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The Centrality of Social Image in Social Psychology

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Abstract

Social image, or the views that others have of us and our groups, plays a role in a wide array of psychological processes, including impression management, interpersonal relationships, mate selection, intra- and inter-group processes, the experience and expression of emotion, gender differences in behavior, and the construction and maintenance of social status. The 13 papers included in this special issue reflect the centrality of social image in these and other social-psychological processes. Five major themes integrate this diverse selection of papers: 1) self-presentation of social image; 2) culture-specific conceptions of social image; 3) the role of social image in emotion, 4) respect and status as reflections of social image; and 5) the influence of social image on ingroup and outgroup perceptions. Taken together, these papers illustrate the importance of social image for understanding the complexities of human behavior and point to new ways to study this important topic.

## The Centrality of Social Image in Social Psychology

We are deeply affected by the image others have of us. We take great care in presenting ourselves to others in ways that promote a positive impression. The mere thought of others condemning us for a moral failure makes us feel the pain of rejection. The respect we enjoy from fellow group members makes us feel more connected with, and work harder for, our group.

Social image is implicated, either directly or indirectly, in a wide array of research topics, including impression management, interpersonal relationships, mate selection, intra- and inter-group processes, the experience and expression of emotion, gender differences in behavior, and the construction and maintenance of social status. The 13 papers included in this special issue are a testament to the centrality of social image in these and other social-psychological processes. We have organized these papers by their thematic focus and present next a discussion of their contributions to our understanding of how social image operates across interpersonal, intragroup, and intergroup contexts.

### **Presenting One's Social Image to Others**

People actively pursue specific social images and they may go to great lengths to create a particular impression. From everyday interactions with peers, to first dates, to momentous audiences with power brokers, individuals present themselves in ways that they believe will produce positive rewards and help them accomplish their goals. William James (1890/1983) pointed to the importance of social image and presentations of oneself to others more than a century ago, but there are still many unanswered questions about the role of self-presentation in social behavior.

Three papers in this special issue address how people strive to create social images. First, Leary, Allen, and Terry review the shortcomings of contemporary research on self-presentation.

They maintain that research on self-presentation has been limited through its almost exclusive reliance on laboratory contexts. This dependence on laboratory research has caused researchers to overlook key features of self-presentation in everyday life. For example, impression management in the laboratory is often explicit and the key goal of the situation, whereas self-presentation in everyday contexts is often subtle and secondary to other goals. In the laboratory, presenting oneself falsely has only short-term, limited consequences, if any. In contrast, in everyday life, false self-presentations can lead to conflict with relationship partners, social sanction, or humiliation when others learn the truth. Moreover, in everyday life, individuals have opportunities to construct or repair their social image over time, as they interact with targets repeatedly over the course of days, weeks, or months.

Leary and his colleagues divide the process of self-presentation into four elements: interpersonal goals, targets, desired social image, and self-presentational mode. They elaborate the role of each of these elements in everyday self-presentation, and they contrast these everyday roles with how they have been operationalized in laboratory research. Their goal is not primarily to critique laboratory research – they applaud the many ways the long history of careful experimental studies has enhanced our understanding of the topic – but rather to spark a new phase of research that examines the complex, powerful, and extensive influence of self-presentation in everyday behavior. This paper is required reading for researchers who, like Leary and his colleagues, view self-presentation and its role in social image as a critically important but underestimated component of social life.

The paper by Canevello and Crocker addresses several elements of Leary et al.'s analysis in a study of new college roommates. In particular, their study focuses on self-presentation goals among roommates who were unacquainted prior to living together. People in such situations

engage in self-presentation repeatedly, over a long period of time, through multiple modes. For example, a college freshman may present herself as cool by wearing the latest fashions, sharing the latest music with her roommate, or scoffing at her roommate's uncool attitudes.

The research by Canevello and Crocker addresses the consequences of two types of interpersonal goals in relationships: self-image goals (self-presentation efforts directed toward obtaining others' esteem) and compassionate goals (efforts directed toward supporting others' well-being). Using weekly reports of goals and interactions among new college roommates, this semester-long study demonstrates that self-image goals can backfire and lead to lower levels of regard from an interaction partner (in this case, a roommate one didn't know initially). In contrast, an actor's endorsement of compassionate goals, or goals to pursue the welfare of the roommate, has the opposite effect: the actor's compassionate goals ultimately contribute to enhanced regard of the actor by the roommate. In addition, increases in actors' goals to be supportive of their roommates were positively related to increases in the actors' self-esteem. In short, this study reveals that the effects of self-presentation depend on the actor's relationship with targets and the duration of time involved. Perhaps more importantly, this study shows that impression management attempts may backfire, and that attempts to focus on others' welfare rather than on others' assessment of oneself may have positive effects for relationships and self-esteem. Researchers interested in relationship quality and stability may find this perspective useful in teasing apart the dyadic processes that affect partners' self-views and views of each other, such as partner idealization (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996) and the Michelangelo Effect (Rusbult, Finkel, & Kumashiro, 2009).

The paper by Lun, Mesquita, and Smith also addresses key points in Leary et al.'s call for research. Lun et al.'s paper focuses on important social relationships using modes not found in

laboratory contexts; it examines cultural differences in impression management as expressed in personal ads for romantic partners. Drawing upon research on regional differences in individualism and collectivism in the United States, they hypothesized that Northerners (from Massachusetts) and Southerners (from North Carolina and Georgia) would present themselves and their desired partners differently. Using personal ads from matched medium and large cities in the north and south, they found that Northerners were more likely than Southerners to describe themselves and their desired partners in terms of context-free traits and controllable dimensions of the self (consistent with an individualistic cultural context). In contrast, Southerners were more likely than Northerners to describe themselves and their desired partners in terms of contextualized and uncontrollable dimensions (consistent with a more collectivist cultural context). Moreover, Northerners tended to like ads that focused on the writer's context-free traits (e.g., *smart, outgoing, and adventurous*) whereas Southerners liked the ads that focused on contextualized aspects of the person (*I like to dance and go to movies*). This study shows that regional culture shapes people's impression management efforts and that presenting oneself in ways that are consistent with one's cultural context is affirmed and rewarded by others who share that cultural background. Moreover, this paper again addresses impression management in real-world settings, as advocated by Leary and his colleagues.

In short, the papers by Canevello and Crocker and by Lun and her colleagues are examples of how Leary et al.'s recommendations can be put into practice to investigate the role of self-presentation in situations outside the laboratory. From day-in and day-out interactions with a roommate to the quest for one's ideal romantic partner, individuals seek to shape others' views of themselves; the ways they address this task affect their relationships, their well-being, and opportunities to accomplish their goals. Leary et al.'s model will be useful to researchers

investigating behavior in the workplace (Bolino, Kacmar, Turnley, & Gilstrap, 2008); political psychology (McGraw, 2008; Schutz, 1993), communication processes (Rubini & Sigall, 2002), and many more everyday elements of social life.

### **Cultural Expressions of Social Image: Face and Honor**

Two additional papers in this special issue explore the role of culture in social image. The paper by Lin and Yamaguchi focuses on the emotional consequences of face in Japanese culture.

Goffman (1959) described face as the positive impression we want others to have of us.

Facework, or impression management, refers to the strategies used to maintain or protect face in social interactions. Face is different than self-presentation as the latter is an impression management strategy but not face itself (i.e., the specific impression or image we wish to maintain).

Using a diary methodology, Lin and Yamaguchi studied how concerns for one's own and others' face influence emotional experiences in Japan. Their study showed that the maintenance of one's positive face in everyday social interactions increased feelings of joy and decreased feelings of depressiveness among the Japanese participants. In addition, face maintenance also increased participants' self-esteem. Furthermore, these positive emotional consequences were not limited to one's face: the participants also felt increased joy when others' face was maintained. Taken together, these findings illustrate the relational nature of emotion and self-esteem. The ability to maintain one's own and others' face had a positive effect on the participants' emotional life as well as on their attitudes toward themselves.

Lin and Yamaguchi's paper represents an important contribution to current work on face in cross-cultural psychology. Research on face and culture has to date mostly focused on facework in conflict situations (i.e., face negotiation theory; Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003). Lin



and Yamaguchi's paper is the first to examine the effect of face on positive emotions, negative emotions, and self-esteem. Their paper also represents an important contribution to the scarce emic literature in psychology. Emic approaches to culture emphasize the understanding of psychological phenomena in relation to the shared meanings (e.g., values, beliefs) of a particular cultural community (Pike, 1954). By endorsing this approach, Lin and Yamaguchi elaborate on how face is beneficial for the maintenance of interpersonal harmony in Japanese culture. As face can only be claimed (and therefore maintained) when the individual fulfills the expectations associated with his/her social roles, face encourages individuals to care about what it is expected of them thereby ensuring harmony and cooperation in social relations. Additionally, the Japanese participants in Lin and Yamaguchi's study experienced greater levels of positive emotions when their own, *and others' face*, was maintained. The positive emotions that the maintenance of face engenders should affirm an individual's commitment to live up to social role expectations.

Ijzerman and Cohen's paper presents an embodiment approach to honor. This approach emphasizes the importance of bodily posture as a means of communicating one's cultural values. In three experiments, Ijzerman and Cohen examined the meaning of an upright, chin-held high body posture (compared to a head-down body posture) among members of honor and dignity cultures. Honor cultures focus heavily on social image, in contrast to dignity cultures, which focus primarily on one's appraisal of one's own inherent and inalienable worth (also see Leung & Cohen, 2011). Thus, honor is a cultural expression of a concern for social image. Having honor versus failing to maintain it can have implications for one's own perception of worth as well as other people's respect.

The three experiments studied the embodiment of cultural values across three different cultural groups. In the first study, Anglo Americans in the chin-up position endorsed honor

attitudes to a greater extent and were also more likely to read the word ‘honor’ on an eye chart compared to those in the head-down position. This effect, however, emerged only for participants who were primed with the salience of honor by means of a word completion task. Interestingly, participants who strongly endorsed the value of dignity were more likely to reject honor attitudes in the chin-up compared to head-down position. A second study replicated these findings with Latino (but not Latina) participants. Interestingly however, the Latino participants showed greater endorsement of honor attitudes in the chin-up position *independently* of whether they were primed for honor or not. Finally, in a third study, the authors showed that Dutch men (members of a dignity culture) were more likely to walk in an expansive posture after rejecting honor-related violence (and shrink after *not* rejecting it), whereas Arab/Turkish men (members of an honor culture) were more likely to walk in expansive posture after endorsing honor-related violence (and shrink after rejecting it).

Taken together, Ijzerman and Cohen’s findings demonstrate the importance of the cultural context in the interpretation of body postures. Moreover, the data presented reveal the bidirectional relationship between body compartment and cultural values: the chronic or temporary accessibility of cultural values influences the meaning of body posture, and body posture also facilitates the endorsement of attitudes related to core cultural values. Furthermore, Ijzerman and Cohen’s focus on the embodiment of honor represents a novel contribution to contemporary research on honor. Finally, their paper demonstrates the importance of studying within-nation differences in cultural values, an approach also present in Lun et al.’s contribution to this special issue.

### **Social Image, Shame, and Embarrassment**

Three papers in this special issue address the role of social image in the self-conscious emotions of shame and embarrassment. These emotions are characterized by an emphasis on one's self-concept, or identity, as the object of emotional experience (Smith, Webster, Parrott, & Eyre, 2002; Tangney & Miller, 2002). This section begins with a theoretical contribution on shame by Gausel and Leach. This paper re-conceptualizes shame by reviewing the available theoretical and empirical literature on this emotion. The authors focus on shame in the context of moral failure.

Gausel and Leach's starting point is the multiplicity of meanings associated with the term 'shame' by researchers, as well as by research participants, in studies on interpersonal and intergroup shame. Their careful review of the literature shows that shame has been associated with a wide variety of antecedents, feelings, and behaviors. In particular, shame has been associated with threats to the self and threats to social image, with feelings of inferiority and feelings of rejection, and with prosocial, avoidant, and even antisocial (aggressive) responses. Gausel and Leach discuss how this *mélange* of contradictory experiences (e.g., shame is both prosocial and antisocial) hinders a scientific study of shame, and is partly the result of equating the structure of shame with the usage of the term 'shame' in everyday discourse (Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1988; Wierzbicka, 2009). Gausel and Leach move away from a layperson's understanding to a scientific analysis of shame by, in their words, 'dissecting' shame into its specific aspects or components.

In their model, moral failure can be appraised by an individual as indicating other's condemnation or one's self-defect. The former appraisal most clearly indicates the concern for *social image*, whereas the latter appraisal most clearly indicates a concern for *self-image*. The appraisal that others are likely to condemn the individual for a moral failure is the cognitive basis for feelings of rejection. This subjective feeling is most likely to be associated with what Gausel

and Leach refer to as self-defensive motivations, like wanting to escape or cover up one's (or one's group's) immoral behavior.

An appraisal of moral failure as implying a self-defect can be further evaluated by an individual as an 'unalterable' (global) or 'potentially alterable' (specific) defect. These two appraisals distinguish shame 'proper' from feelings of inferiority. An appraisal of one's defect as global should be associated with feelings of inferiority, which should, in turn, be linked to self-defensive motivations (e.g., escape) and/or externalizing (e.g., hostile anger). In contrast to this subjective experience of inadequacy, Gausel and Leach propose that shame is the subjective experience associated with an appraisal of a *specific* self-defect. Because this type of self-defect can be changed, shame should be associated with wanting to improve oneself and the quality of one's social relations. They therefore redefine shame as an emotion that has beneficial consequences for the individual and her/his social relations.

Gausel and Leach's diligent analysis of shame results in a conceptual model that is both novel and integrative. Their model is novel because it provides a new way to conceptualize and measure shame. Their model is integrative because it proposes combinations of appraisals, feelings, and motivations embedded in the concept of 'shame' and *supported* by empirical research. Thus, their integration of studies on shame clarifies the seemingly contradictory empirical findings for this emotion. Gausel and Leach also encourage researchers to adopt a methodological approach that measures the appraisal, feeling, and motivational components embedded in the concept of 'shame' separately from each other. Such an approach can only lead to a deeper, and better, understanding of the emotional consequences of moral failure.

Chekroun and Nugier's paper discusses the role of self-conscious emotions in the management of deviant behavior. In three experiments, Chekroun and Nugier measured the

intensity of shame, embarrassment, and guilt in response to deviance. The experiments presented participants with scenarios that manipulated whether the person who engages in a deviant behavior was an ingroup or outgroup member (Study 1), the visibility of an ingroup member's deviant behavior to a third party (Study 2), and the degree of stereotype salience of an ingroup member's deviant behavior (Study 3). The experiments assessed participants' willingness to exert social control (via, for example, a disapproving look or a deliberate cough) while imagining themselves in the situations described in the scenarios.

The findings demonstrated that the tendency to exert social control on deviant behavior was higher when a) the person was an ingroup rather than an outgroup member, b) the deviant behavior was visible to an outgroup, and c) the deviant behavior reinforced a negative stereotype about the ingroup. These findings imply that an ingroup member's deviant behavior threatens the ingroup's social image and the positive social identity of its members. Moreover, deviant behaviors by ingroup members were related to an increase in shame and embarrassment, but not guilt. Most importantly, shame and embarrassment were found to *mediate* the threat posed by an ingroup member's deviant behavior (as measured by different threat-related variables across studies) on participants' readiness to sanction the deviant behavior.

The paper by Chekroun and Nugier demonstrates shame and embarrassment's positive role in the protection of group-based social image. These emotions signal that something needs to be done about an ingroup member's deviant behavior. Protecting one's group from the negative consequences of deviance should be beneficial for group members' social identity as well as for intergroup relations. Thus, Chekroun and Nugier's findings support Gausel & Leach's conceptualization of shame as an emotion associated with self- and social improvement. Furthermore, Chekroun and Nugier's research suggests that shame and embarrassment are more

important than guilt for the preservation of group norms.

The paper by Eller, Koschate, and Gilson also examines group processes in embarrassment. In an interview study and three experimental studies, Eller and colleagues show that the intensity of group-based embarrassment in response to a faux pas is moderated by three important factors. First, the participants in their studies felt more intense embarrassment when they imagined ingroup, rather than outgroup, members witnessing a faux pas. Second, this ingroup-outgroup audience effect only emerged for participants who were highly identified with the ingroup. Third, the participants' embarrassment in front of an outgroup audience was influenced by the status of the outgroup: high status outgroups elicited more intense embarrassment than low status outgroups. These findings emerged across a diverse set of social identities and intergroup relations (e.g., students from different universities, Scottish, Norwegian).

Eller and colleagues' studies are novel in that they are the first to systematically examine moderators of group-based embarrassment. Furthermore, their studies extend knowledge on audience effects in embarrassment. As interpersonal embarrassment is affected by who is witnessing a faux pas (e.g., Parrott & Smith, 1991; Tangney, Miller, Flicker, & Barlow, 1996), so is group-based embarrassment affected by the group membership of the audience. Furthermore, research on embarrassment in interpersonal relations has shown this emotion to be typically felt when we appraise a faux pas as a threat to our social image (e.g., Miller, 2004). The intensity of felt embarrassment is therefore influenced by how much we *care* about the evaluation of those who are witnessing the faux pas. Eller and colleagues' research shows that a concern for social image also moderates the intensity of felt embarrassment in intergroup contexts. In particular, their studies reveal that we care *more* about our image in the eyes of *high*

status outgroups. These findings are in line with Keltner and colleagues analysis of embarrassment in group life. This research showed that embarrassment maintains status hierarchies within a group because the emotion communicates deference to group members (e.g., Keltner & Buswell, 1997). Embarrassment is therefore more likely felt, or more intensely felt, by group members who are of lower status in the presence of high-status members. Eller and colleagues show this role of status in embarrassment to also be present in intergroup contexts. Finally, Eller and colleagues' paper contributes to the literature on group-based self-conscious emotions as this literature has to date mostly focused on the role of shame and guilt in intergroup relations (e.g., Leach, Iyer, & Pedersen, 2006; Lickel, Steele, & Schmader, 2011; Zebel, Doosje, & Spears, 2009).

### **Respect, Disrespect, and Status as Markers of Social Image**

Three papers in this special issue engage notions of respect, disrespect, and status in their analysis of social image: the papers by Renger and Simon, Blincoe and Harris, and Carr and Vignoles. Renger and Simon's paper focuses on the role of respect in intragroup relations. Respect is a source of information about social image because being respected is a marker of a positive image in the eyes of others.

Renger and Simon adopt Honneth's approach to respect (Honneth, 1995). This approach distinguishes between two bases of respect: being recognized as an equal and being recognized for one's achievements (or social esteem). Renger and Simon's paper focuses on being recognized as an equal as a basis of respect. Their emphasis on equality-based respect characterizes their approach as novel and distinctive from other contemporary approaches which have focused their attention on social esteem-based respect and its role in group life (e.g., Sleebos, Ellemers & de Gilder, 2006; Spears, Ellemers & Doosje, 2005). In this way, Renger and

Simon's contribution both complements and expands current notions of respect in social psychology.

To study the consequences of equality-based respect on intragroup relations, Renger and Simon present an experiment in which they manipulated being recognized as an equal by fellow group members. They measured the extent to which the experience of being treated as a group member of equal worth influenced the participants' ingroup identification, motivations to serve the ingroup, and group-serving behavior (idea generation task). Their findings revealed that the experience of equality-based respect increased participants' identification with their group, their motivation to work for their group, as well as their actual *performance* in the idea generation task. Indeed, participants in the recognition condition experienced greater equality-based respect than the participants in the non-recognition condition, and this greater experience of equality-based respect let the former participants to generate more concrete and elaborate suggestions for their group's work.

Furthermore, the perception of being seen as equal by fellow group members had both a direct and an indirect effect on participants' motivation and actual group-serving behavior. The mere perception that the self is being seen as an equal by fellow group members increased the degree to which the participants wanted to work for, and actually worked for, the group. This influence represents a powerful and direct benefit of equality-based respect on group performance. The mediated effect of equality-based respect represents an important influence on the psychological relationship between the individual and the group. This mediated route was termed a 'self-reflective route' by Renger and Simon because the perception of being seen as an equal group member allowed the participants to reflect on their relationship with, and position within, the group. This self-reflection process was indicated by an increase in ingroup



identification. Thus, equality-based respect is a key factor in intragroup relations because of its dual effects on motivation and performance.

Blincoe and Harris's paper examines the antithesis of respect: disrespect and its meaning among women and men. In line with the Huo, Binning, and Molina (2010) dual pathway model of respect, they describe disrespect as posing a threat to two distinct concerns: status and belonging. In three studies (a survey and emotional narratives), Blincoe and Harris showed that disrespect elicits two distinct emotional responses: anger and sadness. This mixed emotional response is reflective of the dual concerns elicited by disrespect. Anger is seen in this approach as an indicator of the threat to status, whereas sadness is seen as an indicator of the threat to belonging. As expected, participants' biological sex moderated which of the two emotions is most intensely felt in response to disrespect. The male participants in Blincoe and Harris' studies reported more intense anger than sadness. In contrast, the female participants reported more intense sadness than anger. These sex differences in emotional experience were not explained by the *type* of disrespectful situations reported by male and female participants. Both groups reported similar disrespectful experiences (e.g., being insulted or made fun of; being ignored). Given the lack of sex differences in the antecedents of disrespect, Blincoe and Harris propose that sex differences in emotional experience are a consequence of disrespect's differential meaning among women and men: Women may be more concerned with the threat to belonging in response to disrespect, whereas men may be more concerned with the threat to status in response to disrespect.

The paper by Blincoe and Harris contributes to the rich available literature on gendered emotions and status (e.g., Brody & Hall, 2010; Fischer, 1993; Shields, 2002). This literature has consistently shown that the available cultural stereotypes about masculinity and femininity

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influence emotions by marking some emotions as particularly ‘feminine’ and other emotions as particularly ‘masculine’. Those emotions that emphasize one’s vulnerability, like sadness, are typically associated with femininity and females because they fit with the nearly universal negative stereotype of females/women as dependent, emotional, or softhearted (Williams & Best, 1982). In contrast, those emotions that emphasize strength and autonomy, like anger, are typically associated with masculinity and males because they fit with the nearly universal stereotype of males/men as active, assertive, and confident (Williams & Best, 1982). These stereotypes have far-reaching negative social consequences. For example, females/women who express anger in professional settings are conferred less status than males/men who express anger (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008). Interestingly, the association between anger and males/men, and between sadness and females/women is stronger among European-American than among other ethnic groups in the US (e.g., African Americans; Durik, Hyde, Marks, Roy, Anaya, & Schultz, 2006). As the majority of Blincoe and Harris’ participants were of European-American descent, their findings are especially important to understand the dynamics of gendered emotions in European-American culture.

Blincoe and Harris’ paper shows that emotional experiences can signify a concern for belonging or a concern for status. Carr and Vignoles’ contribution focuses on a different marker of status: material possessions. This paper examines the processes underlying status projection (i.e., the over-communication of one’s socio-economic status, or SES) through selective display of one’s material possessions that best serve as status symbols. The study was conducted among adolescents recruited from different high schools in an affluent region of South East England. The participants engaged in a behavioral status projection task after completing a series of

measures assessing self-discrepancies (discrepancies between actual-ideal selves), materialistic values, SES, and perceived SES change.

The findings for this study supported two discrete pathways to status projection. Status projection was significantly enhanced (1) among those reporting either upward or downward change in SES, but only to the extent that they endorsed materialistic values, and (2) among those reporting greater self-discrepancies, irrespective of materialistic values. The authors interpret these findings to mean that SES change leads to ‘incompleteness,’ which is typically experienced when a desired identity is blocked or when identity claims are insecure. Thus, a change in SES predicts status projection only to the extent that the individual holds materialistic values or materialistic values predict status projection only to the extent that SES is somehow insecure.

Carr and Vignoles’ paper relates to the contributions by Leary and colleagues, Canevello and Crocker, and Lun and colleagues in this special issue as it tested the role of strategic self-presentation as a way to project one’s status to others. What is unique about this contribution is its focus on material possessions as status symbols in the negotiation of social image and the importance of self-presentation in the self-completion process (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982). Moreover, Carr & Vignoles’ study provides insight into an important sociological phenomenon. In particular, it provides a quantitative test of the psychological investment in using status symbols among members of the nouveau riche class due to their recent, and hence insecure, rise in SES (Goffman, 1951; see also Smith, 2003). By focusing on SES as an important variable, this paper pays attention to social-structural conceptions of value often ignored in psychological research. Finally, by studying adolescents, Carr and Vignoles show that SES plays quite early in

life an important role in the negotiation of social image (see also Kasser, Ryan, Couchman, & Sheldon, 2004).

**Social Images of One's Group: The Case of Meta-stereotypes and Perception of Terrorists**

Owuamalam and Zagefka's paper presents yet another context in which a concern for social image operates: meta-stereotypes. A meta-stereotype is the image that members of a certain group expect a relevant outgroup to have about their group (Vorauer, Main, & O'Connell, 1998). Thus, meta-stereotypes are a specific instantiation of perceived social image in the intergroup context.

In two experimental studies, Owuamalam and Zagefka examined the influence of meta-stereotype valence on ingroup identification (i.e., women) among female university students. Importantly, they also measured female participants' level of ingroup identification before exposure to the meta-stereotype valence manipulation (i.e., prior identification). They find that prior levels of ingroup identification moderated the effect of meta-stereotype valence on subsequent ingroup identification (after exposure to positive or negative meta-stereotypes). In particular, high identifiers were not affected by the valence of meta-stereotypes. These female participants remained highly identified with the ingroup independently of their perceived positive or negative social image of their group among men. In contrast, female participants who exhibited prior lower levels of identification *lowered* their identification with the ingroup after being exposed to negative meta-stereotype information. Moreover, this effect for lower identifiers was mediated by a decrease in these participants' self-esteem.

This paper sheds light on the conditions under which the positive or negative perceived social image of an important ingroup impacts the psychological relationship between the individual and the group. Women who strongly identified with their ingroup were not influenced

by either negative or positive information about how women are viewed by men. Thus, their pre-existing commitment to and investment in their ingroup did not waver after being exposed to positive and negative metastereotype information. This means that their strong identification with the ingroup was a *resource* (Leach, Rodriguez Mosquera, Vliek, & Hirt, 2010) to confront a perceived negative social image. This conclusion is further supported by the finding that these participants did not appraise negative meta-stereotype information as a threat to their self-esteem or self-concept. Thus, Owuamalam and Zagefka's findings suggest that a strong ingroup identification is a marker of psychological empowerment among groups that are traditionally considered low-status groups, like women.

The last contribution to this special issue is by Golec de Zavala. This paper focuses on an important societal issue: the role of terrorist images in shaping people's preferences for different counterterrorism approaches. Using a correlational and an experimental study, Golec de Zavala demonstrates that preference for counterterrorist actions is influenced by the way terrorists are perceived or portrayed as soldiers vs. criminals, as well as by the extent to which these perceptions or portrayals fit the participants' ideological orientation.

Study 1 showed that when terrorists are perceived as soldiers, coercive and warlike counterterrorism is seen as the most adequate response to terrorist threat among Polish participants. In contrast, when terrorists are perceived as criminals, criminal prosecution is seen as the most desirable counterterrorist response. Furthermore, ideological orientations moderated these relationships: the relationship between the perception of terrorists as soldiers and support for coercive counterterrorism was higher among participants high in social dominance orientation whereas the support for criminal prosecution was stronger among individuals with high right-wing authoritarianism tendencies who perceived terrorists as criminals. The

moderating effect of ideological orientations was replicated among British participants in a second, experimental study which manipulated the framing of terrorists as either soldiers or criminals in a mock newspaper article.

This paper provides evidence on how available social images of groups (e.g., in the media) can influence decision-making processes in a political domain. Moreover, the research by Golec de Zavala shows that the influence of framing the social image of a group on individuals' opinions about that group interacts with ideological orientation. Her studies therefore contribute to the literature on the effects of framing in social psychology as well as in other social sciences, such as political science and media studies. Finally, Golec de Zavala's findings highlight the important role of much researched ideological orientations (social dominance orientation and right wing authoritarianism) in shaping perceptions of a social group (terrorists) and preferred actions against them.

### **Social Image as Integrative Framework**

Face and honor. Shame and embarrassment. Respect and disrespect. Status and belonging. Self-presentation. Meta-stereotypes. All of these terms encapsulate a pervasive concern in social life: the concern for our image in the eyes of others. The contributions to this special issue shed new light on *when* and *how* a concern for social image influences emotions as well as interpersonal, intragroup, and intergroup relations. Furthermore, this special issue has identified links between areas of research that would not be easily associated with each other without an appropriate framework. For example, research on face in Japanese culture and research on respect in intragroup relations would not ordinarily be linked. The concern for social image is the silver thread that connects all contributions. Thus, social image serves as an integrative framework for lines of research rooted in different theoretical and methodological traditions. We hope that this

juxtaposition of papers with varied methods, theoretical orientations, and cultural backgrounds will revitalize interest in social image as a classic concept in social psychology, and will prompt new research on this exciting topic.

Finally, some words of thanks. We appreciate the positive response to the call for papers for a special issue on social image. Due to page limitations of the journal, we could only include less than one third of the manuscript submissions. We wish to thank all of our colleagues who submitted their manuscripts for consideration in this special issue. We also wish to thank the many reviewers for their thoughtful and constructive comments on the manuscripts, and the contributors to this special issue for cooperating with us to create this special issue. We would also like to thank the editorial board of the European Journal of Social Psychology for giving us the opportunity to pursue this special issue, and Wolfgang Boban for his continuous editorial assistance. It is our hope that this special issue manifests the centrality of social image as a research topic in social psychology.

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