

# Are Dominance and Prestige Distinct Strategies for Attaining Social Status?

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## Two Strategies for Attaining Social Status

- Social status is the degree of **social influence** one possesses over other individuals
- Based on evolutionary logic, Henrich and Gil-White (2001) distinguished between two strategies to attaining status in human societies:
  - **Dominance (fear-based status)**
    - Attaining status through intimidation, force, or threat
    - e.g., a bully threatening a classmate
  - **Prestige (admiration-based status)**
    - Attaining status through possessing valued skills, expertise, or know-how
    - e.g., an accomplished scientist advising a student

○ Previous studies have demonstrated that dominance and prestige have divergent personality, emotional, and hormonal correlates

	Associated with Dominance	Associated with Prestige
<b>Personality Trait</b>		
Narcissism		Self-esteem
Aggression		Social Acceptance
Disagreeableness		Agreeableness
Neuroticism		Skills and perceived expertise
Machiavellianism		Altruistic tendencies
<b>Emotion</b>		
Hubristic pride		Authentic pride
No relation with testosterone		Low testosterone

Note. From Buttermore, 2006; Cheng, Tracy, & Henrich, 2009; von Rueden, Gurven, & Kaplan, 2008; Reyes-Garcia et al., 2008)

○ However, studies have not tested whether both dominance and prestige lead to social influence

## Research Questions

- Do both dominance and prestige promote social influence?**
  - If both are evolved strategies for attaining status, both should effectively promote social influence
- Are dominance and prestige associated with distinct interpersonal behavioral patterns?**
  - Given personality and emotional differences between the two strategies, they are likely associated with distinct interpersonal behavioral profiles
  - We predict that dominance will be associated with displays of entitlement and aggression, while prestige will be associated with displays of consensus-seeking and confidence

## Method

**Participants and Procedure:**

- Groups of 4-6 unacquainted individuals (N = 191) completed a decision task
  - First, privately
  - Then, collaboratively as a group (20-min, paid for correct responses, video-recorded)
- Rated all group members (in round-robin fashion) on the following dimensions:

**Peer-Ratings:**

Dimension	Sample Items
<b>Dominance</b> 8 items, $\alpha = .93$	This person... "enjoyed having authority over others", "was willing to use use aggressive tactics to his/her way"
<b>Prestige</b> 8 items, $\alpha = .89$	This person... "has gained distinction and prestige among the group", "is held in high esteem by the group"
<b>Liking</b> 2 items, $\alpha = .89$	I like... "this person", "working with this person"
<b>Agency</b> 3 items, $\alpha = .92$	This person was... "assertive", "self-confident"
<b>Communion</b> 2 items, $\alpha = .71$	This person was... "unsympathetic" (reversed), "softhearted"
<b>Social Influence</b> 3 items, $\alpha = .89$	This person... "led the task", "had high status", "was attended to"

Note. Social Relations Model (Kenny, 1994) was utilized to derive target effects, which served as a participant's peer-perceived score on dimension, with perceiver-bias removed

**Behavioral Measure of Social Influence:**

- Computed discrepancy score between **private response** and **group's response** on task, summed across all items:

$$\text{Influence} = -1 \sum_i (\text{participant's private response on item } i - \text{group's response on item } i)$$

\*A high positive score reflects high behavioral influence

**Outside Observer Coding:**

- 2 trained coders watched videos and rated each participant (N = 191) on:

Behaviors reflecting entitlement	Behaviors reflecting consensus-seeking
Overbearing	Invite alternative views
Attribute success to self	Attribute success to team
Humiliating teasing style	Flattering teasing style
Manipulative	Tells jokes
Inflate importance of own ideas	Self-deprecation

  

Nonverbal displays of aggression	Nonverbal displays of confidence (i.e., pride)
Arms out from body	Head tilt up
Body occupies much room	Smile
Wide posture	Chest expanded
Violent arm gestures	Torso pushed out

Note. Behaviors relevant to nonverbal pride display (Tracy & Robins, 2004)

## Results

1. Dominance and prestige are distinct strategies for attaining social influence

	Dominance (Peer-rated target effect)	Prestige (Peer-rated target effect)
<b>Peer-rated</b>		
<b>Influence</b> (Peer-rated target effect)	.77**	.59**
<b>Agency</b> (Peer-rated target effect)	.60**	.41**
<b>Behavioural measure of influence</b> (Similarity between private and group response)	.21**	.15*
<b>Communion</b> (Peer-rated target effect)	-.33**	.14*
<b>Liking</b> (Peer-rated target effect)	-.16*	.54**
<b>Observer coded</b>		
<b>Influence</b>	.57**	.38**
<b>Agency</b>	.58**	.34**
<b>Communion</b>	-.21**	.37**

Note. N = 191. Dominance and prestige target effects are statistically independent ( $r = .12, ns$ ). \*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$ .

2. Dominance and prestige are associated with distinct interpersonal behavioral patterns

Observer coded behavior	Dominance (Peer-rated target effect)	Prestige (Peer-rated target effect)
<b>Social behaviors</b>		
Attribute success to self	.36**	.13
Dominant teasing style	.59**	.01
Humiliating teasing style	.52*	.11
Gesture to oneself	.41*	.14
Overbearing	.56*	-.02
Manipulative	.46*	.00
Inflate importance of own ideas	.27**	-.11
Self-deprecation	.01	.15*
Invite alternative views	.15*	.33**
Flattering teasing style	.11	.21**
Attribute success to team	.01	.14
Tells jokes	.12	.27**
<b>Nonverbal behaviors</b>		
Arms out from body	.29**	.04
Body occupies much room	.26**	.13
Wide posture	.19**	.11
Violent arm gestures	.22**	.23**
Head tilt up	.03	.19**
Smile	-.06	.27**
Chest expanded	.03	.19**
Torso pushed out	.01	.19**

Note. N = 191. \*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$ .

## Conclusions

- Dominance and prestige represent distinct strategies for the acquisition of high status
- Both are effective for attaining social influence
- Emergence of dominance and prestige was likely favored by different selection pressures (i.e., agonistic contests vs. cultural transmission of knowledge)
- Dominance and prestige may have coevolved with distinct personality, emotional, and interpersonal behavioral patterns

## References

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