

APPLYING THE SCM TO A SPECIFIC INTERGROUP RELATIONSHIP: NORTHERN VERSUS SOUTHERN ITALIANS

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In the present study the SCM was applied to a specific and culturally salient intergroup relationship: Northern versus Southern Italians. We aimed to investigate whether the perceptions of structural attributes and their related stereotypic traits would remain the same when judgments were expressed by group members. Two student samples were recruited, one from Northern ($N = 183$), the other from Southern Italy ($N = 182$). Using questionnaires, the SCM main hypotheses were tested. Results are consistent with the model's predictions, and reflect the cultural stereotypes of the two groups. However, some interesting unexpected results were found and discussed.

Key words: Stereotype Content Model; Ingroup bias; Ingroup status; Competence; Warmth.

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INTRODUCTION

Despite recent North-American and British surveys have showed a progressive increase in the general level of tolerance (e.g., Brown, 1995), many social psychologists have started thinking that society is being confronted with new forms of prejudice, which have found novel expressions to avoid social sanctions. Indeed, nowadays, social norms strongly punish overt demonstrations of prejudice. Nevertheless, the increasing public acceptance of certain groups (e.g., Blacks and Jews) is not extended to others (e.g., Gypsies). The changes in the way people express prejudice reveal the basically modifiable nature of such expressions under normative pressure. This necessarily leads social psychologists to move on from stereotyping processes to stereotype content and functions. If stereotypes depend on social pressures, perhaps their content may be the consequence of systematic principles (for reviews, see Brown, 1995; Fiske, 1998), and, if so, it is essential to identify common dimensions of stereotype content.

This is, indeed, what Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, and Xu (2002) tried to do with their Stereotype Content Model (SCM). Fiske and collaborators considered warmth and competence as the two fundamental dimensions capturing the content of cultural stereotypes (for reviews see Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2008; Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2007). According to the authors, stereotype content results from shared public views of groups and, as also supported by many researchers, it re-

volves around the traits of competence and warmth. Several social psychologists indicated these dimensions as fundamental for social judgment, though using different labels: intellectual good/bad versus social good/bad (Rosenberg, Nelson, & Vivekanathan, 1968); self-profitable versus other-profitable traits (Peeters & Czapinsky, 1990); competence versus morality (Wojciszke, 1994, 2005). The distinction has been massively used in research concerning national stereotypes (Phalet & Poppe, 1997; Poppe & Linssen, 1999), evaluations of social behavior (Vonk, 1999), gender groups (Glick & Fiske, 1996), collectivism versus individualism (Wojciszke, 1997), compensation hypothesis (Judd, James-Hawkins, Yzerbyt, & Kashima, 2005; Yzerbyt, Kervyn, & Judd, 2008).

THE STEREOTYPE CONTENT MODEL

After individuating the main dimensions of stereotype content, Fiske and collaborators tried to identify which factors could reliably predict such a content. They argued that intergroup stereotypes revolve around consciousness of power relations, and are a direct consequence of socio-structural relationships between groups, organized around two main factors: relative socio-economic status (high vs. low), and kind of interdependence (cooperative vs. competitive). The position that a group occupies in society's hierarchy (i.e., status) allows inferences concerning its competence, while the type of interdependence with other groups allows inferences concerning its warmth. Combining status and interdependence, a 2×2 table of possibilities emerges (see also Fiske, Xu, Cuddy, & Glick, 1999; Glick & Fiske, 2001). Each cell of the table describes a specific form of prejudice, and stereotype content, which sustains prejudice, is organized around competence and warmth, which are respectively predicted by status and interdependence.

High status groups, perceived in a cooperative relationship, are the object of *admiration*. The high status and positive interdependence produces a perception of both competence and warmth. The admiration prejudice may be directed at ingroups or cooperative groups of equal status (i.e., groups perceived as allies). Opposed to the admiration cell, we find a cell that brings together low status groups, perceived in a competitive relationship. These groups may be the object of a purely hostile form of prejudice: the *contemptuous prejudice*. They are perceived as neither warm nor competent. This can occur when low status groups are viewed as illegitimate dependents (e.g., welfare recipients regarded as lazy, parasites, and so on).

The last two forms of prejudice, included in the SCM, are defined as ambivalent (or mixed): competence and warmth are negatively correlated. In other words, in the ambivalent prejudice, groups tend to be viewed as either competent or warm, but not both. The *paternalistic prejudice* is directed toward groups that have low socio-economic success and are perceived as non-competitive. Given these socio-structural factors, the target group is regarded as warm, but incompetent. This type of prejudice reflects liking but disrespect. There is a lack of respect (sometimes expressed as pity), due to the incompetence attributed to the lower status group. At the same time, the positive feature (i.e., high warmth) of mixed stereotype content reduces the lower status group's resistance: the mixed stereotype serves to support existing systems of privi-

lege, and to conciliate the disadvantaged groups, by conceding them socially desirable, though secondary, traits (Ridgeway, 2001).

On the contrary, the *envious prejudice* targets high status groups, yet perceived as competitors. Their success leads to infer competence, but the antagonism of goals results in inferences concerning warmth that go in the opposite direction. Viewed reluctantly as worthy of respect because of their competence, such groups are not well liked (see Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2002). The target groups of this form of prejudice often tend to share and accept the favorable aspect of their in-groups' stereotype (e.g., Jews are clever); in doing so, they fail to recognize and, therefore, challenge the negative side of such a stereotype, thus risking tragic consequences. For instance, recent studies have showed how the Jewish group was the target of an envious prejudice during the Fascist (Durante, Volpato, & Fiske, in press) and Nazi régimes (Capozza & Volpato, 2009). This representation favored and sustained the Jews' persecution and deportation during WWII.

The SCM has been substantiated by a number of correlational studies (for a review, see Cuddy et al., 2008), which involved several representative and culturally different samples (e.g., Cuddy et al., 2009). Also, some experimental research was conducted, where the socio-structural factors (status and competition) were manipulated at an intergroup level, with consequent changes in the stereotypes of competence and warmth (Caprariello, Cuddy, & Fiske, 2009; Oldmeadow & Fiske, 2007; see also, Durante, Capozza, & Fiske, 2009). Furthermore, at the interpersonal level, manipulations of status predicted perceived dispositional competence, and manipulations of competition predicted perceived dispositional lack of warmth (Russell & Fiske, 2008). The SCM was also implicated in neuroscience studies (Harris & Fiske, 2006), and, more recently, it was applied to archival data, demonstrating the model's validity across historical and cultural contexts (Durante et al., in press).

However, so far, the SCM had not been applied to a relationship between two specific groups, involving, as participants, members of the two groups. The present work aims to fill this gap.

AIM OF THE CONTRIBUTION AND OVERVIEW

One of the most salient intergroup relationships, in the Italian society, is that between Northerners and Southerners. In a recent SCM study conducted in Italy (Durante, 2008), participants spontaneously mentioned these two groups among those considered as the most salient in the Italian social context. Findings showed that Northerners and Southerners were included in different clusters, namely, higher competence than warmth for Northerners, higher warmth than competence for Southerners. Therefore, we chose these two groups for our investigation.

According to the SCM socio-structural hypothesis, the evaluations of competence and warmth mentioned above occur because Northerners are perceived as a high status group, while Southerners are perceived as a lower status group, and because one group is perceived as more competitive (Northerners) than the other (Southerners). However, would the perceptions of structural attributes and their related stereotypic traits remain the same when judgments were expressed by group members?

To address this question, one sample from the North and one sample from the South were recruited and asked to evaluate ingroup and outgroup on the SCM dimensions: competence, warmth, status, competition, cooperation. It is worth noting that Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, and Xu (2002) excluded cooperation since, in initial pilot studies, cooperation, as they measured it, did not predict warmth. However, they mentioned Eckes' (2002) scale of cooperation as an example of measure that did show evidence of what they assumed. For this reason, we included Eckes' measure in the current investigation.

In the present study, we asked participants to express their personal beliefs about ingroup and outgroup, and not the societal point of view, as generally done in the SCM studies. The goal was to investigate whether, moving from general evaluations of social groups toward a more specific intergroup relationship, where group members were directly involved, would confirm the SCM predictions.

THE STUDY

Method

Participants

Two student samples were recruited. For Northern Italians: 183 students, recruited from various psychology courses at the University of Padova, volunteered to complete the questionnaire (35 males, 138 females, and 10 who did not indicate gender; mean age = 21.93). For Southern Italians: 182 students, recruited from various psychology courses at the University of Catania, volunteered to complete the questionnaire (22 males, 151 females, and 9 missing values; mean age = 20.10).

Questionnaire and Procedure

A questionnaire was administered to both samples. Each sample evaluated both ingroup and outgroup on: six competence items (e.g., "In your opinion, how competent are Northern Italians/Southern Italians?"); six warmth items (e.g., "In your opinion, how warm are Northern Italians/Southern Italians?"); two status items (e.g., "How economically successful are Northern Italians/Southern Italians?"); two competition items ("Resources going to Northern Italians/Southern Italians are likely to take away from resources of the Southern group/Northern group."). Items were borrowed from Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, and Xu (2002, Study 2). Three items, measuring cooperation (Eckes, 2002), were added (e.g., "Does a fair give-and-take exist between Northerners and Southerners?"). Participants were instructed to make their evaluations using 7-point scales, anchored by 1 = *not at all* and 7 = *very much*.

Table 1 reports means, standard deviations, and Cronbach's alphas for all the constructs. Items were averaged and composite scores were created.

TABLE 1
 Means, standard deviations, and reliabilities for measures in the Northern and Southern samples

Sample	Northern Italians			Southern Italians		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Alpha	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Alpha
Cooperation	3.31***	1.12	.81 ^a	2.87***	1.17	.80 ^a
Competition	3.70**	1.52	.71	4.71***	1.35	.59

	Ingroup			Outgroup			Ingroup			Outgroup		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Alpha									
Competence	4.88***	0.92	.92	4.43***	0.98	.90	4.81***	0.98	.86	4.51***	0.98	.87
Warmth	4.08	0.86	.86	4.98***	0.94	.85	5.41***	0.79	.81	3.45***	1.10	.86
Status	5.02***	0.97	.85	3.97	1.15	.83	3.91	1.14	.82	5.03***	1.03	.65

Note. ^a = obtained after excluding one item from the cooperation scale. Means are on a 7-point scale, anchored by *not at all* (1) and *very much* (7). Asterisks indicate that means are different from the mid-point of the scale. ***p* < .01, ****p* < .001.

The Perception of the Socio-Structural Attributes

On the status variable, a 2 (sample: Northern Italians vs. Southern Italians) × 2 (target group: ingroup vs. outgroup) mixed ANOVA was performed, with the last factor serving as a within-participants factor. Results showed a significant Sample × Target Group interaction, $F(1, 359) = 167.09, p < .001$ (see Table 2). The Northern group's status was rated higher by both samples, regardless of the target evaluated, namely, ingroup or outgroup. In the Northern sample, means were $M = 5.02$ for ingroup, and $M = 3.97$ for outgroup. In the Southern sample, means were $M = 3.91$ for ingroup, and $M = 5.04$ for outgroup, $t_s \geq 9.12, p_s < .001$. This result highlights that the perceptions of status were shared by the two samples.

TABLE 2
 Status ratings as a function of sample and target group

Sample	Status			
	Ingroup		Outgroup	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Northern Italians	5.02 _a	0.96	3.97 _b	1.15
Southern Italians	3.91 _b	1.14	5.04 _a	1.02

Note. Means are on a 7-point scale, anchored by *not at all* (1) and *very much* (7). Within each column and each row, the different subscript indicates that the two means are significantly different, $p < .001$.

Concerning perceptions of cooperation, results showed that the Northern sample rated cooperation higher than the Southern sample ($M = 3.31$ vs. $M = 2.87$), $t(363) = 3.60, p < .001$. For competition, findings showed a much higher degree of competition perceived by Southern (M

= 4.71) than Northern participants ($M = 3.70$), $t(361) = 6.69$, $p < .001$. In other words, the Southern sample perceived the relationship with the outgroup as competitive and less cooperative than the Northern sample.

The Perception of the Stereotypic Traits

In order to investigate the perceptions of competence and warmth held by participants, a 2 (sample: Northern Italians vs. Southern Italians) \times 2 (target group: ingroup vs. outgroup) \times 2 (trait: competence vs. warmth) mixed ANOVA was performed, with the last two factors serving as within-participants factors. Results showed a significant main effect for target group, $F(1, 360) = 66.170$, $p < .001$. The ingroup was generally evaluated higher than the outgroup ($M = 4.80$, $SD = 1.85$ vs. $M = 4.34$, $SD = 0.96$, respectively). A significant main effect was also found for trait, $F(1, 360) = 34.11$, $p < .001$. The stereotypic trait of competence was rated higher ($M = 4.66$, $SD = 0.76$) than the stereotypic trait of warmth ($M = 4.48$, $SD = 0.67$). Both the two-way interaction, Sample \times Target Group, $F(1, 360) = 145.48$, $p < .001$, and Trait \times Target Group, $F(1, 360) = 5.07$, $p < .03$, were significant. More interestingly, a significant 3-way interaction, Sample \times Target Group \times Trait, was found, $F(1, 360) = 491.78$, $p < .001$.

The 3-way interaction was decomposed into two 2-way interactions Target Group \times Trait: one for the Northern and one for the Southern sample. ANOVA, ran for the Northern sample, revealed a significant main effect for target group, $F(1, 179) = 9.49$, $p < .01$. Interestingly, the Northern sample generally evaluated the outgroup higher than the ingroup ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 0.90$ vs. $M = 4.49$, $SD = 0.78$, respectively). As previously found, results showed a significant main effect for trait, $F(1, 179) = 10.18$, $p < .01$. Competence ratings were higher than warmth ratings ($M = 4.65$, $SD = 0.80$ vs. $M = 4.53$, $SD = 0.62$, respectively). More interestingly, the interaction was significant as well, $F(1, 179) = 247.82$, $p < .001$. As reported in Table 3, ingroup competence was rated higher ($M = 4.88$) than outgroup competence ($M = 4.43$), $t(180) = 6.06$, $p < .001$. However, the opposite was true for evaluations on the warmth dimension. In fact, ingroup warmth was judged lower ($M = 4.08$) than outgroup warmth ($M = 4.98$), $t(180) = 10.06$, $p < .001$. Finally, the Northern sample judged the ingroup as more competent than warm, $t(181) = 12.17$, $p < .001$, and the outgroup as more warm than competent, $t(180) = 11.61$, $p < .001$.

TABLE 3
 Ratings as a function of the stereotypic trait and the target group for the Northern sample

Trait	Target group			
	Ingroup		Outgroup	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Competence	4.88 _a	0.92	4.43 _b	0.98
Warmth	4.08 _b	0.87	4.98 _a	0.94

Note. Means are on a 7-point scale, anchored by *not at all* (1) and *very much* (7). Within each column and each row, the different subscript indicates that the two means are significantly different, $p < .001$.

ANOVA ran for the Southern sample revealed, just as for the Northern sample, a significant target group main effect, $F(1, 181) = 172.31, p < .001$. Conversely to what was previously found, in this case the ingroup was generally evaluated higher than the outgroup ($M = 5.11, SD = 0.80$ vs. $M = 3.98, SD = 0.89$, respectively). A trait main effect was also found, $F(1, 181) = 24.67, p < .001$, which highlights higher competence than warmth ratings ($M = 4.66, SD = 0.72$ vs. $M = 4.43, SD = 0.65$, respectively). Finally, results showed a significant Target Group \times Trait interaction, $F(1, 181) = 249.75, p < .001$. As reported in Table 4, ingroup competence was rated significantly higher ($M = 4.81$) than outgroup competence ($M = 4.51$), $t(181) = 3.08, p < .01$. Also for the warmth dimension, the ingroup was judged significantly warmer ($M = 5.41$) than the outgroup ($M = 3.45$), $t(181) = 18.94, p < .001$. Finally, the Southern sample judged the ingroup as more warm than competent, $t(181) = 10.42, p < .001$, and the outgroup as more competent than warm, $t(181) = 13.19, p < .001$.

TABLE 4
 Ratings as a function of the stereotypic trait and the target group for the Southern sample

Trait	Target Group			
	Ingroup		Outgroup	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Competence	4.81 _a	0.98	4.51 _b	0.99
Warmth	5.41 _b	0.79	3.45 _a	1.10

Note. Means are on a 7-point scale, anchored by *not at all* (1) and *very much* (7). Within each column and each row, the different subscript indicates that the two means are significantly different, $p < .001$.

DISCUSSION

What happens to the SCM predictions when a specific intergroup relationship is considered? The present study aimed to address this question by examining the Northern versus Southern Italians relationship, and by recruiting members of these two groups as participants. The SCM deals with societal stereotypes, that is, culturally shared views of groups. In SCM studies, participants are always asked to express the societal point of view concerning groups, not their personal beliefs. In our study, instead, we asked participants to evaluate both the ingroup and the outgroup according to their own opinions. Findings supported the model, but also showed some discrepancies. Both samples shared the same perception of status, Northerners being perceived as the higher status group. Consistent with this evaluation, the Northern sample ascribed more competence to the ingroup than the outgroup. The perception of the other socio-structural attribute, namely, interdependence, differed in the two samples. The Southern sample perceived the relationship with the outgroup as more competitive and less cooperative, and, consequently, attributed less warmth to the outgroup than the ingroup. Results showed, furthermore, that competence and warmth differentiated the stereotypes of the two groups: given the lower ratings on one dimension coupled with higher ratings on the other for both samples and target groups, Northern and Southern stereotypes found here can be considered as mixed or ambivalent. These results are

consistent with the SCM predictions, though no admiration was found toward the ingroup. Instead, the cultural stereotypes prevailed: as previously found (Durante, 2008), the Northern sample perceived the ingroup as more competent than warm, and the outgroup as more warm than competent; likewise, the Southern sample depicted the ingroup as more warm than competent, and the outgroup as more competent than warm.

Results concerning the higher status group's evaluations of warmth contradict what expected, given the interdependence ratings. Northern participants, in fact, considered their relationship with the outgroup as less competitive compared to the Southern sample. However, they did not judge the ingroup as both competent and warm, assigning, instead, more warmth to the outgroup. It seems that, despite the perception of the structural attribute, Northerners' evaluations on the warmth dimension were driven by cultural stereotypes. It is possible that, when a stereotype is so culturally deep-rooted, it persists beyond the interdependence existing between groups, when collecting data. Alternatively, according to theories of legitimizing ideologies (see, e.g., Jost & Banaji, 1994; Lerner, 1980), it could be argued that higher-status Northern participants willingly conceded more warmth-related traits to the lower status group, in order to satisfy their need for a positive social identity, and thus supporting the existing hierarchical system.

Another interesting inconsistency concerns the lower status group and its competence evaluations. Despite the fact that both samples assigned a higher status to Northerners, the Southern sample rated ingroup competence higher than outgroup competence. This result is inconsistent not only with SCM predictions, but also with cultural stereotypes. We believe that this result could be explained in terms of ingroup bias. Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981; for recent reviews see Brown & Capozza, 2006; Capozza & Brown, 2000) argues that individuals need a positive social identity, and the ingroup has a value when it is perceived as superior to relevant outgroups. We maintain that here a perception of illegitimate status by Southern participants is at work. Social identity theory claims that individuals belonging to a low status group, which confers a negative social identity, are likely to display ingroup favoritism in order to enhance their collective identity (see Scheepers, Spears, Doosje, & Manstead, 2006). It is likely that the Southern sample perceived the ingroup's lower status as being illegitimate. This perception of illegitimacy may lead to a desire for social change, particularly when associated to the perception of instability.

It is worth noting that social psychology has investigated the relationship between Northerners and Southerners since the '50s of the last century (e.g., Battacchi, 1972). This relationship was subjected to many changes, often due to the country social and economic contingencies. For instance, Capozza, Bonaldo, and Di Maggio (1982) argued that, according to early investigations, Southerners seemed to accept their status inferiority, but during the '60s started using social creativity strategies to improve their social identity. During the '70s, Southerners tended to deny Northern superiority (Capozza et al., 1982), while during the '80s the perception of a status difference between the two groups clearly reemerged (Jost, Mosso, Rubini, & Guermandi, 2000; see also Andrighetto, 2009). This latter evidence is consistent with our results. Participants, indeed, clearly perceived a status difference. However, it seems that Southerners question the legitimacy of such a difference: they acknowledge Northerners higher status, but they claim to be more competent. Even so, neither Northern nor Southern participants subverted the cultural stereotype about their own group, namely, Northerners, as higher in status, are perceived as more competent than warm, and Southerners, as lower in status, are perceived as more warm than competent.

Overall, the present work provides empirical support for the SCM, also when applied to a specific intergroup relationship, and when individual beliefs are investigated. However, it also shows the key role played by culture in shaping personal beliefs. The Northern and Southern stereotypes are deeply rooted in the Italian culture: what is illustrated above shows the strength of this cultural view, which is shared also by members of these groups themselves. The largest part of the results, in fact, confirmed what is culturally well-known concerning Northerners and Southerners. In other words, it seems that, in this particular intergroup relationship, being members of these groups does not raise doubts about what has been handed down culturally for generations, which highlights, once more, the power of the SCM as a tool for detecting cultural stereotypes.

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