

# Are Women Allowed to be Proud? The Implications Proud Women Face

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## Abstract

*Gender stereotypes are powerful and prevalent in today's society, and have many negative effects on how people perceive themselves and each other. One of the most prominent gender stereotypes is the women are more emotional than men (Brescoll, 2016). This belief has many consequences for women as they are perceived as being irrational and unable to control their feelings and reactions. The emotionality stereotype holds true for many positive and negative emotions; however, emotions that indicate high status, such as pride, are often reserved for men. In a replication and expansion study of Shariff and Tracy's (2009) work, the present research used an implicit association test to investigate the relationship between pride and high status for women. Results indicate that people may associate men with pride and high status more than women, and they may associate woman with shame/embarrassment and low status more than men.*

## Introduction

One of the most prominent gender stereotypes in Western cultures is the belief that women are more emotional than men (Brescoll, 2016). According to Shields (2002), this belief is the "master [gender] stereotype because it serves as an overarching organizing principle for other related beliefs" (p.3). However, it is not that women are viewed as experiencing more emotions than men, but rather women are viewed as outwardly expressing emotions to a greater frequency and intensity than men. As a result, women are seen as less able to control the outward display of their emotions (Brescoll, 2016).

Although women are viewed as being the more emotional gender due to their tendency to outwardly display emotions more frequently than men, there are two emotions that are exceptions to the stereotype: anger and pride. Anger and pride are emotions that communicate dominance and power, but only when men express these emotions (Plant, Hyde, Keltner, & Devine, 2000). Lewis (2000) found that when women expressed anger or pride, people often reacted more negatively than when a man expressed these emotions. In a study conducted by Tracy and Beall (2011), participants rated male faces displaying pride as significantly more attractive than male faces displaying happiness, and they rated female faces displaying happiness as

significantly more attractive than female faces displaying pride. The bias toward women expressing pride creates backlash effects for women. For example, participants penalize self-promoting women displaying pride, but did not penalize self-promoting men displaying pride (Rudman et al., 2012).

Researchers Shariff and Tracy (2009) conducted several experiments examining whether the nonverbal expression of pride sends a signal of high status. They used implicit association tests (IAT) to measure the relationship between pride and high status. They found strong support for an implicit association between pride and high status, indicating that at an unconscious level, pride sends a signal of high status. A limitation to their research is that they only looked at this association using a photo of a 24-year-old White man. In order to generalize the results of the Shariff and Tracy study to women, it is of highest importance to replicate their research using a photo of a woman expressing pride.

The present research will focus on study one of the Shariff and Tracy (2009) experiment. Our replication will create the same IAT using photos of a man displaying pride and shame/embarrassment, as well as photos of a woman displaying pride and shame/embarrassment. Each participant will complete the IAT categorizing photos and high/low status words into appropriate positions of a congruent and an incongruent test. In the congruent test, pride is paired with high status, and shame/embarrassment is paired with low status; in the incongruent test, pride is paired with low status, and shame/embarrassment is paired with high status. Participant's reaction times will be measured in order to investigate if the association between pride and high status exists for women like it does for men.

Due to implications from the existing literature, we hypothesize that participants will have faster reaction times when pride is paired with high status words than with low status words. We also predict that in the congruent test, participants will have faster reaction times when the photo of the pride expresser is male than when the photo of the pride expresser is female. Additionally, we predicted that participants will be faster at categorizing the female shame/embarrassment photos than they will be at categorizing the male shame/embarrassment photos.

## Methods

Participants were 63 undergraduate and graduate students from Millersville University, who participated in exchange for course extra credit. They were recruited from various psychology and social work classes. Participants gave their informed consent, and answered various demographic questions prior to beginning the experiment.

Photographs were obtained from an online database and included male and female photos of an actor displaying nonverbal expressions of pride and nonverbal expressions of shame/embarrassment. There were two variations of pride and shame/embarrassment expressions for both genders. Examples of the photographs used can be found in appendix A.

High and low status words were included in the IAT to test for the association between status and emotion. The high-status words that were used were: commanding, dominant, important, powerful, and prestigious. The low status words were: humble, minor, submissive, unimportant, and weak. These words were used in the

original Shariff and Tracy (2009) study, and thus were chosen for our replication.

Participants were asked to categorize photos and words into appropriate positions in a congruent as well as an incongruent pairing using the “e” and the “i” keys, and they were asked to go as quickly as possible. Their latency reaction times were measured in milliseconds for each test. Example photographs of the IAT screen can be found in appendix B.

## **Results**

Participant’s reaction times were significantly faster for the congruent test than their reaction times for the incongruent test. This finding provides support for the association between pride and high status. Further statistical analyses were conducted to examine participant’s reaction times for categorizing male and female photos in the congruent test. We found that participant’s

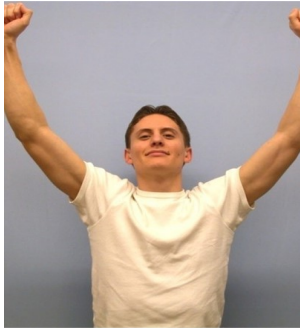
reaction times were faster for categorizing male photos when the emotional expression was pride, and reaction times were faster for categorizing female photos when the expression was shame/embarrassment. This finding indicates that taken together, emotional expression and gender has an effect on participant’s reaction times.

## **Discussion and Future Directions**

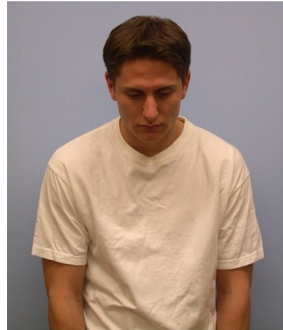
The findings suggest that pride may send a signal of high status and shame/embarrassment may send a signal of low status. Additionally, our findings suggest that men may be associated with pride and high status more than women, and women may be associated with low status and shame/embarrassment more than men. We are currently expanding upon this research by analyzing the potential relationship between implicit biases and explicit ratings of men and women in leadership positions.

**Appendix A**

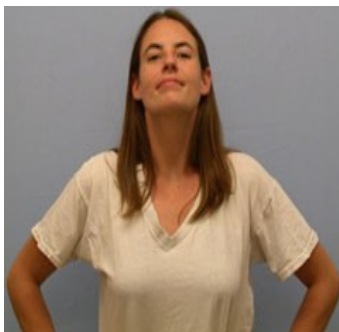
Male Pride Photos:



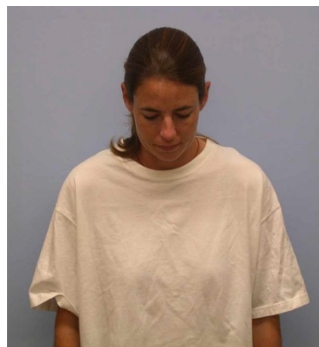
Male Shame/Embarrassment Photos:



Female Pride Photos:

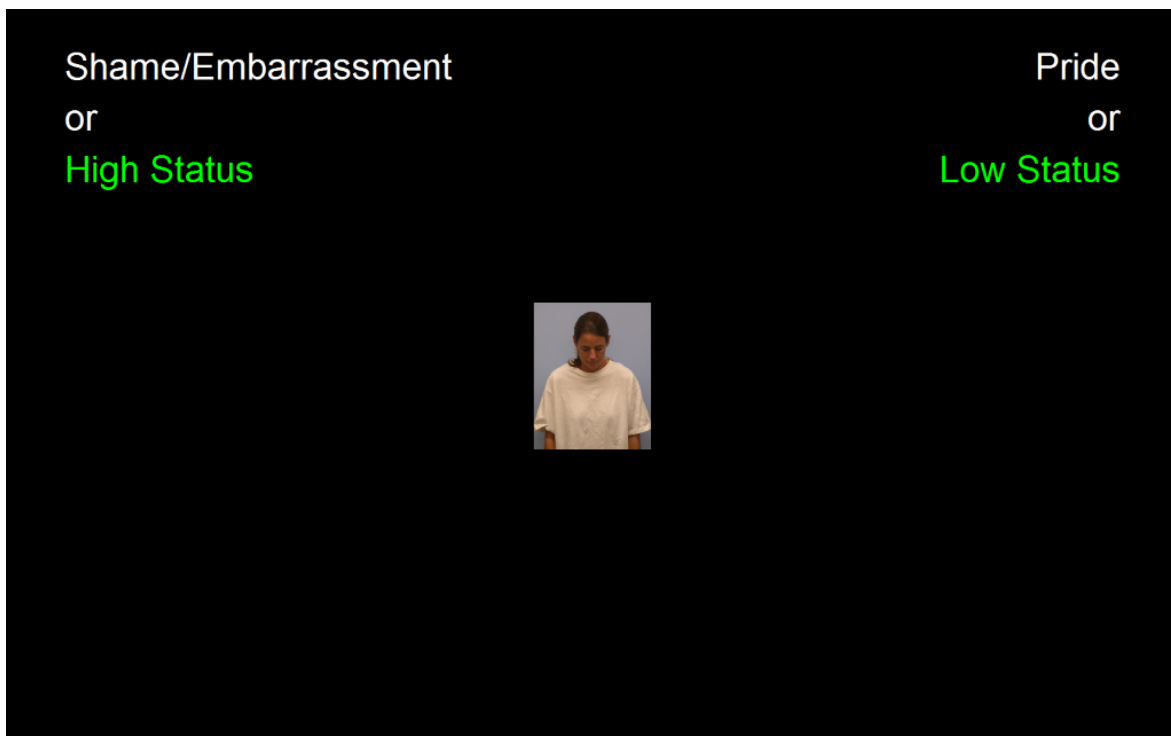
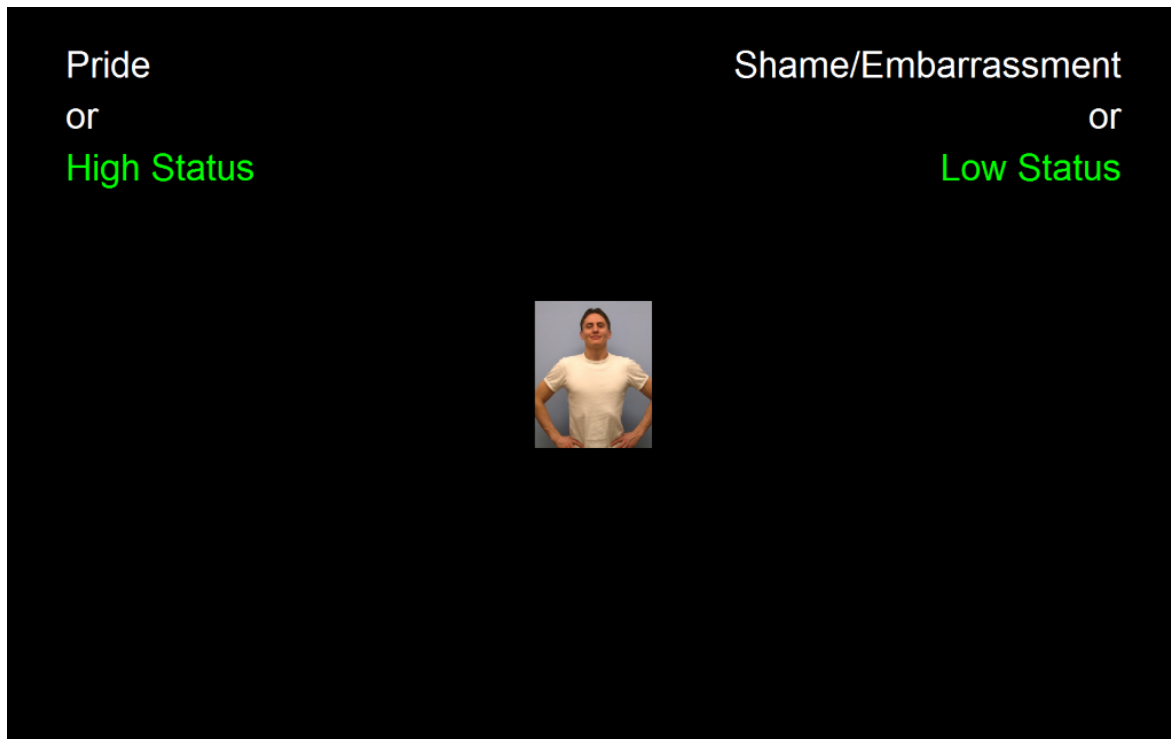


Female Shame/Embarrassment Photos:



## Appendix B

Examples of IAT screen (congruent test and incongruent test respectively):



## References

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