

**The relation between socio-economic status and societal discontent, and the
mediating role of negative meta-stereotyping**

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Abstract

The aim of this research was to investigate the extent to which subjective socio-economic status, as well as income and education, as facets of objective socio-economic status predicted societal discontent, and whether this relationship was mediated by status related negative meta-stereotyping. For this purpose, data of 467 American participants was collected. It was found that individuals with lower subjective and objective socio-economic status show increased levels of societal discontent. Also, the results showed that individuals with a lower subjective socio-economic status, as well as lower income expected to be stereotyped more negatively, in comparison to individuals with a higher subjective socio-economic status and income, who expected to be stereotyped more positively. This indicated that individuals with a lower socio-economic status use comparatively more status-related negative meta-stereotyping. However, this was not the case with level of education as a predictor. Further, it was found, that the relation between socio-economic status and societal discontent was mediated by low status negative meta-stereotyping. This was also not the case with level of education as the predictor, wherefore the hypothesis was partially accepted. The present research replicated previous findings regarding the negative relationship between socio-economic status and societal discontent. In addition, previous research was extended by establishing the mediating effect of status related negative meta-stereotyping within the relation between socio-economic status and societal discontent. These findings provide implications on how low status individuals expect to be stereotyped negatively due to their low status, and how it in turn negatively affects their assessment of their surrounding society.

Keywords: subjective socio-economic status, objective socio-economic status, meta-stereotyping, societal discontent

The relation between socio-economic status and societal discontent, and the mediating role of negative meta-stereotyping

Many people perceive certain aspects of their surrounding society as problematic, like, for example a bad healthcare system, a lack of transparency in political decision making, economic inequality, racism, shortcomings in education, and others. All these notions can be considered symptomatic of a general dissatisfaction and unease directed towards ones surrounding society, or in other words of societal discontent (Gootjes et al., 2021). In all its different facets, this phenomenon constantly gathers a lot of public attention and is a matter of scientific, as well as political discourse (RMO, 2013, Mellink et al., 2014). For example, a recent study by the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (Geurkink, & Miltenburg, 2023) assessed differences in societal unease in the Netherlands. They found that around 60% of Dutch citizens reported dissatisfaction with society.

Nonetheless, it appears that this general perception of societal pessimism or dissatisfaction varies strongly between certain groups. For example, someone who benefits, or at least perceives to benefit strongly from their surrounding society by having a well-paid job or a sufficient inclusion in social structures, may perceive their surrounding society far more positive, than someone who is not. So, people with a lower socio-economic status may feel comparatively more dissatisfied with surrounding societal structures, since these might be experienced as unequal, or personally unbeneficial. This assumed relation between low socio-economic status and high societal discontent is the main foundation for the present research. While this rationale is backed up by previous research (e.g., Bornand, & Klein, 2022; Geurkink, & Miltenburg, 2023; Van der Bles, Postmes, LeKander-Kanis, & Otjes, 2018), it is not yet clear why this is the case. There are many potential explanations for this relationship, such as, for example, low status individuals' increased perceptions of unequal

treatment in comparison to others, prevalent healthcare risks, perceptions of social exclusion, financial disadvantages, and others.

The present research explores an alternative explanation for the relationship between socio-economic status and societal discontent based on the role of stereotyping. People with differing socio-economic statuses can be seen as different groups, that hold corresponding stereotypes about each other. For example, someone with a higher socio-economic status may think about someone with a low status as lazy or uneducated. However, members of these stereotyped groups have an impression of how they are stereotyped. This phenomenon is called meta-stereotyping (Vorauer et al, 1998). Meta-stereotypes have been found to influence how people feel, think, and react (e.g., Issmer, Stellmacher, & Gollwitzer, 2013; Owuamalam, Tarrant, Farrow, & Zagefka, 2013; Sigelman & Tuch, 1997; Vorauer, Main, & O'Connell, 1998). Generally speaking, what you think others think of you is likely to influence how you feel and how you perceive your surroundings. We believe that people with a lower socio-economic background believe that they are negatively perceived by others in society, which may increase their discontent about society. In the present research we therefore aimed to examine the role of such negative meta-stereotypes in the relationship between socio-economic status and societal discontent.

Causes and consequences of societal discontent

Members of a society often possess a certain amount of dissatisfaction with different features, structures, or mechanisms of the society in which they exist, and with which they interact, for example in an economic, social, environmental, or even cultural sense. In current public discourse this widespread discontent further appears to be a polarizing subject of concern, as it has wide-reaching implications for everyone, as far as they are somehow integrated in societal structures (Mellink et al. 2014). This unease towards society as a whole can have a multitude of reasons and an equally infinite number of potential consequences.

Steenhoven (2015) calls this phenomenon of generalized societal dissatisfaction “societal unease”. According to her, societal unease may include dissatisfaction with society’s functioning in general, decreased trust in political leadership, or the general impression that societal norms change or decrease in value. While societal unease appears to be a public matter of concern, previous research seems to have mainly focused on more specific attitudes rather than considering the general outlook on society as a distinguishable and unidimensional measure (Steenhoven, 2015).

A conceptual framework for general societal dissatisfaction is crucial in understanding factors for its emergence and persistence. More specifically, according to Gootjes, Kuppens, Postmes, and Gordijn (2021), measures of certain attitudes regarding societal dissatisfaction, like decreased political trust (van der Meer & Hakhverdian, 2016), perception of societal decline (Elchardus & Spruyt, 2016), societal pessimism (Steenhoven, 2015), perception of fragile leaderships and the eroding of social fabric (Teymoori et al., 2016), and overestimation of prevalence of societal issues (van der Bles et al., 2015), are highly correlated with each other. Therefore, these interdependent concepts appear to not merely stem from personal circumstance, but rather emerge from “discontent with the societal collective” (Gootjes, et al., 2021, p. 2). Concludingly, Gootjes, et al. (2021) propose the existence of an underlying unidimensional variable, which is labelled societal discontent. It is subsequently defined as: “the feeling or belief that society, at large, is in a state of decline and is poorly functioning” (Gootjes, et al., 2021, p. 2).

Societal discontent may have some potentially negative consequences. Considering that a certain amount of interaction with society is inevitable to everyone, combined with the rather negative attitudes related to the content of societal discontent, it becomes logically apparent that some individuals with heightened societal discontent aim to change their condition of having to live in a society with which they are dissatisfied, by for example

developing a more polarized political affiliation and engaging in corresponding voting behavior (van der Bles et al., 2017; van der Meer & Hakhverdian, 2016), and anti-government action (Gootjes, et al., 2021). Another potential consequence of societal discontent may be a significantly increased sensitivity to the negative outcomes of societal shortcomings like economic inequality, crime, and corruption (van der Bles et al., 2015), which can potentially lead to decreased feelings of well-being and safety.

There are certain societal groups which are hypothesized to be more susceptible to experiencing societal discontent than others. For example, individuals who experience social exclusion, or who perceive their surrounding societal structures as personally unbeneficial or have a comparatively low income and level of education, are expected to assess their surrounding societal structures as comparatively more negative (Bornand, & Klein, 2022; Van der Bles, Postmes, LeKander-Kanis, & Otjes, 2018). More specifically, the possession of a rather low socio-economic status appears to be related to increased levels of societal discontent.

The relation between socio-economic status and societal discontent

According to Lipset (1960), a lower socio-economic status is often characterized by a lack of economical and psychological security, as well as unemployment and increased fluctuations in total income. Socio-economic status can be described objectively as well as subjectively. Firstly, a general assessment of socio-economic status is based on the specific amount of income, grade of education, and type of occupation one has. There are different national as well as international socio-economic classification systems which provide a framework for classifying certain socio-economic statuses according to their characteristics in terms of income, education, and occupation, like, for example, the European ESeG. Secondly, socio-economic status can be assessed subjectively, by means of individual comparison to other members of a group or society (Adler et al., 2000). In order to get a

sufficient impression of one's socio-economic status, utilizing objective as well as subjective measures thereof appears the most feasible.

The current research aims to examine whether socio-economic status also predicts societal discontent. The previously defined phenomenon of societal discontent is hypothesized to be experienced differently in terms of its severeness and general nature by members of different socio-economic classes. More specifically, previous research partly established that individuals with a lower socio-economic status assess their surrounding society more negatively, in comparison to individuals with a relatively higher socio-economic status (Bornand, & Klein, 2022; Van der Bles, Postmes, LeKander-Kanis, & Otjes, 2018). Generally, the reasons for heightened societal discontent in individuals from a lower socio-economic class might be equally multifaceted and deeply rooted as the concepts themselves. A general assumption for heightened societal discontent in individuals with low socio-economic status may be that present societal structures and institutions are perceived as benefiting other individuals with a higher status more than themselves, while "belonging to a group of people that is unfairly treated by society" (Elchardus & Spruyt, 2016). For example, according to Van der Bles et Al., (2018), lower levels in education as a facet of socio-economic status are associated with a rather pessimistic impression of the course of society and a negative zeitgeist, as also described in the present conceptualization of societal discontent (Gootjes, Kuppens, Postmes, & Gordijn, 2021). Bornand and Klein (2022) additionally state that lower socio-economic status is strongly related to lower political trust, due to lower socialization in regard to political functioning. Nonetheless, they additionally argue, that: "lower socio-economic status enhances the perception that the social fabric is breaking down (anomie), which reduces political trust" (Bornand, & Klein, 2022). Concludingly, socio-economic status appears to be related to the different constitutes of

societal discontent. One potential reason for this relationship could be that people with a lower socio-economic status expect to be perceived negatively by other members of society.

The mediating role of Meta-stereotypes

One's socio-economic status can be part of one's social identity, which subsequently leads to the classification of other individuals with a different status as the outgroup while perceiving individuals from the same socio-economic background as the ingroup (Destin, Rheinschmidt-Same, & Richeson, 2017; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This distinction between 'them' and 'us' is typically accompanied by a set of stereotypes which are applied on the opposing outgroup as a necessity for predicting their emotions, intentions, and possible actions (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

In order to predict the emotional states, intentions, and possible actions of members of the outgroup towards the ingroup, one may additionally think about which stereotypes the relevant outgroup potentially applies on members of one's ingroup. This process is conceptualized as meta-stereotyping (Sigelman & Tuch, 1997; Vorauer, Main, & O'Connell, 1998). It encompasses the assessment of potential stereotypes held by the outgroup about oneself as a member of the ingroup. Previous research assumes that meta-stereotyping is a major determinant for one's own cognitions, behaviors, and emotions relating to the outgroup (Vorauer, Main, & O'Connell, 1998). Vorauer, Main, and O'Connell (1998) further state that when people utilize meta-stereotypes, they are increasingly inclined to consider whether they actually possess assumed stereotypes. It is further stated that this can subsequently lead to behavioral and affective adaption towards the experienced stereotype, and lead to the emergence of corresponding intergroup attitudes (Issmer, Stellmacher, & Gollwitzer, 2013; Owuamalam, Tarrant, Farrow, & Zagefka, 2013).

As there are positive stereotypes, which assign certain qualities or skills to members of a specific group, and negative stereotypes, which assume weaknesses or discredit qualities

of members of a group, this is also comparably inherent in meta-stereotypes. More specifically, a negative meta-stereotype describes one's perception of the outgroup as holding a negative stereotype about oneself as member of the ingroup (Vorauer, 1998). Vorauer, (1998) additionally implicates that meta-stereotypes in general often have a rather negative, than positive content. Previous research found that negative meta-stereotypes facilitate a variety of negative outcomes, like decreased self-esteem (Gordijn, 2010) and a decrease in self-concept clarity (Vorauer, Main, & O'Connell, 1998). Furthermore, it has been found that negative meta-stereotyping increases subjective feelings of anxiousness (Finchilescu, 2010), as well as a desire to distance oneself from the outgroup to which the negative meta-stereotypes are related (Kamans et al., 2009). Concludingly, negative meta-stereotypes are potentially responsible for decreases in well-being, increased intergroup tensions, reduced intergroup contact, and act as a precursor for intergroup conflict.

Especially individuals with a low socio-economic status appear to be susceptible to use meta-stereotyping. That is, according to Lammers et al. (2008), meta-stereotypes are more likely to be activated by individuals who feel comparatively more powerless. Individuals with a lower socio-economic status, and therefore a lower power position within society, have to be increasingly aware of how higher power groups perceive them, which makes them more susceptible to activate meta-stereotypes regarding their status. Given that these stereotypes are likely to be negative, this may subsequently facilitate negative outcomes. For example, according to the stereotype-content model (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2008), individuals with a low socio-economic status are increasingly confronted with the stereotype content of being incompetent. As a consequence of that, low SES individuals may be inclined to perceive themselves in accordance with the corresponding stereotype content (Vorauer, 1998). More specifically, low SES individuals may perceive themselves as incompetent because they expect to be stereotyped in that way.

Low socio-economic status individuals' perceptions of societal discontent are potentially reinforced by activated meta-stereotypes which prescribe negative qualities to their ingroup. More specifically, this assumed disapproval and ascription of negative qualities of the in-group of low status individuals by their surrounding society is hypothesized to reinforce their existing beliefs regarding societies' negative treatment of them, which in turn reinforces their perceptions of societal discontent as caused by their low socio-economic status. We assume, that negative meta-stereotypes increase low status individuals' perception of their 'distance' to society, while accentuating the rather unbeneficial nature it has for them. Following this rationale, the current research examines whether negative meta-stereotyping regarding ones' socio-economic mediates the relationship between socio-economic status and societal discontent.

Current Study

The present research aims to examine the relationship between socio-economic status and societal discontent, as well as the potential mediational role of negative meta-stereotyping within this relationship. The corresponding research question is: *To what extent is the relationship between socio-economic status and societal discontent mediated by the extent of negative meta-stereotyping regarding one's socio-economic status?*

This research firstly aims to replicate the previously discussed findings regarding the negative relationship between socio-economic status and societal discontent. It is expected that individuals with lower socio-economic status display comparatively higher societal discontent than individuals with a high socio-economic status (*hypothesis 1*). Secondly, it is expected, that individuals with lower socio-economic status apply more negative meta-stereotypes than individuals with a rather high socio-economic status (*hypothesis 2*). Thirdly, the present study examines whether the relationship between socio-economic status and societal discontent is mediated by negative meta-stereotyping (*hypothesis 3*). These

hypotheses are examined by means of an online survey, which was administered with American participants. Furthermore, socio-economic status was assessed as an objective measure (i.e., educational level and income), as well as a subjective measure.

Method

Participants and design

In order to determine the sample-size for investigating the indirect effects as described in hypothesis 3, a power analysis with a desired power estimate of .80 and correlations of minimum .25 was conducted. This resulted in a desired sample size N of 222. The final dataset included 478 American participants, who were recruited via the online service Prolific.com¹. The participants of the study did receive 1.35 dollar for their participation. Furthermore, the study was preregistered via https://aspredicted.org/8BM_QHD.

Participants were only able to take part in the study if they were American citizens of 18 years and older. The preregistered exclusion criteria were failing at least two of the three attention checks ($N=1$), showing response bias ($N=2$), not completing at least 50% of items measuring the dependent variable ($N=6$), and completing the questionnaire in less than two minutes ($N=2$). Concludingly, 11 participants were excluded, which led to a final sample size of $N= 467$. The final sample consisted of 52.5% male, 46% female, and 1.5% non-binary/diverse participants. The mean age of participants was 40 years, with a range from 19 to 79 years. In terms of ethnic backgrounds, around 80% of the participants indicated to be white, 6.9% black, 4.9% Asian, 4.3% Hispanic, 3% multiracial, as well as under 1% native Americans. Furthermore, 70% of participants indicated to currently be in paid work, and 8.6% was currently unemployed.

¹ Previously, the plan was to recruit participants via the online service Amazon Mechanical Turk, but the set maximum completion time of the provided questionnaire was (accidentally) set extremely short. These accidental time constraints resulted in extremely low-quality data, wherefore data-collection was administered a second time, this time using Prolific.

The present study utilizes a correlational quantitative design, in which socio-economic status is the predictor, negative meta-stereotyping is the mediator, and societal discontent is the dependent variable.

Procedure

Prior to data collection, the present study was approved by the ethics committee of the Faculty of Behavioral and Social Sciences of the University of Groningen. The final study was created and conducted via the program Qualtrics, while the link to the study was published on Prolific.com. Firstly, participants received basic information about the study. This was followed by an informed consent form, providing the possibility to agree or disagree to participate in data-collection. Secondly, participants were asked to indicate their demographics, which included age, gender, nationality, and ethnicity. Thirdly, the participants were asked to fill in the provided questionnaires, which are described in more depth below. Additionally, there were three attention checks included in order to detect participants who were not attentive to the provided questionnaires. These attention checks were also labelled as such within the questionnaire (e.g., *“To check if you are still paying attention, how much is five plus three”*, or *“Please select 2, this is an attention check”*). The present study is part of a larger project wherefore there were also other measures administered. The entire questionnaire is reported in the Appendix A. Lastly, after completion of the questionnaire, participants were debriefed, given the opportunity to write down comments, and being thanked for their participation.

Measures

Objective socio-economic status

Objective socio-economic status was measured by means of three multiple-choice questions. Firstly, participants were asked to indicate their highest level of education out of 11 options, ranging from (lowest; *“no diploma or degree or certificate/I did not finish any*

degree” to highest; “*doctorate*”); $M = 4.34$, $SD = 2.12$. Therein, 37% of participants indicated that their highest educational level was a bachelor’s degree, while 30% of participants indicated to have a high school diploma. Secondly, the participants were asked to indicate their current level of monthly income out of 7 options, ranging from (lowest; “ $< \$500$ ”, to highest; “ $> \$4000$ ”); $M = 4.43$, $SD = 2.17$. Therein, 16% of participants indicated to currently earn less than 500\$ per month, while 25% of participants indicated to currently have an income of more than 4000\$ per month. Thirdly, the participants were asked to indicate the best description of what they have been doing the past four weeks, with options ranging from (“*In paid work*” to “*Other (please specify)*”); 70% of participants were in paid work, 8,6% unemployed, 6,4% retired, 6,4% doing housework, 3,2% permanently sick or disabled, 2,8% in education, and 2,6% other. Nonetheless, this variable is not included in the subsequent analyses since its direct implications as a predictor variable, accounting for high and low objective socio-economic status, are rather limited. More specifically, as someone for example indicates to be in paid work, it is still not directly apparent whether this person has a rather high or low socio-economic status.

Subjective socio-economic status

In order to investigate subjective socio-economic status, the “Mac Arthur Scale of Subjective Social Status” (Adler et al., 2000) was utilized and slightly adapted. This scale depicts a ladder with ten different levels, which correspond to differing socio-economic statuses in American society, ranging from (1; “*Extremely low position on the ladder*”) to (10; “*Extremely high position on the ladder*”). Individuals who are at the highest position of the ladder are described as “the people that have the most money, the highest degree of schooling, the best jobs, and the most respect”, while individuals on the lowest level of the ladder are described as “the people who have the least money, little or no education, no jobs or jobs that no one wants and the least respect”. The participants firstly indicated their own

relative position on the ladder. Secondly, they indicated their family's relative position on the ladder. Thirdly, participants estimated what their relative position on the ladder will be in 5 years from now. The three variables were subsequently combined into a new scale accounting for subjective socio-economic status: $M = 5.35$, $SD = 1.63$, Cronbach's alpha = .87.

Societal discontent

In order to measure societal discontent, the "Negative emotions about society" scale by Gootjes et al., (2021) was utilized. This scale consists of 4 items, with a respective 7-point Likert scale, ranging from (1; *absolutely disagree* to 7; *absolutely agree*). Example items include: "I feel concerned when I think about the future of society", and "I am frustrated because society is not as it should be". All corresponding items were subsequently combined into one scale to account for societal discontent: $M = 5.43$, $SD = 1.33$, Cronbach's alpha = .88.

Meta-stereotyping

In order to assess the rather positive or negative content of meta-stereotypes possessed regarding one's socio-economic status, two scales with 3 respective items on a 7-Point Likert scale, ranging from (1; *absolutely disagree* to 7; *absolutely agree*), are utilized. Both scales are based on the stereotype-content model by Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick (2008), by utilizing the dimensions of competence, warmth, and morality as they "underlie and differentiate group stereotypes" and are described as "universal dimensions of social judgement" (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2008, p. 68, p. 138). The first scale assessed the content of stereotypes which are directed towards individuals with a low socio-economic status: "*In general, I expect that people with a **higher** socio-economic background think that people with a **lower** socio-economic background are: 1. Competent, 2. Kind, 3. Trustworthy*". Therefore, if someone previously indicated to have a rather low socio-economic status, this question measures meta-stereotype content, while it assesses 'regular' stereotype content as applied by higher status

individuals towards lower status individuals. Therefore, a low score on this scale indicates negative meta-stereotype content, while a higher score indicates more positive meta-stereotype content by individuals with a lower socio-economic status. The three items were subsequently combined in one scale: $M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.36$, Cronbach's alpha = .91. The second measure: *"In general, I expect that people with a **lower** socio-economic background think that people with a **higher** socio-economic background are: 1. Competent, 2. Kind, 3. Trustworthy"*, correspondingly assesses meta-stereotype content of higher status individuals, while measuring regular stereotyping as exhibited from lower status individuals. Similarly, a low score would reflect negative meta-stereotyping, and a high score would reflect positive meta-stereotyping of high-status individuals. These items were combined in a scale as well: $M = 3.76$, $SD = 1.19$, Cronbach's Alpha = .76.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 depicts the overview of correlations between all measurements. Most of the correlations between variables were as expected. The correlations between the different indicators of SES were significant, and moderate. The correlations between the different indicators of SES and societal discontent were negative, significant, and small. In other words, people with higher SES experience less societal discontent, and vice versa. Correlations between both low-, as well as high status related stereotyping and subjective socio-economic status were significant, positive, and small, which indicates that people with a lower subjective SES hold more negative stereotypes about higher, as well as lower status individuals. This is also in line with the expectation, that individuals with a low subjective SES hold more negative meta-stereotypes than individuals with a high subjective SES. Income also showed a significant, small correlation with low-, and high-status related stereotyping. However, the correlation between level of education and low-, as well as high

status related stereotyping was not found significant (see table 1). Societal discontent showed a significant, and small negative correlation with low-, and high-status related stereotyping. This implies that individuals who hold more high- and low status related negative stereotypes possess increased societal discontent. Additionally, low status related stereotyping and high-status related stereotyping were significantly, and strongly correlated with each other. Concludingly, there is correlational evidence for the interrelations between subjective SES, income as a form of objective SES, high-, as well as low status related meta-stereotyping, and societal discontent, as expected. The only unexpected finding was that education as a form of objective SES appears to not be correlated with measures for high-, and low status related meta-stereotyping. See table 1.

Table 1

Correlations between variables

	Subjective SES	Level of education	Monthly income	Societal discontent	Stereotyping (Low SES)	Stereotyping (High SES)
Subjective SES	-					
Level of Education	.426**	-				
Monthly income	.470**	.419**	-			
Societal discontent	-.182**	-.180**	.156**	-		
Stereotyping (Low SES)	.285**	.062	.171**	-.262**	-	
Stereotyping (High SES)	.148**	.071	.111**	-.199**	.577**	-

Main Analyses

For examination of the described hypotheses, linear regression analyses, as well as PROCESS model 4 (Hayes, 2017) analyses were conducted to investigate the direct relationship between variables, as well as to investigate mediation effects.

Hypothesis 1: Regarding the first hypothesis, it was expected, that individuals with a lower socio-economic status show higher levels of societal discontent than individuals with a higher socio-economic status (*Hypothesis 1*). In order to investigate the relationship between socio-economic status and societal discontent, linear regression analyses were run with SES as the independent variable and societal discontent as the dependent variable. This hypothesis was tested separately with subjective socio-economic status, education, and income as predictors.

Subjective socio-economic status and societal discontent: The overall model was found significant. $R^2 = .033$, $F(1, 465) = 15.885$, $p < .001$. It was found that subjective socio-economic status has a significant negative relation with societal discontent ($B = -.148$, 95% CI $[-.221, -.075]$ $t = -3.986$, $p < .001$). This indicates that individuals with a lower subjective socio-economic status experience more societal discontent than individuals with a higher subjective socio-economic status.

Level of education and societal discontent: The overall model was significant. $R^2 = .032$, $F(1, 465) = 15.591$, $p < .001$. Level of education has a significant negative relation with societal discontent ($B = -.113$, 95% CI $[-.169, -.057]$ $t = -3.949$, $p < .001$), which implies, that individuals with a lower level of education experience more societal discontent than those with higher levels of education.

Income and societal discontent: The overall model was found significant, $R^2 = .024$, $F(1, 465) = 11.587$, $p < .001$. The amount of income has a significant negative relation with societal discontent ($B = -.096$, 95% CI $[-.151, -.040]$ $t = -3.404$, $p < .001$). Therefore, it is

implicated that individuals with comparatively lower income display increased societal discontent, as relative to individuals with a higher income.

Concludingly, in line with hypothesis 1, it was found that individuals with a lower subjective, as well as objective socio-economic status (education and income), display comparatively higher amounts of societal discontent than individuals with a higher socio-economic status.

Hypothesis 2: Regarding the second hypothesis, it was expected that individuals with a lower socio-economic status exhibit more status related negative meta-stereotyping than individuals with a higher socio-economic status (*Hypothesis 2*). A meta-stereotype describes the expectation to be stereotyped a certain way. This means, that status related stereotypes about individuals with a low SES are regular stereotypes when applied by high SES individuals, and meta-stereotypes when applied by SES individuals. Correspondingly, status related stereotypes about high SES individuals, are regular stereotypes for low SES individuals, and meta-stereotypes for high SES individuals.

In order to test the second hypothesis, separate linear regression analyses were conducted, in which subjective and objective (education, income) socio-economic status were predictors, while low status related negative stereotyping and high status related negative stereotyping were the dependent variables. To predict status related negative meta-stereotyping based on subjective socio-economic status, linear regression analyses were conducted with respect to stereotyping of lower and higher SES groups.

Subjective socio-economic status and low-, and high status related negative stereotyping: The first model tested whether subjective socio-economic status is related to negative stereotyping about lower SES groups. The model was significant, $R^2 = .081$, $F(1, 465) = 41.196$, $p < .001$. Compared to individuals with a higher subjective socio-economic status, individuals with a lower subjective socio-economic status believe that lower SES

groups are stereotyped more *negatively* ($B = .238$, 95% CI [.165, .311] $t = 6.418$, $p < .001$), indicating evidence of negative meta-stereotyping as exhibited by individuals with a lower subjective socio-economic status.

Next to that, to investigate the relationship between subjective socio-economic status and high status related negative stereotyping, a linear regression analysis was conducted as well. The corresponding model was significant, $R^2 = .022$, $F(1, 465) = 10.415$, $p < .001$. Compared to individuals with a lower subjective socio-economic status, individuals with a higher subjective socio-economic status believe that higher SES groups are stereotyped more *positively* ($B = .108$, 95% CI [.042, .174] $t = 3.227$, $p < .001$). This indicates positive meta-stereotyping by individuals with a higher subjective socio-economic status.

Education and low-, and high status related negative stereotyping: To assess the relationship between education and low-, and high status related negative meta-stereotyping similar analyses were conducted, including educational level as a predictor. However, with respect to stereotyping of both, low SES groups and high SES groups, the model was not found significant in subsequent analyses, with $R^2 = .004$, $F(1, 465) = 1.776$, $p = .183$, for low SES negative stereotypes, and $R^2 = .005$, $F(1, 465) = 2.345$, $p = .126$, for high SES negative stereotypes. Therefore, the effect of educational level on negative status-related meta-stereotyping is not significant within the present model. The effect of educational level as a facet of objective socio-economic on meta-stereotyping could therefore not be supported.

Income and low status related negative meta-stereotyping: This model tested whether amount of income is related to negative stereotyping about lower SES groups. The model was significant, $R^2 = .029$, $F(1, 465) = 13.997$, $p < .001$. Compared to individuals with a higher income, individuals with a lower income believe that lower SES groups are stereotyped more negatively ($B = .107$, 95% CI [.051, .163] $t = 3.739$, $p < .001$), which indicates negative meta-stereotyping as exhibited by individuals with a lower income.

Furthermore, a model regarding the relationship between income and negative stereotyping about high SES groups was found significant as well $R^2 = .012$, $F(1, 465) = 5.741$, $p = .017$. Compared to individuals with a lower income, individuals with a higher income believe that higher SES groups are stereotyped more *positively* ($B = .061$, 95% CI [.011, .111] $t = 2.396$, $p = .017$). This indicates positive meta-stereotyping by individuals with a higher income.

Concludingly, it was expected that individuals with a low socio-economic status possess rather negative meta-stereotype content regarding their status, in comparison to individuals with a higher socio-economic status (*Hypothesis 2*). In support of the hypothesis, lower status individuals indeed use more negative meta-stereotypes than higher status individuals, but only with respect to subjective SES and income level. Therefore, hypothesis 2 is partially accepted.

Hypothesis 3: It was expected that negative meta-stereotyping mediates the relationship between socio-economic status and societal discontent (*Hypothesis 3*). In order to test this hypothesis, Hayes PROCESS model 4 (Hayes, 2017) was utilized to examine mediation effects. In this model, the predictor X was socio-economic status, the dependent variable Y was societal discontent, and the mediators M were negative stereotypes about low and high SES groups. This analysis was run separately with subjective socio-economic status, education, and income as predictors.

Subjective socio-economic status as predictor: Firstly, a mediation analysis including subjective socio-economic status as the predictor, societal discontent as the dependent variable, and low-, and high-status related stereotyping as the mediators was conducted. The results revealed a significant indirect effect of subjective socio-economic status on societal discontent through low status related negative stereotyping ($B = -.0431$, LLCI = $-.0726$, ULCI = $-.0174$), but not through high status related negative stereotyping ($B = -.0090$, LLCI = -

.0260, ULCI = .0034). The direct effect of subjective socio-economic status on societal discontent was found significant ($B = -.0962$, $t = -2.5401$, $p = .0114$), while the total effect was significant as well ($B = -.1483$, $t = -3.9856$, $p > 0.001$). This indicates that the relationship between subjective socio-economic status and societal discontent is partially mediated by the expectation that low SES groups are stereotyped more negatively by higher status individuals, but not by the expectation that high SES groups are stereotyped more negatively by low SES groups. This suggests that individuals with a lower subjective SES perceive low SES groups as being stereotyped more negatively. This is indicative of negative meta-stereotyping by individuals with a low subjective SES, which subsequently predicts increased societal discontent.

Education as a predictor: Secondly, a mediation analysis was conducted, including education as the predictor, societal discontent as the dependent variable, and low-, and high-status related stereotyping as the mediators. The direct effect ($B = -.1018$, $t = -3.6684$, $p = .0003$), as well as the total effect ($B = -.1129$, $t = -3.9486$, $p > 0.001$), were significant. However, the indirect effect of education on societal discontent through low status related negative stereotyping was not significant ($B = -.0083$, LLCI = $-.0237$, ULCI = $.0040$), while the effect of education on societal discontent through high status-related negative stereotyping was also not significant ($B = -.0028$, LLCI = $-.0113$, ULCI = $.0019$). Correspondingly, this suggests that the relationship between level of education and societal discontent was not mediated by expectations regarding status-related stereotyping of higher-, and lower SES groups.

Income as a predictor: Thirdly, a mediation analysis was conducted, including income as the predictor, societal discontent as the dependent variable, and low-, and high status related negative stereotyping as the mediators. The results showed a significant indirect effect of income on societal discontent through low status related negative stereotyping ($B = -$

.0231, LLCI = -.0390, ULCI = -.0080), but not through high status related negative stereotyping ($B = -.0047$, LLCI = -.0148, ULCI = .0022). The direct effect of income on societal discontent was found significant ($B = -.0695$, $t = -2.5141$, $p = .0123$), while the total effect was significant as well ($B = -.0956$, $t = -3.4039$, $p = .0007$). This indicates that the relationship between income and societal discontent is partially mediated by the expectation, that low SES groups are stereotyped more negatively by higher status individuals, but not by the expectation, that high SES groups are stereotyped more negatively by low SES groups. These findings correspondingly indicate that individuals with a lower income think that low SES groups are being stereotyped more negatively. Correspondingly, this indicates negative meta-stereotyping of individuals with a lower income, which also relates to increased societal discontent.

Concludingly, it was expected that the relationship between socio-economic status and societal discontent is mediated by status dependent negative meta-stereotyping (*Hypothesis 3*). Indeed, low status related stereotypes mediated the relationship between both subjective socio-economic status, as well as income as a facet of objective socio-economic status and societal discontent. This indicates that individuals with a lower subjective socio-economic status or a lower income expect that lower SES groups are more negatively stereotyped by higher SES groups, which is indicative of status-related negative meta-stereotyping, and subsequently increases their societal discontent. However, this was not found for the relationship between educational level and societal discontent, suggesting partial evidence for hypothesis 3.

Discussion

The present research examined the mediating role of negative status related meta-stereotyping in the relationship between socio-economic status and societal discontent, by means of a cross-sectional study including American participants. In line with hypothesis 1, it was found that a lower subjective socio-economic status, as well as a lower level of income and education as indicators for objective socio-economic status are related to increases in societal discontent, in comparison to a higher subjective, as well as objective socio-economic status. Note that the effect of subjective socio-economic status on societal discontent was comparatively larger than the effect of education or income on societal discontent.

According to hypothesis 2 it was expected that individuals with a low socio-economic status hold rather negative meta-stereotypes regarding their status, in comparison to individuals with a higher socio-economic status. Indeed, we found that individuals with a comparatively low subjective socio-economic status or income expected that low SES groups are stereotyped more *negatively*, while individuals with high subjective socio-economic status, or income expected that high SES groups are stereotyped rather *positively*. However, education did not predict the expectation to be stereotyped rather positively or negatively. This suggests that individuals with a lower socio-economic status hold more negative meta-stereotypes than higher status individuals, but only with regards to subjective socio-economic status and income level. So, hypothesis 2 is partially accepted.

According to Hypothesis 3, the relationship between socio-economic status and societal discontent was expected to be mediated by status-related negative meta-stereotyping. In line with this, we found that individuals with a lower subjective socio-economic status, or lower income expected that lower SES groups are more negatively stereotyped than higher SES groups, which predicted more societal discontent. However, this was not the case for educational level as a predictor. Concludingly, hypothesis 3 is partially accepted.

Overall, a lower subjective socio-economic status, educational level, or income predicted more societal discontent. A lower subjective socio-economic status, as well as lower income predicted more negative status-related meta-stereotyping, while a higher subjective socio-economic status, or income predicted more positive meta-stereotyping. However, in both cases this was not found in regard to level of education. A relatively lower income or subjective socio-economic status predicts more negative meta-stereotyping, which subsequently increases the experience of societal discontent.

Theoretical Implications

The present research established, that a lower subjective socio-economic status, as well as lower levels of income and education are related to increased societal discontent. This adds to findings by Bornand, and Klein (2022), who state that a low socio-economic status enhances the perception of anomie, which subsequently reduces political trust. In the present study, political trust is conceptualized as a facet of societal discontent (Gootjes, Kuppens, Postmes, & Gordijn, 2021), while increased societal discontent is related to lower political trust (Bornand, & Klein, 2022). Due to the similarities between the concepts of societal discontent and political trust, the present research partially replicates, and extends findings by Bornand, and Klein (2022).

Low levels of income and education as facets of objective socio-economic status have historically been linked to increased levels of societal discontent (e.g., Strümpel, 1974). Bornand, and Klein (2022) also assessed socio-economic status in terms of level of income and education. However, the present research adds to that by also measuring subjective socio-economic status (Adler et al., 2000) in relation to societal discontent. Interestingly, it was found that the effect of subjective socio-economic status was comparatively stronger than the effect of income, and education on societal discontent, therefore extending findings of

previous research. According to the findings of the present research it may for example be likely, that low subjective socio-economic status is also related to reduced political trust.

As it was found that a lower socio-economic status is related to heightened societal discontent, low status individuals may be increasingly susceptible to the negative consequences of societal discontent. While interaction with societal structures, mechanisms, and institutions is inevitable to everyone who is part of that society, dissatisfaction with certain features thereof is often also equally inevitable, which may ultimately lead to the desire to overcome one's negative circumstances. More specifically, it is plausible that individuals with a low socio-economic status may be more susceptible to developing polarized political affiliations and engaging in corresponding voting behavior (van der Bles et al., 2017; van der Meer & Hakhverdian, 2016), while also being more prone to engage in anti-government action (Gootjes, et al., 2021), as a reaction to their experience of societal discontent. In line with that, Carpenter et al., (2019, p. 1) state: "Radical recent developments such as Brexit, the rise of extreme nationalism, the *gilets jaunes*, polarizing leaders, the Arab Spring, and fundamentalist movements are indications of societal discontent with the status quo". In other words, low status individuals with comparatively less power within society who feel like social fairness is violated, may perceive that they do not have the necessary channels to address their societal discontent more constructively, which potentially leads to more radical or novel forms of expression. This is in line with findings from Owuamalam et al. (2014), who implicate that the perceived extreme challenging of social fairness by the dominant outgroup, in this case high status groups, may lead to an increase in nonnormative expressions of the ingroup, in this case low status groups.

Societal discontent can be conceptualized in different ways. On the one hand, according to the Netherlands Institute for social research (Geurkink, & Miltenburg, 2023), policymakers tend to often focus on the rather negative consequences of societal discontent,

while fearing that it could put pressure on administrative functioning (Steur et al., 2017). On the other hand, according to the Netherlands Institute for social research (Geurkink, & Miltenburg, 2023 p.1), societal discontent “can also be a useful indicator and have a constructive democratic function”. So, societal discontent can be either seen as a factor that destabilizes societal and political functioning by enabling extreme expressions of concern, or it can be seen as an indicative factor, which drives societal progress and experimentation towards political and societal alternatives. Related to that, Carpenter et al., (2019, p. 1) state: “The emerging image is that of a society engaged in multifaceted experimentation. Maintaining such experimentation may help inspire novel pathways to desirable futures, but there is a risk of societies becoming trapped in backward-looking narratives that threaten long-term sustainable outcomes”. They further state that within current western societies, the amount of experimentation with transformative social innovations and radical political alternatives is steadily increasing, which is an indicator for instability of the status quo (Carpenter et al., 2019), and therefore increased societal discontent as a cause, as well as reaction to that.

Previous research established a variety of potential explanations for the relationship between low socio-economic status and increased societal discontent. These explanations include low status individuals’ perceptions of unbeneficial social structures and unequal treatment towards low-status groups (Elchardus & Spruyt, 2016), decreased trust in political leadership and lower socialization to political functioning within low-status groups (Bornand, & Klein, 2022), or a lack of basic economic security, and fluctuations in income (Lipset, 1960). However, prior research did not focus on the mediating role of status-related negative meta-stereotyping in the relationship between socio-economic status and societal discontent. Therefore, the current findings provide a rather new explanation for the phenomenon of

increased societal discontent in individuals with a low objective, and especially low subjective socio-economic status.

It was established that individuals with a low subjective socio-economic status and low income are more likely to believe they are negatively stereotyped, in comparison to high status individuals, who more often utilize meta-stereotypes with a rather positive content. Correspondingly, individuals with a low subjective and objective socio-economic status can be considered as individuals with comparatively less power within society. The present research is therefore in line with findings from Lammers et al. (2008), who state that negative meta-stereotypes are utilized more by individuals who feel increasingly powerless rather than individuals who are in higher power positions within society. Additionally, the expectation of low status individuals to be stereotyped negatively due to their socio-economic status also relates to the concept of perceived relative group worth (Owuamalam, & Zagefka, 2013). It describes perceptions of privilege which are directed towards the ingroup by society, as relative to the outgroup. In the case of low socioeconomic status groups, the perceived relative group worth may be perceived as very low, which also potentially increases societal discontent, as well as feelings of powerlessness (Lammers, et al., 2008).

The relationship between education as a facet of objective socio-economic status, and status-related negative meta-stereotyping was not established within the present research as expected. However, according to Noord et al., (2021), individuals with relatively lower educational level are more likely to experience misrecognition, which is related to the concept of negative meta-stereotyping. More specifically, misrecognition concerns “the extent to which people have the feeling that they do not play a meaningful role in society, that they possess a (stigmatized) identity that is looked down upon and feel less valued than other social groups” (Noord et al., 2021, p. 832). This appears to be closely linked to status-related negative meta-stereotyping as well, since it also relates to the expectation to be negatively

perceived or treated by others within society. So, while a lower educational level predicts feelings of misrecognition, it also might be indicative of status-related negative meta-stereotyping. However, we did not find this in the current research.

The main risk for negative meta-stereotypes as mediating the relationship between status and societal discontent could be that low socioeconomic status, and its side effects like decreased self-esteem (Gordijn, 2010), feelings of anxiousness (Finchilescu, 2010), decreased self-concept clarity (Vorauer, Main, & O'Connell, 1998), and perceived distance to the out-group of higher status individuals (Kamans et al., 2009), may maintain themselves by creating a negative belief system in accordance with one's negative meta-stereotypes (Vorauer, 1998). This subsequently holds potential to enhance and maintain the societal disequilibrium between high and low status groups, which may gradually foster societal discontent and polarization of social classes. Also, considering negative meta-stereotypical beliefs regarding one's socio-economic status as a determinant for societal discontent, should not discard other factors potentially fostering societal discontent within low status groups, such as structural inequality, financial shortcomings, healthcare risks, and social exclusion.

Practical Implications

The findings of the present research provide certain practical implications in terms of policies, and corresponding possibilities for intervention. From a broader perspective, societal discontent is predominantly framed as a reason for emerging extreme expressions, violence against the government and police, and polarized political affiliation, in public, as well as political discourse. However, conceptualizing societal discontent as an indicator for societal shortcomings provides the potential to increase democratic functioning if constructively addressed (Geurkink, & Miltenburg, 2023). Policymakers might increasingly use the narrative, that societal discontent is an outcome of structural shortcomings that low-status groups are regularly confronted with, rather than purely a reason for nonnormative

expressions. Thereby, it also is crucial that nonnormative expressions like actions against the government, or radical political orientations might be regarded as a form of communication.

From a more direct perspective, it might be useful for local decision makers to provide more alternative channels for low status groups to express discontent more frequently in rather controlled settings. This could be done for example in schools, or local communities, but also through short online questionnaires, to increase accessibility and ensure anonymity if needed. Thereby the specific content of societal discontent can be made salient, and subsequently communicated to local decision-makers collectively. This might provide lower status individuals with increased perceptions of social participation and control. The possibility for low-status individuals to express their discontent may also lead to a decrease in nonnormative expressions, such as actions against the government, and radical political affiliation. This subsequently holds potential to foster perceptions of social fairness and relative group worth within low status groups. However, this proposed practical implication is somewhat limited, since it demands a lot of time and interdisciplinary effort.

There are a lot of structural mechanisms that foster and accentuate disadvantages of low status groups within society, while a low socio-economic status is also debatably difficult to change by means of a practical intervention or policy. However, there is potential to reduce societal discontent within low status groups by targeting status-related negative meta-stereotypes, for example by means of an intervention aimed at perspective taking or increased intergroup contact. It may be useful to establish continuous structural programs and workshops around institutions like schools and social centers, which are organized locally. On an individual level, these programs might focus on personal empowerment and awareness to minimize negative meta-stereotypes and subsequent societal discontent, while enabling inclusion, to increase perceived group worth on a collective level.

Limitations and future research

Representativeness

The present research is based on data obtained from exclusively American participants, wherefore the representativeness of findings has to be considered with caution. As there are certain value differences between differing societies, these findings are not necessarily universally applicable. It could for example be, that the established model works entirely different in rather collectivistic societies, in which group values and social desirability are of larger importance than in individualistic societies (Triandis, McCusker, & Hui, 1985). However, as the relationship between socio-economic status and societal discontent is historically documented in a broad variety of contexts, the mediating role of status-related negative meta-stereotypes might be present in other societal contexts as well. Therefore, future efforts should be made in order to examine this relationship also in other settings, to account for representativeness of the present findings.

Another concern might be that the obtained sample may be biased in regard to the socio-economic status of participants. More specifically, it may be that the only, or main source of income for participants is the completion of online questionnaires via Prolific, which would be indicative of a rather low socio-economic status. However, the obtained data appeared relatively balanced. The mean subjective socio-economic status of the final sample was slightly above average (5.5 out of 10). Moreover, around 16% of participants indicated to earn less than 500 \$ per month, 16% between 2000 and 3000 \$ per month, and 25% to earn more than 4000 \$ per month, while most of the participants indicated to have a bachelor's degree (37%), or a high school diploma (30%). Nonetheless, the sample is not absolutely representative, as it most likely did not include individuals with a very high socio-economic status and other minority extremes. This should be considered when interpreting the results.

Future research might aim at obtaining larger samples, in order to minimize potential threats to representativeness.

Measures

In the present study, socio-economic status was considered as an objective, as well as a subjective construct. It was found that the effect of subjective-, or perceived socio-economic status on societal discontent is comparatively stronger than the effect of objective socio-economic status. Potentially, thinking about oneself as having a low socio-economic status is more strongly related to the subjective experience of societal discontent, than one's actual income and education. While previous research on this matter often solely relies on measures for objective socio-economic status as a predictor for societal discontent, future research should increasingly consider subjective socio-economic status, since it appears to also be strongly related to societal discontent.

The measures used in the present study for both subjective, and objective socio-economic status were continuous, wherefore the present study is only able to make assumptions about relative differences. Future research on this topic will benefit from utilizing categorical measurements for socio-economic status, in order to compare low- and high-status groups with each other and make more specific assumptions. Also, the model which was tested in the present research was based on a causal relationship. However, the findings were only correlational, wherefore the assumed relations could also be of different nature. Concludingly, future research on this topic should manipulate objective and subjective socio-economic status, in order to test the proposed model and the direction of its relationships.

The present study made use of the concept of societal discontent as a unidimensional measure, which describes a rather generalized sentiment. On the one hand, this enables the possibility to make direct assumptions as related to societal discontent as a whole, which is

useful in examining its direct relation with other concepts like status-related negative meta-stereotyping and socio-economic status. On the other hand, societal discontent appears as a simplified version of the overall constitutes of the concept itself. In other words, it is useful to utilize the concept of societal discontent as a unidimensional measure when wanting to examine general tendencies (e.g., Geurkink, & Miltenburg, 2023). However, the concept of societal discontent also appears multifaceted and complex. Therefore, future research on that matter should reflect on both, societal discontent as a unidimensional measure, as well as its different constitutes, in order to produce more specific assumptions.

Conclusion

In the present study we investigated the relationship between socio-economic status and societal discontent, and whether this was mediated by status-related negative meta-stereotypes. We found that low status individuals expect to be seen negatively by others due to their low socioeconomic status, and that this relates to increases in discontent with their surrounding society. These findings extend previous research and add to the understanding of the relationship between low objective and subjective socio-economic status and societal discontent.

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Appendix A

Prolific: How you view society and how do you think society views you?

Info_P1

"WHAT IS YOUR VIEW OF SOCIETY AND HOW DO YOU THINK SOCIETY VIEWS YOU?"

Welcome to this study! Please read the study information below and after that, click on the red arrow to continue to the next page.

Why do I receive this information?

You are being invited to participate in this research, because we are interested in how you think about the society you live in, and your socio-economic status in this society. This research involves two students, L. Jonkers and J. Arzbach, from the University of Groningen in the Netherlands, and is supervised by E. Gordijn.

Do I have to participate in this research?

Participation in the research is voluntary. However, your consent is needed. Therefore, please read this information carefully. You can withdraw from participation at every moment without explanation, and there will be no negative consequences for you. You have this right at all times, also after you have given consent for participation.

Why this research?

For this research, we are looking for participants:

- 1) Who live in the United stated
- 2) Who are older than 18

What do we ask of you during the research?

First, we will ask you for consent to participate. When you agree to participate, you will receive a questionnaire, in which you first are asked to give some demographic information about yourself, such as your age, ethnicity, gender, and your socio-economic status. Next, you will be asked questions about, for example how you think you are perceived in society, the way you perceive society, and how you feel about different groups in society. The questionnaire will take approximately 9 minutes to complete.

What are the consequences of participation?

We believe there are little to no risks associated with participation in this study. However, you may find some questions difficult to answer or would prefer not to answer them. Please remember that you may always withdraw from the study, which does not have any negative consequences for you.

How will we treat your data?

Your data will contribute to two Master Theses and to a scientific publication. Your data is confidential. While no personal data is collected, some information may act as identifiers when combined (e.g., gender, ethnicity, or age in combination with personal remarks). Only the researchers of this study will have access to it. We will also use given Prolific ID numbers

to compensate for the participation. This can be deemed as an indirect identifier. After making payments, we will immediately delete these indirect identifiers from the data for the sake of keeping participant anonymity. The data consists of your responses to the questions, which will be collected using an online questionnaire. We collect this data for scientific purposes. If the data is published, we will anonymize information that could be used to identify individual participants (e.g., if you made remarks that could identify you). Please note that the data is collected and stored in Europe. When the study is finished, the data will be stored at a safe University of Groningen server in the Netherlands and will be stored for 10 years.

What else do you need to know?

You may always ask questions about the research: now, during the research, and after the end of the research. You can do so by sending an e-mail to e.h.gordijn@rug.nl. If you have questions/concerns about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of the research, you may also contact the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Behavioral and Social Sciences of the University of Groningen: ec-bss@rug.nl. Do you have questions or concerns regarding the handling of your personal data? You may also contact the University of Groningen Data Protection Officer: privacy@rug.nl. As a research participant, you have the right to receive a copy of this research information (i.e., you can take a screenshot).

Consent

INFORMED CONSENT

"WHAT IS YOUR VIEW OF SOCIETY AND HOW DO YOU THINK SOCIETY VIEWS YOU?"

I have read the information about the research. I have had enough opportunity to ask questions about it

I understand what the research is about, what is being asked of me, which consequences participation can have, how my data will be handled, and what my rights as a participant are.

I understand that participation in the research is voluntary.

I myself choose to participate.

I can stop participating at any moment.

If I stop, I do not need to explain why.

Stopping will have no negative consequences for me.

Below I indicate what I am consenting to.

Consent to participate in the research:

- Yes, I consent to participate, and I consent to the processing of my personal data as mentioned in the study information. (1)
- No, I do not consent to participate (2)

No consent: You indicated you do not want to participate in this research. If you want to let us know why you do not want to participate, you can do so below. We thank you for your time!

Demographics First, we ask you to provide some demographic information below before starting the main survey.

Age What is your age?

Gender: Please indicate your gender

- Male (1)
 - Female (2)
 - Non-binary / third gender (3)
 - Prefer not to say (4)
-

Nationality: Are you American?

- Yes, I am American (1)
- No (2)

Ethnicity: Which of these best describes your ethnic background? Please select one answer

- Asian or Pacific Islander (1)
 - Black (2)
 - Hispanic or Latino (3)
 - Native American or Alaskan Native (4)
 - White (5)
 - Multiracial or Biracial (6)
 - An ethnicity not listed here (7)
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Education: Please indicate your highest educational level (only select the highest level possible)

- No diploma or degree or certificate / I did not finish any degree (1)
- High School Diploma (2)
- Certificate (sub-bachelor or vocational) (3)
- Associate Degree (4)
- Bachelor's Degree (5)
- First Professional Degree (6)
- Post-bachelor's Diploma/Certificate (7)
- Master's Degree (8)
- Certificate of Advances Study (9)
- Education of Specialist Degree (10)
- Doctorate (11)

Income: Please indicate your current monthly net level of income

- <500 (1)
 - 500-1000 (2)
 - 1000-1500 (3)
 - 1500-2000 (4)
 - 2000-3000 (5)
 - 3000-4000 (6)
 - >4000 (7)
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Job: Which of the following describes best what you have been doing for the last 4 weeks (select the option that represents this most accurately).

- In paid work (or away temporarily, employee, self-employed, working for family business) (1)
 - In education (not paid by employer) even if on vacation (2)
 - Unemployed (3)
 - Permanently sick or disabled (4)
 - Retired (5)
 - In community or military service (6)
 - Doing housework, looking after children or other persons (7)
 - Other (please specify) (8)
-

SES subjective Imagine that this ladder is a picture of American society with respect to people's socio- economic background (which depends on their income, education level, job status, and extent to which they feel respected).

check1: To check if you are still paying attention, which of the following is a vegetable: a dog, a carrot, or a hamburger?

Stereolow: How do people from different socio-economic backgrounds perceive each other?

Please answer each of the following statements (1=absolutely disagree; 7 = absolutely agree).

In general, I expect that people with a **higher** socio-economic background think that people with a **lower** socio-economic background are:

	1: absolutely disagree (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7: absolutely agree (7)
Competent (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kind (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trustworthy (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Stereohigh: In general, I expect that people with a **lower** socio-economic background think that people with a **higher** socio-economic background are:

	1= absolutely disagree (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7=absolutely agree (7)
Competent (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kind (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trustworthy (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Misrecog: How do you think about people from your own socio-economic background?

Conflict: Below, different groups in society that may be in conflict with each other are compared.

For each comparison, can you indicate how large you think the conflict is between these two groups in our country? (1=absolutely no conflict; 7 = very large conflict)

	1=absolutely no conflict (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7=very large conflict (7)
Between people WITH and WITHOUT A RECENT MIGRATION background (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Between LOWER and HIGHER EDUCATED (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Between THE ELITE and THE PEOPLE (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

check3: To check if you are still paying attention, how much is five plus three?

Feedback: You are about to come to the end of the study. We would like to hear your thoughts and feedback about the study. If any, please report them in the box below.

Q31 This is the end of the questionnaire.

We are very grateful for your participation! Your participation will help us to get an insight into how Americans perceive their society and how this is related to their own (perceived) position in society.

If you have any further questions, complaints or if you would like to receive the final results of our research, you can send an email to l.l.jonkers@student.rug.nl or to j.arzbach@student.rug.nl.

Thank you!

Please click on the red arrow to finish the study.