Power Prerequisites: Insights into Hierarchy through the High Power-Low Stats actor

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Abstract

Power and status are both fundamental human motives, yet we know very little about the similarity or differences between these motives. I focus on two understudied types of individuals, those with more power than status and those with more status than power. Across several studies, I document a unique struggle that low status-high power individuals face, starting with how they are perceived by others and extending to the quality of their interpersonal relationships. In comparison, high status, low power individuals do not face these challenges. I discuss the implications of these asymmetries for understanding our mental models of hierarchy and power and status as fundamental motives.