VOLUME 8 • NUMBER 7

THE RUSSELL SAGE JOURNAL OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences

Status: What It Is and Why It Matters for Inequality

VOLUME 8, ISSUE 7, NOVEMBER 2022

RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences

Status: What It Is and Why It Matters for Inequality

VOLUME 8, ISSUE 7, NOVEMBER 2022

RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences ISSN 2377-8261

The Russell Sage Foundation

The Russell Sage Foundation, one of the oldest of America's general purpose foundations, was established in 1907 by Mrs. Margaret Olivia Sage for "the improvement of social and living conditions in the United States." The foundation seeks to fulfill this mandate by fostering the development and dissemination of knowledge about the country's political, social, and economic problems. While the foundation endeavors to assure the accuracy and objectivity of each book it publishes, the conclusions and interpretations in Russell Sage Foundation publications are those of the authors and not of the foundation, its trustees, or its staff. Publication by Russell Sage, therefore, does not imply foundation endorsement.

*In accordance with the Russell Sage Foundation's conflict of interest policy, Hazel Rose Markus received no compensation for her work as an editor of this issue, and approval of the issue was made by an independent editorial board.

Mission Statement

RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences is a peer-reviewed, open-access journal of original empirical research articles by both established and emerging scholars. It is designed to promote cross-disciplinary collaborations on timely issues of interest to academics, policymakers, and the public at large. Each issue is thematic in nature and focuses on a specific research question or area of interest. The introduction to each issue will include an accessible, broad, and synthetic overview of the research question under consideration and the current thinking from the various social sciences.

Opinions expressed in this journal are not necessarily those of the editors, editorial board, trustees, or the Russell Sage Foundation.

We invite scholars to submit proposals for potential issues to journal@rsage.org. Submissions should be addressed to Suzanne Nichols, Director of Publications.

To view the complete text and additional features online please go to **www.rsfjournal.org**.

Russell Sage Foundation
112 East 64th Street
New York, NY 10065

ISSN (print): **2377-8253**
ISSN (electronic): **2377-8261**
ISBN: **978-0-87154-805-4**

RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences

VOLUME 8, ISSUE 7, NOVEMBER 2022

Status: What It Is and Why It Matters for Inequality

ISSUE EDITORS
Cecilia L. Ridgeway and Hazel Rose Markus

CONTENTS

The Significance of Status: What It Is and How It Shapes Inequality

CECILIA L. RIDGEWAY AND HAZEL ROSE MARKUS

Status, a form of inequality based on esteem, respect, and honor, pervades social life but is poorly understood and underestimated in terms of significance. We offer a new look at status as a dynamic relationship between the shared views of others and the self that organizes behavior at the micro, meso, and macro levels of society. The status process is governed by a taken-for-granted sociocultural schema consisting of implicit norms for allocating status based on the perceived value of the individual to the group, as well as on historically changing status beliefs about what types of people are more worthy and competent than others. Status plays a role as a powerful motive for individual and group action and in the construction of durable patterns of inequality based on social differences such as race and gender. The pernicious effects of status processes can be mitigated by undermining status beliefs, stereotypes, and norms.

Keywords: status, inequality, sociocultural schema, gender, race

Status is everywhere. But what is it, how does it work, and why can't we ignore it? Why is it that a concern with status no longer seems to be just a vanity, a concern of insecure status-seekers, or the abstract scholarship of social scientists? Why do these questions seem so urgent? Examples of threats to status, ways to mitigate threats, ways to claim status, and situations and conversations that turn on status can be picked from the headlines.

In rural and white working-class contexts, people are pushing back against the status threat of cultural dominance by urban elites. Many now claim that social class status was at least as important as economics in driving support for Donald Trump as president (Cramer 2016; Gidron and Hall 2017; Hochschild 2016; Mutz 2018). In the racial reckoning that followed the murder of George Floyd, companies and organizations rushed to claim allyship status by pledging to support Black businesses (Hsu 2020). The state of California announced that lunch is now free for public school students—a bold move to reduce the stigma and

Cecilia L. Ridgeway is Lucie Stern Professor in the Social Sciences, Emerita, at Stanford University, United States. **Hazel Rose Markus** is Davis-Brack Professor in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University, United States.

 Ridgeway, Cecilia L., and Hazel Rose Markus. 2022. "The Significance of Status: What It Is and How It Shapes Inequality." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 1–25. DOI: 10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.01. The authors would like to thank Amrita Maitreyi for producing figure 1 for us. Direct correspondence to: Cecilia L. Ridgeway, at ridgeway@stanford.edu, Department of Sociology, Stanford University, 450 Jane Stanford Way, Building 120, Stanford, CA 94305, United States; Hazel Rose Markus, at hmarkus@stanford.edu, Department of Psychology, Stanford University, 450 Jane Stanford Way, Building 420, Stanford, CA 94305, United States.

low status associated with free lunch programs (James 2021). American Meghan Markle captured worldwide attention when she joined the British royal family and struggled with a change in a status, one that required deference to the queen. Of course, in all of these examples, social media played a powerful yet still uncharted role in status-making, enhancing the status of some and challenging the status of others, often overnight.

In this double issue, we take another look at status, answering some of the questions of status and how it works and why we care now. We approach status not as an entity that is obvious and that some groups and people have and others do not, but as an ongoing set of processes that have often been too invisible for too long and that may be both more complex and consequential than we realize. We show here that status deserves much more attention and recognition (one might say more status) for the way it holds social worlds together but sometimes rearranges them, and especially for its role in inequality.

STATUS: WHAT IS IT?

Max Weber ([1918] 1968) famously highlights status as a form of inequality that is different from power and wealth and that, although often correlated with them, has its own distinct effects on social relationships and life outcomes. Wealth is possession of valued, exchangeable resources, such as money and goods; power derives from control over positions in organizations that produce and distribute valued resources (Emerson 1962; Tilly 1998). But status is different. It is inequality based on differences in the esteem, honor, and respect accorded individuals and groups in the social worlds in which they participate. These terms and many others used variously in different contexts and disciplines (dignity, worth, value, reputation, standing, face) belong to a large family of concepts that refer to the shared views of others and that communicate the evaluative position an individual or group has in their mutual social world. In the workplace, some become more admired, prominent, and influential than others and are often favored for good opportunities. The same thing happens among students in the classroom. It also happens among senators on a task force. Relative esteem and status attaches as well to the significant groups to which people belong—their preschool, college, retirement home, church, and nation— but also, importantly, to their racial group, their gender, and their class background. The status of people's group identities affects how they are treated by others in all aspects of their lives, including the institutional contexts such as work, school, and health organizations that are consequential for their life outcomes.

As all this suggests, status is everywhere in social life, a ubiquitous form of inequality that interpenetrates modern, ostensibly meritocratic institutions such as schools, workplaces, and government. Status even attaches to objects, such as a BMW versus a Kia automobile, but does so through association with high- and low-status individuals and groups, so we do not deal separately with that here (Veblen [1899] 1953). Status is also an ancient form of inequality and is apparently universal in human societies (van Vugt and Tybur 2016). It emerges from the deep sociality of humans, the way they look to others for their sense of worth and depend on them for what they want and need in life (Anderson, Hildreth, and Howland 2015). Yet, despite its deceptive familiarity, that it is right in front of our faces in everyday life, status is so taken for granted as to be oddly invisible to us as scholars of inequality. The fundamental nature of status as a form of inequality—what it is, how it works, and why it matters for life outcomes—remains poorly understood.

Status may be poorly understood partly because its significance in social life is often underestimated which has reduced scholars' motivation to study it closely. From the perspective of social sciences that focus on collective and group-level processes, such as sociology, political science, and some parts of economics, status is often thought of as a mere gloss on more powerful, underlying inequality processes based on wealth and power. From the perspective of social sciences focused on individual-level processes, such as psychology and other parts of economics, status is highly implicated in well-known concerns such as belonging or group identity yet is rarely analyzed for its broader array of sources and consequences.

Status Emerges in Interaction Between Others and the Self

Appreciating the pain or the humiliation of a threat to status, the anxiety that anticipates the threat, or the comfort that accompanies having status affirmed or assured is relatively easy. But discerning and investigating what status is, why status is continually manifest and how it works has been harder, even for social scientists. One part of the difficulty of fully grasping the centrality of status in the United States is that it emerges in interaction and in the relationship between others and the self.

Capturing and analyzing the relationality that is status and the inequality it generates may be particularly taxing in highly individualist cultures like those of North America. Here, most people, and even some social scientists, when they seek to explain behavior, are likely to emphasize the actions of the individual but less likely to emphasize the ongoing connection between the individual and others. In the more collectivist contexts common in much of the world, relational dynamics are more evident and elaborated as the source of behavior (Markus and Kitayama 1994; Rai and Fiske 2011; Vignoles et al. 2016; Triandis 1995). In U.S. contexts, although "others" are acknowledged, scrutiny often goes first to the preferences, motives, goals, and capacities of the individual.

American ideology also makes the relational process of status harder to see. A cultural emphasis on the self and an ideological focus on equality among unconstrained individuals is built into America's foundational documents and continually stoked by everyday narratives and cultural products. Despite the many overlapping status hierarchies that organize social life for almost everyone in the United States, the American Dream says it does not and should not matter. No matter who you are or where you have come from, if you work hard, you should have an equal opportunity to succeed (Hochschild 2016). Echoing this powerful theme, a recent cultural product—a best-selling children's book—urges girls to push against the gender status hierarchy —"don't let anyone tell you who you are. *You* tell them who you are" (Harris 2021, emphasis added).

Another part of the difficulty in appreciating the significance of status and understanding its nature is that status is manifestly a multilevel process. It involves status among individuals in interpersonal groups as well as status among groups in societies. Moreover, status, as esteem granted one individual or group relative to another, is a kind of reputation. That is, it operates through the shared beliefs of others toward the individual or group. These shared beliefs are part of the culture of the group or society. Thus, in contrast to better-known inequality processes such as wealth or power, status is primarily a cultural process.[1] We explain these points in more detail.

Although status may be distinctive as an inequality process, we argue that the failure to take it seriously is a major mistake. At the micro level, we will never understand the motives involved in the struggle for precedence that lies behind inequality if we do not take into account how much people care about being seen as worthy and valued in the eyes of their group and society. At the macro level, we argue that we will never come to terms with inequality based on categorical differences among people, such as race, gender, and class (understood as lifestyle and culture) if we do not understand the role status plays in such inequalities.

In what follows, we argue that status is best understood as a sociocultural schema people use to manage situations in which they are cooperatively interdependent to achieve valued goals that they want or need, but competitively interdependent to maximize their personal outcomes from the collective effort. Such situations are fundamental to the human condition, which is one reason that status is ubiquitous in social life. Before we turn to explaining the sociocultural schema model of status, however, we begin with the evidence that status is in fact both a motivating concern for individuals and an inequality process that is apparent over a wide range of social spheres. After describing the sociocultural schema model, we

1. Culture is defined in various ways in the social sciences. We use culture to mean shared ideas, beliefs, and values as well as the norms and practices that reflect them both at the interpersonal level and at the organizational level (Hamedani and Markus 2019; Ridgeway 2019).

then use it to show more clearly how status has powerful and distinctive effects at the societal level.

Status Shapes Individual Motivation

Social psychologists have been especially active in demonstrating some aspects of status as a motivating concern even if they have not always used the term in their studies. Since Gordon Allport's *The Nature of Prejudice* was published in 1954, studies have tracked how the negative and devaluing views of others toward the groups that people identify with matter for their life outcomes. Status is all about what other people think. Research across the social sciences has revealed how the devaluing views of prejudice and the group stereotypes they are based on are often driven by and reflect status concerns (see, for example, Bobo 1999; Fiske 2011).

Status as Stereotypes

A vivid demonstration of the power of group stereotypes in the way people assign status and also how status changes with the situation was on display in a recent European soccer championship in which Italy defeated England (Burdick 2021). The English team included a number of Black players from African countries. When England lost, viewers hurled racial slurs and epithets at the Black players on the team who had missed their penalty shots. The pundits noted this status-making and status-taking in action, reporting, "when you win, you're English; when you lose, you're Black." A related study compared the performance of all Black soccer players in the European league during the first half of the 2019/2020 season with their performance on second half of the season, which occurred during the pandemic when no audience was present (Caselli, Falco, and Mattera 2021). Relieved of the devaluing views of others during the game, the Black players who were most commonly targeted showed a 10 percent improvement in performance when they played to empty stadiums.

Sometimes people are well aware of the influence of others on their status or their sense of worth or value. In many other cases, they are not, or, given the individualist cultural press to resist the influence of others, claim not to be. The agenda-setting contribution of the theory of stereotype threat and research has been to illuminate how being seen through the lens of a stereotype about one's gender, race, social class, or age can have a pervasive influence on all aspects of performance across multiple domains (Steele 2010). As we will see, it is the status content of stereotypes that links group identity to performance (Fiske et al. 2002). Claude Steele and his colleagues reason that for negatively stereotyped groups, the negative views of others did not need to be explicitly invoked, as in the soccer example, to undermine performance. Instead, the pressure not to confirm a stigmatizing view of one's self is sufficient to undermine performance.

Black college students who think a task is a test of academic competence score more poorly than Black students who believe the same task requires trying out a new puzzle (Steele 2010). Asian women reminded of their gender identity on a questionnaire before a math test score more poorly than Asian women reminded of their ethnic identity (Shih, Pittinsky, and Ambady 1999). White people talking to a stranger showed a greater increase in blood pressure when talking to a Black stranger than to a White stranger (Mendes at al. 2002). Why?

When performing in the shadow of historically and societally pervasive stereotypes that links class or race or gender to poor performance, people become vigilant. This is the case for Black students who assume a task is a test of academic competence and for women who take a difficult math test. It is also the case for White students in conversation with an unknown Black partner, aware that their race may be linked to general racial insensitivity. In these situations, people's heart rates and blood pressures can change, their minds race, and distracting and self-doubting thoughts can enter (Schmader and Hall 2014; Krendl et al. 2008). Notably, these stereotype threat effects are most apparent when people are strongly identified with the activity at hand and among people who do not themselves believe the stereotype. A concert of internal activity can divert attention from the task at hand, dampen performance, and generate anxiety. Often people report no awareness of the stereotype. Yet rearrange the situation so that the

stereotype is lifted and no longer relevant, and performance returns to normal higher levels. Hundreds of studies demonstrate similar and related effects of group stereotypes in multiple domains, showing the relevance of status for almost all forms of individual behavior (for reviews, see Liu et al. 2021; Schmader and Hall 2014).

Across studies of stereotype threat, the activation of a well-known stereotype reflecting the views of others devalues some aspect of identity and generates anxiety over one's individual or group status in that moment. The source of that anxiety is some awareness of one's relative positioning in a broader social system that confers more advantage and worth to some over others. Although people commonly talk about people who *have* status, at school, work, or in the organization, these studies underscore the fact that status is not a natural, basic, or permanent attribute of a person. And whether one's status is threatened by a stereotype depends on the constellation of relational realities that make up particular situations, including how one is treated or has been treated in similar situations relative to how others are treated, how one infers one's group (racial, ethnic, gender, class, or other) is perceived and how one believes they and other members of their group should be treated relative to others, and what is at stake for them and others in that situation, and of course how the others in the situation respond to the stereotype.

People at the top of the ladder often think, feel, and behave differently from those on the lower rungs, whether the ranking is objectively anchored with clear indications of status, subjectively experienced, or manifest through the temporary manipulation of status and social comparison (for reviews, see Fiske and Markus 2012; Kraus, Côté, and Keltner 2010; Wilkinson 2000) For example, with respect to psychological experience, those at the top of the status ladder tend to be more optimistic, experience more positive and few negative emotions, and feel less threatened and anxious than those at the bottom (Keltner, Gruenfeld, and Anderson 2003). They also have a relatively stronger sense of themselves as relatively independent from the others, have more interest in expressing their preferences, choices, and goals, and more practice in influencing and controlling social interactions (Stephens et al. 2012).

Of course, people individually and together find multiple ingenious ways to navigate status threats, to counter status disavowal and to reclaim and assert status. For example, African Americans, many of whom are continually subject to the cold wind of negative stereotypes, often report the highest self-esteem scores of all ethnic groups. (Twenge and Crocker 2002; Gray-Little and Hafdahl 2000). Yet, when people repeatedly experience situations in which they are cast into lower-status positions by cultural stereotypes, institutional policies, and devaluing interpersonal interactions, some enduring consequences are likely. It is here where the growing volume of work linking status with health and well-being is particularly informative (Hoebel and Lampert 2020).

Status Under the Skin

A serious concern with how status can shape health and well-being began with the Whitehall studies of civil servants in England (Marmot et al. 1991). In these investigations, those in low occupational grades had much worse health and higher mortality than those in higher grades, but surprisingly improvements in health and mortality were evident at each occupation level up to the very highest occupation levels. These findings challenged the widespread view that social class differences were primarily a matter of economic circumstances, and underscored that status is indeed more than just a reflection of material resources. Studies in the United States confirm this clear gradient between social class and health (Adler et al. 1994; Adler and Stewart 2010). Although socioeconomic status is important in explaining race disparities in health outcomes, significant differences in health inequalities remain even when SES is controlled (Franks et al. 2006; House and Williams 2000). These disparities track a deficit in status as indexed by stereotype exposure, ongoing devaluation across multiple domains, and disrespectful treatment (Phelan and Link 2015). Confronting and negotiating pervasive and multilevel insults to status can result in a cumulative wear and tear on the body's systems (Brown and Turner 2014)—on their biological health as indexed by levels of

inflammation, cardiovascular and immune system functioning, body mass index, and so on.

The strong relationship between status and health suggests that people's sense of their position on the social ladder—their subjective socioeconomic status gets under the skin and affects health above and beyond their objective socioeconomic status. A relatively lower status can instigate a recursive cycle of poorer mental and physical health in which those who experience the compounding stress of discrimination, invisibility, less respect, and less personal worth typically have worse health and shorter lives. In contrast, multiple forms of higher status can instigate a recursive cycle of higher mental and physical health in which those who experience the compounding positive effects of visibility, no explicit discrimination, a sense of respect and personal worth, and favorable social comparisons have better health and longer lives. The mechanisms that tie status to health are complex and both social psychological and psychoneurobiological (Hoebel and Lampert 2020). The accumulating evidence implies, however, that a critical element of reducing inequality and thereby enhancing individual and group motivation, performance, health and general well-being is restoring or elevating both individual and collective respect, worth, and value.

Belongingness and Affirmation Can Mitigate Status Threats

When people are affirmed and included rather than threatened and excluded and when they sense that they are seen and accorded some appropriate standing, they tend to feel comfortable and that they belong (e.g., Walton and Crum 2021). Studies in the social psychological literature organized by the label of self-affirmation or belongingness do not invoke the concept of status explicitly. Yet they demonstrate that when people experience a sense of being valued and of worth, motivation and performance improve. In one study, Black and White students in a racially integrated school characterized by a strong racial achievement gap were given a chance to write down some of their most important values. They wrote about family, music, friends, or religion. Other students wrote about their least important value and why others thought they were important. This affirmation improved the performance of the Black students, reducing the achievement gap with the White students (Cohen et al. 2006). Explicitly recognizing and affirming a person's relevant identity groups has similar positive effects on performance (Brannon, Markus, and Taylor 2015).

Transitions from one social situation to another is a time when many worry about whether they will fit in or belong and, as we see, this involves a sense of whether they will be respected or devalued in the new situation. Focusing on the transition from high school to college, one study followed first-generation and African American college students who read the stories of older college students who told them not to worry about whether they belong in college and assured them that if they felt worried about their belonging, their situation would improve with time. This exercise increased the percentage of students who stayed full-time enrolled in college, relative to those in a randomized control condition, by 10 percent. These students chose to live on campus, used academic support services, and joined student groups (Walton and Cohen 2011; Walton and Wilson 2018) . Similar interventions have been effective in mitigating a chilly climate for women in male-dominated spaces. One study in which students heard stories from older engineering students and also wrote a letter to a future engineering student raised the grades and motivation of women in male-dominated engineering majors, eliminating the gender gap in achievement (Walton et al. 2015). A wide variety of other methods, some much more indirect and involving seemingly small changes to the social environment can also increase people's sense that people "like them" belong in a particular situation. These include school websites, mission statements, or walls of fame that represent and explain the value of a diverse student body and thus strive to flatten the status hierarchy and foster a sense of inclusion. For example, a study with a diverse sample of adolescents from more than one hundred schools finds that when schools emphasize the value of diversity (indexed by mentioning diversity in their mission statements), the health of students of color in these schools is better as re-

flected in multiple physiological measures (Levine et al. 2019). This difference was not observed for the White students.

Status in Norms and Institutional Forms

Thus it is evident from studies on stereotype threat, self-affirmation, and belonging that one's sense of self, one's position or status in the situation, emerges between people, depends on the relations among them, and is consequential for individual behavior. My status in this situation depends on your view of me. Of course, if the devaluing reaction was just one person's view—one teacher with low expectations, one potential boss who passes over a résumé, one neighbor who never says hello, it is possible to avoid or ignore the particular encounter and maintain a sense of esteem and respect. Yet stereotypes are so powerful and inequality-generating because we presume them to be the beliefs of "most people." They are shared beliefs that are dispersed deeply, that are widely reinforced, and that package and deliver inequality through people's ongoing relations with one another at school, at work, and in the community, shaping their life outcomes.

A situation may appear free of a concert of the devaluing views of others, or chock full of indications of one's belongingness, but one never knows about the next situation. Many people in many situations seem to "just know" that women or people from working-class backgrounds, or one of many minoritized groups are less competent in STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) fields than men. The views of others are ever present, and the reflections of stereotypes with their devaluing status implications are built into all levels of organizational and institutional cultures, including the physical environment (see, for example, Cheryan et al. 2009). In some settings, stereotypes can be effectively kept at bay by shoring up people's sense of value and worth and with strategies for alternate ways of making meaning in a situation (Thomas et al. 2020). Yet, in many cases, they are easily brought to mind. As Steele theorizes, they constitute "a threat in the air." They are compelling evidence at the level of the individual for the ubiquity and power of status. They also illuminate status as an inequality-generating force that extends well beyond its powerful influence on the individuals' feelings of their belongingness or group identity.

In some cases, the status-allocating views of others—particularly those related to race, ethnicity, gender, and social class—are so widely shared and have been taken for granted for so long that they are reflected in unmarked organizational and institutional norms and seldom recognized as biasing, stereotyping, or devaluing. Instead, these norms are seen as standard, neutral, or necessary policies and practices (Cheryan and Markus 2021). For example, many organizations that are currently actively engaged in efforts to mitigate gender bias are still rooted in a powerful foundation of masculine beliefs and norms that prevent the full participation of women. This mostly hidden foundation can be found in the valuing and rewarding of employees who behave independently, policies requiring that employees nominate themselves for promotion, and interaction styles in which assertively interjecting and debating is necessary for being heard and having influence (Cheryan and Markus 2021; Diekman et al. 2011; Kang 2014; Karpowitz and Mendelberg 2014; Wynn and Correll 2018). Taken for granted, invisible norms that value and reward independence as the most worthy and competent way to be are also common in many universities, colleges, and workplaces. These norms can devalue the more interdependent motivations and actions that often drive students from working-class backgrounds to attend college and can undermine their achievement and performance (Stephens et al. 2015).

THE MULTILEVEL AND SOCIOCULTURAL NATURE OF STATUS

We said at the outset that one of the difficulties in coming to grips with status as an inequality process is that it is primarily a cultural process, in contrast to the more material and concrete processes of wealth, which involve exchangeable resources, and power, which is based on the control of valued resources. That status is a cultural process would benefit from a little unpacking. Because status is the esteem and perceived social value accorded one individual or group relative to another, as we have seen, it

is rooted in the beliefs of others. It reflects these others' roughly shared beliefs about which individuals and which groups are "better" than others at what the group values. As Erving Goffman and others have pointed out, individuals can take strategic actions to claim status, but they cannot directly seize and possess it as they can wealth or power (Goffman 1956; Goode 1978; Gould 2002). The same is true for groups in society. Status must be granted by the collective views of others. If these views change or become less widely shared, status can be lost. For instance, Bill Gates can engage in philanthropy to gain esteem and status in the eyes of his countrymen. But if information becomes public that undercuts shared views of the value or sincerity of his philanthropy, his status will decline despite his continued wealth and power and that decline will reduce his appeal as an exchange partner for others.

In this way, as we have said, status exists in the social space between the individual or group and the surrounding community, that is, in the relationship between them. And that relationship is continually being negotiated through the actions of the individual or group and the ongoing evaluative reactions of the community, as reflected in its emergent shared beliefs and norms in regard to the individual or group. Thus status is a process, something people and groups do and continually redo rather than a fixed personal attribute. Because this process is governed by shared beliefs and the associated practices of a group or community of people, we refer to status as primarily cultural in nature.

As the description of status as an ongoing process illustrates, status is inherently a multilevel process, involving the interplay between an individual and the surrounding interpersonal group or between a group and the surrounding community or society. Because status hierarchies or inequalities develop among individuals in interpersonal groups as well as among groups such races or genders in society, status is a multilevel process in this sense too. Decades of research on the development of status hierarchies in interpersonal groups, particularly that associated with status characteristics and expectation states research, has shown that the status society attaches to individuals' group identities, such as race, gender, education, or class background powerfully shapes their esteem, status, and influence in interpersonal groups (Berger et al. 1977; Berger, Rosenholtz, and Zelditch 1980; Correll and Ridgeway 2003; Ridgeway and Nakagawa 2014; Berger and Webster 2018). This is the message of the stereotype threat research we reviewed as well (Schmader and Hall 2014; Steele 2010).

As such research clearly shows, status between groups in society and between individuals within groups are not separate processes but instead fundamentally linked in the way status works as a system of inequality. Widely shared beliefs about the relative status of groups in society are part of the macro-level culture of that society. But they affect inequality most directly by affecting the evaluative treatment of individuals at the micro level of interpersonal relations, including mediated relations, such as when someone assesses the résumé of another. In other words, the inequality embedded in society's status beliefs about people's significant group identities is delivered home to the individual and shapes their life outcomes at the level of what people do every day in their work-oriented relations with one another. To understand what status really is as an inequality process and what its significance is for inequality in people's valued life outcomes, we need a model of status that can account for its multilevel and processual-cultural nature as well as its ubiquity in social life.

Status as a Sociocultural Schema of Norms and Status Beliefs

Status is ancient, universal, and ubiquitous, we suggest, because it arises out of a fundamental tension in the human condition. Whether people like it or not, they have to cooperate with others to get most of what they want and need in life from the basics of survival to what it takes to make them happy. We have to work with others to make a living, to find meaningful relationships and develop satisfying self-identities, and to form families and raise children. But this deep cooperative interdependence that is built into the human condition has nested within it an inherent competitive tension. When people coordinate their efforts, questions necessarily arise about the terms on

which their relationship will be conducted and how the spoils of their joint efforts will be divided. Who will be the center of attention? According to whose will and judgments will joint actions be determined? Everyone has an unavoidable interest in forming cooperative endeavors but everyone also has an interest in maximizing what they get from those endeavors. Status is best understood, we argue, as a sociocultural schema or blueprint for organizing social relations to manage this basic tension and produce collective outcomes (Ridgeway 2019).

William Sewell (1992) has argued that social structures have a dual nature, consisting on the one hand of a cultural schema of rules for enacting the structure and, on the other, of the material distribution of behaviors and resources that result from that enactment. The sociocultural schema of status is a structural schema in this sense.[2] It is a set of deeply learned, taken-for-granted cultural rules that people use to organize their behavior with others in a manner that produces a status hierarchy—that is, a behavioral ranking in esteem demonstrated through deference, prominence and, typically, influence over collective decisions. As people draw on the familiar, if implicit, sociocultural schema of status to organize the many shared endeavors they engage in, status pervades social life from the interpersonal to the organizational (Ridgeway 2019).

To some, the claim that status is regulated by a sociocultural schema of rules might seem controversial. The obvious alternative would explain status entirely in terms of long-standing evolutionary theories of dominance and hierarchy and more recent evolutionary arguments about prestige (Cheng and Tracy 2014; Henrich and Gil-White 2001; van Kleef and Cheng 2020). Yet recent analyses show that these evolutionary arguments cannot fully account for status hierarchies as they are commonly observed, particularly in groups of three or more (Ridgeway 2019). Furthermore, they do not explain the reach of status beyond the interpersonal group. If, instead of a cultural process based on shared beliefs and rules, status were based solely on evolved, individual attributes and response tendencies, it would be confined to interpersonal hierarchies. Yet, as we have seen, status processes as we observe them involve hierarchies among groups in society, such as races, genders, and classes, as well as among individuals. This is difficult to explain without understanding status as a sociocultural process. The status schema may be a cultural development laid on a residue of evolved responses, this suggests, but it is not reducible to them. In this it is like language, which is fully cultural in nature but developed on top of evolved capacities.

The Basic Norm of Status

Especially if people might have some evolved tendencies for rank and deference, why might they develop a sociocultural schema of rules to regulate deference and status? Cecilia Ridgeway (2019) argues that it is the interdependent interest of group members in who ends up high status that gives rise to the development of cultural rules, or norms for status. Under goal interdependence, who ends up high status in the group affects all our interests. If, for example, that person who likes to talk but does not seem to know much about our problem ends up high status rather than the quieter one with experience, that affects my outcomes as well as theirs. As a result, whatever status we egoistically desire for ourselves, we want others in the group to defer to others who appear most able and willing to contribute to the collective effort because this will maximize success and the shared benefits that flow from that (Ridgeway and Diekema 1989). This means we are likely to pressure others to defer on the basis of expected value to the group. The consequence, though, is that, by the same token, we will be faced with pressure from others to defer on this basis ourselves. In this way, as Christine Horne (2004) shows, such an interdependence of exchange interests gives rise to group norms that members enforce. Here it creates implicit norms for deference on the basis of perceived value to the group's goal efforts.

Evidence is overwhelming that interpersonal status hierarchies grant deference and

2. We call the status schema *sociocultural* rather than just *cultural* to emphasize its nature as a structural schema in Sewell's (1992) sense.

influence to group members in proportion to their perceived value to the collective effort (Anderson and Willer 2014; Correll and Ridgeway 2003; Magee and Galinsky 2008). Note the emphasis on perceived value, given the possible disjunction between perceived and actual value (Correll et al. 2017; Lynn, Poldolny, and Tao 2009). This is the basic norm of status, which people learn from observations and treatment by others and pass on through their own behavior so that it becomes deeply learned, taken for granted cultural knowledge for most people. The norm is a means by which the group exercises some control over a would-be dominator who threatens to take over the group without contributing to the shared endeavor. In a study of status among MBA students, Cameron Anderson and his colleagues (2006) show that students who tried to claim higher status than their peers felt was justified by their value to the team were isolated and disliked. Ridgeway and David Diekema (1989) also find that when a member of a decision-making group attempted to seize influence through dominance that was not backed up by competence, other members turned on the dominator and rejected him or her. Norms can be recognized not just by their enactment, but also by their enforcement. Here we see evidence that people enforce the basic status norm with sanctions against violators and do so spontaneously (Anderson, Ames, and Gosling 2008).

Cultural Status Beliefs

The sociocultural schema of status is more complex than the basic status norm, however. The expectation the norm creates for deference to others on the basis of perceived value to the group immediately confronts the individual member with a second question. How can she figure out what her fellow members will take to be the signs of greater or lesser value to the group? Ridgeway (2019) argues that people solve this coordination problem by developing shared cultural *status beliefs* about the attributes and behaviors that indicate higher or lower levels of status worthiness and types of competence. Especially in a Western, achievement-oriented society such as the United States, beliefs about status, that is, who is "better," and therefore more valuable to the collective endeavor, are closely associated with presumptions of instrumental competence (Fiske et al. 2002; Fiske 2011).

Experiments show that people form shared status beliefs about the indicators of worthiness and competence quite easily and act on these newly formed status beliefs in their subsequent treatment of people (Ridgeway et al. 2009). Other evidence shows that such beliefs are widespread in U.S. culture. Research shows that status beliefs form central elements in the widely held cultural stereotypes of all the major social difference groups by which inequality is patterned in the United States, including race, gender, class, education, and occupation (Fiske et al. 2002; Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick 2007). It is because beliefs about status and competence are embedded in group stereotypes that stereotype threat can affect performance. North Americans also have status beliefs linking assertive, agentic behavior with greater status and competence (Conway, Pizzamiglio, and Mount 1996). These same studies show that status beliefs are recognized by people as "common knowledge" in that they are presumed to be the beliefs of "most people" (Fiske 2011). In that way, common knowledge status beliefs function as ready bases for coordinating judgments of value to the group (Chwe 2001; Thomas et al. 2014). They allow group members to form roughly shared perceptions of who in the group is "better" than whom for the collective effort (Anderson et al. 2006; Anderson et al. 2012; Troyer and Younts 1997).

Common knowledge status beliefs work to coordinate status in the group because each group member presumes that the others will act according to them and thus must take those beliefs in account in their judgments and behavior. In other words, widely known status beliefs act as a kind of social map that we all presume we are all looking at in figuring out how to behave. For instance, in a work group in which some have Ivy League credentials and others do not, all are implicitly aware of the expectations this difference evokes and take that into account in their behavior whether they agree with the expectations or not. Thus common knowledge status beliefs allow group members to quickly converge on a rough working consensus in their relative ranks in the group status hier-

archy even if not everyone in the group fully endorses the status beliefs as correct (Anderson et al. 2012; Correll et al. 2017). They similarly draw on shared status beliefs to make sense of subsequent events in the group in an ongoing process through which they jointly maintain or renegotiate the hierarchy. Indeed, the formation and maintenance of an ongoing, working consensus on status in interpersonal groups is probably only possible because it does not require complete agreement at the level of what each member "really deserves."

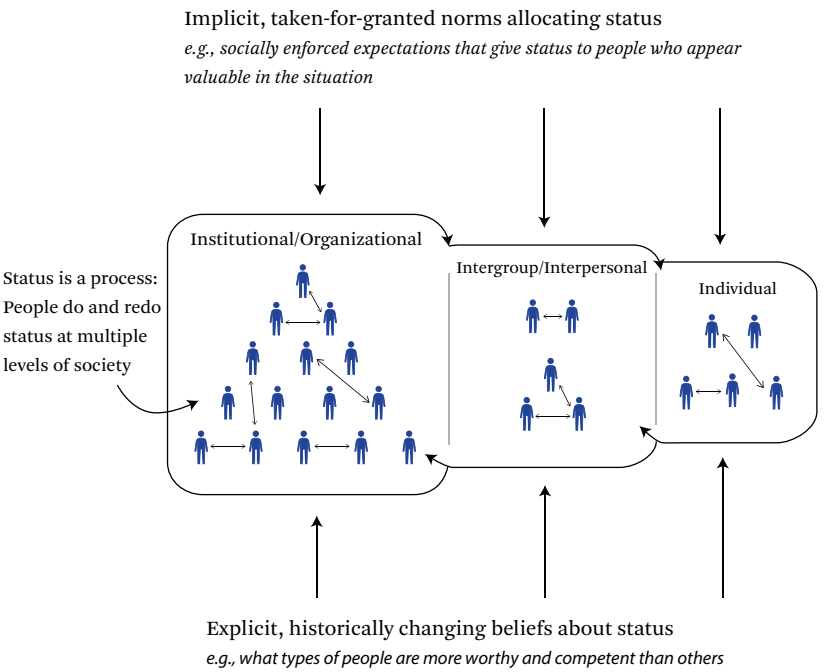
A Twofold Status Schema

The sociocultural schema for status, then, would seem to be twofold (figure 1). We have a taken-for-granted but fundamental basic status norm that we learn from experience and pass on to others through our behavior. We combine this deeper, more implicit normative rule with a more explicit, variable, and historically changing set of shared cultural status beliefs that we use to anticipate what others will see as "better," more competent, and valuable in various situations. It is through the combination of a shared basic status norm and shared status beliefs that people are able to quickly form status hierarchies in the real time of interaction, as evidence shows they do (Bales 1950, 1970).

Understanding status as a sociocultural schema helps us account for some of its distinctive characteristics as a form of inequality. First, because the sociocultural schema approach shows how status hierarchies work through a combination of status beliefs, which typically are shared at the macro level of a broader community or society, and an application of those beliefs at the micro level of social relations among actors, it helps explain the inherently multilevel and cultural nature of status inequality as we observe it around us. Second, in so doing, the sociocultural schema approach clarifies for us the powerful link between status processes and inequality based on social differences and group identity. Finally, it also helps explain the wide range of status rankings in society.

As Sewell (1992) points out, a cultural

Figure 1. A Sociocultural Schema of Status: Societally Specific, Learned and Shared Norms and Beliefs for Organizing Social Relations



Source: Authors' diagram.

schema or blueprint for organizing social relations in a certain way can be applied permissively to new situations and phenomena beyond the contexts of its origins. It is like acquiring a tool for a certain purpose and then finding new ways to use it. It is because of its cultural nature that people can apply status as a way of coordinating with others in regard to a broad range of social phenomena well beyond the interpersonal group. Wendy Espeland and Michael Sauder (2016), for instance, studied how status rankings of law schools develop and become consequential points of reference for both schools and students alike. Shelley Correll and her colleagues (2017) show how, when people must make a decision whose success depends in some degree on the reactions of others, they draw on beliefs about the status of various options to make a choice that will coordinate well with the likely reactions of others. Unfortunately, this can mean that even if a decision-maker thinks, say, that the woman candidate for police chief is as good as or slightly better than the male candidate, the decision-maker may still favor the male candidate as easier to "sell" to others. Indeed, without something like the sociocultural schema approach, the very broad reach of status rankings in advanced industrial societies is much harder to explain.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STATUS FOR INEQUALITY BASED ON GROUP IDENTITY

Understanding status as an inequality process regulated by a deeply learned and shared sociocultural schema helps us see how diverse status phenomena like those between groups in society and those among individuals in groups work together. It also illuminates the processural-cultural nature of status and its basis in the ongoing relationship between the actor and the surrounding group (Grusky, Hall, and Markus 2019). How much does the group value that actor, relative to others, given what counts with the group as important, worthy, and valuable? But for our purposes here, the most important advantage of the sociocultural schema approach is the further insight it provides into the powerful role status plays in creating and maintaining durable patterns of inequality in valued life outcomes among identity groups based on social differences such as race, gender, and class background. These insights derive from the way the status beliefs component of the schema shapes people's evaluative reactions and behaviors toward one another to create status advantage, legitimates inequality between groups based on social difference, and fosters a sense of group position and resistance to status threats.

Status Advantage

We have seen that widely held status beliefs are associated with all the social difference groups by which inequality is patterned in the United States. Status beliefs are a central part of the content of the stereotypes of these groups (Fiske et al. 2002). Status beliefs about a social difference such as race, gender, or class, link people in one category of the difference (men, Whites, the middle class) not only greater esteem, but also with cultural presumptions of greater *competence*, especially at what "counts" in society, relative to people in other categories of that difference (women, people of color, the working class) (Berger et al. 1977; Ridgeway and Erickson 2000; Ridgeway et al. 2009; Berger and Webster 2018). Status beliefs suggest that people in a higher-status category of a social difference such as race, gender, or class, are typically "better" and can be expected to be diffusely more competent than those in lower-status categories of the difference.

Status beliefs about a social difference become salient for people in a goal or work-oriented situation when people differ on the characteristic as well as when the social difference is culturally understood to be relevant to the setting's goals, as in a gender-, race-, or class-typed setting (Berger and Webster 2018). When implicitly salient in a setting, status beliefs create a cascading set of subtle biases in people's evaluations and treatments of one another that jointly create *status advantage* (Correll et al. 2017; Ridgeway and Nakagawa 2014). Status advantage is the treatment of people labeled high status by the status beliefs, such as Whites or men, as more valued and competent in the situation than they otherwise would be and favoring them for rewards and opportunities as a consequence. And, as a corresponding

part of status advantage, those labeled low status by the beliefs find themselves treated as less valued, competent, and favored for rewards than they would otherwise be.

Status advantage based on status beliefs about social differences is the foundation of why status matters for broader patterns of inequality in society. With status advantage, a rich, powerful person from a higher-status group, say, a White person, has an added advantage over an equally rich, powerful person from a lower-status group, say, an Asian, Latinx, or African American. At least three types of bias created by status beliefs compound to create status advantage: status bias, legitimacy bias, and associational bias.

Status bias refers to a series of self-fulfilling evaluative competence biases triggered by status beliefs that have been documented by status characteristics and expectations states research (Berger and Webster 2018; Correll and Ridgeway 2003; Ridgeway and Nakagawa 2014). By this analysis, stereotype threat effects on performance would also fall under the category of status bias (Ridgeway and Correll 2004; Schmader and Hall 2014). Implicitly salient status beliefs bias people's expectations for others' relative to their own competence and suitability for authority in a situation. Biased expectations, in turn, have self-fulfulling effects on people's behaviors, performance, evaluations, and outcomes. By subtly shaping one person's behavior toward another, status beliefs create inequalities in assertive versus deferential behavior, actual task performance and evaluations of performance, attributions of ability, influence, and situational rewards between otherwise equal Whites and non-Whites, men and women, and middle- and working-class people (Correll and Ridgeway 2003; Kahlkoff et al. 2020; Melamed et al. 2019; Ridgeway 2011; Ridgeway and Correll 2004; Ridgeway and Fisk 2012; Webster and Driskell 1978).

As people go about their everyday efforts to achieve the valued outcomes by which we judge inequality, such as wealth, health, and positions of power, status bias acting in the social relationships through which they pursue these outcomes shape both their behavior and others' treatment of them. They affect the confidence and energy with which people put themselves forward in a situation and others' willingness to pay attention to their efforts and evaluate them positively. Expecting themselves to be more competent, the status advantaged speak up eagerly while the status disadvantaged hesitate. The same idea or performance seems better to others coming from the status advantaged. In addition, to both others and themselves, the status advantaged seem more the sort for leadership (Berger and Webster 2018; Ridgeway and Nakagawa 2014). Because of the way people use status beliefs to coordinate evaluations, status bias can even cause people to favor a status advantaged candidate, say for hiring, promotion, or school admission, over a similar or slightly more qualified status disadvantaged candidate if they think the status advantaged candidate will be more readily accepted by others in the situation (Correll et al. 2017). In these ways, status bias, acting through the many goal-oriented encounters that take place in consequential contexts such as the workplace, schools, government or health organizations subtly, but systematically, direct people from higher-status groups toward more valued resources and positions of power than otherwise similar people from lower status groups.

In addition to status bias, status advantage is also fostered by *legitimacy bias*, which is the tendency to treat people from more privileged, higher-status groups as more legitimate occupants of high-status positions of authority in groups and organizations (Berger et al. 1998). Legitimacy matters for people in leadership roles because it affects their ability to act authoritatively and expect compliance (Johnson, Dowd, and Ridgeway 2006; Zelditch 2018). Experimental evidence shows, for instance, that people from lower-status groups who attain a leader role on skill-based merit nevertheless experience more resistance and less compliance from those they lead than those from higher-status groups in the same position (Ridgeway, Johnson, and Diekema 1994). When a distinguished-looking White man is named to lead a government task force, his power and influence is bolstered by the fact that he looks "right" for the role in a way that a Latinx woman in the same role does not.

Legitimacy bias is behind the resistive, back-

lash reaction that women and African American men sometimes experience when they try to act dominant in a leadership setting (Brescoll, Okimoto, and Vial 2018; Livingston, Rosette, and Washington 2012; Rudman et al. 2012; Williams and Tiedens 2016). When a person from a lower status group (a woman or person of color) acts "too dominant," it implicitly challenges the accepted status hierarchy reflected in status beliefs about the difference (Rudman et al. 2012). Those present from the more status-advantaged groups (men or Whites) frequently react with hostility to the status threat that undercuts the status disadvantaged leader's ability to succeed and rise to positions of greater power. Further, if a leader from a status disadvantaged group does make a mistake, it is often criticized more severely than a similar mistake by a leader whose legitimacy is bolstered by a privileged status group background (Rosette and Livingston 2012).

Finally, status beliefs about social difference groups also create *associational preference bias* that further contributes to status advantage. Status spreads through association among both individuals and organizations (Hysom 2009; Poldolny 2005; Thye 2000). Because the status of those you associate with affects your status, status beliefs bias people's associational preferences toward higher-status others, especially in work or goal-oriented settings. Status beliefs intensify in-group preferences on the part of those from higher-status groups who see every reason to prefer their own for network ties, recommendations, and information about new opportunities (Rivera 2015). For those from lower-status groups, status-driven preference biases undercut solidarity as they are torn between networking with higher-status people to improve their opportunities and supporting their in-group (Cabrera and Thomas-Hunt 2007; Duguid, Lloyd, and Tolbert 2012; Krysan et al. 2009; Tajfel and Turner 1986).

The biases that together make up status advantage are rarely noticed by those involved as they happen. They take place through many small behaviors, judgments, and responses among individuals as they carry out their efforts to achieve the valued outcomes they seek, a job, a promotion, an educational degree, good health care. Here again, we see the processural aspect of status inequality as something we continually do in our goal-oriented social relations. The effect of any one of these biases in a given work- or goal-oriented encounter can be large, but most often is small. But over the many such encounters taking place in consequential environments, the effect of these biases accumulates (Botelho and Abraham 2017; Korver-Glenn 2018). Together, they silently but systematically steer people from higher-status groups—Whites, men, the middle class—toward positions of greater resources and power while constraining and interrupting the progress of those from lower status groups.

Through the process of status advantage, which we argue results from people's everyday reliance on the status schema to manage their interdependent, goal-oriented efforts, status functions as an independent force in the maintenance of inequality in power and wealth between social difference groups such as race, gender, and class background. This is the foundation of status's significance as an inequality process over and above power and wealth.

Two additional aspects of that significance are worth pointing out. First, because status beliefs work their effects through multiple small, mostly unremarked biases, the effect for participants in the situations is that those from status-advantaged groups are simply revealed to be "better," more competent and valuable, for the work at hand. This aspect of status advantage, that people rarely see the way that they participate in its production, is how status processes legitimate advantage on the basis of merit in a meritocratic society (Ridgeway 2014). In this manner, status-based inequality based on social difference interpenetrates ostensibly meritocratic institutions.

Second, notice that status creates advantages for some types of people relative to others based only on those people's group identities. That is, status advantages people from high-status groups over those who are just as accomplished but from a lower status group. A job candidate's blinded résumé shows a record of accomplishment. In the interview, however, where the candidate's group identities become apparent, she is clearly also an African Ameri-

can woman with a working-class accent. Or he is a White man with a smooth upper-middle-class manner. By advantaging people based on their status-valued social differences alone, status gives inequalities based on social differences such as race, gender, and class background an endogenous capacity to reproduce themselves independent of the accomplishments or other attributes of the people with these identities (Ridgeway 2011, 2019). This further suggests that to overcome inequality based on social differences, status processes must be taken into account.

Sense of Group Position and Status Threat as a Political Motive

As we have seen, status, including that attached to social identity groups, has a public character in that the arena in which it is supported or contested is in the eyes of others. The position of one's social identity groups in the surrounding society's status rankings is known to all both through common-knowledge status beliefs and the everyday status and deference behaviors observed by all who are driven by these beliefs. Status beliefs also function as public, legitimating ideologies for these observed inequalities in life outcomes by linking presumptions of greater competence with people in some social difference groups but not with people from others. Status beliefs give people in higher-status social groups few reasons to doubt that they have fairly won their relative advantages. Together, the public and legitimating effects of status beliefs create for people what Herbert Blumer (1958) called a *sense of group position*, a sense of the deserved public dignity due to people of their group relative to those ranked as lower in status.

A sense of group position motivates people to react with anger and even aggression not just to threats to their personal status in an interpersonal context, but to perceived threats to the status of their social identity group relative to other groups, in the public arena, including media representations and public policies (Blumer 1958; Bobo 1999). Examples include challenges to policies that favor a lower-status group over a higher one, such as loans targeted to Black farmers rather than White farmers. Studies show, for instance, that highlighting for Whites changing racial dynamics that will eventually make Whites a racial minority evoked status threat in them and led them to endorse more conservative political ideologies as well as oppose welfare programs seen to benefit non-Whites (Craig and Richeson 2014; Wetts and Willer 2018).

As we saw at the outset, status threats evoked by the growing cultural dominance of urban elites who are perceived as disparaging rural and working-class whites as well as the greater political prominence of women and racial minorities has fueled political support for political movements like the Tea Party and iconoclastic candidates such as Donald Trump (Cramer 2016; Gidron and Hall 2017; Hochschild 2016; Mutz 2018). Studies of these effects suggest that it is not those at the very top of the societal status hierarchy, such as upper-class White men, nor those at the bottom, such as lower-class people of color, who have been the most politically reactive to status threats to their group identities. Rather, in recent events, it has been people in the threatened middle or lower middle of the societal status hierarchy who have reacted most strongly. These are people who have felt that their respectable position as White, hard-working, Main Street Americans has been threatened by changing demographics and cultural and political representations that appear to favor previously lower-status groups above them (Cramer 2016; Hochschild 2016; Vance 2016). By fostering political resistance to social, economic, and political changes that challenge the established status hierarchies among social groups, the sense of group position created by status processes is a second way that these processes independently and significantly contribute to inequality in life outcomes based on group identity.

FINAL THOUGHTS

To make sense of the interactional, processual, and yet inherently multilevel nature of status, we proposed that status is best understood as a sociocultural schema that people use to manage situations in which they are cooperatively interdependent with one another to achieve valued goals but competitively interdependent to maximize their personal outcomes from the collective effort. Status is everywhere in social

life partly because such situations are fundamental to the human condition. But if status is a cultural invention to manage a fundamental tension in the human condition, is it likely that people will ever stop doing and redoing status in one work or goal-oriented situation after another? Probably not. Indeed, widespread evidence shows that people's sense of how much they are valued relative to others in the eyes of their group or community is and will probably remain a powerful motivating force in their behavior across social spheres (Anderson, Hildreth, and Howland 2015).

If the everyday doing of status is not going away, then we must take status processes into account and consider how to address their effects if we want to create more egalitarian societies. This is especially the case if we seek a society in which social differences like race or gender are no longer powerful, independent determinants of unequal life outcomes. Status may be an ancient and deeply rooted form of inequality but it is nevertheless cultural and therefore not beyond our control. Although we may never undo status inequality altogether, we can undo its most pernicious effects by undermining the status beliefs embedded in widespread stereotypes of major social groups. It is these status beliefs that link social groups to greater or lesser worthiness and competence and by doing so, transform the everyday doing and redoing of status into the production and maintenance of durable patterns of inequality between these groups.

As cultural beliefs, status beliefs about social groups have to be widely held in a population to have effect. The assumption that status beliefs are what "most people" think is what makes them a basis by which people across multiple social encounters implicitly coordinate their doing and redoing of status. Evidence shows that disrupting the appearance of consensuality and validity that supports status beliefs reduces people's tendency to act on them in their social encounters (Ridgeway and Correll 2006; Seachrist and Stangor 2001). This suggests that changing material circumstances and persistent social and political efforts can create growing public challenges to our most pernicious status beliefs such as those about race, gender, and class background. And, with growing public challenges, even if these spark status threat and resistance, the appearance of consensuality nevertheless erodes. And, as it erodes, the power of these status beliefs to organize local status hierarchies narrows in range and declines. We used to have widely held, devaluing status beliefs about some White ethnic groups, such as the Irish, for instance, but these beliefs lost consensuality and dissipated in effect. Social change is possible, then, but will not happen without sustained effort.

A LOOK AHEAD TO THE ARTICLES

In the sixteen articles that make up this double issue, social scientists from several disciplines take a new look at the nature and significance of status as an inequality process.

We organize them into three categories, each addressing different aspects of the questions of what is status and why does it matter for inequality. The first section features articles that define status as a fundamental form of equality that shapes broad institutional and interactional patterns of inequality and that also functions as a powerful motive at the individual level. Poulomi Chakrabarti begins the double issue with an article titled "Status and Development: How Social Hierarchy Undermines Well-Being," in which she synthesizes literature from multiple disciplines to compare the legacy of slavery in the United States and the caste system in India to illustrate how status plays a powerful and unacknowledged role in both development and redistributive politics. Tali Mendelberg in "Status, Symbols, and Politics: A Theory of Symbolic Status Politics" maintains that status has been seriously undertheorized in politics; she makes the compelling case that government is an official authority for the allocation of status, and as such almost all important political events, issues, movements, and laws arise as groups seek to gain or maintain their status. Biko Koenig in "Politicizing Status Loss Among Trump Supporters in 2020" agrees that status is fundamental in politics and based on interviews argues that Trump supporters were mobilized by "identity entrepreneurs" who sold the idea that status loss was a result of the Democratic Party's rejection of working-class values—hard work, manual

occupations, small-town family-centric culture.

In "The Architecture of Status Hierarchies: Variations in Structure and Why They Matter for Inequality," Fabien Accominotti, Freda Lynn, and Michael Sauder direct our attention to the structure, or "architectural features" of status hierarchies themselves. They show how these features can differ in ways that exacerbate the inequality in rewards that the status hierarchy distributes, affecting inequality based on power and resources as well as status. The relation between status inequality and inequality based on resources is also the theme of Kevin Leicht's "Inequality and the Status Window: Inequality, Conflict, and the Salience of Status Differences in Conflicts over Resources." He introduces the idea of the status window in which people transform their sense of resource differences in society into a status distinction between those with "more" than them and those with "less" than them, which blinds them to the further reaches of resource inequality. Especially in highly unequal societies, narrow status windows increase the salience of status differences in social conflict to the neglect of resource differences. In "To Forgive Is Devine? Morality and the Status Value of Intergroup Revenge and Forgiveness," Stephen Benard, Long Doan, D. Adam Nicholson, Emily Meanwell, Eric L. Wright, and Peter Lista explore both the fundamental nature of what status is based on and the role it plays in intergroup conflict. They examine the circumstances under which not just perceived competence but also the perceived morality of a group member's actions of forgiveness or revenge toward the other group functions as a basis for status in their own group.

The second section includes articles highlighting the relational, cultural, and multilevel nature of status and revealing that implicit norms for allocating status are shared, enacted, and reinforced by people in both high- and low-status positions. Hilary J. Holbrow, in "When All Assistants Are Women, Are All Women Assistants? Gender Inequality and the Gender Composition of Support Roles," demonstrates that changing the link between women and low-status positions is as or more important for improving pay equity and the status of women in organizational culture than is bringing women into managerial positions. Natasha Quadlin in her article "Do Perceptions of Privilege Enhance—or Impede—Perceptions of Intelligence? Evidence from a National Survey Experiment" finds that despite scholarly criticism of meritocracy and the growing awareness of the degree to which educational success can be purchased, a nationally representative study reveals that public opinion still holds that educational credentials are indicative of a person's intelligence.

E. K. Maloney, Kimberly B. Rogers, and Lynn Smith-Lovin in their article "Status as Deference: Cultural Meaning as a Source of Occupational Behavior" argue that we need a more relational measure of occupational status that captures the extent to which the cultural meanings associated with a given set of occupations imply voluntary deference to people in another set of occupations. They use affect control theory and data measuring the cultural meanings of occupations to explore culturally expected deference relations among classes of occupations. Lauren Valentino's "Status Lenses: Mapping Hierarchy and Consensus in Status Beliefs" introduces the concept of *status lenses* to reflect how flat or hierarchical the status order is and how much a given group agrees or disagrees about that order, finding that people use different status lenses depending on their proximity to traditional centers of power in the United States.

The third and final group of articles in this double issue illuminates that status is a process that people do and redo through their social relations, that status beliefs (such as about race, gender, or class) systematically bias outcomes, and that the effects of these biased outcomes accumulate over multiple social relations. Using in-depth interviews with very wealthy White women (median net worth $16.6 million), Annette Lareau in "Downplaying Themselves, Upholding Men's Status: Women's Deference to Men in Wealthy Families" finds that women perform an abdication of interest and expertise in financial matters, revealing what she calls the "stickiness" of gender in shaping family dynamics and maintaining implicit status norms. In "Racial and Ethnic Status Distinctions and Discrimination: The Effects of

Prior Contact and Group Interaction," Bianca Manago, Jane Sell, and Carla Goar tackle the doing of racial status in two experiments testing techniques from intergroup contact and status characteristics theory for interrupting the formation of status hierarchies based on race in work groups. The experiments, which involved Black-White and Mexican American–White work groups that met multiple times, find that it is necessary to alter status-biased perceptions of competence, not just reduce intergroup anxiety, to reduce racial inequality in influence.

Mesmin Destin, Régine Debrosse, Michelle Rheinschmidt-Same, and Jennifer A. Richeson in their article "Psychological Challenges and Social Support That Shape the Pursuit of Socioeconomic Mobility" examine status uncertainty and the doing of status among college students, finding that status uncertainty can have negative consequences for achievement and well-being, and that social support may provide some buffer against these negative outcomes.

In "'But the Fellows Are Simply Diversity Hires!' How Organizational Contexts Influence Status Beliefs," Sandra Portocarrero and James Carter show how the dynamics of status and race shift over organizational contexts in their study of the fates of Pickering Fellows as they take up careers in the U.S. Department of State. Although the fellowships bring prestige to the winners in college, in the State Department workplace, the fellowships mark them (inaccurately) as "diversity hires," undercutting their perceived competence and status in the workplace.

In a different institutional context but one also consequential for individual careers, Kevin Nazar, Roberta Spalter-Roth, and James C. Witte in "Who Gets Accepted and Who Gets Rejected? Status in the Production of Social Science" examine the impact of race and gender on the peer review process that leads to publication in the *American Sociological Review*, a high-status, flagship journal of an academic discipline. Their unique data set includes not only the race and gender of authors and articles accepted for publication in the journal over several years, but also all those articles that were submitted but rejected. Finally, Lehn M. Benjamin in "How Helping Can Reinforce or Attenuate Status Inequalities: The Case of Nonprofit Organizations" highlights how status is maintained in helping exchanges between staff and participants in nonprofit organizations (such as those for addiction, unemployment, homelessness), observing the effects on participants of three status attenuation practices—sharing control, establishing commonalities, and questioning causes, and comparing them with three status maintenance strategies—asserting control, reinforcing differences, and assuming causes.

As the collection of articles in this double issue demonstrates, we are gaining increasing insight into what status is, how it operates, and what its consequences are for unequal life outcomes. The next great challenge we face as researchers is to learn to use what we know about status processes to more effectively interrupt durable patterns of inequality based on social differences among people in society.

REFERENCES

Accominotti, Fabien, Freda Lynn, and Michael Sauder. 2022. "The Architecture of Status Hierarchies: Variations in Structure and Why They Matter for Inequality." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation of the Social Sciences* 8(6): 87–102. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.6.05.

Adler, Nancy E., Thomas Boyce, Margaret A. Chesney, Sheldon Cohen, Susan Folkman, Robert L. Khan, and S. Leonard Syme. 1994. "Socioeconomic Status and Health: The Challenge of the Gradient." *American Psychologist* 49: 15–24.

Adler, Nancy E., and Judith Stewart. 2010. "Health Disparities Across the Lifespan: Meaning, Methods, and Mechanisms." *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1186(1): 5–23.

Allport, Gordon W. 1954. *The Nature of Prejudice.* Cambridge, Mass.: Addison-Wesley.

Anderson, Cameron, Daniel R. Ames, and Samuel D. Gosling. 2008. "Punishing Hubris: The Perils of Overestimating One's Status in a Group." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 34(1): 90–101.

Anderson, Cameron, John A. Hildreth, and Laura Howland. 2015. "Is the Desire for Status a Fundamental Human Motive? A Review of the Em-

pirical Literature." *Psychological Bulletin* 141(3): 574–601.

Anderson, Cameron, Sanjay Srivastava, Jennifer S. Beer, Sandra E. Spataro, and Jennifer A. Chatman. 2006. "Knowing Your Place: Self-Perceptions of Status in Face-to-Face Groups." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 91(6): 1094–110.

Anderson, Cameron, and Robb Willer. 2014. "Do Status Hierarchies Benefit Groups? A Bounded Functionalist Account of Status." In *The Psychology of Social Status*, edited by Joey T. Cheng, Jessica L. Tracy, and Cameron Anderson. New York: Springer.

Anderson, Cameron, Robb Willer, Gavin J. Kilduff, and Courtney Brown. 2012. "The Origins of Deference: When Do People Prefer Lower Status?" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 102(5): 1077–88.

Bales, Robert F. 1950. *Interaction Process Analysis: A Method for the Study of Small Groups.* Cambridge, Mass.: Addison-Wesley.

———. 1970. *Personality and Interpersonal Behavior*. New York; Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Benjamin, Lehn M. 2022. "How Helping Can Reinforce or Attenuate Status Inequalities: The Case of Nonprofit Organizations." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 210–27. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.11.

Benard, Stephen, Long Doan, D. Adam Nicholson, Emily Meanwell, Eric L. Wright, and Peter Lista. 2022. "To Forgive Is Divine? Morality and the Status Value of Intergroup Revenge and Forgiveness." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(6): 122–39. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.6.07.

Berger, Joseph, M. Hamit Fisek, Robert Z. Norman, and Morris Zelditch. 1977. *Status Characteristics and Social Interaction: An Expectation-States Approach*. New York: Elsevier.

Berger, Joseph, Cecilia L. Ridgeway, M. Hamit Fisek, and Robert Z. Norman. 1998. "The Legitimation and Delegitimation of Power and Prestige Orders." *American Sociological Review* 63(3): 379–405.

Berger, Joseph, Susan J. Rosenholtz, and Morris Zelditch Jr. 1980. "Status Organizing Processes." *Annual Review of Sociology* 6: 479–508.

Berger, Joseph, and Murray Webster Jr. 2018. "Expectations, Status, and Behavior." In *Contemporary Social Psychological Theories,* 2nd ed., edited by Peter J. Burke. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Blumer, Herbert. 1958. "Race Prejudice as a Sense of Group Position." *Pacific Sociological Review* 1(1): 3–7.

Bobo, Lawrence. 1999. "Prejudice as Group Position: Microfoundations of a Sociological Approach to Racism and Race Relations." *Journal of Social Issues* 55(3): 445–72.

Botelho, Tristan L., and Mabel Abraham. 2017. "Pursuing Quality: How Search Costs and Uncertainty Magnify Gender-Based Double Standards in a Multistage Evaluation Process." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 62(4): 698–730.

Brannon, Tiffany N., Hazel R. Markus, and Valerie J. Taylor. 2015. "'Two Souls, Two Thoughts', Two Self-Schemas: Positive Consequences of Double Consciousness for Self-Construal and Academic Performance." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 108(4): 586–609.

Brescoll, Victoria L., Tyler G. Okimoto, and Andrea C. Vial. 2018. "You've Come a Long Way . . . Maybe: How Moral Emotions Trigger Backlash Against Women Leaders." *Journal of Social Issues* 74(1): 144–64.

Brown, Tony N., and R. Jay Turner. 2014. "Racial Identity and Allostatic Load: Deepening Our Understanding of the Deleterious Impact of Racism for Blacks." Presented at the 106th Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, Las Vegas, Nev. August 19–23, 2011.

Burdick, Alan. 2021. "Measuring the Cost of Racial Abuse in Soccer." *New York Times*, July 16. Accessed July 29, 2021. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/16/science/covid-racism-soccer-football-falco.html.

Cabrera, Susan F., and Melissa Thomas-Hunt. 2007. "'Street Cred' and the Executive Woman: The Effects of Gender Differences in Social Networks on Career Advancement." In *Social Psychology of Gender*, vol. 24, edited by Shelley Correll. Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing.

Caselli, Mauro, Paolo Falco, and Gianpiero Mattera. 2021. "When the Mob Goes Silent: Uncovering the Effects of Racial Harassment through a Natural Experiment." *Department of Economics and Management Working Papers* 2021/01. Trento, IT: University of Trento.

Chakrabarti, Poulimi. 2022. "Status and Development." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation of the Social Sciences* 8(6): 28–49. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.6.02.

Cheng, Joey T., and Jessica L. Tracy. 2014. "Toward a Unified Science of Hierarchy: Dominance and Prestige Are Two Fundamental Pathways to Human Social Rank." In *The Psychology of Social Status*, edited by Joey T. Cheng, Jessica L. Tracy, and Cameron Anderson. New York: Springer.

Cheryan, Sapna, and Hazel R. Markus. 2021. "Masculine Defaults: Identifying and Mitigating Hidden Cultural Biases." *Psychological Review* 127(6): 1022–52.

Cheryan, Sapna, Victoria C. Plaut, Paul Davies, and Claude Steele. 2009. "Ambient Belonging: How Stereotypical Cues Impact Gender Participation in Computer Science." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 97(6): 1045–60. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1037/a0016239.

Chwe, Michael Suk-Young. 2001. *Rational Ritual: Culture, Coordination, and Common Knowledge*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Cohen, Geoffrey. L., Julio Garcia, Nancy Apfel, and Allison Master. 2006. "Reducing the Racial Achievement Gap: A Social-Psychological Intervention." *Science* 313(5791): 1307–10.

Conway, Michael, M. Teresa Pizzamiglio, and Lauren Mount. 1996. "Status, Communality, and Agency: Implications for Stereotypes of Gender and Other Groups." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 71(1): 25–38.

Correll, Shelley J., and Cecilia L. Ridgeway. 2003. "Expectation States Theory." In *The Handbook of Social Psychology*, edited by John DeLamater. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum.

Correll, Shelley J., Cecilia L. Ridgeway, Ezar W. Zuckerman, Sharon Jank, Sara Jordan-Bloch, and Sandra Nakagawa. 2017. "It's the Conventional Thought that Counts: How Third-Order Inference Produces Status Advantage." *American Sociological Review* 82(2): 297–327.

Craig, Maureen A., and Jennifer Richeson. 2014. "'On the Precipice of a Majority-Minority America': Perceived Status Threat from the Racial Demographic Shift Affects White Americans' Political Ideology." *Psychological Science* 25(6): 1189–97.

Cramer, Katherine J. 2016. *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Cuddy, Amy J., Susan T. Fiske, and Peter Glick. 2007. "The BIAS Map: Behaviors from Intergroup Affect and Stereotypes." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 92(4): 631–48.

Destin, Mesmin, Régine Debrosse, Michelle Rheinschmidt-Same, and Jennifer A. Richeson. 2022. "Psychological Challenges and Social Supports That Shape the Pursuit of Socioeconomic Mobility." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 158–71. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.08.

Diekman, Amanda B., Emily K. Clark, Amanda M. Johnston, Elizabeth R. Brown, and Mia Steinberg. 2011. "Malleability in Communal Goals and Beliefs Influnces Attraction to STEM Careers: Evidence for a Goal Congruity Perspective." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 101(5): 902–18.

Duguid, Michelle M., Denise L. Lloyd, and Pamela S. Tolbert. 2012. "The Impact of Categorical Status, Numeric Representation, and Work Group Prestige on Preference for Demographically Similar Others: A Value Threat Approach." *Organization Science* 23(2): 386–401.

Emerson, Richard M. 1962. "Power-Dependence Relations." *American Sociological Review* 27(1): 31–41.

Espeland, Wendy Nelson, and Michael Sauder. 2016. *Engines of Anxiety: Academic Rankings, Reputation, and Accountability.* New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Fiske, Susan T. 2011. *Envy Up, Scorn Down: How Status Divides Us*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Fiske, Susan T., Amy J. C. Cuddy, Peter Glick, and Jun Xu. 2002. "A Model of (Often Mixed) Stereotype Content: Competence and Warmth Respectively Follow from Perceived Status and Competition." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 82(6): 878–902.

Fiske, Susan T., and Hazel R. Markus. 2012. *Facing Social Class: How Societal Rank Influences Interaction*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Franks, Peter, Peter Meunnig, Erica Lubetkin, and Haomiao Jia. 2006. "The Burden of Disease Associated with Being African-American in the United States and the Contribution of Socio-Economic Status." *Social Science & Medicine* 62(10): 2469–78.

Gidron, Noam, and Peter A. Hall. 2017. "The Politics of Social Status: Economic and Cultural Roots of the Populist Right." *British Journal of Sociology* 68(S1): S57–84.

Goffman, Erving. 1956. "The Nature of Deference and Demeanor." *American Anthropologist* 58(3): 473–502.

Goode, William J. 1978. *The Celebration of Heroes*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Gould, Roger V. 2002. "The Origins of Status Hierarchies: A Formal Theory and Empirical Test." *American Journal of Sociology* 107(5): 1143–78.

Gray-Little, Bernadette, and Adam R. Hafdahl. 2000. "Factors Influencing Racial Comparisons of Self-Esteem: A Quantitative Review." *Psychological Bulletin* 126(1): 26–54.

Grusky, David, Hall, Peter A. Hall, and Hazel Rose Markus. 2019 "The Rise of Opportunity Markets: How Did It Happen & What Can We Do?" *Daedalus* 148(3): 19–45.

Hamedani, MarYam G., and Hazel Markus. 2019. "Understanding Culture Clashes and Catalyzing Change: A Culture Cycle Approach." *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10(700): 1–7.

Harris, Meena. 2021. *Ambitious Girl*. New York: Little, Brown Books for Young Readers.

Henrich, Joseph, and Francisco J. Gil-White. 2001. "The Evolution of Prestige: Freely Conferred Deference as a Mechanism for Enhancing the Benefits of Cultural Transmission." *Evolution and Human Behavior* 22(3): 165–96.

Hochschild, Arlie R. 2016. *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*. New York: The New Press.

Hoebel, Jens, and Thomas Lampert. 2020. "Subjective Social Status and Health: Multidisciplinary Explanations and Methodological Challenges." *Journal of Health Psychology* 25(2): 173–85.

Holbrow, Hilary J. 2022. "When All Assistants Are Women, Are All Women Assistants? Gender Inequality and the Gender Composition of Support Roles." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 28–47. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.02.

Horne, Christine. 2004. "Collective Benefits, Exchange Interests, and Norm Enforcement." *Social Forces* 82(3): 1037–62.

House, James S., and David R. Williams. 2000. Understanding and Reducing Socioeconomic and Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Health." In *Promoting Health: Intervention Strategies from Social and Behavioral Research*, edited by Brian D. Smedley and S. Leonard Syme. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

Hsu, Tiffany. 2020. "Corporate Voices Get Behind 'Black Lives Matter' Cause." *New York Times*, May 31. Accessed July 29, 2021. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/31/business/media/companies-marketing-black-lives-matter-george-floyd.html.

Hysom, Stuart J. 2009. "Status Valued Goal Objects and Performance Expectations." *Social Forces* 87(3): 1623–48.

James, Sofia. 2021. "All California Public School Students Can Now Get Free School Lunches." *LAist*, July 21. Accessed July 29, 2021. https://laist.com/news/food/all-california-public-school-students-can-now-get-free-school-lunches.

Johnson, Cathryn, Timothy Dowd, and Cecilia Ridgeway. 2006. "Legitimacy as a Social Process." *Annual Review of Sociology* 32: 53–78.

Kalkhoff, Will, David Melamed, Josh Pollock, Brennan Miller, Jon Overton, and Matthew Pfeiffer. 2020. "Cracking the Black Box: Capturing the Role of Expectation States in Status Processes." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 83(1): 26–48.

Kang, Cecilia. 2014. "Google Data-Mines Its Approach to Promoting Women." *Washington Post*, April 2. Accessed July 29, 2021. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-switch/wp/2014/04/02/google-data-mines-its-women-problem/.

Karpowitz, Christopher F., and Tali Mendelberg. 2014. *The Silent Sex: Gender, Deliberation, and Institutions*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Keltner, Dacher, Deborah H. Gruenfeld, and Cameron Anderson. 2003. "Power, Approach, and Inhibition." *Psychological Review* 110(2): 265–84.

Koenig, Biko. 2022. "Politiczing Status Loss Among Trump Supporters in 2020." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation of the Social Sciences* 8(6): 69–86. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.6.04.

Korver-Glenn, Elizabeth. 2018. "Compounding Inequalities: How Racial Stereotypes and Discrimination Accumulate Across the Stages of Housing Exchange." *American Sociological Review* 83(4): 627–56.

Kraus, Michael W., Stéphane Côté, and Dacher Keltner. 2010. "Social Class, Contextualism, and Em-

pathic Accuracy." *Psychological Science* 21(11): 1716–23.

Krendl, Anne C., Jennifer A. Richeson, William M. Kelley, and Todd F. Heatherton. 2008. "The Negative Consequences of Threat: A Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging Investigation of the Neural Mechanisms Underlying Women's Underperformance in Math." *Psychological Science* 19(2): 168–75.

Krysan, Maria, Mick P. Cooper, Reynolds Farley, and Tyrone Forman. 2009. "Does Race Matter in Neighborhood Preferences? Results from a Video Experiment." *American Journal of Sociology* 115(2): 527–29.

Lareau, Annette. 2022. "Downplaying Themselves, Upholding Men's Status: Women's Deference to Men in Wealthy Families." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 112–31. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.06.

Leicht, Kevin T. 2022. "Inequality and the Status Window: Inequality, Conflict, and the Salience of Status Differences in Conflicts over Resources." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(6): 103–21. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.6.06.

Levine, Cynthia S., Hazel R. Markus, Makeda K. Austin, Edith Chen, and Gregory E. Miller. 2019. "Students of Color Show Health Advantages When They Attend Schools That Emphasize the Value of Diversity." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 116(13): 6013–18.

Liu, Songqui, Pei Liu, Mo Wang, and Baoshan Zhang. 2021. "Effectiveness of Stereotype Threat Interventions: A Meta-Analytic Review." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 106(6): 921–49.

Livingston, Robert W., Ashleigh S. Rosette, and Ella F. Washington. 2012. "Can an Agentic Black Woman Get Ahead? The Impact of Race and Interpersonal Dominance on Perceptions of Female Leaders." *Psychological Science* 23(4): 354–58.

Lynn, Freda B., Joel M. Podolny, and Lin Tao. 2009. "A Sociological (De)Construction of the Relationship between Status and Quality." *American Journal of Sociology* 115(3): 755–804.

Magee, Joe C., and Adam Galinsky. 2008. "Social Hierarchy: The Self-Reinforcing Nature of Power and Status." *Academy of Management Annals* 2(1): 351–98.

Maloney, E. K., Kimberly Rogers, and Lynn Smith-Lovin. 2022. "Status as Deference: Cultural Meaning as a Source of Occupational Behavior." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 70–88. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.04.

Manago, Bianca, Jane Sell, and Carla Goar. 2022. "Racial and Ethnic Status Distinctions and Discrimination: The Effects of Prior Contact and Group Interaction." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 132–57. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.07.

Markus, Hazel R., and Shinobu Kitayama. 1994. "A Collective Fear of the Collective: Implications for Selves and Theories of Selves." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 20(5): 568–79.

Marmot, M. G., George D. Smith, Stephen Stansfield, Chandra Patel, Fiona North, Jenny Head, Ian White, Eric Brunner, and Amanda Feeney. 1991. "Health Inequalities Among British Civil Servants: The Whitehall II Study." *The Lancet* 337(8754): 1387–93.

Melamed, David, Christopher W. Munn, Leanne Barry, Bradley Montgomery, and Oneya F.Okuwobi. 2019. "Status Characteristics, Implicit Bias, and the Production of Racial Inequality." *American Sociological Review* 84(6): 1013–1036.

Mendelberg, Tali. 2022. "Status, Symbols, and Politics: A Theory of Symbolic Status Politics." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation of the Social Sciences* 8(6): 50–68. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.6.03.

Mendes, Wendy B., Jim Blascovich, Brian Lickel, and Sarah Hunter. 2002. "Challenge and Threat During Social Interactions with White and Black Men." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 28(7): 939–52.

Mutz, Diana C. 2018. "Status Threat, Not Economic Hardship, Explains the 2016 Presidential Vote." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 115(19): E4330–39.

Nazar, Kevin, Roberta Spalter-Roth, and James C. Witte. 2022. "Who Gets Accepted and Who Gets Rejected? Status in the Production of Social Science." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 192–209. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.10.

Phelan, Jo C., and Bruce G. Link. 2015. "Is Racism a Fundamental Cause of Inequalities in Health?"*Annual Review of Sociology* 41: 311–30.

Podolny, Joel M. 2005. *Status Signals: A Sociological Study of Market Competition*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Portocarrero, Sandra, and James T. Carter. 2022. "'But the Fellows Are Simply Diversity Hires!' How Organizational Contexts Influence Status Beliefs." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 172–91. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.09.

Quadlin, Natasha. 2022. "Do Perceptions of Privilege Enhance—or Impede—Perceptions of Intelligence? Evidence from a National Survey Experiment." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 48–69. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.03.

Rai, Tage. S., and Alan P. Fiske. 2011. "Moral Psychology Is Relationship Regulation: Moral Motives for Unity, Hierarchy, Equality, and Proportionality." *Psychological Review* 118(1): 57–75.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L. 2011. *Framed By Gender: How Gender Inequality Persists in the Modern World.* New York: Oxford University Press.

———. 2014. "Why Status Matters for Inequality." *American Sociological Review* 79(1): 1–16.

———. 2019. *Status: Why Is It Everywhere? Why Does It Matter?* New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L., Kristen Backor, Yan E. Li, Justine E. Tinkler, and Kristan G. Erickson. 2009. "How Easily Does a Social Difference Become a Status Distinction? Gender Matters." *American Sociological Review* 74(1): 44–62.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L., and Sandra Nakagawa. 2014. "Status." In *Handbook of the Social Psychology of Inequality*, edited by Jane D. McLeod, Edward J. Lawler, and Michael Schwalbe. New York: Springer Publishers.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L., and Shelley J. Correll. 2004. "Unpacking the Gender System: A Theoretical Perspective on Cultural Beliefs and Social Relations." *Gender and Society* 18(4): 510–31.

———. 2006. "Consensus and the Creation of Status Beliefs." *Social Forces* 85(1): 431–53.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L., and David Diekema. 1989. "Dominance and Collective Hierarchy Formation in Male and Female Task Groups." *American Sociological Review* 54(1): 79–93.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L., and Kristan Glasgow Erickson. 2000. "Creating and Spreading Status Beliefs." *American Journal of Sociology* 106(3): 579–615.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L., Kristen Backor, Yan E. Li, Justine E. Tinkler, and Kristan G. Erickson. 2009. "How Easily Does a Social Difference Become a Status Distinction? Gender Matters." *American Sociological Review* 74(1): 44–62.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L., and Susan R. Fisk. 2012. "Class Rules, Status Dynamics, and Gateway Interactions." In *Facing Social Class: How Societal Rank Influences Interaction*, edited by Susan T. Fiske and Hazel R. Markus. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L., Cathryn Johnson, and David Diekema. 1994. "External Status, Legitimacy, and Compliance in Male and Female Groups." *Social Forces* 72(4): 1051–77.

Rivera, Lauren A. 2015. *Pedigree: How Elite Students Get Elite Jobs*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Rosette, Ashleigh S., and Robert W. Livingston. 2012. "Failure Is Not an Option for Black Women: Effects of Organizational Performance on Leaders with Single Versus Dual-Subordinate Identities." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 48(5): 1162–67.

Rudman, Laurie A., Corinne A. Moss-Racusin, Julie E. Phelan, and Sanne Nauts. 2012. "Status Incongruity and Backlash Effects: Defending the Gender Hierarchy Motivates Prejudice Against Female Leaders." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 48(1): 165–79.

Schmader, Toni, and William M. Hall. 2014. "Stereotype Threat in School and at Work: Putting Science Into Practice." *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 1(1): 30–37.

Seachrist, Gretchen B., and Charles Stangor. 2001. "Perceived Consensus Influences Intergroup Behavior and Stereotype Accessibility." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 80(4): 645–54.

Sewell, William H. 1992. "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation." *American Journal of Sociology* 98(1): 1–29.

Shih, Margaret, Todd L. Pittinsky, and Nalini Ambady. 1999. "Stereotype Susceptibility: Identity Salience and Shifts in Quantitative Performance." *Psychological Science* 10(1): 80–83.

Steele, Claude M. 2010. *Whistling Vivaldi: And Other Clues to How Stereotypes Affect Us*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Stephens, Nicole M., Stephanie A. Fryberg, and Hazel R. Markus. 2012. "It's Your Choice: How the Middle Class Model of Independence Disadvantages Working Class Americans." In *Facing Social Class: How Societal Rank Influences Interaction*, edited by Susan T. Fiske and Hazel R. Markus. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Stephens, Nicole M., Tiffany N. Brannon, Hazel R. Markus, and Jessica E. Nelson. 2015. "Feeling at Home in College: Fortifying School-Relevant Selves to Reduce Social Class Disparities in Higher Education: The Importance of Fit and Empowerment." *Social Issues and Policy Review* 9(1): 1–24.

Tajfel, Henri, and John C. Turner. 1986. "The Social Identity Theory of Inter-Group Behavior." In *Psychology of Inter-Group Relations,* edited by Stephen Worchel and William G. Austin. Chicago: Nelson-Hall.

Thomas, Catherine C., Nicholas G. Otis, Justin R. Abraham, Hazel R. Markus, and Gregory M. Walton. 2020. "Toward a Science of Delivering Aid with Dignity: Experimental Evidence and Local Forecasts From Kenya." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science* 117(27): 15546–53.

Thomas, Kyle A., Peter DeScioli, Omare Sultan Haque, and Steven Pinker. 2014. "The Psychology of Coordination and Common Knowledge." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 107(4): 657–76.

Thye, Shane R. 2000. "A Status Value Theory of Power in Exchange Relations." *American Sociological Review* 65(3): 407–43.

Tilly, Charles. 1998. *Durable Inequality*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Triandis, Harry C. 1995. "The Self and Social Behavior in Differing Cultural Contexts." In *The Culture and Psychology Reader,* edited by Nancy R. Goldberger and Joanne B. Veroff. New York: New York University Press.

Troyer, Lisa, and C. Wesley Younts. 1997. "Whose Expectations Matter? The Relative Power of First- and Second-Order Expectations in Determining Social Influence." *American Journal of Sociology* 103(3): 692–732.

Twenge, Jean M., and Jennifer Crocker. 2002. "Race and Self-Esteem: Meta-Analyses Comparing Whites, Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and American Indians and Comment on Gray-Little and Hafdahl (2000)." *Psychological Bulletin* 128(3): 371–408.

Valentino, Lauren. 2022. "Status Lenses: Mapping Hierarchy and Consensus in Status Beliefs." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 89–110. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.05.

Van Kleef, Gerben A., and Joey T. Cheng. 2020. "Power, Status, and Hierarchy: Current Trends and Future Challenges." *Current Opinion in Psychology* 33: v–xiv.

Van Vugt, Mark, and Joshua M. Tybur. 2016. "The Evolutionary Foundations of Hierarchy: Status, Dominance, Prestige, and Leadership." In *Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology*, 2nd ed., edited by David M. Buss. New York: Wiley.

Vance, J. D. 2016. *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis*. New York: Harper Collins.

Veblen, Thorstein. (1899) 1953. *The Theory of the Leisure Class.* New York: New American Library.

Vignoles, Vivian L., Elinor Owe, Maja Becker, Peter B. Smith, Matthew J. Easterbrook, Rupert Brown, Roberto González, Nicolas Didier, et al. 2016. "Beyond the 'East–West' Dichotomy: Global Variation in Cultural Models of Selfhood." *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 145(8): 966–1000.

Walton, Gregory M., and Geoffrey L. Cohen. 2011. "A Brief Social-belonging Intervention Improves Academic and Health Outcomes of Minority Students." *Science* 331(6023): 1447–51.

Walton, Gregory M., and Alia J. Crum. 2021. *Handbook of Wise Interventions: How Social Psychology Can Help People Change.* New York: Guilford Press.

Walton, Gregory M., Christine Logel, Jennifer M. Peach, Steven J. Spencer, and Mark P. Zanna. 2015. "Two Brief Interventions to Mitigate a 'Chilly Climate' Transform Women's Experience, Relationships, and Achievement in Engineering." *Journal of Educational Psychology* 107(2): 468–85.

Walton, Gregory M., and Timothy D. Wilson. 2018. "Wise Interventions: Psychological Remedies for Social and Personal Problems." *Psychological Review* 125(5): 617–55.

Weber, Max. (1918) 1968. *Economy and Society*. Edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich. Trans-

lated by Ephraim Frischoff. New York: Bedminster.

Webster, Murray, and James E. Driskell. 1978. "Status Generalization: A Review and Some New Data." *American Sociological Review* 43(2): 220–36.

Wetts, Rachel, and Robb Willer. 2018. "Privilege on the Precipice: Perceived Racial Status Threats Lead White Americans to Oppose Welfare Programs." *Social Forces* 97(2): 793–822.

Wilkinson, Richard G. 2000. *Mind the Gap: Hierarchies, Health, and Human Evolution*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

Williams, Melissa J., and Larissa Z. Tiedens. 2016. "The Subtle Suspension of Backlash: A Meta-analysis of Penalties for Women's Implicit and Explicit Dominance Behavior." *Psychological Bulletin* 142(2): 165–97.

Wynn, Alison T., and Shelley J. Correll. 2018. "Puncturing the Pipeline: Do Technology Companies Alienate Women in Recruiting Sessions?" *Social Studies of Science* 48(1): 149–64.

Zelditch, Morris, Jr. 2018. "Legitimacy Theory." In *Contemporary Social Psychological Theories*, 2nd ed., edited by Peter J. Burke. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

PART II

Status Is Relational, Cultural, and Multilevel

When All Assistants Are Women, Are All Women Assistants? Gender Inequality and the Gender Composition of Support Roles

HILARY J. HOLBROW

A growing literature examines whether women's integration into management jobs erodes gender stereotypes and gender inequality. However, this literature neglects the other side of the status coin—women's continued predominance in low-level support jobs. I theorize that what people see when they "look down" the occupational structural is more critical to the creation of status beliefs than what they see when they "look up," and test this theory using matched employer-employee data from Japan. I find that, adjusting for job type and human capital, the gender pay gap is nearly three times greater in companies where subordinate jobs are female dominated. This theory provides new ways to understand the "stalled gender revolution" in the United States, Japan, and beyond.

Keywords: inequality, status, gender, organizations, work, United States, Japan

Many scholars and business consultants agree that higher managerial representation for women is key to disrupting patterns of male supremacy in the workplace (see, for example, Cohen and Huffman 2007, 700; Huffman, Cohen, and Pearlman 2010, 273; Nemoto 2016; Kramer and Harris 2019, chap. 11; Shams and Tomaskovic-Devey 2019). Because managerial women erode gender essentialist beliefs, the argument goes, women's representation in management also benefits the vastly larger ranks of nonmanagerial women workers by reducing bias and discrimination against all women (Ely 1995; Huffman, Cohen, and Pearlman 2010; Kramer and Harris 2019).

This perspective draws on status construc-

Hilary J. Holbrow is assistant professor of Japanese politics and society at Indiana University.

 Holbrow, Hilary J. 2022. "When All Assistants Are Women, Are All Women Assistants? Gender Inequality and the Gender Composition of Support Roles." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 28–47. DOI: 10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.02. The author gratefully acknowledges financial support from the Fulbright Foundation as well the invaluable introductions provided by Akinari Horii and Jun Kurihara at the Canon Institute for Global Studies (CIGS), and by Shinju Fujihira at Harvard. This research would not have been possible without them and the support of numerous staff at the Canon Institute, the Japan Association of Corporate Executives (JACE), and the companies that participated in the survey. I am particularly indebted to Yasuko Nagatsuka of CIGS, Natsuko Kasahara of JACE, and to Keiko Shibatani. Their intelligence and professionalism brought the project from idea to reality. Hazel Markus, Suzanne Nichols, Cecilia Ridgeway, Jocelyn Viterna, the Russell Sage Foundation conference participants, and the anonymous reviewers provided insightful feedback. Direct correspondence to: Hilary Holbrow, at hilholbr@iu.edu, Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies, Indiana University, 355 N. Eagleson Ave., Bloomington, IN 47405, United States.

tion theory (SCT), which posits that where resources and power are unevenly distributed among groups, members of the better-resourced group will tend to be more highly valued and esteemed. This esteem for members of the better-resourced group not only leads people to bestow its members with higher rewards, but also gives their higher rewards the halo of merit and justice, further reinforcing the unequal conditions that first give rise to the belief (Ridgeway 1997, 2019). Inspired by this framework, a rapidly growing body of organizational scholarship investigates the effects of women's gradual incursion into management on outcomes for nonmanagerial women in the United States and other postindustrial countries (see, for example, Ely 1995; Hultin and Szulkin 2003; Cohen and Huffman 2007; Huffman, Cohen, and Pearlman 2010; Kurtulus and Tomaskovic-Devey 2012; Stainback and Kwon 2012; Stainback, Kleiner, and Skaggs 2016; Abendroth et al. 2017; Halldén, Säve-Söderbergh, and Rosén 2018; Stojmenovska 2019).

This scholarship, however, has overlooked the other side of the status coin—women's enduring overrepresentation in low-level service and administrative positions. Although women's representation in historically male-typed professional and management positions has grown dramatically over the past five decades, men's representation in historically female-typed jobs, such as those of secretaries or office assistants, has not increased accordingly (England 2010; Brynin and Perales 2016; on men's hostility to feminized service jobs, see Koenig 2022). SCT implies that this persistent female overrepresentation in jobs with little power and resources may have marked effects on gender status beliefs and consequently on the ways in which all women are viewed and treated in the workplace. Yet the relationship between the gender composition of these categorically subordinate roles and other metrics of gender inequality receives little attention.

In this article, I draw on the cross-national literature on gender inequality and workplace demography to theorize why the composition of low-status jobs may be of even greater importance to the creation of status beliefs than the composition of managerial and professional jobs. I test the implications of this theory using data from Japan and show that gender gaps in pay and in the subjective experience of feeling valued by supervisors are both far larger where subordinate jobs are female dominated. I argue that the exclusive focus on women's representation in management in previous scholarship can itself be seen as a form of pro-male bias, whereby the gender composition of stereotypically male-typed management jobs is implicitly assumed to matter more for workplace dynamics than the composition of female-typed subordinate jobs.

This new theory can illuminate the causes of what Paula England (2010) terms "the stalled gender revolution." Although the direct relationship between women's overrepresentation in low-status support roles and the stagnant gender wage gap is well documented (England 2010; England, Levine, and Mishel 2020), the theory developed here highlights how women's predominance in support jobs may have important indirect consequences. In addition to its direct effect on wages, women's overrepresentation in low-status jobs may entrench views of women as "mere" assistants, justifying devaluative treatment of women, regardless of the job they hold. This theory thus provides a new lens through which to understand why gendered beliefs in the workplace have remained intractable (Vial, Napier, and Brescoll 2016) and why gender inequality in pay has barely changed since the early 2000s (England, Levine, and Mishel 2020), despite women's consistent gains in managerial representation over the past half century in the United States and beyond (World Bank 2021).

WHY THE GENDER COMPOSITION OF SUBORDINATE JOBS MATTERS

Contrary to media hyperbole (for example, Feintzig 2020), office digitization has by no means eliminated secretarial work. Office and administrative support is the single largest occupational category in the United States, employing over 18.5 million workers in 2020, more than three times the number classified as managerial (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2021a). Despite the near disappearance of "secretary" as a job title, an army of "assistants," "coordinators," and even "managers" (Seeley 2018), "di-

rectors" (ZipRecruiter 2021), or "partners" (Facebook Careers 2021) continue to greet customers, answer phones and emails, make photocopies, manage calendars, order supplies, and maintain filing systems and databases (Truss et al. 2013) in the name of facilitating the "more important" work of others (Karlsson 2011; Seeley 2018).

The face of this administrative army is, and has long been, female. Women made up 77 percent of administrative support workers in the United States in 1975 (Wootten 1997) and 72 percent of administrative support workers in 2020 (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2021b). The more closely an administrative job hews to the secretarial model (Truss et al. 2013), the more female dominated it tends to be. In 2020, 93 percent of U.S. administrative assistants were women (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2021b).

Rosabeth Kanter's groundbreaking study of gender in the white-collar workplace paid careful attention to the role of the secretary and noted how women secretaries' categorically subordinate positions bolstered the power and authority of male managers (1993, 18, 84). Building on this study, status construction theory has focused on how power and resource differentials reinforce men's workplace supremacy (Ridgeway 2019), acknowledging the role that female support employees play in workplace status dynamics (Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin 2002, 196–97).

Yet few studies investigate the circumstances of low-level administrative personnel (for exceptions, see Karlsson 2011; Truss et al. 2013; Costello 2015; Seeley 2018). Moreover, empirical work on organizational demography as a determinant of gender inequality focuses exclusively on the effects of women's entry into and presence in male-typed managerial and professional jobs (Ely 1995; Cohen and Huffman 2007; Huffman, Cohen, and Pearlman 2010; Maume 2011; Kurtulus and Tomaskovic-Devey 2012; Penner, Toro-Tulla, and Huffman 2012; Srivastava and Sherman 2015; Stainback, Kleiner, and Skaggs 2016; Abendroth et al. 2017; Halldén, Säve-Söderbergh, and Rosén 2018; Stojmenovska 2019).

This cross-national literature, which includes cases from the United States (Kurtulus and Tomaskovic-Devey 2012), the United Kingdom (Stojmenovska 2019), Sweden (Halldén, Säve-Söderbergh, and Rosén 2018), Germany (Abendroth et al. 2017), South Korea (Stainback and Kwon 2012), and Japan (Nemoto 2016) has largely, if not universally, supported the predictions that women's entry into management ameliorates other measures of gender inequality. However, where studies have found positive effects of women's managerial presence, these effects are substantively small. For example, Fidan Kurtulus and Donald Tomaskovic-Devey (2012) find that a 1 percent increase in women's share of management in large U.S. firms is followed by a less than 0.1 percent increase in women's share of mid-level management over a six-year period. Matt Huffman, Philip Cohen, and Jessica Pearlman (2010) show that a 1 percent increase in women's share of management is followed by change of 0.02 in the 0–1 segregation index of nonmanagerial jobs. Dragana Stojmenovska (2019), using British data, finds that a 1 percent increase in women's share of management jobs is associated with a £17 (about $24) decrease in the gender wage gap in annual earnings. Why, given these small effect sizes, have scholars not turned their attention to other aspects of workplace demography, including the enduring overrepresentation of women in support roles?

In principle, the continued focus on the effects of women managerial workers is logical if women managers' direct power and influence is the primary mechanism linking female managerial representation to better outcomes for other women (Hultin and Szulkin 2003). Women in management have far greater leeway to allocate resources in ways favorable to women than secretaries or other subordinate personnel do. In contrast to the symbolic processes described in SCT, then, the power mechanism justifies a narrower focus on women's entry into management.

However, the power mechanism is poorly substantiated. First, qualitative studies cast doubt on claims that female managers foster subordinate women's professional advancement (Costello 2015, 115–17). Second, even when female managers are motivated to reduce gender inequality, their capacity to act is constrained. Not only do they face more scrutiny and suspicion than male managers (Kanter

1993); they are also often concentrated on the bottom rungs of management hierarchies (Stojmenovska, Steinmetz, and Volker 2021). Finally, if managerial women's power reduces gender inequality, we would expect to see the ameliorative effects of women leaders most strongly on gender inequality among their direct subordinates (Srivastava and Sherman 2015). Dyadic study designs, which capture the genders of both employees and their managers, are best suited to this task. However, dyadic studies have universally found null or even negative relationships between the presence of female managers, and outcomes for female subordinates (Maume 2011; Penner, Toro-Tulla, and Huffman 2012; Srivastava and Sherman 2015).

Support for the hypothesis that women's managerial presence improves conditions for nonmanagerial women comes overwhelmingly from studies that examine gender inequality at higher levels of aggregation. These studies investigate whether gender inequality is lower across the board in firms with higher shares of women in management (Ely 1995; Cohen and Huffman 2007; Stainback, Kleiner, and Skaggs 2016; Abendroth et al. 2017), or in firms where women's share of management has grown (Huffman, Cohen, and Pearlman 2010; Kurtulus and Tomaskovic-Devey 2012; Stojmenovska 2019). The disjuncture in the results of dyadic and aggregative studies suggests that, to the extent that women's entry into management ranks mitigates gender inequality for nonmanagerial women, it is predominantly through symbolic channels operating at higher levels of analysis—in establishments, in organizations, industries, and society more broadly—as suggested by SCT.[1] In turn, the importance of the symbolic divisions between the genders urges attention toward not just the top of the organizational pyramid but also the bottom.

Other strands of research also indicate that the composition of support jobs is likely to be a potent generator of status beliefs. Perhaps because assistants are seen as peripheral, academic studies that center their experiences are few and far between. However, the rare examples of such studies vividly highlight the persistent devaluation and marginalization of women in these roles (Truss et al. 2013; Costello 2015). An ocean of anecdotal evidence further suggests that this devaluation matters not just to the female assistants most directly affected by it, but also to women in professional and managerial roles. Female CEOs (McNally 2019), engineers (Niselow and Omarjee 2018), lawyers (Melaku 2019), medical doctors (Wible 2016), research scientists (Williams, Hall, and Philips 2014), photographers (Nittle 2017), professors (Laufenberg 2021), and politicians (Wheeler 2015) all report being mistaken for assistants. In the United States, these experiences are especially common among Black and Latina women (Williams, Hall, and Philips 2014).

The attention on female representation in elite (and male-typed) managerial and professional jobs and its effects on gender inequality is remarkably widespread, persistent, and impervious to countervailing evidence (also see Leicht 2022). Despite these examples from women's daily lives, despite decades-old insights that female subordination shapes views of women in the workplace, despite subordinate women's numerical predominance over managerial women across national contexts, and despite findings from across the postindustrial world that women's entry into managerial positions has had small (or null) impacts on gender inequality for other women, the literature has perversely maintained this exclusive focus. I argue that this evidence enjoins us to take a new look at the construction of status and its effects on inequality in the workplace and beyond, with the spotlight on the bottom of the hierarchy rather than the top.

THE JAPANESE CASE

Building on the transnational literature on status, inequality, and workplace demography, I use a case study from Japan to test the implications of the theory that the composition of low-status jobs has important indirect effects on gender inequality. The selection of a Japanese case is a practical one. Contemporary American organizations sometimes attempt to sustain il-

1. If power is the mechanism, it may narrowly benefit the relatively small cadre of management-adjacent women professionals rather than women as a whole.

lusions of equality, concealing the subordinate or support nature of jobs behind inflated titles, such as "Director of First Impressions" rather than the prosaic "receptionist" (ZipRecruiter 2021). However, this sleight of hand is not typical of Japanese businesses, where hierarchy is generally accepted as a matter-of-fact feature of organizational life. Japanese organizations thus use worker classification systems that make the identification of subordinate workers straightforward.

Japanese firms' particular delineations between subordinate jobs and other positions arise in the context of employers' emphasis on long-term employment and internal labor markets, or ILMs (Brinton 1993; Ono 2007; Mun and Jung 2018). ILMs generate premiums for tenure and incentivize core workers to demonstrate potential and commitment by working long hours (Ono 2018). However, the dual expectation of long-term employment and long work hours make it all but impossible for women with children to fit the "ideal worker" model of Japanese firms (Brinton and Mun 2016; Ono 2018). Hence, over the past fifty years, firms have employed women predominantly, although not exclusively, in peripheral roles, either as irregular workers who lack job security and access to seniority wages (Mun 2016; JILPT 2021a), or as regular workers on a clerical track in which employees engage primarily in support work and are ineligible for promotion to management (Kanai 2013; Mun 2016).

Regular management-track jobs are male dominated in more than 80 percent of firms (Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare 2013, 9). Meanwhile, the clerical track is female dominated in 64 percent of firms (Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare 2013, 9), and 68 percent of irregular workers are women (JILPT 2021a). Thus the management, clerical, and irregular job categories institutionalize the female "secretarial ghetto" that is a ubiquitous, but less formalized, feature of office life in the United States and other postindustrial countries.

However, as in the United States, Japan's dearth of women in management is the subject of far greater attention than women's overrepresentation in irregular or clerical track jobs. Although the number of female irregular workers exceeds the number of managers of both genders by a factor of eleven (JILPT 2021a, 2021b),[2] in the period between 2000 and 2021, mentions of "managerial work" and "women" (*kanrishoku* and *josei*) in the *Asahi Shimbun*, a leading Japanese newspaper, were twice as frequent as mentions of "irregular [employment]" and "women" (*hiseiki* and *josei*).

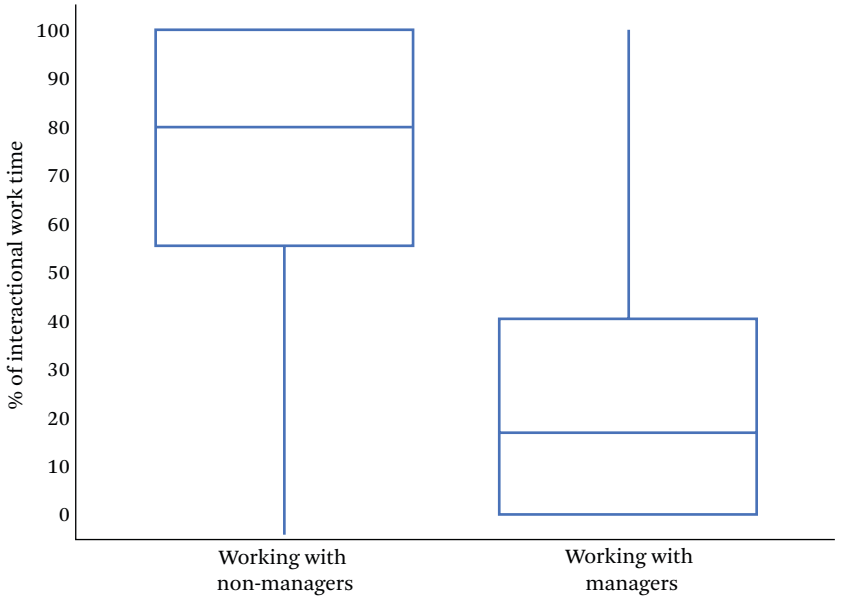
Elite discourse and policy follow this same pattern. In 2013, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe set a target of increasing women's share of leadership positions to 30 percent by 2020 (*The Economist* 2014, 25). As of 2016, large companies have been required to set (voluntary) targets for women's managerial representation and report women's share of management jobs to a publicly accessible database. Prominent global consulting firms (Goldman Sachs 2019; McKinsey & Company 2021) champion the cause of female representation in management in Japanese firms, as do international investors (Mun and Jung 2018), often in the name of improving Japan's economy and companies' bottom lines. However, although there is ample room for improvement in women's access to managerial jobs—Japan fell far short of Abe's target, with women holding just 15 percent of managerial jobs in 2020—managerial workers are a scant 2 percent of the labor force (JILPT 2021b). As in the United States, then, faith that increasing women's representation in management will revitalize Japan's economy rests implicitly on the weakly supported assumptions that managerial women will create "trickle down" equality (see Leicht 2022), and that the composition of management is the most potent driver of status beliefs.

DATA

The data for this study come from a 2015 survey of employees nested within twelve large Japanese firms. The firms represent three industries—high-tech manufacturing, business services, and consumer services. All are members of the diversity subcommittee of the Japan Association of Corporate Executives, a prestigious business group.

2. The number of female workers in clerical occupations exceeds the total number of managerial workers by a factor of six (JILPT 2021b).

Figure 1. Respondents' Percentage of Interactional Work Time



Source: Author's calculations.

Each firm selected at least two teams and sent the survey to every member of the team, including management track, clerical track, and irregular workers.[3] The inclusion of both regular and irregular workers in nested teams and firms makes this survey unique and is crucial for exploring the question of interest because it has become increasingly common for firms to replace regular employees on the clerical track with irregular workers (Mun 2016). This data structure makes visible not only gender differences in managerial representation between firms, but also differences in gender representation at the bottom of the corporate hierarchy.

In total, 539 employees completed the survey for a response rate of 59 percent, exceeding the mean response rate of 52.7 percent in organizational surveys (Baruch and Holtom 2008). Respondents provided extensive information on their demographic background, their pay, job content, supervisory authority, and job classification. They also rated their workplaces on various subjective measures.

Descriptive data from the survey highlight a reason the composition of subordinate jobs may not only be influential in the creation of status beliefs, but also more important than the composition of management jobs. As Cecilia Ridgeway and Hazel Markus describe (2022, this issue), status beliefs emerge and are expressed in interaction. Further, deferential behaviors and attitudes are a key way in which organizational actors perform status differences (Maloney, Rogers, and Smith-Lovin 2022, this issue). In this sample, as in postindustrial economies more generally, subordinate jobs are more numerous than managerial jobs—25 percent of respondents are in subordinate roles versus 15 percent in managerial ones. Intuitively, then, we can expect that most respondents have greater opportunity to receive (or exact) deference from subordinate workers than to offer deference to managerial workers.

Respondents' time-use reports, illustrated in figure 1, support this intuition. Including only time spent in interaction with coworkers, the median time respondents spent with man-

3. Because these data were collected to understand foreign workers' workplace integration (see Holbrow 2020), the teams were selected based on the presence of white-collar foreign workers; team selection is thus unrelated to gender composition of the teams.

agerial workers is 17 percent; 25 percent of workers spent no time at all with managers. In contrast, the median time spent with nonmanagerial workers is 80 percent. Whatever ways in which employees perform deference to managers, these performances are infrequent. Thus, contrary to the stance of the organizational demography literature, the gender composition of management is unlikely to be of highest importance in undermining or reinforcing gender status beliefs, while the gender composition of subordinate jobs is potentially of much greater impact.

Individual-level sample descriptives are presented in table 1. The analytic sample size of 528 is slightly smaller than the 539 total respondents because eleven respondents are missing data on income.

Although some Japanese firms "symbolically comply" to gender norms in other wealthy countries by hiring more women managers and leaving other aspects of gender inequality untouched (Mun and Jung 2018), both individual and firm-level statistics indicate this is not the case among the sample firms.

Including clerical track workers, nearly 80 percent of women in the sample have regular status, meaning they enjoy long-term job security and access to company welfare benefits. In contrast, at a national level, most women work in irregular positions, including part-time, term-limited, and dispatch jobs (JILPT 2021a). Further, adjusted for their shorter tenures, women have more job transfers within their firms, a key metric of firms' commitment to developing female employees' human capital in the context of ILMs.

Nonetheless, these metrics do not indicate that the firms have achieved a gender-equal environment. As in most Japanese firms, women are overrepresented in subordinate clerical track and irregular jobs and underrepresented in management.

Descriptive statistics on the firms in table 2 confirm the impression of the sample firms as unusually gender progressive in the broader

Table 1. Individual-Level Descriptive Statistics

	Men (n = 355)		Women (n = 173)	
	Mean or %	SD	Mean or %	SD
Income (1,000s of JPY)	8,632.2	4,468.0	5,566.5	2,988.2
Job category				
Management track	80.8		62.4	
Clerical track	6.8		16.8	
Irregular job	12.4		20.8	
Education				
High school or associates'	6.2		11.6	
BA	69.3		65.3	
MA/MS	19.4		17.3	
MBA/JD/PHD	5.1		5.8	
Work hours	43.8	8.6	42.2	8.4
Number of job placements, adjusted for tenure and normalized	−0.1	1.0	0.1	1.0
Supervisory level				
No subordinates	64.5		89.6	
One to five subordinates	10.7		3.5	
Six or more subordinates	24.8		6.9	
Has children	54.6		16.8	

Source: Author's calculations.

Table 2. Firm-Level Measures of Job Distribution by Gender

Company	Number of Respondents	Women's Percentage of Respondents	Number of Manager Respondents	Women's Percentage of Managerial Jobs (Firm)	Women's Percentage of Managerial Jobs (Sample)	Number of Management Track Respondents	Women's Percentage of Management Track	Number of Clerical Track and Irregular Respondents	Women's Percentage of Clerical Track and Irregular Respondents
A	32	31.3	9	7	11.1	27	25.9	5	60.0
B	43	27.9	12	3	0.0	36	25.0	7	42.9
C	35	40.0	8		25.0	31	35.5	4	75.0
D	50	24.0	17	20	17.6	39	17.9	11	45.5
E	30	23.3	15	11	0.0	15	13.3	15	33.3
F	81	35.8	22	5	9.1	52	15.4	29	72.4
G	27	66.7	3	34	33.3	7	28.6	20	80.0
H	37	35.1	9	10	22.2	27	37.0	10	30.0
I	142	26.8	34	16	17.6	119	28.6	23	17.4
J	23	30.4	4	4	0.0	19	31.6	4	25.0
K	29	34.5	5	5	0.0	24	37.5	5	20.0
L	10	30.0	7	28	14.3	9	33.3	1	0.0

Source: Author's calculations.

context of large Japanese businesses. Nationwide, women's average share of management positions in large firms, defined here as the section chief (*kacho*-level) and above, is around 5 percent (Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare 2016, 3); in 80 percent of firms, women's share of management is less than 10 percent (Teikoku Databank 2018, 2). However, women's share of management jobs exceeds 10 percent in seven of the twelve sample firms. Four firms have shares of women in management that are similar to the average for large firms, but three of these are manufacturing firms, where women's typical share falls well below the cross-industry average. Thus, for large firms in their industry, even these firms are progressive.[4] If women's overrepresentation in subordinate roles is associated with greater gender inequality even in this environment where employers are unusually supportive of women's advancement, this suggests that the relationship between these two factors may be even more marked among firms with lower commitments to women's workplace advancement.

ANALYTIC STRATEGY

Previous research has often used cross-sectional data to investigate whether gender wage gaps are lower in firms where women make up a larger share management (Hultin and Szulkin 2003; Cohen and Huffman 2007; Stainback and Kwon 2012; Stainback, Kleiner, and Skaggs 2016; Abendroth et al. 2017). In this study, I use this same methodology to ask whether gender wages gaps are wider where women compose a larger share of the subordinate workforce, as implied by the theory that the demography of subordinate jobs is critical for the construction of status beliefs, and for the distribution of resources in the workplace.

To do so, I model respondents' earnings using two-level hierarchical linear modeling. This strategy accounts for clustering in the standard errors of income for individuals within firms (Snijders and Bosker 2012).[5] All models use random effects for firms. The outcome variable is annual earnings, including salary and bonus. I do not log wages because earnings are not highly dispersed, reflecting the low ratio of highest to lowest earnings in Japanese firms relative to U.S. firms (Koike 1988). All models adjust for standard measures of human capital, including age, tenure, education, and work hours, as well as individual job classification (management track, clerical track, or irregular) and number of employees supervised.[6]

I assess the effect of interest by interacting respondent gender with a binary variable indicating whether women are overrepresented in subordinate roles in their firms.[7] As a point of comparison, I also interact a binary variable of women's representation in management with respondent gender.

If the gender composition of subordinate jobs is associated with gender inequality, it is also of interest how this association varies with job category. I therefore run a final model that interacts a categorical variable for gender and

4. Shares of women in management in the firms are strongly correlated with women's share of management in the surveyed teams (Pearson's $r = 0.77$), indicating that the surveyed teams are representative of their firms as a whole.

5. Within firms, variation is minimal in wages at the team level, so the models do not include random effects for teams.

6. One potential concern with this modeling strategy is that the small number of level two units (firms) may bias the point estimates and standard errors of the cross-level interactions, leading to a higher rate of type one errors (Snijders and Bosker 2012). To mitigate these concerns, I use Restricted Maximum Likelihood (REML) estimation, with a Kenward-Roger adjustment (Kenward and Roger 1997, 2009). Although traditional maximum likelihood estimation requires twenty to thirty clusters to generate unbiased estimates, REML with the Kenward-Roger adjustment produces unbiased estimates with as few as ten clusters (McNeish and Stapleton 2016; McNeish and Harring 2017).

7. Data on firm-wide share of women in subordinate roles is not available, but the comparison of women's share of management in the sample and the firms as a whole shows a strong correlation between the sample-level and firm-level representation, indicating that sample-derived data are an adequate proxy.

job type (divided into management track and nonmanagement tracks jobs of all kinds due to small sample size) with the binary variable for women's overrepresentation in subordinate jobs. This allows us to determine whether women in both management track and in clerical track or irregular positions experience greater wage inequality in firms with female-dominated subordinate jobs.

Because the data used here are cross-sectional, I cannot make causal claims about the findings. I have argued that women's overrepresentation in subordinate jobs may produce a devaluative organizational climate, where all women are seen as less worthy and capable and hence receive less pay. However, associations between gender inequality and subordinate job composition may be the product of other, unobserved characteristics of firms or workers. For example, HR practices may be different in firms where women are overrepresented in subordinate jobs; alternatively, women with high career ambitions may avoid firms where subordinate jobs are female dominated. However, studies of the relationship between women's representation in management and gender inequality share these limitations. Even longitudinal studies cannot rule out time-variant differences between firms that drive both growing shares of women in management and reductions in gender inequality. Like previous research in the organizational demography tradition, this study does not conclusively demonstrate a causal relationship between the variables of interest. Instead, it establishes the promise of an analytical approach centered on the demography of subordinate jobs in the study of status processes and gender inequality.

RESULTS

Model 1 in table 3 shows the relationship between individual-level variables and earnings. Measures of human capital follow expected patterns, and, also as anticipated, wages vary significantly by job classification. For example, clerical track employees earn around ¥1.6 million ($16,000) less than management-track employees on an annual basis. Irregular jobs are not significantly associated with lower wages after adjustments for tenure because irregular workers by definition do not stay with the firm long enough for their low returns to tenure to accrue. Supervisory authority is strongly and positively associated with earnings. However, significant gender gaps in pay remain after adjustments for human capital and job characteristics. Women are predicted to earn ¥1.4 million ($14,000, or 17 percent) less than men, net of adjustment variables. Although vertical segregation and shorter tenure are frequently cited as reasons for Japan's high levels of gender inequality, direct effects of these measures explain just over half of the gender pay gap in this study context.

Model 2 tests whether, as I have hypothesized, gender inequality is greater where subordinate jobs are female dominated. The model reveals a large and statistically significant negative interaction between female gender and women's share of subordinate roles. This interaction is visualized in figure 2. For women in firms where subordinate jobs are gender balanced or dominated by men, women's wage disadvantage shrinks to around ¥0.8 million ($8,000), or 11 percent; in contrast, women's wage disadvantage is more than three times larger, ¥2.8 million ($28,000), or 31 percent, in the firms where subordinate jobs are female dominated. In other words, in the firms where women are "the face" of subordinate jobs, women earn considerably less than men, net of human capital and job category.

This large interaction effect is robust to a number of different modeling variations. Changing the cut point for female-dominated subordinate jobs from 60 to 70 percent increases the predicted size of the effect (model not shown). And, the effect is also apparent in a linear specification of women's share of subordinate jobs in model 3. This model shows that, for every percentage increase in women's share of subordinate jobs, the gender wage gap increases by ¥31,000 ($310). Figure 3 illustrates this effect.

I also examine the relationship between gender inequality and women's representation in management jobs, using a binary measure of female managerial representation with a cut-off point of 15 percent, following Kanter's estimation of the percentage below which minority group members are perceived as tokens. No

Table 3. Regression of Human Capital and Gender Representation on Annual Earnings

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Beta	SE	Beta	SE	Beta	SE	Beta	SE
Women	−1,460.2***	265.0	−798.2*	318.5	−154.4	520.0	−1,475.6***	391.0
Subordinate jobs female-dominated			1,872.2	1,184.7				
Women*subordinate jobs female-dominated			−1,965.5***	531.6				
Women's percent of subordinate jobs					27.2	23.9		
Women * women's percent of subordinate jobs					−31.4**	10.8		
Token female representation in management							5.9	1,202.9
Women*token female representation in management							27.4	513.2
Education[a]								
BA/BS	909.2	507.0	1,004.3*	501.5	920.3	503.5	903.7	508.1
MA/MS	942.0	578.0	953.4	571.1	904.8	574.1	934.6	579.1
MBA/JD/PHD	2,380.8***	715.8	2,445.3***	707.4	2,359.5***	710.8	2,375.8***	717.3

Age	220.1***	20.9	221.4***	20.7	222.9***	20.8	220.0***	21.0
Tenure	257.5***	54.3	266.2***	53.8	255.3***	54.0	257.7***	54.6
Tenure*tenure	−8.1***	1.4	−8.3***	1.4	−8.2***	1.4	−8.1***	1.4
Weekly work hours	24.5	15.3	23.1	15.2	22.2	15.3	24.5	15.4
Job Class[b]								
Clerical track job	−1,586.3***	425.3	−1,322.0**	426.1	−1,347.7**	430.0	−1,580.1***	433.6
Irregular job	−654.8	354.5	−453.9	355.1	−489.5	357.4	−651.9	355.1
Job placements[c]	388.3*	170.2	383.0*	168.2	360.0*	169.3	389.7*	170.5
Number of employees supervised	138.5***	21.8	132.6***	21.6	135.4***	21.7	138.5***	21.8
Constant	−4,094.3***	1,243.3	−4,822.2***	1,283.5	−5,212.6**	1,586.4	−4,090.1**	1,365.3
Model Information								
Observations	528		528		528		528	
Number of firms	12		12		12		12	

Source: Author's calculations.

Note: All models are from HLM with random effects for firms.

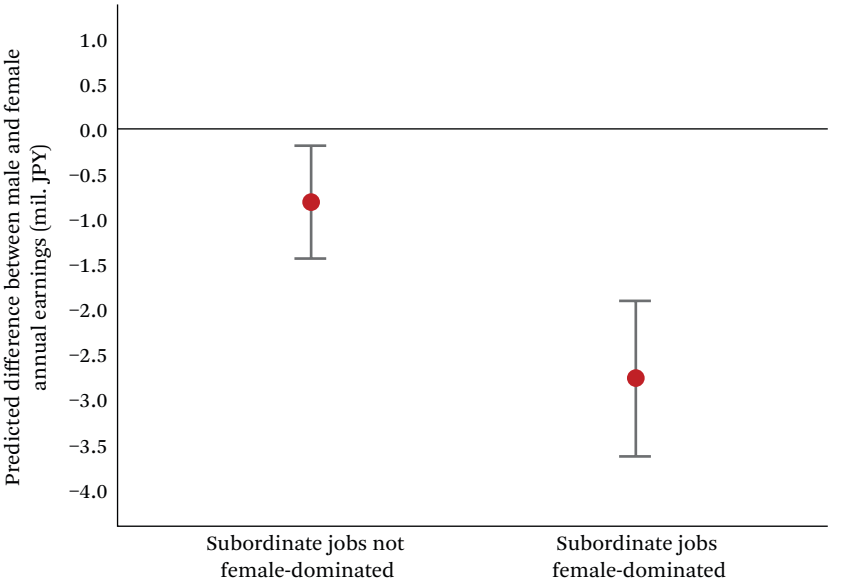
[a] Reference category is below BA/BS.

[b] Reference category is management track job.

[c] Number of job placements is adjusted for tenure by dividing by tenure+1 and taking the natural log. The resulting variable is normalized by subtracting the mean and dividing by the standard deviation.

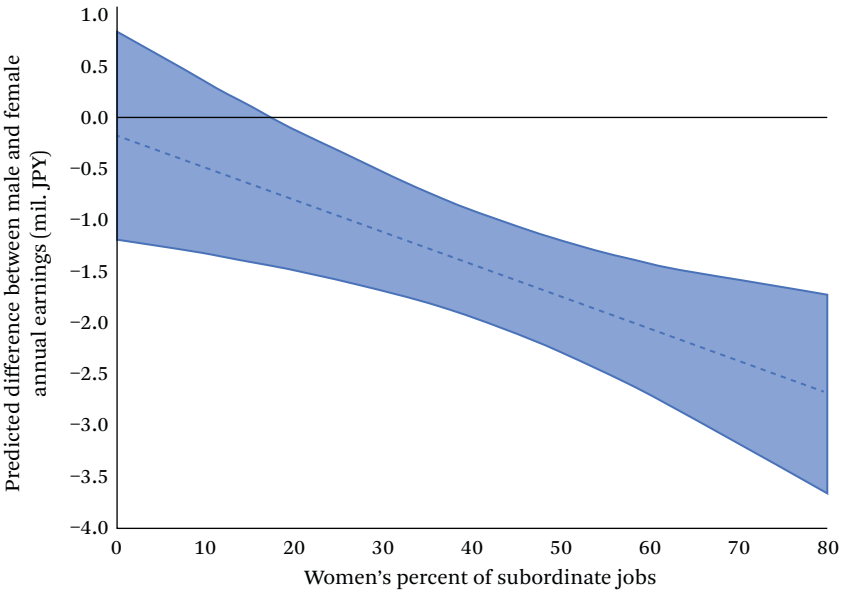
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Figure 2. Predicted Female Wage Disadvantage by Gender Composition of Subordinate Jobs (Binary Specification)



Source: Author's calculations.

Figure 3. Predicted Female Wage Disadvantage by Gender Composition of Subordinate Jobs (Linear Specification)



Source: Author's calculations.

evidence indicates that women's representation in management is associated with the gender wage gap, other than through its direct effects on women managers themselves.

Model 5 in table 4 investigates how gender inequality varies by job category as well as by composition of the subordinate workforce. Figure 4 presents these results. As the error bars show, estimates are imprecise due to small sample size but we can nonetheless observe some interesting patterns. Consistent with previous research that has found that female share of a job predicts low wages (England, Allison, and Wu 2007), both women and men in subordinate jobs earn considerably less than management-track men in firms where subordinate jobs are female dominated. Thus subordinate jobs are devalued more heavily, regardless of who holds them, in firms with female-dominated subordinate workforces. We also see a heavy penalty for management-track women in firms with female-dominated subordinate jobs. But, most significantly, the biggest losers in the firms with female-dominated subordinate tracks are women who themselves hold subordinate positions. Not only do these women experience the largest penalties relative to management-track men; in addition, relative to men in subordinate jobs, the gender penalty they face is also greater relative to that of their counterparts in firms where subordinate jobs are male dominated or gender balanced. Although this difference is not statistically significant, it suggests an amplification effect whereby if women significantly outnumber men in subordinate jobs, these women experience double jeopardy of lower occupational wages and steeper gender devaluation.

Because these data are cross-sectional, the observed interactions between gender composition of subordinate jobs and gender inequality in pay are not necessarily causal. However, subjective measures of workplace environment offer a rare opportunity to further explore whether a causal relationship is plausible. Respondents to the survey were asked to answer the prompt, "My supervisors _____ value my contributions on the job," on a 1–5 scale rang-

Table 4. Regression of Job Type and Gender Representation on Annual Earnings

	Model 5	
	Beta	SE
Gender and job category[a]		
Women on the management track	−763.5*	355.1
Men in subordinate jobs	−128.8	414.0
Women in subordinate jobs	−1,296.7*	609.0
Subordinate jobs female-dominated	2,393.6*	1,158.0
Women on the management track*subordinate jobs female-dominated	−1,977.2**	673.3
Men in subordinate jobs*subordinate jobs female-dominated	−2,526.6**	849.6
Women in subordinate jobs*subordinate jobs female-dominated	−2,920.5***	793.9
Constant	−5,061.1***	1,257.8
Model information		
Human capital controls[b]	Yes	
Job characteristics controls[c]	Yes	
Observations	528	
Number of firms	12	

Source: Author's calculations.

Note: Model is from HLM with random effects for firms.

[a] Reference category is men on the management track.

[b] Education, age, tenure, tenure squared, work hours, and number of job placements by tenure.

[c] Job category and number of employees supervised.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Figure 4. Predicted Wage Disadvantage Compared to Management Track Men by Gender Composition of Subordinate Jobs

Source: Author's calculations.

ing from never to always. If subjective valuations of women and men link women's dominance in subordinate jobs to women's lower pay in these firms, we would expect a larger gender gap in feeling valued in the firms where subordinate jobs are female dominated. Table 5 shows the likelihood of feeling valued by gender, job type, and composition of subordinate jobs. Although women are less likely than men to say that their supervisors usually or always value their contributions in both types of firms, the difference with male peers is far more striking in firms where subordinate jobs are female dominated. In these firms, women on the management track are 19 percent less likely to feel valued, and women in subordinate jobs 27 less likely to feel valued, while in other firms, their counterparts are just 5 and 6 percent less likely than men to feel valued.

These perceptions of feeling valued by supervisors are not simply proxies for dissatisfaction with pay. Men in subordinate jobs in the firms where such jobs are female dominated report feeling valued at a high rate even though their wages are low relative to management-track men. Further, respondents were also asked to respond to the prompt "Relative to my contributions on the job, my pay is _____," with one of the following choices: very low, somewhat low, appropriate, somewhat high, very high. Answers to this question correlate only weakly (Pearson's r = 0.12) with responses to the question on how often supervisors value their contributions. That both objective and subjective devaluation of women occurs in the firms where subordinate jobs are female dominated, but that subjective devaluation is only weakly associated with perceptions of low pay increases confidence that devaluation causes low wages for women in these firms.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In the United States and around the world, the gender revolution has stalled—wage gaps between men and women are no longer rapidly shrinking (England, Levine, and Mishel 2020), and at current rates it will take 135 years for gender gaps to close worldwide (Haynes 2021). As Paula England argues (2010), this is a result of the failure of gender integration in histori-

Table 5. Likelihood of Feeling Valued by Firm Characteristics, Job Characteristics, and Sex

	Percentage of employees who always or often feel valued	*N*
Subordinate jobs are not female dominated		
Men on the management track	43.6	204
Women on the management track	38.4	78
Men in subordinate jobs	42.3	52
Women in subordinate jobs	36.3	22
Subordinate jobs are female dominated		
Men on the management track	47.7	88
Women on the management track	28.5	28
Men in subordinate jobs	53.3	15
Women in subordinate jobs	25.6	43

Source: Author's calculations.

cally female jobs. Although women have moved into professional and managerial jobs, this movement is not enough to counterbalance women's continued predominance in the more heavily populated world of low-paid service and administrative work. However, as I argue, the implications of women's concentration in low-paid, low-status work may be even more profound than previously recognized. This is because women's overrepresentation in these roles has symbolic and cultural implications as well as structural ones. Where all, or nearly all, assistants are women, all women risk being perceived as "mere" assistants.

A voluminous literature draws on status construction theory to examine the impact of women's entry into management on gender inequality. However, I theorize here that this emphasis on the top of the occupational structure is misplaced. As Kanter cogently argues, many of the negative stereotypes of women, such as emotionalism or excessive focus on details, are examples of women's behavioral responses to the dependent status of the secretarial role (Kanter 1993, 73–97). Where these jobs remain female-typed, we can expect these stereotypes to persist.

Status construction theory further posits that status beliefs emerge in interaction (Ridgeway and Markus 2022, this issue). In the corporate pyramid, there are commonly more workers at the bottom of the hierarchy than at the top. For example, in Japan, clerical workers outnumber managers by a factor of ten (JILPT 2021b), and in the United States by a factor of three (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2021a). As demonstrated empirically here, this means that workers spend only a relatively small share of their time interacting with managers. In an environment where most subordinate jobs are held by women, and where subordinate jobs, and interactions with subordinate jobs holders, are more numerous, when employees think "woman," they are far likelier to think "assistant" than "CFO," even if management teams are gender balanced or female dominated.

My analyses also bear out the insight that group-level representation in low-status roles is closely related to both attitudes toward, and treatment of, group members. As I show, where (nearly) all assistants are women, women feel less valued than men, and receive lower pay, regardless of their job category. The effects are severe for non-subordinate women, whose wage gap with men is more than three times greater in firms where subordinate jobs are female dominated. However, women in subordinate jobs bear the highest cost. Their enormous wage disadvantage in firms where support jobs are female dominated is a result of both higher gender penalties and higher job penalties for subordinate jobs in these firms.

The effect sizes in these analyses dwarf those found in the literature on women in man-

agement. Dragana Stojmenovska (2019), using British data, finds that a 1 percent increase in women's share of management jobs is associated with a $24 decrease in the gender wage gap in annual earnings.[8] In contrast, in the current study, a 1 percent decrease in women's share of subordinate jobs is associated with a $310 decrease in the gender earnings gap, an effect more than twelve times as large. These large effects imply not only that the demographic makeup of subordinate jobs affects status beliefs, but also that the composition of low-status jobs matters more for status beliefs than the composition of high-status jobs.

Although the data used in this case study are cross-sectional, and unobserved firm-level characteristics may explain both the gender composition of subordinate jobs and the size of the gender pay gap, the findings highlight the imperative for and promise of further research on the relationships between subordinate job composition, status beliefs, and inequality across the postindustrial world. The theoretical insights generated here have the potential not only to illuminate the causal dynamics of the "stalled gender revolution," but also to deepen our understanding of other axes of workplace inequality, such as race or ethnicity.

Management consultants routinely recommend increasing women's representation in management as a tool of workplace transformation. Of course women and men deserve equal opportunities for workplace advancement, but I argue that these initiatives targeting managerial representation are unlikely to achieve these lofty goals. What, then, are organizations to do? Affirmative action for male secretaries is unlikely to prove useful. Few men apply to secretarial or other support jobs. Furthermore, any affirmative action for men runs the risk of further disadvantaging women to whom even a poorly paid secretarial job is a financial lifeline. However, Rosabeth Kanter's early and groundbreaking study of "Indsco" offers a useful starting point. Specifically, Kanter advocated for job redesign to give the secretarial workforce greater scope to develop skills and build careers (1993, 267–81). To degender the workplace, employers will need to delegate highly valued tasks to low-level workers, and more equitably distribute the labor of undervalued tasks across levels of the organizational hierarchy.

Restarting the "stalled gender revolution" will require scholars to push back against status beliefs that predispose us to assume that the composition of male-typed managerial jobs is necessarily the most important determinate of status beliefs, and organizations to reconfigure subordinate and support jobs to be rewarding and powerful enough to appeal to both men and women. Although undoing gendered patterns at the top of an organization may help all women to a degree, undoing gendered patterns at the bottom, as Kanter recommended more than forty years ago, may help more women, more consequentially.

REFERENCES

Abendroth, Anja Kristin, Silvia Melzer, Alexandra Kalev, and Donald Tomaskovic-Devey. 2017. "Women at Work: Women's Access to Power and the Gender Earnings Gap." *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 70(1): 190–222.

Baruch, Yehuda, and Brooks C. Holtom. 2008. "Survey Response Rate Levels and Trends in Organizational Research." *Human Relations* 61(8): 1139–60.

Brinton, Mary C. 1993. *Women and the Economic Miracle: Gender and Work in Postwar Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Brinton, Mary C., and Eunmi Mun. 2016. "Between State and Family: Managers' Implementation and Evaluation of Parental Leave Policies in Japan." *Socio-Economic Review* 14(2): 257–81. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/ser/mwv021.

Brynin, Malcolm, and Francisco Perales. 2016. "Gender Wage Inequality: The De-gendering of the Occupational Structure." *European Sociological Review* 32(1): 162–74.

Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2021a. "May 2020 National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates." Accessed May 17, 2021. https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm#00-0000.

———. 2021b. "Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey." Accessed June 4, 2021. https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm.

8. This is calculated by multiplying the effect size, which is displayed as weekly earnings, by fifty-two.

Cohen, Philip N., and Matt L. Huffman. 2007. "Working for the Woman? Female Managers and the Gender Wage Gap." *American Sociological Review* 72(5): 681–704.

Costello, Carla A. 2015. "Women in the Trenches: Barriers to Female Staff's Advancement in Higher Education." Ed.D. diss., College of William and Mary.

The Economist. 2014. "Holding Back Half the Nation." *The Economist*, March 29. Accessed June 8, 2022. https://www.economist.com/briefing/2014/03/29/holding-back-half-the-nation.

Ely, Robin J. 1995. "The Power in Demography: Women's Social Constructions of Gender Identity at Work." *Academy of Management Journal* 38(3): 589–634.

England, Paula. 2010. "The Gender Revolution: Uneven and Stalled." *Gender & Society* 24(2): 149–66.

England, Paula, Paul Allison, and Yuxiao Wu. 2007. "Does Bad Pay Cause Occupations to Feminize, Does Feminization Reduce Pay, and How Can We Tell with Longitudinal Data?" *Social Science Research* 36(3): 1237–56.

England, Paula, Andrew Levine, and Emma Mishel. 2020. "Progress Toward Gender Equality in the United States Has Slowed or Stalled." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 117(13): 6990–97.

Facebook Careers. 2021. "Administrative Partner." Accessed June 4, 2021. https://www.facebook.com/careers/v2/jobs/348321213242057/.

Feintzig, Rachel. 2020. "The Vanishing Executive Assistant." *Wall Street Journal*, January 18. Accessed June 8, 2022. https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-vanishing-executive-assistant-11579323605.

Goldman Sachs. 2019. "Womenomics 5.0." Accessed June 10, 2021. https://www.goldmansachs.com/insights/pages/womenomics-5.0/multimedia/womenomics-5.0-report.pdf.

Halldén, Karin, Jenny Säve-Söderbergh, and Åsa Rosén. 2018. "Gender of the Immediate Manager and Women's Wages: The Importance of Managerial Position." *Social Science Research* 72: 115–33.

Haynes, Suyin. 2021. "The Global Gender Gap Will Take an Extra 36 Years to Close After the COVID-19 Pandemic, Report Finds." *Time*, March 30. Accessed November 16, 2021. https://time.com/5951101/global-gender-gap-135-years/.

Holbrow, Hilary J. 2020. "Detangling Capital from Context: A Critical Investigation of Human Capital Explanations for Immigrant Wage Inequality." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 46(19): 4043–65. DOI: 10.1080/1369183X.2018.1527682.

Huffman, Matt L., Philip N. Cohen, and Jessica Pearlman. 2010. "Engendering Change: Organizational Dynamics and Workplace Gender Desegregation, 1975–2005." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 55(2): 255–77.

Hultin, Mia, and Ryszard Szulkin. 2003. "Mechanisms of Inequality. Unequal Access to Organizational Power and the Gender Wage Gap." *European Sociological Review* 14(2): 143–59.

Japan Institute for Labor Policy and Training (JILPT). 2021a. "Koyou keitaibetsu koyou shasuu 1984nen-2020nen" [Number of employees by employment type, 1984–2020]. Accessed June 10, 2021. https://www.jil.go.jp/kokunai/statistics/timeseries/html/g0208.html.

———. 2021b. "Shokugyoubetsu shuugyou shasuu" [Number of workers by occupation]. Accessed June 10, 2021. https://www.jil.go.jp/kokunai/statistics/chart/html/g0006.html.

Kanai, Kaoru. 2013. "'Tayou na seishain' shisaku to josei no hatarakikata he no eikyou" ['Diverse regular employee' policy and its influence on women's work]. *Nihon Roudou Kenkyuu Zasshi* 636: 63–76.

Kanter, Rosabeth M. 1993. *Men and Women of the Corporation*. New York: Basic Books.

Karlsson, Anette. 2011. "Occupational Identity in Administrative Service Work: The Aspect of Carefulness." *Gender, Work and Organization* 18(S1): E132–56.

Kenward, Michael G., and James H. Roger. 1997. "Small Sample Inference for Fixed Effects from Restricted Maximum Likelihood." *Biometrics* 53(3): 983–97.

———. 2009. "An Improved Approximation to the Precision of Fixed Effects from Restricted Maximum Likelihood." *Computational Statistics & Data Analysis* 53(7): 2583–95.

Koenig, Biko. 2022. "Politicizing Status Loss Among Trump Supporters in 2020." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(6): 69–86. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.6.04.

Koike, Kazuo. 1988. *Understanding Industrial Relations in Modern Japan*. New York: St Martin's Press.

Kramer, Andrea S., and Alton B. Harris. 2019. *It's Not You, It's the Workplace: Women's Conflict at Work and the Bias That Built It*. Boston, Mass.: Nicholas Brealy Publishing.

Kurtulus, Fidan Ana, and Donald Tomaskovic-Devey. 2012. "Do Female Top Managers Help Women to Advance? A Panel Study Using EEO-1 Records." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 639(1): 173–97.

Laufenberg, Bella. 2021. "ND Female Professors Share Their Stories of Success." *The Observer*. March 19. Accessed June 10, 2021. https://ndsmcobserver.com/2021/03/nd-female-professors-share-their-stories-of-success/.

Leicht, Kevin T. 2022. "Inequality and the Status Window: Inequality, Conflict, and the Salience of Status Differences in Conflicts over Resources." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(6): 103–21. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.6.06.

Maloney, E. K., Kimberly B. Rogers, and Lynn Smith-Lovin. 2022. "Status as Deference: Cultural Meaning as a Source of Occupational Behavior." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 70–88. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.04.

Maume, David J. 2011. "Meet the New Boss . . . Same as the Old Boss? Female Supervisors and Subordinate Career Prospects." *Social Science Research* 40(1): 287–98.

McKinsey & Company. 2021. "Mobilizing Women to Step Up as Leaders in Japan." April 27. Accessed June 10, 2021. https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/asia-pacific/mobilizing-women-to-step-up-as-leaders-in-japan.

McNally, Danielle. 2019. "Cartier's Women's Initiative Award Winners Prove Women Will Change the World." *Marie Clair*, May 5. Accessed June 4, 2021. https://www.marieclaire.com/career-advice/a27360808/cartiers-womens-initiative-awards-winners-2019/.

McNeish, Daniel M., and Jeffery Harring. 2017. "Clustered Data with Small Sample Sizes: Comparing the Performance of Model-Based and Design-Based Approaches." *Communications in Statistics—Simulation and Computation* 46(2): 855–69.

McNeish, Daniel M., and Laura M. Stapleton. 2016. "The Effect of Small Sample Size on Two-Level Model Estimates: A Review and Illustration." *Educational Psychology Review* 28: 295–314.

Melaku, Tsedale. M. 2019. *You Don't Look Like A Lawyer: Black Women and Systemic Gendered Racism*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.

Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare. 2013. "Heisei 24 nendo koyou kintou kihon chousa no gaikyou" [Overview of the 2012 basic survey of equal employment]. Accessed December 22, 2015. http://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/list/dl/71-24e.pdf.

———. 2016. "Kigyou chousa kekka gaiyou" [Summary of survey results]. Accessed June 10, 2021. https://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/list/dl/71-7-02.pdf.

Mun, Eunmi. 2016. "Negative Compliance as an Organizational Response to Legal Pressures: The Case of Japanese Equal Employment Opportunity Law." *Social Forces* 94(4): 1409–37.

Mun, Eunmi, and Jiwook Jung. 2018. "Change Above the Glass Ceiling: Corporate Social Responsibility and Gender Diversity in Japanese Firms." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 63(2): 409–40.

Nemoto, Kumiko. 2016. *Too Few Women at the Top: The Persistence of Inequality in Japan*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Niselow, Tehillah, and Lameez Omarjee. 2018. "Women Engineers Speak Out: From No Female Toilets to Being Mistaken for a Secretary." *News 24*, August 8. Accessed June 4, 2021. https://www.news24.com/fin24/Companies/Industrial/women-engineers-speak-out-from-no-female-toilets-to-being-mistaken-for-a-secretary-20180808-2.

Nittle, Nadra. 2017. "Sexism Is Rampant for Female Fashion Photographers." Racked.com, November 30. Accessed June 10, 2021. https://www.racked.com/2017/11/30/16720374/photography-sexism-fashion.

Ono, Hiroshi. 2007. "Careers in Foreign-Owned Firms in Japan." *American Sociological Review* 72(2): 267–90.

———. 2018. "Why Do the Japanese Work Long Hours ?" *Japan Labor Issues* 2(5): 35–49.

Penner, Andrew M., Harold J. Toro-Tulla, and Matt L. Huffman. 2012. "Do Women Managers Ameliorate Gender Differences in Wages? Evidence from a Large Grocery Retailer." *Sociological Perspectives* 55(2): 365–81.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L. 1997. "Interaction and the Conservation of Gender Inequality: Considering Employment." *American Sociological Review* 62(2): 218–35.

———. 2019. *Status: Why Is It Everywhere? Why Does It Matter?* New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L., and Hazel Rose Markus. 2022. "The Significance of Status: What It Is and How It Shapes Inequality." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 1–25. DOI: http://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.01.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L., and Lynn Smith-Lovin. 2002. "The Gender System and Interaction." *Annual Review of Sociology* 25(1): 191–216.

Seeley, J. Lotus. 2018. "'Show Us Your Frilly, Pink Underbelly': Men Administrative Assistants Doing Masculinities and Femininity." *Gender, Work and Organization* 25(4): 418–36.

Shams, Safi, and Donald Tomaskovic-Devey. 2019. "Racial and Gender Trends and Trajectories in Access to Managerial Jobs." *Social Science Research* 80: 15–29.

Snijders, Tom A. B., and Roel J. Bosker. 2012. *Multilevel Analysis: An Introduction to Basic and Advanced Multilevel Modeling*, 2nd ed. London: Sage Publishers.

Srivastava, Sameer B., and Eliot L. Sherman. 2015. "Agents of Change or Cogs in the Machine? Reexamining the Influence of Female Managers on the Gender Wage Gap." *American Journal of Sociology* 120(6): 1778–1808.

Stainback, Kevin, Sibyl Kleiner, and Sheryl Skaggs. 2016. "Women in Power: Undoing or Redoing the Gendered Organization?" *Gender and Society* 30(1): 109–35.

Stainback, Kevin, and Soyoung Kwon. 2012. "Female Leaders, Organizational Power, and Sex Segregation." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 639(1): 217–35.

Stojmenovska, Dragana. 2019. "Management Gender Composition and the Gender Pay Gap: Evidence from British Panel Data." *Gender, Work and Organization* 26(5): 738–64.

Stojmenovska, Dragana, Stephanie Steinmetz, and Beate Volker. 2021. "The Gender Gap in Workplace Authority: Variation Across Types of Authority Positions." *Social Forces* 100(2): 599–621.

Teikoku Databank. 2018. "Josei kanrishoku wariai ha heikin 7.2%" [Women's average share of management positions is 7.2%]. Accessed June 10, 2018. http://www.tdb.co.jp/report/watching/press/pdf/p180805.pdf.

Truss, Catherine, Kerstin Alfes, Amanda Shantz, and Amanda Rosewarne. 2013. "Still in the Ghetto? Experiences of Secretarial Work in the 21st Century." *Gender, Work and Organization* 20(4): 349–63.

Vial, Andrea C., Jaime L. Napier, and Victoria L. Brescoll. 2016. "A Bed of Thorns: Female Leaders and the Self-Reinforcing Cycle of Illegitimacy." *Leadership Quarterly* 27(3): 400–414.

Wheeler, Brian. 2015. "Lib Dem Ex-Minister Jo Swinson 'Mistaken for Secretary.'" BBC, September 20. Accessed June 10, 2021. https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-34307798.

Wible, Pamela. 2016. "Female Physicians Told to Sit Down, Shut up, and Get Out of the Way During Emergencies as Patients Nearly Die." *Ideal Medical Care*, October 14. Accessed June 4, 2021. https://www.idealmedicalcare.org/female-physicians-told-to-sit-down-shut-up-and-get-out-of-the-way-during-emergencies-as-patients-nearly-die/.

Williams, Joan C., Erika V. Hall, and Katherine Philips. 2014. "Double Jeopardy? Gender Bias Against Women in Science." Technical Report. San Francisco: University of California, Hastings College of the Law. DOI: http://doi.org/10.13140/2.1.1763.8723.

Wootton, Barbara H. 1997. "Gender Differences in Occupational Employment." *Monthly Labor Review*, April 15–24.

The World Bank. 2021. "Female Share of Employment in Senior and Middle Management (%)." Data from International Labour Organization, ILOSTAT database, January 29. Accessed June 4, 2021. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.EMP.SMGT.FE.ZS.

ZipRecruiter. 2021. "Director of First Impressions Job Description Sample." Accessed June 4, 2021. https://www.ziprecruiter.com/e/Director-of-First-Impressions-Job-Description-Sample.

Do Perceptions of Privilege Enhance—or Impede—Perceptions of Intelligence? Evidence from a National Survey Experiment

NATASHA QUADLIN

Scholars have long criticized the notion of meritocracy, in part because many achievements that are ostensibly earned stem from the intergenerational transmission of advantage. Although much research has demonstrated this link, fewer studies have considered public attitudes toward these constructs, including whether perceptions of privilege mitigate the symbolic power that educational accomplishments hold. In this article, I use data from an original, nationally representative survey experiment (N=1,800) that focuses on public perceptions of college degree holders. I find that, if anything, college graduates who are perceived as wealthy are perceived as more intelligent than they otherwise would be. Yet I also find evidence that less-privileged respondents are more likely than their more-privileged peers to convey status on those who may have faced obstacles in completing college.

Keywords: educational inequality, income and wealth, social perceptions, experimental methods, conjoint experiments

Generations of social scientists have criticized the notion of meritocracy because it is imbued with inequality (McNamee and Miller 2009). Although outcomes such as status, wealth, and power purportedly reflect objective notions of merit, these outcomes often capture privileges that can be passed down through generations (see, for example, Blau and Duncan 1967; Sewell, Haller, and Portes 1969).

Educational outcomes are no exception. A degree from a highly selective college (or any college, for that matter) is considered a great accomplishment, and for many people a college degree conveys a great deal of skill and competence (Quadlin and Powell 2022). Research has shown repeatedly, however, that socioeconomic status (SES) is a better predictor of college attendance and completion than academic performance measures per se (see, for example, Dynarski 2015; Pfeffer 2008; Reardon

Natasha Quadlin is associate professor of sociology and faculty fellow in the California Center for Population Research at the University of California, Los Angeles, United States.

 Quadlin, Natasha. 2022. "Do Perceptions of Privilege Enhance—or Impede—Perceptions of Intelligence? Evidence from a National Survey Experiment." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 48–69. DOI: 10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.03. I thank Long Doan, Bianca Manago, Brian Powell, Vinnie Roscigno, Tom VanHeuvelen, and Elizabeth Zack for comments on previous drafts and guidance during the research process. I am also grateful to the editors of this issue, Hazel Rose Markus and Cecilia Ridgeway, for their thoughtful feedback on this work, as well as the other contributors for their suggestions. Direct correspondence to: Natasha Quadlin, at quadlin@soc.ucla.edu, 299 Haines Hall, 375 Portola Plaza, Los Angeles, CA 90095, United States.

2011). This is true especially at highly selective colleges, where applicants often receive a premium in the admissions process for engaging in high-status activities and hobbies that are only accessible to a select few (Arcidiacono, Kinsler, and Ransom 2022; Stevens 2009), and students disproportionately come from families in the top 1 percent of the national income distribution (Aisch et al. 2017). Children raised in high-SES families have substantial advantages when it comes to education, suggesting that the more economic privilege one has, the easier it is to achieve success in education.

Despite many studies that have demonstrated this relationship between economic privilege and educational success, less scholarly research has assessed public perceptions of privilege, including the extent to which these perceptions affect the symbolic power of a college degree in the United States. Research suggests contrasting perspectives on this question. On the one hand, Americans as a whole believe deeply in the power of meritocracy and the idea that individual accomplishments reflect individual effort (Kluegel and Smith 1986; McCall 2013). When a person encounters someone with a high-status college degree, their first impression may be that this person is highly accomplished, rather than that the person may have had economic advantages that made the degree more attainable. Thus we might expect college graduates to be highly regarded in terms of their intelligence, even if (and perhaps especially if) they are perceived as economically privileged. At the same time, recent events (for example, the college admissions "scandal" involving multiple celebrity parents and their children) imply that Americans may not be surprised at the extent to which educational success can be purchased.[1] Members of the public may question whether educational credentials indeed indicate a person's intelligence—or if they, instead, are merely indicators of intergenerational wealth.

In this article, I ask whether perceptions of privilege enhance—or impede—perceptions of intelligence. In other words, when a person is perceived as economically privileged, to what extent do these perceptions affect the status that their educational credentials convey? I assess these questions using data from an original online survey experiment with a large sample (N = 1,800) of respondents who are nationally representative of the U.S. adult English-speaking population. The experiment is designed to capture how Americans think about college degrees of varying selectivity levels, and the extent to which these degrees signal intelligence, economic privilege, and likability—a construct that is often considered alongside measures of intelligence and competence, as I discuss in the sections that follow.

BACKGROUND

Educational Credentials and Americans' Belief in Meritocracy

The American Dream is premised on the belief that anyone in the United States can achieve success as long as they work hard. This is a dominant ideology in American society—one that has simultaneously comforted and motivated generations of Americans, and one that has had an outsize influence on political discourse (Cullen 2003; Hochschild 1995). A related, but ultimately separate, construct is meritocracy, the idea that people achieve success and power on the basis of their merit, and that people who are successful were able to advance because they worked hard and proved themselves to be superior to others in one or more relevant areas (McNamee and Miller 2009). Research shows that Americans have largely bought into these belief structures and rely on them in their everyday lives. For example, in a recent iteration of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), approximately 95 percent of U.S. adults indicated that advancement in society is determined on the basis of hard work (Mijs 2021; see also Kluegel and Smith 1986; McCall 2013; McNamee and Miller 2009; Young 1958).[2] This pattern suggests that when

1. Although the media and some members of the public portrayed these events as a scandal, many subject-matter experts were not surprised that they took place and would not characterize them as particularly shocking.

2. This also looks to be the case for most Western countries, although the percentage of people who agree with this statement is largest in the United States. As Jonathan Mijs (2021) describes, using data from twenty-three

a person achieves success in the United States, most Americans assume that this person earned their success through hard work, superior intellect, outstanding skills, or some other indication of merit.

But despite Americans' strong belief in the American Dream and meritocracy, much research across the social sciences has shown that intergenerational privileges—including, but not limited to, parental occupation, education, income, and wealth—have just as much (if not more) predictive power in explaining people's outcomes relative to individual-level measures of ability or achievement (see Blau and Duncan 1967; Conwell 2021; Conwell and Ye 2021; Erikson and Goldthorpe 2002; Ermish, Jäntti, and Smeeding 2012; Hout 2018; Pfeffer and Killewald 2018; Quadlin and Conwell 2021; Sewell, Haller, and Portes 1969). Predictors of academic performance (for example, grades, test scores) and educational attainment (for example, college completion, years of education completed) have been widely studied in this regard. This is partly because schooling is compulsory in the United States up to a certain point, and thus virtually everyone has some data to report on their academic performance and educational experiences, which is convenient for quantitative studies of these relationships. At the same time, educational outcomes are highly salient to the intergenerational transmission of advantage because the grades, test scores, and credentials earned through schooling are purported to measure and reflect traits such as intelligence and competence.

Just as income and wealth are socially heritable, research shows that success in education is socially heritable. SES often is a better predictor of college attendance and completion than academic performance measures per se (Pfeffer 2008; Reardon 2011). One particularly striking analysis by Susan Dynarski (2015) in the *New York Times Upshot* examines rates of bachelor's degree completion by SES and math achievement in the Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS-02).[3] In these nationally representative data, high-SES students in the top quartile of math achievement had a very high likelihood of completing a bachelor's degree (74 percent), but this outcome was far less certain for low-SES students with comparable achievement (41 percent). In fact, low-SES students in the top quartile of math achievement were equally likely to earn a bachelor's degree as high-SES students in only the second quartile of math achievement (that is, those in the 25th to 49th percentiles; 41 percent likelihood for both groups). This contrast in educational outcomes between students at the top and bottom of the family income hierarchy clearly demonstrates the power of socioeconomic privilege in predicting educational credentials, even conditional on ability or achievement measures.

College Degrees as Signals of Privilege and/or Merit

Although social scientists have frequently pointed out the strong relationship between social origins and educational outcomes, less research has considered how the public thinks about these dynamics. In particular, I focus on perceptions of socioeconomic privilege and the extent to which these perceptions either enhance or impede the positive attributes that a college degree conveys. Although few studies speak to this topic directly, existing theory and research provide two contrasting perspectives that can help guide our thinking on this question.

The first perspective, which I call an *enhancement perspective*, suggests that percep-

countries in the 2014 ISSP, "A first thing to note is how strongly citizens, across the board, think success depends on hard work. With the exception of communist pre-1989 Poland, a majority in each country and time period believes theirs is a meritocracy society. A second thing to note is that the percentage of people who does, has gone up in almost every country since the late 1980s" (2).

3. The ELS-02 is a nationally representative survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics that captures education, family, and work experiences for a cohort of students who were high school sophomores in 2002. In Dynarski's (2015) analysis, math achievement was measured using students' scores on a standardized math assessment that all ELS respondents took, which is a standard measure of ability in many educational studies.

tions of socioeconomic privilege further enhance the merit that a college degree conveys. In this perspective, perceptions of privilege and merit are considered additive, and a college degree-holder who is perceived as coming from a high-SES family will be perceived as demonstrating even more merit than they otherwise would. Theories of cumulative advantage (as well as empirical research in this line of work) posit that those who are raised in more-privileged families will typically, though not always (Streib 2020), become privileged adults (Blau and Duncan 1967; DiPrete and Eirich 2006; Merton 1968; Sewell, Haller, and Portes 1969). This process happens through a variety of mechanisms, including, but not limited to, educational opportunities that are restricted to privileged children starting at an early age and continuing through postsecondary education (Massey et al. 2011; Owens 2018); exposure to dominant forms of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986; DiMaggio 1982); and a sense of confidence (or perhaps entitlement) that equips children to advocate for themselves more effectively than their less-privileged peers (Calarco 2011).

For the intergenerational transmission of advantage to occur, people would not necessarily perceive privileged individuals as any less meritorious than less-privileged individuals with the same credentials—or, alternatively, gatekeepers and those in positions of power would need to perceive privileged individuals as meritorious (a possibility that I consider in this study). Some research suggests that the most privileged students who attend elite colleges tend to secure the highest-paying post-college opportunities, in part because they have the cultural capital and other skills that appeal to elite gatekeepers, such as those who conduct hiring at top consulting firms (Binder, Davis, and Bloom 2016; Rivera 2015). This pattern generally supports the notion that privileged college students are perceived as more competent, or at least equally competent, relative to their less-privileged peers. Yet these studies were not conducted in an experimental framework, and thus more research is needed to establish the causal relationships behind perceptions of privilege and merit.

In a similar vein, insights from sociological social psychology support the idea that people work to confirm, rather than challenge, their expectations of others. A key principle of status characteristics theory is that people form expectations for others' task performance on the basis of consensually held status beliefs. For example, women are often expected to be less effective than men in task groups, in part because women are broadly considered less competent and less worthy than men in society (Ridgeway 2011; Ridgeway and Correll 2004). Status beliefs and performance expectations work in tandem, and they also work to generate self-fulfilling prophecies (Berger, Cohen, and Zelditch 1972). When individuals are expected to perform well, they "are offered more opportunities to contribute to the group task, are more likely to accept (or create) opportunities to contribute, and their contributions are more likely to be evaluated positively and accepted by the group" (Dippong and Kalkhoff 2015, 3). Accordingly, we might expect individuals to work much harder to confirm their expectations of others' competence than they would to refute these expectations. When they encounter a person who has achieved academic success, they may not readily challenge that person's intelligence, even if they suspect (or know of) that person's economic privilege, because a person can rationally be both privileged and intelligent simultaneously.

The second perspective, which I call an *impediment perspective*, is the idea that perceptions of socioeconomic privilege impede perceptions of merit. This perspective posits that when a person is perceived as coming from a wealthy family, others may be skeptical of that person's individual abilities, and therefore their accomplishments are viewed in a less favorable light than they otherwise would be.

This perspective is informed largely by recent events and the sense of a possible growing backlash toward the wealthiest and most privileged Americans. For example, what the media referred to as a recent college admissions "scandal" involving numerous wealthy or celebrity parents and their children shows that families can buy their way into some of the nation's top universities (Medina, Benner, and Taylor 2019). This reality was difficult for many members of the public to swallow because educational success, including admission to top uni-

versities, is theoretically supposed to be based on academic performance and skill—not the prominence of one's family. These events may have led some members of the public to realize that the wealthy have outsized advantages in college admissions. Indeed, long-standing practices such as legacy preferences in admissions have institutionalized educational advantages for those who are already advantaged (Espenshade and Chung 2005)—something that many members of the public are deeply opposed to, as evidenced by recent successful pushes to ban legacy preferences at Johns Hopkins University (Castro 2020) and public colleges in Colorado (Jaschik 2021).

Recent research using public documents from the *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard* case relatedly shows that 43 percent of Harvard's White students are recruited athletes, legacies, children of faculty and staff, or children of those who have made sizable donations.[4] What is more, three-quarters of these White students would not have qualified for admission without these advantages (Arcidiacono, Kinsler, and Ransom 2022). Although it is unclear whether members of the public are familiar with the details of this case, many people would likely disapprove if such details became widely known, considering public attitudes toward legacy preferences in admissions. Given these events and others like them, it may be that some members of the public are deeply skeptical of the cognitive abilities of those who they perceive as privileged. If it is easier for high-SES students to achieve educational success, then the status tied to their success may be muted relative to those from humbler backgrounds.

Similarly, some literature questions whether rising inequality has affected people's beliefs about meritocracy. Although economic inequality is on the rise and has been for several decades, some research suggests that Americans are not concerned about such inequalities, and that they may double down in their beliefs about meritocracy in order to convince themselves that opportunity is readily available (Bénabou and Tirole 2006; Jost, Banaji, and Nosek 2004). These studies broadly support the enhancement perspective, described earlier, because they imply that people tend to overlook matters of economic inequality in favor of meritocratic beliefs. Recent experimental research, however, calls this into question, finding that rising inequality makes respondents skeptical about the degree of economic opportunity in society and encourages support for policies that improve equity (McCall et al. 2017). If people are skeptical of economic opportunity, they may also be skeptical of those who have achieved success, especially in light of the many studies and popular accounts that have demonstrated a link between socioeconomic privilege and high-status educational credentials.

Additional Considerations: Likability as a Potential Mediating Variable, and Variation Across Respondent Education

In addition to adjudicating between these enhancement and impediment perspectives, I also assess two other questions: the extent to which perceptions of likability mediate the relationship between perceptions of privilege and intelligence, and whether the relationship between perceived privilege and perceived intelligence varies across social groups. As to the first question, perceptions of likability are important because they are intimately related to perceptions of competence. Much social psychological research has shown that perceptions of competence and likability are interwoven, such that people who are perceived as likable often tend to be perceived as competent, and vice-versa (Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick 2008; although this relationship may be weaker for targets in certain social groups, as I outline in the methods section). As discussed earlier, members of the public may be becoming increasingly knowledgeable about the advantages that wealth buys in college admissions, and research points to something of a growing backlash against the most privileged Americans (McCall et al. 2017). This evidence suggests

4. *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard College, Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. University of North Carolina, et al.*, Docket nos. 20-1199, 21-707, U.S. Court of Appeals, 1st Circuit, Amicus Brief no. 19-2005.

that, to the extent that people who are perceived as privileged are perceived as less intelligent than they otherwise would be, this may be because these individuals are penalized in terms of their likability. I incorporate this idea into the experimental design by capturing perceptions of likability alongside measures of perceived intelligence and privilege, as discussed in the methods section.

Second, I consider the extent to which the enhancement or impediment perspectives predominate among certain social groups: specifically, among those who have and do not have bachelor's degrees. College-educated individuals tend to come from higher-SES backgrounds than those who have not completed college (Reardon 2011). They also are familiar with, and serve to benefit from, the status advantages associated with college completion. Thus we might expect people with college degrees to take these educational credentials at face value more so than those with less education. Even if, and perhaps especially if, they perceive a given college degree-holder as coming from socioeconomic privilege, they may be more willing to perceive that person as having demonstrated merit. Conversely, individuals without college degrees may be skeptical of those whom they perceive as benefiting from an unequal, or even rigged, playing field. For this reason, we might expect perceptions of privilege to impede perceptions of merit, but only for those who do not have a college degree.

DATA AND METHODS

This study uses data from an original survey experiment fielded through the survey company YouGov (Quadlin 2019a). In recent years, scholars have increasingly relied on survey companies, such as YouGov, Qualtrics, and the AmeriSpeak panel through NORC, to collect high-quality data with established panels of respondents (see, for example, Doan, Quadlin, and Powell 2019; Galperin et al. 2020; Pedulla 2014; Ray 2017; Schachter 2016; Wildeman et al. 2017). The sample used in this study (N = 1,800) is nationally representative of the adult noninstitutionalized population when using survey weights, which are included in all analyses. The survey uses a conjoint experiment design, such that respondents are presented with and asked to assess two hypothetical people at the same time. Conjoint designs are effective for reducing social desirability bias (Schachter 2016), which is important in this study because I asked respondents to make judgments related to gender, race-ethnicity, and social class, which may invoke social desirability for some respondents. That said, capturing people's genuine beliefs about race and gender remains a perennial challenge in surveys because Americans are ideologically committed to color and gender blindness (see, for example, Bonilla-Silva 2006; Risman and Ferree 1995). As a result, survey respondents may not make as big of a distinction between race and gender groups as they normally would in social life. This is an important topic that I return to in the discussion because it has implications for this research as well as survey methodology more broadly.

Experimental Design

The experiment is outlined in figure 1. After viewing an instruction screen, respondents were randomly assigned to view profiles for two recent college graduates. I chose recent college graduates as the targets because I wanted to capture the extent to which people's undergraduate institutions and college experiences signal intelligence, privilege, and likability, and these signals are perhaps most salient among this specific population. If I were to use older targets with more work experience, their occupations or graduate institutions may have confounded the primary signals used in the study. Other scholars have examined, for example, the extent to which occupations signal prestige and other personal traits (Valentino 2020), and this question is certainly of interest to many scholars of social inequality, but is not the core focus here.

The targets' characteristics were randomized using a 2 (gender) × 4 (race) × 6 (college selectivity) × 6 (field of study) × 6 (grades received) factorial design, with each possible combination of characteristics being represented in the data. Although gender and race-ethnicity are not the core interests in this study, I vary these characteristics nonetheless because respondents' perceptions may well vary

Figure 1. Conjoint Experimental Design

Introduction screen

We are interested in studying how you perceive of young adults who have recently finished college. You will be presented with pairs of profiles describing different college graduates. Then, you will be asked whether you perceive those people as *intelligent*; whether you perceive them as *kind*; and whether you perceive them as *coming from a wealthy family*. For each pair of profiles, please look at the information carefully, and then indicate how you perceive of each person. There are no correct or incorrect answers for this, we just want to know how you perceive of these individuals.

Example conjoint profile display

	Young Adult 1	Young Adult 2
Name	Emily Meyer	Dwayne Jefferson
College	Harvard University	University of Wyoming
Field of study	Biology	English literature
Grades received	Mostly Cs and Ds	Mostly As

Experimental manipulations (randomly selected as components in the conjoint profiles)

Component	Used to Signal
Name	
Emily Meyer	White woman
Matthew Becker	White man
Janae Washington	Black woman
Dwayne Jefferson	Black man
Mariana Velazquez	Hispanic woman
Carlos Orozco	Hispanic man
Amy Wong	Asian woman
Daniel Chen	Asian man
College	
Harvard University or Stanford University	Highly selective private
University of California, Berkeley or University of Virginia	Highly selective public
Syracuse University or Pepperdine University	Moderately selective private
Pennsylvania State University or University of Washington	Moderately selective public
Suffolk University or Seattle Pacific University	Less selective private
Montclair State University or University of Wyoming	Less selective public
Major	
Biology	Female-dominated STEM
Mathematics	Male-dominated STEM
Psychology	Female-dominated social science
Economics	Male-dominated social science
English literature	Female-dominated humanities
History	Male-dominated humanities
Grades	
"Mostly As" through "Mostly Cs and Ds"	Quality of academic performance

Source: Quadlin 2019a.

depending on the targets' social groups. Gender was manipulated using gendered first names. Race was manipulated using racialized first names and/or last names. For White, Black, and Latinx targets, both the first and last names are racialized and derived from prior research (Gaddis 2017b; Quadlin 2018; Weisshaar, Chavez, and Cabello-Hutt 2020). For Asian targets, I chose names from among the most common first and last names for Chinese Americans (Bartz 2009), who are the largest Asian ethnic group in the United States. The Asian names are notable because Chinese Americans frequently have White-sounding first names, making their last names most important for signaling race-ethnicity (Crabtree and Chykina 2018). This represents a slight deviation across experimental conditions, but one that is consistent with naming patterns in the United States. In addition, all eight names are intended to be perceived as middle class. This is a key consideration especially for Black and Latinx names because, for example, if a name is readily perceived as both Black and lower class, Black targets may be penalized not only because they are perceived as Black (which studies are attempting to capture), but also because the name evokes socioeconomic disadvantage (which would be a confound from the researcher's name selection; Gaddis 2017a).

I chose undergraduate institutions representing six levels of college selectivity, according to their ranking in *U.S. News and World Report* (high, moderate, and low) and their sector (private and public). Notions of selectivity are based on several factors, such as academic qualifications of the entering classes and the percent of applicants rejected, and selectivity is often considered akin to prestige or college quality in the United States (see, for example, Conwell and Quadlin 2022; Stevens 2009). The targets' majors are either female dominated or male dominated, and are intended to span diverse content areas, that is, STEM (science, technology, engineering, math), social science, and the humanities. Finally, the targets' academic performance spans six levels, ranging from high to low. The low achievement condition (that is, mostly Cs and Ds) is intended to be just high enough that it would be conceivable for a person to earn a college degree with these grades; any lower, and it would be unlikely that the target would have been allowed to stay enrolled and graduate. Readers who are intimately familiar with higher education may quibble about whether, for example, students can graduate from Harvard while earning mostly C and D grades. Such an academic record may be improbable, or sometimes even impossible, but most members of the public are unlikely to know about minimum grade requirements at specific institutions.

Directly beneath the two profiles, I asked respondents three questions that gauged their impressions of the targets. Specifically, I asked respondents to report their perceptions of the targets in terms of how intelligent they are, how kind they are, and the extent to which they are perceived as coming from a wealthy family.[5] The first two items are drawn from research on perceptions of competence and social warmth, which are considered fundamental aspects of social perception that are often complementary (Fiske et al. 2002). Yet perceptions of competence and warmth may be in conflict when assessing members of some social groups. For example, Whites and Asians are frequently viewed as possessing high competence, but low warmth (Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick 2008). Further, research shows that women who exhibit agentic traits (for example, professional women, high-achieving women) risk being perceived as lacking social warmth more so than their men counterparts (Eagly and Carli 2007; Glick and Fiske 1996; Quadlin 2018). The third item is intended to capture perceptions of intergenerational privilege, which are theoretically distinct from, but certainly help support, achieved statuses such as educational and occupational attainment (Sewell, Haller, and Portes 1969).

After respondents completed their first set of ratings, they then repeated the task two

5. Perceptions of kindness are not exactly the same thing as perceptions of social warmth, and thus this measure deviates slightly from prior research. However, I could only include one measure of social warmth in the survey, and I decided that respondents could gauge whether a person is kind in this context more easily than they could assess whether a person is warm. I ultimately expect that these measures would produce equivalent results.

more times. I dropped twenty-two cases with missing data on one or more outcome variables (.2 percent of the sample), leaving a final sample size of 10,778 profile ratings.

Methods

I begin by showing descriptive statistics for perceptions of intelligence, likability, and privilege, including how these perceptions vary across the main experimental manipulations. I then use linear regressions, first to assess how the main experimental manipulations are associated with perceptions of intelligence, and then to examine the extent to which perceptions of privilege and likability also factor into these perceptions. Finally, I consider whether these perceptions vary according to respondents' educational attainment—that is, whether respondents have not attained a bachelor's degree (n = 7,665), or whether they have attained a bachelor's degree or more (n = 3,113). For this component of the analysis, I use both structural equation models (SEM) and linear regressions to quantify each of the pathways of interest and compare them across education groups. For all analyses, standard errors are clustered by respondent.

RESULTS

Perceptions of Intelligence, Privilege, and Warmth

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for the three perceptions of interest in this study: intelligence, privilege, and kindness. These perceptions are shown across each of the target characteristics (that is, gender, race-ethnicity, college selectivity, field of study, academic performance), along with test statistics to indicate which groups are perceived as significantly different from each other.

One point becomes immediately apparent: college characteristics and experiences—including college selectivity, field of study, and especially academic performance—look to be much more determinative of individual perceptions than a person's race and gender. Broadly speaking, among targets who attended different types of colleges, majored in different fields of study, and earned different grades, respondents tended to view these groups quite differently for each of the perceptions under consideration. As an illustration of this point, consider the targets with the lowest grades (mostly Cs and Ds in college) versus those with the highest grades (mostly As). Respondents perceived the highest-achieving targets as considerably more intelligent than their lowest-achieving peers, with a 2.27-point differential between these groups ($p < .001$). The highest achievers were also perceived as more likable ($p < .001$) and as coming from wealthier families than the lowest achievers ($p < .001$), although the point differentials for perceived intelligence are by far the largest of the three.

Similar patterns are observed among targets who attended colleges of varying selectivity levels, and among those who majored in different fields of study. College selectivity looks to have the largest effects on perceptions of wealth. Targets who attended highly selective private universities (such as Harvard) are perceived as wealthier than those who attended less selective public universities (such as Montclair State; $p < .001$). The biggest disparities across fields of study are in terms of intelligence. The mean for the highest-rated field, biology (6.76), is only slightly higher than that for the lowest-rated field, psychology (6.50), although this point differential is statistically significant ($p < .001$). That STEM majors are rated as more intelligent than other majors underscores the growing importance of STEM fields in the national discourse, even at the same time that much of the country expresses anti-science beliefs (O'Brien and Noy 2020). This is a potential source of tension that may be a fruitful area for future research—that is, the extent to which individuals who espouse anti-science attitudes see the value of scientific careers for themselves, their children, or other members of the public, especially given the prestige and strong economic returns that are tied to many scientific careers (Kim, Tamborini, and Sakamoto 2015; VanHeuvelen and Quadlin 2021). Although some individuals may be decidedly anti-science, they may nonetheless endorse STEM majors and careers for instrumental reasons, but this question is ultimately empirical.

By comparison, race and gender are much less determinative of perceptions of intelligence, wealth, and kindness. Men and women

Table 1. Perceptions of Intelligence, Privilege, and Kindness by Target's Characteristics

	Intelligence	Privilege	Kindness
Gender			
Man (ref.)	6.59	5.68	6.23
Woman	6.62	5.63	6.28
Race-ethnicity			
White (ref.)	6.59	5.80	6.25
Black	6.58	5.60*	6.23
Hispanic	6.59	5.49*	6.34
Asian	6.68	5.72	6.21
Race-gender			
White man (ref.)	6.59	5.85	6.20
White woman	6.58	5.76	6.31
Black man	6.58	5.66*	6.21
Black woman	6.57	5.54*	6.25
Hispanic man	6.58	5.51*	6.32
Hispanic woman	6.59	5.48*	6.35
Asian man	6.63	5.72	6.19
Asian woman	6.74	5.73	6.23
Selectivity			
Highly selective private (ref.)	6.74	6.35	6.19
Highly selective public	6.64	5.62*	6.27
Moderately selective private	6.55*	5.72*	6.28
Moderately selective public	6.54*	5.49*	6.24
Less selective private	6.56*	5.38*	6.21
Less selective public	6.63	5.37*	6.35*
Major			
Biology (ref.)	6.76	5.72	6.35
Math	6.71	5.60	6.28
Psychology	6.50*	5.57*	6.15*
Economics	6.57*	5.66	6.20*
English literature	6.55*	5.77	6.29
History	6.56*	5.60	6.26
Grades			
Mostly Cs and Ds (ref.)	5.35	5.33	5.93
Mostly Cs	5.97*	5.55*	6.16*
Mostly Bs and Cs	6.49*	5.66*	6.31*
Mostly Bs	6.88*	5.68*	6.33*
Mostly As and Bs	7.33*	5.75*	6.35*
Mostly As	7.62*	5.95*	6.46*

Source: Author's tabulation from original data collected through YouGov (Quadlin 2019a).
* $p < .05$; mean is significantly different from the mean for the reference category.

have comparable mean scores across each of these perceptions. In addition, all four race-ethnicity groups are perceived similarly in terms of their intelligence and kindness. In an exception, both Black targets ($p < .01$) and Hispanic targets ($p < .001$) are perceived as coming from less-privileged families than their White counterparts, which is consistent with research

on the demography of race, income, and wealth in the United States (Hamilton and Darity 2010). It may be surprising that gender and race-ethnicity groups are not rated more disparately, considering that research has pointed to wide gulfs in perceptions of these groups (Berger, Cohen, and Zelditch 1972; Ridgeway 2011). Part of this equalization may be due to the fact that all the targets in the experiment were described as college graduates. I suspect that this standardization of educational attainment is mitigating some of the group-based disparities that have been observed in research. That said, we might still expect larger race and gender effects in this experiment, given the large racial and gender disparities we observe in social life; this is an important topic that I return to in the discussion.

A final point is that respondents' mean ratings of privilege typically were lower than their ratings of intelligence and kindness. Broadly, this speaks to Americans' general distaste for the concept of privilege, even as Americans seem to be becoming more aware of how powerful it is and how it operates. As other articles in this volume mention (see, for example, Koenig 2022), the recognition of undeserved status may be one of the key mechanisms fueling the pro-Trump movement as well as larger forces of political polarization in the United States. Although many of the vignette characters could have reasonably been interpreted as quite privileged on the basis of their race and undergraduate institution, among other attributes, respondents may have been more likely to gravitate toward perceptions of intelligence and kindness than perceptions of privilege per se.

Predicting Perceptions of Intelligence

Table 2 builds on these descriptive statistics by presenting how respondent perceptions of wealth and kindness, along with the target's characteristics, are associated with perceptions of intelligence. The first model shows the effects of target characteristics before incorporating the other respondent perceptions. Men and women are perceived as about equally intelligent, as are all four race-ethnicity groups. The effects of college selectivity also are relatively sparse. Targets who attended moderately selective private institutions ($p < .05$) and moderately selective public institutions ($p < .05$) are perceived as less intelligent than their peers who attended the highest-status private colleges, but other categories of selectivity are not significant. This finding may be surprising given the vast differences in selectivity between, for example, Harvard and the University of Wyoming; this is a point that I return to later in the analyses. As expected given what we saw in the descriptive statistics, biology majors are perceived as more intelligent than those who majored in several other fields, including psychology ($p < .001$), economics ($p < .01$), English literature ($p < .001$), and history ($p < .001$). Finally, academic performance has a significant and substantively large effect on perceived intelligence: each step increase in a target's grades (for example, from "mostly Cs and Ds" to "mostly Cs") is associated with a .45-point increase in perceived intelligence on a 10-point scale ($p < .001$), which is the largest effect here in substantive terms.

Models 2 and 3 incorporate perceptions of privilege and kindness. Here I start by discussing these respondent perceptions before turning to how the effects of target characteristics (such as college selectivity) change across models. In model 2, we see that perceptions of wealth are positively associated with perceptions of intelligence ($p < .001$). When a recent college graduate is perceived as coming from a wealthy family, they are perceived as more intelligent than they otherwise would be, net of their sex, race, and college information. After incorporating perceptions of kindness in model 3, the effect of perceived wealth remains significant ($p < .001$), although the size of the coefficient declines between models 2 and 3. This pattern suggests that perceptions of kindness and wealth are positively correlated, such that people who are perceived as coming from a wealthy family are also perceived as relatively kind. In addition, perceptions of kindness are positively associated with perceptions of intelligence ($p < .001$), which is consistent with research on the positive relationship between perceptions of competence and social warmth (Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick 2008).

Turning to the effects of target characteristics, many patterns are observable throughout

Table 2. Predictors of Perceptions of Intelligence, *N* = 10,778

	(1)	(2)	(3)
R's perceptions:			
Comes from a wealthy family		0.33***	0.15***
		(0.02)	(0.02)
Kind			0.53***
			(0.02)
Sex (ref: Male)			
Female	0.03	0.05	−0.00
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Race-ethnicity (ref: White)			
Black	−0.00	0.06	0.04
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.04)
Hispanic	0.03	0.13**	0.03
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.04)
Asian	0.10	0.12*	0.13**
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.04)
College (ref: Highly selective private)			
Highly selective public	−0.12	0.13	−0.05
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)
Moderately selective private	−0.17*	0.04	−0.12*
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)
Moderately selective public	−0.19*	0.10	−0.07
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)
Less selective private	−0.15	0.17*	−0.02
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.06)
Less selective public	−0.08	0.24***	−0.02
	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.06)
Major (ref: Biology)			
Math	−0.10	−0.07	−0.04
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)
Psychology	−0.31***	−0.26***	−0.16**
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)
Economics	−0.18**	−0.17**	−0.10
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)
English literature	−0.24***	−0.26***	−0.21***
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)
History	−0.27***	−0.22***	−0.19***
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)
Grades	0.45***	0.42***	0.39***
	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)

Source: Author's tabulation from original data collected through YouGov (Quadlin 2019a).
Note: OLS regressions; coefficients reported. Standard errors clustered by respondent. Models include survey weights.
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

the table, but the effects of college selectivity are perhaps most instructive. In model 1, we observe that students who attended low-status private and public institutions are perceived as about equally intelligent as those who attended high-status private institutions (the reference category). After accounting for perceptions of privilege in model 2, the coefficients for low-status private and public institutions are now significant and positive ($p < .05$ and $p < .001$, respectively). This pattern suggests that when respondents are presented with students from low-status institutions, their perceptions of intelligence are suppressed partly because they perceive these students as lacking privilege. Yet, once perceptions of privilege are controlled for, we see that these students are perceived as more intelligent than students who attended high-status private colleges. Finally, in model 3, the coefficients for low-status institutions are again not significant when controlling for perceptions of kindness. Thus, perceptions of intelligence among low-status college graduates look to be driven by perceptions of kindness. This explanation is consistent with what we saw in the descriptive statistics in table 1—that is, students who attended low-status institutions are often rated relatively low in terms of intelligence and wealth, but relatively high in terms of kindness.

Despite these variations, it is worth underscoring just how large the effects of academic performance are relative to that of college selectivity in guiding perceptions of intelligence. Figure 2 illustrates this point well. Both panels show mean perceptions of intelligence for White men targets. The top panel captures biology majors who received mostly As in college, across all six levels of college selectivity; the bottom panel captures psychology majors who received mostly Cs and Ds, across all six levels. From left to right in both of these panels, we see how perceptions of intelligence vary (modestly) according to college selectivity. Here it becomes abundantly apparent that one's grades in college are far more determinative of perceived intelligence than where one went to college. Put differently, a degree from Harvard, which some scholars and members of the public have argued is an indicator of intergenerational wealth, will not "save" a person from being perceived as lacking intelligence if they received poor grades, at least in the context of this experiment.

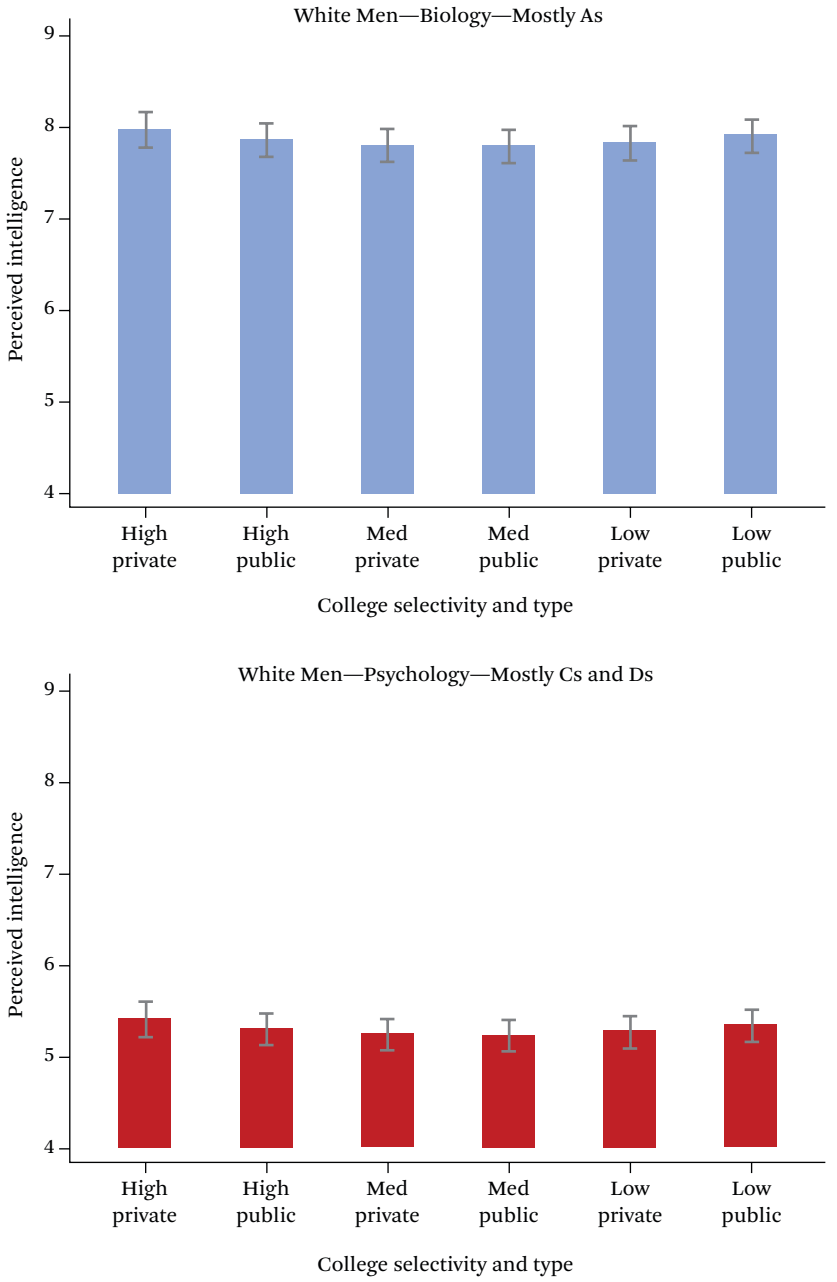
Comparing Respondents with and Without Bachelor's Degrees

As a final component of the analysis, I consider whether respondents with and without bachelor's degrees make distinct assessments of recent college graduates in terms of their intelligence, privilege, and kindness. Figure 3 shows structural equation models for each of these groups, which help quantify and compare each of the relationships of interest. Perhaps surprisingly, these SEM results are virtually identical across groups. In both panels, we see positive pathways between perceptions of privilege and likability, between perceptions of likability and intelligence, and between perceptions of privilege and intelligence (all $p < .001$). What is more, the magnitudes of these relationships are extremely consistent across education groups, suggesting that regardless of whether one has attained a bachelor's degree, the assessments of these traits follow similar processes. In general, when a recent college graduate is perceived as economically privileged, they are also perceived as more intelligent than they otherwise would be, and this pattern holds regardless of respondents' level of education.[6]

Table 3 provides something of a counterpoint to this finding, however. This table mirrors figure 2 by showing how perceptions of intelligence vary across levels of college selectivity for two distinct groups: White men who majored in biology and received mostly As, and White men who majored in psychology and received mostly Cs and Ds. These estimates are derived from separate models by respondent educational attainment. For those who have a bachelor's degree or more, we see a distinct gradient in perceived intelligence across levels of college selectivity. Targets who attended highly selective private institutions are perceived as more intelligent than those who attended less selective public institutions, even though they majored in the same subject and received the

6. A similar consistency is seen in the regression models in table A.1.

Figure 2. Perceptions of Intelligence: Comparing Variation in Academic Performance versus College Selectivity

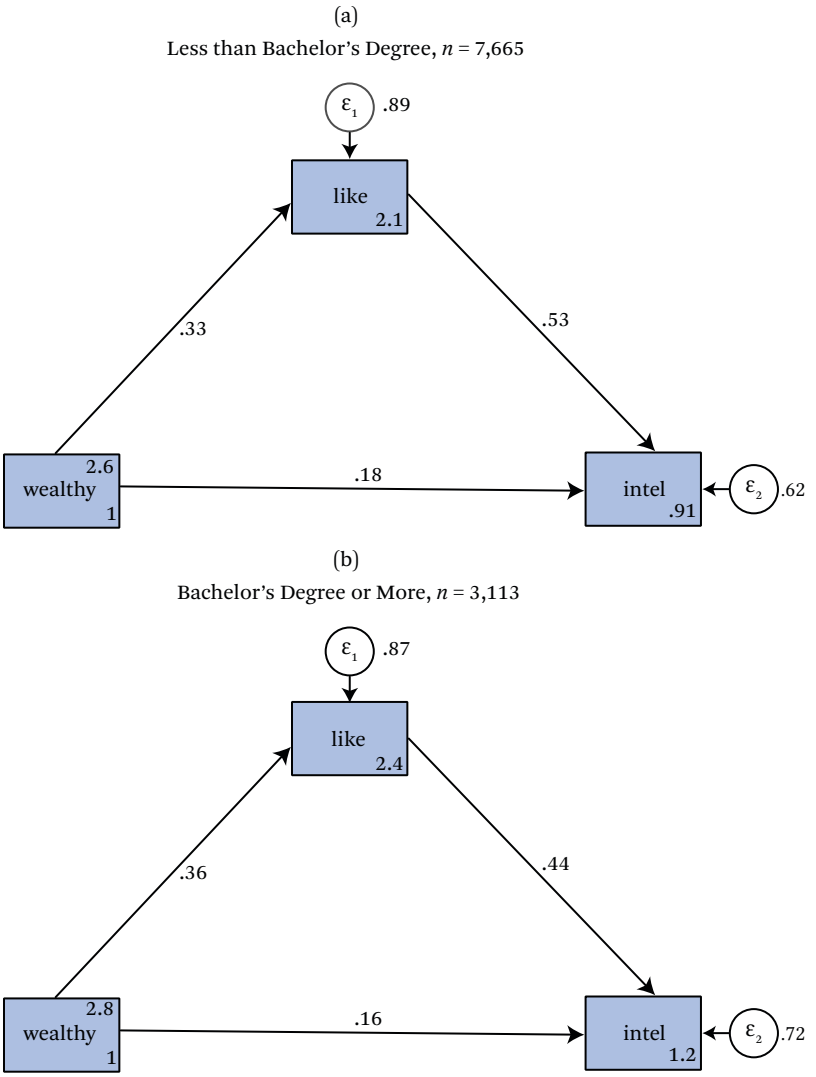


Source: Author's tabulation from original data collected through YouGov (Quadlin 2019a).
Note: Figures are derived from OLS regressions. Models include survey weights.

same grades ($p < .05$). Put differently, respondents who have a bachelor's degree or more tend to use college selectivity information to make assessments of others' intelligence.

This is not the case when we limit the sample to respondents who have less than a bachelor's degree, however. For this group, perceptions of intelligence do not vary significantly across levels of college selectivity. This is partly driven by the fact that respondents with less

Figure 3. Structural Equation Model Estimates for Perceptions of Intelligence, Likability, and Privilege



Source: Author's tabulation from original data collected through YouGov (Quadlin 2019a).
Note: Standard errors clustered by respondent. Models include survey weights.

than a bachelor's degree rated students from less selective institutions relatively highly in terms of intelligence (a pattern evident in the contours in table 2). Further research is needed to fully unpack this mechanism, but I suspect that these respondents were especially likely to recognize the barriers that students from less selective colleges face, and they awarded them an intelligence "boost" as a result. Accordingly, it may not be that lower-SES respondents are skeptical of privileged people's intelligence; instead, they may be more willing to recognize the intelligence that less-privileged individuals possess. This is a potentially important pathway in the assessment of individual merit that can be refined in future work.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Using data from an original, nationally representative survey experiment, this article has considered the intertwined relationships between perceptions of intelligence and privilege. People make assessments of others' intelligence every day, and these assessments matter

Table 3. Perceptions of Intelligence: Comparing Variation in Academic Performance versus College Selectivity, by Respondent Education Level

	Less than Bachelor's Degree	Bachelor's Degree or More
White men—biology—mostly As		
Highly selective private (ref.)	7.85	8.32
Highly selective public	7.75	8.16
Medium selective private	7.74	7.99*
Medium selective public	7.69	8.06*
Less selective private	7.76	8.01*
Less selective public	7.86	8.01*
White men—psychology—mostly Cs and Ds		
Highly selective private (ref.)	5.46	5.31
Highly selective public	5.36	5.16
Medium selective private	5.35	4.99*
Medium selective public	5.30	5.06*
Less selective private	5.37	5.01*
Less selective public	5.47	5.00*

Source: Author's tabulation from original data collected through YouGov (Quadlin 2019a).
Note: OLS regressions. Standard errors are clustered by respondent. Models include survey weights.
* $p < .05$

for determining many outcomes that have an impact on people's lives. Scholars of educational inequality are well aware that students who attend the nation's most elite institutions are not necessarily more intelligent than similar others; instead, they may have gained admission to these institutions, at least in part, as a byproduct of the intergenerational transmission of advantage (Bero 2021). But what does the public make of this? Are graduates of the most elite institutions perceived as privileged and intelligent simultaneously? Or are members of the public skeptical of wealthy Americans to the point that people who are perceived as privileged are regarded as less intelligent than they otherwise would be?

The results from this study are very clear in this regard: when a recent college graduate is perceived as coming from a wealthy family, they are perceived as more intelligent than their peers who are perceived as less wealthy. In this sense, perceptions of privilege tend to enhance—rather than impede—perceptions of intelligence. This finding is consistent with research such as that in the status attainment tradition (Sewell, Haller, and Portes 1969), which finds a persistent positive relationship between one's social class of origin and one's life chances. For these relationships to persist on a large scale, privileged individuals would not face disproportionate barriers in their pursuit of status; instead, they would have an easier time demonstrating to others that they are competent and worthy. This pattern also is consistent with insights from sociological social psychology, which suggests that people work to confirm their impressions of others rather than to debunk their initial assumptions. This study likewise shows that people who are perceived as privileged are effectively given a vote of initial confidence when it comes to their intelligence.

I also considered the extent to which this relationship is consistent across social groups. Specifically, I assessed whether perceptions of recent college graduates are consistent for respondents with and without bachelor's degrees. Considering that college graduates tend to come from high-SES families, and that college graduates likewise stand to benefit from the status advantages tied to postsecondary education, it would not necessarily be surpris-

ing if perceptions of privilege and intelligence were especially strong for bachelor's degree–holders.

For the most part, I find that these groups have similar perceptions of college graduates, and that the direction and magnitude of these perceptions are consistent across groups. Yet I also find a deviation when it comes to the symbolic power tied to college selectivity. Whereas college graduates tend to differentiate between levels of college selectivity in assessing people's intelligence, people without college degrees may not make such distinctions. Instead, in many cases, they may perceive recent college graduates as about equally intelligent regardless of the selectivity of their college. This is partly driven by the fact that nongraduates tend to rate students from the least selective institutions rather highly when assessing their intelligence. Perhaps these respondents are more likely than college graduates to recognize the barriers that these students face in attaining their degrees and thus are more generous in their assessments. An alternative possibility is that college graduates and nongraduates are motivated to either maintain or disrupt the status hierarchy, respectively, and that respondents' perceptions are a reflection of these differential motivations. College graduates, for example, may be more likely to distinguish between levels of college selectivity as a way to bolster their status and promote themselves relative to those who attended less selective colleges. Those without college education, meanwhile, may minimize differences between levels of college selectivity as a way of flattening a prestige hierarchy they are not privy to. Overall, this may be a fruitful area for future research to help enhance our understanding of how and for whom educational credentials hold symbolic power.

Broadly, the findings from this study tell us much about the status implications of privilege and power in the United States. Despite much social scientific evidence that socioeconomic privilege enhances people's chances of academic success, members of the public regard privilege as an indicator of merit in and of itself. Put differently, respondents generally perceive privileged individuals—or those who are least likely to have to "pull themselves up by their bootstraps" based on skill alone—as the most intelligent. These findings have implications for college admissions, hiring and promotion in professional organizations, and many other settings where perceptions of intelligence are used in decision-making. Perhaps the status tied to privilege would not be as strong if people were reminded about the many advantages that flow from income and wealth. This could be an effective intervention for reducing the linkages between privilege and intelligence—at least in an experimental setting, where respondents do not have to justify their choices to others or make decisions based on other competing interests. In the real world, however, these linkages are much more difficult to break. College admissions officers may continue to admit privileged students, even if they are reminded of the biases in doing so, because they are incentivized to admit entering classes that will benefit the university financially. Similarly, hiring decision-makers may continue to hire privileged applicants, even if they are reminded of the biases in doing so, because clients and coworkers are likely to regard these applicants positively. All of this is to say that bias is not the only mechanism that contributes to patterns of cumulative advantage, and any successful intervention will take into account both the cognitive biases and the social structures that reinforce inequality.

The data for this study come from a conjoint survey experiment using a nationally representative sample of U.S. English-speaking adults. Conjoint experiments have been shown to reduce social desirability bias in individual perceptions, which can be a concern for some types of survey experiments, especially those that ask respondents to report impressions of people from diverse racial and gender groups (for related discussion, see Quadlin 2019b). Although I have taken care to mitigate the potential for social desirability bias here, it is a perennial concern among survey experimentalists, especially given Americans' deep-seated tendencies toward color and gender blindness. Future research could incorporate other modes of data collection, such as interviews or even surveys with open-ended components, to triangulate the perceptions reported here.

Research could also make in-depth assess-

ments, for example, of Americans' current narratives or theories of intelligence, privilege, and kindness. How do these narratives account for higher education credentials and experiences? Is intelligence a fixed and innate trait, or does it grow and expand when we give people the opportunity to attend an elite college—especially students from humbler backgrounds? Similarly, does college provide an environment that engenders feelings of kindness and trust in students, or does this kindness not shine through as brightly for those who attend less selective institutions where resources are scarce? I find that credentials tend to shape perceptions of intelligence, privilege, and kindness, but more work could be done to assess where these feelings come from.

Studies could also assess how perceptions of intelligence and privilege vary across other social divides, such as social class of origin and parents' educational attainment. These are key measures of socioeconomic privilege that are likely to shape the way people think about, and differentially reward, achieved statuses such as education. Although scholars are well aware that many so-called achieved statuses are at least partly ascribed, these linkages are not well known among members of the public, which only helps reinforce existing forms of inequality.

Table A.1. Predictors of Perceptions of Intelligence, by Respondent Education Level

	No Bachelor's Degree		Bachelor's Degree or More	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
R's perceptions:				
Comes from a wealthy family	0.34***	0.16***	0.30***	0.14***
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Kind		0.55***		0.46***
		(0.02)		(0.04)
Sex (ref: Male)				
Female	0.06	−0.01	0.03	0.02
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.05)
Race-ethnicity (ref: White)				
Black	0.02	0.02	0.13	0.07
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Hispanic	0.10	0.02	0.19*	0.05
	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.08)	(0.07)
Asian	0.10	0.12*	0.15	0.15
	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.08)	(0.08)
College (ref: highly selective private)				
Highly selective public	−0.32***	−0.04	−0.03	0.19
	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.13)	(0.11)
Moderately selective private	−0.15	−0.04	−0.00	0.03
	(0.08)	(0.06)	(0.13)	(0.11)
Moderately selective public	−0.21**	−0.12	−0.16	−0.05
	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.11)	(0.10)
Less selective private	−0.18*	−0.07	−0.03	0.00
	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.10)	(0.10)
Less selective public	−0.10	0.01	−0.00	−0.02
	(0.09)	(0.07)	(0.11)	(0.10)
Major (ref: biology)				
Math	−0.11	−0.10	0.02	0.09
	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.11)	(0.10)
Psychology	−0.26**	−0.15*	−0.28*	−0.21
	(0.09)	(0.07)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Economics	−0.20*	−0.12	−0.11	−0.05
	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.11)	(0.10)
English literature	−0.23**	−0.21**	−0.33**	−0.21
	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.12)	(0.11)
History	−0.19*	−0.17*	−0.33**	−0.27**
	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.10)	(0.09)
Grades	0.38***	0.36***	0.50***	0.47***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)
n	7,665		3,113	

Source: Author's tabulation from original data collected through YouGov (Quadlin 2019a).
Note: OLS regressions; coefficients reported. Standard errors clustered by respondent. Models include survey weights.
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

REFERENCES

Aisch, Gregor, Larry Buchanan, Amanda Cox, and Kevin Quealy. 2017. "Some Colleges Have More Students from the Top 1 Percent Than the Bottom 60. Find Yours." *New York Times*, January 18. Accessed November 19, 2021. https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/01/18/upshot/some-colleges-have-more-students-from-the-top-1-percent-than-the-bottom-60.html.

Arcidiacono, Peter, Josh Kinsler, and Tyler Ransom. 2022. "Legacy and Athlete Preferences at Harvard." *Journal of Labor Economics* 40(1): 133–56. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1086/713744.

Bartz, Kevin. 2009. "English First Names for Chinese Americans." *Harvard University Social Science Statistics Blog*, March 13. Accessed November 21, 2021. https://blogs.iq.harvard.edu/english_first_n.

Bénabou, Roland, and Jean Tirole. 2006. "Belief in a Just World and Redistributive Politics." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 121(2): 699–746.

Berger, Joseph, Bernard P. Cohen, and Morris Zelditch. 1972. "Status Characteristics and Social Interaction." *American Sociological Review* 37(3): 241–55.

Bero, Tayo. 2021. "Turns Out, Harvard Students Aren't That Smart After All." *The Guardian*, November 17. Accessed November 19, 2021. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/nov/17/harvard-university-students-smart-iq.

Binder, Amy J., Daniel B. Davis, and Nick Bloom. 2016. "Career Funneling: How Elite Students Learn to Define and Desire 'Prestigious' Jobs." *Sociology of Education* 89(1): 20–39.

Blau, Peter M., and Otis Dudley Duncan. 1967. *The American Occupational Structure*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 2006. *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1986. "The Forms of Capital." In *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by John G. Richardson. New York: Greenwood.

Calarco, Jessica McCrory. 2011. "'I Need Help!' Social Class and Children's Help-Seeking in Elementary School." *American Sociological Review* 76(6): 862–82.

Castro, Abril. 2020. "An Elite College Has Dropped Legacy Admissions—It's Time for Other Higher Education Institutions to Do the Same." Center for American Progress, January 30. Accessed November 21, 2021. https://www.americanprogress.org/article/elite-college-dropped-legacy-admissions-time-higher-education-institutions/.

Conwell, Jordan A. 2021. "Diverging Disparities: Race, Parental Income, and Children's Math Scores, 1960 to 2009." *Sociology of Education* 94(2): 124–42.

Conwell, Jordan A., and Natasha Quadlin. 2022. "Race, Gender, Higher Education, and Socioeconomic Attainment: Evidence from Baby Boomers at Mid-Life." *Social Forces* 100(3): 990–1024.

Conwell, Jordan A., and Leafia Zi Ye. 2021. "All Wealth Is Not Created Equal: Race, Parental Net Worth, and Children's Achievement." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 7(3): 101–21. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2021.7.3.05.

Crabtree, Charles, and Volha Chykina. 2018. "Last Name Selection in Audit Studies." *Sociological Science* 5(2): 21–28.

Cuddy, Amy J. C., Susan T. Fiske, and Peter Glick. 2008. "Warmth and Competence as Universal Dimensions of Social Perception: The Stereotype Content Model and the BIAS Map." *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 40: 61–149.

Cullen, Jim. 2003. *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea That Shaped a Nation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

DiMaggio, Paul. 1982. "Cultural Capital and School Success: The Impact of Status Culture Participation on the Grades of U.S. High School Students." *American Sociological Review* 47(2): 189–201.

Dippong, Joseph, and Will Kalkhoff. 2015. "Predicting Performance Expectations from Affective Impressions: Linking Affect Control Theory and Status Characteristics Theory." *Social Science Research* 50(3): 1–14.

DiPrete, Thomas A., and Gregory M. Eirich. 2006. "Cumulative Advantage as a Mechanism for Inequality: A Review of Theoretical and Empirical Developments." *Annual Review of Sociology* 32(1): 271–97.

Doan, Long, Natasha Quadlin, and Brian Powell. 2019. "Americans' Perceptions of Transgender People's Sex: Evidence from a National Survey Experiment." *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World* 5: 1–15.

Dynarski, Susan. 2015. "For the Poor, the Graduation Gap Is Even Wider Than the Enrollment Gap." *New York Times*, June 2. Accessed November 21, 2021. https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/02/upshot/for-the-poor-the-graduation-gap-is-even-wider-than-the-enrollment-gap.html.

Eagly, Alice H., and Linda L. Carli. 2007. *Through the Labyrinth: The Truth About How Women Become Leaders*. Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press.

Erikson, Robert, and John H. Goldthorpe. 2002. "Intergenerational Inequality: A Sociological Perspective." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 16(3): 31–44.

Ermish, John, Markus Jäntti, and Timothy M. Smeeding, eds. 2012. *From Parents to Children: The Intergenerational Transmission of Advantage*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Espenshade, Thomas J. and Chang Y. Chung. 2005. "The Opportunity Cost of Admission Preferences at Elite Universities." *Social Science Quarterly* 86(2): 293–305.

Fiske, Susan T., Amy J. C. Cuddy, Peter Glick, and Jun Xu. 2002. "A Model of (Often Mixed) Stereotype Content: Competence and Warmth Respectively Follow from Perceived Status and Competition." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 82(6): 878–902.

Gaddis, S. Michael. 2017a. "How Black Are Lakisha and Jamal? Racial Perceptions from Names Used in Correspondence Audit Studies." *Sociological Science* 4: 469–89.

———. 2017b. "Racial/Ethnic Perceptions from Hispanic Names: Selecting Names to Test for Discrimination." *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World* 3: 1–11.

Galperin, Roman V., Oliver Hahl, Adina D. Sterling, and Jerry Guo. 2020. "Too Good to Hire? Capability and Inferences about Commitment in Labor Markets." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 65(2): 275–313.

Glick, Peter, and Susan T. Fiske. 1996. "The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory: Differentiating Hostile and Benevolent Sexism." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 70(3): 491–512.

Hamilton, Darrick, and William Darity. 2010. "Can 'Baby Bonds' Eliminate the Racial Wealth Gap in Putative Post-Racial America?" *Review of Black Political Economy* 37: 207–16.

Hochschild, Jennifer L. 1995. *Facing Up to the American Dream: Race, Class, and the Soul of the Nation*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Hout, Michael. 2018. "Americans' Occupational Status Reflects the Status of Both of Their Parents." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 115(38): 9527–32.

Jaschik, Scott. 2021. "Legacy Admissions Banned in Colorado." *Admissions Insider*, June 1. Accessed November 21, 2021. https://www.insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2021/06/01/colorado-bars-public-colleges-using-legacy-admissions.

Jost, John T., Mahzarin R. Banaji, and Brian A. Nosek. 2004. "A Decade of System Justification Theory: Accumulated Evidence of Conscious and Unconscious Bolstering of the Status Quo." *Political Psychology* 25(6): 881–919.

Kim, ChangHwan, Christopher R. Tamborini, and Arthur Sakamoto. 2015. "Field of Study in College and Lifetime Earnings in the United States." *Sociology of Education* 88(4): 320–39.

Kluegel, James R., and Eliot R. Smith. 1986. *Beliefs About Inequality: Americans' Views of What Is and What Ought to Be*. New York: Routledge.

Koenig, Biko. 2022. "Politicizing Status Loss Among Trump Supporters in 2020." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(6): 69–86. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.6.04.

Massey, Douglas S., Camille Z. Charles, Garvey Lundy, and Mary J. Fischer. 2011. *The Source of the River: The Social Origins of Freshmen at America's Selective Colleges and Universities*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

McCall, Leslie. 2013. *The Undeserving Rich: American Beliefs About Inequality, Opportunity, and Redistribution*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

McCall, Leslie, Derek Burk, Marie Laperrière, and Jennifer A. Richeson. 2017. "Exposure to Rising Inequality Shapes Americans' Opportunity Beliefs and Policy Support." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 114(36): 9593–98.

McNamee, Stephen J., and Robert K. Miller. 2009. *The Meritocracy Myth*, 2nd ed. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.

Medina, Jennifer, Katie Benner, and Kate Taylor. 2019. "Actresses, Business Leaders and Other Wealthy Parents Charged in U.S. College Entry Fraud." *New York Times*, March 12. Accessed November 21, 2021. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/12/us/college-admissions-cheating-scandal.html.

Merton, Robert K. 1968. "The Matthew Effect in Science: The Reward and Communication Systems of Science Are Considered." *Science* 159(3810): 56–63.

Mijs, Jonathan J. B. 2021. "The Paradox of Inequality: Income Inequality and Belief in Meritocracy Go Hand in Hand." *Socio-Economic Review* 19(1): 7–35.

O'Brien, Timothy L., and Shiri Noy. 2020. "Political Identity and Confidence in Science and Religion in the United States." *Sociology of Religion* 81(4): 439–61.

Owens, Ann. 2018. "Income Segregation Between School Districts and Inequality in Students' Achievement." *Sociology of Education* 91(1): 1–27.

Pedulla, David S. 2014. "The Positive Consequences of Negative Stereotypes: Race, Sexual Orientation, and the Job Application Process." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 77(1): 75–94.

Pfeffer, Fabian T. 2008. "Persistent Inequality in Educational Attainment and Its Institutional Context." *European Sociological Review* 24(5): 543–65.

Pfeffer, Fabian T., and Alexandra Killewald. 2018. "Generations of Advantage. Multigenerational Correlations in Family Wealth." *Social Forces* 96(4): 1411–42.

Quadlin, Natasha. 2018. "The Mark of a Woman's Record: Gender and Academic Performance in Hiring." *American Sociological Review* 83: 331–60.

Quadlin, Natasha. 2019a. *Perceptions of Intelligence, Privilege, and Kindness Among Recent College Graduates* (data set). Redwood City, Calif.: YouGov.

———. 2019b. "Sibling Achievement, Sibling Gender, and Beliefs about Parental Investment: Evidence from a National Survey Experiment." *Social Forces* 97(4): 1603–30.

Quadlin, Natasha, and Jordan A. Conwell. 2021. "Race, Gender, and Parental College Savings: Assessing Economic and Academic Factors." *Sociology of Education* 94(1): 20–42.

Quadlin, Natasha, and Brian Powell. 2022. *Who Should Pay? Higher Education, Responsibility, and the Public*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Ray, Rashawn. 2017. "Black People Don't Exercise in My Neighborhood: Perceived Racial Composition and Leisure-Time Physical Activity Among Middle Class Blacks and Whites." *Social Science Research* 66: 42–57.

Reardon, Sean F. 2011. "The Widening Academic Achievement Gap Between the Rich and the Poor: New Evidence and Possible Explanations." In *Whither Opportunity? Rising Inequality, Schools, and Children's Life Chances*, edited by Greg J. Duncan and Robert J. Murnane. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L. 2011. *Framed by Gender: How Gender Inequality Persists in the Modern World*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L., and Shelley J. Correll. 2004. "Unpacking the Gender System: A Theoretical Perspective on Gender Beliefs and Social Relations." *Gender & Society* 18(4): 510–31.

Risman, Barbara J., and Myra Marx Ferree. 1995. "Making Gender Visible." *American Sociological Review* 60(5): 775–82.

Rivera, Lauren A. 2015. *Pedigree: How Elite Students Get Elite Jobs*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Schachter, Ariela. 2016. "From 'Different' to 'Similar': An Experimental Approach to Understanding Assimilation." *American Sociological Review* 81(5): 981–1013.

Sewell, William H., Archibald O. Haller, and Alejandro Portes. 1969. "The Educational and Early Occupational Attainment Process." *American Sociological Review* 34(1): 82–92.

Stevens, Mitchell L. 2009. *Creating a Class: College Admissions and the Education of Elites*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Streib, Jessi. 2020. *Privilege Lost: Who Leaves the Upper Middle Class and How They Fall*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Valentino, Lauren. 2020. "The Segregation Premium: How Gender Shapes the Symbolic Valuation Process of Occupational Prestige Judgments." *Social Forces* 99(1): 31–58.

VanHeuvelen, Tom, and Natasha Quadlin. 2021. "Gender Inequality in STEM Employment and Earnings at Career Entry: Evidence from Millennial Birth Cohorts." *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World* 7: 1–15. First published online: December 11, 2021. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/23780231211064392.

Weisshaar, Katherine, Koji Chavez, and Tania Cabello-Hutt. 2020. "An Imperfect Match? How Gender and Race Influence Perceptions of Underqualified Job Applicants." Paper presented at the virtual annual meeting of the Population Association of America, April 23–25, 2020.

Wildeman, Christopher, Kris Scardamalia, Elizabeth G. Walsh, Rourke L. O'Brien, and Bridget Brew. 2017. "Paternal Incarceration and Teachers' Expectations of Students." *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World* 3: 1–14.

Young, Michael. 1958. *The Rise of the Meritocracy*. New York: Transaction Publishers.

Status as Deference: Cultural Meaning as a Source of Occupational Behavior

E. K. MALONEY, KIMBERLY B. ROGERS, AND LYNN SMITH-LOVIN

Status is an independent basis of inequality. Cultural meanings create the voluntary esteem and deference that distinguish status inequities from inequalities in power and material resources, as Cecilia Ridgeway and Hazel Markus explain in the introduction to this issue. Here, we use affect control theory (ACT)—a formal theory of culture, identity, and social action—to explore how cultural meanings of occupational identities shape status behavior. ACT assumes that people try to maintain cultural meanings for identities and behaviors on three affective dimensions (evaluation, potency and activity) as they interact with others. We use ACT to define how actors in different status groups—occupations with similar patterns of deference to and from other occupations—act toward one another. We validate our theoretical behavioral predictions with vignette survey data.

Keywords: status, affect control theory, deference, occupational prestige, inequality

In classic texts, Max Weber (1978, 2014) argues that status—the sense that someone is worthy of esteem, honor, and respect—is a source of inequality independent of material resources and power, the ability to overcome opposition from others.[1] Status directly produces inequality because cultural beliefs about differences between identity groups elicit and justify un-

E. K. Maloney is a graduate student in the Department of Sociology at Duke University. **Kimberly B. Rogers** is an associate professor of sociology at Dartmouth College. **Lynn Smith-Lovin** is the Robert L. Wilson Professor of Arts and Sciences in the Department of Sociology at Duke University.

 Maloney, E. K., Kimberly B. Rogers, and Lynn Smith-Lovin. 2022. "Status as Deference: Cultural Meaning as a Source of Occupational Behavior." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 70–88. DOI: 10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.04. The authors thank Robert Freeland and Jesse Hoey for providing the deference scores used in this research. We also thank Kieran Healy, Mark Chaves, the Social Psychology and Worldview Workshops at Duke University, and the Writers' Workshop at Dartmouth College for their helpful feedback on this article. This research was supported by NSF GRANT #DGE-1644868. Direct correspondence to: E. K. Maloney, at em.k.maloney@duke.edu, Department of Sociology, Box 90088, 417 Chapel Drive, Duke University, Durham, NC 27708-0088, United States; Kimberly Rogers, at krogers@dartmouth.edu, Department of Sociology, Dartmouth College, 20 North Main Street, Hanover, NH 03755, United States; or Lynn Smith-Lovin, at smithlov@duke.edu, Department of Sociology, Box 90088, 417 Chapel Drive, Duke University, Durham, NC 27708-0088, United States.

1. Power can be derived from control over economic and social resources, including status (Weber 1978, 2014).

equal actions, treatment by others, and resource allocations in social interactions. Status also stabilizes existing inequalities via presumptions that those with greater power and material resources are worthy and deserving of these advantages (Ridgeway 2014; Ridgeway and Markus 2022, this issue).

Despite the clear importance of status for inequality, however, most scholarship focuses on material and structural dimensions of stratification (power and resources) rather than interaction dynamics and cultural forces (status), perhaps because the latter are more challenging to measure. Even the most widely used operationalization of status, occupational prestige, maps more closely onto features of occupations such as income and educational prerequisites than cultural and interactional patterns (Freeland and Hoey 2018). A long-standing criticism that these measures are simply "error-prone estimates" of occupations' material features (Featherman and Hauser 1976, 405) has encouraged reliance on material measures of occupational importance, and a corresponding reluctance to theorize status as a basis of stratification in its own right.

In this article, we review a new conceptualization and operationalization of status based in affect control theory (ACT)—a formal, mathematical theory of culture, identity, and social action (Heise 2007; Robinson and Smith-Lovin 2018). This approach measures status using ACT predictions about deference between occupational groups in social interactions (Freeland and Hoey 2018) and identifies occupational status groups (OSGs) with similar deference patterns and therefore similar positions within the interactional status structure (Maloney 2020). We use this approach to explore culturally expected behaviors between occupational actors occupying different positions in the status structure by predicting the actions and social treatment of objects from different occupational status groups. In so doing, we illuminate the micro-social dynamics that produce and justify inequalities between groups with differing status. We close by showing that our model predictions conform to people's actual expectations about unequal interactions among status groups with a vignette survey.

SOCIAL SCIENCE VIEWS OF INEQUALITY AND SOCIAL CLASS

Weber (1978, 2014) delineates three conceptually independent sources of inequality: status, power, and resources. Social scientists have concentrated most of their efforts on the analysis of resource disparities (usually in terms of income or wealth) and differences in power (usually in terms of organization or mobilization), perhaps because these are easier to measure than cultural features of honor, esteem, and worthiness (status). However, social psychological research shows that beliefs about the worthiness of social identities create and legitimize unequal allocations of power and resources, in that high-status individuals are deemed more deserving of leadership and rewards than those with low status (Correll and Ridgeway 2003; Ridgeway 2014; Ridgeway and Correll 2006).

The most commonly used measure of status at present, occupational prestige, overlaps substantially with measures of the human capital and material rewards associated with specific jobs (see Bukodi, Dex, and Goldthorpe 2011). We contend, however, that measures that rely on the material dimensions of social standing and discount the role of cultural honor, esteem, and respect can lead to incorrect predictions about status dynamics, or a failure to really understand them at all. For example, occupations that offer low material rewards may nevertheless be highly regarded (for example, coal mining and manufacturing versus warehouse jobs, see Koenig 2022; Valentino 2022, this issue), making them desirable in ways that cannot be easily understood by their physical conditions and pay. People often prefer respect to rank position (Anderson et al. 2021).

Recent work has reinvigorated the study of status as an independent source of inequality by developing a new measure of status that better reflects its cultural and interactional character, thereby addressing the shortcomings of prevailing measures of status as occupational prestige. This work uses ACT—a formal, mathematical theory of culture, identity, and social action (Heise 2007; Robinson and Smith-Lovin 2018)—to quantify the expectation that a person in one occupation will defer

to someone in another occupation in interaction based on cultural meanings regarding the pleasantness, dominance, and expressiveness of these occupations.[2] A deference structure derived from these data identifies groups of structurally equivalent occupations with similar deference patterns and thus similar positions in the status hierarchy (OSGs). Because ACT may not be familiar to a wide interdisciplinary audience, we summarize its core characteristics before discussing the interactional deference structure that motivates our analysis in this article.

Affect Control Theory

ACT is a mathematical model of social interaction that quantifies the cultural meanings of identities and behaviors and that generates precise predictions about the consequences of these meanings for social action. It uses empirically estimated, culture-specific models of impression formation norms to show how social interactions change our feelings about actors and actions (for reviews of the theory, see Heise 1979, 2007; MacKinnon 1994; Robinson and Smith-Lovin 2018). Widely shared cultural meanings, known in ACT as *fundamental sentiments*, are measured along three dimensions: evaluation (good or bad), potency (powerful or weak), and activity (active or passive), referred to as EPA. These meanings reflect basic cultural knowledge about the social order (Heise 2010; Rogers 2021b), are foundational to socioemotional processing (Scholl 2013), and parsimoniously summarize concept meanings across many cultures (Osgood, May, and Miron 1975; Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum 1957). For example, U.S. English-speakers see doctors as good, powerful, and neutral in activity (E = 2.69, P = 2.94, A = 0.37), and patients as neutral in goodness, weak, and passive (E = 0.57, P = –1.49, A = –1.28 on scales that range from 4.3 to –4.3).

The fundamental sentiments that ACT measures map onto cultural features measured in other theoretical models interested in status (see Scholl 2013). This includes, for example, status defined as evaluations of competence within and expectations for contributions to a task group in expectation states theory (Dippong and Kalkhoff 2015; Rogalin, Soboroff, and Lovaglia 2007; Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin 1994) and intergroup judgments of warmth and competence in the stereotype content model (Rogers, Schröder, and Scholl 2013). Here we argue that ACT offers unique advantages for understanding inequalities in status behavior that arise as people endeavor to maintain fundamental sentiments in interactions with others. The theory's precise measurement of cultural meanings allows for, among other things, a concrete description of how events change these meanings and how people react to that change. In addition, ACT is distinctive in modeling status behavior in a manner that is not constrained to task-oriented interaction settings (Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin 1994) and that f ocuses on interaction dynamics rather than intergroup bias (Rogers, Schröder, and Scholl 2013).

ACT's impression-change equations predict the shift in meaning resulting from an event in which an actor does a behavior to an object (Heise 1979, 2010; Smith-Lovin and Heise 1988).[3] These new event-contextualized meanings for the actor, behavior, and object-person following a situation are the *transient impressions* created by a social encounter. After a doctor listens to a patient, for example, the doctor seems nicer, less powerful, and less active (E = 3.11, P = 2.03, A = –0.10) than we would expect based on fundamental sentiments alone. The greater the EPA distance between transient impressions and fundamental sentiments, the more culturally misaligned the situation. This misalignment is quantified in ACT as *deflection*, the sum of the squared differences between transient impressions and fundamental sentiments in

2. Robert Freeland and Jesse Hoey (2018) use a Bayesian version of ACT that allows for variation and uncertainty in the cultural meanings associated with occupational identities and behaviors (for a description of BayesACT and its properties, see Schröder, Hoey, and Rogers 2016). Given that occupational identities usually have well-institutionalized and widely shared cultural meanings (Heise 2010; Ridgeway 2019), we use the non-Bayesian ACT that assumes a point estimate in three-dimensional space for our analyses in this article.

3. The estimation of these impression-change equations from simple actor-behavior-object event vignettes is described in detail elsewhere (see Smith-Lovin and Heise 1988; Heise 2010; Morgan, Rogers, and Hu 2016).

EPA (Heise 2007; Robinson and Smith-Lovin 2018). Higher deflection events are less likely to occur, less expected, and less culturally normative (Rogers 2021a). Situations that violate cultural expectations prompt restorative actions or reinterpretations of events that realign transient impressions with fundamental cultural meanings for the people and actions involved.[4]

Crucially, for the cultural nature of the theory (and our view of status presented here), both the cultural sentiments associated with identities and the impression-change processes that occur when these identities are embedded in social events show high consensus across members of a national language culture (Heise 2010; Rogers 2019a, 2019c). Although some variation in meaning is observed in social position, as with occupational prestige and other subjective measures of inequality, these beliefs are widely shared. The exceptions are striking because they are precisely that—exceptions.[5]

Cecilia Ridgeway and Hazel Markus (2022, this issue) contend that status is distinct from other bases of inequality in being primarily cultural, operating through shared evaluations of a person or group's worthiness by others; multilevel, affecting the relative worth of persons within groups as well as groups within societies; and relational, in being inherently comparative and emergent through social interactions. We argue that ACT is an especially useful tool for examining status dynamics because it quantifies culturally shared meanings of identities and behavior, reveals how actors' relative positioning on these dimensions reflects their cultural and interactional standing, and predicts the relational, situated behavior between actors occupying identities that carry status. In addition, ACT is amenable to the study of status dynamics across cultures. Indeed, the data and models already exist to apply the theory in this manner. This is noteworthy because the bases of status differ across cultures. For example, in cultures such as Japan, more traditional occupations might be higher evaluation and potency than they are in the United States because the elderly are seen as sources of wisdom (Schröder et al. 2013). Here we focus on the U.S. context, where status is highly influenced by judgments of competence. However, ACT could also be used to study status processes in cultural contexts where status is more strongly determined by, for example, attributions of morality (Zhao 2022). We expect such cultural features to affect the EPA assessments of different identity groups and the impression-change processes that combine with these assessments to guide social action.

ACT and the Measurement of Occupational Deference Scores

Robert Freeland and Jesse Hoey (2018) leverage ACT's approach to modeling cultural expectations to create a new method of operationalizing occupational status. Because ACT is a formal model of how cultural sentiments create expectations for behavior and deference behavior is an expression of an underlying status order, Freeland and Hoey argue that deflections from simulations of deference events provide a quantitative, theoretically motivated indicator of occupational status.

Using ACT, they estimate deflection (cultural dislocation) from simulated deference events of the structure *occupation A defers to occupation B* for all possible combinations of 304 occupational identities as actors and object-persons. For example, the event a surgeon (E = .09, P = 3.14, A = –0.13) defers to (E = –0.15, P = 0.45, A = –0.44) a coal miner (E = 0.78, P = 0.01, A = 0.47) results in a deflection of 7.2.[6]

4. ACT also has an explicit model of attribution and emotion, but we do not describe it here because we do not use this aspect of the theory in this article.

5. Prior work has generally found high consensus in EPA ratings within cultures, but some differences in these ratings are associated with race and class (see Ambrasat et al. 2014; Rogers 2019c). This mirrors the findings of Valentino (2022, this issue) about different "status lenses" on occupational prestige. We identify this as an area for future research in the discussion section.

6. Ridgeway (2019) has in her recent status work more explicitly brought in motivations to further group interests, but this has not historically been a major feature of expectation states theory. The principle that status is a reward

A coal miner deferring to a surgeon produces less deflection (5.9), indicating that ACT predicts the latter situation to be more likely, less unexpected, and more culturally aligned than the former (Rogers 2021a). A single deference score was created for each occupation (analogous to occupational prestige scores) by averaging deflections across all events involving interactions with other occupations. For example, the deference score for surgeons was produced by averaging the deflection from all 304 events wherein a surgeon deferred to some other occupation.

Freeland and Hoey's (2018) deference score summarizes the social, relational, and consensual nature of status that Ridgeway (2019) observes as being culturally and interactionally grounded and relative rather than absolute—the result of an occupation's position relative to others in the cultural system. It outperforms the standard measure of occupational prestige in predicting Harris poll rankings of occupations' prestige as well as a variety of affective job outcomes such as workplace attachment, job satisfaction, general happiness, respondents' feeling that their work is meaningful and that they are respected at work, and their willingness to keep working even if not financially necessary. Thus it has both construct and criterion validity as a measure of occupational status.

A New Conceptualization of Social Classes: Occupational Status Groups

Although the new deference score provides a concise summary of status rankings, it ignores a great deal of information contained in the 304 × 304 matrix of simulated interactions by averaging across rows to create a single deference score for each occupational identity. E. K. Maloney (2020) addresses this issue by using network methods to derive occupational status groups with common patterns of deference from the same matrix of deflections.[7] Such methods look for structural equivalence, grouping occupational identities that defer to the same occupations and receive deference from the same occupations. Unlike research that uses network methods to search for direct connections between occupations, such as cliques or interconnected positions, this method identifies similarities in occupations' positions within the cultural status system.

Maloney's (2020) analysis identifies four OSGs. The first and largest group included 120 *everyday specialists* (mean EPA = 1.35, 0.92, 0.26)—occupations that are respected for their skills and have authority within their specialty, but which are not revered more generally (such as bricklayer or baker). The second status group, *service-to-society* (mean EPA = 1.65, 1.08, 0.85), included fifty-five largely female-typed occupations that are valued but tend not to receive high wages, such as teacher or social worker. The third status group, the *disagreeably powerful* (mean EPA = 0.74, 1.27, 0.26), included 109 largely male-typed occupations with the ability to change others' actions or influence the course of someone's day without much collaboration (such as foreman or bailiff). The final status group—the *actively revered* (mean EPA = 1.91, 1.44. 1.44) is the smallest, including only thirteen occupations, but is perhaps the most striking. It includes occupations often seen as heroes and caretakers but that garner lower material rewards than the *everyday specialists* and *disagreeably powerful* (such as nurse or firefighter).

Two recent articles demonstrate that the cultural sentiments associated with occupational identities and the status groups within which occupations fall have important implications for the emotional experiences of their occupants (Maloney 2022; Maloney and Smith-Lovin 2021). This article explores the behavioral implications of these status meanings. More specifically, it identifies the behaviors that are most common, expected, and normative (Rogers 2021a) in interactions within and between the occupations in each status group. These

for high-competence people devoting themselves to positive, shared group outcomes is, however, core to that theory.

7. All EPA profiles come from a compilation of ratings by undergraduates at two universities in a collaborative project conducted from 2012 through 2014 (Smith-Lovin et al. 2016).

patterns demonstrate how status dynamics contribute to inequality, as higher status groups are culturally entitled to engage in actions and receive social treatment that justifies and reinforces their advantaged position (Rogers 2021b). The article contrasts high- and low-prestige occupations within each status group (using more conventional measures) to develop our understanding of the differences between status as voluntary deference and status as resources or power. Model predictions are validated with a vignette survey.

DATA

Analyses for this article take two forms: theoretical models of status behavior using ACT and a vignette survey validating the predictions. Data for models of status behavior come from four sources. Deference scores are from Freeland and Hoey (2018). Occupational status groups are from Maloney (2020). A crosswalk was used to match occupational identities in the deference dataset to occupations in the General Social Survey (Smith et al. 2017), from which we gathered ISCO-88 classifications to match with Standard International Occupational Prestige Scale scores (SIOPS) (Treiman 1977) and the International Socio-Economic Index of Occupational Status (ISEI) (Ganzeboom and Treiman 1996; Ganzeboom, de Graaf, and Treiman 1992). For some occupations, the SIOPS is an average across several occupations mapped to a single occupational identity (such as different types of teachers). EPA ratings of identities and behaviors were taken from an ACT sentiment dictionary collected between 2011 and 2014 (Smith-Lovin et al. 2016).[8]

Data for the vignette validation survey were gathered online via Amazon Mechanical Turk in the fall of 2021. After participants who did not pass a manipulation check question and responses with the same IP address were removed, the study included 424 respondents. On average, participation took around ten and a half minutes, and respondents were paid $5 on completion of the study. In our analytic sample, the median age is thirty-six, and the majority of respondents were white (81 percent), male (62 percent), and identified as men (61 percent). The most common education level of our respondents was a bachelor's degree (58 percent).[9]

METHODS

The first analysis elaborates theoretical models of status behavior, using ACT impression-change equations to predict culturally expected behaviors in interactions between all possible pairs of occupational identities in the design. The EPA value identified reflects the action that will maximally confirm the identities of both the actor and object-person (that is, maintain the status of both occupational identities involved in the modeled situation). This EPA value is then matched with the nearest behavior labels in the most recent ACT sentiment dictionary (Smith-Lovin et al. 2016). The analysis was completed using the R package inteRact (Maloney 2021), which implements ACT's impression-change equations in R. Functions that implement the theory's U.S. English impression-change equations (Heise 2007) were used to estimate optimal behavior.

To assess the effects of status as a cultural (deference) versus material (occupational prestige) construct, we selected four occupational identities from each status group in Maloney (2020), two low in prestige and two high in prestige. We chose occupational identities with fundamental sentiments as close as possible to the median EPA value of each of the four OSGs to ensure that the identities used in the simulations matched the social positions of their respective OSGs in the status structure. Table 1 displays these sixteen occupational identities, along with their EPA ratings, OSG, prestige

8. For a list of all 303 occupational identities including their EPA ratings, GSS occupational markers, deference scores, SIOPS, and occupational status group, see online appendix A (https://www.rsfjournal.org/content/8/7/70/tab-supplemental). Maloney (2020) eliminates one occupational identity, dishwasher, because respondents interpreted this identity as a machine rather than a person. For a full replication repository, see https://github.com/ekmaloney/rsf_occ_status (accessed June 19, 2022).

9. A table with descriptive statistics for the validation sample and a more detailed description of the data collection process is in section B of the online appendix.

Table 1. Occupational Identities Chosen for Simulations

Occupational Identity	Occupational Status Group	Prestige	E	P	A	Distance from Median	SIOPS-08
Pediatrician	*actively revered*	High	3.01	2.52	0.53	2.02	78.00
Nurse	*actively revered*	Low	2.84	1.75	0.53	5.77	78.00
Surgeon	*actively revered*	High	2.92	3.05	−0.33	1.43	49.02
Firefighter	*actively revered*	Low	3.27	2.85	2.29	1.79	35.00
Defense attorney	*disagreeably powerful*	High	0.86	2.05	1.44	0.03	45.94
Bailiff	*disagreeably powerful*	Low	0.72	1.56	0.10	1.87	73.10
Foreman	*disagreeably powerful*	High	0.64	1.30	0.34	0.03	32.39
Crane operator	*disagreeably powerful*	Low	0.94	1.23	0.29	0.09	54.17
Dentist	*everyday specialists*	High	1.62	1.51	0.08	0.25	70.00
Dental hygienist	*everyday specialists*	Low	1.68	0.86	0.34	0.37	70.00
Civil engineer	*everyday specialists*	High	1.70	1.55	−0.02	0.08	52.72
Technician	*everyday specialists*	Low	1.67	1.08	0.45	0.11	49.87
Nutritionist	*service-to-society*	High	2.30	1.20	0.16	0.69	52.00
Cook	*service-to-society*	Low	2.24	1.69	1.58	1.91	62.63
Teacher	*service-to-society*	High	2.50	2.31	0.32	0.45	46.09
Musician	*service-to-society*	Low	1.77	1.25	1.47	1.03	33.00

Source: Authors' tabulations.
Note: E = Evaluation, P = Potency, A = Activity.

(high or low), deference score, distance from the median EPA of the OSG, and SIOPS. The optimal behavior EPA and closest behavior label were estimated for all possible combinations of these identities, 256 in all.

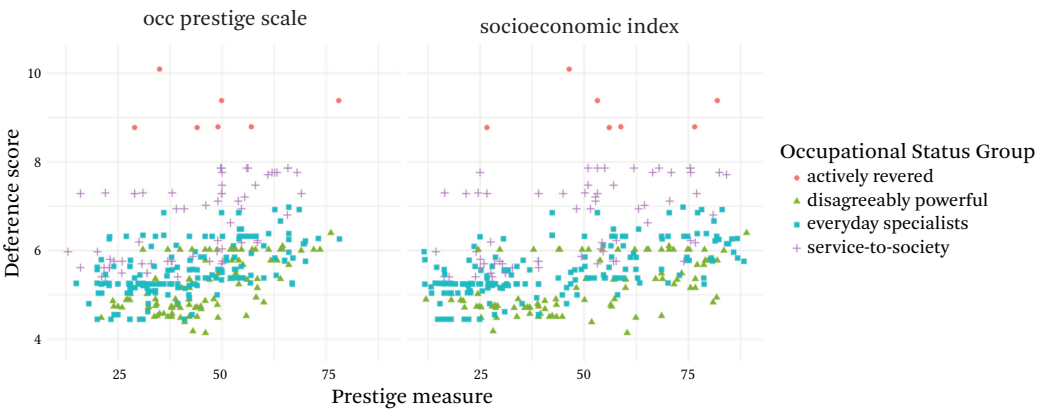
Vignette Survey

To validate these theoretical projections, we fielded a vignette survey on Amazon Mechanical Turk. Respondents consented to participate in the study, then completed a brief demographic survey. Afterward, they responded to vignette questions that asked them to choose the behavior most likely to occur in an interaction between the two people shown (for example, a surgeon and a nurse). Two response options were provided, the optimal behavior from our theoretical models and a randomly chosen behavior from the most recent U.S. ACT sentiment dictionary (Smith-Lovin et al. 2016). Respondents were randomly assigned to complete subsets of stimuli, answering thirty-two questions each. The study included 512 stimuli in total; approximately twenty-five respondents answered each.[10] The interaction (actor-behavior-object) is the unit of analysis.

Two constraints on the random selection of behaviors from the ACT dictionary reduced bias in design. First, the chosen behaviors were required to be a Euclidean distance of five or greater away from the optimal behavior EPA, because distance in EPA space predicts how culturally appropriate an action seems according to ACT; we did not want the randomly chosen behavior to be an affective synonym for the theoretically predicted behavior. Second, we filtered out violent or sexual behaviors and actions clearly constrained to a single profession (such as inject with medicine), which may be viewed as unlikely for cognitive reasons rather than the cultural affective reasons of interest here (Rogers 2021a). This constraint was conservative in the sense that some random behavior choices were still institutionally inappropriate and might not have been chosen for that reason.

10. A full list of the stimuli, including events, the optimal behavior term, the randomly selected behavior term, and the distance between the two are in section C of the online appendix.

Figure 1. Relationship Between Deference and Prestige



Source: Authors' tabulations based on Treiman 1977; Ganzeboom, De Graaf, and Treiman 1992; Freeland and Hoey 2018.

Note: Occupational prestige scale is the Standard International Occupational Prestige Scale (Treiman 1977). The socioeconomic index is the International Socio-Economic Index of Occupational Status (Ganzeboom, De Graaf, and Treiman 1992). Deference scores are from Freeland and Hoey (2018).

To analyze the resulting data, we regressed a binary indicator of choosing the optimal behavior (yes = 1 / no = 0) on the Euclidean distance between the random and optimal behavior in EPA space. We expected that respondents would be more likely to choose the optimal behavior when the randomly chosen behavior was further away from optimal EPA, as predicted by ACT. A multilevel model with questions nested in individuals nested in modules accounted for the underlying grouping of our design. We ran three models: one assessing the base rate of choosing the optimal behavior over the randomly selected behavior (model 1), another including only the distance measure (model 2), and a third including both measures and controls for sex, age, and education (model 3). To help the models converge, both distance and age were standardized such that the mean is 0 and the standard deviation 1. Because the patterns are consistent across these models, only model 3 is discussed in detail here (for additional results, see the online appendix at https://www.rsfjournal.org/content/8/7/70/tab-supplemental).[11]

RESULTS

To illustrate the differences among our core concepts, we show scatterplots (figure 1) of the relationship between deference scores and both occupational prestige (SIOPS) and a standard index of socioeconomic status (ISEI), with status group indicated by color and symbol (Ganzeboom, De Graaf, and Treiman 1992; Treiman 1977). The zero-order Pearson correlation between SIOPS and the Freeland and Hoey deference score is 0.401. The modest association between these measures is predictable from the findings of prior work. Freeland and Hoey (2018) find that conventional prestige scores, which are closely related to education and income for an occupation, are most strongly predicted by their potency (power, dominance), whereas deference scores are most strongly predicted by their evaluation (warmth, esteem). Prestige is also negatively associated with activity (expressivity, engagement), whereas deference scores are positively associated with activity. Put differently, deference and prestige evoke different cultural connotations: high prestige occupations carry connotations of

11. For a more detailed summary of modeling choices and results from all three models as well as robustness checks, see section D of the online appendix.

quiet dominance; high deference occupations carry connotations of esteem, efficacy, and agency. Occupational status groups are clearly stratified along the *y* axis of deference (because they are based on deference relations) and also spread widely across the *x* axis of prestige. Notably, *actively revered* occupations are grouped at the top of the deference scale but differ dramatically in prestige. *Disagreeably powerful* occupations span into the upper part of the prestige scale, but never make it past the middle range on deference.

The plot relating deference and the socioeconomic status index shows almost exactly the same patterns as the occupational prestige plot, which is not surprising; occupational prestige is effectively a subjective measure of objective material resources.

Theoretical Models of Status Behavior

Table 2 and figure 2 present results from the theoretical models of status behavior. Table 2 displays the mean EPA of optimal behaviors given the status group of the actor (the person enacting the behavior) and object-person (the person receiving the behavior), as well as exemplar behavior labels for the events modeled. The violin plots in figure 2 visualize the probability density of behavior EPA across the three models. They enable us to see the degree of consistency in behavior EPA across the events comprising each cell in the plot. The columns in this plot reflect actor OSG and the rows reflect object OSG.

Findings summarized in each cell are affected both by actors' expected actions based on their status and object-persons' expected treatment based on their status, because both factors influence cultural expectations about appropriate behavior in the interactions modeled. The top left cell, for example, summarizes the EPA distribution of optimal behaviors for all sixteen modeled events in which *actively revered* actors interact with *actively revered* objects. In that cell, we see that all of the optimal behaviors that *actively revered* actors direct at *actively revered* objects are uniformly positive (the plot for evaluation is concentrated in one value region), whereas the potency and activity of their behaviors are more variable. Our theoretical models consistently predict that when *actively revered* people interact with one another, they will expect and enact behaviors that are extremely positive, pleasant, and congenial.

Our models predict differences in the cultural meanings of optimal behaviors across sta-

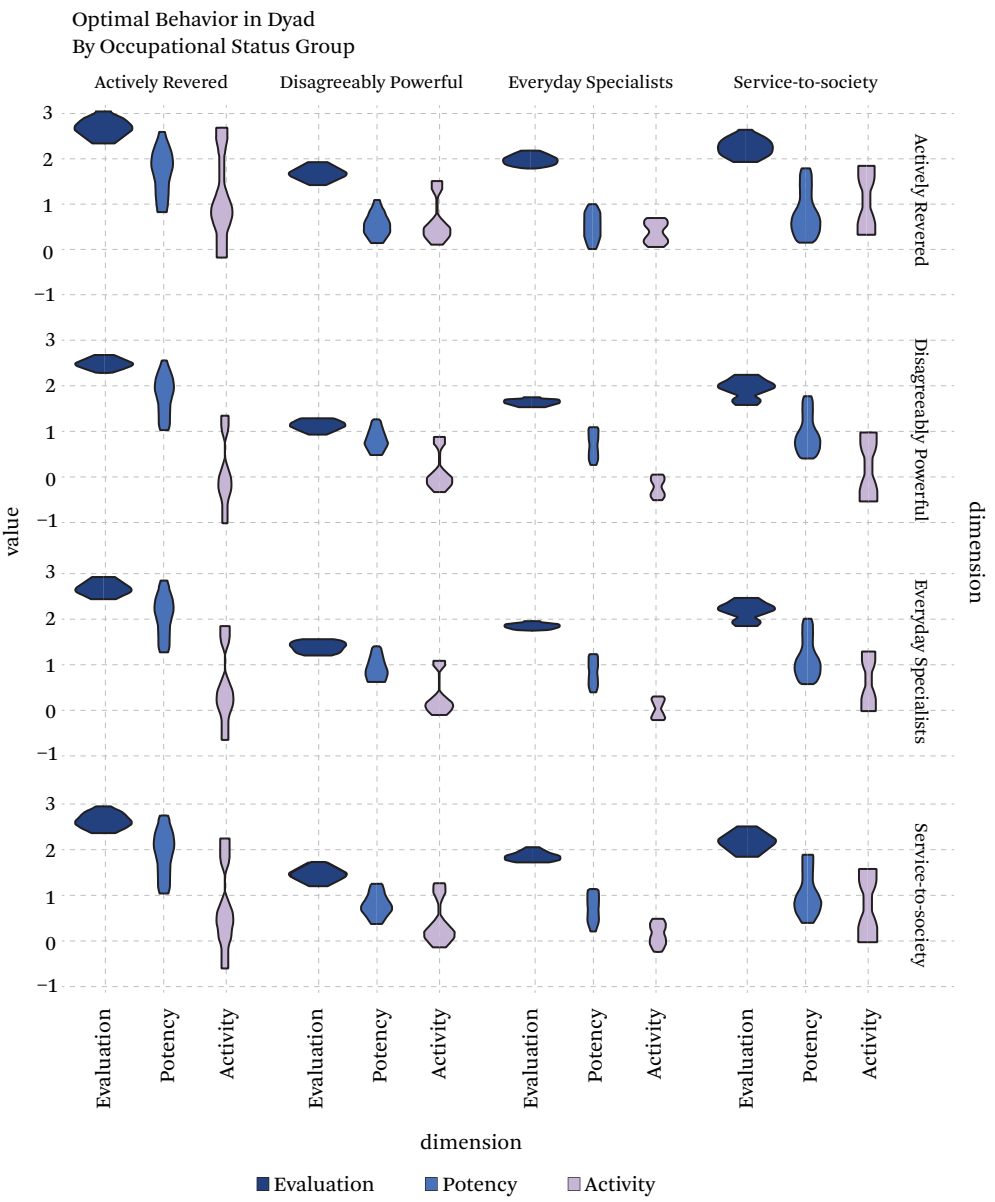
Table 2. Optimal Behaviors

Actor	Object	Evaluation	Potency	Activity	Example Behaviors
AR	AR	2.68	1.79	0.97	praise, greet, welcome
AR	DP	2.44	1.81	−0.01	explain something to, remember, grin at
AR	ES	2.62	2.05	0.44	acknowledge, treat, like
AR	StS	2.64	2.03	0.66	reward, praise, acknowledge
DP	AR	1.68	0.58	0.65	call, ask about, decorate
DP	DP	1.12	0.83	0.13	show something to, identify, indulge
DP	ES	1.36	0.91	0.30	identify, escort, brief
DP	StS	1.48	0.84	0.43	escort, brief, ask about
ES	AR	1.98	0.56	0.43	ask about, answer, agree with
ES	DP	1.62	0.71	−0.21	serve, ask about, turn to
ES	ES	1.82	0.81	0.05	ask about, consult, agree with
ES	StS	1.88	0.77	0.19	ask about, answer, agree with
StS	AR	2.26	0.86	1.09	chat with, eat with, reply to
StS	DP	1.93	0.97	0.27	answer, agree with, consult
StS	ES	2.14	1.11	0.62	caution, chat with, reply to
StS	StS	2.18	1.08	0.81	chat with, caution, reply to

Source: Authors' tabulations.

Note: AR = *actively revered*, DP = *disagreeably powerful*, ES = *everyday specialist*, StS = *service-to-society*.

Figure 2. Optimal Behavior Violin Plot by Actor and Object Status Group



Source: Authors' tabulations.

tus group interactions (table 2; for full simulation results, see the online appendix). The most pronounced differences occur based on the actor's status group. *Actively revered* occupations are expected to engage in actions high in evaluation, potency, and activity (for example, praise, treat, reward). In contrast, the *disagreeably powerful* are expected to engage in moderately powerful actions low in evaluation and activity (such as ask about, show something to, escort). *Service-to-society* occupations are expected to engage in actions that are just below the *actively revered* in goodness and activity and moderate in potency (such as caution, chat with, consult). And *everyday specialists* are expected to engage in actions that are good but low in potency and activity (such as answer, serve, concur with).

Optimal behaviors also differ in some cases based on the status group of the object-person at whom they are directed. This is most noticeable in events with *disagreeably powerful* objects, who are recipients of actions lower in activity and sometimes evaluation than other status groups. We find the greatest consistency in behavior evaluation across the events modeled, with less consistency in potency and activity (figure 2).

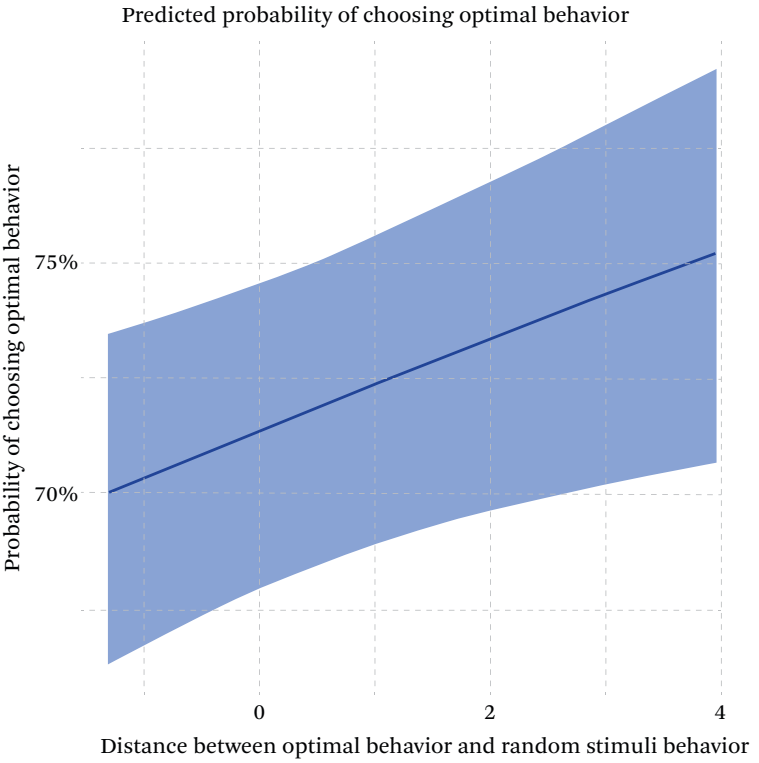
Our results point to relationality of status dynamics, as actions are dependent, to some extent, on the status of both the actor and object-person. For example, *actively revered* actors such as firefighters are expected to engage in warmer actions toward those in the more positively evaluated *everyday specialist*, *service-to-society*, and *actively revered* occupations (for example, congratulating a musician, applauding a nutritionist) than toward those in less positively evaluated *disagreeably powerful* occupations (such as coaching a foreman, greeting a bailiff). *Disagreeably powerful* actors such as bailiffs are expected to engage in more powerful actions toward those in the less powerful *everyday specialist* and *service-to-society* occupations (for example, identifying a musician, escorting a nutritionist), than toward those in more powerful *actively revered* and *disagreeably powerful* occupations (such as asking about a surgeon, showing something to a foreman). Whereas firefighters receive honor, deference, and camaraderie from those in most other occupations (for example, defense attorneys toast, pediatricians praise, musicians joke with firefighters), the *disagreeably powerful* have their status affirmed in more relationally dependent ways. *Everyday specialists* (such as dental hygienists, technicians) are expected to serve bailiffs, whereas those in higher status occupations are expected to treat them more warmly (firefighters greet, pediatricians grin at bailiffs).

We also compared optimal behavior EPA for modeled events that involve low- versus high-prestige actors across status groups to determine whether this contributed to the greater variation detected along the potency and activity dimensions (for a summary of the results, see tables A.1 and A.2 and figure A.1). We indeed find that optimal behaviors differ in potency and activity, but not evaluation, for high- versus low-prestige occupations across all status groups. Specifically, behaviors are comparatively high in potency and low in activity for high-prestige actors in most status groups, while the reverse is true for low-prestige actors. The only status group that does not follow this pattern is the *disagreeably powerful*, for whom the opposite is true.[12] For example, high-prestige *service-to-society* actors are expected to turn to or seek advice from (2.05, 1.13, –0.33) high-prestige *disagreeably powerful* objects. Low-prestige *service-to-society* actors are expected to call or chat with (2.01, 0.97, 1.22) low-prestige *disagreeably powerful* objects. This is consistent with Freeland and Hoey's (2018) outlined argument about the relationship of deference scores and occupational prestige with EPA.

Several core predictions emerge from the theoretical models of optimal behavior. First, the models suggest that evaluation (goodness, pleasantness, esteem) has central importance in status behavior. Although the dominance and expressiveness of behavior among occupations varies across status groups, the positivity of the actions differs most strongly. This finding echoes the finding that forgiving someone (a very positive, potent, lively behavior, in our terms) confers more status than the powerful and lively, but nasty act of exacting revenge (Benard et al. 2022). Second, the status of the actor has a larger impact on expected behavior than that of the object-person. The columns of figure 2 show much more consistency than the rows do. This suggests that the esteem in which we hold someone says more about how we think they will treat others than it does about how we expect others to treat them. Third, occupational prestige (as traditionally measured) influences the dominance (potency) and expressiveness (activity) of status behavior but tells us nothing about the largest and most consistent difference in behavioral patterns—how positively (evaluation) people treat one another.

12. This pattern has some exceptions, the most noteworthy being the slightly lower evaluation levels found among low-prestige actors in the *everyday specialists* and *service-to-society* status groups.

Figure 3. Deflection by Distance of Random Behavior from Optimal Behavior



Source: Authors' tabulations.

Put differently, the effects of prestige on status behavior are always contingent on something prestige cannot directly explain—how good, bad, or evaluatively neutral the behavior seems.

Taken together, our theoretical predictions provide a different view of the behavioral implications of status hierarchy than those derived from the traditional focus on wealth and power. Our findings highlight the important role doing good (or not) can play in the actualization of one's status through behavior viewed as appropriate to the situation—especially to the cultural meaning of one's own identity. Attempts at dominance should be more effective, according to ACT, when culturally aligned with the situation at hand and the identities of those involved. Thus *actively revered* actors should have their status affirmed when their dominance is paired with warmth and expressiveness, and *disagreeably powerful* actors should have theirs affirmed through dominant actions that are less nice and more reserved. In other words, situated action can contribute to the (re) production of social hierarchies through multiple behavioral pathways. We now move to seeing whether our predictions are supported by the expectations of real people (participants in a Mechanical Turk vignette survey).

Vignette Survey

On average, participants in the vignette survey had a 71 percent probability of choosing the theoretically optimal behavior over one randomly selected from a large corpus of potential social actions. The distance between the optimal and randomly chosen behavior also had a significant effect, meaning that respondents were more likely to choose the optimal behavior when random behaviors were more divergent in EPA from (culturally dissimilar to) the optimal behavior (see figure 3). Both the base rate of choosing the optimal behavior and the effect of distance between the two behavior choices indicate that the behaviors predicted by the theoretical models follow respondents' two cultural expectations about status behavior.

Implications for Inequality

Ridgeway and her colleagues (Ridgeway 2014, 2019; Ridgeway and Markus 2022, this issue) argue that status contributes to inequality through two main pathways. First, status creates inequality as cultural beliefs about essential differences between identity groups generate interaction dynamics that produce and reproduce social hierarchies. Second, status stabilizes existing inequalities by legitimizing unequal allocations of power and resources based on attributions of greater worthiness to powerful and resource-rich actors. Here we briefly discuss the implications of our findings for status-based inequality generated through each of these pathways and consider the utility of our approach for understanding status dynamics in other domains.

In regard to the first pathway, evidence is consistent that occupational status as measured culturally with ACT stratifies how we expect individuals in different status groups to enact their status advantage or disadvantage in social encounters with others. By capturing occupational status in the three-dimensional cultural structure of goodness, potency, and activity, ACT enables us to measure the relative status of occupations within the broader cultural system (Freeland and Hoey 2018; Maloney 2020). The theory demonstrates how status differences produce behavior dynamics that uphold the social order (the findings here about the expected behaviors among status groups). We specifically show that patterns of relational deference emerge from the cultural meanings of occupational identities, producing distinctive behavioral norms for different status groups. Although the powerful actions of the *actively revered* are warm and expressive, the *disagreeably powerful* enact dominance in ways less nice and more reserved. Others honor, praise, toast, and applaud the *actively revered* but serve, answer, and turn to the *disagreeably powerful*. In the aggregate, these behavior patterns not only reify the occupational status structure but also have downstream consequences. For example, they can shape decisions to enter into particular professions (such as by influencing which identities are seen as desirable to occupy, or align with gendered self-sentiments) as well as workplace experiences and outcomes (for example, treatment by others, emotions, retention). Our work centers the relationality of occupational status as enacted in reference to and through interactions with other occupational identities.

In regard to the second pathway, deference dynamics based in ACT offer a novel approach to studying status in that it both contributes to and arises from inequalities in power and resources. Access to material resources and cultural scripts can afford actors greater ability to influence the definition of an interaction (Cast 2003). If individuals with high material resources want to gain status as shown here, they may try to create situational contexts that conform with the behavioral patterns expected (and even prescribed) for our highest status group, the *actively revered*. Basically, one can "buy" status when material resources or power allow one to control interactions in ways that create certain affective meanings. The rich can afford to be pleasant and supportive, if they choose to be so; they have the ability to acquire status by enacting behaviors that confer those meanings and pushing others into social roles that support them. Similarly, we see that high-status people may tend to move upward in prestige (material resources and power) over time as others respond to them more positively and afford them social opportunities to gain wealth and power. Our empirically validated theoretical models suggest at least two pathways by which high-prestige actors (who have greater material resources) might effectively actualize their advantage through status behavior in social interactions—via powerful actions that are warm and expressive or dispassionate and reserved. The pathway likely to be most effective will depend on the cultural meanings of the actor's identity and, to a lesser extent, the object-person with whom they are interacting (Robinson, Smith-Lovin, and Zhou 2020).

This article focuses on behavior dynamics emergent from the occupational status structure, but the same methods can be applied to analyze status structures and dynamics for social identities (such as race, class, gender), role identities related to the major institutions that structure social life (parent-child, boss-employee), and even traits (assertive, agreeable) (Rogers 2019b). Maloney's (2020) method

for detecting OSGs can be used to uncover groups of identities with distinctive interaction patterns in a network of simulations involving identities of any type. Our approach can be used to understand the behavior and emotion dynamics emergent from structurally equivalent identity groupings (Maloney 2022; Maloney and Smith-Lovin 2021; Rogers 2021b). This is because all identities carry cultural meanings with implications for social norms regarding the appropriate behavior, treatment, and emotions of identity groups.

Kimberly Rogers (2019b, 2021b), for example, finds that privileged social identities (such as white, rich, cisgender, heterosexual) carry distinctive cultural meanings that are higher than all other social identity groups in potency but lower than all other groups in evaluation and activity. These cultural meanings affect behavior dynamics and emotional experiences in interactions between the privileged and members of other identity groups. Privileged actors are expected to engage in significantly nicer behavior toward powerful than weak object-persons and to direct the least dominant actions toward in-group members. They experience the most positive and activated emotions in interactions with highly evaluated object-persons closest to them in power and the least positive emotions in interactions with weak object-persons. These stratified behavior and emotion dynamics reproduce and justify inequalities between social identity groups much as the occupational status dynamics observed here do.

DISCUSSION

This article shows how deference scores, as a cultural measure of status, differentiate occupations in a distinct way from prior operationalizations of prestige that more closely map onto material features of occupations, such as income or education. Deference scores based in ACT leverage culture-specific identity and behavior meanings and impression-change models to predict relational status behavior and can be used to identify status inequalities at both the cultural and interactional level. They therefore capture the cultural, relational, and multilevel nature of status (Ridgeway and Markus 2022, this issue). The lower correlation of deference versus prestige with material resources also suggests that deference is better suited to disentangling inequalities based on status and resources.

Using theoretical models of status behavior, we predict which behaviors are most culturally expected in interactions between actors and objects belonging to differing status groups and examine how predictions differ for occupations with low versus high prestige. We find appreciable differences in predicted behavior EPA based on the status group of the actor and, less often, object-person involved in an event. These behaviors reflect the cultural meanings associated with occupational identities. For example, *actively revered* actors are predicted to engage in warm, expressive, and powerful actions, and *disagreeably powerful* actors are expected to be less nice and more reserved as they enact their power. More powerful, less lively behaviors were expected for high- than low-prestige occupations across most status groups; the goodness of predicted behavior did not differ appreciably by prestige. Our predictions were validated through a vignette survey. Respondents were more likely to report that behaviors which were close to culturally optimal were more likely to occur between a given pair of occupations.

In all, we endeavored to show how status differences between occupational identities shape interactions differently than material resource (prestige) levels. Status expectations guide interactions between occupational identities, shaping what sorts of behaviors are enacted. These behavioral expectations, then, uphold status asymmetries.

We see several possible avenues for future research on this subject. Here, we use dictionaries and impression-change models developed for U.S. English language culture, but future research could examine whether status dynamics operate differently in other cultural contexts where, for example, judgments of morality are a more important basis of status than competence. Future work could also examine the extent of consensus in deference scores by social position in a similar manner to Lauren Valentino's work on occupational prestige (2022, this issue). Although the fundamental sentiments in EPA used here are highly consen-

sual, variation (especially in potency and activity ratings) by social position may still be enough for different behavioral patterns by race or class. In addition, scholarship building on our approach to examine the efficacy of different behavior pathways for legitimizing power and resource advantages through status could be particularly fruitful. Given that ACT has historically been used to generate both expectations about and normative prescriptions for behavior (Heise 2007), this line of theoretical development seems particularly promising.

Finally, this article treats occupational interactions as a function of general occupational status identities. Most occupational interactions, of course, occur within narrower institutional frameworks, and involve interactions with nonoccupational actors. For example, doctors interact in medical settings with patients as well as other medical personnel, such as nurses, physical therapists, lab workers, secretaries, hospital administrators, insurance claim processors, and so on. The interactions among status groups analyzed here are more like those among occupational occupants outside work, such as when a doctor and a bill collector serve on a jury together or meet at a party or neighborhood association meeting. Their occupational status is relevant there in the same ways that other status identities such as race-ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and physical attractiveness might be. However, future research should explore the more contextualized, institutionally anchored interactions among occupational roles within work settings.

Table A.1. High-Prestige Optimal Behaviors

Actor	Object	Evaluation	Potency	Activity	Example Behaviors
AR	AR	2.76	1.92	0.31	acknowledge, like, treat
AR	DP	2.42	2.02	−0.59	entrust, sympathize with, reason with
AR	ES	2.66	2.21	−0.17	foster, assure, reassure
AR	StS	2.65	2.25	0.10	advise, foster, share something with
DP	AR	1.74	0.52	0.97	call, chat with, acclaim
DP	DP	1.09	0.87	0.41	indulge, brief, relish
DP	ES	1.39	0.87	0.60	decorate, brief, bargain with
DP	StS	1.55	0.83	0.78	call, decorate, contact
ES	AR	2.08	0.69	0.24	ask about, answer, agree with
ES	DP	1.62	0.91	−0.41	serve, excuse, turn to
ES	ES	1.87	0.97	−0.14	turn to, consult, ask about
ES	StS	1.95	0.96	0.06	consult, agree with, turn to
StS	AR	2.40	0.98	0.47	dine with, caution, reply to
StS	DP	2.05	1.13	−0.33	turn to, seek advice from, admire
StS	ES	2.28	1.24	0.03	dine with, compensate, visit
StS	StS	2.30	1.25	0.28	dine with, compensate, caution

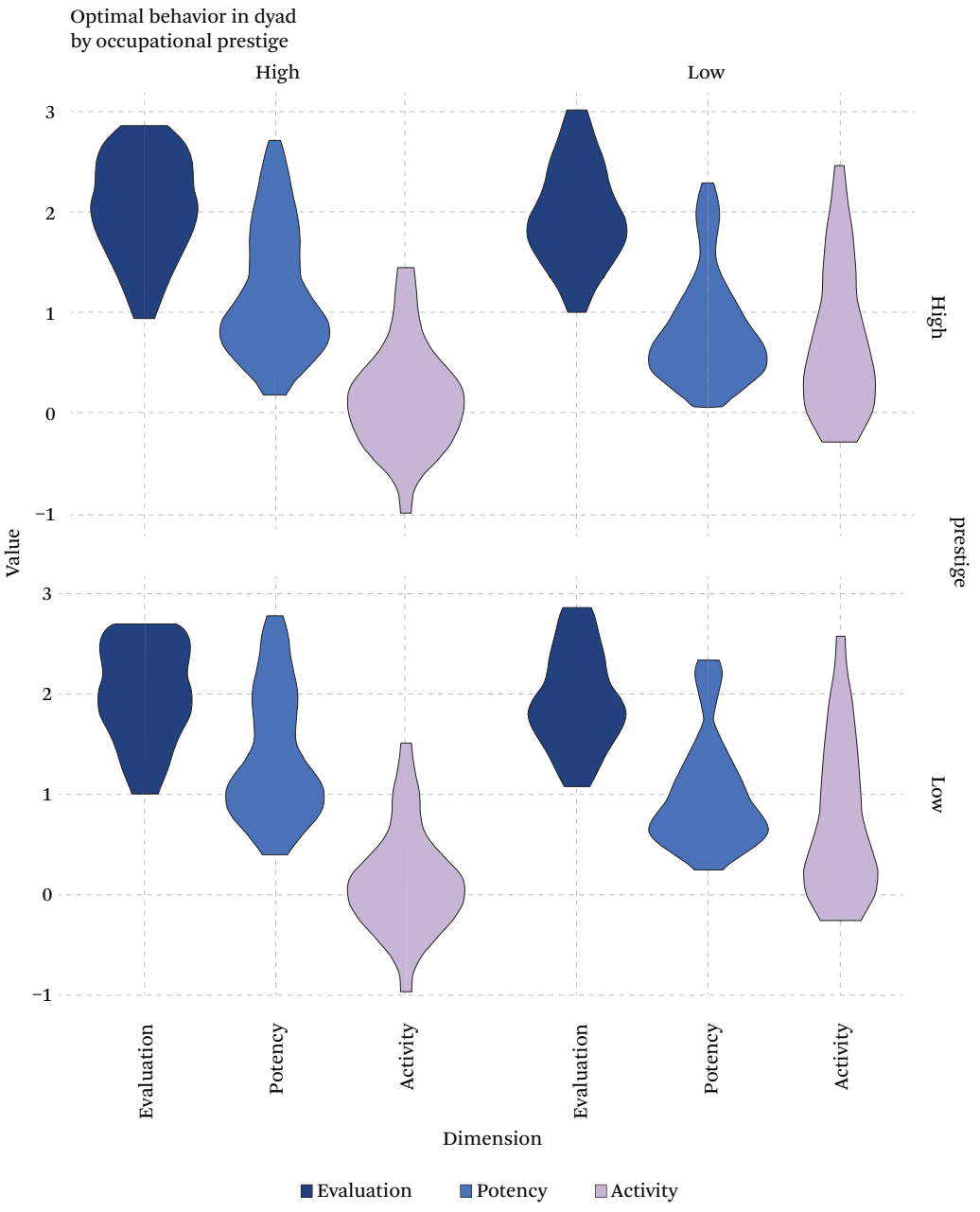
Source: Authors' tabulations.
Note. AR = *actively revered*, DP = *disagreeably powerful*, ES = *everyday specialist*, StS = *service-to-society*.

Table A.2. Low-Prestige Optimal Behaviors

Actor	Object	Evaluation	Potency	Activity	Example Behaviors
AR	AR	2.60	1.64	1.63	speak to, amuse, entertain
AR	DP	2.46	1.59	0.58	invite, accommodate, reply to
AR	ES	2.58	1.87	1.06	greet, praise, coach
AR	StS	2.62	1.81	1.19	greet, warn, coach
DP	AR	1.62	0.63	0.33	ask about, escort, serve
DP	DP	1.16	0.80	−0.15	show something to, sit next to, serve
DP	ES	1.34	0.93	0.00	show something to, identify, serve
DP	StS	1.42	0.84	0.08	ask about, serve, identify
ES	AR	1.88	0.42	0.63	ask about, answer, chat with
ES	DP	1.61	0.50	−0.01	serve, ask about, sit next to
ES	ES	1.76	0.64	0.24	ask about, serve, answer
ES	StS	1.81	0.58	0.33	ask about, answer, agree with
StS	AR	2.13	0.74	1.72	joke with, toast, speak to
StS	DP	1.82	0.79	0.87	call, chat with, acclaim
StS	ES	2.01	0.97	1.22	chat with, toast, acclaim
StS	StS	2.06	0.90	1.33	chat with, toast, acclaim

Source: Authors' tabulations.
Note. AR = *actively revered*, DP = *disagreeably powerful*, ES = *everyday specialist*, StS = *service-to-society*.

Figure A.1. Optimal Behavior Violin Plot



Source: Authors' tabulations.

REFERENCES

Ambrasat, Jens, Christian von Scheve, Gesche Schauenburg, Markus Conrad, and Tobias Schröder. 2014. "Consensus and Stratification in the Affective Meaning of Human Sociality." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 111(22): 8001–06.

Anderson, Cameron, Robb Willer, Gavin J. Kilduff, and Courtney E. Brown. 2021. "The Origins of Deference: When Do People Prefer Lower Sta-

tus?" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 102(5): 1077–88.

Benard, Stephen, Long Doan, D. Adam Nicholson, Emily Meanwell, Eric L. Wright, and Peter Lista. 2022. "To Forgive Is Divine? Morality and the Status Value of Intergroup Revenge and Forgiveness." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(6): 122–39. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.6.07.

Bukodi, Erzsebet, Shirley Dex, and John H. Goldthorpe. 2011. "The Conceptualisation and Measurement of Occupational Hierarchies: A Review, A Proposal and Some Illustrative Analyses." *Quality & Quantity* 45(3): 623–39.

Cast, Alicia D. 2003. "Power and the Ability to Define the Situation." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 66(3): 185–201.

Correll, Shelley J., and Cecilia L. Ridgeway. 2003. "Expectation States Theory." In *Handbook of Social Psychology*, edited by John Delamater. New York: Klewer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

Dippong, Joseph, and Will Kalkhoff. 2015. "Predicting Performance Expectations from Affective Impressions: Linking Affect Control Theory and Status Characteristics Theory." *Social Science Research* 50(1): 1–14.

Featherman, David L., and Robert M. Hauser. 1976. "Prestige or Socioeconomic Scales in the Study of Occupational Achievement?" *Sociological Methods and Research* 4(4): 403–22.

Freeland, Robert E., and Jesse Hoey. 2018. "The Structure of Deference: Modeling Occupational Status Using Affect Control Theory." *American Sociological Review* 83(2): 243–77.

Ganzeboom, Harry B.G., Paul M. De Graaf, and Donald J. Treiman. 1992. "A Standard International Socio-Economic Index of Occupational Status." *Social Science Research* 21(1): 1–56.

Ganzeboom, Harry B.G., and Donald J. Treiman. 1996. "Internationally Comparable Measures of Occupational Status for the 1988 International Standard Classification of Occupations." *Social Science Research* 25(3): 201–39.

Heise, David R. 1979. *Understanding Events: Affect and the Construction of Social Action*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2007. *Expressive Order: Confirming Sentiments in Social Actions*. New York: Springer.

———. 2010. *Surveying Cultures: Discovering Shared Conceptions and Sentiments*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Koenig, Biko. 2022. "Politicizing Status Loss Among Trump Supporters in 2020." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(6): 69–86. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.6.04.

MacKinnon, Neil J. 1994. *Symbolic Interactionism as Affect Control*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Maloney, Em K. 2020. "The Social Psychology of Occupational Status Groups: Relationality in the Structure of Deference." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 83(4): 463–75.

———. 2021. "inteRact: Implements Affect Control Theory Equations in R." Accessed June 18, 2022. https://ekmaloney.github.io/inteRact/index.html.

———. 2022. "The Influence of Occupational Identity on Emotional Experience." *American Behavioral Scientist*. First published online: January 2022. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764221066053.

Maloney, Em K., and Lynn Smith-Lovin. 2021. "The Emotional Implications of Occupational Deference Structures." *Advances in Group Processes* 38(1): 1–21.

Morgan, Jonathan H., Kimberly B. Rogers, and Mao Hu. 2016. "Distinguishing Normative Processes from Noise: A Comparison of Four Approaches to Modeling Impressions of Social Events." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 79(4): 311–32.

Osgood, Charles E., William H. May, and Murray S. Miron. 1975. *Cross-Cultural Universals of Affective Meaning*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Osgood, Charles E., George J. Suci, and Percy Tannenbaum. 1957. *The Measurement of Meaning*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L. 2014. "Why Status Matters for Inequality." *American Sociological Review* 79(1): 1–16.

———. 2019. *Status: Why Is It Everywhere? Why Does It Matter?* New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L., and Shelley J. Correll. 2006. "Consensus and the Creation of Status Beliefs." *Social Forces* 85(1): 431–53.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L., and Hazel Rose Markus. 2022. "The Significance of Status: What It Is and How It Shapes Inequality." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 1–25. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.01.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L., and Lynn Smith-Lovin. 1994. "Structure, Culture and Interaction: A Compari-

son of Affect Control Theory and Expectations States Theory." *Advances in Group Processes* 11(1): 213–39.

Robinson, Dawn T., and Lynn Smith-Lovin. 2018. "Affect Control Theories of Social Interaction and Self." In *Contemporary Social Psychological Theories*, 2nd ed., edited by Peter J. Burke. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Robinson, Dawn T., Lynn Smith-Lovin, and Jun Zhao. 2020. "The Role of the Other: How Interaction Partners Influence Identity Maintenance in Four Cultures." In *Identity and Symbolic Interaction: Deepening Foundations, Building Bridges*, edited by Richard T. Serpe, Robin Stryker, and Brian Powell. New York: Oxford University Press.

Rogalin, Christabel L., Shane D. Soboroff, and Michael J. Lovaglia. 2007. "Power, Status, and Affect Control." *Sociological Focus* 40(2): 202–20.

Rogers, Kimberly B. 2019a. "Do You See What I See? Testing for Individual Differences in Impressions of Events." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 81(2): 149–72.

———. 2019b. "Identity Meanings and Categorical Inequality." In *Identities in Everyday Life*, edited by Jan E. Stets and Richard T. Serpe. New York: Oxford University Press.

———. 2019c. "Sources of Consensus and Variegation in Cultural Affective Meanings." *Social Currents* 6(3): 219–38.

———. 2021a. "Event Likelihood Judgments Revisited." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 84(2): 177–88.

———. 2021b. "Separate and Unequal: Predicting Intergroup Behavior and Emotions from Social Identity Meanings." *Advances in Group Processes* 38(1): 23–52.

Rogers, Kimberly B., Tobias Schröder, and Wolfgang Scholl. 2013. "The Affective Structure of Stereotype Content: Behavior and Emotion in Intergroup Context." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 76(2): 125–50.

Scholl, Wolfgang. 2013. "The Socio-Emotional Basis of Human Interaction and Communication: How We Construct Our Social World." *Social Science Information* 52(1): 3–33.

Schröder, Tobias, Jesse Hoey, and Kimberly B. Rogers. 2016. "Modeling Dynamic Identities and Uncertainty in Social Interactions: Bayesian Affect Control Theory." *American Sociological Review* 81(4): 828–55.

Schröder, Tobias, Kimberly B. Rogers, Shuichirou Ike, Julija N. Mell, and Wolfgang Scholl. 2013. "Affective Meanings of Stereotyped Social Groups in Cross-Cultural Comparison." *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations* 16(6): 717–33.

Smith, Tom W., Michael Davern, Jeremy Freese, and Michael Hout. 2017. *General Social Surveys, 1972–2016.* [machine-readable data file]. Principal Investigator, Tom W. Smith; Co-Principal Investigators, Peter V. Marsden, and Michael Hout, NORC ed. Chicago: NORC.

Smith-Lovin, Lynn, and David R. Heise. 1988. *Analyzing Social Interaction: Advances in Affect Control Theory*. New York: Taylor & Francis.

Smith-Lovin, Lynn, Dawn T. Robinson, Bryan C. Cannon, Jesse K. Clark, Brent H. Curdy, Robert Freeland, Jonathan H. Morgan, and Kimberly B. Rogers. 2016. "Mean Affective Ratings of 929 Identities, 814 Behaviors, and 660 Modifiers by University of Georgia and Duke University Undergraduates in 2012–2014." University of Georgia, Affect Control Theory. Accessed June 19, 2022. https://affectcontroltheory.org/resources-for-researchers/data-sets-for-simulation/.

Treiman, Donald J. 1977. *Occupational Prestige in Comparative Perspective*. New York: Academic Press.

Valentino, Lauren. 2022. "Status Lenses: Mapping Hierarchy and Consensus in Status Beliefs." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 89–110. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.05.

Weber, Max. 1978. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, vol. 1, edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich. First published 1918. Berkeley: University of California Press.

———. 2014. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, edited by Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. New York: Routledge.

Zhao, Jun. 2022. "Modeling Impression Formation Processes Among Chinese and Americans." *American Behavioral Scientist.* First published online: January 22, 2022. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/00027642211066025.

Status Lenses: Mapping Hierarchy and Consensus in Status Beliefs

LAUREN VALENTINO

Research on status beliefs demonstrates that judgments of status are not always universally shared and are shaped by social structural factors. Building on this literature, I introduce the concept of status lenses, reflecting a hierarchical-nonhierarchical dimension and a consensus-dissensus dimension of how social groups view the status order. Using data from the 2012 General Social Survey module on occupational prestige, the most common measure of status in sociology, I find that groups use different status lenses depending on their proximity to the traditional centers of power in the United States. Men, Whites, college-educated, and higher-earning groups have a diffuse consensus status lens; women have a discriminating consensus status lens; and Black, noncollege degree, and lower-earning groups have a discriminating dissensus status lens.

Keywords: status, inequality, occupational prestige

Status is a form of social standing distinct from class. Although both involve perceptions, class is derived from an individual's (perceived) relationship to the market, yet status has a uniquely intersubjective quality. Weber defines status as "an effective claim to social esteem in terms of positive or negative privileges" (1968, 305). Thus, status—unlike other dimensions of social inequality, such as class or power—is fundamentally rooted in shared cultural perceptions of who deserves honor, respect, and esteem (Ridgeway 2019; Lamont 2012).

Yet the extent to which perceptions of status are widely shared remains an open question. How do we understand where someone falls in the status order? To what extent is our view similar to—or different from—others' views of the social hierarchy? This study examines the cognitive processes underlying the way people in the United States make judgments of social status. I focus on Americans' mental maps of the occupational status hierarchy, using a cultural cognitive approach at the intersection of the sociology of culture and social psychology. In so doing, this study develops a new concept around perceptions of status—*status lenses*.

Lauren Valentino is an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology at The Ohio State University, United States.

 Valentino, Lauren. 2022. "Status Lenses: Mapping Hierarchy and Consensus in Status Beliefs." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 89–110. DOI: 10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.05. The author acknowledges Steve Vaisey, Scott Lynch, and the fellow members of the Russell Sage Foundation "Status and Inequality" conference for their helpful feedback on earlier versions of this work. Direct correspondence to: Lauren Valentino, at valentino.60@osu.edu, Department of Sociology, 221 Townshend Hall, 1885 Neil Avenue Mall, Columbus, OH 43210, United States.

This concept captures two dimensions related to perceptions of status: how flat or hierarchical the status order is seen as (sensitivity or discrimination) and how much a given group agrees or disagrees about the status order (consensus and dissensus). Further, I examine the extent to which different social groups use different status lenses. In particular, I consider the hypothesis that individuals closer to the traditional centers of power in American society (Whites, men, more educated, higher earning) have a status lens distinct from that of those who have been historically excluded from core American institutions (ethno-racial minorities, women, less educated, lower earning).

To test this hypothesis, I use data on judgments of occupational prestige, which is historically one of the most common measures of status sociologists use.[1] Occupational prestige reflects the way we value the division of labor within a society by expressing whose role is most important, worthy, and deserving of social acclaim. It captures not just how much talent, hard work, or experience is required to perform that role or how much a person should be materially rewarded for fulfilling it—occupational prestige also reflects a moral (MacKinnon and Langford 1994) and deferential (Freeland and Hoey 2018; Maloney 2020; see Maloney, Rogers, and Smith-Lovin 2022, this issue) component of that role, in addition to inscribing elements of existing gender and racial inequalities (Valentino 2020, 2022). Thus occupational prestige is an ideal test case for examining perceptions of status, whether certain social groups vary in terms of how sensitive or discriminating they are in perceiving the status order, and whether there is more or less consensus within those groups.

SHAREDNESS IN STATUS PERCEPTIONS

Much research on status—particularly in the area of occupational prestige—assumes a relatively high degree of uniformity in how people perceive the status hierarchy. Early social theorists argued that society itself is defined by its singular, homogeneous view of the status order. Émile Durkheim's (1912) notion of the *conscience collective* captures the idea of a set of fundamental representations or symbols shared among all members of a society. For Durkheim, these shared representations or symbols encode social categories and classification systems. In the transition from a "primitive" society (characterized by mechanical solidarity) to a "modern" one (characterized by organic solidarity), the division of labor comes to prescribe a set of fixed roles that enable social cohesion. Durkheim argues that social meanings are widely shared precisely because everyone understands where they fit into society's hierarchy. Talcott Parsons also views societies as having a relatively unified set of agreed-upon values. This purported value consensus leads to several core features that, in Parsons's view, characterize a social system: a system for categorizing people, places, and things; role definitions; a system for allocating people to those roles; and, most important, a system for allocating "sanctions and rewards, especially prestige and status" based on the performance of these roles (Parsons and Shils 1951, 257). For Parsons, much like Durkheim, a society is in fact defined by its members' adherence to a singular view of status.

Specific to occupational prestige, studies throughout the twentieth century have documented high correlations between the mean values of a given occupation's prestige rating among members of different education and income levels, occupations, genders, ages, regions, and even countries and time periods (for a review, see Wegener 1992). In his study of more than sixty societies, Donald Treiman (1977) famously asserts that "there is extraordinary consensus throughout each society regarding the relative prestige of occupations" (59), indicative of what he calls a "single world-

1. Status can be measured in various ways, certainly, such as consumption patterns and tastes (Bourdieu 1984), symbolic boundaries (Lamont 1992, 2000), third-party rankings (Sauder 2006), subjective social status (Nielsen, Roos, and Combs 2015), and sociometric status (Jiang and Cillessen 2005). Expectation states theory in sociological social psychology argues that identities such as sex, race, education level, or even right- versus left-handedness can acquire a particular status (in the language of expectation states, they become diffuse status characteristics), leading to performance expectations (Berger et al. 1977; see also Ridgeway 2014).

wide prestige hierarchy" (159). In fact, the universal agreement regarding which occupations are high prestige and which are low prestige is known among sociologists as the Treiman constant. Even in more contemporary studies of occupational prestige, perceptions of an occupation's status are often assumed to be equivalent across individuals, regardless of background.

Yet recent evidence from work on perceptions regarding other types of status suggest that a universal view of status may not always—or even often—be the case. Women and men use different bases on which to determine their subjective class identification (Luo and Brayfield 1996), and individuals of different social class backgrounds use different bases for determining social worth of other groups in the United States and France (Lamont 1992, 2000; Gorman 2000), as well as in China (Wang 2017). Race and ethnicity have been shown to be particularly important determinants of how a person views a particular group's status (Kahn et al. 2009; Wolff et al. 2010; Melamed et al. 2019). Kevin Leicht (2022) argues that different inequality regimes entail different perceptions of status due to an individual's social distance from their near-status peers.

Even in terms of occupational prestige, there is reason to doubt its universality. Xueguang Zhou (2005) finds that a person's education, race, and gender are important determinants of the bases upon which they confer prestige to a given job. Gordon Gauchat and Kenneth Andrews (2018) find that a person's income and degree of scientific literacy determine the extent to which Americans emphasize scientific prestige when understanding expert professions. Using inductive techniques, Lauren Valentino (2021) finds evidence for five distinct logics of occupational prestige in the United States, and which logic a person uses to order the hierarchy depends on their race, gender, education, income, age, religiosity, and geographic region. In Sweden, Dustin Avent-Holt, Martin Hällsten, and David Cort (2020) uncover substantial variation across organizations in terms of how occupations' statuses are perceived within the workplace.

Yet most of these studies emphasize differences in mean status beliefs, saying little about dispersion or disagreement between and within groups in terms of how prestige is perceived. Freda Lynn and George Ellerbach (2017) are an important exception: they find that highly educated individuals are more consistent in their views on occupational status, particularly when it comes to occupations requiring more educational credentials. They posit that education is a socializing institution that creates more uniformity in how people see the occupational structure. Using interview data, Amy Binder, Daniel Davis, and Nick Bloom (2016) find evidence for this process: they observe that elite colleges expressly narrow students' ideas about what constitutes a prestigious job. Indeed, Fabien Accominotti, Freda Lynn, and Michael Sauder (2022) demonstrate that status hierarchies vary in their architectural features, depending on the context. Thus it is reasonable to expect that people perceive these architectural features differently as well depending on their position in society.

STATUS LENSES

A cultural cognitive approach lies at the intersection of the sociology of culture and social psychology, imploring scholars to focus on "processes or mechanisms, cognitive and social, through which cultural elements are acquired, rendered salient, linked to broader patterns of meaning, and displaced" (DiMaggio and Markus 2010, 348). The cultural cognitive approach thus invites social scientists to consider the sharedness of status beliefs as an empirical question rather than an orienting assumption. Based on the emerging research regarding the way social structural factors (such as class, race, and gender) shape status judgments as well as the nascent evidence regarding key variations in how status is perceived, I use the cultural cognitive approach to propose the existence of a more general concept: status lenses.

Status lenses reflect two aspects of how status beliefs can vary within a society: their level of sensitivity or discrimination, and their level of agreement. These dimensions are illustrated in figure 1. First, drawing on signal detection theory (Gambetta 2009; Wickens 2002), I argue that social groups may vary in how sensitive or discriminating they are—that is, how hierarchi-

cal they perceive the status order. Some may have a more discriminating mental map of status that includes a large social distance between the bottom and top positions. Other individuals, by contrast, may have a more diffuse one in which the positions are less differentiated or distanced from one another. In social theory, this is known as a rhizomatic system (Deleuze and Guattari 1987), and in information science and complex systems as a heterarchy (McCulloch 1945).

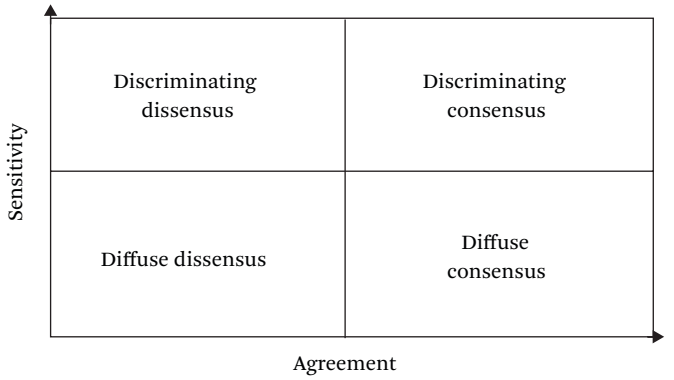
Second, social groups may vary in terms of the degree to which they exhibit consensus or dissensus about the status hierarchy. A group may uniformly agree about its hierarchy: it may order its positions identically or very similarly. High consensus about status is often the result of commensuration, the process by which qualitative entities become publicly defined or ranked by a single set of metrics (Espeland and Stevens 1998). Conversely, a social group may exhibit very little agreement about which positions fall where in the hierarchy. This phenomenon is known as status disagreement (Kilduff, Willer, and Anderson 2016) and may occur as a result of internal heterogeneity within groups (Boltanski and Thévenot 1983).

Figure 1 illustrates how these two axes work together to produce different types of status lenses. The first cell, *diffuse dissensus*, reflects a status lens in which a group perceives a relatively flat hierarchy, and their mental map of the status order varies, reflecting a heterogeneous set of views. An example of the diffuse dissensus status lens occurs when sportscasters speculate about the performance of various teams in a professional sports league at the beginning of the season. In most leagues, the difference between the team with the best record and the team with the worst is still relatively small—both are composed of professional athletes with very high levels of talent and ability. Furthermore, at the beginning of the season, fans and experts debate vigorously about who will have a winning record and who will not this season—disagreement about which teams are best and which are the worst is considerable. The next cell, *diffuse consensus*, reflects a reality in which the group agrees, relatively speaking, about the nature of the hierarchy, but that hierarchy is much flatter. Consider small tribes of hunter-gatherers, which are known to be relatively egalitarian but still exhibit a minimal division of labor (see Sterelny 2021), or certain nonprofit organizations (see Benjamin 2022, this issue).

The third cell, *discriminating dissensus*, would mean the status order takes the shape of a multimodal distribution: this status lens reflects a situation in which a group has subgroups with distinctly different understandings of the status hierarchy, a state Pierre Bourdieu refers to as "classification struggles" (1984, 483). University rankings are emblematic of this view: although most people likely agree that the distance between the very worst and very best universities are quite large, disagreement is significant in terms of how the universities should be ranked. Indeed, we have seen a proliferation of different types of rankings (for example, *U.S. News and World Report*, *QS World and University Rankings*, *Niche*, and so on) that reflect this dissensus (see also Espeland and Sauder 2016). Finally, *discriminating consensus* represents the dominant view in the existing literature on occupational prestige and status beliefs more generally. This status lens captures the idea of a uniform prestige hierarchy about which all members of a given group make fine-grained distinctions. Modern bureaucratic organizations such as the military or hospitals are excellent examples: everyone agrees on highly prescribed and differentiated roles, and the status distance between a private and a four-star general or between an orderly and an attending physician is large (see Jenkins 2020).

Critically, status lenses may be socially patterned, reflecting what Kimberly Rogers (2019) calls "cultural variegation"—the existence of distinctions across social groups in terms of cultural meanings, including (but not limited to) status beliefs. Earlier research leads to several predictions. Norman Alexander (1972, 767) argues that "the lower the perceiver's actual, imagined, or aspired-to status, the smaller the dispersion of his status judgments." The mechanism here is in essence self-enhancement bias: individuals on a lower rung of the status ladder are motivated to move the rungs closer together to minimize the distance between their status and the highest status on the ladder. Alexander finds evidence for this process

Figure 1. Conceptual Representation of Four Status Lenses



Source: Author's conceptual diagram.

in terms of occupational prestige as well as high school popularity in observing that raters who are lower in occupational prestige and students who are less popular exhibited smaller dispersion in their ratings of others' prestige and popularity. This prediction implies that these groups will therefore have less sensitive or discriminating status lenses but says little about consensus differences between groups.

In terms of consensus, the institutional logics perspective suggests that socializing institutions such as schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods will lead to converging views of what constitutes high status versus low status within certain groups (see Zhou 2005). Here two mechanisms are relevant. First, consistent views of status enable coordination within organizations. Thus organizations such as workplaces have a vested interest in imposing explicit status hierarchies as a way of facilitating efficiency and productivity. They may also emerge inductively and become entrenched through path dependency as individuals solve coordination problems on the ground—for instance, when deciding who should take notes at an office meeting, or nominating someone to run for president of a school's parent-teacher association. Second, once individuals have been socialized within these formal institutions—especially schools and universities—they become invested in justifying the allocation of rewards (such as status) on the basis of these institutions' credentials. Those who are the most likely to reap rewards from these credentials—Whites, men, the higher earning in the United States—are the most likely to see these credentials as fair bases for resource distribution (see Cech and Blair-Loy 2010). This prediction implies that these groups have more consensus in terms of their status lens but says little about whether they are more or less sensitive or discriminating. It is therefore vital to consider the two dimensions of status lenses simultaneously.

This study thus seeks to first answer the question of whether status lenses exist. It then determines the degree to which different social groups have different status lenses—that is, whether they exhibit varying levels of sensitivity or discrimination about the status hierarchy and agreement (consensus versus dissensus) about the rank order of that hierarchy. I focus on two key sets of groups in American society: those who are closer to the traditional centers of power (men, Whites, the college educated, and higher earners), and those who are farther away (women, racial minorities, those without a college degree, and lower earners). Using the case study of occupational prestige judgments, I bring a cultural cognitive approach to bear on what has largely been an orienting assumption for much of the existing research on status.

DATA AND METHODS

The source of data for this study is the 2012 occupational prestige module from the General Social Survey (GSS). Every few decades, to update its prestige score variable, the National Opinion Research Center, which administers the GSS, asks a subset of its survey-takers to

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of GSS Sample

	Proportion	
Male	.449	
Female	.551	
White	.792	
Black	.142	
Hispanic	.026	
Asian	.026	
Other race	.008	
Work less than full time	.527	
Working full time	.474	
	Mean	SD
Prestige rating	4.538	.928
Education (years)	13.661	2.911
Income	58173.30	42549.74
Age	51.633	16.326
Prestige score of own job	43.991	13.185

Source: Author's calculations.
Note: Descriptives shown for full sample (N = 1,001).

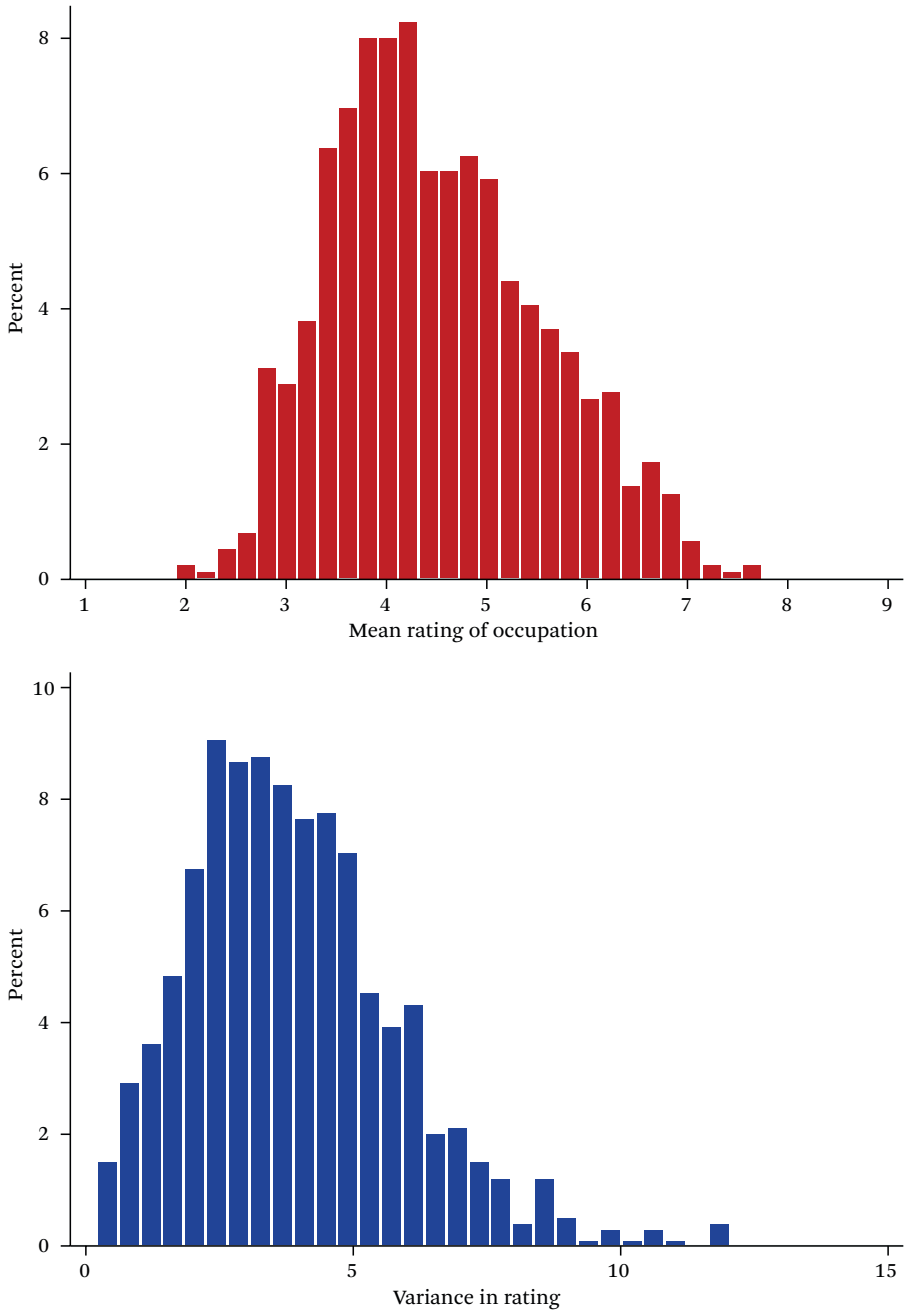
rate a number of occupational titles spanning the breadth of occupations in the United States.[2] In 2012, members of the in-person rotating panel were asked to complete the occupational prestige module, a total of 1,001 respondents. The module uses a split-ballot design, in which 860 total occupational titles are rated, but each survey respondent is randomly assigned to one of twelve possible ballots including seventy occupations. Every respondent is also asked to rate twenty core occupations. Respondents are presented with a stack of cards with the ninety occupational titles and a box with slots labeled one through nine. They are instructed to place each occupation in the slot corresponding to its social standing, one being the lowest and nine being the highest (for data collection details, see Smith and Son 2014). Although most researchers use the scaled occupational prestige scores that are trimmed and aggregated measures of occupational status, I obtained the raw ratings data from NORC in order to examine the micro-level, cognitive process by which these status judgments are made.

The GSS is a national probability sample of Americans, and thus the subset of those who participated in the occupational prestige module are largely representative of the United States in 2012 (see table 1). The analytic sample includes 1,001 respondents and detail about their gender, race-ethnicity, educational attainment, income, and age. Demographic data and work-related variables (work status and prestige score of own job) are also included in some models as well.

Beginning with occupations, we can see that the mean occupational rating is 5.7 of 9. As we can see in panel A of figure 2, however, some occupations were rated very low on average (street corner drug dealer received a mean rating of 1.902) and some were rated very high on average (surgeon received a mean rating of 7.744), indicating an occupational hierarchy. Further, respondents varied dramatically in how dispersed their ratings were, as evidenced by the histogram in panel B. Some respondents exhibited high dispersion, with variances as large as 12.053; others exhibited low dispersion, as low as 0.198. I use this within-respondent dispersion as a measure of sensitivity and discrimination.

2. This list also includes a handful of unusual or unofficial occupations, such as street corner drug dealer and panhandler.

Figure 2. Occupational Means and Rater Variances in Prestige



Source: Author's calculations.

To assess whether this dimension of status lenses varies across social groups, I examine person-specific variance in occupational prestige ratings. Because different people rated different occupations, looking at the overall dispersion of respondents' occupational prestige ratings is the best way to ascertain sensitivity and discrimination. Higher levels of individual dispersion indicate that a rater perceives a large status distance between the lowest-prestige and highest-prestige occupations, whereas lower levels of individual dispersion

indicate that a rater perceives a small status distance between the lowest-prestige and highest-prestige occupations. I begin by looking at descriptive differences between groups in terms of variance in their ratings to assess whether they may be more or less sensitive or discriminating in how they perceive the hierarchy. Next, I model person-level variance in prestige ratings as a function of these group variables to isolate the specific relationship between each demographic characteristic and the variation in prestige ratings. I use Poisson regression with variance as the outcome because this variable is noticeably right-skewed (see figure 2, panel B) and follows a Poisson distribution (its mean and variance are nearly identical); furthermore, this modeling approach avoids the problem of producing negative predictions, which are nonsensical in the case of variances. All models include robust standard errors to account for potential violation of the dispersion assumption (see Cameron and Trivedi 2013). I also include ballot controls in all models to account for possible anchoring effects in terms of how respondents rated the particular list of occupations they received.

To examine agreement (level of consensus versus dissensus) within groups, I focus on how respondents ranked the twenty core occupations because these were the only ones that all members of the sample rated. I convert each respondents' ratings into rankings to account for potential differences in the sensitivity-discrimination component of status perceptions. Rankings focus on the order of occupations without regard for the distance between them, and disregarding distance is necessary to isolate the consensus dimension of status lenses. I next compute all pairwise dyads of respondents ($N = 500{,}500$) in these rank orderings, which allows me to examine the extent to which every possible combination of raters agree with one another in terms of how these occupations should be ordered. I use Spearman's rho, as well as Kendall's tau, to calculate these pairwise correlations. To assess whether groups agree or disagree about these orderings, I focus on whether pairs of matched dyads from the far group (for example, women) are more or less likely to exhibit a higher ordinal correlation relative to matched dyads of the close group (for example, men). I first examine descriptive differences in these correlations, and then regress the group-level variables on these correlations to examine their unique contributions to level of consensus.

FINDINGS

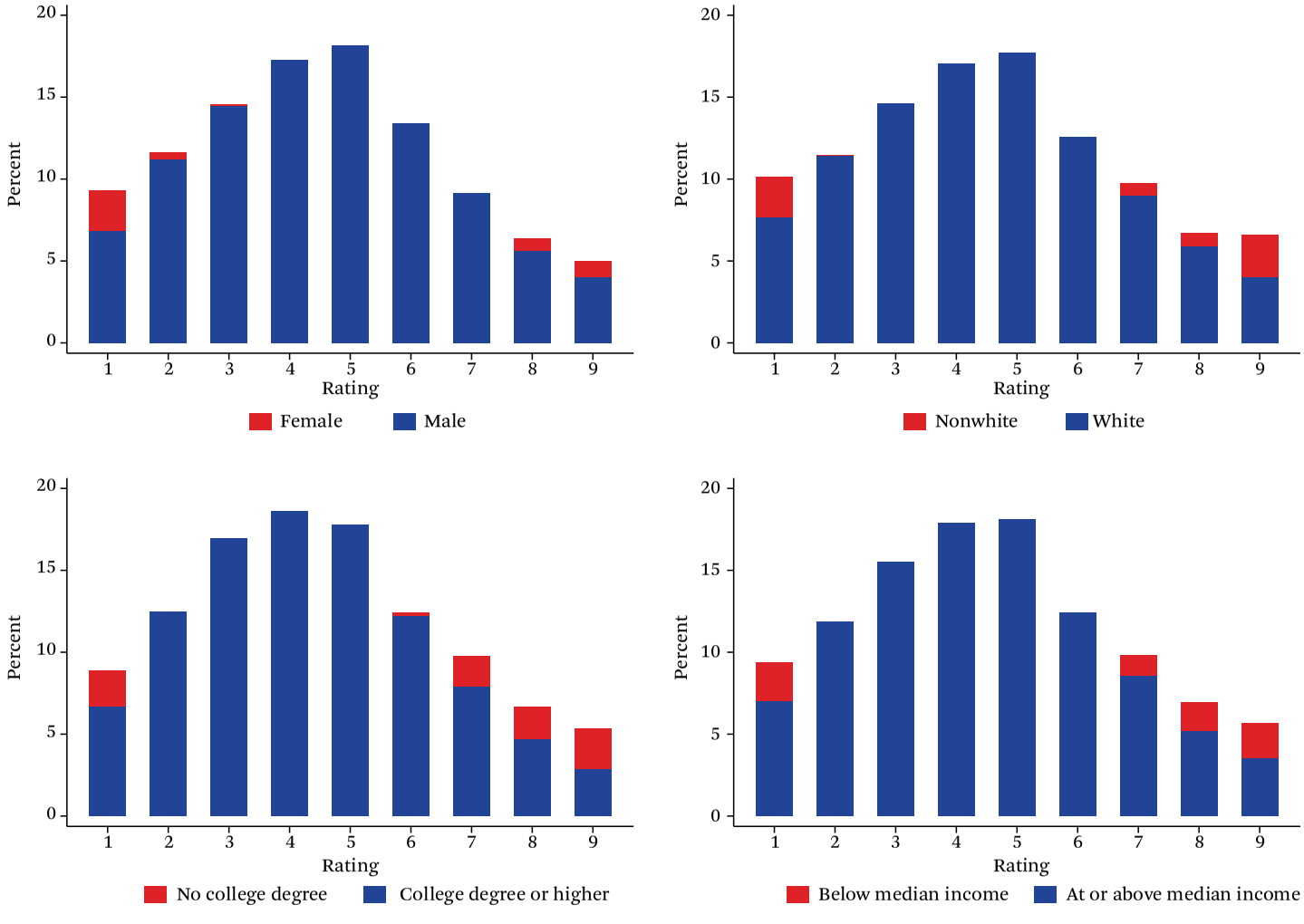
I begin by examining descriptive differences in sensitivity-discrimination between groups. To simplify comparisons in figure 3, I dichotomize education into those who do not have a college degree versus those who have a college degree (or higher credential) and income into below median income versus at or above median income.[3] I consider those who identify as White versus non-White and those who identify as male versus female.

This figure reveals key differences between groups with regard to how discriminating they are in their prestige ratings. In terms of gender, we see that women exhibit more dispersion than men. This is borne out in the median-centered Levene's test of equality of variances ($F = 181.329$, $p < .001$). In terms of race, respondents who are racial minorities exhibit more dispersion than White respondents, also confirmed by the median-centered Levene's test ($F = 347.318$, $p < .001$). Looking at education, respondents who do not have a college degree exhibit more dispersion than those who do have a college degree, evidenced by the significant median-centered Levene's test ($F = 645.447$, $p < .001$). Finally, respondents whose household income is below the median exhibit more dispersion than those whose income is at or above the median level, again supported by the median-centered Levene's test ($F = 568.566$, $p < .001$).

Yet we know that many of these variables are interrelated; thus it is important to disentangle

3. The median household income in 2012 was $51,371 (Noss 2013). Because the GSS asks respondents to provide their household income in categories, I consider a respondent "at or above median income" if they selected an income category of $50,000 or more. Calculations in regression models use logged midpoint values of the income category to account for right-skewness in the distribution.

Figure 3. Observed Dispersion in Prestige Ratings Across Social Groups Far and Close to Traditional Power in the United States



Source: Author's calculations.

Table 2. Poisson Regression of Ratings Variance on Group Level Variables

	Model 1		Model 2	
Female	.144***	(.032)	.138***	(.032)
Black[a]	.186***	(.044)	.187***	(.045)
Hispanic[a]	−.078	(.113)	−.066	(.119)
Asian[a]	−.080	(.080)	−.075	(.082)
Other race[a]	.197	(.167)	.181	(.166)
Education (years)	−.027***	(.006)	−.023**	(.008)
Income (logged)	−.034**	(.012)	−.039**	(.011)
Age	−.001	(.001)	−.002	(.001)
Working full time			−.046	(.035)
Prestige score of own job			−.001	(.001)
Constant	2.051***	(.144)	2.083***	(.144)
Ballot controls?	Yes		Yes	
Deviance goodness-of-fit	785.282		758.642	
Pearson goodness-of-fit	779.289		754.772	
N	927		903	

Source: Author's calculations.

[a] Reference group is Whites.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)

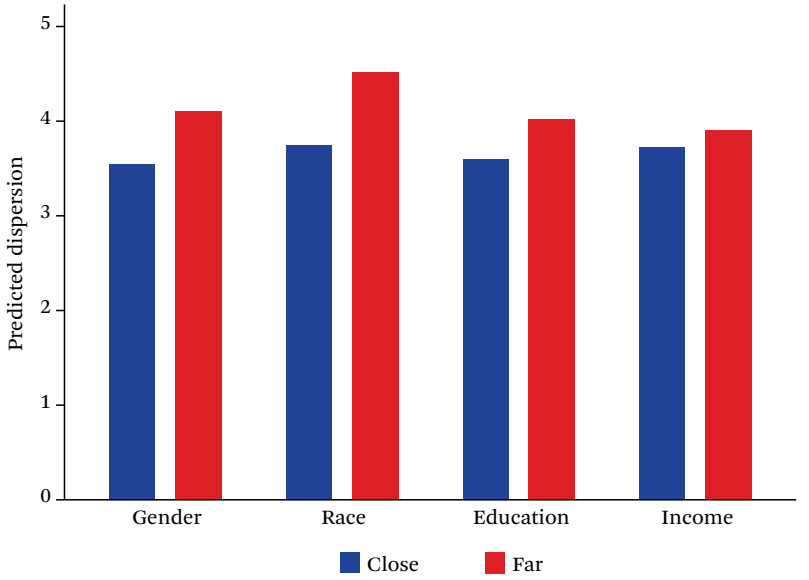
the unique impact of each social structural factor on the sensitivity of prestige ratings. I therefore turn now to the Poisson regression models, which simultaneously estimate the impact of gender, race, education, and income, with controls for age and ballot. Model 1 estimates these group-level variables. Model 2 introduces the work-related variables to capture whether a respondent is working full time, part time, or not at all, and the prestige score of a respondent's own job. As seen in table 2, both models exhibit nonsignificant goodness-of-fit statistics ($p > .05$) for the deviance and Pearson tests, suggesting that the Poisson specification fits the data well in both cases.

Results from model 1 demonstrate that women have a larger variance than men, net of race-ethnicity, education, income, and age, by about 16 percent. Black respondents have around 20 percent larger variance than White respondents, all else equal, although Hispanic and Asian respondents do not significantly differ from White respondents. The more education and income a respondent has, the smaller their variance, net of other variables. For every additional year of education, the ratings variance decreases by about 2.7 percent; for every $10,000 of additional household income, they decrease by about 3 percent. Finally, a respondent's age does not have an independent effect on the dispersion of their ratings.[4] Introducing work-related variables in model 2 very slightly attenuates the gender, race, education, and income variables, but differences between social structural groups remain significant nonetheless. A person's work status as well as the average prestige score of their own occupation do not seem to impact the degree of sensitivity or discrimination with which they view prestige. Overall, then, these results demonstrate that women, Black respondents, less-educated and lower-income respondents are more likely to have a dispersed view of the occupational hierarchy—evidence that those furthest from the traditional centers of power in American society have higher levels of sensitivity and discrimination in their status views.

The results for sensitivity-discrimination

4. Additional analyses testing for a quadratic effect of age did not change the nonsignificance of the variable and did not improve model fit. Tables A.1 and A.2 test alternative specifications of dispersion using a log-linear and generalized binomial approach, respectively. Both alternative models demonstrate patterns consistent with the Poisson results presented in table 2.

Figure 4. Predicted Dispersion for Groups Close to and Far from Centers of Power



Source: Author's calculations.

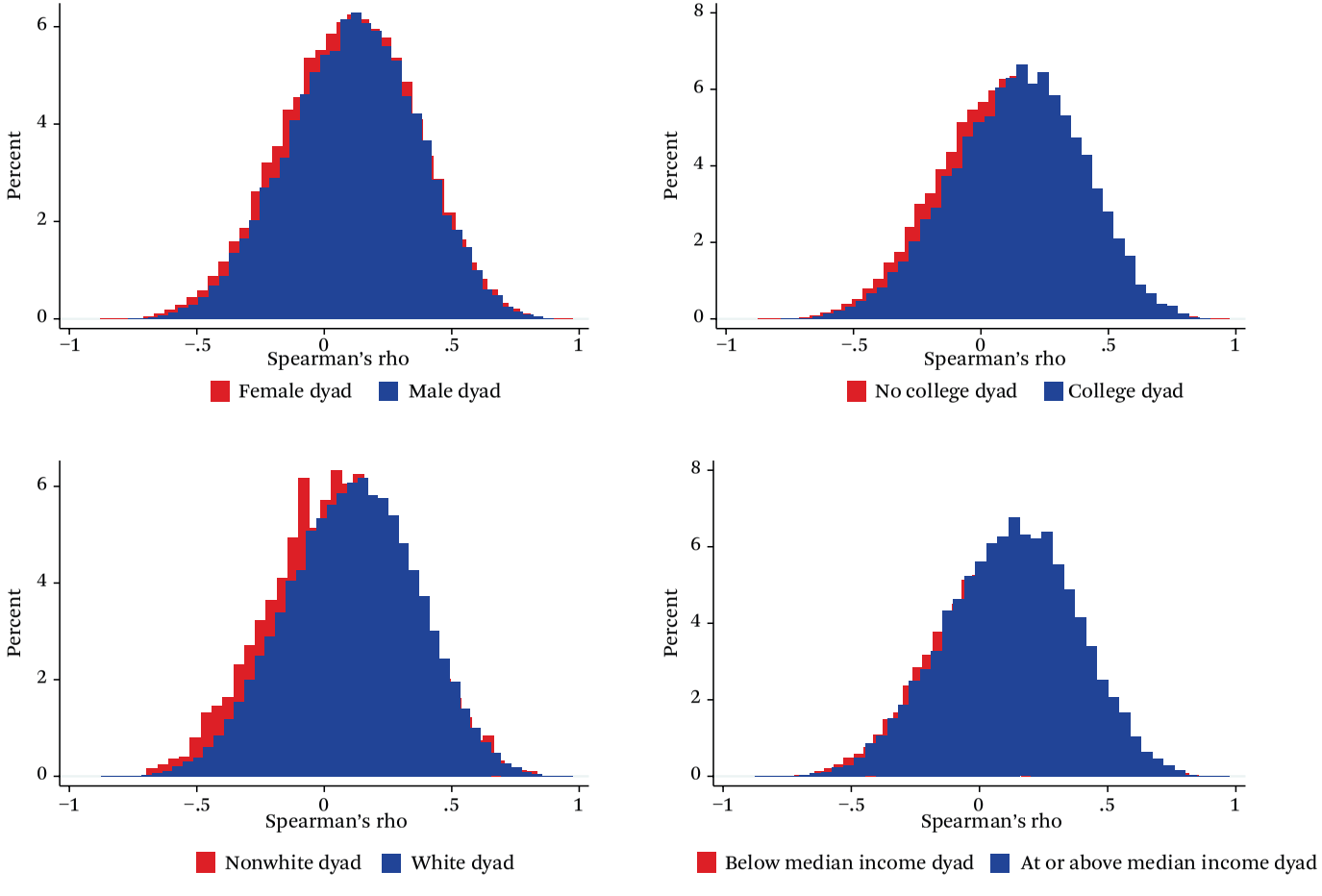
are illustrated in figure 4 using predicted values of key independent variables, holding all other variables at their means and modes. These figures help demonstrate the magnitude of each social structural variable net of other factors. All else constant, men's dispersion is smaller than women's by 0.552, and White respondents' dispersion smaller than that of Black respondents by 0.765. In terms of education, going from a high school diploma to a college degree decreases a respondent's prestige dispersion by 0.408. Going from the 25th percentile of household income to the 75th percentile of median income diminishes a respondent's dispersion by 0.178. We can conclude that race (specifically, White versus Black) is the most important determinant of how sensitive or discriminating a respondent is in their perceptions of the status hierarchy, followed by gender, followed by education, followed by income.

I now turn to the question of agreement. We have seen that women, racial minorities, less-educated, and lower-earning respondents perceive a more hierarchical status order in terms of occupational prestige. But can we claim that these groups necessarily perceive a more highly differentiated occupational status hierarchy—a discriminating consensus status lens? Or do they simply exhibit more heterogeneity overall in their views of the status order—a discriminating dissensus status lens? To investigate this second dimension of status lenses, I now turn to the pairwise rankings data. Spearman correlations for the rankings of close dyads (men, Whites, more educated, higher earning) versus far dyads (women, racial minorities, less educated, lower earning) are shown in figure 5.[5]

Descriptively, we can see that groups further from the traditional centers of power have lower dyadic correlations, suggesting a relative lack of agreement (dissensus) within these groups in terms of how they perceive the status order. T-tests between group dyads reveal that men are significantly more likely to agree than women ($t = 6.726$, $p < .001$), Whites are significantly more likely to agree than racial minorities ($t = 11.370$, $p < .001$), those with a college degree are significantly more likely to agree than those without ($t = 17.568$, $p < .001$), and those at or above the median income are significantly more likely to agree than those below it ($t = 15.106$, $p < .001$). However, it is once again

5. Figures A.1 and A.2 chart these relationships using Kendall's tau. The overall pattern remains the same to the results using Spearman's rho shown here.

Figure 5. Observed Correlations of Dyads in Rank Orderings of Core Occupations by Social Group



Source: Author's calculations.

Table 3. Linear Regression of Ranked Correlations on Group Level Variables

	Spearman's ρ	Kendall's τ A	Kendall's τ B
Male	.010 (.007)	.005 (.004)	.010 (.006)
White	.037*** (.008)	.022*** (.005)	.032*** (.007)
College	.036*** (.009)	.024*** (.005)	.031*** (.008)
At or above median income	.017* (.008)	.010* (.005)	.015* (.007)
Constant	.050*** (.007)	.031*** (.004)	.043*** (.006)
N dyads	49,234	48,692	48,692

Source: Author's calculations.
Standard errors clustered by respondent ID. Reference category is "far" group (female, non-Whites, no college degree, below median income).
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)

important to parse out unique effects of each social structural variable because we know these four factors are deeply interrelated. I therefore regress these four structural variables onto the correlations using linear regression with robust standard errors clustered by respondent to account for the dyadic structure of the data. These results are presented in table 3.

Results indicate that women are not statistically significantly different from men in terms of their level of agreement once controls are included in the models. However, Whites exhibit significantly higher levels of consensus, as do those with a college degree, and those at or above the median household income relative to non-Whites, those without a college degree, and those below the median income, respectively. These differences are illustrated using predicted values in figure 6. As we can see, race once again has the largest impact on consensus, with a difference of 0.037 between Whites and non-Whites in terms of their Spearman correlations. Education is next in importance, with a difference of 0.036 between those with a college degree and those without. Finally, income is third in importance, showing a difference of 0.011 between those at or above the median income and those below it.[6]

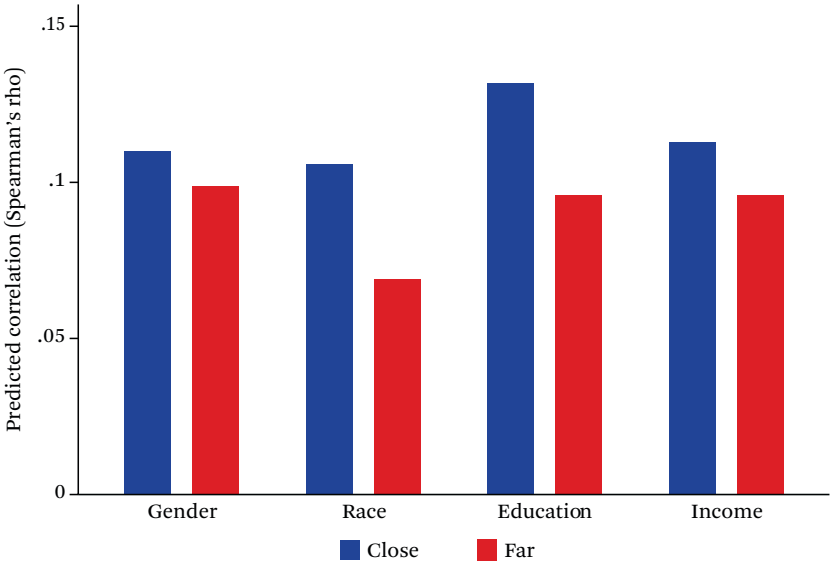
Results from the second part of the analysis provide evidence that gender does not shape level of agreement—both men and women are similar in their degree of consensus regarding the status order—but race, education, and income do shape level of agreement—respondents who are racial minorities, have less education, and have lower income all have significantly lower levels of consensus. Overall, then, we can conclude that gender affects sensitivity and discrimination but not consensus, whereas race, education, and income affect both dimensions.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Using perceptions of occupational prestige as a measure of status beliefs, this study finds evidence for three different types of status lenses among social groups in the United States. Women have a discriminating consensus status lens: they perceive a highly differentiated occupational hierarchy and tend to agree about how the positions should be ranked. Men, Whites, highly educated respondents, and high-earning respondents have a diffuse consensus status lens: they tend to perceive a relatively flat occupational status hierarchy and they agree about the order of the occupations within that hierarchy. Black, less-educated, and lower-earning respondents have a discriminating dissensus status lens: they perceive considerable distance between the high and low positions within the hierarchy, and they exhibit heterogeneity in terms of where they think those positions should rank within that hierarchy, consistent with Andrei Boutyline and Stephen Vaisey's (2017) findings regarding how lower educated individuals exhibit less organized political attitudes and David Harding's (2007) findings regarding the presence of cul-

6. Figures A.3 and A.4 illustrate these relationships with Kendall's tau, once again demonstrating a similar pattern in terms of differences and effect sizes.

Figure 6. Predicted Correlations of Dyads in Rank Orderings of Core Occupations by Social Group



Source: Author's calculations.

tural heterogeneity in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Altogether, these results indicate that analysts should no longer conclude that everyone uses a widely agreed-upon, highly sensitive, and discriminating status lens to make sense of the occupational hierarchy. As I show, this is only true for one group—women—in the United States.

Instead, consistent with the nascent evidence on how social structure shapes a person's status beliefs, I find that gender, race-ethnicity, and social class play an important role in which status lens a person uses. What is driving these differences in status lenses? Findings align with the idea that groups that are farther away from the traditional centers of power in the United States—women, racial minorities, the less educated, and lower-earning individuals—are more likely to experience status threats during interactions and to have to navigate situations in which status is visible and highly salient to them (see Ridgeway and Markus 2022, this issue). This helps explain why they perceive larger social distance between low-status and high-status roles and positions. The results regarding group differences in consensus and dissensus can likely be explained by the institutional logics perspective: socializing institutions and on-the-ground coordination problems have likely led to greater levels of agreement regarding the status hierarchy among Whites, the college educated, and higher-earning individuals as a result of time spent in schools, universities, workplaces, associations, and other formal organizations. Racial minorities, the less educated, and lower-earning individuals have likely had less formative experience in these socializing institutions and therefore are less likely to hold unified views of the status order. Nevertheless, future studies should directly examine the degree to which status threat and socializing institutions can explain these differences in perceptions of status. Furthermore, the present analytic approach is limited in its ability to draw conclusions about the intersectional impact of these social groups on status lenses. Overcoming this limitation using intersectional techniques is another important avenue for future research.

The extent to which these particular status lenses are used in realms other than occupational status remains an open question. In particular, I suspect that other-regarding status beliefs, such as sociometric status, may follow the pattern observed here, whereas status beliefs that are self-regarding (for example, subjective social standing and class identification) may not, given their complex relationships to

identity and self-perception. Further, the current findings raise questions about whether and how these status lenses change over time. Is it possible that Treiman was correct in the mid-twentieth century when he argued for the existence of a singular, discriminating consensus lens, but that other status lenses have emerged since then as the United States has become more diverse but also more unequal? Looking forward, one question is whether other aspects of social structure—such as political affiliation, due to increasing political polarization—will also become salient factors that shape our view of the occupational hierarchy (see Koenig 2022). In addition, researchers should consider the behavioral consequences of different status lenses, particularly in the realm of status attainment. For example, we can imagine that having a discriminating status lens might restrict the range of occupational and educational aspirations an adolescent develops or the occupational mobility they ultimately pursue throughout their career trajectory; relatedly, having a dissensus status lens might make it more difficult for individuals to realize their aspirations accordingly (Harding 2007; Frye and Trinitapoli 2015). These are also critical questions for future research.

Finally, scholars of status have more recently argued for the importance of third-order status beliefs: a foundational aspect of status is not just what people believe is high or low status, but what people believe the generalized other believes about status (Correll et al. 2017; Melamed et al. 2019). Indeed, third-order beliefs about status lead to stereotype threat, in which a stigmatized group often carries a psychological burden of having to navigate a world in which the status order has been decided by those in positions of power—even though they themselves may not hold that belief (for a review, see Spencer, Logel, and Davies 2016). The current GSS data on occupational prestige ratings cannot disentangle first-order status beliefs from third-order status beliefs: are people rating occupations based on what they think is a high-status job, or are they rating them based on what they think most other people think is a high-status job—regardless of their own views? Indeed, we cannot know whether part of the dissensus observed among racial minorities, low-education, and low-income groups is due to the fact that some may be reporting first-order status beliefs and some may be reporting third-order status beliefs. This vital question requires researchers to collect data on occupational status beliefs that is different than the way we have gathered prestige data for the past near-century.

A cross-disciplinary line of inquiry has established the many micro, meso, and macro domains in which social status impacts our life chances (see Ridgeway 2019; Fiske and Markus 2012). A person's occupational status is known to influence their stress level (Matthews et al. 2000), body mass index (McLaren and Godley 2012), cancer risk (Behrens et al. 2016), mortality rate (Christ et al. 2012), as well as their children's educational outcomes (Conley and Yeung 2005), above and beyond their material resources. Yet this study's cultural cognitive approach to status beliefs has demonstrated social patterning in status lenses, suggesting that these status beliefs are not necessarily widely shared. This means that existing work using occupational prestige as a measure of status is likely incomplete, given that standard occupational prestige scores use trimmed means of these ratings, erasing any systematic differences between social groups in these status perceptions (see Smith and Son 2014). Furthermore, status lenses are likely a driver of interactional inequality in the United States because the rewards of status are allocated based on the status lens of those closest to the traditional centers of power—men, Whites, the college educated, and the higher earning. These groups, in essence, create and enforce the rules of the game by making decisions on the basis of a status order that others do not necessarily hold. Acknowledging and even acquiring a different status lens may help equalize these status effects and allocate the rewards of status in a more just way.

Table A.1. Log Linear Approach to Modeling Sensitivity-Discrimination

	Model 1		Model 2	
Female	.183***	(.038)	.164***	(.039)
Black[a]	.206***	(.055)	.186**	(.059)
Hispanic[a]	−.086	(.123)	−.089	(.128)
Asian[a]	−.012	(.121)	−.031	(.126)
Other race[a]	.160	(.216)	.127	(.216)
Education (years)	−.028***	(.007)	−.024**	(.008)
Income (logged)	−.040**	(.013)	−.041**	(.014)
Age	−.001	(.001)	−.002	(.001)
Working full time			−.065	(.045)
Prestige score of own job			.000	(.002)
Constant	1.932***	(.174)	1.983***	(.184)
Ballot controls?	Yes		Yes	
N	927		903	

Source: Author's calculations.

Note: The log linear approach linearly regresses a logged outcome on the covariates. Unsurprisingly, this model violates the nonnormality assumption of OLS, as evidenced by the significant Shapiro-Wilk test ($p < .001$), as well as visual inspections of the residuals, so it is not preferred over the Poisson model in this case. Nevertheless, it produces very similar results to the Poisson approach in table 2.

[a] Reference group is Whites.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)

Table A.2. Generalized Negative Binomial Approach to Modeling Sensitivity-Discrimination

	Model 1		Model 2	
Female	3.170*	(1.528)	2.216***	(.544)
Black[a]	1.367***	(.117)	1.173***	(.113)
Hispanic[a]		[b]		[b]
Asian[a]		[b]		[b]
Other race[a]		[b]		[b]
Education (years)	−.192***	(.020)	−.125***	(.022)
Income (logged)	−.104**	(.031)	−.141***	(.029)
Age	−.014***	(.004)	−.015***	(.003)
Working full time			−.244	(.138)
Prestige score of own job			−.028***	(.005)
Constant	−2.955	(1.622)	−1.108	
Ballot controls?	Yes		Yes	
N	80,765		78,773	

Source: Author's calculations.

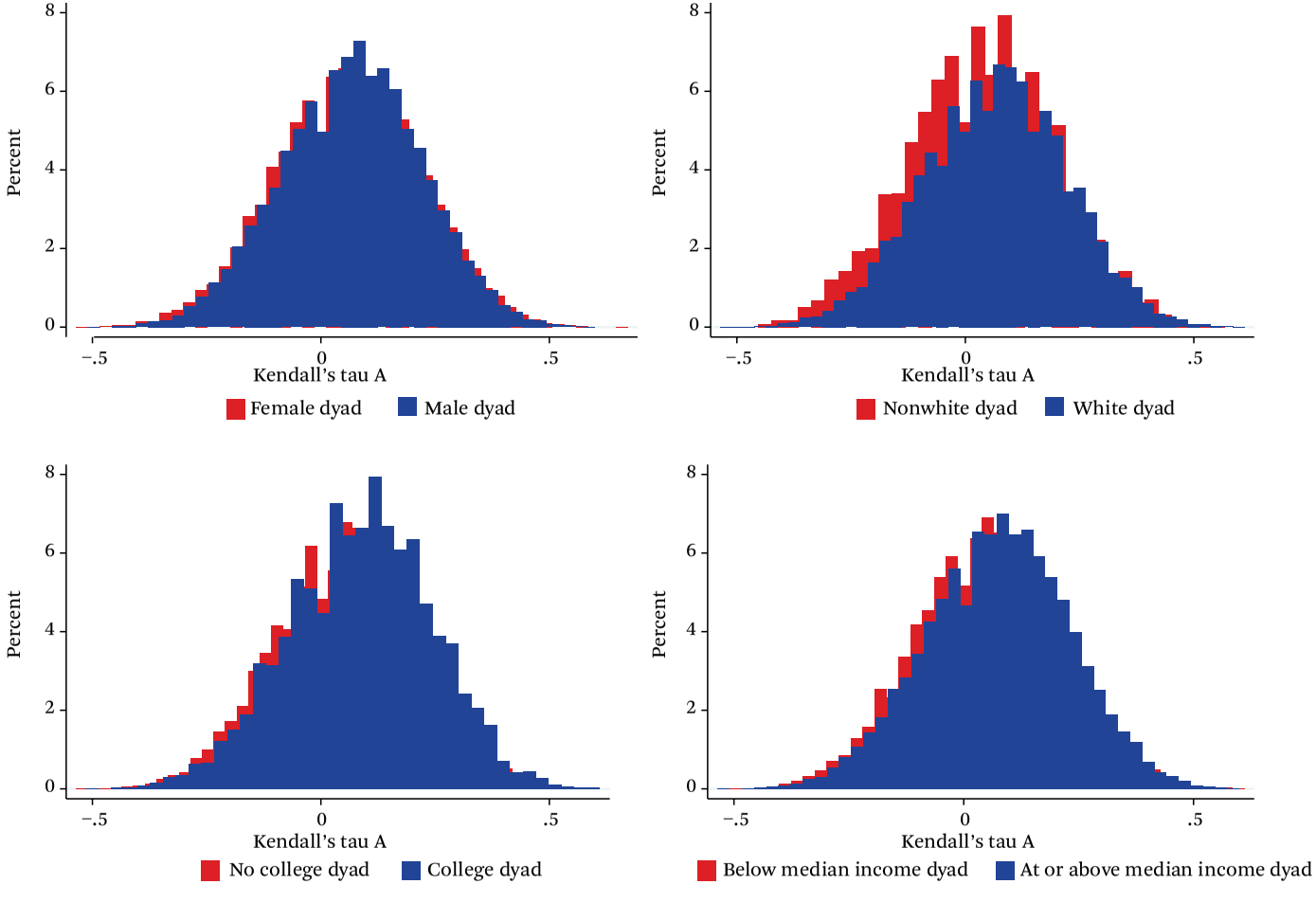
Note: Generalized negative binomial models allow for the simultaneous estimation of the mean and dispersion parameters as a function of some vector of covariates. Results presented here model the mean prestige rating as a function of ballot ("ballot controls," results for which are not shown here to conserve space), and the dispersion in prestige ratings as a function of respondent-level independent variables (the results shown in table A.2). This model requires estimation on the full ratings dataset, as indicated by the very large sample size. Results are also very consistent with results from the Poisson regression approach.

[a] Reference group is Whites.

[b] Cell size is too small to produce reliable estimate using this estimation approach.

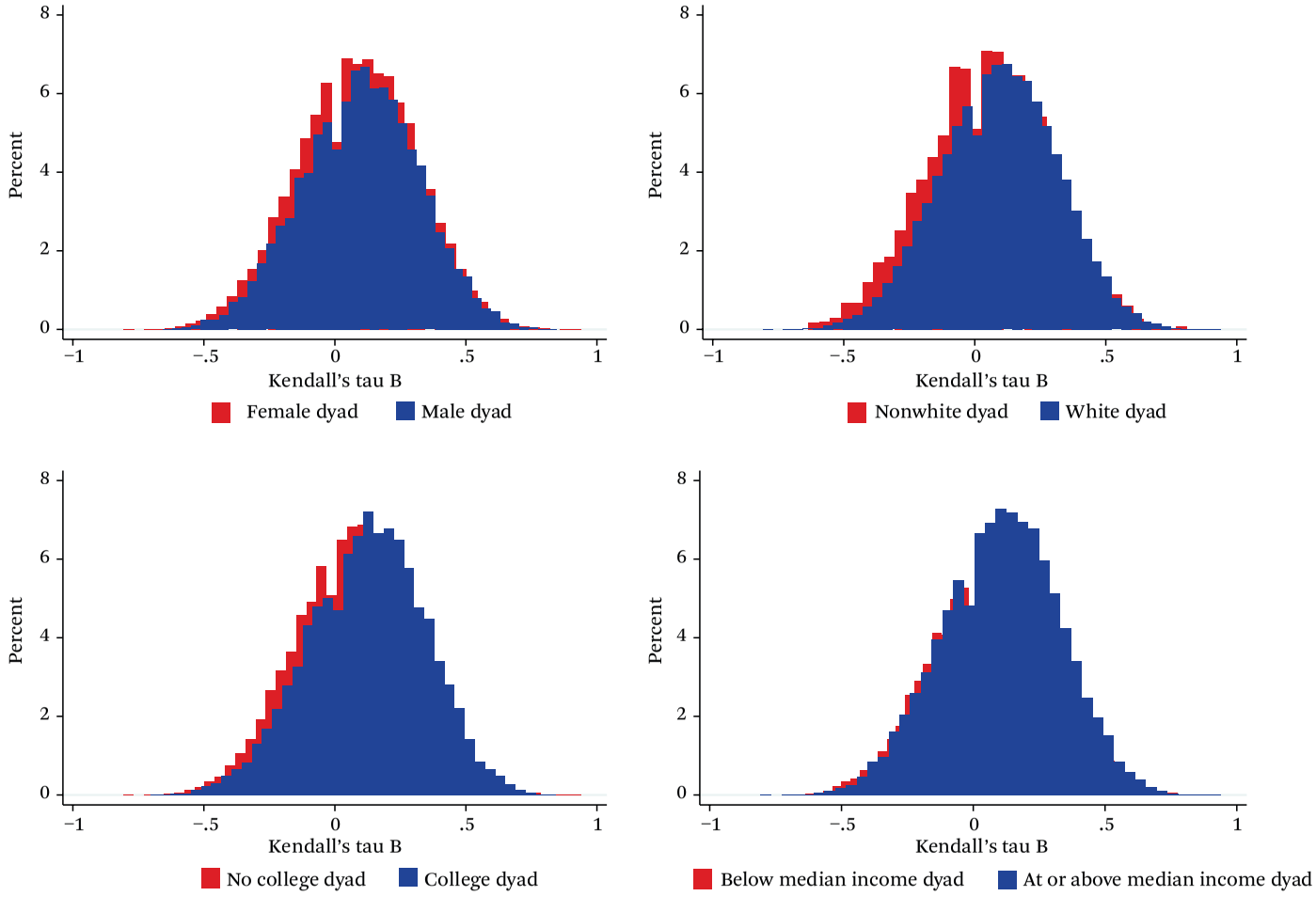
*$p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)

Figure A.1. Descriptive Differences in Kendall's tau (a) Correlations by Dyad



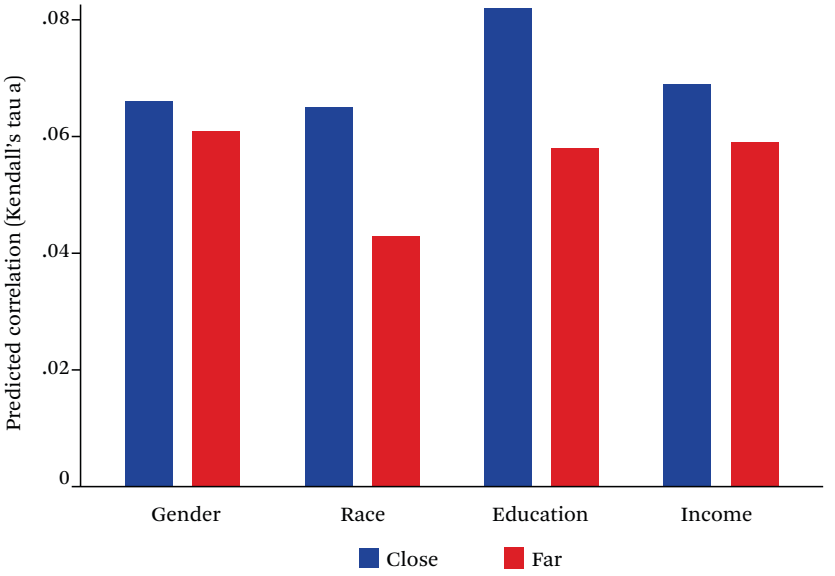
Source: Author's calculations.

Figure A.2. Descriptive Differences in Kendall's tau (b) Correlations by Dyad



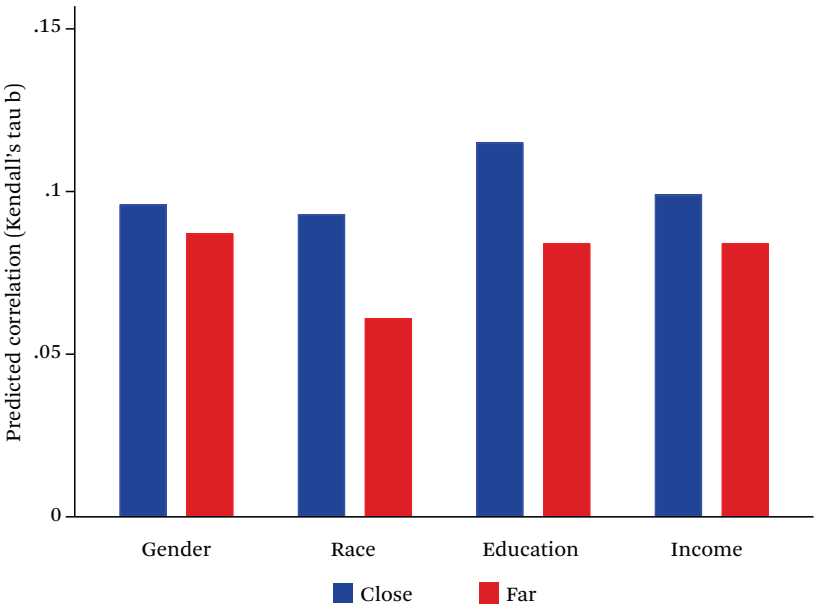
Source: Author's calculations.

Figure A.3. Predicted Values for Kendall's tau (a) by Social Group



Source: Author's calculations.

Figure A.4. Predicted Values for Kendall's tau (b) by Social Group



Source: Author's calculations.

Taken together, Figures A.1 through A.4 demonstrate that results presented for dyadic correlations of rank orderings are not sensitive to the measure of ordinal correlation used because they are consistent across all three measures (Spearman's ρ, Kendall's τ a and Kendall's τ b).

REFERENCES

Accominotti, Fabien, Freda Lynn, and Michael Sauder. 2022. "The Architecture of Status Hierarchies: Variations in Structure and Why They Matter for Inequality." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(6): 87–102. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.6.05.

Alexander, C. Norman. 1972. "Status Perceptions." *American Sociological Review* 37(6): 767–73.

Avent-Holt, Dustin, Martin Hällsten, and David Cort. 2020. "Occupational Status and Organizations: Variation in Occupational Hierarchies Across Swedish Workplaces." *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 70: 100423.

Behrens, Thomas, Isabelle Groß, Jack Siemiatycki, David I. Conway, Ann Olsson, Isabelle Stücker, Florence Guida, Karl-Heinz Jöckel, et al. 2016. "Occupational Prestige, Social Mobility and the Association with Lung Cancer in Men." *BMC Cancer* 16(395). DOI: https://doi.org/10.1186/s12885-016-2432-9.

Benjamin, Lehn M. 2022. "How Helping Can Reinforce or Attenuate Status Inequalities: The Case of Nonprofit Organizations." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 210–27. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.11.

Berger, Joseph, Hamit Fişek, Robert Norman, and Morris Zelditch. 1977. *Status Characteristics and Social Interaction* New York: Elsevier.

Binder, Amy J., Daniel B. Davis, and Nick Bloom. 2016. "Career Funneling: How Elite Students Learn to Define and Desire 'Prestigious' Jobs." *Sociology of Education* 89(1): 20–39.

Boltanski, Luc, and Laurent Thévenot. 1983. "Finding One's Way in Social Space: A Study Based on Games." *Social Science Information* 22(4–5): 631–80.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Boutyline, Andrei, and Stephen Vaisey. 2017. "Belief Network Analysis: A Relational Approach to Understanding the Structure of Attitudes." *American Journal of Sociology* 122(5): 1371–447.

Cameron, A. Colin, and Pravin K. Trivedi. 2013. *Regression Analysis of Count Data.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Cech, Erin A., and Mary Blair-Loy. 2010. "Perceiving Glass Ceilings? Meritocratic Versus Structural Explanations of Gender Inequality Among Women in Science and Technology." *Social Problems* 57(3): 371–97.

Christ, Sharon L., Lora E. Fleming, David J. Lee, Carles Muntaner, Peter A. Muennig, and Alberto J. Caban-Martinez. 2012. "The Effects of a Psychosocial Dimension of Socioeconomic Position on Survival: Occupational Prestige and Mortality Among US Working Adults." *Sociology of Health & Illness* 34(7): 1103–17.

Conley, Dalton, and W. Jean Yeung. 2005. "Black-White Differences in Occupational Prestige: Their Impact on Child Development." *American Behavioral Scientist* 48(9): 1229–49.

Correll, Shelley J., Cecilia L. Ridgeway, Ezra W. Zuckerman, Sharon Jank, Sara Jordan-Bloch, and Sandra Nakagawa. 2017. "It's the Conventional Thought That Counts: How Third-Order Inference Produces Status Advantage." *American Sociological Review* 82(2): 297–327.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

DiMaggio, Paul, and Hazel Rose Markus. 2010. "Culture and Social Psychology: Converging Perspectives." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 73(4): 347–52.

Durkheim, Émile. 1912. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. London: Allen & Unwin.

Espeland, Wendy Nelson, and Michael Sauder. 2016. *Engines of Anxiety: Academic Rankings, Reputation, and Accountability*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Espeland, Wendy Nelson, and Mitchell L. Stevens. 1998. "Commensuration as a Social Process." *Annual Review of Sociology* 24(1): 313–43.

Fiske, Susan T., and Hazel Rose Markus. 2012. *Facing Social Class: How Societal Rank Influences Interaction.* New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Freeland, Robert E., and Jesse Hoey. 2018. "The Structure of Deference: Modeling Occupational Status Using Affect Control Theory." *American Sociological Review* 83(2): 243–77.

Frye, Margaret, and Jenny Trinitapoli. 2015. "Ideals as Anchors for Relationship Experiences." *American Sociological Review* 80(3): 496–525.

Gambetta, Diego. 2009. "Signaling." In *The Oxford Handbook of Analytical Sociology*, edited by Peter Hedstrom and Peter Bearman. New York: Oxford University Press.

Gauchat, Gordon, and Kenneth T. Andrews. 2018. "The Cultural-Cognitive Mapping of Scientific

Professions." *American Sociological Review* 83(3): 567–95.

Gorman, Thomas J. 2000. "Cross-Class Perceptions of Social Class." *Sociological Spectrum* 20(1): 93–120.

Harding, David J. 2007. "Cultural Context, Sexual Behavior, and Romantic Relationships in Disadvantaged Neighborhoods." *American Sociological Review* 72(3): 341–64.

Jenkins, Tania M. 2020. *Doctors' Orders: The Making of Status Hierarchies in an Elite Profession*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Jiang, X. Lu, and Antonius H. N. Cillessen. 2005. "Stability of Continuous Measures of Sociometric Status: A Meta-Analysis." *Developmental Review* 25(1): 1–25.

Kahn, Kimberly, Arnold K. Ho, Jim Sidanius, and Felicia Pratto. 2009. "The Space Between Us and Them: Perceptions of Status Differences." *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 12(5): 591–604.

Kilduff, Gavin J., Robb Willer, and Cameron Anderson. 2016. "Hierarchy and Its Discontents: Status Disagreement Leads to Withdrawal of Contribution and Lower Group Performance." *Organization Science* 27(2): 373–90.

Koenig, Biko. 2022. "Politicizing Status Loss Among Trump Supporters in 2020." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(6): 69–86. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.6.04.

Lamont, Michèle. 1992. *Money, Morals, and Manners: The Culture of the French and American Upper-Middle Class*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

———. 2000. *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration*. New York / Cambridge, Mass: Russell Sage Foundation / Harvard University Press.

———. 2012. "Toward a Comparative Sociology of Valuation and Evaluation." *Annual Review of Sociology* 38: 201–21.

Leicht, Kevin T. 2022. "Inequality and the Status Window: Inequality, Conflict, and the Salience of Status Differences in Conflicts over Resources." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(6): 103–21. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.6.06.

Luo, Ye, and April Brayfield. 1996. "Women's and Men's Subjective Class Identification from the 1970s to the 1990s." *Sociological Spectrum* 16(1): 83–107.

Lynn, Freda B., and George Ellerbach. 2017. "A Position with a View: Educational Status and the Construction of the Occupational Hierarchy." *American Sociological Review* 82(1): 32–58.

MacKinnon, Neil J., and Tom Langford. 1994. "The Meaning of Occupational Prestige Scores: A Social Psychological Analysis and Interpretation." *Sociological Quarterly* 35(2): 215–45.

Maloney, Emily K. 2020. "The Social Psychology of Occupational Status Groups: Relationality in the Structure of Deference." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 83(4): 463–75.

Maloney, Emily K., Kimberly B. Rogers, and Lynn Smith-Lovin. 2022. "Status as Deference: Cultural Meaning as a Source of Occupational Behavior." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 70–88. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.04.

Matthews, Karen A., Katri Raikkonnen, Susan A. Everson, Janine D. Flory, Christine A. Marco, Jane F. Owens, and Catherine E. Lloyd. 2000. "Do the Daily Experiences of Healthy Men and Women Vary According to Occupational Prestige and Work Strain?" *Psychosomatic Medicine* 62(3): 346–53.

McCulloch, Warren S. 1945. "A Heterarchy of Values Determined by the Topology of Nervous Nets." *Bulletin of Mathematical Biophysics* 7: 89–93.

McLaren, Lindsay, and Jenny Godley. 2012. "Social Class and BMI Among Canadian Adults: A Focus on Occupational Prestige." *Obesity* 7(2): 290–99.

Melamed, David, Christopher W. Munn, Leanne Barry, Bradley Montgomery, and Oneya F. Okuwobi. 2019. "Status Characteristics, Implicit Bias, and the Production of Racial Inequality." *American Sociological Review* 84(6): 1013–36.

Nielsen, François, J. Micah Roos, and Rose M. Combs. 2015. "Clues of Subjective Social Status Among Young Adults." *Social Science Research* 52: 370–88.

Noss, Amanda. 2013. "Household Income: 2012." *American Community Survey* brief no. ACSBR/12-02. Washington: U.S. Census Bureau. Accessed June 21, 2022. https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2013/acs/acsbr12-02.html.

Parsons, Talcott, and Edward A. Shils. 1951. "Values, Motives and Systems of Action." In *Toward a General Theory of Action*, edited by Talcott Parsons and Edward A. Shils. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L. 2014. "Why Status Matters for

Inequality." *American Sociological Review* 79(1): 1–16.

———. 2019. *Status: Why Is It Everywhere? Why Does It Matter?* New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L., and Hazel Rose Markus. 2022. "The Significance of Status: What It Is and How It Shapes Inequality." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 1–25. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.01.

Rogers, Kimberly B. 2019. "Sources of Consensus and Variegation in Cultural Affective Meanings." *Social Currents* 6(3): 219–38.

Sauder, Michael. 2006. "Third Parties and Status Position: How the Characteristics of Status Systems Matter." *Theory and Society* 35: 299–321.

Smith, Tom W., and Jaesok Son. 2014. "Measuring Occupational Prestige on the 2012 General Social Survey." GSS Methodological report no. 122. Chicago: NORC at the University of Chicago.

Spencer, Steven J., Christine Logel, and Paul G. Davies. 2016. "Stereotype Threat." *Annual Review of Psychology* 67(1): 415–37.

Sterelny, Kim. 2021. *The Pleistocene Social Contract: Culture and Cooperation in Human Evolution*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Treiman, Donald J. 1977. *Occupational Prestige in Comparative Perspective*. New York: Academic Press.

Valentino, Lauren. 2020. "The Segregation Premium: How Gender Shapes the Symbolic Valuation Process of Occupational Prestige Judgments." *Social Forces* 99(1): 31–58.

———. 2021. "The Heterarchy of Occupational Status: Evidence for Diverse Logics of Prestige in the United States." *Sociological Forum* 36(S1): 1395–418.

———. 2022. "Constructing the Racial Hierarchy of Labor: The Role of Race in Occupational Prestige Judgments." *Sociological Inquiry* 92(2): 647–73. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/soin.12466.

Wang, Chi Phoenix. 2017. "Perceived Positions Along the Social Spectrum: The Subjective Social Status of Contemporary Chinese in a Coastal Metropolis." *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 5(1): 90–126.

Weber, Max. 1968. "Status Groups and Classes." In *Economy and Society*, vol. 1. Edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich. Translated by Ephraim Frischoff. First published 1918. New York: Bedminster Press.

Wegener, Bernd. 1992. "Concepts and Measurement of Prestige." *Annual Review of Sociology* 18(1): 253–80.

Wickens, Thomas D. 2002. *Elementary Signal Detection Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wolff, Lisa S., Dolores Acevedo-Garcia, S. V. Subramanian, Deanne Weber, and Ichiro Kawachi. 2010. "Subjective Social Status, a New Measure in Health Disparities Research: Do Race/Ethnicity and Choice of Referent Group Matter?" *Journal of Health Psychology* 15(4): 560–74.

Zhou, Xueguang. 2005. "The Institutional Logic of Occupational Prestige Ranking: Reconceptualization and Reanalyses." *American Journal of Sociology* 111(1): 90–140.

PART III

Status Is a Process That We Do and Redo Whose Effects Accumulate over Multiple Social Relations

Downplaying Themselves, Upholding Men's Status: Women's Deference to Men in Wealthy Families

ANNETTE LAREAU

Studies often portray status as a position, but status is also a process sustained by social and cultural mechanisms. These social processes can create inequality in men's and women's economic positions. Families are key economic institutions, but the processes involved in managing family wealth are poorly understood. Drawing on in-depth interviews with twenty-five women (and eleven husbands) in families with a median net worth of $27.5 million, I find that wives report general ignorance about wealth (although, on deeper probing, women often have more expertise than it appears on first glance). Second, women state they are disengaged with the economic realm. Third, the formation of marriages where women would have vastly more economic power than their future husbands are deeply stigmatized. Despite formidable wealth, in these marriages, women emphasized their lack of economic expertise and engagement. This gender "stickiness" contributed to status inequality in the economic sphere.

Keywords: gender, wealth, status, family, economic, elite

In the study of social status, many conceptualize status as a position ("he is a judge"). Less attention has been paid to status as a process embedded in broader cultural schemas and cultural expectations (but see Ridgeway and Markus 2022, this issue, as well as Fiske and Markus 2012; Lamont 1992; Lamont et al. 2014)). Yet, as Pierre Bourdieu taught us, routine social interactions are structured and yet at the same time fluid in what is termed a "logic of practice" (1977, 1990). This means that a full account of status—the focus of this special double issue—

Annette Lareau is professor of sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, United States.

 Lareau, Annette. 2022. "Downplaying Themselves, Upholding Men's Status: Women's Deference to Men in Wealthy Families." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 112–31. DOI: 10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.06. I am grateful to the Russell Sage Foundation and to the National Science Foundation for generous financial support of this research. In addition, the University of Pennsylvania Research Foundation and the School of Arts and Sciences contributed important resources. The project benefited from the helpful feedback of Hazel Markus and Cecilia Ridgeway as well as the comments of the anonymous reviewers and other authors of articles in this volume. I deeply appreciate comments from Pilar Gonalons-Pons, Aliya Rao, Maia Cucchiara, Judith Levine, Peter Harvey, Katharina Hecht, and Doron Shiffer-Sebba on an earlier version of this article. In addition, Ashleigh Cartwright provided invaluable assistance as did the following research assistants: Lin Ang, Chelsea Gardner, Shawn Kim, Marion Standefer, Edward Stevens IV, Hector Torres, and, especially, Andy Jimenez. All errors, of course, are the author's responsibility. Direct correspondence to: Annette Lareau, at alareau@sas.upenn.edu, 3718 Locust Walk, McNeil Bldg., University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA 19104-6099, United States.

needs to examine the social and cultural processes that sustain these status positions and shape perceptions of the status hierarchy (see also Accominotti, Lynn, and Sauder 2022,; Correll et al. 2017; Leicht 2022; Valentino 2022, this issue; Benjamin 2022, this issue).

The importance of conceptualizing status as a set of processes is key in the realm of economic institutions. In economic institutions, the social and cultural processes undergirding economic inequality are prone to being obscured. After all, the family is decisively an economic institution, but the affective character of the family often takes center stage. Of course, a vast literature addresses important family economic matters such as gender and labor-force participation, earnings, and household labor.[1] Yet relational dynamics, such as the ways in which family members claim expertise or simply disengage from economic matters, have gained less attention. These gendered forms of relational work, however, may be important in shaping familial status hierarchies and control over family resources.

Wealthy families are a particularly useful setting in which to examine the social processes that sustain economic positions because, by definition, considerable wealth is involved (Gilding 2005; Hansen and Toft 2021; Kendall 2002, 2008; O'Brien, 2021; Schimpfössl 2018; Sherman 2019; Toft and Friedman 2021). In families with millions of dollars, the ample supply of wealth might theoretically allow for more flexibility and fluidity in actions men and women take in economic realms. (See Cousins, Khan, and Mears 2018 on the value of studying elites, as well as Keister 2014 and Kendall 2008.) Few studies have been undertaken; Susan Ostrander's classic work, *Women of the Upper Class*, was completed some forty years ago (1984). In the ensuing decades, women's labor-force participation, earnings, and political roles shifted considerably (Perry-Jenkins and Gerstel 2020; Wharton 2015). Luna Glucksberg (2018) highlights the labor needed to manage elite women's complex lives, but does not take up the issue of their expertise in family economic matters.[2]

In this article, drawing on in-depth interviews with twenty-five wealthy women and eleven of their partners, I conclude an elaborate set of social and cultural processes that helps sustain husbands' positions as key economic agents within the family. I make three points. First, I find that men are deeply knowledgeable about family economic matters while their wives perform levels of general ignorance (although, on deeper probing, women often have more expertise than it appears at first glance). These social processes, where women shun gathering expertise in key areas, sustain inequality in men's and women's positions as economic actors given that men have more economic expertise. Second, women report levels of disengagement and discomfort with the economic realm but men appear animated, excited, and comfortable with economic matters. Third, the inequality in economic status appears so formidable as to suggest a stigma to forming marriages where women would have vastly more economic wealth than their husbands.[3] Respondents report significant social costs to these unions; some have broken them off precisely over issues of relative economic position. This pattern of marital avoidance limits the possibilities of wealthy women having more economic power than their husbands. Taken together, women and men report that women have subordinated economic positions in families relative to men in terms of expertise, engagement, and in some cases economic power. Given that the women are extremely competent, particularly in running their complex family lives, the results suggest ongoing

1. See, among others, Bertrand, Kamenica, and Pan 2015; Smock and Schwartz 2020; Tichenor 2005; Yavorsky et al. 2022. For workplace and gender, see Correll et al. 2017, 2020; Gonalons-Pons et al. 2021; Smith 2002; Stone and Lovejoy 2019; Wharton 2015; Williams, Berdhal, and Vandello 2016; see also Cooper 2014; Rao 2020.

2. There is a vast literature in the area of consumption, including the ways in which status signals influence consumption. See Warde 2015. For a more general discussion of the meaning of money, see Zelizer 2017. For general discussions of growing inequality see Saez and Zucman 2020; for attitudes toward the wealthy, see McCall 2013.

3. On how women's higher earnings are associated with lower likelihood of marriage, see Bertrand et al. 2015.

importance of broader traditional cultural schema surrounding gender as mechanisms sustaining the position of men as the higher-status, key economic actors in the family. In addition to changes in the legal realm and other structures (Bessière 2019), efforts to reduce economic inequality in family life would require rethinking the broader cultural and social pressure regarding men's and women's economic involvement.

LITERATURE

Status is an important dimension of daily life, shaping countless aspects of our social world. As Cecilia Ridgeway and Hazel Markus (2022, this issue) write, cultural schemas are key: "The status process is governed by a cultural schema." Here, Ridgeway and Markus focus on "implicit norms for allocating status based on perceived value to the group." They note everchanging "status beliefs about what types of people are worthier and more competent than others" (2). Although status has more than one element, here I focus on status as an "evaluative hierarchy in which one person is more respected, deferred to, and influential than the other" (Ridgeway and Correll 2006, 431).

Status hierarchies about gender are particularly powerful. After all, evidence of punishment if women and men violate gender norms is considerable. Studies of the workplace reveal that women are harshly judged for being proactive, being agentic, and showing leadership.[4] Despite more limited pertinent research, studies also show men are also sharply criticized for "behaving modestly," leading to the conclusion that gender rules reinforce gender power differences by constraining men to behave in ways consistent with high-status people while prohibiting women from high-status displays (Moss-Racusin, Phelan, and Rudman 2010, 148).

The impact of cultural beliefs can be powerful. For example, countries have differing cultural views on the norm of men being the key economic provider. Pilar Gonalons-Pons and Markus Gangl (2021) show that countries with more traditional gender cultural beliefs have higher divorce rates when men are unemployed than countries with less traditional cultural beliefs. Thus cultural gender norms clearly place economic pressure on family relationships. Extensive quantitative research has also documented key aspects of family members' economic dynamics such as the largely negative impact of women earning more money than their husbands on the likelihood of marriage, men's participation in household chores, marital satisfaction, and divorce (Bertrand, Kamenica, and Pan 2015; Schwartz and Gonalons-Pon 2016; Tichenor 2005). The research on professionals' unemployment is also striking. For example, as Aliya Rao (2020) convincingly shows, women who are the primary breadwinners at home are strongly urged by their husbands to focus on domestic issues and not to emphasize their job search to reenter the workforce. By contrast, men's unemployment is considered a family crisis and family members treat men as trespassers in their own homes, pressuring them to resume their economic contributions. Relatedly, Marianne Cooper's (2014) ethnographic study of families in the Silicon Valley also highlights how women had more responsibility and control over economic resources in the working-class families, but as the families became wealthier, men were very powerful in managing the economic realm. In short, gender relations can be powerful in framing men's and women's family dynamics around economic issues. Wealthy families provide a particularly valuable case to explore these issues because the level of wealth offers family members more options than in many families.

THE ROLE OF WEALTH

We know that wealth appears to have an independent impact on family life, that is, above and beyond income (for a review, see Keister and Moller 2000). Most research in the social sciences, however, focuses on income. Other work describes a pattern of gender inequality in amounts of wealth (Chang 2010; Ruel and Hauser 2013). We do not have enough studies of how men and women manage the family's wealth or develop expertise around the family's

4. For a discussion, see, among others, Smith 2002; Perry-Jenkins and Gerstel 2020.

net worth. As noted, signs are also evident of the distinctive nature of gendered family relations in the upper class. Susan Ostrander's classic 1984 work, *Women of the Upper Class*, shows the subordination of women to their husbands in crucial ways including in the extensive role of women's philanthropic work, which assists in the perpetuation of the class (see also Daniels 1988).

Rachel Sherman's work (2019) illuminates how high-income and wealthy couples navigate consumption by showing how wealthy wives sometimes hide expenditures from their husbands as well as tensions in couples undertaking a home renovation. She finds that in couples with inheritance, money was usually managed by the inheritor, male or female. Thus she suggests that it is the inheritance path, rather than gender, that creates expertise and control over money. Still, she also notes that when the woman is the inheritor and the man the partner, tension is common. Her study is deeply valuable but focuses primarily on consumption and expenditures and less on the level of knowledge, expertise, or detailed information about net worth. Nor does Sherman take up the question of how wealth might impede the formation of unions.[5] In addition, whereas most studies look at the viewpoint of one person only, analysis that involves interviews with both partners in a marriage is helpful to discern the level of agreement or disagreement on foundational issues.

In short, evidence of gender shaping key aspects of daily lives is powerful. As the authors of a study of class and gender in France pointed out, "The reproduction of the gender order plays out in the processes of the conservation and transmission of wealth which are at the heart of different social classes. Reciprocally, the reproduction of the class order rests on processes of the enrichment of men and the impoverishment of women. At a moment when family wealth increasingly determines the social status of individuals, inequalities between men and women can't be addressed without attacking inequalities of class, but the society of class will not be abolished without reversing the order of gender."[6]

METHODOLOGY

Members of the upper class are notoriously hard to recruit for interviews (Hertz and Imber 1995; Sherman 2019). I used "the strength of weak ties" to recruit respondents, describing the study as focusing on "the blessings and challenges of being financially comfortable." Once asked (that is, after someone asked a friend to pass along the potential respondent's contact information to me for a brief phone call), approximately 20 percent of high-wealth individuals agreed to be in the study. During a subsequent phone call, I described the study, offered to give potential respondents a report of my findings at the end of the study, and promised confidentiality through extensive measures. After I spoke with them on the telephone, all of the respondents agreed. My status as a late middle-age, female sociologist in an elite institution may have influenced the recruitment, but my impression is that the respondents agreed as a favor to the person who vouched for me or out of a desire to talk about something very much on their minds but for which forums for discussion are few. Given the Survey of Consumer Finance has a response rate of 12 percent for high-net-worth respondents, the response rate, though not ideal, is comparable to other research (Bricker et al. 2015). The sample draws on families living across the United States, and the sources of their money include manufacturing, finance, retail, technology, and real estate. To protect the confidentiality of the respondents, I have situated them in a different state and somewhat altered the nature of the businesses and other identifying details. All names are pseudonyms.

5. For a study of the role of legal professionals in creating "reverse accounting" in managing inheritances and divorce settlements in France, which generally favored men over women, see Bessière 2019.

6. The quote is from Joan Scott's 2020 review of the book *Le Genre du capital: Comment la famille reproduit les inégalités* by Céline Bessière and Sibylle Gollac. The quote is from page 280 of the book. An English translation, by Juliette Rogers, titled *The Gender of Capital: How Families Perpetuate Wealth Inequality*, is forthcoming from Harvard University Press in February 2023.

This article focuses particularly on my interviews with twenty-five women (table 1). I also include interviews with ten spouses and one cohabitating male partner of these women. In addition, I report on two additional (conceptually relevant) interviews with wealthy men. The total sample is of thirty-nine wealthy individuals including both people in eleven couples (table 1). The net worth ranged up to $150 million, but the median net worth was $27.5 million. Still, several had lower wealth, in part because they had given significant amounts to philanthropy. All of the respondents are heterosexual except two single women who are lesbians. In the sample of women as a whole, one is Latina, one is Indian American, one is Iranian American, and the rest are white.[7] Most of the women are married (table 1). Except for one woman in her nineties, all of the women have a college degree and many have advanced degrees in law, business, or nonprofit management. The women have a range of political beliefs; more are Democrats, but some are Republicans. Eight of the women were recruited through a network of people connected to a group of adults where politically liberal members seek to talk openly about their wealth and be very philanthropic. In most cases, the women are children or spouses of the person who earned or inherited the money. In three cases, women contributed significantly to the business. As I explain, I interviewed multiple family members of a white Republican family (the Jansens) who have a manufacturing business in the Northeast; I also have collected documents revealing the assets of this family.

I conducted most of the interviews in the respondent's home in a face-to-face interview that lasted around two hours or longer. In five cases, however, the interviews took place via Zoom. In the interviews, I began by asking about the family they grew up in, memories of money as a child, how they made the money (if they made it), spousal dynamics around money, plans for bequeathing money, and philanthropy. Early in the interview, I asked questions for direct figures (such as their salary for their first job, the cost of their first house); adding these monetary figures into the interview early on appeared to facilitate a franker discussion about wealth. A professional service transcribed interviews; the accuracy of the transcription was verified by reviewing the audio and reading the transcript, and the interview was deidentified by changing the names of the people, institutions (such as colleges), and locations. After the research team developed a coding scheme, research assistants, who signed confidentiality agreements, worked with deidentified interviews to code the interviews using Atlas.ti. In the data analysis process, I continued to read and reread the interviews, write memos, create data matrices, and search for disconfirming evidence (Lareau 2021).

FINDINGS: ECONOMIC EXPERTISE

Gender shaped the ways in which women and men engaged with economic issues. Rather than sharing their economic knowledge, married women often immediately asserted their ignorance with economic issues. Even if women had active careers, they proclaimed themselves to be much less engaged than their husbands on financial matters. Gender norms appeared to be quite powerful. Women expected their husbands to manage the finances as they managed the child rearing and the home.[8]

Interviews revealed women who reported that they lacked knowledge and expertise. They insisted on their incompetence ("I am not good at this"). Because these women annually signed tax returns that clearly stated their family income, and they sometimes worked on family projects or in the family foundation, their

7. I interviewed two wealthy African American men who have a net worth of $25 million and $100 million, respectively, but I have not yet interviewed their wives because of the impact of the pandemic on data collection (for race and wealth, see Shapiro 2004; Sherwood 2010).

8. In the interviews, the women spoke at great length, with pleasure and excitement, about their children, their homes, their meals, and other aspects of their roles as family caretakers. This warm embrace of motherhood contrasted with their vague, disinterested approach to economic matters, but it is also outside the scope of this paper. See, among others, Blair-Loy 2009; Nomaguchi and Milkie 2020.

Table 1. Women in Study by Characteristics

	Name	Wealth Origins (I = inherited; U = upwardly mobile; M = mixed, inherited, and made)	Source of Money	Race	Family Net Worth (in millions)[a]	Age	Marital Status[b]	Prenuptial Contract?[c]	Interviewed Spouse?	Education	Children	Liberal Organization
1	Sara Cramer	I	mother	white	16	35	single (lesbian)	n/a	no	graduate school	0	yes
2	Tammy Dawson	I	own business with husband	white	100	64	married	no	no	bachelor's	2	yes
3	Deborah Haberman[d]	I	father	white		53	married		no	bachelor's	4	no
4	Julie Halperin	I	parents	white	5.5	67	cohabitating	n/a	yes	bachelor's	1	yes
5	Maci Hartman[e]	I	father	white	3	48	single	n/a	n/a	graduate school	0	yes
6	Rachel Heimowitz[f]	I	father, husband	white	5	45	married		no	bachelor's	2	no
7	Mary Hirsch	I	father	white	50	69	divorced (lesbian)	no	n/a	master's	2	yes
8	Abby Jansen	M	husband	white	110	38	married	yes	yes	bachelor's	2	no
9	Emily Jansen	M	husband	Latinx	185	39	married	yes	yes	bachelor's	2	no
10	Karla Jansen	M	husband	white	35	56	married	refused	yes	graduate school	2	no
11	Lettie Jansen	M	husband	white	20	84	married	no	yes	bachelor's	5	no
12	Rebecca Katz	I	husband	white	100	61	married	refused	yes	bachelor's	4	no
13	Jaime Magnone[g]	I	father	white	1	50	never married (remote)		n/a	graduate school	1	no
14	Ellie Mahler	U	own business with husband	white	50	90	widowed	no	no	high school	1	no
15	Nancy Natha	I	father and husband	white	50	60	married		no	graduate school	2	no

(*continued*)

Table 1. (*continued*)

	Name	Wealth Origins (I = inherited; U = upwardly mobile; M = mixed, inherited, and made)	Source of Money	Race	Family Net Worth (in millions)[a]	Age	Marital Status[b]	Prenuptial Contract?[c]	Interviewed Spouse?	Education	Children	Liberal Organization
16	Darlene Norton	U	husband	white	38	60	married		yes	master's	0	no
17	Susan Proctor[h]	U	husband	white	11	65	married	no	yes	bachelor's	3	no
18	Tracey Rogers	U	own business with husband	white	13.5	50	married	no	yes	graduate school	4	no
19	Diane Samuels	M	husband	white	70	72	widowed	no	n/a	graduate school	3	no
20	Pam Saunders	U	husband	white	6.5	73	widowed	no	n/a	bachelor's	2	no
21	Peyton Steadman	I	father	white	15	26	single	n/a	planned	graduate school	0	no
22	Nan Tam	U	work	Indian, US citizen	9	63	married		yes	graduate school	2	no
23	Sophia Telford[i]	I	father	white	5	66	married		no	bachelor's	0	yes
24	Karen Thompson	I	father	white	40	57	divorced	yes	n/a	graduate school	1	yes
25	Heather Tullman	I	husband	white	150	52	married	no	yes	master's	2	no

Source: Author's tabulations.

[a] Median = $27.5 million.

[b] Single 3; divorced 2; widowed 3; married 16; cohabitating 1.

[c] Prenuptial 3; no prenuptial 12; don't know 7; single 3.

[d] Interview not completed; respondent willing to complete the interview in the future.

[e] Gave away approximately $2 million.

[f] Will inherit $30 to $50 million.

[g] Will likely inherit about $20 million. Trust pays child's private school tuition .

[h] Net worth estimate includes the $5 million exclusively controlled family foundation.

[i] Will inherit around $1 to $2 million, gave away $1.3 million.

avowed lack of basic information was striking.[9] Although they were proud of their husbands, the women denied knowing even the rudiments of the family's economic position. By contrast, in their interviews, men were extremely forthcoming about the details of their net worth, the wide variety of assets they held, and their strategies for maximizing wealth in the future.[10]

Many women did not know the actual details of the families' economic situation or, if they knew anything, it was vague rather than detailed. Couples often had differing views on the net worth. As part of the study, I interviewed Mr. and Mrs. Jansen, both in their eighties, and their three sons, who were in their late fifties, as well as the three wives of the sons.[11] The Jansen family had moved the business, estimated to be worth between $50 and $100 million, into an irrevocable trust in the names of the children. The son, Tom Jansen, managed the business and the trusts; the father, Jerry Jansen, no longer had control. This decision, which had been made a number of years earlier (when the estate tax kicked in at $5.4 million rather than the current $11.8 million), greatly reduced their net worth. Still, Mrs. Jansen, in her mid-eighties, was less knowledgeable than her husband when asked, in separate interviews, their net worth today.

LETTIE: Well we've given away so much to avoid the death tax. That we each have, four million or something.

JERRY: Our net worth, I say it's around, around $12 million plus or minus a couple either way.

Mrs. Jansen's combined figure of $8 million was dramatically lower than her husband's. Because Mr. Jansen provided extremely detailed information and also shared written records, I concluded that his estimate is correct.

Tom Jansen, who manages the business and the trust, also provided detailed records. As he and all members of the family pointed out, the business is a private business. The value of it is hard to discern. (If it were put it up for sale, the value would of course be more clear.) They estimate it as worth between $50 and $100 million. Because one adult child declined his portion, the business assets were divided among four and estimated to be around $12.4 to $25 million each. In addition, Tom Jansen had made significant money in his brother's business as well as his own real estate deals. He shared the records of all of his assets. The value of the assets depends on the sale as well as how the investments do over time (for example, in the stock market or investments such as buildings they have bought). He provided a conservative measure of his total net worth:

ANNETTE: And what's your net worth right now, ball park?

TOM: Somewhere between fifty and a hundred million.

His wife, Abby, however, who signed IRS [Internal Revenue Service] tax forms every year, gave a much more confused answer:

ANNETTE: And do you know now how much the assets are?

ABBY: I do.

ANNETTE: And what would you put them at?

ABBY: Well, it depends on how they get evaluated. And it also depends if you count the inheritance once Jerry and Lettie pass away. But it's somewhere between $25 and $35 million. Not counting the inheritance. $35, I think, is counting it [the inheritance].

9. On the extensive loopholes and elaborate arrangements to tax liability and thus the tax forms, which cover income, often obscuring actual wealth, see Shiffer-Sebba 2021.

10. It is difficult to see a theoretical reason why women would be less forthcoming than men. In addition, women often revealed very personal information including their worries about their children, tensions with their family of origin and their in-laws, and other life challenges. Thus, though certainty is elusive, the details women provide in other parts of the interview gave me more confidence in the data. In addition, this pattern is consistent with theories that emphasize the centrality of gender performance in social interaction.

11. One daughter has a very serious illness; the other daughter died, as an adult, in a car accident.

Abby is correct that the assets depend on how the business is valued ("evaluated"), but the figure she gives is significantly lower than that of her husband's report. Furthermore, her husband saw her as a great resource for him in listening to him and supporting him, but said outright that she did not understand certain aspects of their finances: "[I'm] very open about everything, and Abby, my wife is one of my best supporters and listeners. Like, remember I said I work at home? And I run things by her. She mostly just, doesn't understand completely, but she's a great supporter." Despite his appreciation of his wife's support, his comment that she "doesn't understand completely" stresses her lack of expertise. Instead, in their marriage, their interactions sustained the husband's status as the economic expert in the family.

Another brother, Nick, has started a business, sold it, and earned income from the sale. He was also trying to start another business that he hoped in twenty years would be worth "billions." As true for many respondents, ascertaining the net worth was complex because it included the family business, assets from the business he sold, his two houses (which we had discussed earlier in the interview), and other monies he had inherited. But, like many other men, Nick did not deny having expertise about the amount; the issue was how to compute it: "It's hard to say exactly, of course, because a lot of my wealth is in this manufacturing business, which is privately held, not liquid, and what it's worth is what someone's willing to pay for it. You know, and I have other things that I own and other companies that I own."

All told, his total net worth was between $22 and $36 million, most of which is not liquid. His wife, however, who has a law degree and provided extremely personal information about her challenges growing up and other intimate issues, simply could not answer the question about their net worth. She repeatedly indicated that she simply did not know.

The third brother, Davey Jansen, had started and sold a business. He gave an estimate of $185 as his net worth. His wife, Emily, gave a figure that, though not identical, was close: "Over the years, I've learned those things. I think, at the time, 2014, when I asked Dave, I think his estimate was about $160, $165. I don't know what it is now, but $175 or $80, I don't know." Emily also downplayed her expertise, saying twice, "I don't know." The other three wives differed wildly from their husbands' reports or were unable to estimate.

Other couples had a similar pattern of having capable women deny knowledge of the economic situation. For example, Kirk and Tracey Rogers are in their late forties and renovate homes. They benefit from the 2012 law in Puerto Rico where personal income from capital gains, interests, and dividends are not taxed. Before moving to Puerto Rico, Mrs. Rogers was the primary wage earner. At one point, she supervised more than four hundred people. She sees herself as an active partner, and she works long hours renovating houses. She admits, though, that she simply doesn't know their wealth. Although she was very animated at points in the interview and provided a great deal of detail, such as about the skimpy outfits women wore around the island, she did not know the actual amount of their wealth. When discussing their situation five years earlier, for example, she immediately said in so many words that she wouldn't know.

ANNETTE: And do you know what your net worth was then?

TRACEY: I mean, I wouldn't know. I'll be honest with you, I don't track it like him. . . . I do investments and I'm all in that, but he knows where we are financially. He keeps his spreadsheets.

In saying that they are "his spreadsheets," Mrs. Rogers saw the expertise on their net worth as in the purview of her husband. This was also the case about their current net worth: "I don't know how much money we have. I know we have a lot more now. Kirk knows to the penny probably, I think he told me we're closer to between around $15 to $20 million, I don't know."

When probed more deeply in the interview, Mrs. Rodgers could assess the value of their various assets, but her immediate response was to insist that she was not knowledgeable. In this way, she has a pattern of deference that sustains her husband's higher status in the economic realm.

Her husband provided a similar portrait: "She's operations. We're very similar except I'm the one who sources the deals and I analyze them for the dollars, and then she analyzes them for 'Nobody's going to like this type of house because it's, it's missing a —— , the rooms are too small or it's got a horrible view. There's something, there's something wrong with it.' My wife does pick up the furniture and the floor plan, all that stuff. If we have to move some rooms around, she gets my input, but it's 90 percent my wife and 10 percent me." He did the deals, and she did the houses, views, and furniture.

He was also extremely detailed as well as energized about their steep upward trajectory: "So, all I gotta do at this point is cash in on all my property and I'm at somewhere around $13.5 [million] and I'm on track for $15 million by, you know, within the next, you know, six months or so." He proudly announced that pretty soon he would be earning $2 million per year ("just sitting on my butt"); his goal was to realize a net worth of $100 million during his working life. Like other couples, Mr. Rogers spoke more quickly, leaned forward, and was very animated as he spoke of the growth of the family's wealth. His wife was more detached.[12] In sum, husbands generally expressed more economic expertise than their wives. Men also expressed confidence.

As a result, women could be off by significant amounts in their estimates, by as much as 25 percent of the total. For example, Mrs. Samuels is a deeply religious Presbyterian woman in her late sixties living in Mississippi who was widowed in her fifties when her husband died after a brief illness. She has three grown children who are involved in making charitable gifts, as she is, but her knowledge of fundamental aspects of the business are hazy. Mrs. Samuels could say with precision how much money was in each of the trusts for her three children. Crucial pieces of information, however, she could not recall. She gave a $20 million range and was embarrassed that she could not remember it better. She stumbled in her answer:

ANNETTE: So, when the business was sold, what was it sold for?

MRS. SAMUELS: The shoe company— he . . . he had branched out into land development, and so um, so, but the company, and I hope I'm not getting my . . . just because the land was worth about as much as the company was, which really means the land was worth more. You know how that works. So, I hope I'm telling you right. Oh, I am telling you. Isn't this awful? It was either. . . . It was either $80 or $60, but I'm almost positive $80.

In the interviews with married couples, it was striking how the husbands provided vastly more precision than did their wives. Husbands and wives described the wives as lacking financial expertise. These dynamics around knowledge helped sustain men's superior economic status within the family.

Disengagement

Women also stressed their disengagement from economic matters. For example, Mary Saunders was in her seventies and had been widowed for two decades. At a number of points in the interview in her $3.5 million Manhattan apartment, she proclaimed her disinterest:

> I've close to no interest . . . in money. And my husband would say, "Well you know, we really need to talk about our finances." I'd say, "You're absolutely right, we do." . . . [but] it's just zero interest on either one of our parts. The one thing I think it was so sweet of him, I guess he knew how sick he was. I didn't. But he went to a lawyer, and because he had actually written it down on paper to see how much money we had because he was concerned about me. . . . I came across this piece of paper. Again, just didn't, really, pay any attention to it.

Given that her husband died when the children were quite young, it is especially noticeable that, even as a widow with two young children, she "didn't, really, pay any attention to

12. In the terms of Randall Collins (2014), the men displayed more "emotional energy" around their wealth than did the women.

it." Her statements in this regard were puzzling because, at other points in the interview, she revealed extremely detailed knowledge of finances. For example, she was very proud that as a young, single woman in her twenties working in graphic design, she bought a Manhattan apartment. Almost forty years later, she remembered the precise dollar amounts she had saved, that her parents gave her, and how much she sold it for later. She was also quite proud that when she met her husband and married, as she said, "I paid fully 50 percent. I was quite pleased with myself for that." After her husband's death, she sold the apartment they were living in, used it to complete an all-cash purchase on her current apartment, and met regularly with a financial advisor to save for college. In short, she had more expertise than she suggested, but she emphasized her complete disengagement.

The importance of gender also could be seen in couples in which women were the inheritors but managing the finances was "his thing" rather than hers. For example, Sara Cramer is a white woman in her thirties and an only child from a multigenerational dynasty family. Her family has a large number of priceless original artworks in her childhood home. The wealth inequality between her mother and father was significant: "Certainly, by the time I was in middle school probably, if not before then my mother had inherited enough money from her family that my father didn't need to be working. . . . My father's income was not, would not have truly . . . [been] missed."

Nevertheless, her father, not her mother, was the "finance person." Her mother deferred to her father; Ms. Cramer described it as a matter of interest: "[My dad] did investing, and definitely sort of was the primary sort of finance person in the family. I never got a sense that my mother was like excluded from finance or it was kept hidden from her in any capacity. It was more, I think if anything, you know, it was just, it was something that my dad was like interested in. So that was his thing." It was only when her father developed a serious, life-threatening illness, which led to his death when she was in high school, that her mother took over the finances. The culture of this family was that economic issues was his "interest" which sustained his higher status in the economic realm.[13]

This gender division of labor also surfaced between siblings. For example, when Julie Halperin's parents both had memory problems, they had a division of labor. Her brother did the finances, and she managed the caregivers, noting that "we always operated as a team." They worked as a team but she was not involved in the finances. This division of labor also happened with another wealthy woman, Jaime Magnone, who had a trust worth around $45 million (as did her brother, Roy, and sister, Kimberly). When her father was dying, he put Roy "in charge," as she related: "Roy's the only one with an . . . MBA, and he also is on the board, he was interested, and he has the MBA, and he's more like my dad. And so, when Dad was dying, he called one day, this might've been our last conversation. . . . He said, 'I've put Roy in charge, if you have any problem . . . problems with the money, go to Roy.'"

At first, as she put it, her "back went up":

> When he first said, "I put Roy in charge," I'm like, "What the hell are you talking about Roy in charge?" and then I realized . . . he was just talking about money issues, and Roy has all of the connections with people at the foundation, so it does make sense. So, what I saw as sexism, initially, and, oh, my back went up when he said that. Supposedly he admires and respects me so much, and thinks I'm brilliant, why do I need my brother in charge? And, then I realized what it probably was, was just pragmatic. Maybe . . . there's a tinge of sexism to it, but this was Roy's choice in life lent itself to being that person. Would my dad have done it if it was me or Kimberly who was involved in that way, in the trust company? Maybe. I didn't perceive that growing up, that I was treated differently.

In short, the pattern of men running the finances surfaced not only in marriages but also

13. Of course, the ways in which economic issues are intermingled with other aspects of family life is a complex issue (see, among others, Krippner and Alvarez 2007; Zelizer 2005).

in sibling relationships. Women were more disengaged. In addition, family members, including parents, reaffirmed men as the appropriate choice, reinforcing the idea of women deferring to men's super expertise. Put differently, men were given more status around economic matters in families than women.

Interweaving of Exclusion and Disengagement

Yet, in some cases, disengagement was linked to feelings of exclusion. For example, one married father living in the West Coast had inherited money from his father. However, he also worked in a family business, and he had invested in real estate for himself and his family. His wife reported that she and her husband had planned to sell a building together, but, when she wanted to take a lower offer because of her empathy for the buyers, and ultimately the offer fell through, he moved ahead and sold it without her: "We sold the house, we tried to sell the house without a realtor and we tried to do it together, and the first attempt at the sale fell through, and I felt that he blamed me for that, and then he went on to sell the house without me, and that, that was, that hurt."

She felt he was putting the money over their relationship, but she also thought he was trying to reduce their stress: "That felt like he was saying, you know, 'We are not capable of doing this without getting emotional.' And maybe there's some truth to that, but I also felt like. . . . what's more important? Our relationship or how much money we get from the sale? . . . I think he felt like it was less stressful for me and for him for us not to work on it together, and that's probably I think, you know, that was his main focus was making it less stressful."

She felt that these moments when she was "pushed out" made the power dynamics clear: it was not her money. "When I get, when I get voted out of big things like that or pushed out, I, it does often feel like, 'Okay, this is, this is not really my money.' You know? 'This is like the family money.'"

Still, in the next moment, she attributed her disengagement to her having her "head in the clouds." Her husband had special expertise ("all these laws that he knows about"), which she did not. Although they had a prenuptial contract, he told her (and me) that he now sees their funds as joint, as she recounted in a halting, hesitant fashion:

> But he, but to counter that, he's always said, "What I have is, is yours." You know? "This is what we're gonna pass down to our children, and this is what, you know, I'm working on this sort of thing right now so that, you know, we don't pay taxes on what we inherit from [her husband's parents] go to our children, so there's like generations skipping tax and all these laws that he knows that I, you know, don't, and we'll save tons of money, but I sort of have my head in the clouds about it all."

In her interview, the wife vacillated between feeling pushed out and also saying that she was not paying attention to the details. Thus she appeared to feel that she was denied key powerful roles at the same time that she was disengaged due to lack of interest as she said, "my head [was] in the clouds." Other women also integrated different rationales together in their interviews. The bottom line was the same, however. Men controlled information and power regarding money both publicly and, in many cases, privately. As a result, men and women sustained men's social status in the family as economic leaders.

Sustaining Men's Superior Economic Positions: Marriage to Richer Women as Stigmatized

It also became clear that women's having vastly more economic resources than men was considered a serious enough problem that in some cases it prevented marriage. The impact of gender relations on intimate relationships has of course been noted in the literature. Rachel Sherman, for example, notes that when women have inherited more money than their partners, their gender relationships are, as one respondent put it, "swimming upstream." Memoirs have made a similar point. Prior work, however, underestimates the significant social stigma on union formation.

For example, Bruce Gottfried is a tall, elegantly dressed man in his sixties with silver hair who works as a financial advisor on the twentieth floor of a Boston downtown high-

rise. His net worth is currently $12 million. He was raised in a divorced family where his (alcoholic) mother had inherited wealth and his architect father did not. His father had grown up in a small town where his own father was a prominent manufacturer who lost his money, after which the family sold their large home to move into an apartment. His father married his mother when she was his assistant out of college. His mother's family continued to be extremely wealthy, and his maternal grandparents lived on a vast estate with many employees.

Mr. Gottfried, who went to elite prep schools and to an Ivy League college, dated a woman in college in the late 1960s from a prominent, very wealthy family, the Rothschilds (a pseudonym) who appeared to have more than $100 million.[14] He said that they were planning to get married: "we were the perfect couple." Her family traveled frequently to ski resorts, the Caribbean Islands, and other places; they invited him as well as the boyfriend of their other daughter and covered their expenses. But although he was from a wealthy family, he keenly felt the inequity in their wealth. Aware of his parents' situation, he explained how he felt at the time: "I'm not going to make the same mistake my father did. . . . I've seen this movie. [Laughs.] It's, it's . . . I know where it's going. I said, 'I just can't have your parents paying for me all the time and stuff like that.'" He felt that his girlfriend was very enmeshed with her own mother, and placed her family above him. He also chafed at her expectations: "She would ask me things like, 'If we get married, would you think about changing your name to Rothschild?' I go, 'Not really.' And I said, 'But I . . . You don't have change your name to Gottfried, but it— I'm not changing my name to Rothschild.'"

He admired how smart his girlfriend was, but, in the end, was very clear that he

> did not want to be a guy married to a woman wealthier than myself. Two years into it, I realized I'm being kept, you know. This is what my father felt like: "Is it worth it?" So, I began refusing invitations, and refusing things, and we ultimately broke up. . . . I saw that I did not want to be a guy who married a woman wealthier than myself. And that wasn't a sexist comment, I don't believe, or an antifeminist comment, it was a realistic comment, because I had never seen a situation where the man I— where it works. I mean, maybe Philip and [Queen] Elizabeth worked, but he walks four steps behind her, right?

He eventually married someone who had less money than he did.

Others echoed this view, noting that when men married women with more money, there were very high social costs. Men who had less money than their wives appeared to feel deeply stigmatized. One man, Larry Nimitz, for example, reported that his father's worry that he would be a "tag-along husband" led him to work round the clock to make money. Mr. Nimitiz is an entrepreneur in his forties who grew up in a West Coast family. His mother is of Asian descent and his father is white; both his parents are active in finance and real estate. They were both born in the early 1950s. Strikingly, Mr. Nimitz explained that his father was quite wealthy at the time of his marriage—in current dollars, around $14 million in assets, putting him in the top 1 percent of the country in net worth. But his mother had vastly more, more than $200 million. His parents had a prenuptial with a "sunset clause" that expired after thirty years.

Mr. Nimitz reported that the economic disparity grated on his father. His father did not want to be "just the tag-along husband." Mr. Nimitz said that his father worked extremely hard "to catch up with my mother":

> I grew up with two parents who were really dedicated to their work in a way I thought was normal, but now realize is very unusual. My father always says he hasn't missed a day of work in forty years. Two hours after I was born, I think the doctor said, "Your son is okay" and [my father] drove to the airport to be in Boston the next day. That is just how he has always been. He has always tried to catch

14. This figure is based on my estimate of the family's wealth at that time based on public information.

> up with my mother, I think, financially and otherwise knowing that it is impossible, but . . . [voice trails off]. He doesn't want to be just the tag-along husband.[15]

His father is now worth "between $90 and $110 million" but, as Mr. Nimitz said with a sad smile, "it is impossible" for his father to catch up. In addition, it is not only the size of the wealth but the "billion-dollar deals" she speedily completes in a few days. Although his father is on the board of directors of major corporations, his deals have neither the size nor the speed of those of his wife. His father's preoccupation with working has important consequences in terms of his father's absence from family life. Mr. Nimitz had gone to law school and business school, and his graduation was coming up. When I asked whether his father would attend his graduation, after a short pause he replied, "I hope so."

These cases are from older couples but evidence suggests that these ideas persist with younger people. I interviewed Peyton Steadman, who at age twenty-six is blond, fashionably dressed, and quiet, living in an elegant, sunny, very large apartment on one of the most expensive streets in Boston. She works as a library assistant; her earnings of $35,000 per year are significantly less than the money thrown off by her $15 million trust fund (which will increase in future years). She noted that it was awkward when she had a party for people from work; her work colleagues were wide-eyed with bewilderment about how she could afford the apartment. She is currently single and hopes to marry and have a family. In a two-hour interview, which included extensive discussions of her education at an all-girls school, her career, sibling relationships, her desire for a prenuptial in the future, and other issues, she never raised any thoughts about gender inequality. Nevertheless, she is extremely direct about her experience with the gendered status hierarchy: "I just think that guys don't want the girl to have more money than them [laughs] just in essence. I don't know if it's they don't want or it just makes them feel uncomfortable, and I think that's just the root [laughs] of it and I probably haven't figured out quite how to handle it myself, or how to bring it up or whether to bring it up or not and obviously, I don't go into details with people but definitely people are like, 'Oh, you live here. Okay.'"

With her comment that "guys don't want the girl to have more money than them," Ms. Steadman indicated that the stigma remains very much alive. In marriage, cultural scripts support husbands being higher status than wives in the economic realm. Her viewpoint suggests a strong social stigma against forming a marital relationship where a woman has significantly more wealth than the man. This stigma both reflects and sustains the idea that men should have more economic power than women within families.

When men were married to women who made vast sums of money while they did not, some gave signs of "acting out" to demonstrate their superior status. In a Californian couple, the wife, Kala, worked in banking at a very high-level position. She traveled extensively. She reported assets of "a little under ten" million dollars. In a separate interview, her husband stressed his earlier job (which lasted only a few years) where he earned more money. He also reported that he hid money from his wife: "Kala and I have a . . . shared network of somewhere between $10 and $12 million is my guess. Includes the house, properties, equity markers, IRA dollars, stuff like that. . . . Aside from that I have my personal portfolio, which I don't share with Kala. Kala's never asked, and I have never shared with her. . . . Kala doesn't know about it. . . . So there is another portfolio. My guess is there's several million dollars there."

Another woman, Karen Thompson, with inherited wealth of around $40 million, had a prenuptial agreement, but then "commingled" funds with very negative consequences. She also reported that her husband physically abused her:

> And my ex-husband, so I have a twenty-two-year-old daughter; we divorced when my daughter was five. She was in kindergarten.

15. For a similar finding, see Ostrander 1984.

> He had beaten me and denied it, two marriage counselors told me to get out, that I was not safe. He knocked me unconscious on a dozen occasions and then not remembered it. So, I divorced him.
>
> He was really, really, really pissed off that I divorced him, furious, and in denial that he'd ever lifted a finger against me. . . . [He] sued for child support and full custody. And he got $70,000 a year, more than that, in child support to send [our] daughter to a public high school and, and he got several million dollars because I'd commingled some assets and in, in homes.

Although she was supposed to be protected with the prenuptial agreement, once she created a joint account with approximately $8 million, her ex-husband was awarded $4 million plus annual payments. Compounding the issue, one year the company in which she held 40 percent of the stock paid double dividends, which yielded $2.2 million in income that year. Over her protests, this figure became the basis for child support.

Of course, without an interview with her ex, and possibly additional data, it is difficult to untangle this complicated tale. The key point, however, is that Ms. Thompson strongly believed that men found it "emasculating" for their wives to have more money.

In a somewhat different vein, although most families had very strong principles of an equitable division of assets among their children, in some families boys were favored over girls and girls' positions were denigrated in financial terms. For example, in the Magnone family, Ms. Magnone is a fifty-year-old woman working as a non–tenure track professor at a college in a STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) field in Seattle, Washington. Her current husband lives in a different state, so she is effectively a single parent of a ten-year-old son. When she was four years old and her brother was born, her father and two other colleagues created a process to give their first-born sons income from rental properties and other passive income: "Around the time my brother was born, these three men that work together, they got together and they structured their . . . this deal for their first-born sons, like our 'first sons, yeah' [said in a mock-masculine tone]. So my brother came into a source of passive income early on. And made it that he didn't have to work." The fathers created a deliberate and explicit pattern of gender inequality favoring sons over daughters throughout their lifetimes.

Thus, in various ways, women's financial positions were denigrated relative to men's, brothers were at times financially favored over sisters, and the notion of a marriage where women had many more financial assets was deeply problematic for men.

VARIATIONS ON A THEME

Overall, the interviews suggested family processes that supported men's superior economic status relative to women. The three women in the sample, however, were extremely knowledgeable about financial matters. Yet, even in these families were signs of men's having more explicit engagement with economic matters. One woman, Ms. Dawson, had sold a Silicon Valley company that she and her husband and another person had created and sold. Their assets were more than $100 million after the sale, taxes, and so forth. But after the sale, Ms. Dawson went to work rejuvenating an environmental area. Her husband started another business. Ms. Dawson was knowledgeable but not particularly excited about the money. Her excitement was for her environmental efforts. In a different vein, Ms. Mahler, a woman in her nineties, had been active in her husband's real estate business, particularly after he retired. She was visibly excited about her efforts to make money. Yet, in the interview, she portrayed her husband as the economic mastermind, downplaying her efforts. Indeed, in the beginning of the interview she emphasized her late husband's vision, skill, and economic expertise. I was more than one-third of the way through the interview before it dawned on me that she had an active role in the business. She had emphasized her husband's superior economic status. Third, in a related vein, Rachel Heimowitz, a married woman in her late thirties, is the only child of a philanthropic, Philadelphia family. Her father worked hard to help

her understand key aspects of financial planning:

> We talk about it a lot. We talk about the plan. He's great at, right, leaving me the spreadsheet of his insurance policies and who to contact and what are the, the list of the places that my mother and I could get cash if need be during the probate. And let's see, what else? You know, the codicil to the will. He's been great in the last ten to fifteen years in communicating with me about what I should know. I actually went to him at one point and said, "I'd like to sit down with you and ask you a bunch of questions." He said, "Make an appointment and bring your notebook." So, we did that a few times. I was able to ask questions about even like what would you want your funeral to be, who are all the people in your life and their phone numbers so I know how to call them, and your advisory team and all that.

Yet he never revealed the amount of their net worth to her or her mother. When asked the approximate size, she did not know, even though it was crucial information: "Ironically, my father has trained me in unbelievable ways my entire life, he never shares what the amount is. I know from the value of the two homes he owns and what he helped invest in mine and properties he's bought for other family members and friends that, you know, it's got to be upwards of ten million. . . . But he'll never tell me the number."

Nor does her mother know: "So, honestly, my mother doesn't know either."

When asked to estimate her father's net worth, she laughingly replied, "between five and a hundred." Ms. Heimowitz felt that her father "didn't want to undermine my drive" and she felt confident that she could support herself. She also added that in terms of her father's withholding this information from his wife and his daughter, "you could say it's control. There's clearly that going on." Thus, although she was interested in delving into the details, she was excluded. Although more knowledgeable than other women in the study, in these families the men still had more public engagement or expertise in economic issues than the women did.

DISCUSSION: SOCIAL AND CULTURAL PROCESSES SUSTAINING ECONOMIC STATUS

Studies of status have helped us understand key mechanisms sustaining and challenging the maintenance of status (Accominotti, Lynn, and Sauder 2022; Destin et al. 2022, this issue; Ridgeway and Markus 2022, this issue). Cultural factors are also critical to the maintenance of status hierarchies (Lamont 1992; Lamont, Beljean, and Clair 2014). Too often, scholars focus on status as a social location rather than as a process bolstered by social and cultural factors, including widely shared cultural schemas. Yet evidence is ample of the power of culture in shaping men's and women's unequal participation in economic institutions (Correll et al. 2017). Research is also extensive on ways in which gender becomes the "master frame" in shaping family members' interpretations of gender and work (for an overview, see Ridgeway 2009, 2019).

Social scientists often do not focus enough on how men and women make claims for economic expertise within the family, or, more generally, how families' members interact around economic matters, preferring to emphasize the affective dimension as well as women's leadership in nurturance and household management. As a result, the social processes undergirding husbands' and wives' economic status in the family have received less attention. In this article, drawing on qualitative interviews with unusually wealthy families, I have sought to demonstrate that, somewhat surprisingly, highly educated women quickly proclaim their lack of knowledge on economic matters relative to men, although in some cases closer questions reveal that they in fact have considerable information. Women assert their disengagement with financial matters. On the basis of their lack of knowledge and engagement, women work to downgrade their role as economic actors, deferring to their more expert husbands. Men and women report strong social barriers against the formation of marriages where women would have more economic

power than their husbands. Taken together, the gendered cultural schemes deeply inflect the class dynamics in households of the upper class and help forge and sustain status inequalities (Scott 2020).[16]

The study points to the considerable interactional work needed to sustain inequality with some people making claims of expertise and others deferring to, or, at the least, not challenging these claims. These wives, by affirming their lack of interest, lack of knowledge, and lack of skill in household wealth management, also affirm their husbands' expert status as knowledgeable, expert, and high-status economic actors. Here, the findings are consistent with other work on "fragile masculinity" (Connell 1991; DiMuccio and Knowles 2020) as well as research on gender differences in confidence and overconfidence (for a review, see Kay and Shipman 2014).

Within the confines of this design, it is difficult to untangle the relationship between status hierarchies within the family and displays of power, compensatory actions, and other forms of division of labor in the home. Although beyond the scope of this article, signs were evident of women exerting much more clarity, expertise, and control over childrearing, food choices, and other household matters, even when their husbands were aggravated by their choices. Despite some hints of compensatory behavior, with men "acting out" when women had more wealth than they did, future work is needed to unpack the impact of these dynamics on family life.

Of course, social deference by women toward wealthy men happens in other spheres outside the family as well. For example, Ashley Mears (2020) vividly describes the deference by many different parties, including beautiful young women, for "whales" who consume in a conspicuous fashion in expensive night clubs. Brooke Harrington (2016) delineates the elaborate help brokers give to wealthy families in the management of wealth, securing tax advantages, and protection of assets. These brokers also can help with a wide range of personal services as well, all of which are aimed at sustaining the high status of the wealthy and smoothing their pathways. If anything, these studies suggest even more elaborate rituals of deference to wealthy men's status outside the family than inside it.

How does this influence inequality? Despite formal legal equality explicitly laid out in a number of settings, women appear hesitant to engage, and, especially if the marriage ends, may be vulnerable to significant economic losses given their lack of expertise. Relative to the men in the family, they depend more on the expertise of others. In addition, other research suggests that women give more to philanthropy than men do (Mesch et al. 2015). If women had more status in economic arenas, it might lead families to give away more assets rather than continue to build them, thereby tamping down the growth in wealth inequality. As they proceed, men and women also model these behaviors for other family members. including their children. thereby contributing to the perpetuation of gendered norms for behavior.

In the end, status inequalities within families are perpetuated by moments, hours, and years of social interaction. Nor is this a one-person process because upholding status inequality is linked to the actions of both men and women. For example, as we have seen, men actively avoid partnering with women who will exert more financial power than they, and women, even young women, actively defer to these norms because both women and men are aware of the negative reactions if they enter into socially stigmatized marriages. Also, once partnerships are established, the excitement, pleasure, and energy men show is striking relative to women's. These gendered patterns can be disrupted, particularly in the case of illness or incapacitation, but often it is husbands, uncles, and brothers who manage wealth and wives, nieces, and sisters who defer. Hence men's and women's status positions in families are not fixed but relational; both men and women are participating in creating and sustaining these gendered patterns. In intimate

16. It is difficult to assess the degree to which these status hierarchies would be upheld in families lower down the class hierarchy where resources are tighter, and women might claim more power. But, again, other studies show men continuing to dominate financial matters.

relationship within the family, inequality in status between men and women both reflects and promotes gender inequality in the broader culture.

REFERENCES

Accominotti, Fabian, Freda Lynn, and Michael Sauder. 2022. "The Architecture of Status Hierarchies: Variations in Structure and Why They Matter for Inequality." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(6): 87–102. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.6.05.

Benjamin, Lehn M. 2022. "How Helping Can Reinforce or Attenuate Status Inequalities: The Case of Nonprofit Organizations." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 210–27. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.11.

Bertrand, Marianne, Emir Kamenica, and Jessica Pan. 2015. "Gender Identity and Relative Income within Households." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 130 (2): 571–614.

Bessière, Céline. 2019. "Reversed Accounting: Legal Professionals, Families and the Gender Wealth Gap in France." *Socio-Economic Review* 20(1): 233–56.

Blair-Loy, Mary, 2009. *Competing Devotions: Career and Family Among Women Executives*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Translated by R. Nice. New York: Cambridge University Press.

———. 1990. *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Bricker, Jessie, Alice M. Henriques, Jake A. Krimmel, and John E. Sabelhaus. 2015. "Measuring Income and Wealth at the Top Using Administrative and Survey Data." Finance and Economics Discussion Series. Washington, D.C.: Federal Reserve Board.

Chang, Mariko Lin. 2010. *Shortchanged: Why Women Have Less Wealth and What Can Be Done About It*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Collins, Randall. 2014. *Interaction Ritual Chains*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Connell, R. W. 1991. "Live Fast and Die Young: The Construction of Masculinity Among Young Working-Class Men on the Margin of the Labour Market." *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* 27(2): 141–71.

Cooper, Marianne. 2014. *Cut Adrift: Families in Insecure Times*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Correll, Shelley J., Cecilia L. Ridgeway, Ezra Zuckerman, Sharon Jank, Sara Jordan Bloch, and Sandra Nakagawa. 2017. "It's the Conventional Thought That Counts: How Third-Order Inference Produces Status Advantage." *American Sociological Review* 82(2): 297–327.

Correll, Shelley J., Katherine R. Weisshaar, Alison T. Wynn, and JoAnne Delfino Wehner. 2020. "Inside the Black Box of Organizational Life: The Gendered Language of Performance Assessment." *American Sociological Review* 85(6): 1022–50.

Cousin, Bruno, Shamus Khan, and Ashley Mears. 2018. "Theoretical and Methodological Pathways for Research on Elites." *Socio-Economic Review* 16(2): 225–49.

Daniels, Arlene. 1988. *Invisible Careers: Women Civic Leaders from the Volunteer World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Destin, Mesmin, Régine Debrosse, Michelle Rheinschmidt-Same, and Jennifer A. Richeson. 2022. "Psychological Challenges and Social Supports That Shape the Pursuit of Socioeconomic Mobility." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 158–71. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.08.

DiMuccio, Sarah H., and Eric D. Knowles. 2020. "The Political Significance of Fragile Masculinity." *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences* 34(1): 25–28.

Fiske, Susan T., and Hazel Rose Markus, eds. 2012. *Facing Social Class: How Societal Rank Influences Interaction*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Gilding, Michael. 2005. "Families and Fortunes: Accumulation, Management Succession and Inheritance in Wealthy Families." *Journal of Sociology* 41(1): 29–46.

Glucksberg, Luna. 2018. "A Gendered Ethnography of Elites: Women, Inequality, and Social Reproduction." *Focaal* 81: 16–28.

Gonalons-Pons, Pilar, and Markus Gangl. 2021. "Marriage and Masculinity: Male-Breadwinner Culture, Unemployment, and Separation Risk in 29 Countries." *American Sociological Review* 86(3): 465–502.

Gonalons-Pons, Pilar, Christine R. Schwartz, and Kelly Musick. 2021. "Changes in Couples' Earn-

ings Following Parenthood and Trends in Family Earnings Inequality." *Demography* 58(3): 1093–117.

Hansen, Marianne Nordli, and Maren Toft. 2021. "Wealth Accumulation and Opportunity Hoarding: Class-Origin Wealth Gaps over a Quarter of a Century in a Scandinavian Country." *American Sociological Review* 86(4): 603–38.

Harrington, Brooke. 2016. *Capital Without Borders: Wealth Managers and the One Percent*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Hertz, Rosanna, and Jonathan B. Imber, eds. 1995. *Studying Elites Using Qualitative Methods*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Kay, Katty, and Claire Shipman. 2014. "The Confidence Gap." *The Atlantic*, April 15.

Keister, Lisa. 2014. "The One Percent." *Annual Review of Sociology* 40(1): 347–67.

Keister, Lisa, and Stephanie Moller. 2000. "Wealth Inequality in the United States." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26(1): 63–81.

Kendall, Diana E. 2002. *The Power of Good Deeds: Privileged Women and the Social Reproduction of the Upper Class*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.

———. 2008. *Members Only: Elite Clubs and the Process of Exclusion*. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield.

Krippner, Greta R., and Anthony S. Alvarez. 2007. "Embeddedness and the Intellectual Projects of Economic Sociology." *Annual Review of Sociology* 33(1): 219–40.

Lamont, Michèle. 1992. *Money, Morals, and Manners: The Culture of the French and the American Upper-Middle Class*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lamont, Michèle, Stefan Beljean, and Matthew Clair. 2014. "What Is Missing? Cultural Processes and Causal Pathways to Inequality." *Socio-Economic Review* 12(3): 573–608.

Lareau, Annette. 2021. *Listening to People: A Practical Guide to Interviewing, Participant Observation, Data Analysis, and Writing It All Up.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Leicht, Kevin T. 2022. "Inequality and the Status Window: Inequality, Conflict, and the Salience of Status Differences in Conflicts over Resources." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(6): 103–21. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.6.06.

Martin, Wednesday. 2015. *Primates of Park Avenue*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

McCall, Leslie. 2013. *The Undeserving Rich: American Beliefs about Inequality, Opportunity, and Redistribution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mears, Ashley. 2020. *Very Important People: Beauty and Status in the Global Party Circuit.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Mesch, Debra, Una Osili, Jacqueline Ackerman, and Elizabeth Dale. 2015. "Where Do Men and Women Give? Gender Differences in the Motivations and Purposes for Charitable Giving." Indianapolis: Indiana University, Lilly Family School of Philanthropy.

Mills, C. Wright. 1956. *The Power Elite*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Moss-Racusin, Corinne A., Julie E. Phelan, and Laurie A. Rudman. 2010. "When Men Break the Gender Rules: Status Incongruity and Backlash Against Modest Men." *Psychology of Men & Masculinity* 11(2): 140–51.

Nomaguchi, Kei, and Melissa A. Milkie. 2020. "Parenthood and Well-Being: A Decade in Review." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 82(1): 198–223.

O'Brien, Shay. 2021. "The Family Web: Studying Elite Persistence Using Full Family Networks." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, online. August 8, 2021.

Ostrander, Susan. 1984. *Women of the Upper Class*. Philadelphia,. Pa.: Temple University Press.

Perry-Jenkins, Maureen, and Naomi Gerstel. 2020. "Work and Family in the Second Decade of the 21st Century." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 82(1): 420–53.

Rao, Aliya Hamid. 2020. *Crunch Time: How Married Couples Confront Unemployment.* Oakland: University of California Press.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L. 2009. "Framed Before We Know It: How Gender Shapes Social Relations." *Gender & Society* 23(2): 145–60.

———. 2019. *Status: Why Is It Everywhere? Why Does It Matter?* New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L., and Shelley J. Correll. 2006. "Consensus and the Creation of Status Beliefs." *Social Forces* 85(1): 431–53.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L. and Hazel Rose Markus. 2022. "The Significance of Status: What It Is and How It Shapes Inequality." *RSF: The Russell Sage Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 1–25.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.01.

Ruel, Erin, and Robert M. Hauser. 2013. "Explaining the Gender Wealth Gap." *Demography* 50(4): 1155–76.

Saez, Emmanuel, and Gabriel Zucman. 2020. "Trends in US Income and Wealth Inequality: Revising After the Revisionists." *NBER* working paper no. 27921. Cambridge, Mass.: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Schimpfössl, Elizabeth. 2018. *Rich Russians: From Oligarchs to Bourgeoisie.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Schwartz, Christine R., and Pilar Gonalons-Pons. 2016. "Trends in Relative Earnings and Marital Dissolution: Are Wives Who Outearn Their Husbands Still More Likely to Divorce?" *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 2(4): 218–36. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2016.2.4.08.

Scott, Joan. 2020. "How Families Reproduce the Inequalities of Capitalism—Céline Bessière and Sibylle Gollac, *Le Genre du capital: Comment la famille reproduit les inégalités* (Paris, La Découverte, 2020, 326 p.)." *European Journal of Sociology* 61(3): 437–39.

Shapiro, Thomas M. 2004. *The Hidden Cost of Being African American: How Wealth Perpetuates Inequality*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Sherman, Rachel. 2019. *Uneasy Street*: *Entitlement and Ambivalence Among Wealthy New Yorkers*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Sherwood, Jessica H. 2010. *Wealth, Whiteness, and the Matrix of Privilege: The View from the Country Club*. Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books.

Shiffer-Sebba, Doron. 2021. "Trust Fund Families: Family Bureaucratization and Elite Social Reproduction." Unpublished paper.

Smith, Ryan A. 2002. "Race, Gender, and Authority in the Workplace: Theory and Research." *Annual Review of Sociology* 28(1): 509–42.

Smock, Pamela J., and Christine R. Schwartz. 2020. "The Demography of Families: A Review of Patterns and Change." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 82(1): 9–34.

Stone, Pamela, and Meg Lovejoy. 2019. *Opting Back In: What Really Happens When Mothers Go Back to Work*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Tichenor, Veronica. 2005. "Maintaining Men's Dominance: Negotiating Identity and Power When She Earns More." *Sex Roles* 53: 191–205.

Toft, Maren, and Sam Friedman. 2021. "Family Wealth and the Class Ceiling: The Propulsive Power of the Bank of Mum and Dad." *Sociology* 55(1): 90–109.

Valentino, Lauren. 2022. "Status Lenses: Mapping Hierarchy and Consensus in Status Beliefs." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 89–110. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.05.

Warde, Alan. 2015. "The Sociology of Consumption: Its Recent Development. *Annual Review of Sociology* 41: 117–34.

Wharton, Amy S. 2015. "2014 PSA Presidential Address (Un)Changing Institutions: Work, Family, and Gender in the New Economy." *Sociological Perspectives* 58(1): 7–19.

Williams, Joan C., Jennifer L. Berdahl, and Joseph A. Vandello. 2016. "Beyond Work-Life 'Integration.'" *Annual Review of Psychology* 67: 515–39.

Yavorsky, Jill E., Lisa A. Keister, Yue Qian, and Sarah Thébaud. 2022. "Separate Spheres: The Gender Division of Labor in the Financial Elite." Paper to be presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Los Angeles. August.

Zelizer, Viviana. 2005. *The Purchase of Intimacy*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

———. 2017. *The Social Meaning of Money: Pin Money, Paychecks, Poor Relief, and Other Currencies*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Racial and Ethnic Status Distinctions and Discrimination: The Effects of Prior Contact and Group Interaction

BIANCA MANAGO, JANE SELL, AND CARLA GOAR

Although racial and ethnic inequalities are consistently reproduced on both macro and micro levels, intergroup contact theory (ICT) and status characteristics and expectation states theory (SC-EST) identify opportunities for intervention. SC-EST most often limits its scope to examining deferential behavior and attitudes toward out-group members in specific interactions; ICT has a broader scope, including measures of attitudes, affect, and behavioral intentions toward out-group members. In two experiments with differing racial-ethnic compositions, we examine the effect of contact and the inconsistent complexity manipulation (from SC-EST) on attitudes and behavior toward specific out-group members within the working groups. We find that both intergroup contact and the inconsistent complexity intervention are effective at reducing some but not all forms of inequality. We discuss the potential for future integrations of the two theories.

Keywords: contact, status characteristics and expectation states, race-ethnicity, experiments, behavior

One of the most important and virulent status distinctions is race-ethnicity. Even the terms *race* or *ethnicity* suggest domination, because we know the terms were, and are, used to create separation and often justification for beliefs about competence and skill (Feagin and Ducey 2019; AAA 1998). Although some, and perhaps most, contexts enable the reproduction of status hierarchies based on race-ethnicity; under some conditions, status hierarchies can be interrupted (Markovsky, Smith, and Berger 1984; Berger and Webster 2006), and prejudice reduced (Dovidio et al. 2017; Paluck et al. 2021). In this article, we consider two theoretical ap-

Bianca Manago is an assistant professor of sociology at Vanderbilt University, United States. **Jane Sell** is a professor emeritus of sociology at Texas A&M University, United States. **Carla Goar** is a professor of sociology and director of the Antiracism and Equity Institute at Kent State University, United States.

 Manago, Bianca, Jane Sell, and Carla Goar. 2022. "Racial and Ethnic Status Distinctions and Discrimination: The Effects of Prior Contact and Group Interaction." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 132–57. DOI: 10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.07. This research was supported in part through NSF Grant 0961940 awarded to the last two authors. We thank the departments of sociology at Kent State University and Texas A&M University for their support. We are especially appreciative of Luis Romero, Calixto Melero, Whitney Hoft, Bobbi Reidinger, Monique Menefee, Jazmine Beidleman, Laura Phillips, and Victoria Reynolds for helping conduct the experiments. We are also grateful to Elaine Li for editorial assistance. Finally, we would like to thank the reviewers and editors. Direct correspondence to: Bianca Manago, at bianca.manago@vanderbilt.edu, Department of Sociology, Vanderbilt University, Garland Hall 321C, United States.

proaches to understanding racial-ethnic inequality and the potential ways to decrease it: status characteristics and expectation states theory and intergroup contact theory.

Status characteristics and expectation states theory describes one way in which racial-ethnic inequality is reflected and reinforced in small group interactions. Specifically, SC-EST predicts that—without an intervention—those with higher status (such as White people in the United States) will have greater influence than those with lesser status (such as people of color in the United States). Within the SC-EST framework, several interventions have been investigated. We investigate one intervention, the inconsistent complexity (IC) manipulation (Goar and Sell 2005; Manago, Sell, and Goar 2019), which emphasizes how the definition of the group task can modify intergroup inequality.

Intergroup contact theory describes how stereotyping and discrimination can be reduced through contact between individuals of different social groups, such as people of different races or ethnicities. Specifically, ICT predicts that under certain conditions, interaction with out-group members decreases discrimination and prejudice toward other out-group members.

Despite considerable research in each of these approaches to decreasing stereotyping and subsequent behavior, few studies bring them together. We examine how both the inconsistent complexity intervention (from SC-EST) and prior contact (from ICT) affect prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behavior. We test our conjectures with small task-oriented groups with two different compositions: Black and White participants in the Midwest and Mexican American and White participants in the Southwest.[1]

We find some support for both SC-EST and ICT. A novel contribution of this article is the bridging of ICT and SC-EST to examine whether prior interracial or interethnic contact could affect perceptions of competence and deferential behavior. We find that although prior contact improved affective prejudice (intergroup anxiety), it did not affect cognitive prejudice (perceptions of competence and deferential behavior). We discuss the implications of these findings for understanding how status works in groups.

STATUS CHARACTERISTICS AND EXPECTATION STATES THEORY

Studies show that, in mixed-race task groups, White participants talked more, were more likely to initiate interaction, exerted more influence, and were more favorably evaluated by other group members than Black participants were (Katz, Goldston, and Benjamin 1958; Cohen and Roper 1972). More recent research finds that White individuals are also perceived as more competent and held to more lenient standards than Black and Mexican American individuals (Biernat and Kobrynowicz 1997; Manago, Sell, and Goar 2019). One way to explain these inequalities is through status characteristics and expectation states theory.

SC-EST is a set of theories that examine inequalities within task-oriented social interactions. Simply put, the theories consider how small group interactions are affected by group members' status characteristics. More specifically, the theories provide insight into how structural inequalities create unequal interactions in smaller task-based groups during cooperative interactions in which people care about the successful performance of the group (Berger et al. 1977).

Status Characteristics

Status characteristics are attributes from which individuals form beliefs and expectations about a person's abilities and include characteristics such as gender, race, occupation, or age (Berger et al. 1977; Berger and Webster 2006; Berger, Rosenholtz, and Zelditch 1980). Status characteristics are one of two types, diffuse or specific. Diffuse status characteristics, such as race and gender, are characteristics associated with cultural beliefs (for example, stereotypes) about a broad range of abilities (Berger, Cohen, and Zelditch 1972; Correll and Ridgeway 2003; Berger and Webster 2006). Specific status characteristics refer to

1. We capitalize *White* in response to other scholars' requests to prevent whiteness from being invisible or considered somehow the default.

particular abilities used to infer performance for a specific type of task. For example, algebraic or verbal ability would be considered a particular task ability that would result in a specific status. When individuals are differentiated based on status characteristics, those with higher status have greater power and prestige within the group (Berger and Webster 2006). That is, all else equal, when status characteristics are differentiated, individuals of higher status (such as men or White people) are given, and take, more influence during interactions with those of lower status (such as women or Black people).

When specific status characteristics become salient, individuals use those characteristics as accurate and relevant indicators of abilities and performance and also generalize from these specific status characteristics to other task settings (Berger et al. 1977; Freese 1976). In the absence of specific information about individuals' abilities on a task, the burden of proof is placed on low-status individuals to prove their diffuse status is not relevant and demonstrate their abilities (Berger et al. 1977). The burden of proof process demonstrates how diffuse status characteristics, which are not initially relevant to the task, come to organize performance expectations and small group interactions. Specifically, the burden of proof process occurs in three steps: the recognition and differentiation of various status characteristics, an inference about general competence, and interactional behaviors that follow a status hierarchy. The process advantages high-status actors who are given greater opportunities to contribute to the task, have more influence, and are evaluated more positively (Berger et al. 1977).

Status Beliefs

The effect of individuals' status markers on group interactions occurs as a result of status beliefs (Correll and Ridgeway 2003). As Cecilia Ridgeway and Hazel Markus (2022, this issue) detail, cultural schemas based on historically contingent and changeable contexts dictate status beliefs about categories of people. Both the societal and group context are important for the distribution of status. These status beliefs then affect the allocation of status based on perceived competence, which in turn enables the distribution of influence within groups, both large and small. Thus, in nearly all aspects of life, individuals' identities (such as gender and race) affect the way they are treated.

Status differences are neither stable nor natural. Instead, they develop through repeated social interactions that attach performance expectations to social categories.[2] One way status beliefs can develop is from initial conditions of unequal resources distributed among two or more nominal categories (Ridgeway 1991). These unequal conditions create an association between the resources and characteristics that, over time and with repeated interaction, inform performance expectations.

For example, because of a number of laws and policies enacted by White individuals to maintain positions of power (Delgado and Stefancic 2001), White Americans are more likely than Black Americans to have greater resources such as wealth, education, and employment (Killewald and Bryan 2018; Kozol 2005; Pager and Shepherd 2008; Quillian, Lee, and Honoré 2020). Similarly, and for the same reasons, compared to Mexican Americans, White Americans have higher employment rates (Pager, Western, and Bonikowski 2009), have better educational opportunities (Valencia and Black 2002; Lopez 2005), and are less likely to receive unjust treatment by police, prosecutors, and immigration authorities (Short and Magaña 2002; Esqueda, Espinoza, and Culhane 2008; Welch et al. 2011; Fussell 2014). Therefore, when individuals interact with Black, Mexican American, and White people, they are more likely to encounter White individuals who are more resourced than their Black and Mexican American counterparts. Belief systems regarding this relative disadvantage or advantage are developed and, over time, favorable expectations of White individuals (and less favorable expectations of

2. Of course, many other methods for measuring status do not depend on specific performance expectations (for discussion, see Valentino 2022, this issue; Maloney, Rogers, and Smith-Lovin 2022, this issue).

Black and Mexican American individuals) are stabilized.

Summary and Hypotheses

In summary, the burden of proof process enables status characteristics to organize behavior in small group interactions, with higher-status individuals having more influence than their lower-status counterparts. In our study, we examine race and ethnicity, which are considered diffuse status characteristics. Specifically, we consider interactions between Black and White and Mexican American and White individuals in small, task-oriented groups. At this point in the United States, White individuals are considered to be higher status than Black and Mexican American individuals. To further meet the scope conditions of SC-EST, we consider groups whose members are interdependent and cooperating to achieve task success.

Prediction A: If there is no intervention, race-ethnicity will act as a diffuse status characteristic.

H1a: Without an intervention, White participants will view Black and Mexican American group members as less competent than other White group members.

H2a: Without an intervention, Black and Mexican American participants will view themselves as less competent than White group members.

H3a: Without an intervention, Black and Mexican American group members will be less influential than White group members.

INTERVENING IN PROCESSES OF PREJUDICE AND INEQUALITY

Because nothing is desirable about status hierarchies based on irrelevant characteristics such as race, researchers have sought interventions that can disrupt status processes. We examine two kinds of interventions, one from SC-EST and another from ICT.

Inconsistent Complexity Intervention

The first intervention we consider is the inconsistent complexity intervention, which interrupts status-generalizing processes. As described earlier, the status-generalizing process, as described by SC-EST, demonstrates how group members use information about each other and about the task to allocate influence in group interactions. For example, if group members know only each other's diffuse status characteristics, then diffuse status characteristics will organize group interaction. Thus, if group members are not told otherwise, the burden of proof process enables a generalization from the diffuse status characteristics to perceived competence (Berger et al. 1977; Goar and Sell 2005).

The inconsistent complexity intervention builds on the work of Elizabeth Cohen (1982, 1993; Cohen and Lotan 1997) and Hamit Fişek (1991). Specifically, by causing group members to consider how different people might have different skills, Cohen and Fişek posit that different types of tasks could interrupt the burden of proof process and status inequality. Carla Goar and Jane Sell (2005) modify the formulation in several ways; in particular, by considering the definition of the task rather than the task itself. Specifically, by defining the tasks as requiring many kinds of abilities, the intervention challenges narrow definitions of competence. If tasks are composed of many components and those components are not necessarily consistent in evaluation (that is, not all high or all low in evaluation) or even related to each other, then overall labels such as smart or competent do not apply. Therefore, by defining the task as requiring many different abilities, group members are more likely to listen to each other thereby increasing opportunities for participation from all group members (for a graph theoretical explanation before intervention, see the appendix).

The inconsistent complexity intervention has been effective in two studies involving race. In the first, when tasks were defined as requiring multiple skills that might not be related to each other, interaction between Black and White group members was more equitable (Goar and Sell 2005). In the second, we (Manago, Sell, and Goar 2019) examined the effectiveness of the inconsistent complexity intervention over a three-week period in groups of Mexican American and White par-

ticipants. Each week, the groups worked on a different task. Although some tasks demonstrated stronger effects than others, the researchers found that the intervention can be sustained over time (Manago, Sell, and Goar 2019).[3]

Summary and Hypotheses

Although higher-status individuals are perceived to be more competent and have more influence than their lower-status counterparts, these status positions are not fixed. Instead, we posit that the inconsistent complexity intervention can decrease status differentials in small, interdependent, task-oriented groups. Therefore, we predict:

> Prediction B: Given the inconsistent complexity intervention, race-ethnicity will not act as a diffuse status characteristic.
>
> H1b: With an intervention, White participants will not view Black and Mexican American group members as less competent than other White group members.
>
> H2b: With an intervention, Black and Mexican American group members will not view themselves as less competent than their White group members.
>
> H3b: With an intervention, Black and Mexican American group members will not be less influential than White group members.

Intergroup Contact Theory

The second intervention is intergroup contact, which includes interactions (broadly defined) with people who differ from oneself in terms of race-ethnicity, religion, and so on (Pettigrew et al. 2011). Several studies and metanalyses confirm the general result that those individuals with more intergroup contact demonstrate less prejudice. Although *prejudice* is broadly defined and measured (Lolliot et al. 2015), contact is consistently associated with decreased prejudice. For example, contact has been shown to decrease negative attitudes (such as stereotypes), affect (such as fear, anger, disgust), and behavioral intentions or actual behavior (such as avoidance, desired social distance; Zhou et al. 2019; Stephan 2014).

Despite considerable research showing an association between contact and discrimination, some researchers criticize the contact literature for the lack of studies that measure actual (versus intended) behavior (Beelmann and Heinemann 2014) and that use random assignment (Paluck and Green 2009; Paluck et al. 2021). The lack of behavioral research and random assignment poses challenges for evaluating the causal effect of contact. For example, some recent field experiments in which participants were randomly assigned to different team compositions demonstrated effects for some—but not all—attitudinal and behavioral measures of prejudice and discrimination measures (Mousa 2020; Scacco and Warren 2018). In particular, behavioral measures showed stronger effects than attitudinal measures.[4]

Cognitive Stereotypes

Despite these concerns, there is considerable research that supports the association between contact and (lower) prejudice (Kotzur and Wagner 2021; Pettigrew et al. 2011; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). Further, this research uses multiple measures of prejudice and discrimination—including a wide variety of stereotypes. Prior contact is consistently associated with decreased negative and increased positive stereotypes. Competence is a fundamental dimension of stereotypes, meaning that all other stereotypes are influenced by perceptions of competence (along with warmth) (Fiske et al. 2002; Brambilla, Ravenna, and Hewstone 2012). In addition to being a fundamental stereotype, competence is also thought to be associated with deference. Specifically, and as noted by SCEST, individuals tend to defer to those whom they perceive to be more competent.

3. Some of the deference results in the White and Mexican American groups we report in this article also appear in an earlier article (see Manago et al. 2019).

4. Some studies do not find the predicted effects of contact, which suggests that different groups (such as forced migrants) might require different approaches (see Kotzur and Wagner 2021).

Generalizability of Contact

When considering the effect of contact on prejudice, researchers have sought to examine whether contact generalizes. That is, are interactions with a specific out-group member viewed as separate from the rest of the out-group, or does generalization from contact extend to the out-group in general? Research indicates that generalization does occur, not only beyond specific individuals, but also beyond specific out-groups. For example, friendship with an out-group member, the most intimate and effectual form of contact, appears to reduce prejudice not only toward that person and other members of that person's out-group, but also to members of different out-groups (Pettigrew 2008; Laar et al. 2005; Pettigrew 1997).

ICT research typically focuses on how contact with specific out-group members generalizes to an entire out-group. In this study, we ask whether attitudes toward out-group members as a whole can also generalize to specific out-group members in groups that are assigned rather than chosen by group members. Our interest in this question stems from research which consistently finds that small group interactions can reflect, reinforce, or challenge larger structural inequalities (Benard et al. 2022; Berger and Webster 2018; Ridgeway 2019; Ridgeway and Markus 2022, this issue). We posit that if small group interactions are microcosms of structural processes, and contact reduces prejudice toward an out-group as a whole, then contact should also decrease prejudice toward specific members of that out-group.[5]

Summary and Hypotheses

Contact is associated with more positive stereotypes of out-group members. Competence is a fundamental dimension of stereotypes and is also associated with deferential behavior. Contact is thought to generalize from specific individuals to broader out-group members. Research has not examined whether this process occurs in the other direction, but we suspect these may be parallel processes. Therefore, we predict:

Prediction C: Greater frequency of past contact with out-groups will be related to more positive estimates of competence and increased deference to out-group members within the task groups.

H4a: For White participants, higher frequency of prior contact with out-group members (Black and Mexican American participants) will be associated with increased perceptions of competence of specific out-group members.

H4b: For White participants, higher frequency of prior contact with out-group members (Black and Mexican American participants) will be associated with increased deference toward specific out-group members.

Affective Stereotypes

In addition to improving cognitive stereotypes (such as perceptions of competence of out-group members), ICT emphasizes that past contact with out-group members is associated with improved affective attitudes toward out-group members. Two such measures of affective attitudes are willingness to interact with out-group members and negative emotion (specifically, in-group anxiety) toward out-group members.

Because contact has been shown to reduce prejudice toward out-group members, researchers are often interested in understanding ways to increase willingness for such contact (Zhou et al. 2019). Put differently, do people who are less prejudiced interact with people from other racial-ethnic groups more often, or does interacting with those from other groups lead to less prejudice? Studies indicate that both seem to be the case (Pettigrew et al. 2011). As an example, a particularly compelling, multicountry, longitudinal research project finds that existing contact leads to less prejudice, and less prejudice leads to a greater willingness for future contact (Binder et al. 2009).

Contact may reduce prejudice, at least in part, by decreasing intergroup anxiety, i.e., the negative emotion felt when anticipating future, or experiencing actual, encounters with out-

5. We posit this should occur even in situations where individuals cannot choose those they are working with, as is the case with the groups we consider.

group members (Brown and Hewstone 2005; Stephan and Stephan 1985). When individuals have high intergroup anxiety associated with a specific out-group, they tend to hold more negative stereotypes of, have more negative affect toward, and desire more social distance from members of that out-group (Stephan 2014). Thus, contact is a well-established predictor of intergroup anxiety (Zhou et al. 2019; Pettigrew and Tropp 2008).

Summary and Hypotheses

Prior contact is associated with a greater willingness for future contact and lower intergroup anxiety. Lower intergroup anxiety is associated with a greater willingness for future contact. Therefore, we predict:

Prediction D: Past contact will predict intergroup anxiety and willingness for future interaction.

H5a: Past contact with out-group members will be associated with higher willingness to have future contact with specific out-group members within the group.

H5b: Past contact with out-group members will be associated with lower reported intergroup anxiety toward out-group members.

H5c: Intergroup anxiety will mediate the effect between past contact and willingness for future contact with specific out-group members within the group.

Although research suggests that intergroup anxiety will mediate the relationship between contact and willingness to interact in the future; we do not expect that intergroup anxiety will mediate the relationship between contact and competence. This is because, although intergroup anxiety may improve affective prejudice, such as willingness to interact, researchers do not suggest that intergroup anxiety will affect cognitive prejudice, such as stereotypes, to the same degree (Pettigrew et al. 2011, 203).

Discrimination by and Against Whom

Research in intergroup contact has primarily focused on decreasing prejudice of historically advantaged group members (those with more power) rather than historically excluded members (those with less power). It may be that this stance was initially developed because researchers focused on decreasing discrimination from the more powerful toward those with less power. Status and discrimination processes, however, are created and recreated in interactions. For example, research suggests that not only do historically advantaged individuals view themselves as more competent than historically excluded individuals, but also that historically excluded individuals perceive themselves to be less competent than historically advantaged group members (Ridgeway 2019).

When research examines the effect of contact on prejudice for both advantaged and excluded groups, it finds that the effects for decreasing the prejudice toward historically disadvantaged groups are stronger than decreasing prejudice toward those who are historically advantaged (Tropp 2007; Tropp and Pettigrew 2005). Additionally, some research finds that intergroup anxiety does not mediate the relationship between contact and prejudice toward those who are historically advantaged. One potential reason for the weaker effect may be the valence of contact (Hayward et al. 2017).

Specifically, evidence indicates that it is not only the presence of contact but also the type of contact, positive or negative, that affects prejudicial attitudes (Hayward et al. 2017; Schäfer et al. 2021). Further, negative contact is weighted more heavily than positive intergroup contact (Barlow et al. 2012; Paolini et al. 2014; Pettigrew and Tropp 2008). Notably, members of both historically advantaged and excluded groups respond similarly both in terms of the high impact of negative contact and the general effect of the positive intergroup contact. It might be, however, that historically excluded group members have more negative contact with out-group members than their historically advantaged counterparts. Therefore, when examining the effect of contact on discrimination, we consider these processes separately for individuals of historically advantaged and excluded social groups.

METHODS

Because race is a status characteristic that spans multiple groups, we examine the pro-

cesses in two studies. One examines interactions between Black and White individuals in the Midwest and the other examines interactions between Mexican American and White individuals in the Southwest. Next, we describe the experimental procedures, which were designed to be consistent across the two locations and settings.

Sample

Participants were recruited from the student population at two large, public universities. To control for other status characteristics (such as gender and education) all participants were women and undergraduate students. Based on power analyses, we aimed for at least twenty-five groups per condition. Given the two conditions (experimental and control) and three participants per group, we recruited a minimum of 150 participants per experiment. Sign-up rates varied, leaving 180 participants in the Midwest (thirty groups per condition) and 150 participants in the Southwest (twenty-five groups per condition). Participants were assigned to groups of three based on individuals' reported availability (such as available to meet on Tuesdays). Each group consisted of two White participants and one participant who was either Black or Mexican American. Then, groups were randomly assigned to one of two conditions—experimental and control.

Design

Each study (Midwest and Southwest) consisted of three sessions, each separated by about a week. Participants worked in the same group on three different tasks that shared common features. Specifically, each task provided a vignette that described how the group had become stranded in a particular environment (session 1, on the moon; session 2, at sea; session 3, in the desert). Group members were then provided with a list of twelve to fifteen salvaged items that might aid in survival and asked to rank the items first as individuals and then as a group, from most to least important. Groups were also prompted to provide reasons for why each item was ranked as it was, thereby creating a high degree of group interaction.

The manipulation was implemented in the first session (see procedure). Each session was jointly administered by two researchers, one of whom was White and the other who was either Black or Mexican American. The researchers were both active in their instructions to the group. In this manuscript, we consider only the last session, session 3. We examine session 3 because during this session, we also administered the questionnaires addressing contact, intergroup anxiety, and willingness to interact with the same group in the future. In the next section, we describe session 1 because it is when we administered the manipulation.

Procedure

Session 1 began with participants individually reading and signing consent forms in separate cubicles. Next, to ensure that participants were aware of their group members' race-ethnicity, we asked them to complete an information sheet about their group members. To assist in filling out the information sheet, participants were given a copy of the completed recruitment form for themselves and the other group members. The recruitment form contained a limited amount of information about each person, but included their racial-ethnic identity, their gender identity, and their name.

After completing the forms, participants watched an instructional video that described the study and included the experimental manipulation. After the recorded instructions, participants worked individually on each session's (survival) task for seven minutes in separate cubicles. At the end of the seven minutes a timer sounded, and at the direction of a researcher, the group was brought to a common table to work on the same task collectively. To control for any effects of table position on status, before the study began the researcher placed completed nametags on the table, thereby ensuring that the woman from the historically excluded group (either the Black or Mexican American group member) was always in the same position (at the right side of the table). Participants worked on the task collectively for twenty minutes and their interactions were recorded. At the end of the twenty minutes, a timer once again sounded. A researcher turned off the video camera and asked participants to fill out a questionnaire.

The questionnaire required participants to recall the instructions they had received, as well as indicate their estimations about the performance of individual members and the group (as a whole). After completing the questionnaire, participants were paid $20 for their participation and scheduled for future sessions. Participants were told that at the end of the three sessions, their group could qualify in an additional cash bonus if their group performance was high. In fact, all groups received the same bonus.

Sessions 2 and 3 involved the same group members, working on similar tasks, first alone and then as a group. All sessions lasted between forty-five minutes and one hour. The only differences are that, unlike in session 1, participants in sessions 2 and 3 were not asked to complete a consent form again or rewatch the instructional video. Additionally, in session 3, participants were asked to complete additional questionnaires (which included our measures of contact, intergroup anxiety, and willingness for future interaction).

Experimental Manipulation

The experimental manipulation (independent variable) was the definition of the task, as described in the instructional video during session 1. The video also instantiated the scope conditions for SC-EST. That is, in all cases, the task was presented as a cooperative task and as one on which people did better when they worked together.[6] A White female professor presented information to the participants. In all conditions, she described the tasks on which the participants would be working and told participants that the studies investigated how people made decisions under differing conditions. Additionally, groups in both conditions were briefed generally about teamwork, and told, "During the past several years, there have been many studies about how different people work together in groups. For many types of problems, the results have shown that individuals working together perform more effectively than individuals working alone. This is true for ALL three of the tasks that we will be asking you to work on."

At this point, the instructions varied, depending upon whether the condition was the baseline condition or the experimental (inconsistent complexity) condition.

Groups in the baseline condition were told that some individuals perform better than others: "This task today and the other tasks you will work on during the second and third group meeting are similar: We DO know that some people do better at these tasks than other people. Even though some people do better while others do worse, we are trying to find out what makes some groups more successful than other groups at tasks like these."

Later in the video these instructions were reinforced, with baseline groups told that "After the twenty minutes allotted for the group task has passed, we will give you a short questionnaire to fill out. This questionnaire will ask you to assess quality of the answers your group provided and more specifically the quality of answers offered by individual group members."

Groups in the experimental condition received the inconsistent complexity intervention, which created a different definition of the task: "The task today and the other tasks you will work on during the second and third group meeting involves using MANY, MANY different skills and abilities. We know that, generally speaking, some group members will have some special skills and abilities and others will have other skills and abilities. So, although everybody will have some ability to contribute to the task, it would be extremely unusual or even impossible for a single individual to be good at every single aspect necessary for these tasks."

These instructions were similarly reinforced later in the video, and experimental groups were told that "After the twenty minutes allot-

6. As a reviewer pointed out, these cooperative scope conditions of SC-EST have been shown to generally decrease inequality in groups. For instance, white-collar organizations that integrate interdependent values into norms and practices report higher levels of retention and belongingness from members who have working-class backgrounds (Stephens, Townsend, and Dittmann 2019; Dittmann, Stephens, and Townsend 2020; Hamedani and Markus 2019; Stephens, Markus, and Phillips 2014). Because this is the case, our tests of the intervention are conservative tests.

ted for the group task has passed, we will give you a short questionnaire to fill out. This questionnaire will ask you to assess the kinds of abilities you think are associated with success at the tasks and, more specifically, the abilities of the different group members."

After receiving the intervention, only in the first week, participants filled out a questionnaire. This questionnaire was used to ensure the participants were paying attention to the instructions. In subsequent weeks, participants simply completed the task and filled out a questionnaire after the task. That is, the intervention occurred only in the first week.

Manipulation Checks

After the video in the first week, participants completed a questionnaire that asked about scope conditions. First, the questionnaires ensured that participants knew that group members had different racial or ethnic, but not gender, identities. If a single group member did not accurately assess the other group members' race-ethnicity, the entire group was omitted from the final sample.[7] Second, the questionnaires ensured that team members were task focused and group oriented. In the Black-White and Mexican American–White studies, 82 percent and 91 percent (respectively) of participants disagreed with the statement that "All answers are equally correct." Respectively, 95 percent and 100 percent disagreed with the statement that "People do better on the task when they work only individually." Participants thus overwhelmingly met the scope conditions.[8]

The questionnaires also evaluated the salience of the inconsistent complexity (experimental) manipulation. As would be expected, in both studies, those in the control condition were more likely than those in the experimental condition to answer "true" to the statement, "Some people just seem to do better, overall, than others at the task" ($X^2_{B/W} = 60.543$, $p < 0.001$; $X^2_{MA/W} = 51.458$, $p < .001$). Similarly, as would be expected, in both studies, participants in the experimental condition were more likely than those in the control condition to answer "true" to the statement that "There are many different abilities and skills important for the task; nobody seems to be good at everything" ($X^2_{B/W} = 33.206$, $p < .001$; $X^2_{MA/W} = 28.57$, $p < .001$). Thus the manipulations appeared to work in both studies.[9]

MEASURES

The descriptive statistics for all dependent measures are presented in table 1. Although competence and deference were measured at all three time points, we examine only the third, because that is when the other variables were also collected.

Contact

We use a well-established measure (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006) of how much contact participants had with Mexican American, Black, and White people. Contact measures are sometimes criticized because they are self-reported and are therefore subject to social desirability biases; however, research that specifically investigates the relationship between observer ratings and self-ratings of contact finds that, overall, self-reports are valid measures of contact (Hewstone, Judd, and Sharp 2011). For our measure, we asked participants how frequently they had done the following things with people of a different race-ethnicity: talk on the phone with, confide in, lend something to, and so on. Responses ranged from 1 (never) to 5 (frequently). For each participant, we averaged the nonmissing items.[10]

7. In eight groups of the Mexican American–White study, group members did not correctly identify each other's ethnicity. They were replaced with other groups. In the Black-White study, all participants correctly identified race.

8. In no groups did all participants fail the scope condition checks. Thus no groups were omitted on that basis.

9. As with the scope condition checks, there were no groups in which all group members failed the manipulation check and therefore no groups were omitted on this basis.

10. Note that these questions all concerned voluntary relations (for example, confide in) and not relations that were circumstantial or not necessarily voluntary (for example, been in classrooms with).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics by Study

	Black-White (*N* = 160)				Mexican American–White (*N* = 150)			
	Mean-Proportion	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Mean-Proportion	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Contact with different race	3.40	1.01	1.00	5.00	3.49	0.97	1.10	5.00
Intergroup anxiety toward different race	3.82	1.38	1.00	6.43	2.20	0.92	1.00	4.89
Willingness to stay with same group	1.16	0.63	−1.00	2.00	0.98	0.67	−1.00	2.00
Perceived competence of different race group members	8.25	2.72	1.00	11.00	7.90	2.23	1.00	11.00
Difference in deference toward MA-Black and White group members[a]	−1.12	8.70	−26.00	24.00	−2.14	11.34	−40.00	35.00
Probability of each group position								
Least influential	0.34				0.38			
Middle	0.31				0.27			
Most influential	0.35				0.35			

Source: Authors' tabulations.

[a] Negative values indicate that the Black or Mexican American group members deferred more than the White group member, and positive values indicate that the White group member deferred more than the Black or Mexican American group members.

Intergroup Anxiety

Using a measure from Walter Stephan and Cookie Stephan (1985), we measure intergroup anxiety by asking participants what "feelings or emotions" they might feel "when you interact with a ____ person" where the blank is filled with a race or an ethnicity, in our study, Mexican American, Black, or White. The emotions include things such as confident, suspicious, and threatened, and participants could choose a number ranging between 1 (not at all) and 7 (very much) (Stephan and Stephan 1985). All items were coded so that higher numbers indicate more intergroup anxiety. We then averaged the items.

Willingness for Future Contact

Willingness to have future contact with specific out-group members was measured using two questions, both of which were measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questions were "In the future, I would be willing to work with my group again." and "In the future, I would choose to work with another group over working with the same group I worked with today." The questions were combined into one measure by subtracting the desire to leave variable from the desire to stay variable and dividing it by two. The final variable ranges from –1 to 2, higher numbers indicating greater willingness to interact with the same group in the future.

Competence Assessments

To measure the participants' perceptions of their group members' competence, participants were asked to evaluate each group member. Specifically, participants were told, "How would you rate [team member] in terms of their performance on the tasks?" Choices ranged from 0 (extremely incompetent) to 10 (extremely competent).

Deference

As mentioned, participants first ranked items in order of importance for survival in the scenario. The group then met and discussed how they should order the items to present as their collective opinion. The difference between participants' original opinions and their final group decision is a measure of deference given to others in the group (Berger et al. 1992; Berger, Cohen, and Zelditch 1972). The greater the difference between the individual's ranking and the final group ranking, the greater the individuals' deference. To measure our questions of interest appropriately, we used these measures of deference in two ways.

First, within each group, we examined each group members' deference and ranked them from least deferential (most influential) to most deferential (least influential). In the case of a tie for most or least influential, the tied group members were put in the same position. For example, if two group members deferred twenty and one deferred twenty-four total points, then the two group members who deferred twenty points were both ranked as least influential in the group. If there was a tie for most or least influential, both team members were put in that position and the middle position in that group was left empty. This explains the imbalance across group positions in table 1.

Next, within each group, we examined the extent to which the White group members deferred relative to their Black or Mexican American group members on each question and overall. For each item that was ranked, the deference that the Black or Mexican American group members gave was subtracted from the deference the White group members gave. Thus negative numbers indicate that the Black or Mexican American group member deferred more than the White group members, and positive numbers indicate that the White group members deferred more than the Black or Mexican American.

ANALYTIC STRATEGY

We analyze data by each hypothesis. We present analyses separately for each study, and when appropriate, separately by condition or race-ethnicity. For continuous dependent variables (for example, intergroup anxiety, deference to specific group members, perceived competence, willingness to interact with group in future), we use linear regression, and for ordinal dependent variables (for example, group influence position), we use ordered logistic regression. Where appropriate, we use post-estimation and difference of difference

tests (Long and Freese 2014). When testing directional hypotheses, we present one-tailed tests. When testing null hypotheses, that is, those where we predict there will not be a difference (H4b, H4d, H5b), we present two-tailed tests (but also see tests of equivalence in appendix B). All analyses are conducted in Stata 15.1.

Because individuals are nested within groups, we cluster the standard errors by group in all analyses. Additionally, because the variance is not normally distributed, we use bootstrapping (Freedman 1981). Finally, because individuals are randomly assigned to condition, we do not use control variables in models in which experimental condition is the independent variable. In models in which prior contact is the independent variable, however, we use experimental condition as a control variable. Notably, effects hold with or without condition as a control variable.

To examine whether intergroup anxiety mediates the relationship between past contact with out-group members and willingness to interact with group members in the future (hypothesis 3), we use Sobel tests of mediation (Sobel 1982). Sobel tests calculate a test statistic for the significance of the indirect effect of the mediating variable, that is, intergroup anxiety. Because we did not experimentally manipulate contact or intergroup anxiety, the mediation tests cannot be interpreted as causal; however, based on theory and associational evidence, they can provide some indication about how past contact increases willingness for future interaction.

FINDINGS

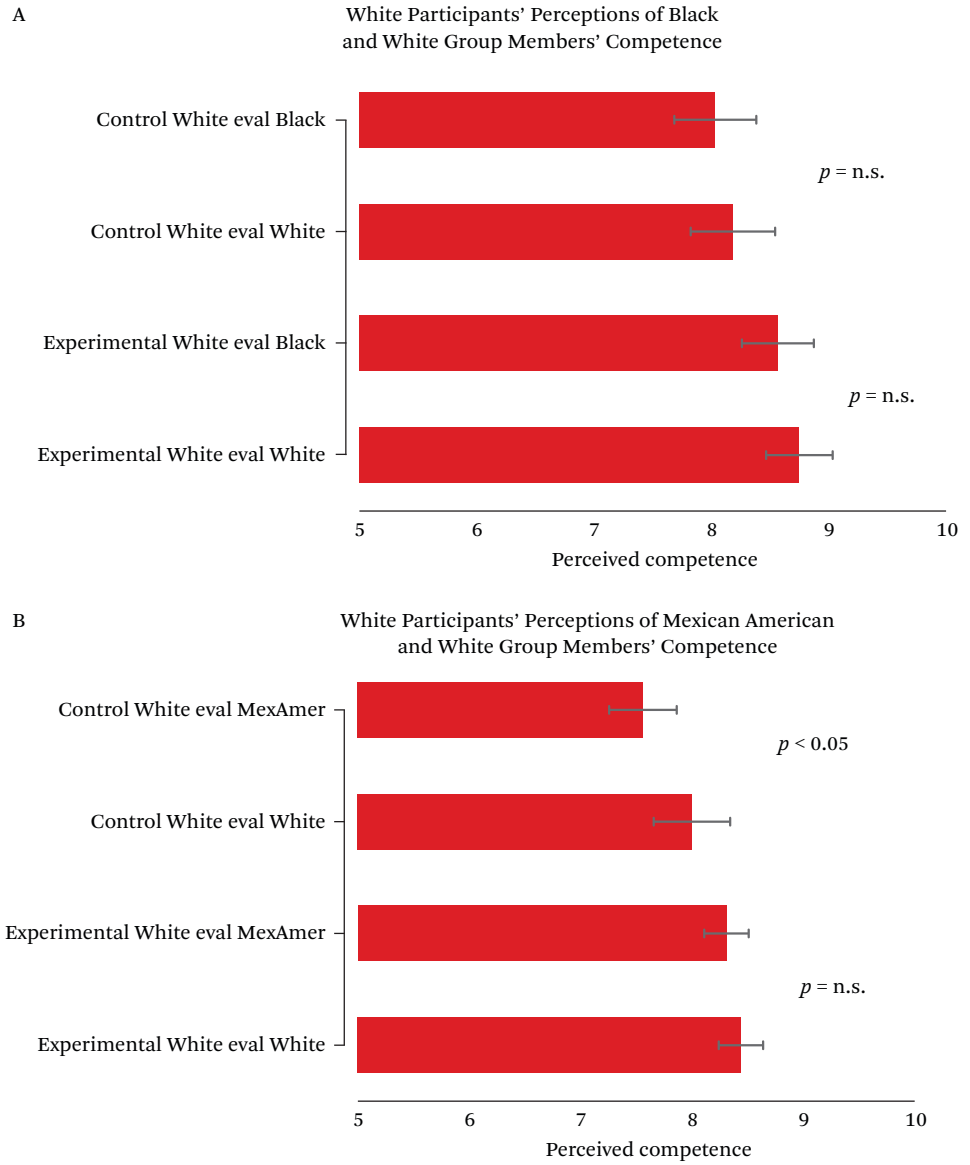
For a summary of all hypotheses and results of null hypothesis tests, see table A.1. For hypotheses 1a and 1b, we predicted that in the control—but not in the experimental—condition, White group members would view Black and Mexican American partners as less competent than other White group members. We find partial support for this hypothesis (see figure 1). Contrary to predictions, White participants in the control condition and experimental condition evaluated their Black group members as similarly competent to their White group members (p = n.s., both contrasts). As predicted, White participants in the control condition, but not the experimental condition, evaluated Mexican American group members as less competent than White group members ($b_{control} = -0.44$, $p < .05$; $b_{experimental} = -0.13$, p = n.s.).

For hypotheses 2a and 2b, we predicted that in the control—but not in the experimental—condition, Black and Mexican American participants would view themselves as less competent than their White counterparts. We find support for this hypothesis (see figure 2). As predicted, Black participants in the control condition, but not the experimental condition, evaluated themselves as less competent than White group members ($b_{control} = -0.917$, $p < .05$; $b_{experimental} = -0.283$, p = n.s.). Similarly, Mexican American participants in the control condition, but not the experimental condition, evaluated themselves as less competent than White group members ($b_{control} = -0.820$, $p < .05$; $b_{experimental} = -0.500$, p = n.s.).

For hypotheses 3a and 3b, we predicted that in the control—but not in the experimental—condition, Black and Mexican American group members would be less influential than their White group members. Again, we find partial support for this hypothesis (see figure 3). Contrary to predictions, in the control and experimental conditions, there was no difference in the probability of group position between Black and White group members (p = n.s., all contrasts). As predicted, however, in the control condition, relative to White group members, Mexican American group members are more likely to be in the least influential position ($p_W = 0.292$ vs $p_{MA} = 0.560$, $\Delta = 0.267$, $p < .05$) and less likely to be in the most influential position ($p_W = 0.445$ vs. $p_{MA} = 0.207$, $\Delta = -0.238$, $p < .05$), and there was no difference in their probability of being in the middle position ($\Delta = -0.029$, p = n.s.). In the experimental condition for the Mexican American–White study, the difference in the probability of being in the least, most, or middle influential position (p = n.s., all contrasts) was not significant.

For hypothesis 4a, we predicted that for members of historically advantaged social groups, increased (prior) contact with out-group members would be associated with increased perceptions of competence of specific out-group members. We examine this question

Figure 1. White Group Members' Evaluations of Black and Mexican American Group Members' Competence

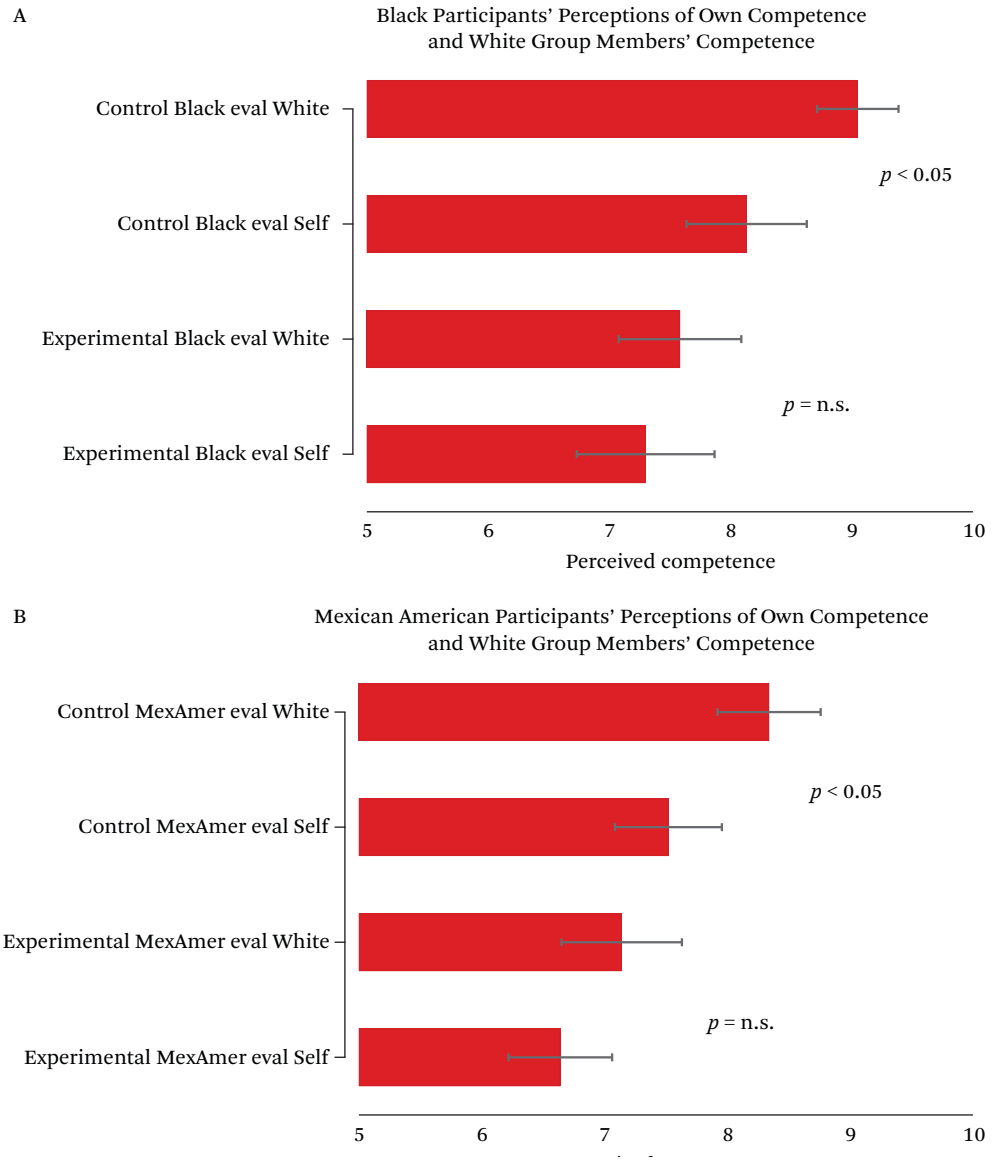


Source: Authors' tabulations.

separately by study (Black-White and Mexican American–White groups) and experimental condition. We do not find support for this hypothesis. There is no effect of contact on White participants' evaluations of Black or Mexican American group members' competence for either the experimental or control condition (p = n.s., all contrasts).

For hypothesis 4b, we predicted that for members of historically advantaged social groups, increased (prior) contact with out-group members would be associated with increased deference toward specific out-group members. We examine this question separately by study (Black-White and Mexican American–White groups) and experimental condition. We do not find support for this hypothesis. There is no effect of contact on White participants'

Figure 2. Black and Mexican American Group Members' Evaluations of White Group Members' Competence



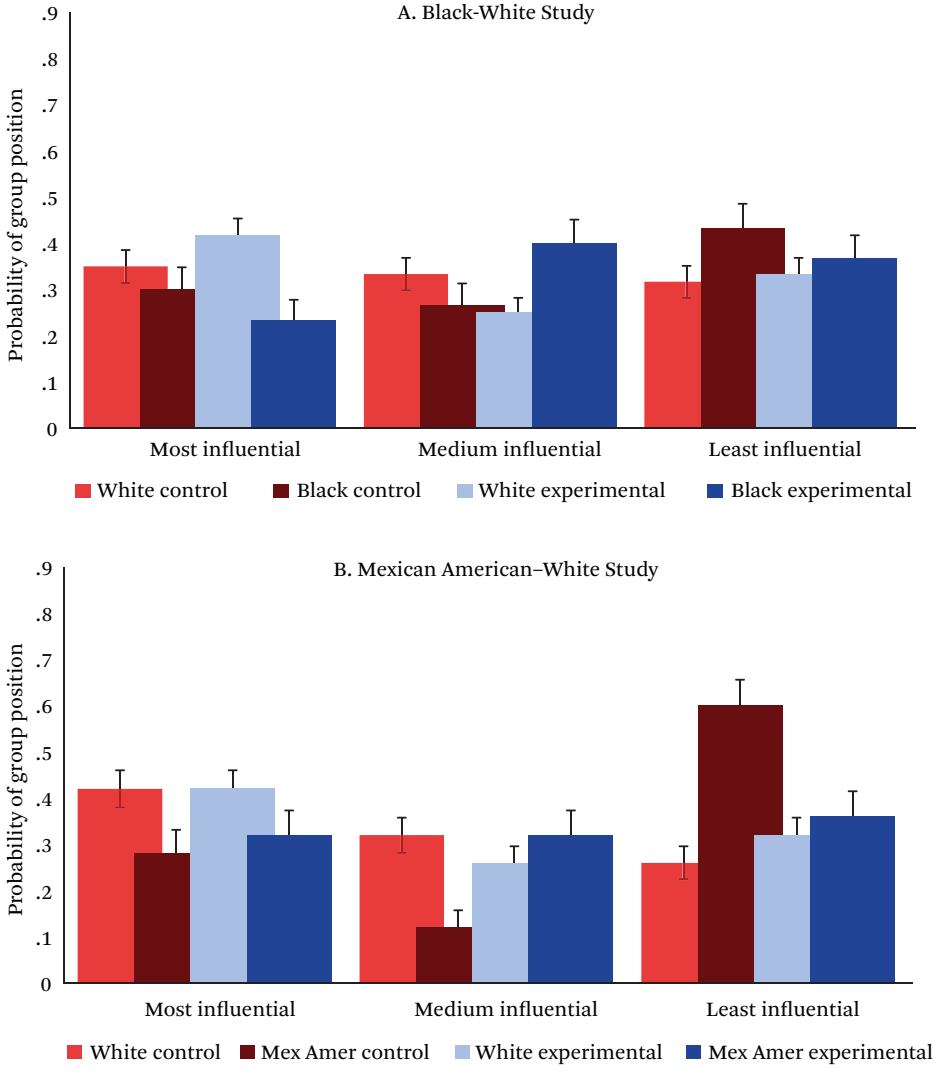
Source: Authors' tabulations.

deference toward Black or Mexican American group members for either the experimental or control condition (p = n.s., all contrasts).

For hypothesis 5a, we predicted that past contact with out-group members would be associated with higher willingness to have future contact with specific out-group members.[11] As predicted, we find that for White group members, past contact with Black individuals is associated with higher willingness to have future contact with their group (b = 0.105, $p < .05$). Similarly, we find that for White group members, past contact with Mexican American individuals is associated with higher willingness to

11. We acknowledge that this analysis is not equivalent for historically advantaged and excluded individuals given that each group included two White participants and one Black or Mexican American participant.

Figure 3. Predicted Probabilities of Group Position by Race, Ethnicity, and Condition



Source: Authors' tabulations.

have future contact with their group ($b = 0.114$, $p < .05$). In contrast, for Black and Mexican American group members, we do not find a relationship between past contact with White individuals and willingness to have future contact with their group (p = n.s., both). In summary, contact appears to have the predicted effect on willingness to interact for White participants, but not Mexican American or Black participants. For sensitivity analyses, both measures were analyzed separately using ordered logistic regression and the findings were consistent.

For hypothesis 5b, we predicted that past contact with out-group members would be associated with lower reported intergroup anxiety toward out-group members. As predicted, we find that for White participants, past contact with Black individuals and Mexican American individuals is associated with lower intergroup anxiety toward Black and Mexican American individuals ($b_{W/B} = -0.238$, $p < .001$; $b_{W/MA} = -0.251$, $p < .001$). Similarly, for Black and Mexican American participants, past contact with White individuals is associated with lower intergroup anxiety toward White individuals

($b_{B/W}$ = -0.329, $p < .01$; $b_{MA/W}$ = -0.288, $p < .001$). In summary, for all groups, contact reduces intergroup anxiety.

For hypothesis 5c, we predicted that intergroup anxiety would mediate the effect between past contact and willingness for future contact with specific out-group members. For White participants, intergroup anxiety explains about 76 percent of the relationship between past contact with Black individuals and willingness for future contact with group members ($p < .01$). Additionally, for White participants, intergroup anxiety explains about 38 percent of the relationship between past contact with Mexican American individuals and willingness for future contact with group members, although this effect is only marginally significant ($p = .055$, one-tailed). Because, for Black and Mexican American participants, past contact does not have a statistically significant effect on willingness to interact with one's group in the future, we do not examine the mediating effect of intergroup anxiety on the willingness for future contact.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Although both intergroup contact theory and status characteristics and expectations states theory seek to determine the processes by which prejudice and discrimination might be ameliorated, there has been little connection between the two literatures. In this project, we contribute to both literatures by examining the effects of status-based interventions and contact on both attitudes and behavior toward out-group members. In doing so, we make four main contributions.

Status Characteristics and Expectation States Theory

Our first set of predictions related to competence assessment by group members and their deferential behavior. Competence assessments and deferential behavior directly relate to task ability and, for SC-EST research, is usually at the heart of stereotypes activated in team settings. Competence and deference measures are different from assessments related to "willingness to interact," as interacting itself does not necessarily relate to competence but is instead a more affective measure.

For White and Mexican American groups, we find that the experimental manipulation intervenes in status processes. Specifically, in the experimental condition, but not the control condition, White participants rate their Mexican American counterparts as similarly competent to White group members. When we look at deferential behavior, we find an intervention effect such that in the control condition but not the experimental condition, Mexican American participants are less influential than White participants. In summary, in groups of Mexican American and White participants, the intervention decreased inequality. For groups that included White and Black participants, however, there was no effect of the intervention on either competence attributions or deference (apart from Black participants' assessments of their competence).

Intergroup Contact Theory

Our other set of predictions considered how prior contact affected willingness to interact with the group. The ICT literature consistently documents how prior contact with an out-group positively impacts willingness to interact with members of the out-group in the future. We ask, does prior contact affect the desire to further interact with those in the group that was initially assigned?

We find that past contact increases White participants' willingness for future contact with the group, but no support for this relationship for Mexican American or Black participants. We also find support for one of the most established findings in ICT: prior out-group contact decreased intergroup anxiety for White, Mexican American, and Black participants. Finally, for White participants we find that intergroup anxiety mediates the relationship between prior contact and willingness to interact. These findings largely support ICT; however, more research is needed to understand the potential for contact to differentially affect members of historically advantaged and disadvantaged groups (Pettigrew and Hewstone 2017). By examining two different racial-ethnic group compositions, we can examine the robustness of the theories and importance of different contexts. The differences we find in our study are theoretically important.

Combining ICT and SC-EST

Finally, we examined the effect of contact on assessments of competence (cognitive stereotypes) and deferential behavior. In so doing, we examined the effect of a well-established intervention (contact) on common measures of group inequality from SC-EST. Contrary to expectations, we find no effect of contact on White group members' assessments of Black or Mexican American group members' competence or deference. These findings are particularly interesting, because contact reduces intergroup anxiety and, for White group members, increases willingness for future contact. Thus, although contact is positively associated with more positive affect, it does not interrupt the emergence of a racial status hierarchy.

Conclusion

In summary, we combine intergroup contact theory and status characteristics and expectation states theory to address inequality in small task-oriented groups. We find fruitful integrations, but we also uncover some further mysteries. First, we find support for one of the most well-established patterns in ICT, that increasing contact with out-groups decreases intergroup anxiety for all the groups, and that intergroup anxiety operates as a mediating variable for the effect of contact on willingness to interact. However, and in line with some research, contact affected White but not Black or Mexican American participants' willingness to work together in the future. Analyses suggest no overall difference between White and Black or White and Mexican American group members' willingness to interact in the future (p = n.s., all contrasts). Indeed, participants overwhelmingly desired to interact with their same groups in the future rather than a different group. It is simply that past contact does not affect willingness to interact in the same way for White participants and Black or Mexican American participants.

Contrary to expectations, prior contact had no effect on assessments of competence for any groups. Although contact did affect White individuals' willingness to work together in the future, a more affective evaluation, it did not affect White individuals' assessments of Black or Mexican American group members' competence. This certainly suggests that an important avenue for contact theory would be a finer assessment of stereotype content. Perhaps, as research suggests, contact works better for reducing affective forms of prejudice, but lesser for cognitive forms of prejudice (Pettigrew and Hewstone 2017; Pettigrew et al. 2011).

The inconsistent complexity intervention affected the Mexican American–White groups more so than the Black-White groups. Specifically, in the Mexican American–White groups, the intervention reduced race-based inequality; however, this was not the case for the Black-White groups. Indeed, the deference levels among Black and White group members who did not receive interventions were similar to those that did. This is likely a demonstration of differences in stereotype content and strength associated with different racial-ethnic groups. Although Goar and Sell (2005) assessed groups of Black and White participants and find substantial differences between Black and White participants when there was no intervention, these groups were in a different location than in this study, specifically, the Midwest rather than the Southwest. This may indicate that stereotypes differ in different locations: stereotypes are not just global, they are also local.

Within our dataset, we do not have measures of initial stereotypes. One reason is that, by measuring these stereotypes, we may have affected participants' behavior. However, because stereotypes are affected by contact, one way to examine the potential effect of initial stereotypes on the strength of the IC interventions would be to assess the levels of contact in the differing settings. If, for example, the overall levels of contact differed between groups of Mexican American and White participants and groups of Black and White participants, it could suggest that the strength and perhaps content of stereotypes also differed. However, we find no differences in contact between the groups of Mexican American and White participants and groups of Black and White participants.

We do, however, find differences in intergroup anxiety levels between the groups of Mexican American and White participants and groups of Black and White participants. White participants have much higher levels of social

anxiety toward Black than toward Mexican American group members. These levels could have a couple explanations.[12]

First, it could signal that White group members are concerned that they might appear to be racist in interactions within public groups. This concern might further activate intergroup anxiety and result in White individuals leaving interracial interactions feeling cognitively or emotionally depleted (Richeson and Shelton 2007). Although we cannot test this directly, we find that when White group members had higher intergroup anxiety, they were less content with the group interaction.[13]

Another possibility is that the stereotypes of Black women as assertive may decrease negative attributions related to competence (Harkness 2016; Livingston, Rosette, and Washington 2012). Again, although we cannot test this directly, we find some support for the idea, because White group members do not rank Black group members as less competent than White group members.[14] Although we cannot conclusively demonstrate the reason for the lack of differences in deference between Black and White group members, our results point to the importance of assessing the initial conditions in each specific context (that is, perceived competence associated with intersectional stereotypes).

The combination of ICT and SC-EST demonstrates how the two theories can supplement each other and points out areas for future collaboration. First, we sought to understand how the general findings of ICT could relate to small, task-oriented groups to which members were assigned. We find that, in general, ICT helps explain, for White individuals, the relationship among contact, social anxiety, and affective measures related to a particular group. Relationships were not as clear for Black and Mexican American individuals. This relates to a common criticism that ICT has not researched those from socially excluded groups as frequently as those from socially advantaged groups (see discussion in Pettigrew and Hewstone 2017).

Second, although contact is predictive of affect, it did not predict competence assessments or measures of deference. Put differently, we find that the contact-based interventions are more effective at changing affective prejudices than cognitive prejudices. This suggests that, despite affective sentiments between members of historically advantaged and disadvantaged groups, status hierarchies may persist. If this pattern is reproduced in future research, it may suggest that status is particularly insidious, maintaining systems of inequality irrespective of affective sentiment.

In conclusion, we call for more work that combines insights from psychological and sociological social psychology to intervene in racial inequality. We support calls for more studies that use random assignment in assessment of the scope of intergroup contact theory (Paluck and Green 2009; Paluck, Green, and Green 2019; Paluck et al. 2021) and this would also provide an avenue to combining SC-EST and ICT. We also echo Thomas Pettigrew's and Miles Hewstone's call to avoid what they call "the single factor fallacy" of research (2017). That is, ethnic relations exist within a complex set of contexts. Researchers must consider the differing histories and norms that frame interactions among the various groups.

12. Notably, no association was found between deference and intergroup anxiety.

13. Analysis available on request from first author.

14. However, Black group members rate themselves as less competent than White group members in the control but not the experimental conditions. This was the same (predicted) pattern that we see in the White and Mexican American groups.

APPENDIX A

Table A.1. Summary of Hypotheses and Tests of Null Hypothesis

Hypotheses		Experiment 1		Experiment 2	
		Black	White	Mexican American	White
1a	Without an intervention, Black and Mexican American participants will view themselves as less competent than their White group members.	✓		✓	
2a	Without an intervention, White participants will view Black and Mexican American group members as less competent than other White group members.		x		✓
3a	Without an intervention, Black and Mexican American group members will be less influential than White group members.	x	x	✓	✓
1b	With an intervention, Black and Mexican American group members *will not* view themselves as less competent than their White group members.	✓		✓	
2b	With an intervention, White participants *will not* view Black and Mexican American group members as less competent than other White group members.		✓		✓
3b	With an intervention, Black and Mexican American group members *will not* be less influential than White group members.	✓	✓	✓	✓
4a	For White participants, increased contact with outgroup members (Black and Mexican American participants) will be associated with increased perceptions of competence of specific outgroup members.		x		x
4b	For White participants, increased contact with outgroup members (Black and Mexican American participants) will be associated with increased deference toward specific outgroup members.		x		x
5a	Past contact with outgroup members will be associated with higher willingness to have future contact with specific outgroup members within the group.	x	✓	x	✓
5b	Past contact with outgroup members will be associated with lower reported intergroup anxiety toward outgroup members.	✓	✓	✓	✓
5c	Intergroup anxiety will mediate the effect between past contact and willingness for future contact with specific outgroup members within the group.		✓		✓

Source: Authors' compilation.

Note: ✓ indicates we can reject the null at $p < .05$. x indicates we fail to reject the null hypothesis. Empty cells indicate that the test was not applicable.

APPENDIX B. TESTS OF EQUIVALENCE

When examining null hypotheses (1b, 2b, 3b), in addition to considering nonsignificant *p*-values, we also consider tests of equivalence (Janssen and Wellek 2010; Seaman and Serlin 1998; Schuirmann 1987; Dinno 2017). Tests of equivalence are designed to test the hypothesis that the effect is no different from zero. This is different from *p*-values from regression analyses, which provide the probability of getting a certain effect size if the actual effect size in the population was zero. This is a subtle but important difference.

As noted, in the Mexican American–White study, White group members in the control, but not the experimental condition evaluated White group members as more competent than Mexican American group members. Tests of equivalence further support these findings. In the experimental conditions, the observed effect falls within the equivalence bounds, meaning that there was practically zero difference in White group members' evaluations of Mexican American and White group members' competence ($p_{MA} < .001$; Seaman and Serlin 1998). Notably, this test of equivalence is also significant in the experimental condition for the Black-White study. However, because the control condition was not statistically significant, the overall meaning is less clear.

In both the Black-White and Mexican American–White studies, in the control condition, Black and Mexican American group members evaluated themselves as less competent than their White group members. In the experimental condition, however, no significant difference was found in Black and Mexican American group members' evaluations of their own and White group members' competence. Tests of equivalence further support these findings. In the experimental conditions of both studies, the observed effect falls within the equivalence bounds, meaning we found practically zero difference in Black or Mexican American group members' evaluations of their own or White group members' competence ($p_{BW} < .01$; $p_{MA} < .05$) (Seaman and Serlin 1998).

Hypothesis 3b predicted no difference in group position by ethnicity in the experimental condition. To confirm this hypothesis, we used tests of equivalence with proportions. Again, the tests of equivalence support the findings from the regression output. For the Mexican American–White study, the observed difference in the probability of group members being in each group position by ethnicity falls within equivalence bounds for the experimental condition.

APPENDIX C. GRAPH THEORETICAL EXPLANATION OF THE INCONSISTENT COMPLEXITY INTERVENTION

One way to think of the burden of proof process and intervention in that process is to think of the number of attributional "steps" people in an interaction might employ to help make decisions. These steps are often unconscious. For example, if two people are working together on one task, and they have information only about the diffuse status characteristics that separate them (for example, one might be a man while the other is a woman), those diffuse status characteristics will be used to make inferences about who should be given more influence than the other. This is especially the case for "unitary tasks," tasks that are assumed to be determined by one specific skill (or specific status characteristic). An example is that men might be granted more influence on a task involving GIS skill.

On the basis of research by Cohen (1993) and Fişek (1991), Goar and Sell (2005) argued that if the task itself was defined as *not* unitary, but rather composed of many differently evaluated subtasks, the steps people employ in decision-making change. The steps increase, and since skills associated with the tasks are not necessarily related to each other, "easy" generalization or stereotyping is more difficult. In these cases, there is an intervention in the burden of proof process. Importantly, Goar and Sell argued that the task itself could be the same, but the *perception* of the task could change the interaction and result in less inequality between interactants. Rather than defining the task as involving only GIS, one might describe it as involving many different skills that might not be related to each other, such as geometric reasoning, topological understanding, and ecological and biological knowledge.

This process can also be described in graph

theory, which can codify the attributional steps mentioned above (Berger et al. 1977; Goar and Sell 2005; Webster and Hysom 1998).

REFERENCES

American Anthropological Association (AAA). 1998. "AAA Statement on Race." *American Anthropologist* 100(3): 712–13. Accessed June 11, 2022. https://www.americananthro.org/ConnectWithAAA/Content.aspx?ItemNumber=2583.

Barlow, Fiona Kate, Stefania Paolini, Anne Pedersen, Matthew J. Hornsey, Helena R. M. Radke, Jake Harwood, Mark Rubin, and Chris G. Sibley. 2012. "The Contact Caveat: Negative Contact Predicts Increased Prejudice More Than Positive Contact Predicts Reduced Prejudice." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 38(12): 1629–43. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167212457953.

Beelmann, Andreas, and Kim Sarah Heinemann. 2014. "Preventing Prejudice and Improving Intergroup Attitudes: A Meta-Analysis of Child and Adolescent Training Programs." *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology* 35(1): 10–24. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2013.11.002.

Benard, Stephen, Doan Long, D. Adam Nicholson, Emily Meanwell, Eric L. Wright, and Peter Lista. 2022. "To Forgive Is Divine? Morality and the Status Value of Intergroup Revenge and Forgiveness." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation of the Social Sciences* 8(6): 122–39. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.6.07.

Berger, Joseph, Bernard Cohen, and Morris Zelditch. 1972. "Status Characteristics and Social Interaction." *American Sociological Review* 37(3): 241–55.

Berger, Joseph, M. Hammit Fişek, Robert Z. Norman, and Morris Zelditch Jr. 1977. *Status Characteristics and Social Interaction*. New York: Elsevier.

Berger, Joseph, Robert Z. Norman, James W. Balkwell, and Roy F. Smith. 1992. "Status Inconsistency in Task Situations: A Test of Four Status Processing Principles." *American Sociological Review* 57(6): 843–56. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/2096127.

Berger, Joseph, Susan J. Rosenholtz, and Morris Zelditch Jr. 1980. "Status Organizing Processes." *Annual Review of Sociology* 6(1): 479–508.

Berger, Joseph, and Murray Webster Jr. 2006. "Expectations, Status, and Behavior." In *Contemporary Social Psychological Theories*, edited by Peter J. Burke. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press.

———. 2018. "Expectations, Status, and Behavior Theories." In *Contemporary Social Psychological Theories*, 2nd ed. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Biernat, Monica, and Diane Kobrynowicz. 1997. "Gender- and Race-Based Standards of Competence: Lower Minimum Standards but Higher Ability Standards for Devalued Groups." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 72(3): 544–57.

Binder, Jens, Hanna Zagefka, Rupert Brown, Friedrich Funke, Thomas Kessler, Amelie Mummendey, Annemie Maquil, Stephanie Demoulin, and Jacques-Philippe Leyens. 2009. "Does Contact Reduce Prejudice or Does Prejudice Reduce Contact? A Longitudinal Test of the Contact Hypothesis Among Majority and Minority Groups in Three European Countries." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 96(4): 843–56. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1037/a0013470.

Brambilla, Marco, Marcella Ravenna, and Miles Hewstone. 2012. "Changing Stereotype Content Through Mental Imagery: Imagining Intergroup Contact Promotes Stereotype Change." *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 15(3): 305–15. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430211427574.

Brown, Rupert, and Miles Hewstone. 2005. "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Contact." In *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 37: 255–343. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(05)37005-5.

Cohen, Elizabeth G. 1982. "A Multi-Ability Approach to the Integrated Classroom." *Journal of Reading Behavior* 14(4): 439–60.

———. 1993. "From Theory to Practice: The Development of an Applied Research Program." In *Theoretical Research Programs: Studies in the Growth of Theory*, edited by Joseph Berger and Morris Zelditch. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Cohen, Elizabeth G., and Rachel Lotan, eds. 1997. *Working for Equity in Heterogeneous Classrooms: Sociological Theory in Practice.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Cohen, Elizabeth G., and Susan S. Roper. 1972. "Modification of Interracial Interaction Disability: An Application of Status Characteristic Theory." *American Sociological Review* 37(6): 643–57.

Correll, Shelley J., and Cecilia Ridgeway. 2003. "Ex-

pectation States Theory." In *Handbook of Social Psychology*, edited by John Delamater. New York: Kluwer Academic Press.

Delgado, Richard, and Jean Stefancic, eds. 2001. *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*. New York: New York University Press. Accessed June 11, 2022. http://uolibraries.worldcat.org/title/critical-race-theory-an-introduction/oclc/45387241.

Dinno, Alexis. 2017. *Two One-Sided Tests of Equivalence* [computer program]. Version 3.1.3. https://www.alexisdinno.com/stata/tost.html.

Dittmann, Andrea G., Nicole M. Stephens, and Sarah S. M. Townsend. 2020. "Achievement Is Not Class-Neutral: Working Together Benefits People from Working-Class Contexts." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology: Attitudes and Social Cognition* 119(3): 517–39.

Dovidio, John F., Angelika Love, Fabian M. H. Schellhaas, and Miles Hewstone. 2017. "Reducing Intergroup Bias through Intergroup Contact: Twenty Years of Progress and Future Directions." *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 20(5): 606–20. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430217712052.

Esqueda, Cynthia Willis, Russ K. E. Espinoza, and Scott E. Culhane. 2008. "The Effects of Ethnicity, SES, and Crime Status on Juror Decision Making: A Cross-Cultural Examination of European American and Mexican American Mock Jurors." *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 30(2): 181–99. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0739986308315319.

Feagin, Joe R., and Kimberley Ducey. 2019. *Racist America: Roots, Current Realities, and Future Reparations*, 4th ed. New York: Routledge.

Fişek, M. Hamit. 1991. "Complex Task Structures and Power and Prestige Orders." *Advances in Group Processes* 8: 115–34.

Fiske, Susan T., Amy J. C. Cuddy, Peter Glick, and Jun Xu. 2002. "A Model of (Often Mixed) Stereotype Content: Competence and Warmth Respectively Follow from Perceived Status and Competition." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 82(6): 878–902. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.82.6.878.

Freedman, David A. 1981. "Bootstrapping Regression Models." *Annals of Statistics* 9(6): 1218–28.

Freese, Lee. 1976. "The Generalization of Specific Performance Expectations." *Sociometry* 39(3): 194. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/2786512.

Fussell, Elizabeth. 2014. "Warmth of the Welcome: Attitudes Toward Immigrants and Immigration Policy in the United States." *Annual Review of Sociology* 40(1): 479–98. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-071913-043325.

Goar, Carla, and Jane Sell. 2005. "Using Task Definition to Modify Racial Inequality Within Task Groups." *Sociological Quarterly* 46(3): 525–43. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.2005.00025.x.

Hamedani, Mar Yam G., and Hazel Rose Markus. 2019. "Understanding Culture Clashes and Catalyzing Change: A Culture Cycle Approach." *Frontiers in Psychology* 10 (April): 700. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00700.

Harkness, Sarah K. 2016. "Discrimination in Lending Markets: Status and the Intersections of Gender and Race." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 79(1): 81–93. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0190272515623459.

Hayward, Lydia E., Linda R. Tropp, Matthew J. Hornsey, and Fiona Kate Barlow. 2017. "Toward a Comprehensive Understanding of Intergroup Contact: Descriptions and Mediators of Positive and Negative Contact Among Majority and Minority Groups." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 43(3): 347–64. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167216685291.

Hewstone, Miles, Charles M. Judd, and Melanie Sharp. 2011. "Do Observer Ratings Validate Self-Reports of Intergroup Contact?: A Round-Robin Analysis." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 47(3): 599–609. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2010.12.014.

Janssen, Arnold, and Stefan Wellek. 2010. "Exact Linear Rank Tests for Two-Sample Equivalence Problems with Continuous Data." *Statistica Neerlandica* 64(4): 482–504.

Katz, Irwin, Judith Goldston, and Lawrence Benjamin. 1958. "Behavior and Productivity in Biracial Work Groups." *Human Relations* 11(2): 126–41. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/001872675801100203.

Killewald, Alexandra, and Brielle Bryan. 2018. "Falling Behind: The Role of Inter- and Intragenerational Processes in Widening Racial and Ethnic Wealth Gaps Through Early and Middle Adulthood." *Social Forces* 97(2): 705–40.

Kotzur, Patrick F., and Ulrich Wagner. 2021. "The Dynamic Relationship between Contact Opportunities, Positive and Negative Intergroup Contact, and Prejudice: A Longitudinal Investigation." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*

120(2): 418–42. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000258.

Kozol, Jonathan. 2005. *The Shame of the Nation: The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America.* New York: Three Rivers Press.

Laar, Colette Van, Shana Levin, Stacey Sinclair, and Jim Sidanius. 2005. "The Effect of University Roommate Contact on Ethnic Attitudes and Behavior." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 41(4): 329–45. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2004.08.002.

Livingston, Robert W., Ashleigh Shelby Rosette, and Ella F. Washington. 2012. "Can an Agentic Black Woman Get Ahead? The Impact of Race and Interpersonal Dominance on Perceptions of Female Leaders." *Psychological Science* 23(4): 354–58. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797611428079.

Lolliot, Simon, Benjamin Fell, Katharina Schmid, Ralf Wölfer, Hermann Swart, Alberto Voci, Oliver Christ, Rachel New, and Miles Hewstone. 2015. "Measures of Intergroup Contact." In *Measures of Personality and Social Psychological Constructs*, edited by Gregory J. Boyle, Donald H. Saklofsky, and Gerald Matthews. New York: Elsevier. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-386915-9.00023-1.

Long, J. Scott, and Jeremy Freese. 2014. *Regression Models for Categorical Dependent Variables Using Stata*, 3rd ed. College Station, Tex.: Stata Press.

Lopez, J. Derek. 2005. "Race-Related Stress and Sociocultural Orientation Among Latino Students During Their Transition Into a Predominately White, Highly Selective Institution." *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education* 4(4): 354–65. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192705279594.

Maloney, E. K., Kimberly B. Rogers, and Lynn Smith-Lovin. 2022. "Status as Deference: Cultural Meaning as a Source of Occupational Behavior." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 70–88. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.04.

Manago, Bianca, Jane Sell, and Carla Goar. 2019. "Groups, Inequality, and Synergy." *Social Forces* 97(3): 1365–88. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soy063.

Markovsky, Barry, Le Roy F. Smith, and Joseph Berger. 1984. "Do Status Interventions Persist?" *American Sociological Review* 49(3): 373–82.

Mousa, Salma. 2020. "Building Social Cohesion Between Christians and Muslims Through Soccer in Post-ISIS Iraq." *Science* 369(6505): 866–70.

Pager, Devah, and Hana Shepherd. 2008. "The Sociology of Discrimination: Racial Discrimination in Employment, Housing, Credit, and Consumer Markets." *Annual Review of Sociology* 34(1): 181–209.

Pager, Devah, Bruce Western, and Bart Bonikowski. 2009. "Discrimination in a Low-Wage Labor Market: A Field Experiment." *American Sociological Review* 74(5): 777–99.

Paluck, Elizabeth Levy, and Donald P. Green. 2009. "Prejudice Reduction: What Works? A Review and Assessment of Research and Practice." *Annual Review of Psychology* 60(1): 339–67. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.60.110707.163607.

Paluck, Elizabeth Levy, Seth A. Green, and Donald P. Green. 2019. "The Contact Hypothesis Re-Evaluated." *Behavioural Public Policy* 3(2): 129–58. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/bpp.2018.25.

Paluck, Elizabeth Levy, Roni Porat, Chelsey S. Clark, and Donald P. Green. 2021. "Prejudice Reduction: Progress and Challenges." *Annual Review of Psychology* 72(1): 533–60. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-071620-030619.

Paolini, Stefania, Jake Harwood, Mark Rubin, Shenel Husnu, Nicholas Joyce, and Miles Hewstone. 2014. "Positive and Extensive Intergroup Contact in the Past Buffers against the Disproportionate Impact of Negative Contact in the Present: Past Contact Moderates Negative Contact Effects." *European Journal of Social Psychology* 44(6): 548–62. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2029.

Pettigrew, Thomas F. 1997. "Generalized Intergroup Contact Effects on Prejudice." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 23(2): 173–85.

———. 2008. "Future Directions for Intergroup Contact Theory and Research." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 32(3): 187–99. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2007.12.002.

Pettigrew, Thomas F., and Miles Hewstone. 2017. "The Single Factor Fallacy: Implications of Missing Critical Variables from an Analysis of Intergroup Contact Theory [1]: The Single Factor Fallacy." *Social Issues and Policy Review* 11(1): 8–37. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/sipr.12026.

Pettigrew, Thomas F., and Linda R. Tropp. 2006. "A Meta-Analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*

90(5): 751–83. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1037/0022–3514.90.5.751.

———. 2008. "How Does Intergroup Contact Reduce Prejudice? Meta-Analytic Tests of Three Mediators." *European Journal of Social Psychology* 38(6): 922–34. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.504.

Pettigrew, Thomas F., Linda R. Tropp, Ulrich Wagner, and Oliver Christ. 2011. "Recent Advances in Intergroup Contact Theory." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 35(3): 271–80. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2011.03.001.

Quillian, Lincoln, John Lee, and Brandon Honoré. 2020. "Racial Discrimination in the U.S. Housing and Mortgage Lending Markets: A Quantitative Review of Trends, 1976–2016." *Race and Social Problems* 12(1): 13–28.

Richeson, Jennifer A., and J. Nicole Shelton. 2007. "Negotiating Interracial Interactions: Costs, Consequences, and Possibilities." *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 16(6): 316–20. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8721.2007.00528.x.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L. 1991. "The Social Construction of Status Value: Gender and Other Nominal Characteristics." *Social Forces* 70(2): 367. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/2580244.

———. 2019. *Status: Why Is It Everywhere? Why Does It Matter?* New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L., and Hazel Rose Markus. 2022. "The Significance of Status: What It Is and How It Shapes Inequality." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 1–25. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.01.

Scacco, Alexandra, and Shana S. Warren. 2018. "Can Social Contact Reduce Prejudice and Discrimination? Evidence from a Field Experiment in Nigeria." *American Political Science Review* 112(3): 654–77. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055418000151.

Schäfer, Sarina J., Mathias Kauff, Francesca Prati, Mathijs Kros, Timothy Lang, and Oliver Christ. 2021. "Does Negative Contact Undermine Attempts to Improve Intergroup Relations? Deepening the Understanding of Negative Contact and Its Consequences for Intergroup Contact Research and Interventions." *Journal of Social Issues* 77(1): 197–216. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12422.

Schuirmann, Donald J. 1987. "A Comparison of the Two One-Sided Tests Procedure and the Power Approach for Assessing the Equivalence of Average Bioavailability." *Journal of Pharmacokinetics and Biopharmaceutics* 15(6): 657–80. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01068419.

Seaman, Michael A., and Ronald C. Serlin. 1998. "Equivalence Confidence Intervals for Two-Group Comparisons of Means." *Psychological Methods* 3(4): 403–11.

Short, Robert, and Lisa Magaña. 2002. "Political Rhetoric, Immigration Attitudes, and Contemporary Prejudice: A Mexican American Dilemma." *Journal of Social Psychology* 142(6): 701–12. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/00224540209603930.

Sobel, Michael E. 1982. "Asymptotic Confidence Intervals for Indirect Effects in Structural Equation Models." *Sociological Methodology* 13: 290. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/270723.

Stephan, Walter G. 2014. "Intergroup Anxiety: Theory, Research, and Practice." *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 18(3): 239–55. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868314530518.

Stephan, Walter G., and Cookie White Stephan. 1985. "Intergroup Anxiety." *Journal of Social Issues* 41(3): 157–75. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1985.tb01134.x.

Stephens, Nicole M., Hazel Rose Markus, and L. Taylor Phillips. 2014. "Social Class Culture Cycles: How Three Gateway Contexts Shape Selves and Fuel Inequality." *Annual Review of Psychology* 65(1): 611–34. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010213-115143.

Stephens, Nicole M., Sarah S. M. Townsend, and Andrea G. Dittmann. 2019. "Social-Class Disparities in Higher Education and Professional Workplaces: The Role of Cultural Mismatch." *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 28(1): 67–73. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721418806506.

Tropp, Linda R. 2007. "Perceived Discrimination and Interracial Contact: Predicting Interracial Closeness among Black and White Americans." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 70(1): 70–81. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/019027250707000108.

Tropp, Linda R., and Thomas F. Pettigrew. 2005. "Differential Relationships Between Intergroup Contact and Affective and Cognitive Dimensions of Prejudice." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 31(8): 1145–58. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167205274854.

Valencia, Richard R., and Mary S. Black. 2002. "'Mexican Americans Don't Value Education!'—On the Basis of the Myth, Mythmaking, and De-

bunking." *Journal of Latinos & Education* 1(2): 81. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532771XJLE0102_2.

Valentino, Lauren. 2022. "Status Lenses: Mapping Hierarchy and Consensus in Status Beliefs." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 89–110. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.05.

Webster, Murray, and Stuart J. Hysom. 1998. "Creating Status Characteristics." *American Sociological Review* 63(3): 351–78. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/2657554.

Welch, Kelly, Allison Ann Payne, Ted Chiricos, and Marc Gertz. 2011. "The Typification of Hispanics as Criminals and Support for Punitive Crime Control Policies." *Social Science Research* 40(3): 822–40. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2010.09.012.

Zhou, Shelly, Elizabeth Page-Gould, Arthur Aron, Anne Moyer, and Miles Hewstone. 2019. "The Extended Contact Hypothesis: A Meta-Analysis on 20 Years of Research." *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 23(2): 132–60. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868318762647.

Psychological Challenges and Social Supports That Shape the Pursuit of Socioeconomic Mobility

MESMIN DESTIN, RÉGINE DEBROSSE, MICHELLE RHEINSCHMIDT-SAME, AND JENNIFER A. RICHESON

Many people seek higher status through socioeconomic mobility. Higher education institutions and professional workplaces include barriers to entry and inclusion that make it difficult for people from lower socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds to reach their goals. Experiences within these settings can lead people to feel status uncertainty, *which is an aversive ambiguity about where one stands on the socioeconomic hierarchy. Status uncertainty has negative consequences for achievement and well-being, but social support may play a role and buffer against these negative consequences. First, a longitudinal study of college students shows predicted connections between socioeconomic background, status uncertainty, social support, and grades at the end of the college years. Next, an experiment shows that inducing a stronger sense of social support protects against negative workplace outcomes for those from lower SES backgrounds. Together, the studies demonstrate the significance of supportive forces during the pursuit of socioeconomic mobility.*

Keywords: socioeconomic status, academic achievement, well-being, social support

One of the most common ways that people seek higher status is following a path of socioeconomic mobility characterized by academic achievement and success in the workplace (Ma, Pender, and Welch 2016). Approximately half of working adults born in the 1980s indeed earn household incomes that exceed the household incomes of their childhood years (Chetty et al. 2017). These trajectories often result from the expanded labor-market opportunities that accompany a degree from a reputable four-year college or university. It is well documented, however, that the likelihood of successfully navigating such opportunities to attain educational and occupational status depends on many factors unrelated to individual merit or

Mesmin Destin is associate professor of psychology and education at Northwestern University, United States. **Régine Debrosse** is assistant professor of Social Work at McGill University, Canada. **Michelle Rheinschmidt-Same** is a senior research associate at Loyola University Chicago, United States. **Jennifer A. Richeson** is Philip R. Allen Professor of Psychology at Yale University, United States.

 Destin, Mesmin, Régine Debrosse, Michelle Rheinschmidt-Same, and Jennifer A. Richeson. 2022. "Psychological Challenges and Social Supports That Shape the Pursuit of Socioeconomic Mobility." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 158–71. DOI: 10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.08. Direct correspondence to: Mesmin Destin, at m-destin@northwestern.edu, Northwestern University, 2120 Campus Drive, Evanston, IL 60208, United States; Régine Debrosse, at regine.debrosse@mcgill.ca, McGill University, 550 SherBrooke Ouest Suite 100, Tour Est, Montréal, QC H3A 1B9, Canada; Michelle Rheinschmidt-Same, at msame@luc.edu, Loyola University, 1032 W Sheridan Road, Chicago, IL 60660, United States; Jennifer A. Richeson, at jennifer.richeson@yale.edu, Yale University, 10 Hillhouse Avenue, New Haven, CT 06511, United States.

ability (see McNamee and Miller 2009). One inherent challenge associated with upward socioeconomic mobility is a type of uncertainty that can occur when ascending a status hierarchy. As people begin to reach success in school and work, they are likely to experience a sense of *status uncertainty* or destabilizing difficulty in understanding and articulating their own socioeconomic status (SES; Destin, Rheinschmidt-Same, and Richeson 2017).

THE EXPERIENCE OF SOCIOECONOMIC MOBILITY

Helping people complete more education, obtain higher-status jobs, earn more income, and achieve financial stability are common objectives of a variety of social policies. A trove of correlational studies supports these efforts and demonstrates the lifetime rewards of having higher SES. For instance, higher SES is associated with better health, a greater sense of control, and higher levels of happiness (see, for example, Cohen et al. 2010; Kraus, Piff, and Keltner 2009; Diener et al. 2010). At the same time, however, both higher- and lower-SES contexts confer protective factors that promote positive outcomes and risk factors that can lead to negative outcomes (Spencer, Dupree, and Hartmann 1997; Spencer et al. 2015). In other words, not all aspects of having higher SES are experienced in positive or even demonstratively better ways than aspects of having lower SES. This perspective is relevant in understanding the experiences, trajectories, and outcomes of people who are moving from a lower to a higher SES position.

Higher education provides an especially suitable context to examine experiences of upward socioeconomic mobility. As young people from lower SES backgrounds transition into and out of college, they move toward establishing their own SES that may be distinct from that of their origins. Sociological studies provide in-depth examples of some of the positive experiences in addition to some of the unique challenges that lower SES students face in college environments. These include, for example, covering the everyday financial costs of attending college with limited economic resources and support (see, for example, Goldrick-Rab 2016). They also often include navigating a complex and expensive peer social scene dominated by higher SES norms and values (see, for example, Armstrong and Hamilton 2013).

Multiple theoretical perspectives in psychology have also provided insight on the challenges that lower SES students systematically face as they experience socioeconomic mobility in higher education. One area of work draws specific attention to the social and cultural resources from their home communities that students often lose as they transition to colleges and universities (see, for example, Herrmann and Varnum 2018). This social and physical separation from family, friends, and communities often necessary to pursue higher status can create a psychological conflict known as achievement guilt (Covarrubias and Fryberg 2015).

Another related area of work in psychology describes the specific ways that lower and higher SES contexts tend to differ in regard to their cultural norms and values. Specifically, higher SES environments are more likely to promote a sense of independence, separation, and competition while lower SES environments are more likely to encourage interdependence, connection, and cooperation (Stephens, Markus, and Phillips 2014). As higher SES environments, most four-year colleges and universities espouse values and practices that are aligned with the experience of students from higher SES backgrounds. For example, administrators, college leaders, and faculty often emphasize the importance of independent values such as competition over interdependent values such as community responsibility. As a result, college students from lower SES backgrounds must often navigate an unfamiliar set of cultural norms and expectations on college campuses and in college classrooms. Several experiments have demonstrated how this cultural mismatch can impair the ability of lower SES students to succeed in college environments (Stephens et al. 2012). Further, even professional workplaces can continue to advantage the experience of employees from higher SES backgrounds through similar processes (Dittmann 2020).

STATUS UNCERTAINTY

One way that all of these social, psychological, and academic challenges that can accompany

socioeconomic mobility are actually experienced and understood by young people is through shifts in their identities. More specifically, people strive to have a clear understanding of who they are and where they stand in society, which can be described as their status-based identities. Such identities are made up of a combination of the narratives that people hold about their SES, the SES groups that they feel connected to, and the ways they imagine their SES in the future. Status-based identity is thus dynamic and shifts according to time and social context. People who experience major shifts in their status-based identity, perhaps due to rising the socioeconomic ladder, become likely to feel heightened status uncertainty.

The concept of status uncertainty connects multiple traditions of theory and research related to the psychological study of the self with the study of SES and socioeconomic mobility. It captures how the experience of socioeconomic mobility disrupts a person's understanding of relevant aspects of who they are. For example, the narrative component of one person's status-based identity might include their history of growing up with a single parent in a working-class community. Throughout their school years, perhaps they found a high level of inspiration and support, eventually leading to their enrollment at a major university and trajectory toward a successful professional career. The social component of their status-based identity could begin to feel complicated as they came to experience economic mobility and create new connections. They might feel difficulty fully relating to the experience of their college and workplace peers from more economically privileged backgrounds. At the same time, they could also have an increasingly different life experience from the members of their family of origin. For instance, this divergence could become poignant when contrasting lifestyles, such as being able to afford more expensive housing or considering a widening range of possible travel or vacation plans that remain inaccessible to important family and community members. Finally, the future component of their status-based identity could include concerns about professional advancement, pressure to make a family of their own, and anxiety about the possibility of owning a home. Overall, it is likely that a person on this particular life trajectory would feel considerable status uncertainty and ambiguity about how to describe their SES given the various shifting status positions associated with their dynamic identities. Finding a significantly different economic position during adulthood than in childhood, feeling somewhat connected to multiple status groups, and having an unclear idea of future social and economic prospects all contribute to status uncertainty and its array of psychological consequences.

Facing status uncertainty can be associated with a range of challenging and undesirable outcomes. In general, people strive to achieve a degree of coherence and clarity in understanding who they are and how other people evaluate them and their various identities (Campbell et al. 1996). It is psychologically gratifying for individuals to feel that they know themselves well and psychologically distressing for individuals to feel unsure about themselves and their identities. For many individuals from lower SES backgrounds, achieving success in school and the workplace can create distance from the people and communities of their origin. At the same time, they may not feel securely settled in new, higher-status contexts.

Existing studies suggest that this specific form of uncertainty leads people to encounter greater challenges in navigating opportunities and continuing to successfully pursue valued goals (Castillo-Lavergne and Destin 2019; Destin, Rheinschmidt-Same, and Richeson 2019; 2017; Destin and Debrosse 2017). For example, a survey of approximately 150 college students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds showed that the experience of status uncertainty can be measured reliably. Further, students from lower SES backgrounds, for whom college is likely to promote status mobility, report higher feelings of status uncertainty than those from higher SES backgrounds, and these feelings are associated with lower psychological well-being during college (Destin, Rheinschmidt-Same, and Richeson 2017). A subsequent longitudinal study shows a pathway whereby increased uncertainty about SES leads to a weakened sense of academic efficacy,

which leads to lower grades during college (Destin, Rheinschmidt-Same, and Richeson 2019).

However, evidence also suggests that feelings of uncertainty about SES during status transitions are malleable and can be shifted based on the social context and experiences. In an experiment including approximately two hundred college students, an experimental treatment successfully led participants to momentarily experience either high or low status uncertainty. Participants randomly assigned to experience low status uncertainty were subsequently more motivated to engage in important school behaviors, including seeking support from peers and faculty, than participants assigned to experience high status uncertainty (Destin, Rheinschmidt-Same, and Richeson 2019). Because a brief cognitive exercise can momentarily shift feelings of status uncertainty, it is likely that various types of more consistent support may influence the experience of people pursuing socioeconomic mobility.

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

Social support is one of the most consistent and reliable predictors of health and well-being (see Cohen and Willis 1985; Taylor 2011). Decades of evidence demonstrate that the more people feel they can count on close others in their everyday lives and in times of need, the better they feel about their lives (see Feeney and Collins 2015). Support itself has been shown to benefit a range of lifetime outcomes related to health and achievement, and a sense of social connectedness can be especially important for people from lower SES backgrounds (see Chen, Brody, and Miller 2017). At the same time, however, the paradox of social support is that those who most need it often encounter the greatest barriers in obtaining consistent support from others. When people face a variety of social and psychological challenges like unemployment or depression, they become less likely to reach out for support. Further, people sometimes avoid contact or providing support to others who face such negative circumstances (Debrosse 2021). These general patterns related to social support may be relevant to understanding the experience of people facing status uncertainty as they pursue socioeconomic mobility.

As young people navigate the social hierarchy, they may benefit from feeling connected to a range of important people in their lives as well as to specialized programs and initiatives that build community and support. However, because feelings of status uncertainty are negative, aversive, and ambiguous, they may lead people to feel isolated and unable to connect with important sources of social support. Examining these supports or their absence may be essential in understanding when and how status uncertainty instigated by the experience of socioeconomic mobility leads to negative academic and workplace outcomes.

In related research, when young people are experimentally guided to cultivate support on the path to their goals, they find more importance and meaning in the challenging everyday tasks that they encounter (Destin, Debrosse, and Silverman 2021). This type of meaning making can facilitate both well-being and continued persistence. Thus lack of support may help to explain how status uncertainty translates to impaired achievement and well-being. At the same time, finding and maintaining support amidst socioeconomic mobility may bolster positive outcomes despite facing status uncertainty. For example, a college student from a lower SES background who begins to grapple with uncertainty about their place in society may be particularly uncertain about where to reach for support and how to articulate everyday challenges. Subsequently, the lack of support is likely to have negative consequences for a range of important outcomes related to their achievement and health. However, finding and maintaining various forms of interpersonal and institutional support may mitigate the negative effects of status uncertainty and the challenges of socioeconomic mobility on the student's goal-pursuit and well-being.

CURRENT STUDIES

In two studies, we analyze the experience of young people navigating the social hierarchy and working toward socioeconomic mobility in college and the workplace with various levels of social support (see figure 1). First, a college

longitudinal study examines the possible role that experiences of social support may play in a hypothesized pathway explaining the experiences and outcomes of college students. The study follows a cohort of approximately 150 college students from the first term of their first year of college to the final quarter of their fourth year. The study evaluates the proposed path linking a lower SES family background to greater status uncertainty during college. The study further tests whether more status uncertainty is associated with finding lower levels of support later during college, and in turn negative potential consequences for both academic achievement and well-being.

Turning to the next developmental phase, the second study is a workplace experiment to test the potential roles that status uncertainty and social support may play in shaping occupational experiences and outcomes after college. The experiment includes a sample of approximately two hundred recent college graduates who have entered the workforce. The design evaluates whether coming from a lower-income background, experiencing uncertainty about SES, and experiencing social support are each independently associated with psychological experiences in the workplace (that is, organizational fit, comfort, commitment, and job satisfaction) among recent college graduates. Further, an experimental manipulation tests whether feeling a stronger sense of social support affects the workplace experience and directly or indirectly protects against intentions to leave an occupation.

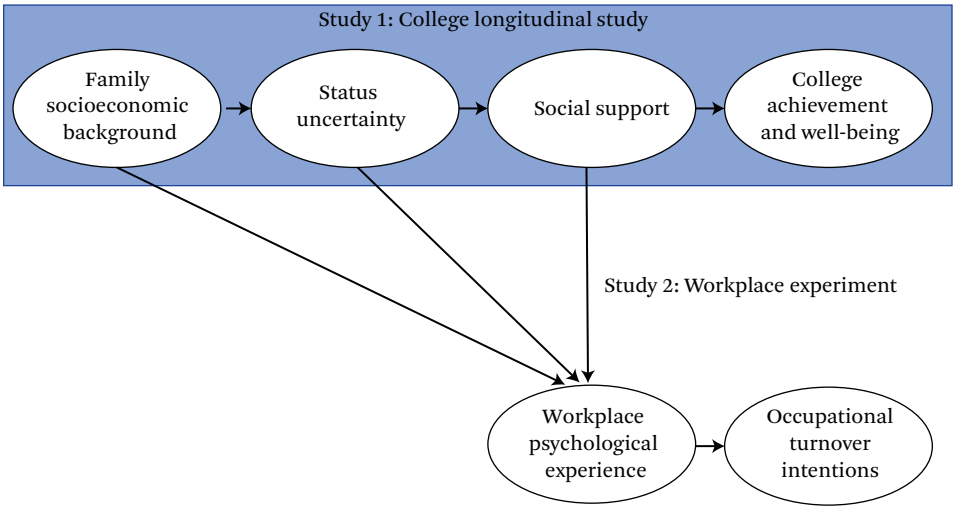
COLLEGE LONGITUDINAL STUDY

We conducted a longitudinal study of college students in order to evaluate how the financial resources in their family of origin are associated with their developing understanding of their own evolving socioeconomic status. We also aimed to determine whether connections between students' levels of certainty or uncertainty about their SES and the social support and connections they maintain were significant, having implications for achievement and well-being.

Method

We recruited 153 college students during the first semester of their first year of college at a selective four-year institution in the Midwest. Participants completed an online survey once each year for four years that included several measures related to their socioeconomic identity, behaviors, well-being, and achievement. They also provided permission for us to access

Figure 1. Model of Pathways Tested in College Longitudinal Study and Workplace Experiment



Source: Authors' conceptualization.

their grade point averages (GPA) from administrative records each year. For this report, we focus on measures related to the hypothesized relationships.

Measures

Family income. During the first term of their first year (T1), participants completed a measure of their annual family income on a scale from 1 = $25,000 or less to 9 = $300,000 or more ($M$ = 5.01, $90,000 to $120,000, SD = 2.59). Family income is theorized as the aspect of SES especially indicative of socioeconomic mobility among students of traditional college age in ways that are connected to status uncertainty.

Status uncertainty. During their second year (T2), participants completed an eleven-item measure of the degree of certainty or uncertainty they felt about their own SES, from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree; sample item, "My beliefs about where I stand in society often conflict with one another"; M = 3.72, SD = 1.05, α = .91 (Destin, Rheinschmidt-Same, and Richeson 2017).

Social support and connection. During their fourth year (T3), participants completed an eleven-item measure of the level of the availability of various sources of social support and connection in their lives, from 1 = none to 5 = all of the time; sample item, "Someone you can count on to listen to you when you need to talk"; M = 4.18, SD = .75, α = .93 (Sherbourne and Stewart 1991).

Achievement. Finally, the cumulative GPAs of participants were collected at the end of their fourth year of college (M = 3.59, SD = .29).

Well-being. During their fourth year, participants also completed a five-item measure of life satisfaction to evaluate their general well-being, from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree; sample item, "I am satisfied with my life"; M = 4.89, SD = 1.16, α = .81 (Diener et al. 1985).

Self-concept clarity. Participants completed a measure of self-concept clarity at T2, which captures general uncertainty about the self on a scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree; sample item, "In general, I have a clear sense of who I am and what I am"; M = 4.12, SD = 1.07, α = .88 (Campbell et al. 1996). Self-concept clarity was included as a covariate in all paths that included status uncertainty in order to distinguish the role of uncertainty about SES from uncertainty about the self in general.

Results and Discussion

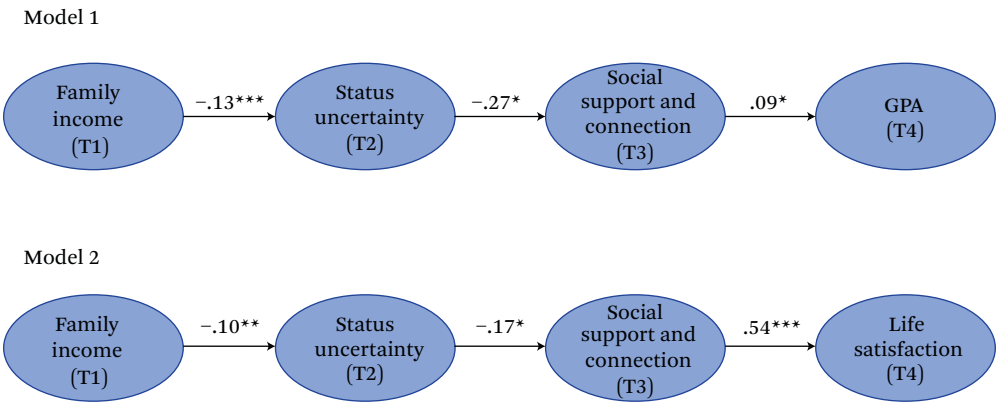
We conducted structural equation modeling to test two longitudinal path models evaluating proposed processes resulting in students' academic achievement and well-being. Model 1 evaluated the connections from students' family household incomes as they began college to their feelings of status uncertainty during their second year. Next, it evaluated whether status uncertainty in their second year was associated with subsequent experiences of social support and connection measured during their fourth year. Finally, the path tested the link from support and connection to students' cumulative academic achievement at the end of their fourth year of college. Model 2 tested the same paths except that the final path evaluated the implications for students' general well-being.

As shown in figure 2, all individual paths were significant for model 1, starting with family income through status uncertainty, social support, and connection, and ending with students' GPA at the end of their fourth year. Model index showed a strong overall model fit (CFI = 1.00), however the direct and indirect effects from family household income to achievement were not significant (ps > .157).

Model 2 showed similar results. All individual paths, starting with family income through status uncertainty, social support and connection, and ending in students' life satisfaction at the end of their fourth year were significant. The model index showed an adequate overall model fit (CFI = .94). The direct effect from family household income to life satisfaction was significant (β = .14, p = .001), however the overall indirect effect was not significant (p = .128).

The college longitudinal study analyses demonstrate evidence for connections from a student's socioeconomic background through their experiences in college to achievement and well-being. The relationships between individual variables all aligned with expectations, but evidence was mixed regarding the overall direct and indirect relationships from family socio-

Figure 2. Results of College Longitudinal Study



Source: Authors' tabulation.
Note: All solid paths are statistically significant, and values represent standardized coefficients.
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

economic background to outcomes at the end of college. Together, these patterns suggest that though the observed relationships between key factors may shape the experiences of many students, they do not indicate a deterministic route to negative outcomes for all students from lower SES backgrounds. Given the generally high achievement of students at selective institutions, traditional indicators of achievement like GPA may not be as vulnerable or important as the indicators more relevant to well-being and health such as status uncertainty, social disconnection, and life satisfaction. Indeed, the direct relationship from family SES to life satisfaction at the end of college was significant and in need of further study. A more nuanced measurement of well-being is likely to provide a more complete picture of the processes leading from socioeconomic background through status uncertainty to such outcomes.

Given that processes related to support were related to variables in predicted patterns but did not contribute to significant indirect effects, deeper investigation of how support functions during socioeconomic mobility remains necessary. We next therefore examine the role of support more directly through a controlled experiment with young people from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds progressing through the transition from college to work.

WORKPLACE EXPERIMENT

We conducted an experiment to investigate how the process of socioeconomic mobility continues to unfold for young people as they enter the workplace. The study aims to evaluate whether uncertainty about socioeconomic background becomes associated with negative occupational outcomes in this next developmental period. The study also directly manipulates feelings of social support and connection to determine whether experiencing more support might protect against some of the challenges that those navigating socioeconomic mobility encounter in the workplace.

Method

We recruited 199 participants who had graduated from a four-year college within the past two years to participate in an online experiment via Qualtrics Panels (mean age 22.90, $SD = 2.20$). We used quotas to recruit participants from a full range of childhood family income backgrounds. Once recruited, participants were randomly assigned to either a *high support* or a *low support* condition (adapted from Destin, Rheinschmidt-Same, and Richeson 2019). In the high support condition, participants were momentarily led to feel a strong sense of social support and connection by reflecting upon a time when they "had a lot of support that you needed from close family or friends." In the low

support condition, on the other hand, participants were momentarily led to feel a weak sense of social support and connection by reflecting upon a time when they "did not have the support that you needed from close family or friends."

Measures

Childhood family income. Participants indicated the level of annual income in their family household when they were growing up on a 9-item scale from 1 = $25,000 or less to 9 = $300,000 or more ($M$ = 4.16, $40,001 to $70,000, SD = 2.15). This measure captures the aspect of participants' socioeconomic background most relevant to socioeconomic mobility in the current model.

Status uncertainty. Participants completed the same 11-item measure of the degree of certainty or uncertainty that they feel about their own SES as described in study 1 (M = 4.01, SD = 1.20, α = .88).

Organizational fit. Participants responded to a 4-item measure indicating their sense of fit with their work organization; sample item, "I feel like I fit in with my current organization"; 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree, M = 4.88, SD = 1.36, α = .87 (adapted from Walton and Cohen 2007; Stephens et al. 2012).

Comfort in organization. Participants completed a 3-item measure of their level of comfort in their work organization; sample item, "I feel comfortable working in this organization"; 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree, M = 4.96, SD = 1.25, α = .64 (Dittmann 2020).

Workplace capital. Participants completed a measure of the amount of social and cultural capital that they felt at the workplace; sample item, 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree, "I understand what it takes to be successful at work"; M = 5.30, SD = 1.10, α = .73 (Dittmann 2020).

Organizational commitment. Participants responded to a 6-item measure of their commitment to their work organization; "I really care about the fate of this organization"; 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree, M = 4.68, SD = 1.13, α = .72 (Porter et al. 1974).

Job satisfaction. Participants completed a 5-item measure indicating their general level of satisfaction with their job; sample item, "I feel fairly satisfied with my present job"; 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree, M = 4.71, SD = 1.23, α = .78 (Judge, Bono, and Locke 2000; Brayfield and Rothe 1951).

Turnover intentions. Participants completed a 4-item measure capturing their thoughts about leaving their work organization; sample item, "To what extent have you thought seriously about changing organizations since beginning to work here?"; 1 = not at all, 7 = a great deal, M = 3.79, SD = 1.53, α = .74 (O'Reilly, Chatman, and Caldwell 1991).

Social support. Finally, participants completed a 19-item measure of how often different kinds of support are available (Sherbourne and Stewart 1991; sample item, "Someone you can count on to listen to you when you need to talk; 1 = never, 5 = all the time, M = 3.87, SD = .84, α = .96).

Results and Discussion

Given the limited research regarding the transition of young people from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds into the workplace, we first observed basic correlations between childhood family income, status uncertainty, and work-related outcomes. As shown in table 1, childhood family income was not directly associated with status uncertainty or any workplace outcomes. However, greater feelings of status uncertainty were associated with several negative work outcomes among recent college graduates, including less organizational fit, less comfort in the organization, weaker feelings of job commitment, and weaker feelings of job satisfaction. More status uncertainty was also associated with less social support.

Next, we evaluated effects of the experimental social support treatment, using linear regression with orthogonal contrasts. The manipulation did not have any direct effects on young people's feelings of status uncertainty or workplace outcomes (ps > .218). The experimental manipulation did, however, have a direct effect on participants' feelings of social support (see figure 3). Participants who were randomly assigned to the low support condition subsequently expressed lower feelings of support than participants randomly assigned to the control and high support conditions, b = .09, SE = .04, t = 2.38, p = .018. The control

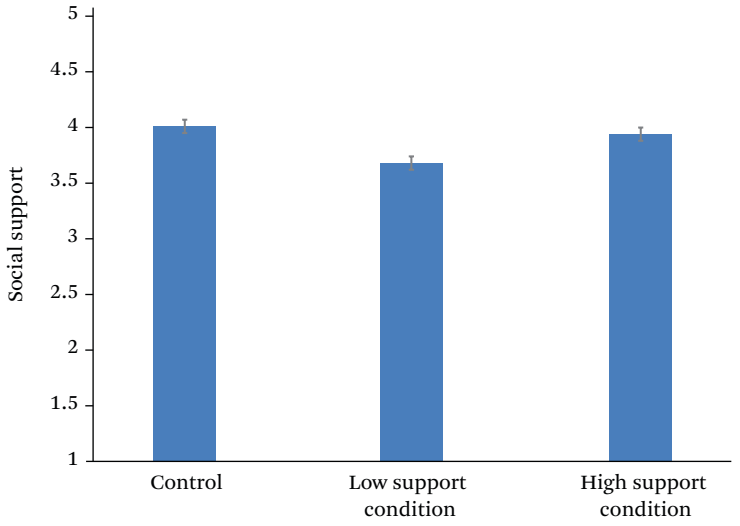
Table 1. Correlations for Study Variables

	Childhood Family Income	Status Uncertainty	Fit	Comfort	Capital	Commitment	Satisfaction	Turnover	Support
Childhood family income									
Status uncertainty	.02								
Fit	.04	−.15*							
Comfort	.09	−.26***	.65***						
Capital	.06	−.03	.50***	.49***					
Commitment	−.02	−.26***	.56***	.66***	.45***				
Satisfaction	.03	−.24***	.54***	.69***	.49***	.80***			
Turnover	−.01	.10	−.38***	−.46***	−.32***	−.68***	−.68***		
Support	.07	−.12†	.23**	.28***	.30***	.18*	.27***	−.09	

Source: Authors' tabulation.

† $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Figure 3. Effects of Workplace Experiment on Feelings of Social Support



Source: Authors' tabulations.

and high support conditions did not differ from one another, $b = -.04$, $SE = .07$, $t = -.49$, $p = .623$. Results were unchanged when including status uncertainty as a covariate in the analysis.[1]

Because of the observed effect of the experimental manipulation on support and the observed correlations between support and other workplace outcomes, we then developed a structural equation model to evaluate the potential indirect effect on workplace experiences and outcomes. Specifically, we evaluated whether the experimental treatment led to increased support, which would then be associated with a latent construct capturing psychological experiences in the workplace (fit, comfort, capital, commitment, and satisfaction), which would finally be associated with turnover intentions. As shown in figure 4, the predicted pathways and overall indirect effect were significant (indirect effect $\beta = -.03$, $p = .049$). The direct effect was not significant ($p = .410$), the overall model fit was strong ($CFI = .974$), and all paths were unchanged when including status uncertainty as a covariate in the model.

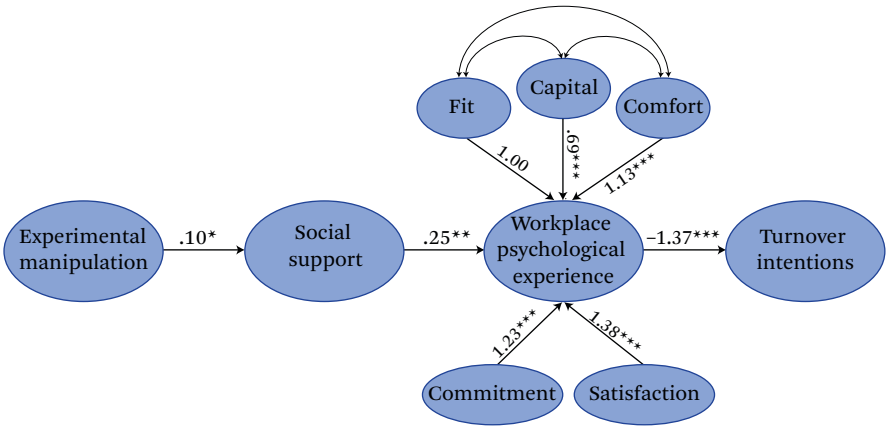
Overall, study 2 first demonstrated that feeling greater status uncertainty is associated with a more negative transition to the workplace along several dimensions. Surprisingly, this experience was not directly related to socioeconomic background or affected by support. In other words, regardless of background, young people may experience vulnerability connected to uncertainty about their SES as they leave college and join the workforce. The experimental component of the study, however, demonstrated that people do benefit from feelings of support, with a series of indirect positive consequences for their experiences in the workplace and intentions to persist in their occupations. The role of support in this pathway mattered independent of the relationship between status uncertainty and workplace experiences.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

As people follow the commonly desired path from attending college to graduating and beyond into starting their first jobs, they navigate a wide variety of opportunities and challenges. For those from lower SES backgrounds, it is common to experience a shift in economic standing and a corresponding unexpected

1. Results were also unchanged in an exploratory analysis including a measure of participants' current income as a covariate.

Figure 4. Indirect Effects of Experimental Manipulation on Workplace Experiences and Outcomes



Source: Authors' tabulations.

Note. All solid paths are statistically significant, and values represent standardized coefficients. Model includes covariances between error terms of latent variable constructs fit, capital, and comfort.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

sense of uncertainty about identity. A longitudinal study found evidence that as lower SES college students encounter status uncertainty, they feel a subsequent lack of support and show lower achievement and well-being toward the end of their college years. Next, an experiment showed how feeling uncertain about SES is also related to worse adjustment and integration into the workplace. However, when new workers felt greater connection and support, there is a corresponding cascade of associated positive outcomes. Ensuring that people can remain connected to important relationships and have access to new sources of support as they transition into the workplace appears to be essential for a healthy and successful trajectory of socioeconomic mobility.

The findings highlight the importance of understanding people's subjective experiences of negotiating shifts in their sense of self as they move from one socioeconomic context and standing to another. These shifts certainly occur within higher education and workplace contexts but might also be relevant to a variety of other interpersonal situations and physical relocations throughout life that accompany a change in SES. Decades of research demonstrate the importance of social support in promoting health and well-being, and the current studies reaffirm and extend the role of social support and connection as key to navigating status transitions. Additional research remains necessary to better understand how specific sources of support function in people's lives during socioeconomic mobility. In addition to maintaining relationships and building new connections, a better understanding of how institutions can effectively provide support also remains essential.

As colleges, universities, and workplaces aim to increase the diversity of backgrounds represented among their students and employees, the findings suggest that they should also restructure themselves to acknowledge and meet people's needs. In higher education, this can include attention to multiple layers of students' sociocultural context including financial resources, institutional messaging and programming, faculty development and teaching practices, and even efforts to shape the peer student culture (Destin, Rosario, and Vossoughi 2021). Similarly, workplaces that continuously attend to, evaluate, and take action to support the well-being of their employees from diverse backgrounds are more likely to witness their success and retention. Colleges, universities, and workplaces vary tremendously, however, and support should be tailored to the

specific people, characteristics, resources, opportunities, and challenges within those environments.

Despite the key findings, this research has certain limitations. First, the conceptualization and measurement of well-being was markedly broad in order to capture a wide range of experiences. Future research might focus on more specific aspects of well-being tailored to particular contexts to better capture the experiences of people navigating them. Relatedly, the experiment used a broad manipulation of support designed to allow people to bring to mind personally relevant sources of connection in their lives. Future research could test the effects of more specific types of interpersonal or institutional support and perhaps actually provide support rather than only invoke it in people's minds. Also, additional research is necessary to better understand potential direct connections between a person's socioeconomic background and their workplace experience that were expected but not observed in the current study. It is possible, however, that graduation from college decreases status uncertainty among those from lower SES backgrounds or that people from a wider range of backgrounds begin to question their status as they move into new and unfamiliar workplace settings.

Last, the studies exclusively investigate the role of participants' socioeconomic backgrounds and identities. Intersecting experiences of other sociodemographic dimensions of identity are almost certain to simultaneously shape people's shifting conceptualizations of their own status (Valentino 2022, this issue). For example, the nature of interactions across racial and ethnic groups and the gender dynamics of interpersonal relationships systematically shape status-related processes (Lareau 2022, this issue; Manago, Sell, and Goar 2022, this issue). These considerations all highlight how the current approach and findings provide a foundation and encouragement for continued work with added layers of complexity and specificity.

Together, the two studies contribute new depth to the understanding of how young people from lower SES backgrounds understand their place on the socioeconomic hierarchy as they pursue their goals. The studies also demonstrate the significance of important supportive forces in their lives to counteract the prevailing negative influence of oppressive hierarchies on their achievement and well-being. These findings suggest that institutions can help to improve the outcomes and experience of their students and employees by offering new opportunities for interpersonal connection and a variety of social supports. In addition, institutions can play a role in actively facilitating opportunities for young people to maintain valued connections to the people and communities that might otherwise become increasingly distant over time.

REFERENCES

Armstrong, Elizabeth A., and Laura T. Hamilton. 2013. *Paying for the Party*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Brayfield, Arthur H., and Harold F. Rothe. 1951. "An Index of Job Satisfaction." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 35(5): 307–11.

Campbell, Jennifer D., Paul D. Trapnell, Steven J. Heine, Ilana M. Katz, Loraine F. Lavallee, and Darrin R. Lehman. 1996. "Self-Concept Clarity: Measurement, Personality Correlates, and Cultural Boundaries." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 70(1): 141–56. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.70.1.141.

Castillo-Lavergne, Claudia, and Mesmin Destin. 2019. "How the Intersections of Ethnic and Socioeconomic Identities Are Associated with Well-Being During College." *Journal of Social Issues* 75(4): 1116–38.

Chen, Edith, Gene H. Brody, and Gregory E. Miller. 2017. "Childhood Close Family Relationships and Health." *American Psychologist* 72(6): 555–66.

Chetty, Raj, David Grusky, Maximilian Hell, Nathaniel Hendren, Robert Manduca, and Jimmy Narang. 2017. "The Fading American Dream: Trends in Absolute Income Mobility Since 1940." *Science* 356(6336): 398–406.

Cohen, Sheldon, Denise Janicki-Deverts, Edith Chen, and Karen A. Matthews. 2010. "Childhood Socioeconomic Status and Adult Health: Childhood Socioeconomic Status and Adult Health." *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1186(1): 37–55.

Cohen, Sheldon, and Thomas A. Willis. 1985. "Stress, Social Support, and the Buffering Hypothesis." *Psychological Bulletin* 98(2): 310–57.

Covarrubias, Rebecca, and Stephanie A. Fryberg. 2015. "Movin' on Up (to College): First-Generation College Students' Experiences with Family Achievement Guilt." *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 21(3): 420–29.

Debrosse, Régine. 2021. "The Kinship Model of Shared Hardships and Interdependence." Unpublished manuscript, McGill University.

Destin, Mesmin, and Régine Debrosse. 2017. "Upward Social Mobility and Identity." *Current Opinion in Psychology* 18: 99–104. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2017.08.006.

Destin, Mesmin, Régine Debrosse, and David M. Silverman. 2021. "An Experimental Demonstration of the Positive Consequences of Guiding Students to Conceptualize Education as Connection." *Journal of Adolescence* 92: 30–33.

Destin, Mesmin, Michelle L. Rheinschmidt-Same, and Jennifer A. Richeson. 2017. "Status-Based Identity: A Conceptual Framework Integrating the Social Psychological Study of Socioeconomic Status and Identity." *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 12(2): 270–89. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691616664424.

———. 2019. "Implications of Intersecting Socioeconomic and Racial-Ethnic Identities for Academic Achievement and Well-Being." *Advances in Child Development and Behavior* 57: 149–67.

Destin, Mesmin, R. Josiah Rosario, and Shirin Vossoughi. 2021. "Elevating the Objectives of Higher Education to Effectively Serve Students from Diverse Socioeconomic Backgrounds." *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 8(1): 59–66.

Diener, Ed, Robert A. Emmons, Randy J. Larson, and Sharon Griffin. 1985. "The Satisfaction with Life Scale." *Journal of Personality Assessment* 49(1): 71–75.

Diener, Ed, Weiting Ng, James Harter, and Raksha Arora. 2010. "Wealth and Happiness Across the World: Material Prosperity Predicts Life Evaluation, Whereas Psychosocial Prosperity Predicts Positive Feeling." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 99(1): 52–61.

Dittmann, Andrea G. 2020. "Social Class at Work: How Social Class Background Shapes Employees' Experiences and Outcomes in White-Collar Organizations." Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University.

Feeney, Brooke C., and Nancy L. Collins. 2015. "A New Look at Social Support: A Theoretical Perspective on Thriving Through Relationships." *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 19(2): 113–47. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868314544222.

Goldrick-Rab, Sara. 2016. *Paying the Price: College Costs, Financial Aid, and the Betrayal of the American Dream*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Herrmann, Sarah D., and Michael E. W. Varnum. 2018. "Integrated Social Class Identities Improve Academic Performance, Well-Being, and Workplace Satisfaction." *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 49(4): 635–63.

Judge, Timothy A., Joyce E. Bono, and Edwin A. Locke. 2000. "Personality and Job Satisfaction: The Mediating Role of Job Characteristics." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 85(2): 237–49.

Kraus, Michael W., Paul K. Piff, and Dacher Keltner. 2009. "Social Class, Sense of Control, and Social Explanation." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 97(6): 992–1004.

Lareau, Annette. 2022. "Downplaying Themselves, Upholding Men's Status: Women's Deference to Men in Wealthy Families." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 112–31. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.06.

Ma, Jennifer, Matea Pender, and Meredith Welch. 2016. "Education Pays 2016." Trends in Higher Education. New York: College Board.

Manago, Bianca, Jane Sell, and Carla Goar. 2022. "Racial and Ethnic Status Distinctions and Discrimination: The Effects of Prior Contact and Group Interaction." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 132–57. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.07.

McNamee, Stephen J., and Robert K. Miller. 2009. *The Meritocracy Myth*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.

O'Reilly, Charles A., Jennifer Chatman, and David F. Caldwell. 1991. "People and Organizational Culture: A Profile Comparison Approach to Assessing Person-Organization Fit." *Academy of Management Journal* 34(3): 487–516. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5465/256404.

Porter, Lyman W., Richard M. Steers, Richard T. Mowday, and Paul V. Boulian. 1974. "Organizational Commitment, Job Satisfaction, and Turnover Among Psychiatric Technicians." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 59(5): 603–9.

Sherbourne, Cathy Donald, and Anita L. Stewart. 1991. "The MOS Social Support Survey." *Social Science & Medicine* 32(6): 705–14.

Spencer, Margaret Beale, Davido Dupree, and Tracey Hartmann. 1997. "A Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST): A Self-Organization Perspective in Context." *Development and Psychopathology* 9(4): 817–33.

Spencer, Margaret Beale, Vinay Harpalani, Elaine Cassidy, Cleopatra Y. Jacobs, Sapana Donde, Tyhesha N. Goss, Michèle Muñoz-Miller, Nicole Charles, and Shaunqula Wilson. 2015. "Understanding Vulnerability and Resilience from a Normative Developmental Perspective: Implications for Racially and Ethnically Diverse Youth." In *Developmental Psychopathology*, edited by Dante Cicchetti and Donald J. Cohen. Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470939383.ch16.

Stephens, Nicole M., Stephanie A. Fryberg, Hazel Rose Markus, Camille S. Johnson, and Rebecca Covarrubias. 2012. "Unseen Disadvantage: How American Universities' Focus on Independence Undermines the Academic Performance of First-Generation College Students." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 102(6): 1178–97. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1037/a0027143.

Stephens, Nicole M., Hazel Rose Markus, and L. Taylor Phillips. 2014. "Social Class Culture Cycles: How Three Gateway Contexts Shape Selves and Fuel Inequality." *Annual Review of Psychology* 65(1): 611–34.

Taylor, Shelley E. 2011. "Social Support: A Review." In *The Oxford Handbook of Health Psychology*, edited by Howard S. Friedman. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Valentino, Lauren. 2022. "Status Lenses: Mapping Hierarchy and Consensus in Status Beliefs." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 89–110. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.05.

Walton, Gregory M., and Geoffrey L. Cohen. 2007. "A Question of Belonging: Race, Social Fit, and Achievement." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 92(1): 82–96.

“But the Fellows Are Simply Diversity Hires!” How Organizational Contexts Influence Status Beliefs

SANDRA PORTOCARRERO AND JAMES T. CARTER

We demonstrate how organizational contexts influence status beliefs. Specifically, we draw from in-depth interviews conducted with current and former U.S. Foreign Service officers to explain how recipients of the U.S. Department of State Pickering Fellowship learn to accept a devaluing status belief about this accolade once they enter the Foreign Service. Within this organizational contex is an established belief that Foreign Service officers who are not the prototypical “Male, Pale, and Yale” workers must be “diversity hires” who have entered the department through a “back door” and have a “leg up” because of their race. This racialized negative evaluation becomes linked to the Pickering Fellowship and affects all fellows. Our study offers insights into the intersection of racial diversity and status processes in organizations.

Keywords: race and ethnicity, organizations, diversity, inequality

Status processes play a fundamental role in maintaining inequality. Since Max Weber’s ([1918] 1968) insight that status can be distinct from material resources as a form of social division, scholars have incorporated other forms of status hierarchy (such as race and ethnicity, gender, and disability) into social scientific analyses (see, for example, Ridgeway 2014; Roscigno 2019). Status is the position one occupies in a socially constructed and culturally supported hierarchy, as well as the respect and admiration that this positioning confers (see Ridgeway and Walker 1994; Magee and Galinsky 2008; Sauder, Lynn, and Podolny 2012). Researchers continue to ponder how status processes operate in realistic social contexts (Rivera 2010) and why studying these processes matters for inequality (see Ridgeway and Markus 2022, this issue).

The organizations and institutions we interact with in our everyday lives are heavily implicated in the rising levels of global inequality (see Amis et al. 2018). But we know little about how organizational contexts have the power to shape status dynamics. We also know little about the emergence of status beliefs, how they

Sandra Portocarrero is a postdoctoral scholar at Columbia Business School, United States. **James T. Carter** is a Ph.D. candidate in Management at Columbia Business School, United States.

 Portocarrero, Sandra, and James T. Carter. 2022. “‘But the Fellows Are Simply Diversity Hires!’ How Organizational Contexts Influence Status Beliefs.” *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 172–91. DOI: 10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.09. The authors thank Tania Jenkins, Gerardo Okhuysen, Vincent Roscigno, and Mark Warschauer for their helpful feedback on previous versions of this manuscript. We are grateful to our anonymous reviewers. Direct correspondence to: Sandra Portocarrero, at p.sandra@columbia.edu, Columbia University, 606 W. 122nd St., Room 506, New York, NY 10027, United States.

become widely shared in organizational contexts, and what social processes maintain them (Ridgeway and Erickson 2000). Because status is constructed through repeated social interaction and negotiation among actors in a given hierarchy (Bendersky and Pai 2018), it is necessary to understand how these interactions and negotiations shape status beliefs and, thus, individual outcomes. Research finds that these social interactions help determine who becomes a leader and who a follower (DeRue and Ashford 2010), who asserts their expertise in meetings (Owens and Sutton 2001), and how, through collaborative work, individuals assert their competence to be perceived as higher-status actors (Sutton and Hargadon 1996). In this way, these status organizing processes translate to the have and have-nots of organizational resources and expectations around who adds value to the organization.

These interpersonal evaluations are rooted in status beliefs—or widely held cultural beliefs that link social category differences to greater or lesser status-worthiness and perceived competence (Ridgeway and Erickson 2000; Melamed et al. 2019) and status characteristics—any recognized social distinction that has attached to it widely shared beliefs about at least two categories, or states, of the distinction (for example, Ridgeway 2001). Recent work expands classical theorizing on status beliefs and characteristics to focus on the role contexts and positionality play in establishing, reifying, evaluating, or diluting these beliefs (for example, Bianchi, Kang, and Stewart 2012; Valentino 2022, this issue).

Contributing to this growing body of literature in status research, we provide a case study of recipients of the prestigious Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship, a U.S. Department of State program that confers high levels of status and visibility on recipients. Specifically, we investigate how a change in organizational context can lead individuals to experience a shift in the way they perceive a status characteristic, and how a negative status belief established in an organizational context gets linked to a person's status characteristic. To unpack these processes, we draw from rich interview data to show how recipients of the Pickering Fellowship experience a shift in the way they perceive this accolade and how their move through several organizational contexts facilitates this shift. We uncover how Pickering fellows go from contexts that hold a positive status belief about the fellowship (fellows' family and college communities) to one in which a negative status belief is established (the Department of State). Further, we show how linking a new distinguishing characteristic (the Pickering Fellowship) to a status-valued social difference established in this organizational context (the racialized evaluation of Foreign Service officers) causes a negative status belief to spread to the Pickering Fellowship.

Our case offers several contributions to the literature on status processes. Typically, status processes are associated with gender, race, and class, among other demographic variables. However, to the best of our knowledge, status processes associated with an accolade (in this case, a fellowship) have not yet been explored as a potential pathway for the formation of status beliefs. Studying the status beliefs tied to an accolade such as the Pickering Fellowship drawing from distinct yet related disciplines and levels of analyses—individual, group, and organizational—helps untangle the complexity of fellowship status as both a means of distinction and a reproducer of inequality. Further, we unpack the intricate, multilevel process by which Pickering fellows gradually learn to accept the devaluing status belief about their fellowship, and how this acceptance is necessary to maintain the status hierarchy in the Foreign Service. We demarcate how contexts dictate which status characteristics are amplified, muted, and relevant in explaining individual actors' experiences.

In what follows, we offer a background discussion of prior work related to status characteristics and beliefs. We then turn to our data and case materials. These allow us to trace status dynamics over time at the precipice of winning the fellowship while highlighting the processes by which fellows develop status beliefs depending on their organizational environments. Our in-depth, qualitative methodology focuses on these complexities through an analysis of interactions and perceptions, highlighting how negative status beliefs around the fellowship interact with hegemonic status beliefs around race in the United States.

STATUS DYNAMICS IN ORGANIZATIONS

Status processes are dynamic, culturally embedded, and context dependent (Magee and Galinsky 2008; Rivera 2010). For example, an assistant professor can have, on the basis of his or her expertise, high status among graduate students. However, among all professors in the department, this assistant professor might not be conferred the same status as a senior faculty member. This variation is in part due to different situations valuing different personal characteristics. Once an individual achieves a certain status, that position is often precarious and must be affirmed through social interactions that continuously demonstrate worthiness (Magee and Galinsky 2008). Thus actors must deploy status maintenance techniques to solidify and affirm their position in the hierarchy.

Organizations are contexts that facilitate or constrain access to resources for people, influence their beliefs, and shape status dynamics (Scott and Davis 2015; Blau et al. 1971; Chen et al. 2012). Social scientists have increasingly come to view status as a necessary construct for understanding organizational and interpersonal dynamics and outcomes (see, for example, Gould 2002; Podolny 2005; Piazza and Castellucci 2014). One's position within a status structure affects the constraints an individual faces (Hollander 1958; Galinsky et al. 2008), and their access to resources (Bunderson 2003; Ridgeway 2014). A robust body of research shows that status characteristics strongly influence assessments and evaluations of individuals, for better or worse (Berger et al. 1977; Ridgeway et al. 1998). As status characteristics theory argues (Berger, Rosenholtz, and Zelditch 1980), expectations about performance and contributions are driven in large part by the status that individual is assigned based on personal characteristics. These expectations also shape how people associate with and interact with one another (Correll and Ridgeway 2006).

ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXTS AND STATUS PROCESSES

Although classically theorized at the group level to predict labor distribution and group performance, status characteristics theory is an important framework for understanding boundaries and processes within organizations. Status characteristics are widely held cultural beliefs, and because organizations develop their own shared belief systems (Scott and Davis 2015), we contend that organizational contexts can have unique status characteristics processes. Consider, for example, how status characteristics associated with women might be perceived to be more valuable at an organization in which communality and warmth, rather than those commonly associated with men, are desired characteristics. As such, organization-specific belief systems may indoctrinate actors with beliefs about status characteristics that are unique within the organization's boundaries (Bianchi, Kang, and Stewart 2012).

Status beliefs are a powerful construct because all actors in the social field—even those disadvantaged by the belief—come to accept, as a social fact, that the other group is better than their own (Ridgeway et al. 1998; Ridgeway and Erickson 2000). These third-order inferences develop not just as perceptions about how specific others in a local environment evaluatively rank others, but also as the typical views of the community and evaluative perspective of "most" people (Ridgeway and Correll 2006). Once these associations develop, beliefs about performance expectations become attached to the corresponding status characteristic. Status beliefs link status associations based on race and gender, for example, to interactional experiences among individuals (see, for example, Berger and Fişek 2006). Status beliefs often develop around preexisting social categories and form relatively quickly, and thus individuals often require little evidence or convincing that these beliefs are widely held or credible in some way (Ridgeway and Correll 2006). However, for these beliefs to be widely held, both parties, such as high-status and low-status groups, must accept them (Ridgeway and Erickson 2000). Once they do, the beliefs become a part of the fabric of social reality that shapes outcomes and behaviors for individuals differentially. Status beliefs are therefore instrumental in shaping how people engage, perceive, and interact.

In the Foreign Service, being a Pickering Fellow is associated with lower competence because it is perceived as a diversity or affirmative

action initiative. In our study, being a Pickering Fellow is one state of an accepted status characteristic; another is not being a Pickering Fellow. In an organizational context in which a negative established status belief is rooted in racial differences, such as White versus non-White, holding the fellowship can lead actors to expect that Pickering fellows are less capable, less competent, and less deserving of their positions within the Foreign Service. Our research presents an interesting puzzle around the intersection of race, status beliefs, racialized evaluations of merit, and status characteristics.

It is critical to consider how status beliefs and status characteristics might be racialized. Consider the research on affirmative action policies. Scholars have examined how these initiatives stigmatize the same job applicants and employees they meant to elevate. Experimental research has shown that participants evaluated hypothetical affirmative action hires as less competent regardless of their qualifications (Resendez 2002). This finding is partly driven by associations about the types of people who benefit from affirmative action policies—specifically stereotypes about women and people of color being less competent than White people and men (Coate and Loury 1993; Heilman, Block, and Stathatos 1997).

Recent theorizing on racialized organizations supports this contention. Victor Ray (2019) posits that organizations are racial structures where cognitive schemas connect rules to social and material resources. In line with a theory of racialized organizations, we consider race as constitutive of the organizational foundation of the State Department, its hierarchies, and social processes. The Pickering Fellowship aims to disrupt this hierarchy—whether intentionally or not—and, in changing the demographic makeup of the Foreign Service, brings to bear the centrality of the Male, Pale, Yale stereotype. Our findings offer clarity about this process.

Taking the presented theoretical perspectives and our data analysis together, we contend that associations made about the goal of programs like the Pickering Fellowship, the racialized structure of the department, and the racial composition of the Foreign Service brought into the department through this program, serve to link negative status beliefs about marginalized groups with the fellowship, a distinguishing status characteristic. One of our goals is to tease apart how fellows and nonfellows make these associations, and how they shape and maintain the status hierarchy at the State Department.

SETTING, DATA, AND METHODS

The Department of State is an executive department of the federal government responsible for foreign policy and international relations. Its primary personnel system is the U.S. Foreign Service, which consists of more than thirteen thousand professionals carrying out U.S. foreign policy and aiding U.S. citizens abroad (U.S. Department of State 2021). For our inquiry, the department is commonly known as a Pale, Male, and Yale organization. In 2016, 82 percent of staff in the top ranks of the department were White and 60 percent were male (Kralev 2016). Despite a growth in staff, the number of female and Black employees has declined in the past decades, and promotion rates are lower for them.

In 1992, the department launched the Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship Program. According to the fellowship's website, the program is aligned with "the fundamental principle that diversity is a strength in our diplomatic efforts" (Pickering Fellowship 2021). The fellowship "prepares outstanding young people for Foreign Service careers in the U.S. Department of State." The fellowship program offers $42,000 annually for a two-year period for tuition, room, board, books, and mandatory fees for completion of two-year master's degrees. It also provides an orientation to familiarize the fellows with all aspects of the fellowship and to enhance their understanding of Foreign Service careers. The program also facilitates two internships for all fellows. Finally, the program offers mentoring from a Foreign Service officer for the duration of the fellowship.

Case Selection

We selected the Pickering Fellowship Program after hearing that despite the prestige of the fellowship, some Pickering fellows choose to hide their status from their coworkers. In the September 2020 issue of *The Foreign Service*

Journal, Julie Chung, acting assistant secretary in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, wrote, "For years, I hid the fact that I was a Pickering Fellow and did not list it on my résumé to avoid being prejudged about how I entered the Foreign Service. Sometimes there was office chatter about how 'those fellows' were exploiting the system, and I would not offer up that I was one of them. It was not until I was promoted to Minister Counselor that I had the confidence to talk about the fellowship more openly and explain how we had to surpass higher requirements than normal Foreign Service applicants" (2020).

In the same issue of the journal is an article titled "Diversity at State: A Dream Deferred and a Collective Responsibility" (Escrogima, Miller, and Tilghman 2020). The authors state that "the Pickering Fellowship had gone from being a prestigious attribute to a stigma." The piece explains two key issues. First is the common misperception that all fellows are people of color, and second is that recipients often feel compelled to downplay their background as fellows when it should be a point of pride. The authors, all former Pickering fellows, write that "some minorities in the Foreign Service feel compelled to share that they are not Pickering Fellows." We were intrigued by these statements and conducted an initial ten pilot interviewees to learn more. After reviewing issues of the journal, reading online archives, and conducting pilot interviewees, we selected this as our case study.

Data Collection

We gathered qualitative data through in-depth interviews to investigate the status processes that lead fellows such as Julie to hide their status. We interviewed current and former Pickering fellows, Foreign Service officers (FSOs) who are not fellows, and other people who have worked directly with the fellowship program, such as members of the selection committee and program officers.

With theory generation in mind, we set out to investigate what established status beliefs in the Department of State fellowship could lead recipients of this prestigious fellowship to hide their fellowship status. From 2020 to 2021, we conducted thirty-six in-depth, open-ended interviews. Each interview lasted between forty-five and ninety minutes. Our entire data gathering process took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. We therefore conducted thirty in-depth interviews via Zoom and six interviews over the telephone. We recorded and transcribed twenty-one of the thirty-six interviews. Many of our participants still work for the State Department and therefore fifteen of them decided not to have their interviews recorded. To make up for the lack of verbatim transcriptions, we took detailed notes during and immediately after these interviews. When a participant shared what we considered a "good quote"—a quote that fully captured the message they were conveying—we asked them to pause so we could write it word by word. We assigned pseudonyms to all participants. When referring to cities, we chose pseudonym cities that we considered demographically similar to the city our participants referred to.

We used three main recruitment strategies: we identified Foreign Service officers through LinkedIn and contacted them via private messages; we used snowball sampling techniques (Handcock and Gile 2011); and we reached out to the Pickering Alumni Association's leadership, who, after learning more about our project, sent out an email to all alumni and fellows and posted an announcement on their Facebook group. We asked participants about their experiences when winning the fellowship. We were interested in learning how participants felt when they won the fellowship and how they perceived it. Thus we probed for status, prestige, and emotions that emerged soon after winning the fellowship.

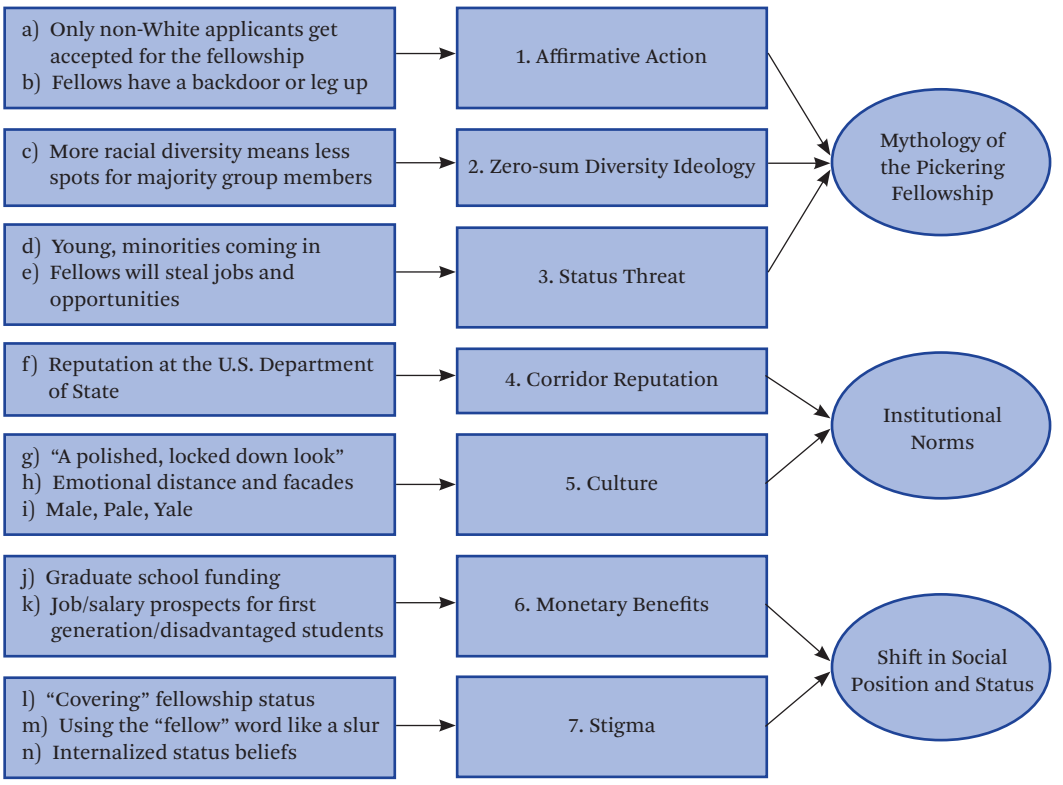
Our semi-structured interview guide also included an extract from the "Diversity at State: A Dream Deferred and a Collective Responsibility" article. During the interviews, we highlighted the following text: "Due to the misinformation regarding some of the fellowships, recipients often feel compelled to downplay their background as fellows when it should be a point of pride. In fact, some minorities in the Foreign Service feel compelled to share that they are not Pickering or Rangel Fellows." Our interview questionnaire explored only a few aspects concerning the experience of Pickering fellows and nonfellows in the State Depart-

ment. We let responses to those answers shape the tone of the interview. For example, if a participant mentioned tensions rooted in the ethno-racial background of fellows, we asked questions that would help us understand how they related their race and the race of others to status.

Data Analysis

Our analysis involved three steps. In the first, we coded interview transcripts and field notes separately using the Atlas.ti software and then convened to share our preliminary results. We exchanged our coded files, reread each interview, focused on our shared coding categories, and discussed conceptual patterns. The second step consisted of looking at secondary codes and patterns across the interviews to collapse into higher-level nodes. For example, we grouped comments such Male, Pale, Yale and "FSOs are expected to have a polished, locked-down look" into a node called culture. The third step involved collapsing the various coding categories into theoretically distinct clusters. We moved iteratively between our first-order codes and the emerging patterns in our data until adequate conceptual themes emerged (Eisenhardt 1989). In addition to the three steps, we carried out a members check (Dacin, Munir, and Tracey 2010; Nag, Corley, and Gioia 2007); that is, during our data analysis and writing process, we talked with informants to ensure that our interpretation of the phenomena aligned with what Pickering fellows experience daily at the Department of State and with what Pickering alumni experienced in the past. Figure 1 illustrates our final data structure. This figure shows the categories and themes from which we developed our findings and the relationships between them. We provide additional supporting evidence in table 1, which is keyed to figure 1. This table contains representative first-order data, which supports the second-order themes.

Figure 1. Final Data Structure



Source: Authors' tabulations.

Table 1. Data Structure

Second-Order Themes and First-Order Categories	Representative Quote
1. Affirmative action	
a) Only non-White applicants get accepted for the fellowship	"If you're like, for example, a White person that grew up in Appalachia like that, that the department doesn't support, the fellowship does consider that like a facet of diversity, gender, sexual orientation, etc." (White, Male, Pickering Fellow)
b) Fellows have a back door or a leg up	"People think fellows maybe don't have to take the test, well, no, they do. They actually have to take the oral assessment; they have to pass it." (Latino, Male, Pickering Fellow)
2. Zero-sum diversity ideologies	
c) More racial diversity means fewer spots for majority group members	"We've been dominating this space for this long, and now you're gonna come in, you got in, you know, cuz you're a special case. So, where does that leave me? Nobody wants to hear about the White guy's opinion anymore. If all these, you know, colorful folks are, you know, taking up the oxygen?" I mean, that's just my impression, but like people just feel threatened because they've just been able to dominate that space for so long with such ease." (Black, Female, Pickering Fellow)
3. Status threat	
d) Young, minorities coming in	"And I think some of [the negativity] goes back to ageism, and the Foreign Service because a lot of us are younger, right? The average age of entering the Foreign Service is in your 30s, yeah, and right now I'm 22. So, I'll be going in at 24" (White, Male, Pickering Fellow)
e) Fellows will steal jobs and opportunities	"Many people in the State Department who believe now for the White male, there's no way I'm going to make it to the next level, because the department's trying to increase diversity, and I'm going to get screwed." (Latino, Male, Pickering Fellow)
4. Corridor reputation	
f) Reputation at the State Department	"And much of that is based on what is called corridor reputation, which starts from the moment that you come into the service." (Asian American, Female, Pickering Fellow)
5. Culture	
g) Having a certain look	"The good Foreign Service officers are the ones who are the most polished and the most lockdown." (White, Female, Foreign Service Officer who is not a fellow).
h) Emotional distance and facades	"I think that the biggest struggle for me at the department and as a Pickering Fellow [is] the emotional veneer of more elite, Whites, and White . . . And everything's very removed and distant and polished." (Black, Female, Former Foreign Service Officer).

Table 1. Data Structure (*continued*)

Second-Order Themes and First-Order Categories	Representative Quote
i) Male, Pale, Yale	"Basically, it was an organization, for like Ivy League, elite White men, for many years, at least since its foundation." (Latino, Male, Pickering Fellow)
6. Monetary benefits	
j) Graduate school funding	"And so now that I had like, this was an opportunity to go to grad school, this is an opportunity to have a white-collar job." (Asian American, Male, Pickering Fellow)
k) Job/salary prospects for first-generation/disadvantaged students	"I'm a first-generation college student. And a first-generation like, white-collar worker. So, it was really life-changing for me." (White, Female, Pickering Fellow)
7. Stigma	
l) Covering fellowship status	"I am slightly worried about once I do enter the service, like whether to tell colleagues, if I'm a fellow or how open to be about that, because of the fear that it might essentially, like put this picture of me in other people's minds that might not be positive" (Black, Female, Pickering Fellow)
m) Using the *fellow* word like a slur	"I guess that the real thing is that sometimes people use the word *fellow*, and it had the same sting as if people were using the N-word, because that's really what they were conveying, at the time." (Asian American, Male, Pickering Fellow)
n) Internalized status beliefs	"I've known there was that stigma associated with the fellowship." (Black, Female, Pickering Fellow)

Source: Authors' tabulations.

FINDINGS

Immediately after winning the fellowship, new fellows move up within the hierarchy of their social systems (their communities and universities). This new status characteristic (the fellowship) quickly becomes a valuable attribute to others in these contexts. Serena's experience depicts this phenomenon. As an ambitious young girl from a low-income family in the border town of Nogales in Arizona, Serena grew up uncertain about what the future would hold for her. Serena remembers bursting into tears when reading the Pickering Fellowship acceptance email. At the time of the interview, in early 2021, she held a senior position in the State Department. Serena never imagined that she would one day be trusted to protect the security of the United States, a country her Mexican parents migrated to before she was born. When asked to think about how her life changed when she won the fellowship, Serena said, "The Pickering [Fellowship] changed everything for me. It gave me resources, and it changed how everyone looked at me. I felt like a celebrity for a while. Papi said I could be the first Mexican president of the U.S. Papi had never said that about me before."

In the context of her community, the Pickering Fellowship became attached to a positive status belief. Serena's proud parents quickly spread the news across their networks. They invited all her uncles and aunties to a big celebration. Soon after learning that Serena won, her classmates and childhood friends called her to ask for guidance on winning prestigious fellowships. Holding the Pickering Fellowship became something desirable to others in her network. During an interview, Serena ex-

plained: "When I became a Pickering, my friends would reach out all the time to ask for my opinion about their future. Before winning the Pickering, I was unsure about my future, and honestly, I never got this kind of attention from anyone. It's like the Pickering became something all my friends wanted. I guess this is because the fellowship is a ticket out of poverty, out of Nogales, yes, and a ticket to a reputable career."

Like the family and friends of Pickering fellows, college friends and professors positively value this prestigious accolade. Dan, a White young man who grew up in a trailer park in rural Kentucky, also felt the esteem of others when he won the fellowship, as he related during an interview:

> I was part of a program called Student Support Services Trio for First-Generation, Low-Income Students at school, they are like family. I remember calling my Trio counselor, who is like my second mom. I was like: "I got an email!" and she was like: "Did you open it?" I was like: "No! Oh my gosh, are you in your office?" She said: "I can be there in five minutes." So, bedhead and everything, I put on jeans, go, and Virginia, the whole office, comes in, and we all go into her office. I opened the email, and it said: "Congratulations, you have been selected as a Pickering fellow." I just screamed in a way that I have never done before, that I do not think I ever will again. It was like a bellowing scream from the bottom of my stomach. I just started screaming, and I was crying. We were all jumping. And then they started crying, and we were all screaming. It was just beautiful.

Dan was "treated with respect" during his remaining time in college. He felt "immense pride for winning this fellowship" and highlighted that "never in my wildest dreams it would have occurred to me, coming from a trailer park in Kentucky, that I would live in D.C." With enthusiasm, Dan said, "My friends brag about me. My alma mater invited me to virtually visit a high school in Kentucky to talk about my experience and everything." Once he started graduate school and his fellowship tenure, Dan continued to feel how others positively valued the fellowship. When talking about his first year of graduate school as a fellow, Dan said, "That high of being a fellow, like even a year into it, you are like: Oh my gosh! I am here, and the people's reactions when you tell others or professors are like: 'Oh, wow! You are a Pickering?' Like when you get those reactions, I feel pride. And especially because we have a few ambassadors at my school, and they consult with me. They are, like, 'Oh, Dan, what do you think?,' and they always call on us, Pickerings, they are like, 'What do you think about this?' It is really cool."

Pickering fellows of all races and cohorts described learning about the positive status belief attached to the fellowship in their educational institutions and families. Natasha felt "immense pride"; Carlos felt "esteemed and respected by others"; Wendy felt "smart and respected."

When fellows enter graduate school, the positive belief associated with this new distinguishing characteristic is reinforced in this organizational context. Our analysis shows that professors and peers recognize the competitiveness and prestige associated with the fellowship. However, in graduate school, some fellows first learn that there might be another side to this status coin—a negative one they did not necessarily expect. Take, for instance, the sentiment shared by Marie, an Asian American Pickering fellow, about her experiences in graduate school. She felt, she explained, that "people resent that we get grad school paid for. People also sometimes resent that they didn't know about it, but they could have applied [but did not] because they thought it was just for people of color." Jenna, who is White, said that she did not share with people in grad school that she was a Pickering fellow because "it had a connotation for my peers. Perhaps a negative one more so at the time, which is unfortunate." Eladio, a young Latino Pickering fellow who is still in graduate school and therefore has not yet entered the department, shared this view: "Truth be told, while I am Latino, I don't like talking about my ethnicity or race because I don't want to have the perception that 'Oh, you're here because of affirmative action.' Like, no guys, I'm here because I'm good."

The experiences of Marie, Jenna, and Ela-

dio highlight a gradual shift in how Pickering fellows perceive holding the fellowship. While most of the fellows we interviewed feel respected for their fellowship status in graduate school, we deemed it essential to show how some fellows begin to learn that not everyone feels the same way about it. Their time in graduate school serves as a primer for what looms at the Department of State. When most Pickering fellows enter their new workplace, they learn that a status-valued social difference is established in this new organizational context.

When the Fellowship Is Negatively Valued

Our data analysis suggests that the status value of the Pickering Fellowship can drastically flip from one organizational context to another. Once fellows enter the State Department, they experience a painful shift in how they perceive the fellowship: from a context that holds a positive belief (family and college) to one in which this distinction is stigmatized (Department of State). Fellows discover that many Foreign Service officers presume that whoever holds the fellowship is less competent and less deserving of holding a position at their workplace. Fellows hear comments with negative connotations about the fellowship from various actors, which leads them to question the prestige of holding this accolade.

We show how fellows gradually learn to accept the devaluing status belief around the fellowship in the Department of State. We also show how the established status-valued social difference in this organizational context is rooted in racial distinctions (such as White versus non-White race in the Foreign Service), which causes the established status valuation to spread to a status characteristic (the fellowship). FSOs associate people who hold the fellowship with corresponding differences in status-worthiness and competence. Our data analysis suggests that two myths contribute to the established status-valued social difference in this organizational context: the Pickering Fellowship only targets people of color and the fellowship provides people of color a back door into the Department of State and a leg up once they are part of the Foreign Service. We explain these myths in the sections that follow.

Myth 1: The Pickering Fellowship Targets Only People of Color

The first myth contributing to the established negative status belief around the Pickering Fellowship is that it is only awarded to people of color. Cristina, a White woman and a Pickering fellow who worked at the Department of State for years, said, "I do not think I met many people of color in the State Department that were not Pickering fellows. The ones I knew were Pickering, and I talked to people of color through that channel. Foreign Service officers assume that the fellowship targets people of color only because many Pickerings are Black or people of color. I would say the State Department does not recruit Black people outside of the Pickering Fellowship for the most part."

Like many White workers in the Foreign Service we interviewed, Cristina believes that the only way for Black people to access the Department of State is through a fellowship program like the Pickering. Irma, a Black woman and Pickering fellow working at State, is well aware of how dissimilar others (that is, White workers) might perceive holding the fellowship:

> There is this assumption that Pickerings are Black, or maybe Latino, right? That it is only for minorities, when it is much broader. People do not understand the scope of the program. They just assume that it is an affirmative action type of situation and that you are not qualified. That has been my experience, from hearing others talk about Pickerings, not realizing that I am a Pickering. They assume that if you are Black, you are either civil service or Foreign Service that entered via Pickering. This girl said, and I had to bite my tongue: "Oh! This guy, he is Black! And he's not a Pickering! So, what is he doing here?"

Our data analysis suggests that many State Department workers question the competence of those who are not the prototypical "Male, Pale, and Yale" FSO. Many of the White Department of State workers we interviewed have a zero-sum mindset when they think about racial diversity in their workplace. That is, they reported that increasing minority populations in their workplace might reduce their chances of prosperity and success (for a broader conversa-

tion on the implications of status threat and zero-sum ideologies, see Craig and Richeson 2014; Koenig 2022; Mendelberg 2022). Most of the non-Pickering White FSOs we interviewed believe that if people of color enter the State Department through "diversity initiatives" such as the Pickering Fellowship, their chances of moving up within the organization decrease. Carlos, a Latino Pickering fellow, illustrated this phenomenon by talking about his experiences with White colleagues: "There are many people in the State Department now, White males, that believe 'There is no way I'm going to make it to the next level because the department is trying to increase diversity, and I am going to get screwed.' I cannot tell you how many times I have heard that from a Male-Pale-Yale guy who did very well, has done very well in his career, and says that to me, thinking like I would sort of agree with him, for some reason."

Interviewees who had spent at least five years working as FSOs gave important explanations about the drivers of the myth that the fellowship serves as a back door for non-White FSOs. Martina is one of them: she is a Black woman who has been working at the Department of State for more than a decade. Martina thinks that "it is a racialized situation, because of White people pushing back saying that minorities were getting a benefit through the fellowship" Similarly, Maria, a Latina FSO who has been working at State for a long time, offers clarity on what might hold this myth:

> People believe that the Pickering only targets non-Whites. Do you know what this is about it? It is about power. It is about privilege. To some extent, I guess it could be a threat, right? Because when you are used to being the dominant [group], it is a race in these positions. It could be perceived as a threat. And that's why maybe there's this backlash against it, because, you know: "Oh, are they taking over now?" And possibly, you know, taking over their positions or their legacy, right? So maybe it's a threat to their legacy, fear of other people that do not look like them getting to where they're at. And now you have this affirmative action move, and it's like a threat to their legacy.

In sum, our analysis suggests that the myth of the Pickering Fellowship targeting people of color goes hand in hand with the belief that increasing racial diversity at the Department of State might diminish White workers' chances of success or promotion. This belief shapes how FSOs perceive Pickering Fellowship holders. Our intention is not to suggest that the zero-sum mentality or the threat White workers perceive solely drives this myth. However, we find that the racial rhetoric concerning the Pickering program plays an essential role in maintaining this myth.

Myth 2: The Pickering Fellowship as a Back Door or Leg Up

The second myth that contributes to the established negative valuation of the Pickering Fellowship is that the program functions as a back door for people to get into the Department of State or as a leg up that helps fellows be easily promoted. Many workers erroneously believe that fellows do not take the required oral exam to enter the department or that "they have it easier than most members to enter." Pickering fellows learn that others might negatively value the fellowship through repeated interactions with nonfellows. During an interview, Andrew, a Latino FSO who has been working at the State Department for eight years, said this: "I remember a White male in one of my training sessions early on in my career. I do not even know how it came off. But he commented about how being a Pickering makes it easier for me, and how he had taken the test multiple times and kind of earned his way in, and how I did not earn my way in. The program does not give you an advantage, though. You have to compete with everybody else."

Like Andrew, Karina, a Black woman and former Department of State worker, said, "I have heard people comment about how the program provides a leg up and it gets people in through the door. There is a misconception about what the fellowship is. People think fellows maybe don't have to take the test. Well, no, they do." Winning a Pickering Fellowship does not waive entry exam requirements. Nevertheless, a significant number of Foreign Service officers believe this. Derek, an Asian American FSO and a Pickering fellow, describes an en-

counter with a coworker that happened during his first internship several years ago:

> In one particular instance, I explained the fellowship to an officer at the embassy where I worked. I had corrected his misinterpretation that fellows get some sort of backdoor in the department and that they get to skip the steps to enter the department. Later that day, this particular individual was having a conversation with a friend of mine, who later reported back to me that this individual continued to believe that I had a backdoor in, and it was like, I just explained that was not the case! In the future, this individual continued to say that Pickerings "cheated their way into the department."

Like the FSO Derek encountered, many believe those who won the Pickering Fellowship are less competent because they do not think they entered the department on their merits. Other fellows, such as Jenny, a Black woman and Pickering fellow who left the Department of State to pursue a successful career in public affairs, had strong opinions about this perception. Jenny said that "White people think fellows have a leg up when in reality fellows had to work twice as hard to enter the department." We did not record this interview, but Jenny's overall sentiment about this myth is that White State Department workers feel threatened by "the presence of people of color." Jenny related that people "make up excuses to justify the presence of people of color in a White organization, like saying the Pickering program is a back door."

Our analysis shows that being a Pickering fellow and a person of color working at the Department of State becomes associated with corresponding differences in status-worthiness and ability. A negative status valuation of people of color in this organizational context spreads to the fellowship. Teresa, a Black woman and former FSO, highlighted that "people at the State Department cannot reconcile diversity with meritocracy." In Western societies, people understand value as perceived competence and effort (Ridgeway et al. 2009). Those who consider the fellowship an initiative to promote racial diversity in the Department of State view recipients as less competent individuals who entered the organization with less effort than others. We have explained how fellows gradually learn about the established devaluing status of the fellowship. In what follows, we explain how this negative status belief becomes widely held within the State Department and accepted by the group that holds high status and by the fellows. This process is essential to maintain the negative status belief about the fellowship within the department.

Internalizing the Evaluative Rank: Choosing to Hide Fellowship Status

As we pointed out, a central feature of status beliefs is that all group members come to acknowledge and accept these distinctions (Ridgeway and Correll 2006). The negative one of the fellowship is inculcated into new Foreign Service members when they enter the State Department, fellows and nonfellows alike. Like Julie Chung, the acting assistant secretary referred to earlier, fellows accept the devaluing status of the fellowship within the Department. Thus many of the fellows we interviewed choose to hide that they are Pickering recipients to maintain what is popularly known as their *corridor reputation*, "the reputation that follows every officer throughout their diplomatic career." In the A-100 training classes (the orientation course at the Foreign Service Institute), all future FSOs learn, among other things, about the culture of the State Department. When talking about why she chooses to hide that she is a Pickering fellow, Daniela, a Latina FSO, said, "Much of that [fear of disclosing my fellowship status] is based on corridor reputation, starting from the moment you come into the service. As a result of this idea of corridor reputation, there is also often the initial sort of climb up, having to prove yourself with your FSO written exam results and how you did on your oral assessment."

Carla, an Asian American woman who worked at State for more than ten years, explained how she navigated the trickiness of disclosing her fellowship status:

> I am very strategic about where I disclose it. It's mostly gut instincts, but I've talked about it in my graduate experiences for the most

> part. The fellowship has been a tremendous source of pride for me, and I never thought about it this explicitly. But I think at some level also, because I've known there was that stigma associated with the fellowship, I actually had the opposite reaction where I think to some extent, I wanted to say: "Yes, I'm a fellow, I know, I'm going to do my work," but I never said this directly. But part of me is thinking in the back of my head: "I'm going to do my work and represent this fellowship. So, I want you to know that I'm a fellow, because if you have any misperceptions about the fellowship, you know, I want to be someone you think of when you think of the fellowship. That whatever negative perception you have, it is wrong."

On clear display here is how fellows wrestle with the pride they feel for being Fellows and the institutional perception of the fellowship. Though many of them want to be "out, loud, and proud" about their fellowship, they end up being what one interviewee called "closet Pickerings" as a way to avoid perceptual and social penalties at work (see, for example, Yoshino 2007; Kelly and McKillop 1996). Eladio's response encapsulates this sentiment: "I heard that having that fellowship can be almost a stigma in the State Department. Because it has this terrible perception, I wonder if it can impact my chances of being promoted or considered for other posts. You don't talk about it too closely or too openly. Because [Pickerings are perceived] as diversity hires, it really can hurt promotion status."

Mark, a Black man and a Pickering fellow who has worked in the Foreign Service for years, has a similar concern. He explained during his interview how the two myths make fellows question their worth:

> There is a tendency to either downplay the fellowship or avoid mentioning it altogether. People don't want to be perceived as having taken a shortcut. They don't want their credentials to be doubted. People think you're bypassing some of the entry requirements for Foreign Service, that you won't have to take the oral assessment or the written assessment, that fellows jumped the line. The fellowship is very competitive. But for a lot of people, it still fuels that self-doubt, that like "Did I take a shortcut? Do I belong here?" The institutional perception of the Pickering Fellowship does not help, thinking it's like a shortcut around what other people had to do to get into the Foreign Service.

Mark highlights a critical dynamic of status beliefs. He emphasizes how both fellows and nonfellows begin to adopt mindsets that question whether fellowship winners deserve to be at the State Department. In reminiscing about his experience, Mark illustrates how high-status members' (such as those who fit the Male, Pale, and Yale stereotype) erroneous perceptions of the fellowship get imprinted on fellows. More important, he highlights the institution's role in maintaining this established negative status valuation. The question then arises of who tells fellows to hide their fellowship status. In the following section, we present how well-intentioned mentors suggest that their mentees be "discreet about the fellowship."

Hearing from Mentors to Hide One's Fellowship Status

One of the central selling points for prospective Pickering fellows is that they will have access to an extensive network of past fellows and mentors who can guide them through graduate school and while working as FSOs. Formal and informal mentors teach fellows about socializing, engaging with their colleagues and supervisors, and maintaining their corridor reputation. We asked our interviewees if they could remember specific advice from their mentors regarding these issues. Irma, a White former FSO, told us that her mentors asked her "to be humble regarding the fellowship because not everyone views it in a positive light." Indeed, FSOs who won the fellowship earlier in their careers and who are now mentors say that the fellowship can become a double-edged sword. Brian, an Asian American FSO who has mentored "over a dozen fellows," told us that "It [holding the fellowship] works both ways. In a negative sense, it gives us the status of someone who is filling a quota. Maybe you didn't earn your way into the State Department, which,

again, is why I think a lot of people are reluctant to advertise openly. They're part of the fellowship program because they don't want to have that status of not being a traditional hire. Maybe outside of the State Department, it can give you status among people who want to involve themselves with the Foreign Service or the government."

Although Brian does not explicitly share that he tells his mentees not to disclose their status, we deemed it important to present how mentors (and in this case, a former Pickering fellow) think about the process of disclosing the fellowship to others. Leah is a Black woman known to be "seriously committed to mentoring Pickerings." Leah no longer works at State. She instead holds an important position in public service. However, she continues to informally mentor "whoever needs a mentor to navigate this White institution." When asked about the type of advice she gives her mentees concerning their fellowship status, Leah remembers her times as a Pickering fellow:

> We had a higher standard, very specific requirements that we had to meet, but there was this feeling like we were coming in a nontraditional way, and you did feel compelled to hide it. This was very clear when you would run into Pickerings. I remember an instance where someone from the second cohort, I ran into her on the street with another person, and it was like, oh, great to see you! The third person says, "How do you know each other?" and it was clear that the other fellow did not want me to indicate that it was through this fellowship. So, we did feel we needed to hide that we had received the fellowship.

In sum, our analysis reveals that an important part of the socialization between Pickering fellows and their mentors centers on navigating and discussing (or not) their fellowship status. Mentors make this suggestion given the stigmatized nature of the fellowship within the State Department. The advice of mentors plays a crucial role in how fellows internalize the evaluative rank and engage with others. All groups involved in this process acknowledge the evaluative rank. Fellows choose to hide their fellowship status to maintain their reputation and to avoid being seen as less competent in this organizational context.

The Negative Status Belief Affects All

We have demonstrated the racialized evaluation of the Pickering and Pickering fellows, but the established negative status belief at State affects all fellows. Taryn, a White woman who worked at the department for eight years before moving to industry, explained how the established negative evaluation affected her perception of being a recipient. Being a Pickering fellowship, she said, might not be "in line" with being a "very good FSO":

> In the Foreign Service, there are the "very good FSOs" and then there are the "terrible FSOs," and there isn't any in-between. The good Foreign Service officers are the ones who are the most polished and the most lockdown. They are the people that you want to be like, with a good career reputation. People at State talk about being a Pickering fellow, they talked about it in the A100, and it was so damaging as if winning the Pickering was making a wrong step, and if you have it, that people are going to talk about you, that's not okay. It's rooted in what I think are just very fundamental cultural flaws in the Foreign Service.

Adam, a White Pickering fellow who has worked at the State Department for ten years, learned about the negative status belief attached to the fellowship when he was working in Korea:

> There's one woman I met in my first tour in Busan. She's like, my picture of what the perfect Foreign Service officer would be. She went to an elite college in Boston. And she had that veneer all the time. I very occasionally saw breaks in it. She would say horrifying things. And some of the things she said made me realize I should not disclose I am a fellow. I think I heard it twice from her. It was just this shock of like, "Oh my god, you think that." She'll probably be an ambassador one day. And like, I've referred people to her because she's going places, and I admire her in a lot of ways. But it's kind of scary.

After this encounter, Adam learned to hide his fellowship status. During an interview, Carla, a White Pickering fellow who currently works at State, spoke of how the myths around the fellowship also affected her perception of the fellowship: "Somebody said something about the fellowship on a panel. I can't pick out a specific person. It was more of what I observed. I heard things like people thought that we had an easier route. I know it was actually a harder route to get into this because I had to go to grad school for two years, which was paid for, and that's awesome. But, you know, I had to do two internships, and it's hard. And I also had to pass the test. I took the orals twice."

The responses of White Pickering fellows provided a clarifying point for us: that the effects we are documenting are due to a negative belief about the Pickering itself, and not just direct, negative stereotyping of non-White members of the Foreign Service. We are not arguing that there is not a direct, negative stereotyping process. Instead, we contend that these distinctions illustrate how status, as a multilevel process, works. In this organizational context, linking the fellowship, which is a distinguishing status characteristic, to a status-valued social difference established at the State Department (being a White versus a non-White Foreign Service officer) causes the established status valuation to spread to the fellowship.

DISCUSSION

Our objectives in this study were to understand how a change in organizational context can lead individuals to experience a shift in the way they perceive a status characteristic. Specifically, we have shown how a negative status belief about the Pickering Fellowship forms within the State Department and focus on the process by which fellows gradually learn to accept themselves the devaluing status belief about their fellowship. This is necessary to maintain the established negative status belief and also affects White fellows. In this way, we show that the effects presented in our data are due to an established negative belief about the Pickering Fellowship, as well as to indirect stereotyping of non-White fellows.

Our findings suggest that experiences with status are context dependent: at home and school, participants experienced the esteem and respect of others. When they entered the State Department, they entered an organization where a negative status belief is established that is linked to the Pickering Fellowship, a distinguishing status characteristic. For many at State, holding a fellowship is a sign of lesser value because the evaluation of the fellowship is racialized: people believe that winning requires only being a person of color, nothing more. Thus, Department of State employees see fellows as less competent because they conflate racial status characteristics with holding the fellowship, even though some Pickering fellows are White. Notably, White fellows are not exempt from the stigma. Therefore, our case study highlights the intersection of race, myths, perceptions, and status. This phenomenon is essential to studying status beliefs and status characteristics because these elements are central to the widely held stereotypes of all the major groups through which inequality is patterned in the United States (Fiske and Bai 2020; Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick 2007). The stereotype that people of color are less competent is reified here because nonfellows perceive the fellowship not as the opportunity equalizer it was meant to be but as a back door into one of the most prestigious institutions in the country.

Theoretical Contributions

Our case offers two important theoretical contributions. First, we extend status characteristics theory. We do so by unpacking the process of how the established status-valued social difference in an organizational context is rooted in racial distinctions (White versus non-White in the Foreign Service), which causes the established status valuation to spread to a distinct, yet related status characteristic (fellowship holder versus nonfellowship holder). This process has been overlooked in much status research in part because this process is difficult to nail down; our qualitative approach allows us to keenly pinpoint these shifts and processes. Although status theorists have widely acknowledged that race and other dominant, hegemonic status distinctions (such as gender) play an essential role in status processes, the concept of race being linked to other status

characteristic or characteristics—though explored in other areas, such as intersectionality (Carter and Ponce de Leon 2022)—is on the periphery in much of the extant status research.

Second, we augment and extend the literature on status processes in organizations. We do so by examining how organizational contexts shapes status processes, highlighting the multilevel process of setting racial distinctions through the association of the race of fellows to a status characteristic. All status beliefs are rooted in communities and organizations, and the status attached to a distinguishing characteristic in one community is not the same as in another. Our case shows that a status belief embedded in the different contexts where the fellows socialize, whether with their families, the university, or the Department of State, does not change. What changes is the status belief held by the individual fellow about the fellowship as they enter the Department of State and learn about the established status belief.

Practical Contributions

Despite the efforts, the State Department continues to primarily employ and promote White men. As many of our participants mentioned, conversations about racial diversity broke out throughout the department after the murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020. The department implemented changes after this tragic event. In April 2021, President Biden appointed Ambassador Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley as the department's first chief diversity and inclusion officer. We are in a critical historical moment that gives momentum to conversations around race and diversity (see Boykin et al. 2020; Portocarrero and Carter 2022). By providing detailed accounts of the experiences of FSOs during this time in history, our findings can inform policies to diversify the Foreign Service and other organizations.

More important, our work demonstrates that the policies used to diversify historically White organizations often have unintended consequences for the individuals who bear that burden (Heilman, Block, and Lucas 1992). Specifically, in taking an in-depth qualitative approach, we highlight important mechanisms that drive this stigmatizing process. In doing so, we provide a critical roadmap for policy implementers as well as a cautionary tale for how these programs can reproduces negative consequences for those they are meant to advance.

Limitations and Opportunities for Future Research

Our study has limitations that provide fertile ground for future research. First, although we present data from nonfellows, we center the experiences of fellows rather than nonfellows and other important actors at State and what they think about this accolade. Thus we rely less on perceptions and more on the experience of having this status characteristic. Future research should examine this phenomenon in-depth and study whether perceptions change across organizational hierarchies. However, this approach does not diminish the value of understanding perceptions of Pickering fellows—particularly from a majority or nonstigmatized population. Thus one area of future work should explore the perceptions of fellows by nonfellows. Additionally, given the tight-knit, high-stress nature of the FSO program, research should explore how these processes might differ across the strength of the relationship or associations. For example, is this a case specific to the FSO program or would less closely linked actors exhibit a different response to these interlocking status characteristics?

Second, burgeoning research in this double issue also provides insights into new directions at the nexus of status beliefs and status characteristics. Specifically, Mesmin Destin and colleagues (2022, this issue) introduce the term *status uncertainty*, whereby aversive ambiguity about where one stands on the socioeconomic hierarchy has negative consequences for achievement and well-being. In this way, integrating themes from research here on status as well as class in organizations (Martin and Harrison 2022; Martin and Côté 2019) provides a promising, interesting research path.

Last, our study touches on the perception of diversity by highlighting how some individuals refer to the fellows as diversity hires. However, it does not thoroughly investigate what participants refer to when using the word *diversity*, particularly concerning fellowship status, despite this question being a growing area of re-

search. Ambiguity around diversity and inclusion is shown to lead national scholarship recipients to feel ashamed of their scholarship status (Portocarrero 2020). Experimental work in social psychology finds that diversity awards can funnel minoritized applicants away from more lucrative awards they qualify for to less lucrative ones (Germano et al. 2021). This research highlights some of the negative, unintended consequences marginalized actors face when in the presence of diversity programming. Further research could benefit from a qualitative approach and draw from status literature and sociocultural studies that explore evaluation, worth, and respect (see, for example, Lamont et al. 2016) to study how members of dominant groups value those who hold diversity accolades.

Conclusion

On the whole, this study provides an in-depth, qualitative investigation on the role of how organizational contexts ebb and flow to shift the meaning of status characteristics among both those carrying the designation and those who do not. In an ever-shifting landscape wherein diversity policies and conversations permeate all organizations and equally prolific diversity programming arises, it is important to understand the interpersonal and organizational consequences of both. Other work has begun to document the implications of the diversity messaging and policies (see, for example, Windscheid et al. 2016; Groenveld and Verbeek 2012). This research begins to shed light on the programming. Our aim is to provide a foundation for explorations into the broader consequences and experiences of those who bear the "diversity hire" label.

REFERENCES

Amis, John M., Kamal A. Munir, Thomas B. Lawrence, Paul Hirsch, and Anita McGahan. 2018. "Inequality, Institutions and Organizations." *Organization Studies* 39(9): 1131–52.

Bendersky, Corinne, and Jieun Pai. 2018. "Status Dynamics." *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior* 5(1): 183–99. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1146/annurevorgpsych-032117=104602.

Berger, Joseph, and M. Hamit Fişek. 2006. "Diffuse Status Characteristics and the Spread of Status Value: A Formal Theory." *American Journal of Sociology* 111(4): 1038–79.

Berger, Joseph, M. Hamit Fişek, Robert. Z. Norman, and Morris Zelditch Jr. 1977. *Status Characteristics and Interaction: An Expectation States Approach*. New York: Elsevier Academic Publishing.

Berger, Joseph, Susan J. Rosenholtz, and Morris Zelditch Jr. 1980. "Status Organizing Processes." *Annual Review of Sociology* 6(1): 479–508.

Bianchi, Alison J., Soong Moon Kang, and Daniel Stewart. 2012. "The Organizational Selection of Status Characteristics: Status Evaluations in an Open Source Community." *Organization Science* 23(2): 341–54. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1100.0580.

Blau, Peter Michael, Judith Lewis Herman, Melinda Blau, and Richard A. Schoenherr. 1971. *Structure of Organizations*, vol. 10. New York: Basic Books.

Boykin, Malik, N. Derek Brown, James T. Carter, Kristen Dukes, Dorriane J. Green, Timothy Harrison, Michelle Hebl, et al. 2020. "Anti-Racist Actions and Accountability: Not More Empty Promises." *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal* 39(7): 775–86.

Bunderson, J. Stuart. 2003. "Recognizing and Utilizing Expertise in Work Groups: A Status Characteristics Perspective." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 48(4): 557–91.

Carter, James T., and Rebecca Ponce de Leon. 2022. "Double Jeopardy or Intersectional Invisibility? Reconciling (Seemingly) Opposing Perspectives." In *Research on Social Issues in Management*, vol. 3: *The Future of Scholarship on Race in Organizations*, edited by Mikki Hebl, Eden King, and Quinetta M. Roberson. Charlotte, N.C.: IAP Publishing.

Chen, Ya-Ru, Randall S. Peterson, Damon J. Phillips, Joel M. Podolny, and Cecilia L. Ridgeway. 2012. "Introduction to the Special Issue: Bringing Status to the Table—Attaining, Maintaining, and Experiencing Status in Organizations and Markets." *Organization Science* 23(2): 299–307.

Chung, Julie. 2020. "The Making of a Real American Diplomat." *The Foreign Service Journal*, September. Accessed June 11, 2022. https://afsa.org/making-real-american-diplomat.

Coate, Stephen, and Glenn C. Loury. 1993. "Will Affirmative-Action Policies Eliminate Negative Stereotypes?" *American Economic Review* 83(5): 1220–40.

Correll, Shelly J., and Cecilia L. Ridgeway. 2006. "Expectation States Theory." In *Handbook of Social Psychology*, edited by John Delamater. Boston, Mass.: Springer.

Craig, Maureen A., and Jennifer A. Richeson. 2014. "On the Precipice of a "Majority-Minority" America: Perceived Status Threat from the Racial Demographic Shift Affects White Americans' Political Ideology." *Psychological Science* 25(6): 1189–97.

Cuddy, Amy J. C., Susan T. Fiske, and Peter Glick. 2007. "The BIAS Map: Behaviors from Intergroup Affect and Stereotypes." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 92(4): 631–48.

Dacin, M. Tina, Kamal Munir, and Paul Tracey. 2010. "Formal Dining at Cambridge Colleges: Linking Ritual Performance and Institutional Maintenance." *Academy of Management Journal* 53(6): 1393–418.

DeRue, D. Scott, and Susan J. Ashford. 2010. "Who Will Lead and Who Will Follow? A Social Process of Leadership Identity Construction in Organizations." *Academy of Management Review* 35(4): 627–47. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5465/AMR.2010.53503267.

Destin, Mesmin, Régine Debrosse, Michelle Rheinschmidt-Same, and Jennifer A. Richeson. 2022. "Psychological Challenges and Social Supports That Shape the Pursuit of Socioeconomic Mobility." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 158–71. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.08.

Eisenhardt, Kathleen M. 1989. "Making Fast Strategic Decisions in High-Velocity Environments." *Academy of Management Journal* 32(3): 543–76.

Escrogima, Ana, Lia Miller, and Christina Tilghman. 2020. "Diversity at State: A Dream Deferred and a Collective Responsibility." *The Foreign Service Journal*, September. Accessed June 11, 2022. https://afsa.org/diversity-state-dream-deferred-and-collective-responsibility.

Fiske, Susan T., and Xuechunzi Bai. 2020. "Vertical and Horizontal Inequality Are Status and Power Differences: Applications to Stereotyping by Competence and Warmth." *Current Opinion in Psychology* 33: 216–21.

Galinsky, Adam. D., Joe C. Magee, Deborah H. Gruenfeld, Jennifer A. Whitson, and Katie A. Liljenquist. 2008. "Power Reduces the Press of the Situation: Implications for Creativity, Conformity, and Dissonance." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 95(6): 1450.

Germano, Adriana L., Sianna A. Ziegler, Laura Banham, and Sapna Cheryan. 2021. "Do Diversity Awards Discourage Applicants from Marginalized Groups from Pursuing More Lucrative Opportunities?" *Psychological Science* 32(9): 1346–61.

Gould, Stephen Jay. 2002. *The Structure of Evolutionary Theory*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Groeneveld, Sandra, and Stijn Verbeek. 2012. "Diversity Policies in Public and Private Sector Organizations: An Empirical Comparison of Incidence and Effectiveness." *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 32(4): 353–81.

Handcock, Mark S., and Krista J. Gile. 2011. "Comment: On the Concept of Snowball Sampling." *Sociological Methodology* 41(1): 367–71.

Heilman, Madeline E., Caryn J. Block, and Jonathan A. Lucas. 1992. "Presumed Incompetent? Stigmatization and Affirmative Action Efforts." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 77(4): 536–44.

Heilman, Madeline E., Caryn J. Block, and Peter Stathatos. 1997. "The Affirmative Action Stigma of Incompetence: Effects of Performance Information Ambiguity." *The Academy of Management Journal* 40(3): 603–25. https://doi.org/10.2307/257055.

Hollander, E. P. 1958. "Conformity, Status, and Idiosyncrasy Credit." *Psychological Review* 65(2): 117.

Kelly, Anita E., and Kevin J. McKillop. 1996. "Consequences of Revealing Personal Secrets." *Psychological Bulletin* 120(3): 450.

Koenig, Biko. 2022. "Politicizing Status Loss Among Trump Supporters in 2020." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(6): 69–86. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.6.04.

Kralev, Nicholas. 2016. "The State Department Has a Diversity Problem." *Foreign Policy*, May 22. Accessed August 2, 2021. https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/05/22/state-department-race-gender-diversity-susan-rice-kerry/.

Lamont, Michèle, Graziella Moraes Silva, Jessica Welburn, Joshua Guetzkow, Nissim Mizrachi, Hanna Herzog, and Elisa Reis. 2016. "Getting Respect." In *Getting Respect.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2016.

Magee, Joe C., and Adam D. Galinsky. 2008. "Social Hierarchy: The Self-Reinforcing Nature of Power

and Status." *Academy of Management Annals* 2(1): 351–98.

Martin, Sean R., and Stéphane Côté. 2019. "Social Class Transitioners: Their Cultural Abilities and Organizational Importance." *Academy of Management Review* 44(3): 618–42.

Martin, Sean R., and Spencer Harrison. 2022. "Upward Mobility, the Cleft Habitus, and Speaking Up: How Class Transitions Relate to Individual and Organizational Antecedents of Voice." *Academy of Management Journal*. Published online: January 30, 2022. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2020.1550.

Melamed, David, Christopher W. Munn, Leanne Barry, Bradley Montgomery, and Oneya F. Okuwobi. 2019. "Status Characteristics, Implicit Bias, and the Production of Racial Inequality." *American Sociological Review* 84(6): 1013–36. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122419879101.

Mendelberg, Tali. 2022. "Status, Symbols, and Politics: A Theory of Symbolic Status Politics." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(6): 50–68. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.6.03.

Nag, Rajiv, Kevin G. Corley, and Dennis A. Gioia. 2007. "The Intersection of Organizational Identity, Knowledge, and Practice: Attempting Strategic Change via Knowledge Grafting." *Academy of Management Journal* 50(4): 821–47.

Owens, David A., and Robert I. Sutton. 2001. "Status Contests in Meetings: Negotiating the Informal Order." In *Groups at Work: Theory and Research*, edited by Marlene E. Turner. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Piazza, Alessandro, and Fabrizio Castellucci. 2014. "Status in Organization and Management Theory." *Journal of Management* 40(1): 287–315. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206313498904.

Pickering Fellowship. 2021. "The Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship Program." Accessed August 2, 2021. https://pickeringfellowship.org.

Podolny, Joel M. 2005. *Status Signals*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Portocarrero, Sandra. 2020. "Qué Vergüenza: How an Organization Led National Scholarship Recipients to Become Ashamed of What Had Once Made Them Most Proud." *Academy of Management Proceedings* 2020(1): 18017.

Portocarrero, Sandra, and James T. Carter. 2022. "Diversity Initiatives in the US Workplace: A Brief History, Their Intended and Unintended Consequences." *Sociology Compass*. 16(7). DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.13001.

Ray, Victor. 2019. "A Theory of Racialized Organizations." *American Sociological Review* 84(1): 26–53.

Resendez, Miriam G. 2002. "The Stigmatizing Effects of Affirmative Action: An Examination of Moderating Variables." *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 32(1): 185–206.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L. 2001. "The Emergence of Status Beliefs: From Structural Inequality to Legitimizing Ideology." In *The Psychology of Legitimacy: Emerging Perspectives on Ideology, Justice, and Intergroup Relations*, edited by John T. Jost and Brenda Major. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2014. "Why Status Matters for Inequality." *American Sociological Review* 79(1): 1–16.

Ridgeway, Cecilia. L., Kristen Backor, Yan E. Li, Justine E. Tinkler, and Kristan G. Erickson. 2009. "How Easily Does a Social Difference Become a Status Distinction? Gender Matters." *American Sociological Review* 74(1): 44–62.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L., Elizabeth H. Boyle, Kathy J. Kuipers, and Dawn T. Robinson. 1998. "How Do Status Beliefs Develop? The Role of Resources and Interactional Experience." *American Sociological Review* 63(3): 331–50.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L., and Shelley J. Correll. 2006. "Consensus and the Creation of Status Beliefs." *Social Forces* 85(1): 431–53.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L., and Kristan G. Erickson. 2000. "Creating and Spreading Status Beliefs." *American Journal of Sociology* 106(3): 579–615.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L., and Hazel Rose Markus. 2022. "The Significance of Status: What It Is and How It Shapes Inequality." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 1–25. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.01.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L., and Henry A. Walker. 1994. "Status Structures." In *Sociological Perspectives on Social Psychology*, edited by Karen S. Cook, Gary Alan Fine, and James S. House. London: Pearson.

Rivera, Lauren A. 2010. "Status Distinctions in Interaction: Social Selection and Exclusion at an Elite Nightclub." *Qualitative Sociology* 33(3): 229–55. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-010-9152-2.

Roscigno, Vincent J. 2019. "Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, and the Impact of Workplace Power." *Socius* 5. First published online: June 28, 2019. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/2378023119853894.

Sauder, Michael, Freda Lynn, and Joel M. Podolny. 2012. "Status: Insights from Organizational Sociology." *Annual Review of Sociology* 38(1): 267–83.

Scott, W. Richard, and Gerald F. Davis. 2015. *Organizations and Organizing: Rational, Natural and Open Systems Perspectives*. London: Routledge.

Sutton, Robert I., and Andrew Hargadon. 1996. "Brainstorming Groups in Context: Effectiveness in a Product Design Firm." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 41(4): 685–718. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/2393872.

U.S. Department of State. 2021. "About the U.S. Department of State." Accessed August 2, 2021. https://www.state.gov/about.

Valentino, Laura. 2022. "Status Lenses: Mapping Hierarchy and Consensus in Status Beliefs." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 89–110. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.05.

Weber, Max. 1968. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretative Sociology*, vol. 1. First published 1918. New York: Bedminster Press.

Windscheid, Leon, Lynn Bowes-Sperry, Deborah Kidder, Ho Kwan Cheung, Michèle Morner, and Filip Lievens. 2016. "Actions Speak Louder Than Words: Outsiders' Perceptions of Diversity Mixed Messages." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 101(9): 1329.

Yoshino, Kenji. 2007. *Covering: The Hidden Assault on Our Civil Rights*. New York: Random House.

Who Gets Accepted and Who Gets Rejected? Status in the Production of Social Science

KEVIN NAZAR, ROBERTA SPALTER-ROTH, AND JAMES C. WITTE

This article considers science as a stratified social system that may reflect and reproduce broader social patterns of stratification. Analyses are based on a unique data archive with more than ten thousand published and unpublished manuscripts and the associated peer reviews, all submitted between 1990 and 2010 to the American Sociological Review, *a leading journal in the discipline. The analysis considers how race, gender, manuscript topic, and institutional affiliation are associated over time with publication decisions. These decisions shape the future of the discipline and have broader social implications. The findings show patterns that may limit emerging perspectives in the discipline and provides recommendations as to how the discipline can not only make the stratification system more permeable, but also emphasizes the significance of flattening the hierarchy altogether.*

Keywords: gender, knowledge production, peer review, publication bias, race, status, stratification

Science is a highly stratified social system (Nielsen and Andersen 2021). It is a process of knowledge production that can create or reinforce status inequalities. Studies have found steep academic hierarchies within sociology and other disciplines in regard to interdepartmental prestige hierarchies, citation counts, editorships in top-tier journals and areas of specialization. The prestige gap between elite and non-elite sociology departments in universities in the United States has proved enduring (Weakliem, Gauchat, and Wright 2012). Earlier studies show that status markers such as the race and gender of individuals and especially the status of employing academic departments or institutions are related to publication and

Kevin Nazar is a doctoral candidate in public and applied sociology at George Mason University, United States. **Roberta Spalter-Roth** is a senior research fellow at George Mason University, United States. **James C. Witte** is a professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and director of the Institute for Immigration Research at George Mason University, United States.

 Nazar, Kevin, Roberta Spalter-Roth, and James C. Witte. 2022. "Who Gets Accepted and Who Gets Rejected? Status in the Production of Social Science." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 192–209. DOI: 10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.10. All authors contributed equally to the article and are listed alphabetically. We thank the American Sociological Association for its participation in the ASR Digital Archive project. Research support was provided by Mason students: Yukiko Furuya, Amber Kalb, Carol Petty, Vivek Vimal Shah, Elizabeth Portaluppi, and Janie Inez Ritter. The project was funded by the National Science Foundation (award numbers 1855477, 1949732, and 1455499). Direct correspondence to: James C. Witte, at jwitte@gmu.edu, Institute for Immigration Research, 4400 University Drive, MSN 1D7, Fairfax, VA 22030, United States.

can therefore shape what is deemed legitimate science (Bakanic, McPhail, and Simon 1987; Crane 1967). These authors' findings are decades old now and are limited to publications, the end of the knowledge creation process. Since then, sociology has seen a growth in women and scholars of color. The question is whether this growth is reflected in manuscript acceptance rates that lead to publication? Has it democratized the discipline by narrowing race and gender gaps in publication, leveling the status hierarchy of academic departments, and increasing the scope of the manuscript topics accepted?

Within academic disciplines publications are thought of as an objective measure of status and institutional or departmental prestige (Wellmon and Piper 2017). We would expect that members of elite departments publish the most. Based on forty-five years of publications in four leading journals, faculty in the top twenty-five institutions account for 89 percent of the published articles; PhDs from Yale and Harvard account for 20 percent of all published articles. These are the markers that are typically used to define "elite departments" and the faculty associated with them (West et al. 2013). Those academics in departments with high levels of prestige can claim special monopolies, such as selecting (as an editor) or endorsing (as a reviewer) publishable manuscripts by virtue of their positions (Weber 2018, 144).

Along with institutional and departmental prestige characteristics, demographic characteristics such as gender, race, and ethnicity can likewise be status attributes that influence the knowledge production process in sociology (Bakanic, McPhail, and Simon 1987; Moore et al. 2018; Spalter-Roth et al. 2019).

Manuscript acceptance in elite scientific journals has been called the most important measure of social capital and legitimacy in a discipline (Wellmon and Piper 2017). Yet relying solely on published articles for researching what topics, departments, institutions, and demographic characteristics are most prevalent in a given period is a flawed method. It can lead to publication bias because researchers cannot compare manuscripts that are accepted with those that are rejected, and whether acceptances versus rejections vary by status characteristics (Begg and Berlin 1988; Delgado and Delgado 2018; Radicchi, Fortunato, and Castellano 2008). As a result, we know relatively little about how the peer-review process constrains knowledge production in sociology and in other disciplines and if these practices are influenced by status characteristics (Camic, Gross, and Lamont 2011). An exception is a study based on forty-three thousand reviews that finds that women were underrepresented in the peer-review process; female editors are more likely to suggest female reviewers and male editors are more likely to suggest male reviewers (Helmer et al. 2017). In contrast, most studies are both based on manuscripts that are published and are a potentially biased examination of the review process.

STUDY PURPOSE

The purpose of this article is to overcome this bias by examining manuscripts submitted to the *American Sociological Review* (*ASR*), the discipline's most prestigious journal, to find whether biases are present in the selection process by analyzing which manuscripts are accepted as publishable, which are rejected or assigned a revise and resubmit. Our analysis answers a series of research questions as to whether demographic, departmental, and topic area characteristics are more or less likely to gain status as legitimate science in the form of acceptance of manuscripts for publication, when controlling for other factors. We are able to answer the study research questions using a new digital archive (DA) that includes the status characteristics of accepted, rejected, and revise and resubmit (R&R) manuscripts. Specifically, it enables us to answer the following research questions related to status:

> Does the peer-review process result in equal acceptance rates by race and gender? Has this changed over time, so that there is greater equity among manuscript submitters?
>
> Is elite departmental status still a key predictor of the acceptance of manuscripts? Are there still significant race and gender effects once elite departmental status is considered?

> Are race and gender-themed manuscripts more likely to be accepted or rejected than those on other topics? Who is most likely to submit manuscripts on these topics and who is most likely to have theirs accepted?

We examine twenty-one-years' (1990–2010) of manuscripts submitted to *ASR*, plus a more detailed examination of 2007–2010 manuscripts. In short, we study inequalities in manuscripts' acceptance rates among race and gender groups, employment in elite or non-elite departments, and topic areas, as well as interaction effects of race, gender, and elite department affiliation. Our emphasis is on the structural determinants of the construction of sociological knowledge.

To answer these questions, this article uses the DA created by the authors that includes both published and unpublished manuscripts, and the associated peer-review documents, in order to measure status in the production of legitimate science in sociology and how status, in the form of prestigious publications is gained (Leahey and Moody 2014; Ridgeway 2011). Having both published and unpublished manuscripts and their peer reviews in a research archive helps shed light on the complete practice of scholarly journal peer review.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Over the last several decades, interest has increased in the processes of scientific knowledge production to analyze why some groups, topics, institutions, and paradigms gain or lose status over time (Calhoun and Van Antwerpen 2007; Camic, Gross, and Lamont 2011; Fortunato et al. 2018). The processes of scientific production emphasize the relational structure between demographic characteristics, departmental status, and topic area. (Fortunato et al. 2018).

Race and Gender in the Publication Process

The academic stratification process appears to legitimate a non-Hispanic White male set of rules and practices including value neutrality and objectivity that can be a veneer for maintaining (Bonilla-Silva 2015) White male power (Bonilla-Silva and Embrick 2005; Zambrana et al. 2017; Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva 2008). "White logic and White methods" have been seen as hegemonic (Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva 2008). These norms may constrain non-elite faculty careers, especially if these scholars want to follow career paths that include many peer-reviewed publications and teaching at research extensive institutions (Allen et al. 2008; Burawoy 2005; Bonilla-Silva and Embrick 2005; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Bowles and Gintis 2011; Darity 2010). During the period we investigate, *ASR* editors, who make final determinations of what is legitimate science, were predominately White male full professors in elite departments of sociology.

Despite progress toward gender equality in institutions of higher education and some progress in racial equality, deep patterns of discrimination against women and non-White male faculty appear to persist. From the "chilly climate" to the "old boys' club," women and minority academics must navigate structures and cultures that continue to marginalize, penalize, and undermine their success. For example, women attempting to publish in psychiatry journals face inequality in a male-dominated hierarchical system (Upthegrove et al. 2020). These hierarchical differences are on the rise and exist across countries and disciplines (Nielsen and Andersen 2021). One reason for these differences are that women are younger, on average, and are not, or have not yet been, promoted to higher ranks. In the research in psychology that Kevin Laland (2020) conducted, he finds that of the sixty editors-in-chief between 1974 and 2018, 83 percent were White and 5 percent were people of color. Further, these data also show that when editors are White, empirical papers included fewer participants of color when written by White authors (Williams 2020). These conditions may be worse for Black women (Spalter-Roth 2021), if they do not follow historically White male norms for an "ideal" career in the academic world (Bonilla-Silva 2017; Embrick 2017).

Research finds among underrepresented minority (URM) scholars (that is, African American and Latinx scholars) a series of significant differences in women's and men's daily experiences, with women having more negative experiences than men (Spalter-Roth 2021). Relative to their male colleagues, women are nearly

twice as likely to report unequal treatment in recruitment processes, and almost twice as likely to report not receiving resources to help them balance work and family obligations. More than twice as many women of color report experiencing verbal abuse or ridicule, although the numbers are small. An additional 17 percent of women report others have failed to legitimize or take their scholarship seriously. To a lesser degree, URM men have negative experiences as well, although it may be that men are more reluctant to report negative experiences than women. However, none of the findings indicate that these men had significantly worse experiences, on average, than their female colleagues, although in some cases their experiences are just as damaging. For example, equal percentages (48 percent) of URM men and women report that they do not spend time with other faculty members in their departments, suggesting that they do not have the potential for coauthoring or other networking activities and, therefore diversity is less likely to be sustained because URM academics have less opportunity to participate in publishable research (Spalter-Roth 2021).

Although they appear to be dominant in publishing, the share of White men who are members of the American Sociological Association (ASA) has decreased from 52.1 percent in 2002 to 44.2 percent in 2020. This is because White men eschewed graduate training in sociology as research and development funding dropped, real earnings declined, and the academic labor market contracted (ASA 2020). At the same time, women and URM students increasingly chose graduate training in sociology because sociology's subject matter lent itself to the inclusion of issues central to their lives (Reskin and Roos 1987). So, in recent years, the dominance of White males in the discipline should have declined but does not appear to have done so.

Likewise, in academic psychiatry, women face gender inequality, including in publication. Women have fewer high-impact publications, are more likely to be rejected, and spend longer time in review (Upthegrove et al. 2020). In addition, looking across fields, previous authors also find that women are likely to have publications in a narrow range of gender or family-focused topics that are considered less prestigious (West et al. 2013). These authors use JSTOR's large-scale data sets of publications in a wide variety of journals to examine the percentage of articles published by women compared to men, the order in which authors are listed, and the topics that have been published. The study authors find significant disparities between the genders with women publishing less, although the gap appears to be narrowing over time. The percentage of women with published articles in JSTOR from 1990 to 2011 ranged from 10.6 percent in mathematics to 46.4 percent in education. The percentage in sociology was among the highest, at 41.4 percent. The authors find, however, that women are less likely than men to be first authors on joint articles.

The Ideal Career Path: Elite Departments and Institutions

The "ideal" academic career path starts at a Research I graduate program, leads to employment in a tenure-track position and tenure at elite departments—all leading to increasing status in the discipline. Such a career path is assumed to be the model for graduate training and is promulgated in graduate programs and is the career path into which many graduate students are socialized (Burawoy 2005; Golde and Walker 2006; Walker et al. 2008). Historically, women, Blacks and Latino/as were excluded from or marginalized in predominantly White departments and institutions that produce cultural capital in the form of publications within academia (Blackwell and Janowitz 1974; Moore et al. 2018; Spalter-Roth et al. 2019). Most URM faculty are now educated and teach in historically White or predominantly White departments or institutions, but are less likely to teach at the most prestigious ones (CSMGEP 2018; Spalter-Roth and Erskine 2007). Previous authors do find that women and URMs are likely to have publications in a narrow range of gender or family-focused topics (West et al. 2013). Research on publications in *ASR* for earlier years suggests that elite institutional affiliation is significantly related to manuscript acceptance (Bakanic, McPhail, and Simon 1987).

In conclusion, the history of White women, Black men, and Black women as "outsiders

within" higher education is a long one; nevertheless, they create new paradigms such as intersectionality, critical race theory, and Black and Latina studies (Brewer 1989; Collins 1986, 1990; Collins and Bilge 2016). This history includes efforts to build Black and Latina/o sociologies separate from the paradigms created by White sociologists, which often treated URMs as Others or as the problem (Moore 2017). Often these scholars have made use of their outsider or marginal status to produce particular standpoints different from those of White sociologists and organizations on the basis of their own interests (Collins 1990, 1986).

The Scientific Process: Evaluation of Manuscripts

The dominant method for evaluating what should be published as legitimate science is peer review, conducted by editors and reviewers for a journal. Following Max Weber (2018), we suggest that editors have special status monopolies in that they pick the reviewers for articles. Editors and assistant, or deputy, editors have special power in the process in that they both select reviewers, who may have identical disciplinary interests to their own or are in the same professional networks or in similarly high-status departments. Editors, and deputy editors, unlike reviewers, have institutional and demographic knowledge of submitters. Most important, editors make the final decision, after reading the reviews, whether the submission is accepted, rejected, or suggested for revision (Bakanic et al. 1987; Crane 1967).

Although reviewers do not have access to manuscript authors' institutional and demographic characteristics, they may use a variety of techniques to intuit the gender and other status characteristics of manuscript authors such as the degree of self-references, labeling of the research as unique, and topic area (Flahrety 2019). For example, one study concludes that in the last few decades men self-cited 70 percent more often than women (King et al. 2017).

RESEARCH DATA AND DESIGN: THE *ASR* DIGITAL ARCHIVE

As outlined, the coin of the realm in an academic career is publication in high-status journals (Burawoy 2005; Darity 2010, 175). Thus we identify manuscript acceptance in *ASR* as the dependent variable in this analysis to see whether status characteristics are associated with acceptances. Until now, sociologists had no opportunity to directly examine the production of scientific knowledge because they were limited to the manuscripts that made it through the review process and were accepted. Even for the published articles, reviewers' comments and documentation of the changes made to the submitted manuscript prior to publication were not available. The DA used in this article is unique in that it is based on both the published and unpublished manuscripts and their peer reviews to shed light on the complete practice of scholarly journal peer review through which sociological knowledge is legitimated, communicated and preserved. By examining changes over time based on analysis of all submissions rather than just publications, this work may support or cast doubt on the existing literature as to the status of women, people of color and the significance of institutional affiliation, as well as a focus on gender and race topics in the production of legitimate science.

Over the course of several years, researchers from the ASA and from the Center for Social Science Research at George Mason University developed the DA based on more than two decades of archived materials. Paper records from ASA's journals were housed in a traditional archive at Pennsylvania State University. When the university decided to deaccession these records, they were stored in a climate-controlled warehouse by ASA, but were slowly deteriorating. The choice between letting these files degenerate and creating a new form of archive was made by the ASA Council. The result was a proposal to the National Science Foundation (NSF) for "Creating a Digital Archive for Research on the Production of Scientific Knowledge" that was funded by NSF in 2015. The goal of the project was to develop a digital research archive from the paper manuscripts, corresponding reviews, and editorial materials submitted to the ASA's six journals. The first step of this process was to curate the boxes of manuscripts, reviews, and letters to determine the completeness of the paper files for each journal. *ASR*, ASA's flagship peer-reviewed research

journal, contained the most organized files for each year of data and these materials were scanned into machine-readable files to create the foundation for the DA.

Since 1990, the ASA has used an editorial administration tool, Journal Builder, to manage and process submissions and reviews. The Journal Builder information provided accurate metadata to maintain a record of every manuscript submitted to each journal each year, its title, author or authors, reviewers, transaction dates, reviewer decisions and final outcome all connected through the unique manuscript, revision, author and reviewer ids. Based on the metadata, the DA included 10,551 manuscripts, linked to 18,554 authors, and 26,693 reviews; combined with editorial correspondence, the entire DA includes eighty-three thousand documents.

Demographic Data for Authors and Reviewers

Additional information from the ASA Graduate Department Guide and the ASA membership data base was linked to authors and reviewers present in the DA. ASA annually publishes a guide to sociology departments that offer graduate degrees and that wish to be included in the guide. This guide is organized by the name of university and the name of department. The guides could be used to determine departmental affiliation at the time of the article or review submission. The ASA membership files, are filled out by ASA members on an annual basis at the beginning of each membership year. For those who were ASA members during this period, gender, race, and ethnicity, current department and institution, as well as current email addresses for the most recent year of membership were extracted. For those characteristics that could not be obtained through the membership files, we engaged in a series of online searches and sent authors and reviewers a survey, which also asked for information on race, ethnicity, gender, and institution that could be used to populate the files when membership information was missing.

Departmental Affiliation

Based on a list developed by Phillipp Korom (2020) of 346 elite sociologists—identified through citation accounts for scholars in departments of sociology—fifty-five departments at U.S. universities were classified as elite departments because one or more elite sociologists were affiliated with these departments between 1990 and 2010 (see table A.1). Then, for the analysis that follows, looking specifically at publication outcomes between 2007 and 2010, the *ASA Guide to Graduate Programs* from 2007 was used to define all faculty members and Ph.D. recipients from those programs as elite sociologists. This allows the analysis to examine the extent to which an organizational feature, elite departmental affiliation, combines with individual status markers such as race, gender, and topic area to influence publication outcomes.

Manuscript Topic

To determine the status of various topics, the first step of the coding process involved manually obtaining references related to specific topics in sociology within *ASR* manuscripts. To do this, we manually coded 168 abstracts for *ASR* manuscripts from 1990, 2001, and 2008. The codes were related to fifteen topics of the discipline of sociology; this article focuses on the significance of the topics of gender and race. Using this manual coding as a reference, a second step involved using NVivo software and its programmable autocoding function to automatically code raw PDF files of all but 124 of the 3,046 submissions to *ASR* between 2007 and 2010. The NVivo autocoding was based on the sentences coded from the selected abstracts of the years 1990, 2001, and 2008 to code for references related to gender, race, and family topics in the raw files for the years from 2007 through 2010. References from those abstracts that the authors coded as belonging to gender and race themed manuscripts—and not a simple set of search terms—were used for the autocode of the other files. The output of the autocoding process yielded the number of references to the chosen topics found in each raw file. This resulted in a count of topic references per manuscript.

The next step was to compare the autocoding reference scores of sentences in abstracts initially coded manually to an autocoding based on basic definitions and themes related to the topics of gender or race. This way we

could analyze the correlation between the autocoding based on our coding references and more basic sentences about gender and race that the autocode could search for in the raw files. The correlation yielded a Pearson's r value of 0.72 ($p < .01$) for the gender topic and 0.40 ($p < .01$) for the race topic, which means that the coding based on the sentence references from the abstracts is similar to what would result if we based the coding on standard descriptions of gender and race. The basic sentences about gender and race that were tested against the manual sentence references to gender and race were based on a list from the journals *Gender and Society* and *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* (Golash-Boza 2016). For example (a full list is available on request):

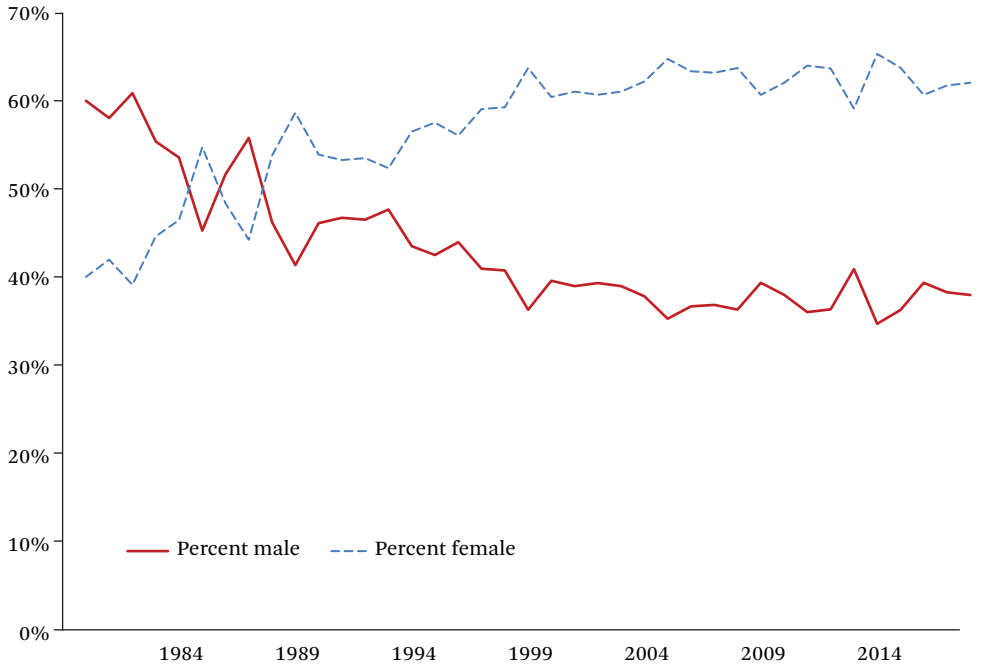
> Gender is related to class inequality.
>
> Division of household labor is a central theme of gender.
>
> Feminist identity is part of gender.
>
> Sociologists have a critical sociological theory of race and racism.
>
> Race is a modern concept and a product of colonial encounters.
>
> Most of the world has been affected by "global White supremacy."

Having topic information for gender and race for both the published and unpublished manuscripts, peer reviews, and departmental and demographic data in a unified research archive helps shed light on the complete practice of scholarly journal peer review through which sociological knowledge is codified and communicated.

FINDINGS

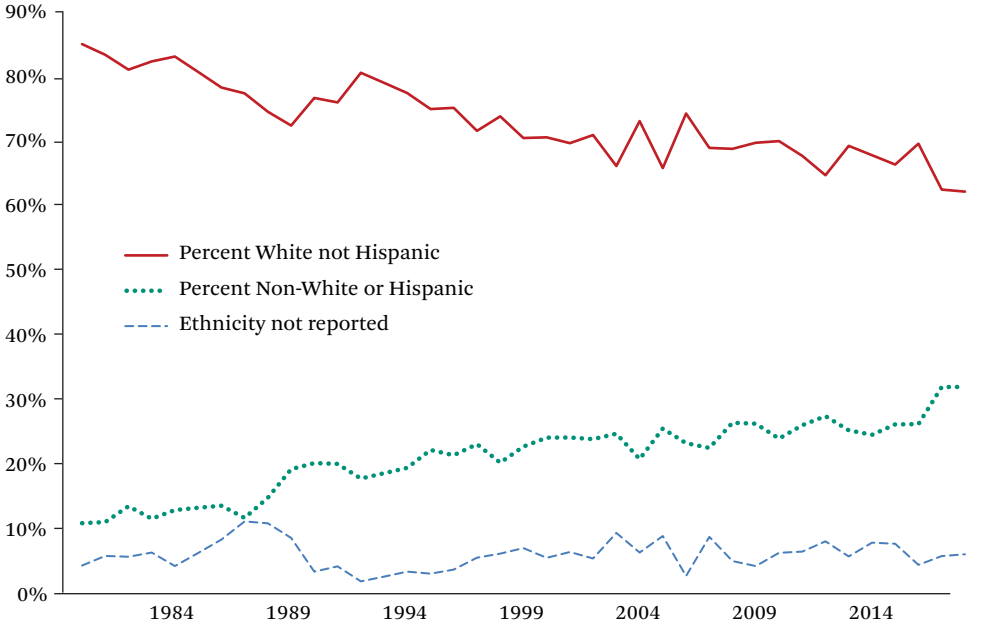
Figures 1 and 2 show the gender and race composition of each cohort of new sociology doctoral recipients from 1980 through 2018 to set the stage for the analyses based on the DA, which covers the period from 1990 to 2010. Figure 1 shows that prior to 1985, more men were receiving doctorates in sociology than women, but that by 1990 53 percent of the new doctoral recipients in sociology were female. In 2010, 64 percent were female. Figure 2 portrays a sig-

Figure 1. Sociology Doctorate Recipients in the United States by Gender



Source: Authors' calculations based on NSF 2020.

Figure 2. Sociology Doctorate Recipients in the United States by Race-Ethnicity



Source: Authors' calculations based on NSF 2021.

nificant decline in the proportion of non-Hispanic Whites among sociology doctoral recipients over the same period. With more women and non-Whites entering the discipline, along with retirements among older cohorts, where more White non-Hispanic men were in the discipline, the overall percentage of women and minorities in the discipline has presumably grown over time. The question then is whether the overall change in the demographics of the discipline also led to a shift in status recognition within the discipline as measured by publication in *ASR*, sociology's flagship journal.

The first set of DA findings is based on all authors who submitted manuscripts to *ASR* between 1990 and 2010. As table 1 shows, despite a small but significant increase in the percentage of non-Whites among those who submitted papers to *ASR* during this period, from 18.4 percent to 24.7 percent, the proportion of women authors has increased even more from 26 percent to 36.5 percent in 2010.

As table 2 shows, this period is marked by a notable decline in manuscript acceptances. Although the acceptance rate in the final two periods, especially the last one, is influenced by open R&R manuscripts, some of which will turn into acceptances, it declined by roughly 50 percent compared to 1990. Also noteworthy is the dramatic increase in the number of authors submitting, from 2,347 in the 1990 to 1993 period to 3,046 in the 2007 to 2010 period. This is then matched by a sharp increase in the number of manuscripts rejected without review (313) or withdrawn (2) for a total of 10.3 percent between 2007 and 2010 relative to earlier periods.

To simplify the analysis and focus on the most meaningful categories, yet remain mindful of the right censoring of final decisions obvious in the 2007 to 2010 period, subsequent analyses rely on two dichotomies: papers accepted or conditionally accepted relative to all other types of final decisions, and publishable papers that combine open R&Rs with those that are accepted in contrast to those who were rejected, rejected without review, or withdrawn.

To move beyond bivariate relationships, we estimated a series of logistic regression models. In table 3, exponentiated logistic regression coefficients are reported for manuscripts submitted by White authors, male authors, and pa-

Table 1. Race and Gender of *ASR* Authors

	1990–1993	1994–1996	1997–2000	2001–2003	2004–2006	2007–2010	Total
Race[a]							
White	81.6	78.7	77.2	77.7	76.2	75.3	77.6
Non-White	18.4	21.3	22.8	22.3	23.8	24.7	22.4
Gender[b]							
Male	74.0	70.3	64.4	66.2	61.8	63.5	66.4
Female	26.0	29.7	35.6	33.8	38.2	36.5	33.6
Total within period	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
# of authors	2,347	1,699	2,461	1,975	2,140	3,046	13,668

Source: Authors' calculations.
Note: 175 cases missing gender and 913 missing race. All figures except number of authors in percentages.
[a] $X^2 = 32.036$ with 5 df, $p < .001$.
[b] $X^2 = 106.352$ with 5 df, $p = .000$.

Table 2. *ASR* Final Editorial Decisions by Period

	1990–1993	1994–1996	1997–2000	2001–2003	2004–2006	2007–2010	Total
Accepted or conditional acceptance	17.8	15.9	12.5	10.2	12.7	8.6	12.7
Revise and resubmit	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	1.3	8.4	2.2
Reject	76.1	82.5	85.5	82.8	82.2	72.7	79.7
Reject-no review or withdrawn	6.1	1.6	2.0	6.5	3.8	10.3	5.4
Total within period	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
# of authors	2,347	1,699	2,461	1,975	2,140	3,046	13,668

Source: Authors' calculations.
Note: All figures except number of authors in percentages.
$X^2 = 1121.780$ with 15 df, $p < .001$.

pers submitted in each of the last five time periods with non-White authors, female authors, and the 1990 to 1993 period serving as reference categories. In models 1 and 2, the analysis is based on all manuscripts submitted between 1990 and 2010; in models 3 and 4, it considers only sole-authored manuscripts.

The results are consistent across all four models. Race is the strongest predictor. Manuscripts submitted by White authors are approximately 28.5 percent more likely to be accepted (model 1) or 29.0 percent more publishable (model 2). This remains the case when the analysis is limited to sole-authored papers (models 3 and 4). The effect of gender is weaker than that of race, but in all four models between 1990 and 2010 White and male authors are significantly more likely to have their manuscripts accepted or to be eventually publishable than female authors.

Once race and gender are considered, the period effects observed in the bivariate relationships generally remain strong and significant in table 3. With 1990 to 1993 serving as the reference category in all four models, the exponentiated logistic regression coefficients are under 1.000, indicating a lower probability of acceptance or possible acceptance. This is par-

Table 3. Exponentiated Logistic Regression Coefficients Decision

	All Authors		Single Authors	
	Accepted Authors[a] [1]	Publishable Authors[b] [2]	Accepted Authors[c] [3]	Publishable Authors[d] [4]
Race				
White	1.285***	1.290***	1.362***	1.370***
Gender				
Male	1.136*	1.114*	1.84*	1.163*
Period				
1994–1996	0.916	0.915	0.830	0.829
1997–2000	0.698***	0.700**	0.669***	0.672***
2001–2003	0.545***	0.579***	0.568***	0.607***
2004–2006	0.708***	0.794**	0.629***	0.717***
2007–2010	0.447***	0.937	0.423***	0.894
Constant	0.164***	0.981	0.142***	0.143***
Total number	13,493	13,493	7,845	7,845

Source: Authors' calculations.

Note: 1,044 cases missing gender or race.

[a] X^2 = 140.436 with 7 df, $p < .001$.

[b] X^2 = 80.070 with 7 df, $p < .001$.

[c] X^2 = 85.131 with 7 df, $p < .001$.

[d] X^2 = 46.325 with 7 df, $p < .001$.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

ticularly the case, for example, in the 2001 to 2003 period, all papers were about 45 percent (model 1) and sole-authored papers 43 percent (model 3) less likely to be accepted than in the 1990 to 1993 period. The trend for the final period, from 2007 to 2010, is somewhat ambiguous because, as shown in table 2, 8.4 percent of the authors' manuscripts were still in the R&R category. However, based on the results from models 1 and 3, it appears the trend will hold for this period as well.

Now, focusing attention on the most recent period, from 2007 to 2010, the analysis of publication outcomes includes manuscript topic and elite departmental affiliation. Overall, with the 2007 to 2010 data set, the acceptance rate is 8.6 percent, and an additional 8.4 percent of the authors' papers may still be publishable because they were out for revision and possible resubmission at the end of 2010 (table 2). To extend this analysis, table 4 provides an overview of the bivariate relationship between manuscript topic and departmental affiliation with the interaction of race and gender, that is, a comparison between non-White women, White women, non-White men, and White men. With regard to topic, a significant relationship is observed between race and gender and the submission of gender-related manuscripts. Non-White women are the most likely to submit gender-themed manuscripts, and the relationship between race and gender and manuscripts with a race theme is significant; moreover, the relationship between race and gender and whether a manuscript addresses either a gender theme or a race theme is also significant. Of the manuscripts submitted by non-White women, 37.8 percent addressed either gender or race, relative to 30.8 percent of White women or 31.1 percent of White men, and 37.0 percent of non-White men. To our surprise, non-White men were equally likely to submit manuscripts on race and gender topics as women of color were.

Clearly though, the strongest relationship found in table 4 is between the interaction of

Table 4. Interaction Effects Between Race and Gender for Topic and Affiliation

	Non-White Women	White Women	Non-White Men	White Men
Gender topic[a]				
Other topics	69.6	76.7	74.5	77.6
Gender topic	30.4	23.3	25.5	22.4
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Race topic[b]				
Other topics	77.5	82.3	73.5	78.9
Race topic	22.5	17.7	26.5	21.1
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Gender or race topic[c]				
Other topics	58.1	66.4	61.9	66.4
Gender or race topic	37.8	30.8	37.0	31.1
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Departmental affiliation[d]				
No elite affiliation	77.2	74.8	74.7	68.3
Elite affiliation	22.8	25.2	25.3	31.7
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	246	806	459	1,377

Source: Authors' calculations.

Note: 158 cases missing gender or race. All figures except total number in percentages.

[a] $X^2 = 7.631$, 3 df, $p = .05$.

[b] $X^2 = 12.791$, 3 df, $p = .005$.

[c] $X^2 = 9.823$, 3 df, $p = .020$.

[d] $X^2 = 17.329$, 3 df, $p = .001$.

race and gender, which represents the concept of intersectionality (Collins 1990; Collins 1986; Collins and Bilge 2016; Crenshaw 1989) and affiliation with an elite department of sociology: 31.7 percent of White male authors were affiliated with an elite department relative to 25.3 percent of non-White men, 25.2 percent of White women, and 22.8 percent of non-White women.

Table 5 then moves the analysis of *ASR* publication outcomes to a multivariate framework. The analysis considers race, gender, elite departmental affiliation and manuscript topic. Preliminary analyses tested for interaction effects between gender and elite departmental affiliation, race and elite departmental affiliation, and for the combination of gender and race with elite departmental affiliation, that is, White males affiliated with elite departments. None of these interaction terms were significant; nor did they significantly improve the overall fit of the models. Therefore they are excluded from the models.

Models 1 and 2 in table 5 provide the exponentiated logistic regression coefficients for the proposed multivariate models. In both cases, the overall model is significant, affiliation with an elite department standing out as the most important predictor, and the effects of race and gender are not significant. This finding is evidence of continued White male dominance, as they are more likely than other demographic groups to hold positions in elite departments. However, in model 1 and model 2, which includes papers with an open R&R along with the accepted papers, there is a significant, positive coefficient for authors of race-focused manuscripts.

Model 3 then considers the impact of the same variables on a slightly different definition

Table 5. Exponentiated Logistic Regression Coefficients Editorial Decisions

	Accepted Authors Model 1[a]	Publishable Authors Model 2[b]	Rejected Without Review Model 3[c]
Race			
Non-White	—	—	—
White	1.058	1.089	0.761
Gender			
Female	—		—
Male	1.018	1.033	1.257
Departmental affiliation			
No elite affiliation	—		—
Elite affiliation	1.607***	1.635***	0.424***
Topic			
Nongender focused	—	—	
Gender focused	0.993	1.251	0.524**
Nonrace focused	—	—	
Race focused	1.359*	1.421**	0.255***
Neither gender nor race focused	—	—	
Constant	0.079***	0.118***	0.202
Total number	2,647	2,647	2,647

Source: Authors' calculations.
Note: 399 cases missing gender, race, or topic.
[a] $X^2 = 15.082$, 6 df, $p = .007$.
[b] $X^2 = 32.302$, 6 df, $p < .001$.
[c] $X^2 = 96.934$, 6 df, $p < .001$.
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

of the dependent variable, in this case, whether a manuscript was rejected without a review. Reviews of this sort are done solely at the discretion of the *ASR* editors and, in some instances, deputy editors. As a result, these are not masked decisions but rather are taken with knowledge of the author's name and institutional or departmental affiliation and potentially also the author's race and gender. Here too, race, gender, and topic were not significant; however, if authors are affiliated with an elite department, then they are 58.1 percent less likely to have their papers rejected without a review. Moreover, gender-focused topics are 47.6 percent less likely to be rejected without a review, whereas manuscripts focused on race are 74.5 percent less likely.

Summary of Findings

To analyze the importance of status characteristics in academic publication, considered the key indicator of prestige in the discipline of sociology, this article addresses a series of research questions related to status and research publications. Based on unique archival data of *ASR* published and unpublished manuscripts, the analyses are situated in a stratified academic environment that creates and maintains status hierarchies. The analysis focuses on race, gender, the intersection of race and gender, departmental affiliation, and manuscript topics as predictors of successful publishing outcomes. Using data from the DA, the findings indicate the following for the period from 1990 to 2010:

Submissions to *ASR* by non-White and female authors have increased significantly, acceptance rates have declined, and rejections without review, that is, editorial desk reviews have increased (tables 1 and 2).

White authors and male authors were significantly more likely to have their manuscripts accepted or have open R&R as the final editorial decision, most of the open decisions occurring toward the end of the observation period (in 2010).

These relationships are seen in multivariate models that look at race, gender, and submission date (table 3). Unlike the analyses focusing on the 2007 to 2010 period, however, they do not consider manuscript topic or departmental status.

In analyses looking specifically at manuscripts submitted between 2007 and 2010, there are clear indications of the extent to which race and gender intersect with one another in the *ASR* publication process. Notably, non-White women are significantly more likely to submit gender-themed manuscripts, and relations between the interaction of race and gender and affiliation with an elite department of sociology are highly significant (table 4).

When the 2007 to 2010 data is viewed in a multivariate framework (table 5), race and gender are not significant predictors of publication outcomes, which may well be related to the increase in submissions by non-White and female authors over time. However, the significance of departmental affiliation remains; after controlling for race and gender, authors with an elite affiliation are 60 percent more likely to have positive publication outcomes than those from non-elite departments. Similarly, authors from elite departments are about 60 percent less likely to have their manuscripts rejected without review.

Along with the finding that desk rejections are less likely for authors affiliated with an elite department, it can also be seen that desk rejections were also significantly less common for manuscripts focused on gender (47 percent) and race (74 percent) than manuscripts without such an emphasis. This finding suggests that race and gender topics may have become a central focus of the field, at least for *ASR* editors.

Implications

To the extent that gaining status in the discipline of sociology rests on publications in top journals such as *ASR*, we have seen White males remain the dominant group in securing these publications, though this is mediated through their affiliation with elite departments of sociology. We have seen that race and gender are significant predictors of manuscript acceptance with women and men of color least likely to have their manuscripts accepted. Yet, when we include departmental status in the equation, race and gender drop out as significant predictors. We suggest that the reasons for this situation are that they are less likely to be recruited into elite departments. Those who are not in elite departments, we speculate, are less likely to have resources to publish their research. In addition, members of non-elite departments are less likely to have high-status mentors, must teach more courses, have fewer resources, such as availability of travel costs to ASA meetings, and are less likely to have graduate research assistants. In addition, their scholarship may be less likely to be thought of as legitimate and more likely to be subjects of harassment (Moore 2017; Moore et al. 2018).

What means are available for addressing these status disparities? These suggestions are based on a 2017 ASA membership survey (ASA 2019).

Increase Mentoring

Mentoring is viewed as a crucial part of the process of professional training and especially of increasing the number and proportion of underrepresented minorities in the scientific workforce. Academic mentoring is designed to create conditions for success by expanding social capital, networks, and other resources that result in greater productivity and archetypal employment (Lamont and Huutoniemi 2011). One long-term concern is that members of underrepresented minority groups are still being insufficiently mentored for academic career trajectories that are oriented toward scientific research, scholarly productivity, and the contri-

bution of new perspectives to the work of science (Dixon-Reeves 2003; Olson and Fagen 2007; Walker et al. 2008).

Although many White women and Black men and women prefer mentors "who look like them," some hotly debated findings suggest that having a White male mentor at a Research I graduate school significantly improves the chances of obtaining a tenure-track position at a Research I institution (Spalter-Roth and Erskine 2007). This finding is likely a result of the professional networks in which these faculty advisors participate and their status in the discipline. ASA holds workshops and programs to increase support for mentoring and increase access to professional development activities. By and large, these workshops are held at annual national and regional sociology meetings, but many faculty members and graduate students, particularly those not affiliated with elite departments, do not have the funds to attend.

Networks

Gaining access to professional networks is important for sociologists who want to do research and publish (Moody 2004). As noted, Black men and women often do not have close colleagues to publish with in their home departments (Spalter-Roth 2021). An alternative method for gaining networks in the discipline is to participate in ASA sections, representing specific subfields within the discipline. A number of large sections focus on race and gender. Others are not exclusively focused on these topics, but could afford men and women of color the opportunity to interact with a variety of other sociologists, present papers, gain comments, and find coauthors. These include the sociology of culture, medical sociology, organizations, occupations, and work, and community and urban sociology,

A possible outcome may be to legitimize "outsider perspectives" across the discipline. Yet the majority of ASA survey respondents are neutral as to whether sections help their professional status, especially if they are not in a top-tier department. Thomas Pettigrew suggests that more study is needed of the processes of intergroup contacts to see which processes lead to integration and which lead to separation (2007). Other survey respondents suggest that ASA should do more to make sociologists from all types of departments feel welcome. One idea is that membership fees should be reduced so that more sociologists can afford to participate or that as part of the membership, those who join the association should receive one free section membership (ASA 2019).

Resources

Research by the ASA Membership Task Force has suggested that women, and especially men and women of color, have fewer resources and often heavier teaching loads and service responsibilities because they are less likely to participate in elite departments. These resources, including time, are critical for research and publishing (ASA 2019). They remain a serious problem and limit opportunities to gain status in the discipline, especially in the form of publications. Selective programs such as the ASA Minority Fellowship Program (MFP) provide graduate support for a limited number of participants who are expected to go on to prestigious careers. The ASA Fund for the Advancement of the Discipline (FAD) provides limited funding for early stages of research to early-career faculty members to increase their status in the disciplines. However, the majority of the recipients are already employed by high-status Research 1 departments. Without a greater allocation of resources, inequalities will remain. This is a difficult issue that the discipline needs to address.

Composition of Editorial Boards and Editorial Decision-Making

Our findings also further explicate the special monopoly power of editors at high-status journals such as *ASR*. The significantly lower desk rejection rates for papers on race and gender during the 2007 to 2010 period—despite an overall increase in the number of desk rejections during this time period—are a sign that editors were making a conscious effort to have manuscripts related to these topics go through the peer-review process. However, the significantly lower probability of a desk rejection for authors affiliated with elite department suggests that authors submitting papers from non-

elite departments are systematically not having the opportunity to have their work evaluated through the peer-review process. ASR editors have significant power to ensure that these papers get the benefit of the expertise and opinions of peer reviewers. Extending this discretion to ensure full consideration of all manuscripts, regardless of departmental affiliation, would be a way to further confirm that the journal publishes the "best" submissions.

CONCLUSION

Providing avenues for non-Whites and women to enter elite departments of sociology that are capable of providing the mentoring, networks, and resources key to publishing in journals such as *ASR*, then, offers such individuals career opportunities. It also opens up the discipline to a new range of research and paradigms that will benefit it as a scientific enterprise. Thus far, the purpose of programs such as MFP and FAD is to elevate the status of minorities and professionally younger members of the discipline rather than to diminish the distance between status ranks. Addressing status inequality is not just about elevating a few individuals to high-status groups, but also about reimagining the determinants of status at the group or departmental level. For the good of underrepresented individuals, but also the discipline of sociology and the broader sociological audience, it is important for the discipline to do both—to open opportunities for all individuals to participate in high-status academic work, but also to broaden the definition of what it means to do high-status sociology.

Table A.1. Elite Sociology Departments

Arizona State University	University of California, Los Angeles
Boston College	University of California, Riverside
Brandeis University	University of California, San Diego
Columbia University	University of California, San Francisco
Cornell University	University of California, Santa Barbara
Duke University	University of Chicago
George Washington University	University of Florida
Harvard University	University of Illinois at Chicago
Indiana University Bloomington	University of Iowa
Johns Hopkins University	University of Kansas
Kent State University	University of Maryland, College Park
New School for Social Research	University of Massachusetts Amherst
New York University	University of Michigan
Northwestern University	University of Minnesota
Penn State University	University of Nebraska–Lincoln
Princeton University	University of New Mexico
Rutgers University	University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Stanford University	University of Notre Dame
State University of New York–Albany	University of Oklahoma
State University of New York–Binghamton	University of Oregon
State University of New York–Stony Brook	University of Pennsylvania
Syracuse University	University of Southern California
Texas A&M	University of Texas–Austin
The Ohio State University	University of Washington
Tulane	University of Wisconsin–Madison
University of Arizona	Western Michigan
University of California, Berkeley	Yale University
University of California, Irvine	

Source: Authors' calculations based on elite sociologists identified in Korom 2020.

REFERENCES

Allen, Walter R., Susan A. Suh, Gloria Gonzales, and Joshua Yang. 2008. "Quo Bono: Explaining of Defending Winners and Losers in the Competition for Educational Achievement." In *White Logic, White Methods*, edited by Tukufu Zuberi and Edwardo Bonilla-Silva. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.

American Sociological Association (ASA). 2019. "Report of the ASA Task Force on Membership. American Sociological Association. Accessed July 14, 2022. https://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/task_force_on_membership_report_-_20190930.pdf.

———. 2020. "Data Dashboard: ASA Total Membership Trend." American Sociological Association. Accessed June 11, 2022. https://asanet.org/academic-professional-resources/data-about-discipline/asa-membership/asa-total-membership-trend.

Bakanic, Von, Clark McPhail, and Rita Simon. 1987. "The Manuscript Review and Decision-Making Process." *American Journal of Sociology* 52(5): 631–42.

Begg, Colin B., and Jesse A. Berlin. 1988. "Publication Bias: A Problem in Interpreting Medical Data." *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 155(3): 419–63.

Blackwell, James E., and Morris Janowitz, eds. 1974. *Black Sociologists*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 2015. "The Structure of Racism in Color-Blind, 'Post-Racial' America." *American Behavioral Scientist* 59(11): 1358–76.

———. 2017. "What We Were, What We Are, and What We Should Be: The Racial Problem of American Sociology." *Social Problems* 64(2): 179–87.

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo, and David G. Embrick. 2005. "Racism Without Racists: Killing Me Softly' with Color Blindness." In *Re-Inventing Critical Pedagogy: Widening the Circle of Anti-Oppression Education*, edited by Cesar Rossatto, Ricky Lee Allen, and Marc Pryun. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.

Bourdieu, Pierre, and Jean-Claude Passeron. 1977. *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Bowles, Sam, and Herbert Gintis. 2011. *Schooling in Capitalist America*. Chicago: Haymarket.

Brewer, Rose M. 1989. "Black Women and Feminist Sociology: The Emerging Perspective." *American Sociologist* 9(20): 57–70.

Burawoy, Michael. 2005. "For Public Sociology." *American Sociological Review* 70 (February): 4–28. Accessed June 11, 2022. http://burawoy.berkeley.edu/Public%20Sociology,%20Live/Burawoy.pdf.

Calhoun, Craig, and Jonathan Van Antwerpen. 2007. "Orthodoxy, Heterodoxy, and Hierarchy: 'Mainstream' Sociology and its Challengers." In *Sociology in America: A History*, edited by Craig Calhoun. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Camic, Charles, Neil Gross, and Michele Lamont. 2011. "Introduction: the Study of Social Knowledge in the Making." In *Social Knowledge in the Making*, edited by Charles Camic, Neil Gross, and Michele Lamont. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Collins, Patricia H. 1986. "Learning from the Outsider Within." *Social Problems* 33(6): S14–S32.

———. 1990. "Black Feminist Thought and the Matrix of Domination." In *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, by Patricia H. Collins. New York: Routledge.

Collins, Patricia H., and Sirma Bilge. 2016. *Intersectionality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crane, Diana. 1967. "The Gatekeepers of Science: Some Factors Affecting the Selection of Articles for Scientific Journals." *The American Sociologist* 2(4): 195–201.

Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1989. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, *Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*." *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1, Article 8. Accessed June 11, 2022. http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/.

CSMGEP. 2018. "Committee of the Status of Minority Groups in the Economics Profession." *AEA Papers and Proceedings* 108: 722–35. Accessed June 11, 2022. https://pubs.aeaweb.org/doi/pdfplus/10.1257/pandp.108.722.

Darity, William A., Jr. 2010. "Notes from the Back of the Academic Bus." In *The Future of Diversity*, edited by Daniel Little and Satya P. Mohanty. New York Palgrave Macmillan.

Delgado, Alberto Falk, and Anna Falk Delgado. 2018. "Home Institution Bias in the *New England Jour-*

nal of Medicine? A Noninferiority Study on Citation Rates." *Scientometrics* 115: 607–11. Accessed June 11, 2022. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs11192-017-2584-7.

Dixon-Reeves, Regina. 2003. "Mentoring as a Precursor to Incorporation: An Assessment of the Mentoring Experience of Recently Minted PhDs." *Journal of Black Studies* 34(1): 12–27.

Embrick, David G. 2017 "Discontents within the Discipline: Sociological Hypnagogia, Negligence, and Denial." *Social Problems* 64(2): 188–93.

Flahrety, Colleen. 2019. "Study: Men Frame Their Research Findings More Positively Than Do Women." *Inside Higher Education*, December 17. Accessed June 11, 2022. https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/12/17/study-men-frame-their-research-findings-more-positively-do-women.

Fortunato, Santo, Carl T. Bergstrom, Katy Börner, James A. Evans, Dirk Helbing, Staša Milojević, Alexander M. Petersen, et al. 2018. "Science of Science." *Science* 359(6379): eaao0185.

Golash-Boza, Tanya. 2016. "A Critical and Comprehensive Sociological Theory of Race and Racism." *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 2(2): 129–41.

Golde, Chris M., and George M. Walker, eds. 2006. *Envisioning the Future of Doctoral Education: Preparing Stewards of the Discipline*. Carnegie Essays on the Doctorate. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Helmer, Markus, Manuel Schottdorf, Andreas Neef, and Demian Battaglia. 2017. "Gender Bias in Scholarly Peer Review." *eLife* 6:e21718. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7554/eLife.21718.

King, Mollie M., Carl T. Bergstrom, Shelley J. Correll, Jennifer Jacquet, and Jevin D. West. 2017. "Men Set Their Own Cites High: Gender and Self-Citation Across Fields and over Time." *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World* 3. First published online December 8, 2017. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/2378023117738903.

Korom, Philipp. 2020. "The Prestige Elite in Sociology: Toward a Collective Biography of the Most Cited Scholars (1970–2010)." *Sociological Quarterly* 61(1): 128–63.

Laland, Kevin N. 2020. "Racism in Academia, and Why the Little Things Matter." *Nature*, August 25.

Lamont, Michele, and Katri Huutoniemi. 2011. "Comparing Customary Rules of Fairness: Evaluative Practices in Various Types of Peer Review Panels." In *Social Knowledge in the Making*, edited by Charles Camic, Neil Gross, and Michele Lamont. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Leahey, Erin, and James Moody. 2014. "Sociological Innovation Through Subfield Integration." *Social Currents* 1(3): 228–56.

Moody, James. 2004. "The Structure of a Social Science Collaboration Network: Disciplinary Cohesion from 1963 to 1999." *American Sociological Review* 69(2): 213–38.

Moore, Kyle K., Ismael Cid-Martinez, Jermaine Toney, Jason A. Smith, Amber C. Kalb, Jean H. Shin, and Roberta M. Spalter-Roth. 2018. "Who Climbs the Academic Ladder? Race and Gender Stratification in a World of Whiteness." *Review of Black Political Economy* 45(3): 216–44.

Moore, Mignon R. 2017. "Women of Color in the Academy: Navigating Multiple Intersections and Multiple Hierarchies." *Social Problems* 64(2): 200–205.

Nielsen, Mathias Willum, and Jens Peter Andersen. 2021. "Global Citation Inequality Is on the Rise." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science of the United States of America* 118(7): e2012208118. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2012208118.

NSF. 2020. National Science Foundation, National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, Survey of Earned Doctorates. NCSES Interactive Data Tool. Accessed July 7, 2020. https://ncsesdata.nsf.gov/explorer.

———. 2021. National Science Foundation, National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, Survey of Earned Doctorates. NCSES Interactive Data Tool. Accessed September 15, 2021. https://ncsesdata.nsf.gov/explorer.

Olson, Steven, and Adam P. Fagen, eds. 2007. *Understanding Interventions That Encourage Minorities to Pursue Research Careers: Summary of a Workshop*. Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.17226/12022.

Pettigrew, Thomas F. 2007. "Future Directions for Intergroup Contact Theory and Research." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 32(3): 187–99.

Radicchi, Phillip, Santo Fortunato, and Claudio Castellano. 2008. "Universality of Citation Distributions: Toward and Objective Measure of Scientific Impact." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 105(45): 17268–72.

Reskin, Barbara F., and Patricia A. Roos. 1987. "Status Hierarchies and Sex Segregation." In *Ingredients for Women's Employment Policy*, edited by Christine Bose and Glenna Spitze. Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press.

Ridgeway, Cecelia. 2011. *Framed by Gender: How Gender Inequality Persists in the Modern World.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Spalter-Roth, Roberta. 2021. "Obstacles to Sustaining Diversity: Historical Context and Current Experiences of Underrepresented Minority Women and Men in Sociology and Economics." *Sustainability* 13(21): 11858. Accessed June3 11, 2022. https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/13/21/11858/html.

Spalter-Roth, Roberta, and William Erskine. 2007. *Race and Ethnicity in the Sociology Pipeline.* Washington, D.C.: American Sociological Association.

Spalter-Roth, Roberta, Jean Shin, Olga Mayorova, and Patricia White. 2011. *The Impact of Cross-Race Mentoring for Ideal and Alternative Career in Sociology.* Washington, D.C.: American Sociological Association.

Spalter-Roth, Roberta, Jean Shin, Jason A. Smith, Amber Kalb, Kyle K. Moore, Ismael Cid-Martinez, and Jermaine Toney. 2019. "Raced Organizations and the Academic Success of Underrepresented Minority Faculty Members in Sociology." *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 5(2): 261–77.

Upthegrove, Rachel, Angharad De Cates, Alice Shuttleworth, Derek. K. Tracey, Matthew R. Broome, and Anne Lingford-Hughes. 2020. "Gender Equality in Academic Publishing: Action from the BJPsych." *British Journal of Psychiatry* 218(3): 128–30.

Walker, George E., Chris M. Golde, Laura Jones, Andrea Conklin Bueschel, and Pat Hutchings. 2008. *The Formation of Scholars: Rethinking Doctoral Education for the Twenty-First Century*. Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Weakliem, David L., Gordon Gauchat, and Bradley R. E. Wright. 2012. "Sociological Stratification: Change and Continuity in the Distribution of Departmental Prestige, 1965–2007." *American Sociologist* 43(3): 310–27.

Weber, Max. 2018. "Class, Status, and Party." In *The Inequality Reader: Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class, and Gender*, edited by David Grusky. New York: Routledge, 2018.

Wellmon, Chad, and Andrew Piper. 2017. "Publication, Power, and Patronage: On Inequality and Academic Publishing." *Critical Inquiry* 44(1). Accessed June 11, 2022. https://criticalinquiry.uchicago.edu/publication_power_and_patronage_on_inequality_and_academic_publishing/.

West, Jevin D, Jennifer Jacquet, Molly M. King, Shelly J. Correll, and Carl T. Bergstrom. 2013. "The Role of Gender in Scholarly Authorship." *PLOS One* 8(7): e66212. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone 0066212.

Williams, Monica T. 2020. "Racism in Academic Publishing." *Psychology Today*, July 7. Accessed June 11, 2022. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/culturally-speaking/202007/racism-in-academic-publishing.

Zambrana, Ruth Enid, Adia Harvey Wingfield, Lisa M. Lapeyrouse, Brianne A. Davila, Tangere L. Hoagland, and Robert Burciaga Valdez. 2017. "Blatant, Subtle, and Insidious: URM Faculty Perceptions of Discriminatory Practices in Predominantly White Institutions." *Sociological Inquiry* 87(2): 207–32.

Zuberi, Tukufu, and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva 2008. *White Logic, White Methods: Racism and Methodology*. Lanham, Md.: Roman & Littlefield.

How Helping Can Reinforce or Attenuate Status Inequalities: The Case of Nonprofit Organizations

LEHN M. BENJAMIN

This article examines one type of social exchange that signals status: giving and receiving help. I focus on formal helping exchanges between staff and participants in nonprofit organizations. Bringing together status theory with research from social psychology on receiving help and studies of nonprofits, I identify how the helping exchanges in these settings can reinforce or attenuate status hierarchies with important consequences for participants. I examine three attenuation practices (sharing control, establishing commonalities, and questioning causes) and three practices that can reinforce status hierarchies (asserting control, reinforcing differences, and assuming causes) to show how status processes play a powerful but unexamined role in the very places dedicated to addressing inequality.

Keywords: nonprofit organizations, helping, status hierarchy, inequality

Giving and receiving help is a universal human experience. We give and receive help all the time. Important for my purpose here, helping is a social exchange that signals status: giving help is a marker of high status and strength, whereas receiving help is a marker of low status and weakness (Nadler 2015). Status is the respect, admiration, and deference one is voluntarily accorded by others based on one's perceived competence and value to the group. As Cecilia Ridgeway and others observe, we care about our status because we care deeply about

Lehn M. Benjamin is an associate professor in the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy at Indiana University, United States.

 Benjamin, Lehn M. 2022. "How Helping Can Reinforce or Attenuate Status Inequalities: The Case of Nonprofit Organizations." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 210–27. DOI: 10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.11. I owe a debt of gratitude to many who have taken the time to read earlier versions of this article and offer critical comments. I thank the editors of this special issue, along with the other contributors, for their feedback. A special thanks to those who provided suggestions on previous drafts, including Imhotep Adisa, Thomasina Borkman, Dave C. Campbell, Dana Doan, Barbara Duffy, Patrick Dwyer, Jennifer Mosley, Lisa Ranghelli, Jodi Sandfort, and Pambana Uishi. I also thank Sara Konrath, who first pointed me in the direction of the social psychology research. Earlier versions of this article were presented at the University of Chicago's Crown Family School of Social Work, Policy, and Practice, the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs, and the European Group for Organizational Studies annual conference. Thank you to participants in those venues for their thoughtful questions and to others I may have inadvertently forgotten in this acknowledgment. I remain responsible for remaining errors, omissions, and limitations. Direct correspondence to: Lehn M. Benjamin, at benjamin@iu.edu, 301 University Blvd., Suite 3000, Indianapolis, IN 46202, United States.

how we are valued in our communities (Anderson, Hildreth, and Howland 2015; Blader and Yu 2017; Ridgeway 2019; Ridgeway and Markus 2022, this issue). In helping exchanges, offering help signals that one not only has some competence to address the issue but also is willing to engage in such effort for another. Both perceived competence and prosocial behavior are associated with higher status (Fragale 2006; Nadler and Halabi 2015; see also Benard et al. 2022).

Decades of research, however, have shown that the evaluative processes leading one person to be accorded a higher status than another are biased, powerful, often unnamed, and serve to maintain and justify inequality (Ridgeway 2019). We might wonder, then, how this universal experience of giving and receiving help is implicated in status processes that maintain inequality and in turn how helping can be offered in ways that attenuate status hierarchies and redress inequality. This article looks more closely at status, helping, and inequality. But rather than focusing on the status benefits to those engaging in prosocial behavior, which has been the focus of many who study status processes, I follow those who draw attention to experiences of those receiving help (Fisher, Nadler, and Whitcher-Alagna 1982; Nadler 2015; Nadler and Halabi 2015). When we look at the experiences of those receiving help, we start to see that how help is provided in a local setting and how it is organized more broadly in society is one way that status processes can exacerbate or redress inequality.

To illuminate the relationship between the how of helping and its consequences for inequality, I focus on formal helping relationships between staff and participants in nonprofit organizations, specifically those dedicated to addressing the causes and consequences of inequality, such as unemployment, sexual exploitation, affordable housing, food access, or criminal justice and police reform, to name a few. In these organizations, the status hierarchy is established at the outset: the staff person is assumed to have some ability and willingness to help and thus is initially accorded higher status.[1] But, unlike other settings status researchers study—where status hierarchies, once established, remain stubbornly stable, defended by those at the top—in formal helping organizations such as nonprofits, the higher-status person, the staff member, must deliberately attenuate the status hierarchy to be effective (Schein 2009). Most immediately, staff must address the status loss participants can feel when seeking help. Failure to do so can put participants at a disadvantage in achieving their goals as they manage stress and other difficult emotions from their experience of this loss (Nadler 2015). Even if participants do not experience a loss of status in seeking help, staff must also attend to the ways in which the organization may accentuate this status hierarchy, negatively affecting participants. Finally, staff must attenuate the status hierarchy by recognizing and supporting participants' competency to address the issue.[2]

I draw from research in social psychology on receiving help and studies of nonprofit organizations, my own and others, to show that how help is provided can accentuate this loss of status for the person receiving help, thereby reinforcing the status hierarchy between the giver and receiver. But I also show how help can be provided in ways that alleviate this loss of status and attenuate this initial status hierarchy. The article focuses on three types of practices: control, commonality, and cause. Specifically,

1. Although the helper is initially accorded higher status, the status hierarchy between helper and helpee may be temporary and unstable, for example, where participants have some doubt about staff competence or willingness to help (Schein 2009). This means that the staff person may be engaged in complex but usually unrecognized status work: reassuring a participant about their desire and ability to help, addressing the loss of status a participant may feel asking for help while recognizing, supporting, and building the competence of participants to address the problem. The status hierarchies in helping exchanges are of course complicated by race, gender, and other markers of social status.

2. Participant competency is an explicit goal of many helping exchanges, whether this is recognizing and supporting someone's existing competence or building new competency in some domain. But this goal has not been recognized as having implications for status and status hierarchies.

it describes three attenuation practices (sharing control, establishing commonalities, and questioning causes) and three practices that reinforce the status hierarchy between staff and participants (asserting control, reinforcing differences, and assuming causes). It thus illuminates how helping exchanges may exacerbate inequality by failing to attenuate status hierarchies and how attenuating these status differences can start to address inequality.

In doing so, the article makes three specific contributions to our understanding of status and inequality. First, it focuses on the experience of those receiving help to show that the ways in which help is provided, how it is organized and institutionalized, matter a great deal for whether helping exacerbates or starts to redress inequality. In this way, I seek to show that helping exchanges are critical sites in which to disrupt the implicit bias that informs status hierarchies and in turn address their powerful role in maintaining inequality. Second, drawing attention to nonprofit organizations, the article shows how, in the very places intended to address inequality, status processes work as an invisible but powerful force to strengthen inequality. This is not inevitable, however. I show how some staff exercise discretion to attenuate the status hierarchy between themselves and the person they are working with, even in settings where such actions go against the norms of appropriate professional practice. Further, some nonprofits address status inequalities directly in the way they organize and engage participants. These organizations have the potential to address status beliefs that maintain inequality, including those about race, class, disability, and so on. Finally, the article discusses the broader forces that have obscured the role of status processes in these organizations, leaving these processes, and their impact, inadequately theorized and addressed.

Before proceeding, I want to be clear about key terms. The term *participants* refers to the individuals, families, or community who are the intended beneficiaries of nonprofit social change strategies. *Nonprofit organizations* refers to organizations whose mission is to work with individuals, families, and communities to address the causes or consequences of inequality, whether this involves providing services, revitalizing neighborhoods, or mobilizing for policy change. *Helping* describes the relationship between nonprofit staff and participants, recognizing that this term does not capture the breadth of these relationships, including how staff learn and receive from participants, nor does it reflect how these relationships vary across nonprofits. Even though the word can have a pejorative connotation, I seek to draw attention to the core feature of these relationships salient for participants: a status ranking based on their presumed competence and that of staff. A key assumption throughout this discussion is that status hierarchies in helping exchanges are no different from what extensive social science research finds about status rankings generally: they reflect biases about race, class, gender, and other markers of social identity. These biases, what Ridgeway refers to as cultural status beliefs, in turn serve to justify and maintain inequality. The section starts with a summary of how status processes reproduce inequality. I then move on to focus on helping exchanges, discussing both how status processes influence these exchanges and how these exchanges in turn challenge or maintain status inequality. Here I synthesize research from social psychology on receiving help, identifying three characteristics of the help that can reinforce the initial status hierarchy between those giving help and those receiving help. The next section extends these insights to nonprofit organizational settings. I conclude by discussing why status has not been more central in the analysis of nonprofit organizations.

HELPING, STATUS, AND INEQUALITY

Research on social status has long recognized the role of helping in status rankings (Nadler and Halabi 2015). Research shows how status processes influence who receives help, how the help is provided, what help is provided, and whether the helping exchange attenuates or reinforces status inequality.

Status and Inequality

Status is a comparative social ranking in which we voluntarily accord greater respect, esteem, and influence to those viewed as more competent in relation to achieving some collective goal (Ridgeway 2019, 3). Studies show that sta-

tus rankings emerge in the first few minutes of groups forming to accomplish a task (Berger, Rosenholtz, and Zelditch 1980). Everyone has experienced situations in which we have been accorded high status, receiving more positive attention relative to others, and those in which we have been accorded a lower status, receiving comparatively less positive attention. We generally seek settings where we feel more valued and respected. Not surprisingly, status explains a wide range of human behavior and predicts one's overall psychological and physical health (Anderson, Hildreth, and Howland 2015). These feelings explain why we monitor our social status, comparing how our ideas, suggestions or questions are taken up and responded to in relation to those offered by others. It also explains why we might avoid seeking help and the potential status loss it portends.

Status hierarchies have been explained as an evolutionary response to ensuring the well-being of the community: they help resolve a fundamental tension between interdependence and competition in achieving collective goals by according the most influence and respect to those who can contribute the most to achieving a collective goal, thus ensuring the well-being of the group (Ridgeway 2019, 3). These status hierarchies, even if temporary and informal, help us make sense of what to do, and without needing to spend a lot of time figuring out who to follow or whether we should lead. But evolutionary explanations are not enough, as Ridgeway explains (2019, 38), in part because we often do not know who is most competent for achieving the goal. Instead, we rely on cultural status beliefs; beliefs that consciously or unconsciously associate competence with certain behaviors, such as taking charge; emotions, such as anger; and social identity markers, such as race or gender (Berger, Cohen, and Zelditch 1972; Berger and Fişek 2006; Ridgeway et al. 2009; Tiedens 2001). Status hierarchies, then, are not accurate reflections of competence or worth but instead represent biased social beliefs about competence and worth (also see Wilkerson 2020). Yet these status rankings are powerful precisely because they appear voluntary, held in place by cultural beliefs rather than coercive force.

These assumptions about competence and worth deepen inequality in a myriad of ways. At the level of social interactions, for example, status rankings influence who is seen as credible or legitimate, who is given credit for an idea, and who gets a confidence boost to support performance (Ridgeway 2019). Research finds that the same idea introduced by someone presumed to be more competent is evaluated more positively, that is, seen as more credible, than when it is introduced by someone assumed to be less competent or of a lower status (Foschi 2000; Ridgeway 2001, 362). Moreover, individuals who are accorded a higher status gain confidence that in turn boosts their performance, whereas those who are presumed less competent and accorded lower status face a performance burden, having to manage difficult emotions about their status while contributing to achieving the goal (Kemper 1991; Muscatell et al. 2012; Ridgeway 2019, 110). Finally, these biases lead to an extraction of value from lower-status actors, where the person accorded high status is credited with the work of the entire group (Ridgeway 2019, 130). Despite their inaccuracies, these status rankings stay in place because, even though we may disagree with the ranking, we presume that others agree. Indeed, studies show that when individuals try to challenge rankings they are quickly brought back in line by other members. For low-ranking members such challenges can have enormous costs (Ridgeway and Correll 2006). In this way, these status beliefs operate implicitly and quickly to create expectations which in turn influence behavior, giving unfair advantages to those assumed to be more competent. Once in place they become very difficult to change.

Helping, Status, and Inequality

At a basic level, both givers and receivers can experience a mix of positive and negative outcomes in helping exchanges (Konrath and Brown 2012; Nadler 2015).[3] For example, research has found that givers can experience burnout from overextending themselves, suffer

3. Critical to understanding the relationship between helping, status, and inequality, but beyond the scope of this article, is understanding the role status processes play in who is recognized as a giver and receiver. For

losses in productivity, and experience threats to their status (Barns et al. 2008; Flynn 2003). Givers also, however, can experience improved psychological well-being as well as greater esteem in the eyes of others (Konrath and Brown 2012; Nadler and Halabi 2015). Similarly, those who receive help can experience a mix of both self-threat and support (Fisher, Nadler, and Whitcher-Alagna 1982; Nadler 2015; Stroebe and Stroebe 1996). Receiving help can lead one to feel cared for, grateful, and part of a larger community. But receiving help can also lead one to experience status threat because asking for help can leave a person feeling dependent, incompetent, or indebted to the helper (Nadler 2015; Schein 2009).[4]

Research that examines the relationships between status, helping, and inequality can be loosely organized into three overlapping areas. One area of research examines how helping affects a person's status ranking, that is, the status gains from giving and the status loss from receiving (Flynn et al. 2006; Nadler and Halabi 2015). For example, work on costly signaling shows that individuals will incur costs to give in the short term to enhance their reputation over the long term (see Mauss 1990; for an overview, see Nadler and Halabi 2015). The competitive altruism hypothesis posits that individuals are more altruistic when their actions are public because their reputation is at stake. Indeed, studies find that these public altruists are accorded the highest status (Hardy and Van Vugt 2006). Other work has found that high-status groups will engage in defensive helping to secure their positions when status relations are less stable (Nadler et al. 2010).

The second area of research looks at how a person's social status affects the amount and kind of help a person receives. For example, some studies find that individuals are more willing to help those from higher-status groups, a lawyer, than those from lower-status groups, a gas station attendant (Goodman and Gareis 1993). Others find that status affects the type of help offered. For example, Arie Nadler and Lily Chernyak-Hai find that a person perceived as weak is more likely to be given dependency-oriented help whereas a person perceived as competent and capable is more likely to be given autonomy-oriented help (2014). Plenty of evidence from African Americans' experience in the health-care system demonstrates that social status affects the amount and quality of help received (Aronson et al. 2013; Ayalon and Young 2005; Hollar 2001).

The third stream of research examines the experience of receiving help. This research finds that one's experience of receiving help will depend on the kind of help sought, the relationship to the helper, the culture in which helping occurs, as well as an individual's circumstances and social identity (Durham 1995; Fiske 1992; Nadler 2015; Shen, Wan, and Wyer 2011). This research also shows how the characteristics of the help can exacerbate or mitigate the loss of status experienced by those receiving help, which is my focus. This research suggests that three features of the help can affect this experience: control, cause, and commonality (Fisher, Nadler, and Whitcher-Alagna et al. 1982; Nadler 2015). Even if individuals do not feel a loss of status when seeking help, these features can affect the experience of social status in the helping exchange, leaving one guarded, stressed, and upset, or cared for, respected, and part of a team of people committed to the same goal. I briefly introduce these three features below and then discuss them in more detail in the next section.

Control

Control refers to the degree of autonomy participants have in the helping exchange. Re-

example, the philanthropy of African Americans has only recently been given the recognition it deserves (Freeman 2020; Jones 1996).

4. Social psychologists explain this status threat using basic psychological needs theory to suggest that this experience compromises fundamental needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Nadler 2015, 308; see also Ryan and Deci 2000). Social exchange theory and equity theories explain the threat as a need to rebalance the relationship in some way by returning a favor or expressing gratitude (Fiske 1992; Gouldner 1960; Mauss 1990; Schein 2009). Such action serves to maintain social order and the optimal functioning of society (Gouldner 1960; Schein 2009, 28).

search in social psychology finds that when help reduces an individual's freedom, because of requirements or stipulations attached to the offer of help, it arouses a psychological reaction aimed at restoring this freedom. The extent of the reaction depends in part on the significance of the freedom to the recipient and the severity of the threat. This research has been used to explain why we avoid help or engage in behavior contrary to what was intended or desired by the helper (Brehm and Cole 1966; Brehm and Brehm 1981; Burgoon et al. 2002). Apart from conditions attached to the offer of help, the degree of input one has in determining what help is provided can also shape the experience of receiving help, what social psychologists refer to as negotiated help (Durham 1995; Nadler 2015, 315). They contrast this with assumptive help, where help is given without request or input (Chentsova-Dutton 2012; Halabi, Nadler, and Dovidio 2011). For example, studies find that persons with visible disabilities spend a lot of time managing assumptive help, balancing the need to save face with the need for some assistance (Braithwaite and Eckstein 2003, 5). The lack of control experienced by those at the bottom of a hierarchy has been linked to measures of health and well-being, which is perhaps not surprising given that autonomy is a fundamental human need (Anderson, Hildreth, and Howland 2015; Marmot 2004; Sapolsky 2005).

Commonalities

Commonality refers to the extent to which the helping experience emphasizes mutuality between the giver and receiver in ways that attenuate the status hierarchy or reinforces differences in ways that strengthen it. Research in social psychology has focused on two features of a helping encounter where commonality is salient. First, when social identity is salient for the person being helped—say in the case of race or lived experience—one may prefer receiving help from others in the same group. For example, in an experimental study, Monica Schneider and her colleagues find that black students who received unsolicited help from a white peer experienced more negative effects, such as lower self-esteem or hopelessness, than white students who received unsolicited help from a white peer did (1996).[5] Second, if getting help is more public or explicit, it can further exacerbate a loss of status because it calls greater attention to someone and their situation, negatively differentiating them from others. For example, one study found that explicit support when the participant was aware they were getting help was significantly more distressing than either no support or implicit support (Bolger and Amarel 2007). This is even more true for issues that carry social stigma. For example, one study of people living with HIV and AIDS in China finds that implicit support was correlated with fewer depressive symptoms, whereas explicit social support was not (Yang et al. 2015).

Causes

Causes refer to the attributions we make to explain events, situations, or actions to ourselves and others. The social psychology research on receiving help has examined two types of attributions: those made about why help is needed and those made about why help is offered (Fisher, Nadler, and Whitcher-Alagna 1982).[6] I focus on the former.[7] Considering the causal

5. If social identity is not salient and the issue is important to one's sense of personal competence, getting help can be more threatening from someone who is similar—getting help from another colleague with writing, for example—because in those situations, we tend to compare ourselves to the helper (Fisher, Harrison, and Nadler 1978; Nadler 2015). In those instances, we prefer help from someone who has a higher status, such as a boss or teacher.

6. The research on attribution in social psychology examines why we make the attributions about events (actions, experiences, situations) that we do, and the consequences of those attributions once made for our actions, feelings and expectations (Kelley and Michela 1980). The attributions we make are shaped by our prior beliefs (about the situation, ourselves or others, or effect), our motivations (need to feel a sense of efficacy or control or avoid feeling shame) and information about the situation.

7. Research on attributions about the helper's motives identifies three possible attributions: the person cares, has some ulterior motive, or is required to help us (see Fisher, Nadler, and Whitcher-Alagna 1982; Nadler 2015, 3; Weinstein, DeHaan, and Ryan 2010).

stories about why help is needed, research finds that, if individuals are told many people have a similar problem, or they attribute their problem to something situational rather than personal, they are more likely to seek help (see Tessler and Schwartz 1972). Others also make attributions about the situation of the person seeking help, and these too can affect a person's experience of the situation and of seeking help. For example, one study found that sexual assault victims had longer recovery times when they received comments implying that they could have prevented the assault, such as you were not careful enough (Ullman 1996). Overall, this research finds that if we attribute our need for help to something personal, we are less likely to seek help than if we attribute it to a situation or something outside our control. Moreover, if we attribute our problem to something personal, such as our inability to deal with a situation, our experience will be more negative when we do seek help (Mitchell 1988). All of this will depend on our beliefs about ourselves, our need for effective control, and whether having this problem is central to our ego (Nadler 2015; Fisher, Nadler, and Whitcher-Alagna 1982).

Next, I turn to formal helping exchanges in nonprofit organizations. In these settings status processes are complicated by organizational hierarchies, where staff have more institutional power and authority than participants do. Here, staff must attenuate the status hierarchy, between themselves and participants, to realize desired goals, something not formally recognized in most organizations. This makes these status hierarchies somewhat distinct, as research finds most status hierarchies are stubbornly stable, defended by those at the top.[8] The necessity of staff attenuating of the status hierarchy between themselves and participants is easy to see when we recall that those with higher status benefit from performance advantages such as confidence boosts, enhanced credibility, and credit for the collective effort of the group. Because participants' competence and leadership are essential for realizing the goal, failure to address their loss of status leads to all kinds of disadvantages including stress, sadness, anger, and other negative emotions, complicated cognitive processes, energy loss from monitoring the high-status person, and so on. Not only do these consequences affect participants' ability to achieve their goal but they have their own toll on participants' health and well-being. Yet, this status attenuation work and its impact on participants have largely remained invisible.

REINFORCING OR ATTENUATING STATUS HIERARCHIES IN NONPROFITS

Nonprofits are private mission-driven organizations dedicated to a collective or public good (Salamon 1999). In the United States alone, there are over 1.6 million registered nonprofits and many more informal organizations. Over the last several decades, these nonprofits have become important resources in communities across the country as people face the consequences of systemic marginalization, including policies that have led to underinvestment in public schools, safe and affordable housing, and basic health care along with the absence of living wage jobs (for example, Michener 2019; Quadagno 1994; Wetts and Willer 2018). My focus is on a subset of these organizations that work with individuals, families, and communities to address the causes and consequences of inequality. This subset includes organizations providing services to address addiction and sexual exploitation, revitalizing neighborhoods through small businesses development and the construction of affordable housing, as well as organizing and building movements to advo-

8. Research finds that status hierarchies change for one of several reasons: lower-ranked members challenge the status hierarchy through demonstrations of their expertise and commitment to the group (Ridgeway 2019); self-interested behavior of highly ranked members can lead others to question their commitment to the group and their legitimacy as a leader, resulting in a loss of status (Ridgeway 2019; Gould 2002); outside environmental shocks require new kinds of expertise that lead to new rankings (Magee and Galinsky 2008); or the group fails to achieve the goal, sowing doubt about the competency of higher ranked members (Bendersky and Pai 2018; Gould 2002). Recent research also shows that team leaders can frame tasks in ways that disrupt cultural status beliefs by emphasizing the importance of each member's contribution (see Manago, Sell, and Goar 2022, this issue).

cate for policy changes (Chetkovich and Kunreuther 2006; Smith and Lipsky 1993). Bear in mind throughout this discussion that nonprofits—the organizations that exist, how they are run, the ideas that inform them, the legitimacy they have in society—reflect historical and contemporary patterns of systemic inequity evident in wider society (Ray 2019; Wooten and Couloute 2017).

Nonprofits dedicated to addressing the causes and consequences of inequality are varied in their purpose, size, structure, funding sources, and staffing. Some are led or staffed by those from the community in which they work whereas others are led or staffed by people from outside the community. In some nonprofits, participants have a great deal of authority, sitting on the board, determining strategies, or working collectively to organize for change, with staff in more supporting roles. In other nonprofits, participants are not involved in organizational decision-making at all. Moreover, the strategies employed by some of these organizations explicitly challenge status beliefs, for example, by launching campaigns to destigmatize mental illness or prostitution or by creating environments that recognize the competence and talent of participants, whereas other organizations do not directly address participants' social status. This diversity means the status hierarchy between staff and participants will vary widely across organizations, where some status hierarchies are flatter and less defined and others steeper and more defined (see Accominotti et al. 2022).

Regardless, these organizations need to attenuate this status hierarchy between staff and participants to effectively address the goal. Some nonprofits understand this and elevate participants' status in the organization as one of their principal strategies. This is evident not only in the organizations that recognize participants' experience and expertise or emphasize more egalitarian relationships between staff and participants, as described, but also in how nonprofits approach helping. For example, in some of these environments the helping relationship is in the foreground, such as when an attorney is working with an asylum seeker; whereas in others it is more in the background, embedded in community and social activities, or part of mutual aid and peer support, where participants are recognized for their role as both givers and receivers (Borkman 1999; Gómez Garrido, Carbonero Gamundí, and Viladrich 2019). Still in other nonprofits, helping is reframed altogether as recognizing and investing in the leadership of participants (Miller 2017). Despite this diversity, in many nonprofits helping is foregrounded but the status hierarchy remains unaddressed, at least formally. Staff still can and do attenuate the status hierarchies in these settings, but these practices are not fully recognized or supported and may even go against the grain of professional norms or what is considered the right thing to do in the organization.

Drawing on studies that show participants' experiences in nonprofits, my own and others, I describe the subtle and not-so-subtle ways that these organizations and their staff can reinforce status hierarchies or use tactics and strategies to attenuate the initial hierarchy. I focus on the three characteristics of helping, as described earlier: control, commonality, and cause. Specifically, I describe three practices that can attenuate this initial status hierarchy—relinquishing control, establishing commonalities and questioning causes—and how the inverse of these practices—asserting control, reinforcing differences, and ascribing causes—can strengthen the initial status hierarchy. In discussing each, I offer four examples—two at the organizational level and two at the staff level—to illustrate the salience of each for the experience of those requesting or receiving help in these settings. Within each set, I provide one case of reinforcing and one of attenuating to draw into sharp relief how these practices may affect the hierarchy between staff and participants, and the consequences of such practices for participants. These practices and corresponding examples are summarized in table 1. Although beyond the scope of this article, how these practices are patterned within and across organizations would further illuminate how helping is organized in a way that reproduces or addresses inequality.

Control

Studies of nonprofit organizations do not explicitly examine status or measure the degree

of control participants have in these settings but do document the consequences of restricting participants' autonomy (Williams 1996; Joniak 2005). For example, several studies examine domestic violence survivors' experience in nonprofit shelters and find that these survivors would rather go back to their abuser than stay in the shelter because of all the rules in the shelter (Glenn and Goodman 2015; Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence 2016; VanNatta 2010). For example, one study reported that "about half of the participants gave at least one example of how the controlling and limiting nature of the rules, particularly those that involved monitoring their behavior, felt similar to what they had experienced in their abusive relationships" (Glenn and Goodman 2015, 10). The study reported the consequences of this for the survivors: "Rules and their enforcement directly affected participants during their stay in the shelter in two main ways: limiting access to resources and thus impeding progress, and causing emotional distress, including increased isolation" (Glenn and Goodman 2015, 12). As a result, shelters experimented with reducing the number of rules, and, as one study reveals, women stayed longer and participated more regularly in case management and educational programming (VanNatta 2010, 157). As one staff member reflected, "We had rhetoric that survivors are strong and powerful, but we didn't treat them that way. We handed them a list of 68 rules to follow while they were there and checked up on them. We weren't respectful in a lot of instances" (Russo and Spatz 2007, 5).

Aside from formal organizational practices, staff can also engage in informal practices that reduce or enhance the control participants have in these settings. For example, performance requirements create real dilemmas for staff that affect how they relate to participants. In studies of social enterprises, where participants are employed as staff and work side by side with professional staff, researchers find that organizational performance expectations create tensions leading professional staff to take over the tasks assigned to working participants or assigning them to simpler jobs, resulting in lower quality job training for them (Cooney 2006; Hustinx and De Waele 2015). In contrast, staff can also exercise discretion in ways that give participants more autonomy and control in the social enterprise. Andrea Chan finds that increases in self-esteem and optimism were associated with staff support that matched the specific demands faced by the worker and interpreted by the worker as helpful (2016, 1737). In another study where participants and staff also worked side by side, one participant described how a staff person approached this issue: "Without BJ I wouldn't be here. . . . [The rest of the staff focus on] rules, this rule that, this rule this, you can't do this, you can't do that and BJ just takes you aside and says, 'What do you think about this? Do you think there's room for compromise or something?'" (personal communication, June 24, 2015).

Organizations need some structure to organize and ease coordination, but the degree of autonomy and control participants have in nonprofits can attenuate or reinforce the status hierarchy between participants and staff, which affects their engagement and their social-emotional experience. The examples also confirm that in organizations two hierarchies exist simultaneously: power hierarchies and status hierarchies (Magee and Galinsky 2008). Staff have control over resources that participants desire, that is, the power hierarchy, but the examples also show that asserting control can rest on evaluations of competence, that is, the status hierarchy, whether it is the competence of participants living in a shelter or as employees in a social enterprise. These evaluations can be institutionalized in organizational rules, procedures, and norms (Ridgeway 2019).

Commonalities

Studies of nonprofit organizations show how organizational practices can draw sharper distinctions between participants and staff or can soften those distinctions, which have consequences for participant experiences. For example, in a study of a homeless shelter, researchers discovered that the volunteers had all sorts of privileges not afforded to the participants. For example, the volunteers had their own cubicle for sleeping, whereas those who were homeless slept in bunk beds crammed into a single room, creating a visible hierarchy de-

scribed as denigrating to participants (Wasserman and Clair 2010, 180). In a study of fifteen antipoverty faith-based nonprofits identified as successful, the organizations had a common practice: participants played a variety of roles, including volunteer, mentor, and board member. In these more role-fluid environments, participants described themselves as collaborators, not clients, and the relationships with staff as mutual, something that surprised the researchers (Netting et al. 2005).

Regardless of whether organizations employ explicit strategies that create more mutual relationships between participants and staff, staff also exercise discretion in ways that inadvertently emphasize these differences or that seek to find commonality and create more mutual relationships. For example, in a study of faith-based providers, Rebecca Sager and Laura Stephens describe participants' experience with one staff member: "[The leader], he's a nice guy, but he's got an ego problem. And he makes sure we all knew he was [professional] of the year, and on and on it went. . . . It's like this 'holier than thou' attitude" (2005, 311). In contrast, another study demonstrates the significance of finding commonality. The study reports that an immigration attorney explained a scenario where she stepped out of her professional role and went to lunch with her client, and how it positively changed the participant's engagement, where she was able to share more information that supported her case: "That moment of rapport, that moment of allowing us to have an interaction outside her just talking about all these awful things that had happened to her—was transformative and made the rest of the day easier. . . . There is a lot of discussion in the legal field, of how close do you allow your clients to become. Some lawyers never talk about their personal lives with clients, ever, period. I don't take that tack. I think there are times that it can really benefit [the client]" (Benjamin and Campbell 2015, 996).

These examples provide some evidence of how organizational and staff practices that emphasize commonality can attenuate the status hierarchy affecting participant engagement and their social emotional experiences. The examples suggest that even small moves to establish mutuality can go some distance toward establishing the types of relationships that make interdependent work possible. The importance of mutuality for participant outcomes has been well supported in some fields (see Repper and Carter 2011) but will depend on the context, the problem, and whether the mutuality triggers comparison (Nadler 2015). Again, we need studies that examine such practices—whether hiring staff with shared experience or identity, or simply supporting relationships that extend beyond staff-participant roles—and their consequences for participants' experience of their social status in nonprofit organizations.

Causes

In nonprofit organizations, attributions about why help is needed are made by participants themselves, as well as by the organization and staff. These causal attributions may be explicit or implicit. For example, studies find that when participants read program descriptions that focus on empowerment rather than need, it has a marked influence on their self-efficacy (Thomas et al. 2020). Research also shows how attributions about participants' problems can be subtle, such as when flood victims find the used clothing offered by organizations belittling: "Many of the women, most of whom had donated to charity throughout their lives, began to realize the flaws in the notion that one person's trash is another person's treasure" (Fothergill 2003, 674).

Other studies point to how these organizations deliberately seek to change participants' causal stories through critical analysis of the structural causes of their situation (Dodge and Ospina 2016; Karriem and Benjamin 2016). For example, in her study of nonprofits providing social services to sex workers, Samantha Majic notes how these organizations, created by activists who fought for prostitutes' rights, mixed needed social services with causal analysis that challenged the predominant approach to criminalization of prostitution, including a sign in the waiting room, "Outlaw Poverty Not Prostitutes." Sex workers, in turn, developed self-efficacy, leading some of them to become more politically active (Majic 2011, 828).

For their part, staff can also exercise discretion in the ways they frame causes for problems

when talking with participants. One staff member described the subtle and unprogrammed ways in which she engages in attributional analysis to motivate participants to quit smoking and stop blaming themselves:

> I've gotten myself armed with a lot of detailed trivia, nuts and bolts stuff, and I pass that along and help a person to see . . . that when you look at it in this much bigger way, instead of being angry about whatever failing, you can just be like "I'm tired of big tobacco" . . . I got a woman to quit smoking three packs a day. . . . [I told her about] the research about how they put together the filters and then purposely put microscopic air holes punched along the side of the filters that line up where your fingers would hold it so that you are now covering the very thing [that is supposed to be ventilating] . . . so you smoke more. (personal communication, October 30, 2012)

Staff can also assume causes by automatically using labels for participants. One staff person recounted how she was talking with a participant and referred to her as homeless: "And she was like, 'I am unhoused I want you to use that word from now on.' I was like 'fine.' So we really got to know her as a person, how she wanted to work, and she got more comfortable with us" (personal communication, March 18, 2015). These examples provide some evidence that causal attributions about the problem affect participants, including their reaction, their sense of efficacy, and their successful accomplishment of a goal.

These examples illustrate the powerful role that status processes play in nonprofit organizations and how, by exacerbating rather than alleviating the temporary status hierarchy in helping relations, nonprofits can inadvertently reinforce inequality. Countless others have suggested as much, pointing out how these organizations are paternalistic, use labels that connote unworthiness, turn people from citizens with rights into participants with needs, perpetuate racism and white supremacy or, alternatively, how they address important challenges in ways that partner with communities, support and recognize participants' leadership and expertise, and help people claim their rights and advocate for policies that address inequality (Eliasoph 2009; Dodge and Ospina 2016; Gutierrez 1990; Hasenfeld 2000; Hulme and Edwards 1996; INCITE! 2017; Kissane 2003). But missing has been a basic account that would tie these observations together. This analysis provides such an account and, in so doing, names what has been a hidden but powerful force in these settings, status processes and their effects on participants.

To be sure, other research in this double issue shows that changing how one is ranked in a status hierarchy is not enough to address inequality. For example, even when individuals experience positive status shifts, these gains can easily be diminished as dominant systems reinscribe the meaning of these status gains in ways that can diminish one's status, for example, by attributing gains to special treatment rather than competence (see Portocarrero and Carter 2022, this issue). Moreover, participants themselves can feel uncomfortable with status gains if this separates them from close others leading to what Mesmin Destin and his colleagues (2022, this issue) refer to as status uncertainty, something that they found can be mitigated with social support.

We need to recognize that attenuating the status hierarchy between staff and participants in nonprofits does not do enough to address the inequities in institutions and systems that have created a need for these organizations. Still, without attention to the initial status hierarchy organizing these relationships, the assumptions about competencies that undergird the status hierarchy go unquestioned, the practices that attenuate status hierarchies remain unsupported, and the practices that reinforce the status hierarchy between staff and participants are not addressed. In the final section that follows, I step back to consider why these status processes in nonprofits have remained undertheorized and not fully addressed despite their significance for participants and for addressing structural inequality.

CONCLUDING CONSIDERATIONS

The analysis in this article demonstrates the powerful role that status processes play in nonprofit organizations and how attenuating, or at least not exacerbating, status hierarchies be-

Table 1. Examples of Status Attenuation and Reinforcement Practices in Nonprofits

	Organization Practice	Consequences for Participant(s)	Staff Practice	Consequences for Participant(s)
Control				
Assert control	Too many rules for participants in domestic violence shelters	Feel emotional distress, isolation Drop out of the program, returns to abuser (Glenn and Goodman 2015)	Take over participants' tasks, do not provide supportive assistance	Receive lower quality job training (Cooney 2006; Hustinx and DeWaele 2015)
Share control	Reduces rules for participants in domestic violence shelter	Engage more in programs Less conflict in shelter (VanNatta 2010)	Provide support that matches participant demands, enabling participants to gain competence.	Interpret support offered as helpful Have improved self-esteem and optimism (Chan 2016)
Commonality				
Reinforce differences	Gives volunteers better sleeping quarters than participants in shelter	Have inferred feelings of denigration (Wasserman and Clair 2010)	Leader lets everyone knows he received professional of the year award	Feel that leader has "holier than thou" attitude (Sager and Stephens 2005)
Establish commonality	Enable particpants to play variety of roles	View selves as collaborators and relationships with staff as mutual Programs identified as successful and innovative (Netting et al. 2005)	Takes a lunch break from interview with trauma survivor, talk about cooking and food, topics not related to the issue	Seem more comfortable and at ease; engaging more; making eye contact. Able to provide information to staff for asylum case (Benjamin and Campbell 2015)
Causes				
Attribute causes	Assumes donated clothes valued by particpants	Feel belittled by donated old worn-out clothes (Fothergill 2003)	Refers to participants as "homeless" (organization provides advocacy for homeless and formerly homeless women)	Get upset and correct staff: is "unhoused" (Author data)
Question assumptions about causes	Challenges prostitution as the problem: "outlaw poverty not prostitutes"	Feel greater self-efficacy Increase political participation (Majic 2011)	Shift blame for smoking from individual to big tobacco companies	Quit smoking three packs a day (Author data)

Source: Author's tabulations.

tween staff and participants is necessary for addressing the inequality that is the motivating concern of these organizations. We might wonder why these status processes, so important to the experience of participants, have not been more central to the analysis of these organizations. One reason is that evaluation models commonly used to assess the impact of these organizations focus on the effect of programs and services rather on than the relational context in which these interventions unfold. The effects of interventions reflect the concerns of funders, evaluators, and program designers. But participants experience nonprofits and their interventions through relationships. Therefore, without attention to relationships, particularly the status processes that structure them, evaluations not only miss these status processes and their consequences but can unintentionally exacerbate status hierarchies between staff and participants. For example, pressure to meet performance targets can easily exacerbate the status hierarchy as staff assert greater control, make hasty causal assumptions, and fail to take the time to develop the kind of mutual relationships necessary to address inequality (also see Benjamin 2008, 2021).

A second reason these processes have not gotten the attention they deserve has to do with the way organizational norms, rules, and procedures that are often taken for granted and presented as rational actually reflect the interests and concerns of those with higher status. This was evident in some of the examples discussed earlier, including when domestic violence shelters had rules to "keep people safe" but were experienced by survivors as coercive and controlling. As Ridgeway reminds us, organizations often reflect the needs and concerns of those that have higher status (Ridgeway 2019, 132; see also Acker 2006; Bonilla-Silva 2012; Evans and Moore 2015; Feagin 2020; Ray 2019; Wingfield 2010). Moreover, because attenuating the status hierarchy can increase the uncertainty about "what to do," nonprofit staff may feel more comfortable maintaining their role as helping experts who have the answers. This may be particularly true for staff with less experience who want to "get it right." Given high staff turnover, nonprofits often have a constant stream of new staff who may lean into their role as helping experts. Even when organizations have practices to ensure that the organization reflects the interests and concerns of participants, the larger institutional environment constrains organizations, making such practices difficult to sustain. Funding priorities, grant requirements, as well as laws and regulations in certain policy fields can all constrain nonprofits in these efforts.

Finally, status processes in nonprofits may not have received the attention they deserve because these organizations depend on the idea that they are "doing good" work: donors make contributions, volunteers give their time, and staff take lower pay because they believe they are engaged in meaningful work, work that contributes to addressing issues of inequality, work that is "doing good" (Breeze 2021). Indeed, we have entire systems dedicated to rewarding such prosocial behavior, including tax breaks for donors and nonprofits, government supported volunteering programs and the like. This association between nonprofits and doing good makes sense when we consider that prosocial behavior has important benefits to the group and thus should be rewarded (Nadler 2015). But this association can make it harder to critique such efforts without stymieing the motivation. To be sure, many have offered important critiques of nonprofits and the larger philanthropic sector over the decades. Recent critiques have echoed historic concerns, arguing that such efforts are antidemocratic, reflect elite interests, are paternalistic, and serve to maintain racial hierarchies (INCITE! 2017; Kohl-Arenas 2015; Morey 2021; Villanueva 2018). My point here is not to revisit these discussions but rather to suggest that the focus on givers—whether to celebrate or critique them—may explain why the relational experience of participants, including their experience of their social status, has not been systematically identified, theorized, or addressed. In the end, how help is organized and institutionalized, including within nonprofit organizations, matters a great deal for whether this universal experience reinforces or attenuates status hierarchies and consequently whether helping addresses or deepens inequality.

REFERENCES

Accominotti, Fabien, Freda Lynn, and Michael Sauder. 2022. "The Architecture of Status Hierarchies: Variations in Structure and Why They Matter for Inequality." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(6): 87–102. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.6.05.

Acker, Joan. 2006. "Inequality Regimes: Gender, Class, and Race in Organizations." *Gender & Society* 20(4): 441–64.

Anderson, Cameron, John Angus D. Hildreth, and Laura Howland. 2015. "Is the Desire for Status a Fundamental Human Motive? A Review of the Empirical Literature." *Psychological Bulletin* 141(3): 574.

Aronson, Joshua, Diana Burgess, Sean M. Phelan, and Lindsay Juarez. 2013. "Unhealthy Interactions: The Role of Stereotype Threat in Health Disparities." *American Journal of Public Health* 103(1): 50–56.

Ayalon, Liat, and Michael A. Young. 2005. "Racial Group Differences in Help-Seeking Behaviors." *Journal of Social Psychology* 145(4): 391–404.

Barnes, Christopher M., John R. Hollenbeck, David T. Wagner, D. Scott DeRue, Jennifer D. Nahrgang, and Kelly M. Schwind. 2008. "Harmful Help: The Costs of Backing-Up Behavior in Teams." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 93(3): 529.

Benard, Stephen, Loan Doan, D. Adam Nicholson, Emily Meanwell, Eric L. Wright, and Peter Lista. 2022. "To Forgive Is Divine? Morality and the Status Value of Intergroup Revenge and Forgiveness." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(6): 122–39. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.6.07.

Bendersky, Corinne, and Jieun Pai. 2018. "Status Dynamics." *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior* 5(1): 183–99.

Benjamin, Lehn M. 2008. "Bearing More Risk for Results: Performance Accountability and Nonprofit Relational Work." *Administration & Society* 39(8): 959–83.

———. 2021. "Beyond Programs: Toward a Fuller Picture of Beneficiaries in Nonprofit Evaluation." In *A Research Agenda for Evaluation*, edited by Peter Dahler-Larsen. Cheltenham, U.K.: Edward-Elgar Publishing.

Benjamin, Lehn M., and David C. Campbell. 2015. "Nonprofit Performance: Accounting for the Agency of Clients." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 44(5): 988–1006.

Berger, Joseph, Bernard P. Cohen, and Morris Zelditch Jr. 1972. "Status Characteristics and Social Interaction." *American Sociological Review* 37(3): 241–55.

Berger, Joseph, and M. Hamit Fişek. 2006. "Diffuse Status Characteristics and the Spread of Status Value: A Formal Theory." *American Journal of Sociology* 111(4): 1038–79.

Berger, Joseph, Susan J. Rosenholtz, and Morris Zelditch Jr. 1980. "Status Organizing Processes." *Annual Review of Sociology* 6(1): 479–508.

Blader, Steven L., and Siyu Yu. 2017. "Are Status and Respect Different or Two Sides of the Same Coin?" *Academy of Management Annals* 11(2): 800–24.

Bolger, Niall, and David Amarel. 2007. "Effects of Social Support Visibility on Adjustment to Stress: Experimental Evidence." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 92(3): 458.

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 2012. "The Invisible Weight of Whiteness: The Racial Grammar of Everyday Life in Contemporary America." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 35(2): 173–94.

Borkman, Thomasina. 1999. *Understanding Self-Help/Mutual Aid: Experiential Learning in the Commons*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.

Braithwaite, Dawn O., and Nancy J. Eckstein. 2003. "How People with Disabilities Communicatively Manage Assistance: Helping as Instrumental Social Support." *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 31(1): 1–26.

Breeze, Beth. 2021. *In Defense of Philanthropy.* Newcastle, UK: Agenda Publishing

Brehm, Jack W., and Ann H. Cole. 1966. "Effect of a Favor Which Reduces Freedom." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 3(4): 420.

Brehm, Sharon S., and Jack Williams Brehm. 1981. *Psychological Reactance: A Theory of Freedom and Control*. New York: Academic Press.

Burgoon, Michael, Eusebio Alvaro, Joseph Grandpre, and Michael Voulodakis. 2002. "Revisiting the Theory of Psychological Reactance." In *The Persuasion Handbook*, edited by James Price Dillard and Michael Pfau. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE Publications.

Chan, Andrea. 2016. "Personal Wellbeing of Partici-

pants of Social Purpose Enterprises: The Influence of Social Support." *Voluntas* 27(4): 1718–41.

Chentsova-Dutton, Yulia E. 2012. "Butting in vs. Being a Friend: Cultural Differences and Similarities in the Evaluation of Imposed Social Support." *Journal of Social Psychology* 152(4): 493–509.

Chetkovich, Carol A., and Frances Kunreuther. 2006. *From the Ground Up: Grassroots Organizations Making Social Change*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Cooney, Kate. 2006. "The Institutional and Technical Structuring of Nonprofit Ventures: Case Study of a U.S. Hybrid Organization Caught between Two Fields." *Voluntas* 17(2): 137–55.

Destin, Mesmin, Régine Debrosse, Michelle Rheinschmidt-Same, and Jennifer A. Richeson. 2022. "Psychological Challenges and Social Supports That Shape the Pursuit of Socioeconomic Mobility." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 158–71. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.08.

Dodge, Jennifer, and Sonia M. Ospina. 2016. "Nonprofits as 'Schools of Democracy': A Comparative Case Study of Two Environmental Organizations." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 45(3): 478–99.

Durham, Deborah. 1995. "Soliciting Gifts and Negotiating Agency: The Spirit of Asking in Botswana." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 1(1): 111–28.

Eliasoph, Nina. 2009. "Top-Down Civic Projects Are Not Grassroots Associations: How the Differences Matter in Everyday Life." *Voluntas* 20(3): 291–308.

Evans, Louwanda, and Wendy Lee Moore. 2015. "Impossible Burdens: White Institutions, Emotional Labor and Micro-Resistance." *Social Problems* 62(3): 439–54.

Feagin, Joe R. 2020. *The White Racial Frame: Centuries of Racial Framing and Counter-Framing*, 3rd ed. New York: Routledge.

Fisher, Jeffrey D., Claire L. Harrison, and Arie Nadler. 1978. "Exploring the Generalizability of Donor-Recipient Similarity Effects." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 4(4): 627–30.

Fisher, Jeffrey D., Arie Nadler, and Sheryle Whitcher-Alagna. 1982. "Recipient Reactions to Aid." *Psychological Bulletin* 91(1): 27–54.

Fiske, Alan P. 1992. "The Four Elementary Forms of Sociality: Framework for a Unified Theory of Social Relations." *Psychological Review* 99(4): 689–723.

Flynn, Francis J. 2003. "How Much Should I Give and How Often? The Effects of Generosity and Frequency of Favor Exchange on Social Status and Productivity." *Academy of Management Journal* 46(5): 539–53.

Flynn, Francis J., Ray E. Reagans, Emily T. Amanatullah, and Daniel R. Ames. 2006. "Helping One's Way to the Top: Self-Monitors Achieve Status by Helping Others and Knowing Who Helps Whom." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 91(6): 1123–37.

Foschi, Martha. 2000. "Double Standards for Competence: Theory and Research." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26: 21–42.

Fothergill, Alice. 2003. "The Stigma of Charity: Gender, Class and Disaster Assistance." *The Sociological Quarterly* 44(4): 659–80.

Fragale, Alison R. 2006. "The Power of Powerless Speech: The Effects of Speech Style and Task Interdependence on Status Conferral." *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 101(2): 243–61.

Freeman, Tyrone M. 2020. *Madam C. J. Walker's Gospel of Giving: Black Women's Philanthropy During Jim Crow*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Glenn, Catherine, and Lisa Goodman. 2015. "Living with and Within the Rules of Domestic Violence Shelters: A Qualitative Exploration of Residents' Experiences." *Violence Against Women* 21(12): 1481–506.

Gómez Garrido, María, M. Antònia Carbonero Gamundí, and Anahí Viladrich. 2019. "The Role of Grassroots Food Banks in Building Political Solidarity with Vulnerable People." *European Societies* 21(5): 753–73.

Goodman, Michael D., and Karen C. Gareis. 1993. "The Influence of Status on Decisions to Help." *Journal of Social Psychology* 133(1): 23–31.

Gould, Roger V. 2002. "The Origins of Status Hierarchies: A Formal Theory and Empirical Test." *American Journal of Sociology* 107(5): 1143–78.

Gouldner, Alvin W. 1960. "The Norm of Reciprocity: A Preliminary Statement." *American Sociological Review* 25(2): 161–78.

Gutierrez, Lorraine M. 1990. "Working with Women of Color: An Empowerment Perspective." *Social Work* 35(2): 149–53.

Halabi, Samer, Arie Nadler, and John F. Dovidio. 2011. "Reactions to Receiving Assumptive Help: The Moderating Effects of Group Membership and Perceived Need for Help." *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 41(12): 2793–815.

Hardy, Charlie L., and Mark Van Vugt. 2006. "Nice Guys Finish First: The Competitive Altruism Hypothesis." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 32(10): 1402–13.

Hasenfeld, Yeheskel. 2000. "Organizational Forms as Moral Practices: The Case of Welfare Departments." *Social Service Review* 74(3): 329–51.

Hollar, Milton C. 2001. "The Impact of Racism on the Delivery of Health Care and Mental Health Services." *Psychiatric Quarterly* 72(4): 337–45.

Hulme, David, and Michael Edwards. 1996. *Beyond the Magic Bullet: NGO Performance and Accountability in the Post–Cold War World*. Bloomfield, Conn.: Kumarian Press.

Hustinx, Leslie., and E. De Waele. 2015. "Managing Hybridity in a Changing Welfare Mix: Everyday Practices in an Entrepreneurial Nonprofit in Belgium." *Voluntas* 26(5): 1666–89.

INCITE!, ed. 2017. *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Jones, Adrienne Lash. 1996. "Philanthropy in the African American Experience." In *Giving: Western Ideas of Philanthropy*, edited by Jerome B. Schneewind. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Joniak, Elizabeth A. 2005. "Exclusionary Practices and the Delegitimization of Client Voice: How Staff Create, Sustain, and Escalate Conflict in a Drop-in Center for Street Kids." *American Behavioral Scientist* 48(8): 961–88.

Karriem, Abdulrazak, and Lehn M. Benjamin. 2016. "How Civil Society Organizations Foster Insurgent Citizenship: Lessons from the Brazilian Landless Movement." *Voluntas* 27(1): 19–36.

Kelley, Harold H., and John L. Michela. 1980. "Attribution Theory and Research." *Annual Review of Psychology* 31(1): 457–501.

Kemper, Theodore D. 1991. "Predicting Emotions from Social Relations." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 54(4): 330–42.

Kissane, Rebecca J. 2003. "What's Need Got to Do with It? Barriers to Use of Nonprofit Social Services." *Journal of Sociology and Social. Welfare* 30(2): 127–48.

Koenig, Biko. 2022. "Politicizing Status Loss Among Trump Supporters in 2020." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(6): 69–86. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.6.04.

Kohl-Arenas, Erica. 2015. *The Self-Help Myth: How Philanthropy Fails to Alleviate Poverty*. Oakland: University of California Press.

Konrath, Sara H., and Stephanie Brown. 2012. "The Effects of Giving on Givers." In *Handbook on Health and Social Relationships*, edited by Matthew L. Newman and Nicole A. Roberts. Washington, D.C.: APA Books.

Magee, Joe C., and Adam D. Galinsky. 2008. "Social Hierarchy: The Self-Reinforcing Nature of Power and Status." *Academy of Management Annals* 2(1): 351–98.

Majic, Samantha. 2011. "Serving Sex Workers and Promoting Democratic Engagement: Rethinking Nonprofits' Role in American Civic and Political Life." *Perspectives on Politics* 9(4): 821–39.

Manago, Bianca, Jane Sell, and Carla Goar. 2022. "Racial and Ethnic Status Distinctions and Discrimination: The Effects of Prior Contact and Group Interaction." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 132–57. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.07.

Marmot, Michael. 2004. "Status Syndrome." *Significance* 1(4): 150–54.

Mauss, Marcel. 1990. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. Translated by W. D. Halls. New York: W. W. Norton.

Michener, Jamila. 2019. "Policy Feedback in a Racialized Polity." *Policy Studies Journal* 47(2): 423–50.

Miller, Mauricio L. 2017. *The Alternative: Most of What You Believe About Poverty Is Wrong*. Raleigh, N.C.: Lulu Publishing Services.

Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. 2016. *How the Earth Didn't Fly into the Sun: Missouri's Project to Reduce Rules in Domestic Violence Shelters*. Jefferson City, Mo.: MCADSV. Accessed June 23, 2022. https://vawnet.org/material/how-earth-didnt-fly-sun-missouris-project-reduce-rules-domestic-violence-shelters.

Mitchell, Cary L. 1988. "Attributions of Responsibility for Problem Cause and Problem Solution: Their Relationship to Self-Esteem." *Journal of Psychology* 122(5): 511–18.

Morey, Maribel. 2021. *White Philanthropy: Carnegie Corporation's An American Dilemma and the*

Making of a White World Order. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Muscatell, Keely A., Sylvia A. Morelli, Emily B. Falk, Baldwin M. Way, Jennifer H. Pfeifer, Adam D. Galinsky, Matthew D. Lieberman, Mirella Dapretto, and Naomi I. Eisenberger. 2012. "Social Status Modulates Neural Activity in the Mentalizing Network." *Neuroimage* 60(3): 1771–77.

Nadler, Arie. 2015. "The Other Side of Helping: Seeking and Receiving Help." In *The Oxford Handbook of Prosocial Behavior*, edited by David A. Schroeder and William G. Graziano. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nadler, Arie, and Lily Chernyak-Hai. 2014. "Helping Them Stay Where They Are: Status Effects on Dependency/Autonomy-Oriented Helping." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 106(1): 58–72.

Nadler, Arie., and Samer Halabi. 2015. "Helping Relations and Inequality Between Individuals and Groups." In *APA Handbook of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 2: *Group Processes*, edited by Mario Mikulincer and Philip A. Shaver. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

Nadler, Arie, Samer Halabi, Gal Harapz-Gorodeisky, and Yael Ben-David. 2010. "Helping Relations as Status Relations." In *Prosocial Motives, Emotions, and Behavior: The Better Angels of Our Nature*, edited by Mario Mikulincer and Philip A. Shaver. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

Netting, F. Ellen, Mary Katherine O'Connor, M. Lori Thomas, and Gaynor Yancey. 2005. "Mixing and Phasing of Roles Among Volunteers, Staff, and Participants in Faith-Based Programs." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 34(2): 179–205.

Portocarrero, Sandra, and James T. Carter. 2022. "'But the Fellows Are Simply Diversity Hires!' How Organizational Contexts Influence Status Beliefs." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 172–91. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.09.

Quadagno, Jill. 1994. *The Color of Welfare. How Racism Undermined the War on Poverty.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ray, Victor. 2019. "A Theory of Racialized Organizations." *American Sociological Review* 84(1): 26–53.

Repper, Julie, and Tim Carter. 2011. "A Review of the Literature on Peer Support in Mental Health Services." *Journal of Mental Health* 20(4): 392–411.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L. 2001. "Social Status and Group Structure." In *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Group Processes*, edit Michael A. Hogg and R. Scott Tindale. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

———. 2019. *Status: Why Is It Everywhere? Why Does It Matter?* New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L., Kristin Backor, Yan E. Li, Justine E. Tinkler, and Kristan G. Erickson. 2009. "How Easily Does a Social Difference Become a Status Distinction? Gender Matters." *American Sociological Review* 74(1): 44–62.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L., and Shelley J. Correll. 2006. "Consensus and the Creation of Status Beliefs." *Social Forces* 85(1): 431–53.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L., and Hazel Rose Markus. 2022. "The Significance of Status: What It Is and How It Shapes Inequality." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(7): 1–25. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2022.8.7.01.

Russo, Ann, and Melissa Spatz. 2007. *Communities Engaged in Resisting Violence*. Chicago: Women and Girls Collective Action Network.

Ryan, Richard M., and Edward L. Deci. 2000. "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being." *American Psychologist* 55(1): 68–78.

Sager, Rebecca, and Laura Susan Stephens. 2005. "Serving up Sermons: Clients' Reactions to Religious Elements at Congregation-Run Feeding Establishments." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 34(3): 297–315.

Salamon, Lester M. 1999. *America's Nonprofit Sector: A Primer*, 2nd ed. New York: Foundation Center.

Salamon, Lester M., and Helmut K. Anheier. 1992. "In Search of the Non-Profit Sector. The Question of Definitions." *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 3(2): 125–51.

Sapolsky, Robert. 2005. "Sick of Poverty." *Scientific American* 293(6): 92–99.

Schein, Edgar H. 2009. *Helping: How to Offer, Give, and Receive Help*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Schneider, Monica E., Brenda Major, Riia Luhtanen, and Jennifer Crocker. 1996. "Social Stigma and the Potential Costs of Assumptive Help." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 22(2): 201–209.

Shen, Hao, Fang Wan, and Robert S. Wyer, Jr. 2011.

"Cross-Cultural Differences in the Refusal to Accept a Small Gift: The Differential Influence of Reciprocity Norms on Asians and North Americans." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 100(2): 271–81.

Smith, Steven Rathgeb, and Michael Lipsky. 1993. *Nonprofits for Hire: The Welfare State in the Age of Contracting*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Stroebe, Wolfgang, and Margaret Stroebe. 1996. "The Social Psychology of Social Support." In *Social Psychology: Handbook of Basic Principles*, edited by E. Tory Higgins and Arie W. Kruglanski. New York: Guilford Press.

Tessler, Richard C., and Shalom H. Schwartz. 1972. "Help Seeking, Self-Esteem, and Achievement Motivation: An Attributional Analysis." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 21(3): 318–26.

Thomas, Catherine C., Nicholas G. Otis, Justin R. Abraham, Hazel R. Markus, and Gregory M. Walton. 2020. "Toward a Science of Delivering Aid with Dignity: Experimental Evidence and Local Forecasts from Kenya." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 117(27): 15546–53.

Tiedens, Larissa Z. 2001. "Anger and Advancement Versus Sadness and Subjection: The Effect of Negative Emotion Expressions on Social Status Conferral." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 80(1): 80–94.

Ullman, Sarah E. 1996. "Social Reactions, Coping Strategies, and Self-Blame Attributions in Adjustment to Sexual Assault." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 20(4): 505–26.

VanNatta, Michelle. 2010. "Power and Control: Changing Structures of Battered Women's Shelters." *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences* 5(2): 149–61.

Villanueva, Edgar. 2018. *Decolonizing Wealth: Indigenous Wisdom to Heal Divides and Restore Balance*. Oakland, Calif.: Berrett-Koehler.

Wasserman, Jason Adam, and Jeffrey M. Clair. 2010. *At Home on the Street: People, Poverty, and a Hidden Culture of Homelessness*. Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Weinstein, Netta, Cody R. DeHaan, and Richard M. Ryan. 2010. "Attributing Autonomous versus Introjected Motivation to Helpers and the Recipient Experience: Effects on Gratitude, Attitudes, and Well-Being." *Motivation and Emotion* 34(4): 418–31.

Wetts, Rachel, and Robb Willer. 2018. "Privilege on the Precipice: Perceived Racial Status Threats Lead White Americans to Oppose Welfare Programs." *Social Forces* 97(2): 793–822.

Wilkerson, Isabel. 2020. *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*. New York: Random House.

Williams, Jean Calterone. 1996. "Geography of the Homeless Shelter: Staff Surveillance and Resident Resistance." *Urban Anthropology* 25(1): 75–113.

Wingfield, Adia Harvey. 2010. "Are Some Emotions Marked 'Whites Only'? Racialized Feeling Rules in Professional Workplaces." *Social Problems* 57(2): 251–68.

Wooten, Melissa E., and Lucius Couloute. 2017. "The Production of Racial Inequality within and among Organizations." *Sociology Compass* 11(1): e12446.

Yang, Joyce P., Janxin Leu, Jane M. Simoni, Wei Ti Chen, Cheng-Shi Shiu, and Hongxin Zhao. 2015. "'Please Don't Make Me Ask for Help': Implicit Social Support and Mental Health in Chinese Individuals Living with HIV." *AIDS and Behavior* 19(8): 1501–509.