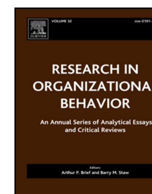
Research in Organizational Behavior xxx (2016) xxx–xxx

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Research in Organizational Behavior

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/riob



Where is context? Advancing status research with a contextual value perspective

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Available online xxx

Keywords:
Status
Context
Individual characteristics
Functionalist perspective
Contextual value perspective

ABSTRACT

Most of the numerous studies on social status over the last decade have focused on how individual characteristics influence status attainment and effects, while much less research has examined the role of context in status dynamics. Given how important and pervasive contextual values are in all types of status hierarchies and all aspects of social life, studies on contextual influences are crucial. In order to spur more research on this critical factor, we review existing theories and empirical findings on the antecedents and effects of social status and closely inspect the untested underlying assumptions of the most prominent theory in status research: the functionalist perspective. We aim to expand the functionalist perspective by incorporating the importance of context and proposing the contextual value perspective. We discuss the different influences of cooperative versus competitive relationships—as an example of contextual factors—on status conferral and experience. We also examine the implications of the contextual value perspective for new and promising directions in status research.

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The world is not flat. Hierarchies that differentiate social actors according to their social status—defined as the prestige, respect, and esteem that an individual or a group has in the eyes of others—are prevalent in all societies,

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http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.riob.2016.10.003
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organizations, teams, and dyads (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009a,b; Blader & Chen, 2012; Fiske, 2010; Fiske & Berdahl, 2007; Magee & Galinsky, 2008). Scholars in sociology, social psychology, and anthropology have long documented that status orderings among individuals and groups emerge naturally in all social contexts (Blau, 1964; Brewer & Brown, 1998; Chen, Brockner, Greenberg, 2003; Earley, 1997; Frank, 1985; Goffman, 1957; Homans, 1950; Sidanius & Pratto, 2003) and even in fairly early developmental stages. Indeed, status hierarchies are not only prevalent, but also impactful. This is because status is a fundamental determinant of social behavior in interpersonal, intra-group and inter-group dynamics. Notably, the existence of status hierarchies knows no borders but, rather, is a cross-national phenomenon. For instance, East Asian cultures demand that social status be explicitly recognized and acknowledged in social interactions; in Korea and Japan, for example, the relative status ranking of the speaker and the listener dictates the grammatically correct form of expression. In Western cultures, despite an emphasis on egalitarianism, high-status individuals enjoy extraordinary levels of admiration and deference (Fiske, 2010). This explains, in part, how movie stars and athletes are able to confer status on products that are completely irrelevant to their expertise—allowing sneakers designed by Kanye West to fetch two to five thousand dollars, far outpacing the price of sneakers designed by far more experienced designers.

But what, precisely, is status? Conceptualizations of status within the social sciences have historically been inconsistent and imprecise. Fortunately, however, researchers are increasingly reaching consensus about how to conceptualize—and thus operationalize—status. To build our chapter on a shared vocabulary, we must consider what these developments indicate about the distinctions between status and related constructs, such as power, influence, and social hierarchy. In particular, the emerging consensus among scholars is that status should be conceptualized as the respect, esteem, and prestige that others bestow through their subjective evaluations of an individual or a group of people. Whether status is achieved (i.e., earned based on one's efforts or achievements) or ascribed (i.e., based on one's group membership or other characteristics), it is voluntarily conferred and, thus, resides in the eyes of those conferring it (Chen, Peterson, Phillips, Podolny, & Ridgeway, 2012; Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Ridgeway & Erickson, 2000). Thus, status is reliant on, and primarily a property of, observers. Individuals cannot have status unless others regard them highly, and, more generally, individuals have only the status that others voluntarily confer on them.

In contrast, power refers to one's control over valued resources (Fiske, 1993; Galinsky, Rucker, & Magee, 2015; Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003; Magee & Galinsky, 2008) and is, therefore, primarily a property of an actor. This is because resources are not easily conferred by others, but rather taken through strategic means. Despite differences in their definitions and attainment processes, scholars have traditionally conflated status and power. This confusion is, most likely, due to the common outcomes that these constructs share (such as influence, formal rank, etc.). Of course, simply because these constructs lead to similar outcomes does not make them conceptually equivalent, but, instead, suggests that they are two distinct pathways to those outcomes. In fact, recent empirical evidence has begun to corroborate longstanding, albeit limited, theorizing that status and power are distinct. For instance, research finds that the outcomes of status and power are significantly different (Blader & Chen, 2012; Blader, Shirako, & Chen, 2016; Hays & Bendersky, 2016). Finally, social rank refers to the differentiation among individuals along a valued dimension—whether that dimension is status, power, influence, formal rank, or any of a myriad of other ways in which individuals are distinguished from one another (e.g., status, power, and formal job title; Magee & Galinsky, 2008). Clarity about the definition of status and its linkages to related constructs is important and situates our analysis of status as compared to other related constructs with which it is often confused.

In addition to clarifying the distinction between status and other bases of hierarchical differentiation, it is also important to clarify the levels of analysis at which status can be conceptualized and at which status operates. Indeed, status exists across all levels of analysis (Chen et al., 2012; Piazza & Castellucci, 2014), from an individual's position within a group's status hierarchy (Tyler & Lind, 1992); to a team's standing among all teams in an organization; to status differences between social groups (for instance, between racial or generational groups, or between men and women, or between occupations (Ridgeway, 1991; Ridgeway & Erickson, 2000; Weber, 1978); to an organization's status and network position in a market (Granovetter, 1973; Podolny, 2005). At each level of analysis, the entity's status influences the opportunities and constraints that it experiences (Fiske, 2010; Ridgeway, Backor, Li, Tinkler, & Erickson, 2009). Status is, therefore, a complex and multi-level phenomenon. However, since our primary focus in this chapter is on status at the individual level, we focus on individuals' status position within the groups to which they belong (i.e., status dynamics among individuals within a group).

The goal of our chapter is to highlight the importance of *context* for understanding status dynamics within groups and organizations. We conceptualize context in a broad sense, including anything from a task group's norms and goals up through the societal and cultural values that surround an organization. We begin our analysis by briefly reviewing existing theories and empirical findings about the antecedents and consequences of an individual's status position. We then turn our attention to key premises and assumptions in prior research, focusing, in particular, on the dominant framework that underlies most status research—namely, the functionalist perspective (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009a). In particular, we evaluate the extent to which the functionalist perspective, and status research more generally, have considered contextual influences. More specifically, we argue that status theorizing and research have not adequately considered the role of context, and, thus, we propose a *contextual value perspective* to address this shortcoming. We demonstrate the potential value and importance of context by analyzing

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how a specific contextual dimension—namely the cooperativeness vs. competitiveness of social relations within a group—can resolve a question in the current literature. That is, we argue that the contextual factor of cooperativeness vs. competitiveness may account for the paradox of whether status is more closely tied to, and reflective of, the dynamics of prestige vs. dominance (by inducing fear in others; Cheng & Tracy, 2014; Henrich & Gil-White 2001). We conclude our chapter by discussing the implications of our *contextual value perspective* for status research and suggest five promising directions for future studies.

1. Where it all starts: status attainment

Scholars have devoted a great deal of effort to identifying the *individual* characteristics and behaviors that drive status conferral. This is a complex undertaking since status is voluntarily conferred through observers' subjective evaluations (Ridgeway & Erickson, 2000) and is, thus, 'in the eyes of the beholder.' As such, the bases of status conferral are almost certain to vary across observers, groups, and time. And, indeed, prior research confirms that they do vary. To date, this variation has been understood primarily through the lens of the *functionalist perspective*, the prevailing framework adopted by scholars to conceptualize and understand status dynamics. The functionalist perspective argues that status conferral is based on the qualities that are most critical to a group's or collective's success (Berger, Cohen, & Zelditch, 1972; Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1989; Emerson, 1962; Goldhamer & Shils, 1939). That is, group members confer status on one another based on the extent to which each individual possesses characteristics that the group needs in order to achieve its goals. As such, the primary avenue through which individuals pursue status is by enhancing and demonstrating the value that they provide to their group (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009a).

Of course, groups differ in the nature of their tasks, goals, aspirations, needs, etc. This should prompt variation across groups in terms of the bases of status attainment. However, prior research has not tended to systematically explore this variation. Instead, it has focused mainly on the individual characteristics and behaviors that most commonly contribute to group effectiveness and, thus, add value to a group. In particular, scholars have tended to focus on two general characteristics that drive status attainment: (a) competence (Bass, 2008; Blau, 1964; Driskell & Mullen, 1990; Hollander & Julian, 1969; Lord, Phillips, & Rush, 1980; Mann, 1959) and (b) willingness or motivation to orient one's efforts towards group goals (Ridgeway, 1978, 1981; Willer, 2009). Groups confer status on those who are seen as possessing these characteristics, as a way of incentivizing these highly capable and valuable members to devote themselves to achieving group goals. Status conferral is a compelling incentive since it affords many perks and privileges to those possessing it (as we discuss below). In this way, the dynamics of status conferral represent a social exchange process whereby social actors are incentivized to utilize their valuable characteristics to benefit their groups, in exchange for the perks that follow from holding a high status position in the group (Gould, 2002; Henrich & Gil-White, 2001). This exchange is 'functional' in the sense that it both serves group goals and satisfies individuals' interest— i.e., it is instrumental in fulfilling the needs and preferences of both parties to the exchange. Without this exchange, groups might not benefit from the efforts of their most essential members, and, in turn, these members would lose out on those perks and risk having their critical needs left unfulfilled (Anderson, Hildreth, & Howland, 2015; Anderson & Kilduff, 2009a).

It is worthwhile to consider these bases of status conferral in more detail. First, competence is important because groups cannot survive—let alone thrive—unless at least some of their members possess the abilities necessary for group performance. As such, competence is the primary basis of status conferral: status is primarily conferred on individuals according to the extent to which they possess competencies on which the group relies. This is substantiated by prior research that shows the importance of competence to the status conferral process, as well as by work showing that individuals compete for status primarily by signaling high levels of competence (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009a). However, although competence is a fundamental and largely functional basis of status conferral, the focus on competence can lead to paradoxical and dysfunctional consequences. Consider, for instance, that people tend not to seek help, even though they may need it and it is available, because they fear the status loss that may result from appearing incompetent (Lee, 1997).

Another paradoxical effect of status follows from the reality that it may be conferred based on perceived or expected—and not on actual or demonstrated—competence (Fragale, 2006). Yet expected competence is difficult to assess accurately, and these judgments are susceptible to a wide range of biases and errors that may result in costly mistakes for the group, as well unfair status allocations for individuals. For instance, prior work shows that trait dominance and overconfidence (Anderson, Brion, Moore, & Kennedy, 2012; Anderson & Kilduff, 2009b) enhance status conferral, due to their impact on perceived competence. Yet dominance and overconfidence are inherently imperfect indices of competence. This not only undermines the link between actual competence and status, but also has potentially negative implications for the people who attain status and, subsequently, control and influence. Similarly, demographic characteristics such as race, age, and sex (Berger et al., 1972) also influence status due to their impact on perceived competence and value to the group. Reliance on such imprecise and inaccurate signals highlights, somewhat ironically, the push to identify competence within the ranks of a group's members. Although it represents a somewhat perverse implication, it may indirectly corroborate the functionalist perspective.

An individual's drive to engage in group-serving behaviors is another key basis of status conferral. That is, status is conferred on those who demonstrate, or who are believed to demonstrate, a motivation to make personal sacrifices for the group, generosity towards group members, and other forms of communally-oriented behaviors (Flynn, 2003; Foley & Fuqua, 1988; Hardy &

Van Vugt, 2006; Willer, 2009). This prompts individuals who desire greater status to deliberately signal group-serving attitudes and behaviors, such as conspicuous selection of environmentally-friendly products that cost the individual more but benefit the community (Griskevicius, Tybur, & Van den Bergh, 2010)—an environmentalism that emerges only in public (and not in private) social contexts (Griskevicius et al., 2010). The same logic explains why some organizational scholars have reasoned that organizational citizenship behaviors (i.e., discretionary behaviors that are not specified in the job description but contribute positively to organizational effectiveness) are not motivated solely by a desire to advance organizational goals but, rather, are often attempts by employees to manage impressions and improve their status (Bolino, 1999; Rioux & Penner, 2001). These examples highlight that the drive to work on behalf of one's group, a key basis of status conferral, can also lead to somewhat paradoxical effects that do not, in actuality, benefit the group.

These insights highlight that status conferral dynamics aim to enhance group success, but that they do so imperfectly. According to the functionalist account, these dynamics are facilitated through group processes that create consensus on the bases of status conferral and the eventual status ordering among group members (Berger et al., 1972). Such a consensus is necessary for status to facilitate group functioning, and it does so via processes such as defining each individual's responsibilities, shaping patterns of deference, and allocating decision-making control to the individuals best positioned to exercise those responsibilities.

2. When you've got it, you've got it? The consequences of experiencing status

As the saying goes, it's good to be king and, perhaps, especially so when it comes to being "king" of the status hierarchy. The perks of high status are hard to overestimate since high status prompts a wide range of beneficial outcomes, from influence and control to subjective well-being, and everything in between. Notably, status-holders are not the only ones to benefit: as noted above, status dynamics can enhance group functioning. Moreover, status shapes individuals' behavior in profound ways, with the result that high-status individuals are often more prosocial and more positive interaction partners (Blader & Chen, 2012). Below, we consider both sets of consequences—for status-holders and for their interaction partners.

One key benefit of high status is that it bestows individuals with greater influence. High-status team members are more assertive, critical and outspoken, and they exert greater influence over low-status members (Levine and Moreland, 1990), who participate less in decision-making, experience greater frustration, and have higher levels of turnover (Jackson, 1996). The heightened influence of high-status individuals is also reflected in their greater tendency to engage in voice behaviors (Janssen & Gao, 2015), positioning them to reap the benefits that follow from being vocal (benefits that are especially likely to be forthcoming to them, given people's tendency to think more highly of high-status individuals' input in the first place).

Another benefit of high status is that it enhances subjective well-being, significantly predicting greater life satisfaction and positive emotions (Anderson, Kraus, Galinsky, & Keltner, 2012), as well as diminished stress and burnout (Anderson et al., 2015). These benefits matter and, indeed, may have downstream health and mortality benefits (Anderson et al., 2015; Ellis, 1994). Additionally, over time, subjective well-being fluctuates in tandem with increases and decreases in social status (Anderson, Willer, Kilduff, & Brown, 2012). These effects may be driven by the reality that status enables the fulfillment of fundamental needs, such as belongingness and autonomy needs (Anderson et al., 2015). The benefits of status to one's subjective well-being are also reflected in high-status individuals' greater propensity to trust others, due to beliefs that others have benevolent intentions toward them (Lount & Pettit, 2012). Corroborating this finding, researchers find that higher-status team members working with higher proportions of lower-status team members report fewer instances in which colleagues accuse them of incompetence or breaching norms of professional conduct—and, thus, lower levels of negative emotions; however, lower-status members report higher levels of these outcomes when working with higher proportions of higher-status members (Chattopadhyay, Finn, & Ashkanasy, 2010). Moreover, when experiencing negative affectivity, higher-status (as compared to lower-status) employees are less likely to become a target of coworkers' aggression (Aquino, Grover, Bradfield, & Allen, 1999).

Thus, high status leads to privileges ranging from greater influence in one's social encounters, to enhanced psychological well-being, to positive social evaluations. But, as noted above, status-holders are not the only ones who benefit from their high status. For instance, high-status people tend to treat others more fairly (Blader & Chen, 2012). This is due to the conferred nature of status. Since status relies on observers, concerns about maintaining and increasing one's status will orient status-seekers outward. In other words, status concerns direct individuals to focus on other people in their social environment (Blader & Chen, 2012; Blader et al., 2016; Flynn, Reagans, Amanatullah, & Ames, 2006). Blader et al. (2016) find that status increases accuracy in reading others' emotions and perspectives (i.e., the ability to take others' vantage point and to understand their feelings, concerns, and perceptions). Moreover, they also find that status increases the tendency to experience socially engaging (rather than disengaging) emotions and to identify others as the source of one's emotional experiences. This enhanced orientation toward others is well-placed since high-status individuals do, indeed, receive more attention and scrutiny from those with less status (e.g., Anderson & Shirako, 2008; Graffin, Bundy, Porac, Wade, & Quinn, 2013). As a result, high-status people are more vigilant and engage in social relations in a way that maintains others' continued respect and esteem. In doing so, they comply with others' expectations that high-status individuals show consideration and act fairly toward others—behaviors that warrant

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their high-status positions (Blader & Chen, 2012; Ridgeway, 1978, 1981).

Although status may have a dark side, which emerging research is starting to explore, existing research overall seems to suggest that the consequences of status are reciprocally beneficial. On the one hand, those possessing high status enjoy manifold perks, both tangible and psychological. On the other hand, because status is continually conferred, high-status individuals do not become complacent in their enjoyment of those perks, since doing so could put their privileged status position at risk. Therefore, they are vigilant about others and about maintaining their high status position. In this way, high status can reap benefits not only for recipients, but also for those conferring it. Once again, this analysis emphasizes that status dynamics are, to a large extent, social exchanges through which both low- and high-status individuals pursue their goals. That is, they are functional exchanges since they enable groups to prosper from the contributions of their most able and valuable group members—members who, presumably, have many outside options and, thus, the group risks losing.

3. The functionalist perspective: boundaries and untested assumptions

As noted, the functionalist perspective of status is the predominant framework that has been adopted to conceptualize and examine status dynamics. This perspective explains *how* groups accord different levels of status to members, highlighting that status allocation is the result of a team's consensus about (a) the characteristics that are beneficial to team effectiveness and (b) the team members who possess these characteristics and, thus, deserve higher social status in the team (Bales, 1950; Berger et al., 1972; Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1989; Emerson, 1962; Goldhamer & Shils, 1939). In other words, groups reach consensus about the individual characteristics that are valuable to the team's success and allocate ranks in the status hierarchy according to the extent to which each individual possesses those characteristics. As we noted earlier, abundant empirical evidence supports this logic by demonstrating that characteristics that are valuable for team success, such as competence and the motivation to work for the group, predict status conferral (Bass, 2008; Blau, 1964; Driskell & Mullen, 1990; Hollander & Julian, 1969; Lord, de Vader, & Alliger, 1986; Mann, 1959; Ridgeway, 1978, 1981; Willer, 2009). The functionalist perspective also explains *why* groups accord members different levels of status, highlighting that status conferral enhances a group's viability by incentivizing the most valuable group members to contribute their competence to the group. That is, status conferral serves a number of functions for the group, such as giving decision-making responsibilities to the most qualified members and, ultimately, optimizing team performance.

Overall, the functionalist perspective provides a highly instrumental and rational account of how and why status operates, as it posits that status dynamics are calibrated to optimize group interests (i.e., performance and success). This is not to imply that mistakes in status conferral never happen; indeed, prior work (some of which we reviewed above) shows that they do. In fact, groups sometimes bestow status on the wrong individuals, often due to reliance on weak or incorrect signals about their instrumentality for the group. For instance, demographic characteristics such as sex and race are often used to infer status (Berger, Rosenholtz, & Zelditch, 1980), although these characteristics are not necessarily diagnostic of an individual's value to a group. Yet these 'errors' are not typically regarded as challenges to the functional perspective itself, but, rather, as problems that arise in its operationalization. That is, these 'errors' have not prompted scholars to question the fundamental premise that status dynamics are functional for groups.

The functionalist perspective has great intuitive appeal since it presents such a rational account for status dynamics. However, we propose that its intuitive appeal may have limited the extent to which this perspective has been investigated and questioned and, more generally, may have limited scholars' examination and understanding of status. Although many studies draw upon—and lend support to—the functionalist account, several critical aspects and underlying assumptions of the theory have gone unexplored. For instance, how does the nature of a group or collective's purpose and goals impact the status conferral process? What assumptions underlie researchers' investigations about the individual characteristics that prompt status conferral? Examining questions such as these can deepen and broaden our understanding of the functionalist account of status. Moreover, as we will argue, the answers to these questions suggest that status research has paid inadequate attention to the role of *context*.

With regard to the first question—about the potential impact of a group's purpose and goals—theorizing and research grounded in the functionalist perspective have focused primarily on status conferral in task groups, or teams, rather than in other types of collectives. Yet status hierarchies exist in all types of collectives and at multiple levels of analysis, which can be as broad as the global society or as narrow as a dyadic relationship. Indeed, status differentiation emerges among nations interacting on the global stage, genders interacting at work and home, organizational units dealing with one another, and football teams competing in a game. Yet these examples highlight situations in which a common goal is often not obvious or explicitly defined (i.e., is more diffuse) but does not diminish the salience and focus on status. Thus, the processes articulated by the functionalist account may differ from how they are usually studied. Most of the work that is grounded in the functionalist perspective has tended to focus on status dynamics in task groups, where the collective goal, as well as the common fate and the mutual benefits of achieving those goals are clear. This is reflected in the emphasis on the bases of status attainment, most notably competence. However, the relevance of a great deal of the prior research on status attainment begins to fade as the context switches to cases in which a common goal is less clear.

To answer the second question—regarding scholars' assumptions about the bases of status conferral—we need to more closely examine the assumptions of the

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functionalist account. One underlying assumption that we wish to highlight is that team performance is assumed to be the key, and perhaps the sole, priority when it comes to status allocation. Although this assumption is often true in a lot of teams, in many situations it is not. For example, although group performance and output may not be the primary goals of particular groups (e.g., some state-owned firms in China and most government units), status dynamics will surely be alive and well in those entities. Moreover, even task groups may wind up prioritizing things other than performance, such as internal cohesion, identity definition, differentiation from others, and so on. For example, when a group is encountering significant internal conflicts, the importance of maintaining high cohesion or low member turnover may be prioritized over task performance. Moreover, even without the need to resolve intra-group conflicts, cohesion can be an end in its own right rather than a means to group performance, such as in collective and relationship-focused countries (Brewer & Chen, 2007; Triandis, 2001).

Priorities such as these may represent departures from the assumptions of the functionalist perspective, suggesting that it (like other rational actor models) may be detached from some realities of group life as they play out in the "real world." Therefore, research that is solely from the functionalist perspective does not examine these realities, and this, in turn, has implications for our assumptions and understandings of the basis of status conferral. A group's context will determine whether or how much task performance is the priority in a team and, thus, will shape how status is conferred within that team. Rather than actual or expected contributions driving status attainment, context may prompt other characteristics that the team deems more valuable at a certain time and/or in a certain situation. Accordingly, the functionalist account loses its relevance and explanatory power as its fundamental assumption of group priorities is challenged.

Like other status scholars, we interpret the functionalist perspective as focusing on the link between status conferral and the tangible instrumental and performance goals of the group. Some might argue that when status is conferred on the basis of further non-performance goals (e.g., social harmony and social identity), it is still "functional" in the broadest sense of the term. However, this all-encompassing use of "functional" would render the theoretical concept of functionalism virtually non-falsifiable since any pursuit could be labeled functional, at least in retrospect.[1] So, similar to previous status researchers, we use the term functionalism in a stricter sense. We categorize functional versus non-functional aspects of status conferral in line with the distinction between task versus social-emotional goals/processes of groups (Bales, 1950).

In sum, we argue that the functionalist account is, in essence, a highly instrumental and rational argument, in which team performance is the ultimate goal, and where the team allocates status rationally. However, as we argued above, these assumptions do not apply to all groups and collectives all the time. Status hierarchy formation is ubiquitous in a wide variety of social interactions, such as in dyads, non-task-driven groups, societies, and even the global society, as well as most aspects of social life. Many phenomena of status conferral and attainment appear to be outside the scope of the functionalist perspective. In the following, we will attempt to expand the functional perspective by incorporating context more squarely and prominently in the theoretical consideration of status dynamics.

4. Context determines expectations and status conferral

We propose that the current gaps in status research are, at least partially, due to insufficient attention to the role of context in shaping status dynamics. Thus, we believe that context should play a larger role in and be an integral part of status research. This would enable an understanding of status conferral that applies to a broader range of collectives and situations. We refer to our perspective as the *contextual value perspective*. Our contextual value perspective proposes that context determines the goals of (not necessarily performance goals) of the group and the characteristics valued within the group, and it suggests how status allocation processes should be carried out. Our approach is consistent with theorizing on status characteristics, which emphasizes that context influences the weight assigned to various status bases (Berger, Ridgeway, Fisek, & Norman, 1998).

The contextual emphasis that characterizes our perspective reflects a wide range of factors and influences. Context includes everything from beliefs and norms at the dyadic, team, organizational, societal or national levels, to deep-seated values about what behaviors or traits are not only legitimate, but also good, desired, or valuable in a certain situation given the proximal goals and environmental demands. These beliefs, norms, and values may be conducive to a group's task success, and when they are, the insights of the functional approach are well suited to account for the status dynamics that may ensue. However, these norms and values may be detached from—or even opposed to—a group's task success in an objective sense and, instead, may reflect alternate goals. For instance, groups may emphasize harmony over productivity, meaning over money, and/or identity over performance. These alternate interests and priorities will alter group members' expectations about what qualities they should associate with high status, without changing the objective factors that would be most likely to drive group task success. Thus, in these cases, status may be conferred based on characteristics that might not be related to tangible indices of group task success; rather, these characteristics might reflect local expectations, beliefs, norms, and values of what is associated with high status. This is because, ultimately, group members confer status based on context-determined values, which may not necessarily be driven by performance or productivity—factors on which the functionalist perspective has focused.

The contextual value perspective that we propose here emphasizes the importance of values that the group deems important *in their context*. In line with the functionalist

[1] We thank Barry Staw for this insightful point.

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account, the contextual value perspective proposes that group members voluntarily confer status on a target actor according to his or her possession of certain positive characteristics. In addition, the contextual value perspective emphasizes that such characteristics are determined by the values in the group context rather than simply by what is optimal for group performance outcomes. These characteristics are not necessarily instrumental to the performance of the collective; in certain situations, they may even be detrimental to both the individual and the collective group. That is, the psychological processes of status conferral, according to the contextual value perspective, may not be purely rational, conscious, or calculative (i.e., status may not be allocated to the "right person" in order to benefit decision making and task coordination). Moreover, the contextual value perspective aims to explain status hierarchy formation in a variety of collectives and among individuals of various relationships, from task-oriented teams with collective and interdependent performance goals to individuals or collectives that are only loosely connected. Hence, the contextual value perspective attempts to explain status conferral processes beyond the functionalist perspective, which has focused on task groups presumed to place performance as their most important goal.

5. The importance of context: prior research

We are by no means the first or only ones to highlight the importance of context in status research, and a review of related prior work can illuminate our claims about the importance of context. The studies that we consider below investigate the impact of context on both status attainment and the psychological and behavioral consequences of status. In other words, they examine the impact of context on the bases on which observers confer status, as well as on the behaviors that follow from individuals' relative status positions. Indeed, the novel contribution of these studies is, in part, their investigation of context. These studies—particularly those that appear inconsistent with the functionalist account—substantiate the significance of our contextual value perspective.

5.1. Context influences status attainment

Torelli, Leslie, Stoner, and Puente (2014) examine the effects of national culture on the determinants of status. In particular, they study how individualism and collectivism influence tendencies to view high-status individuals as competent versus warm. They find that individualism is positively related to the tendency to perceive high-status individuals as competent, whereas collectivism is positively related to the tendency to perceive high-status individuals as warm. In order to gain status in the workplace, U.S. Americans, who are more individualistic, reported a higher frequency of enacting competence behaviors than do Latin Americans, who are more collectivistic. Examples of competence behaviors are: "Work late to be sure you did the best job possible on a work assignment," and "Work to solve a tough problem at work even though you were not expected to" (Torelli et al., 2014, p. 38). On the contrary, Latin Americans reported a higher frequency of enacting warmth-related behaviors than did U.S. Americans; these behaviors include: "Volunteer outside your working hours to help your co-workers with their personal issues," and "Stay late at an office party even when you think everyone is pretty shallow" (Torelli et al., 2014, p. 38). Individualists are more likely to engage in competence than in warmth behaviors to gain social status at the workplace, whereas collectivists are equally likely to engage in both. Moreover, individualists confer higher status for competence, but not for warmth, while collectivists confer higher status for warmth, but not for competence. This set of results demonstrates that the particulars of status attainment are not pan-cultural but, rather, are sensitive to the socio-cultural context (i.e., cultural orientations of individualism and collectivism). Consistent with our contextual value perspective, Torelli et al.'s study expands the functionalist view by highlighting that warmth and competence are valued and expected differentially in certain (national) contexts. It advances our understanding of the national cultural contingencies of status attainment.

Fragale (2006) examines how a contextual factor—i.e., task interdependence—influences the effects of speech styles on status conferral judgments. In an experiment, she exposed participants in different contexts—namely, in a high- or low-task interdependence group—to a person with either a powerful or a powerless speech style and recorded how much status participants conferred on the speaker. Her results indicate that people engaged in low-interdependent tasks confer more status on powerful speakers, whereas people engaged in highly interdependent tasks confer more status on powerless speakers. This was because Fragale's participants weighted agency and communality, traits that they inferred from speech styles, differently in their status conferral judgments, depending on the levels of task-interdependence. These findings prompt the insight that the nature of the group task shapes status conferral bases. Interestingly, this is consistent with how individualist and collectivist orientations determine the weight of competence and warmth as status bases (Torelli et al., 2014).

Researchers also investigate whether context shapes the determinants of influence, which is an outcome of status. For instance, Anderson, Spataro, and Flynn (2008) test how the fit between the person and his or her organization leads to influence. They find that in a team-oriented organization, extroverts gain influence, whereas in an organization emphasizing individual work on technical tasks, conscientious individuals attain influence. The effects remain consistent when controlling for formal authority, job performance, and demographic characteristics. Similar to how the nature of a task determines the weight of agency and communality (Fragale, 2006) and how national culture influences competence and warmth as status bases (Torelli et al., 2014), Anderson et al. (2008) demonstrate that individuals with characteristics that match the organizational values achieve more influence in the group than those who are mismatched.

Recent work by Neeley and Dumas (2016) highlights how a change in context can, in turn, drive a sudden switch

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in what is valued and, subsequently, shape people's status and work attitudes. In a study of the U.S.-based employees of a Japanese organization after a company-wide English language mandate, the researchers examine unearned status gain, which they define as "an unexpected and unsolicited increase in relative standing, prestige or worth, attained not through individual effort or achievement, but from a shift in organizationally valued characteristics" (p. 2). The contextual change of the English mandate rendered a particular characteristic—English fluency—a salient source of status. Although the native English-speaking employees did not gain their English skills through any individual effort or achievement, they nevertheless experienced elevated status in the organization post-mandate. Their sense of belonging, optimism about career advancement, and access to expanded networks all increased. In addition, Neeley and Dumas find that the intergroup context, another contextual factor, influenced how people experienced the unearned status gain. The native English-speaking employees who interacted closely with their Japanese counterparts experienced discomfort and displayed certain interesting behaviors. Specifically, they engaged in status rationalization (i.e., emphasizing the benefits that Japanese employees might gain by learning English) and status stability appraisal (i.e., whether the change was temporary or durable). In sum, this study highlights a case in which a contextual value shift changed individuals' social status "overnight." This case clearly demonstrates that context influences the status implications of individual characteristics (i.e., native language). As the contextual value perspective suggests, this study shows that contextual values, and not only individual characteristics, determine status attainment.

The contextual value perspective may also provide deeper insight into the impact of actors' characteristics on observers' status conferral. A case in point would be the well-established positive relationship between task competence and status conferral (as reviewed earlier). This relationship might reverse in certain organizations and work groups in which the context invokes goals that deviate from group performance. The concept of the "rate buster," widely cited in the industrial and labor relations literature, is a good example of this pattern. In a workplace where compensation is based on piece rate, there are often informal group output norms among the workers. These output restriction norms, rather than individual work ability and motivation, regulate employees' work effort. Typically, these norms set both lower and upper limits on what group members perceive as a proper effort (i.e. "a fair day's work"). A rate buster is someone who produces significantly more than the average worker and exceeds output norms in a production group. Rate busters can receive an additional bonus (or even a group bonus) for their performance, but they might induce management to heighten performance expectations and lower the piece-rate pay for all workers in the group. Thus, rate busters are despised and socially shunned (Jones & Vroom, 1964), and, thus, in spite of their high task competence and contribution to organizational performance, they have low social status. Similarly, in knowledge work teams, one's extraordinarily high performance, if highly deviant from group norms, might be perceived as inappropriate by other members of the team, even if it is beneficial to the team's task completion. One's exceptional task competence may pose performance pressure and status threat to other members (i.e., "making others look bad"). As a result, highly competent individuals may be socially excluded, regarded as low-status, and pressured to conform, (i.e., "putting them in their place"). These examples demonstrate that when the context makes common organizational goals less important than sub-culture or individual interests, the status basis changes accordingly.

According to the social identity theory of leadership (Hogg, 2001), an individual's prototypicality of his/her group is a predictor of status attainment. Groups bestow influence and status on the most prototypical members in the team; thus, prototypical leaders are more effective because followers agree and comply with the leader's goals and strategies. Therefore, the extent to which a leader is prototypical of the group (i.e., representative of the group's identity) predicts the emergence, endurance, and effectiveness of leaders (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). Yet what is 'prototypical'—and, thus, the specific basis of status conferral—is highly variable across groups. Moreover, prototypical attributes may no longer serve group needs. Previously functional images of the "ideal" group member may have become institutionalized and slow to change, and the demands on which previous group norms were based may not reflect current demands. These points highlight the dynamic nature of a group's context, as well as the variation across groups in what is normative and prototypical. This illustrates that the bases of status conferral will look quite different across groups and over time.

The preceding studies and lines of research demonstrate how the contextual value perspective can explain a diversity of results from the literature. Thus, the study of status bases and determinants should not be considered the search for a singular model of antecedents and bases but, rather, for a contingent model—one in which the contingencies depend on the context.

5.2. Context influences the effects of status

Recent research also finds that the consequences of status are contingent on context, such as national culture. For example, Kuwabara, Yu, Lee, and Galinsky (2016) find that high status can lead to opposite effects on the use of punishment in Asian and Western cultures. In Asian cultures, inequalities within one's group and conformity to status expectations—even at the expense of individual interests—is expected (Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998;). Asian cultures are characterized by vertical collectivism, "a cultural pattern in which the individual sees the self as an aspect of an in-group, but the members of the in-group are different from each other, some having more status than others" (Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, & Gelfand, 1995, p. 244). Vertical collectivism prompts expectations that high-status individuals will reinforce the status hierarchy through dominance. For this reason, Kuwabara et al. (2016) find that high status increases punishment by Asian

participants but decreases it by American participants. They also find that the feeling of being respected mediates the relationship between status and punishment in each culture. Moreover, in their study of Asian Americans, the effects of status on imposing punishment differ according to which cultural identity—Asian or American—is activated.

A study by Kraus et al. (2014) also demonstrates how group norms and expectations shape the behaviors of high- versus low-status individuals. They find that because high-status individuals are likely to engage in behaviors that violate group norms and expectations, when compared with low-status individuals, high-status boys and girls engage in more teasing behaviors that are consistent with their gender expectations. For instance, guided by their gender roles, high-status girls tease in a more cheering, affiliative, and playful fashion, whereas high-status boys use more directly hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, compared to their low-status counterparts. They also find that high-status boys follow the manipulated expectations of either taunting or cheering more closely than low-status boys. When taunting expectations are manipulated, high-status boys engage in more direct provocation than low-status boys; however, when cheering expectations are manipulated, they engage in more affiliative behaviors than low-status boys. This study states that high-status individuals take more expectation-consistent actions to maintain their elevated status.

Park et al. (2013),using representative samples of American and Japanese adults, find that the relationship between social status and anger expression in the U.S. is different from that in Japan. Evidence from Western cultures shows that lower-status individuals express more anger because lower social status is associated with greater frustration stemming from life adversities and goal attainment difficulties. As a result, lower-status Americans express more anger to vent their frustration. On the contrary, in Japanese culture, high-status individuals express more anger because a higher social status affords them the privilege of expressing anger. As a result, high-status Japanese express more anger in order to display dominance and decision-making authority. These researchers also find that subjective social status among Americans, but objective social status among Japanese, predicts anger expression. The former was measured by participants' choice of a rung of their own standing in their community and the latter by educational attainment and occupation as objective markers of social status. This study highlights the moderating effects of national culture on how people with high or low social status experience the dynamic construction of anger and anger expression.

In sum, the studies reviewed here demonstrate how contextual factors, such as national culture, the nature of the task, and group norms shape the behaviors of individuals with high versus low status differently. They showcase the effect of contextual values on a variety of status-related behaviors, including the maintenance of status hierarchies via punishment, adherence to expectation-consistent actions to maintain elevated status, and the expression of emotions in ways that display dominance and status. Overall, these studies demonstrate the value of considering the context in which status dynamics play out.

5.3. Cooperativeness and competitiveness as critical contextual factors

We predict that a particularly important contextual factor that determines the bases of status conferral and the consequences of one's status position is the cooperativeness versus competitiveness of the relationship between the members of a group, which is often shaped by the group's norms. The cooperative and competitive nature of relationships or group norms is an important but largely overlooked moderator of status dynamics—one that may explain the apparent contradictions in the research findings. For example, some researchers have argued that, to reinforce their status, high-status individuals engage in domineering moves such as interruption, participation control, and psychological threats (Owens & Sutton, 2001; Owens, Neale, & Sutton, 2000), or that high-status individuals are less prosocial (Guinote, Cotzia, Sandhu, & Siwa, 2015). In contrast, other research finds that high-status individuals treat others with more consideration and fairness (Blader & Chen, 2012) and engage in more perspective-taking (Blader et al., 2016). As we will elaborate, these seemingly opposite patterns may be moderated by whether the nature of the relationship is cooperative or competitive. Notably, previous research has not extensively considered whether the relationship among social actors is collaborative or competitive, and we believe that this has prevented resolution of some paradoxes in the literature.

When the context determines that the relationship is cooperative, team members' rewards are usually positively linked, creating the perception of shared fate and promoting mutually beneficial, supportive behaviors. In this case, the expertise and contributions of each member are shared and highly regarded so that all members can benefit. On the contrary, when the relationship is competitive, there are usually negative correlations among team members' rewards. Thus, instead of supporting each other, members may disregard or even impair others' progress and performance in order to gain a competitive advantage (Deutsch, 1949; Beersma et al., 2003).

The difference between competitive and cooperative relationships among team members has become particularly salient in contemporary organizations because many are trying to transition from individual-based structures to team-based structures (Allred, Snow, & Miles, 1996). It should be noted that, in most real-world situations, actors often simultaneously engage in cooperative and competitive relationships. For example, employees in the same team may collaborate over task completion and shared goals, while competing for opportunities for recognition and promotion. Another example is how different divisions within an organization interdependently contribute to the success of the company while, at the same time, striving for more resources for their own divisions. Although, in many situations, the characteristics that categorize the relationship might be both cooperative and competitive, one of the two is usually more prominent and salient in the

actors' minds at any given time, and the more salient factor will shape status conferral and the experience of status in that moment.

A great deal of prior research has studied status in a collaborative setting. There, highly competent individuals are accorded high levels of social status, so that their competence can be channeled into making excellent decisions for the team and coordinating team collaboration. In order to gain status, individuals display characteristics that are valuable to the team, such as task competence, altruism, and commitment to the group (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009a; Flynn, 2003; Foley & Fuqua, 1988; Hardy & Van Vugt, 2006; Willer, 2009). In terms of the outcomes of status, researchers have found "warm and fuzzy" effects of having high status. For instance, high-status individuals engage in more perspective-taking (Blader et al., 2016) and treat others with more distributive and procedural justice (Blader & Chen, 2012). Thus, feelings of respect and prestige rely on others and are socially defined. As a result, such feelings prompt high-status individuals' concerns about the impressions that they cultivate in others; thus, they consider others' perspectives and act in ways that will be regarded as respectable, which helps maintain others' conferral of status (Flynn et al., 2006; Henrich & Gil-White, 2001).

However, status is more likely to be based on dominance (as opposed to prestige) in a competitive setting than in a collaborative context. This explains why some researchers have argued that high-status individuals engage in domineering behaviors—such as interruption, participation control, and psychological threats—to reinforce their status (Owens et al., 2000). Status conferral in teams is often a competitive process, even when members collaborate to achieve shared goals. According to the status contest literature, lower-ranking group members may display disruptive competitive behaviors because status hierarchies are seen as mutable (Hays & Bendersky, 2015). For example, Hays and Bendersky (2015) find that greater opportunity for upward mobility motivates individuals to compete in the hope of advancing their ranks in the status hierarchy. According to their study, due to a competitive mindset and in order to gain status, low-status individuals choose to engage in competitive behaviors that maximize their advantage relative to others, rather than in pro-social behaviors that maximize collective outcomes. Admittedly, status contests may be present in collaborative teams, but they are more prevalent or severe when a competitive norm/relationship is salient or when the idea of competition is activated in actors' minds. In such a context, individuals might also adopt status moves that are different from those in a collaborative setting. Status seekers in a competitive context might assert their own opinions over others', dominate the conversation, and challenge others' contributions to the group, rather than working harder than others toward the team goal or contributing time and effort that exceeds expectations. These status-seeking behaviors are in stark contrast to those of low-status individuals in a collaborative context, which are more pro-social and self-sacrificing (Owens & Sutton, 2001).

Cooperativeness versus competitiveness also potentially helps us understand the seeming contradiction between two pathways to status. According to the Dominance-Prestige model (Cheng & Tracy, 2014; Henrich & Gil-White 2001), social rank can be attained via two fundamental pathways: dominance (inducing fear in others) and prestige (gaining others' respect). Intimidation and respect co-exist as two bases of rank differentiation (Cheng & Tracy, 2014). Cheng and Tracy (2014) state:

> [T]his account proposes that differences in hierarchical rank within human social groups are the result of both: (a) coerced deference to dominant others who induce fear by virtue of their ability to inflict physical or psychological harm (i.e., Dominance) and (b) freely conferred deference to prestigious others who possess valued skills and abilities (i.e., Prestige). (p. 4)

Dominant individuals attain rank through intimidating those who respond with compliance, whereas individuals with prestige do so by gaining respect. We propose that the psychological processes that underpin the Dominance-Prestige model explain both status and power attainment. Dominance and prestige may lead to status, power, or both, depending on the context. In other words, the relative salience, weight, or effectiveness of these two paths to status attainment depends on the nature of the relationship of the social actors and the group norm—i.e., whether it is more cooperative or more competitive. Specifically, when individuals are in a competitive (versus a cooperative) relationship, they are more likely to gain status through dominance rather than through prestige.

Cooperativeness and competitiveness may also vary depending on the level of analysis under consideration, such as individuals within groups or among groups in an inter-group setting. Just as the norms of interaction between in-group members may be cooperative or competitive, the nature of an interaction between two groups can also be cooperative or competitive. Groups may or may not agree on the status basis or the status differential, leading to increased competition; and competition due to competing group goals, or at least the absence of shared common goals, can also lead groups to engage in more contests over relative status. The competitiveness that is typically associated with inter-group dynamics may influence status attainment and can often drive differential effects for status in inter-group versus intra-group contexts.

6. Directions for future research

Greater consideration of context can help us gain a more thorough and granular understanding of the effects of status. For example, previous research on the consequences of power and status has focused mainly on the liabilities of power and the benefits of status, while largely overlooking the benefits of power and potential liabilities of status. Research has shown that status prompts individuals to behave in positive ways. High-status individuals strive to fulfill others' expectations of them by showing consideration and acting in a manner that warrants their high-status position (Blader & Chen 2012; Ridgeway, 1978, 1981). They are outward-oriented, attentive toward social targets, and prone to act in ways that

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others consider respectable and commendable. Thus, after achieving higher rank, people increase their generosity to the group (Willer, 2009). High-status individuals also engage in more perspective-taking (Blader et al., 2016) and treat others with more distributive and procedural justice (Blader & Chen, 2012). On the contrary, the effects of power documented by researchers are often negative, at least in terms of interpersonal and intragroup dynamics. For example, power liberates people from social and normative constraints and enables them to focus inwardly on their own goals (Galinsky, Magee, Gruenfeld, Whitson, & Liljenquist, 2008; Guinote, 2007; Keltner et al., 2003). It prompts an egocentric orientation to social encounters (Fiske 2010; Galinsky, Magee, Inesi, & Gruenfeld, 2006; Lee & Tiedens, 2001) and makes people less attentive to and concerned about others (Galinsky et al., 2006).

Unfortunately, most recent research on the benefits of status has studied the phenomenon only in cooperative settings, while the effects of status in a competitive context might be different (or less socially desirable). In line with the status contest and status conflict literatures, we argue that when tested in a competitive setting, status might have various negative effects on the behaviors, attitudes, and performance of both individuals and collectives. For example, motivated by status maintenance concerns, high-status individuals might feel threatened by or experience envy toward more-competent individuals. As a result, they may engage in dominating and self-centered behaviors that hinder others who are highly competent, preventing them from contributing to the team and gaining status. Such behaviors (similar to the behaviors of high-power individuals) can hurt the effectiveness of the collective. Conversely, in highly collaborative contexts, high-power individuals may be able to channel their power and their actions into benefiting the collective rather than only themselves (similar to the behaviors of high-status individuals). Therefore, taking context into consideration may help paint a more complete picture of the effects of status and power by revealing the negative effects of status and the positive effects of power—a perspective that is currently missing from the literature.

In order to advance theorizing on context in status research and to empirically test how context shapes status attainment and its consequences, we also urge researchers to conduct research in field settings, where there would likely be more conflicting and paradoxical findings due to the role of the context. While, to date, empirical studies on status have mostly, if not exclusively, been carried out in laboratory settings, exploration of contextual influences that occur naturally in the field would help us better understand these phenomena. In field settings, researchers can better study the various contextual factors (both in organizations and in other aspects of social life) that influence status attainment and consequences. For example, researchers can study contextual factors such as cooperativeness, competitiveness and salient values in the local culture (e.g., emphasis on problem-solving and intelligence in higher- education settings). In contrast, when status is examined in hypothetical settings, with little contextual information and in short-lived teams without history or future, the importance and implications of status may be mischaracterized, or there may be deficiencies in how they are operationalized and studied. At a minimum, laboratory research should explicitly specify and test for the contexts of social interaction. Greater contextualism, as recently called for by Staw (2016), involves not only less of an emphasis on artificial tasks and more attention to the simulation of work experiences, but also greater appreciation for the phenomenon under study. In our view, one's choice of methodology should not inherently limit researchers' opportunities to map the richness and dynamics of status conferral and its consequences.

Besides the cooperative and competitive nature of the social relationship, other under-explored factors may also influence the status conferral and experience. Here, we discuss three unexplored factors that promise useful insights: status differentiation, stability of status, and culture. Status differentiation is defined as the process by which people differentiate their behaviors toward others according to perceived status differences (Matsumoto, 2007). It influences what people expect from and how they react to the behaviors of high- vs. low-status others. Research has shown that because Japan and South Korea have higher status differentiation than the United States, Japanese endorse downward self-regulation and downward assertiveness more than Americans, while Koreans rate downward self-regulation and upward assertiveness as less appropriate than Americans do (Matsumoto, 2007).

Another factor worth studying is stability of status. Because status hierarchies are inherently mutable (Hays & Bendersky, 2015), they can be unstable and subject to change. The stability of status potentially differs across social contexts, such as national and corporate cultures, and influences the outcomes of social status. However, most research on stability of status has been conducted with humans' evolutionary cousins (e.g., chimpanzees and baboons) rather than with human groups. When social hierarchy is stable in an animal species (e.g., rank is hereditary), where dominant individuals actively dictate to subordinates, low-status individuals experience more physical and psychological stress than high-status individuals (Sapolsky, 2005). In this type of animal culture, low-status individuals experience high rates of physical and psychological harassment, lack of control and predictability, and the need to work extra hard to obtain food. However, when the hierarchy is unstable (i.e., during a major hierarchical reorganization), dominant individuals are at the center of social tensions and suffer from the highest stress (Sapolsky, 2005). Consequently, during such reorganization or soon after group formation, among various primates (e.g., talapoin monkeys, squirrel monkeys, wild baboons, and chimpanzees), dominant individuals have the highest levels of stress hormones. Once hierarchies stabilize, low-status individuals once again experience more stress than high-status ones (Sapolsky, 2005).

Although only a few studies have examined the effects of stability of status in human life (e.g. Hays & Bendersky, 2015), more research exists on the influences of power stability in human groups. For instance, Scheepers, Röell,

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and Ellemers (2015) examine the effects of stability of power on cardiovascular responses linked to feeling threats and challenges. According to this study, when power is unstable, high-power participants feel threatened, whereas low-power participants feel challenged. When power is stable, low-power participants display cardiovascular signs of task disengagement. This study highlights the importance of the stability of hierarchy in shaping the relationship between power and benign or maladaptive physiological and psychological responses. In a study along the same lines of research, in which stability (stable vs. unstable) and power (high powerful vs. low powerful) are manipulated, subjects in the conditions of unstable powerful and the stable powerless were found to prefer probabilistic over certain outcomes and engaged in riskier behaviors in several laboratory tasks (e.g., an organizational decision-making scenario, a blackjack game, and a balloon-pumping task) than did those in conditions of stable powerful and unstable powerless (Jordan, Sivanathan, & Galinsky, 2011). However, simply extending the logic of status research with nonhuman samples or with lab studies on power stability to the effects of human status stability might not be viable. Recently, Hays and Blader (in-press) argued and found that stability has relatively little impact on status since mutability is inherent to status. In other words, variations in status stability are restricted to a smaller range and, thus, have less impact (than power stability). Obviously, more studies on stability of status should be conducted, which may, in turn, yield important insights about the experience of high- vs. low-status individuals.

Finally, it would be promising for future research to examine how members of multicultural teams reach consensus on incongruent beliefs about status characteristics (Greer & Bendersky, 2013), such as competence. Members of a team cooperatively (and sometimes competitively) construct status differentiations within the team (Silberzahn & Chen, 2012). Since multinational teams are composed of members from different countries and are becoming an increasingly prevalent and important part of the global economy (Kozlowski & Bell, 2013), researchers need to better understand the status dynamics that enable such teams to harvest the benefits of their diversity (e.g., bringing together the capabilities needed to solve complex problems underlying innovation projects (Connaughton & Shuffler, 2007; Wilson & Doz, 2012)). As we have argued, since people from different cultures may deem different characteristics and behaviors status-worthy, communicating competence and, thus, value to the team can be difficult in these multicultural groups due to potential intercultural miscommunication and cultural stereotypes (Yoon & Hollingshead, 2010). Researchers have, therefore, highlighted the importance of shared expectation states, which people from different cultures may face difficulties developing (Yuan, Bazarova, Fulk, & Zhang, 2013). Moreover, geographic separation and technological mediation can often add to the difficulty of status construction and utilization in multicultural teams. For example, one recent study on competence recognition in multinational teams tested a multilevel model of the effects of language proficiency and speaking up as status characteristics (Li, Yuan, Bazarova, & Bell, 2015). The findings revealed that, at the individual level, team members with higher levels of language proficiency were more likely to speak up, which led to more positive perceptions of their competence. At the team level, however, a greater dispersion in language proficiency among team members was associated with less accurate competence recognition of the team as a whole, which, in turn, led to lower team performance. Moreover, the medium of communication moderated these relationships, such that the effects of language proficiency were more potent in face-to-face than in computer-mediated teams. Obviously, additional studies like this one are needed for understanding how people who hold different beliefs and contextual values can best work in the same team, and especially for discerning how status construction processes and dynamics pan out in multicultural groups. More such endeavors will help advance status theories at both the individual and team levels, providing insights for successfully managing competence, status and distributed work in multinational teams.

7. Conclusion

Most of studies on status in the last decade have focused on how individual characteristics influence status attainment and effects, while much less research has examined the role of context in status dynamics. This chapter has demonstrated that, given how important and pervasive contextual values are in all types of status hierarchies and all aspects of social life, more studies on contextual influences are needed. We hope that our chapter spurs further research on this critical factor. In order to achieve this goal, we review existing theories and empirical findings about the antecedents and effects of social status and closely inspect the untested underlying assumptions of the most prominent theory in status research, namely the functionalist perspective. We aim to expand the functionalist perspective by incorporating the importance of context and propose the contextual value perspective to better explain existing findings and guide future predictions. We discuss the different influences of cooperative versus competitive relationships, as an example of contextual factors, on status conferral and experience. We end by discussing the implications of the new contextual value perspective for status research and suggest promising directions for future studies.

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Please cite this article in press as: H. Li, et al., Where is context? Advancing status research with a contextual value perspective, Research in Organizational Behavior (2016), http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.riob.2016.10.003