What Influences How Higher Status People Respond to Lower Status Others?

Effects of Procedural Fairness, Outcome Favorability, and Concerns About Status Maintenance

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Abstract

Three studies evaluated reactions of those of higher status to encounters with lower status others. These encounters varied as a function of outcome favorability and procedural fairness. Across a wide range of contexts and bases of status, Study 1 found an interaction effect among higher status individuals in which outcome favorability had a stronger relationship with participants’ reactions when procedural fairness was high rather than low (Chen, Brockner, & Greenberg, 2003). Studies 2 and 3 explored the underlying theoretical mechanisms for the interaction effect by considering the moderating effect of factors that influence people’s confidence in their higher status position. In particular, among those 1) high on self-esteem, 2) low on need to belong, or 3) high on power distance orientation, outcome favorability and procedural fairness did not interact at all. Theoretical and practical implications of these findings for social exchange at work, organizational justice, and status are discussed.
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Social scientists have long argued that asymmetries in the status of interdependent parties are an inevitable and ubiquitous aspect of social and organizational life and that status differentials may arise in relationships between organizations, groups, and individuals (Berger, Rosenholtz, & Zelditch, 1980; Blau, 1964; Homans, 1961; Ridgeway, 1997). Yet management theory and research has primarily focused on the influence that higher status parties wield over lower status parties, with far less attention to the influence of lower status parties on their high status counterparts (Chen, Brockner, & Greenberg, 2003). As examples, consider that scholars examining the effects of participatory decision making exclusively consider the involvement of lower status parties in higher status parties’ decision making (e.g., Sagie & Aycan, 2003) and that leadership research rarely considers the influence of followers’ characteristics on a leader’s adoption of a particular leadership style (e.g., Bono & Anderson, 2005). However, the demands of management practice and theory also require an understanding of how lower status parties impact higher status parties (Blau, 1964; Simmel, 1950). Consider, for instance, the influence of managers’ reactions to their direct reports on their direct reports’ performance (e.g., Eden, 1988), managers’ commitment to their direct reports (Hill, 1992), and managers’ job satisfaction. Moreover, the relevance of many existent theories becomes questionable when the focus is on higher status parties’ responses to lower status others, although determining their relevance may provide valuable insight into the underlying mechanisms of these theories.

Evidence that traditional insights from management theory may not directly translate to reactions of higher status parties toward lower status others was recently provided by Chen, Brockner, and Greenberg (2003). Our studies presented below extend this earlier work in two important ways. First, we examine their higher-toward-lower-status finding across a broader set of exchange situations at work, going beyond the negotiation and reward allocation contexts Chen et al. (2003) examined, to consider a more representative set of organizational situations. Second, we explore the mechanism that underlies
higher status people’s reactions to their lower status interaction partners, i.e., we examine why higher status individuals react to lower status others the way they do. Overall, our studies broaden and deepen our understanding of the psychology of higher status individuals.

**Outcomes, procedures, and relative status**

Social exchange theories and organizational justice research suggest that social encounters are evaluated along two primary dimensions (Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996). The first dimension is the favorability of the outcomes associated with the encounter. The more satisfied people are with the outcomes of an encounter, the more likely they are to positively evaluate that encounter and their exchange counterpart (Adams, 1965; Blau, 1964; Greenberg, 1986). The second dimension is people’s perceptions of procedural fairness, i.e., their judgments about the fairness of the process that accompanies and/or determines the outcomes associated with the encounter. More positive perceptions of procedural fairness are associated with more positive evaluations of the encounter (Blader & Tyler, 2005). For example, the more people feel that their supervisors treat them with dignity and respect (Bies, 2001) and make decisions in fair ways (Blader & Tyler, 2003a, 2003b), the more satisfied they will be with the supervisor.

In addition to their direct impact on people’s evaluations, outcome favorability and procedural fairness often interact with one another (Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996; Folger, Rosenfield & Robinson, 1983). This interaction indicates that the positive relationship between outcome favorability and people’s positive attitudes and behaviors is reduced when procedural fairness is high, rather than low. Moreover, high outcome favorability also reduces the positive relationship between procedural fairness and people’s positive attitudes and behaviors, relative to when outcome favorability is low. Therefore, outcome favorability and procedural fairness can “compensate” for one another when people encounter low levels of one of these dimensions (as depicted in Figure 1, Panel A). However, Chen, Brockner, and Greenberg (2003) found evidence that the interactive effect of procedural fairness and outcome favorability takes a different form when the evaluator of these dimensions holds relatively higher status in the social encounter. In particular, they found that the compensatory dynamic between these factors disappears
among relatively higher status parties, and instead the positive relationship between outcome favorability and reactions is *heightened* when procedural fairness is high rather than low. That is, the strongest positive reactions do not result from the presence of either positive outcomes or fair processes, but rather from the combination of *both* positive outcomes and fair processes (as depicted in Figure 1, Panel B).

What explains the alternate interactive effect of outcome favorability and procedural fairness among those with relatively higher status? Chen et al. (2003) propose that one’s relative status position in a social encounter shapes the concerns they focus on. When one has relatively lower status in an encounter, a primary concern is to avoid being devalued, ostracized, or exploited (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick & Xu, 2002; Kramer, 1996; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; van den Bos & Lind, 2002). But when one has relatively higher status, a primary concern is maintenance of their existing relative status position (Jackman, 1994; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). As a result, when people have relatively higher status they are particularly attuned to information that verifies or challenges their status position.

In many social encounters, outcome favorability and procedural fairness information serve the function of verifying/challenging status. This is because having relatively higher status suggests that one is entitled to expect and receive both favorable outcomes and fair treatment from lower status counterparts (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Lerner, 1980; Sunshine & Heuer, 2002). When an encounter is marked by favorable outcomes and fair processes, these expectations are met, and the individuals’ higher status position is confirmed. But when an encounter fails to have either favorable outcomes or fair processes, expectations are violated and the higher status party may feel a challenge to their status position. For instance, an unfavorable outcome suggests that one’s higher status failed to compel the lower status other to deliver the desired outcome (e.g., to meet a deadline). It indicates that the lower status other may not sufficiently respect or admire the higher status individual, since they do not feel obliged to provide their higher status counterpart with favorable outcomes. Also, a low outcome for the high status party (e.g., profit obtained in a negotiation with a lower status other) may suggest that the lower status party actually has greater ability than the high status party. This inference is particularly likely when procedural fairness is high, rather than low (Schroth & Shah, 2000), since unfavorable outcomes stemming from fair
procedures will most likely be perceived as deserved (i.e., arrived at “fairly and squarely”) and will thus cast doubt on one’s self conception as the relatively higher status individual.

Similarly, when the process in an encounter with a lower status other is unfair, one’s relative higher status is likewise challenged. Higher status is normatively associated with receiving higher esteem, more respect, and fairer treatment as compared to behavior directed toward those with lower status (e.g., Ridgeway, 1997; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Tyler & Lind, 1992). Unfair treatment from a lower status other unambiguously violates the normative expectation of the status interaction order and poses a direct threat to one’s higher status position. Even when an outcome is favorable, an unfair process suggests that the lower status other rendered that outcome without “genuine” respect, making the outcome inconsequential (or, at least, less consequential). To those of higher status, procedural fairness is a necessary but insufficient element in their social encounters with lower status others.

In short, we argue that because expectations associated with being the relatively higher status party include the provision of favorable outcomes and fair processes from the lower status party, the absence of either prompts a sense that one’s relative status position is being challenged while the presence of both confirms their relative status position. The need to verify the existing higher status position when it is being challenged may explain the alternate interactive pattern between outcomes and processes shown in Figure 1(b).

**Factors that shape confidence in the role of the higher status party**

Implicit in our reasoning above is the assumption that higher status individuals are concerned with maintaining their relative status position (Jackman, 1994; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) and that a key determinant of whether their status position is being maintained is verification of their status position by others (Bales, 1950; Berger, et al., 1980; Homans, 1961). Status maintenance concerns, however, cannot be directly observed. As such, we propose to identify factors that may make these concerns more or less prominent, and to examine whether these factors moderate the pattern of reactions to outcome and process information presented in Figure 1(b). When factors make status verification concerns less prominent—that is, when people are more secure in their role as the higher
status party and less reliant on social information that verifies their status position—we would not expect the interaction pattern to emerge, compared to when factors lead status verification concerns to be more prominent. Therefore, in the studies presented below, we investigate why higher status parties display the interaction presented in Figure 1(b) by examining three dispositional factors that make people more or less concerned about status verification. Our approach is to deepen understanding of why the interaction effect occurs by identifying among whom it is most likely to occur.

The first dispositional factor we examine is people’s sense of their self-worth, i.e., their self-esteem. Higher status individuals with low self-esteem are particularly likely to question their higher status role, as compared to their counterparts with higher self-esteem, since the positive information about the self that accompanies high status is largely inconsistent with their self-views (Swann, 1996). This makes them particularly vigilant for cues from their interaction partner that either verify or challenge their role as the higher status party, since that is not a role that they naturally embrace or regard as a given. Therefore, to the extent that the interactive pattern between outcome favorability and procedural fairness depicted in Figure 1(b) reflects a concern with status-verification, we predict that this interactive pattern will be more likely to emerge among higher status individuals with low, rather than high, self-esteem. That is, we predict that self-esteem moderates the outcome favorability x procedural fairness interaction.

The second dispositional factor we examine is people’s level of need to belong. Need to belong (i.e., the desire to form attachments to individuals and groups) is a fundamental human motivation with important consequences for social and relational functioning (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Need to belong prompts people’s basic psychological systems to chronically monitor their social standing, which in turn leads them to closely scrutinize the social information they encounter (Pickett, Gardner, & Knowles, 2004). As such, higher status parties that are high on need to belong are particularly likely to be sensitive to the status verification information conveyed by outcomes and processes. Therefore, we predict that need to belong moderates the outcome x process interaction depicted in Figure 1(b), such that the interactive pattern will be more likely to emerge among higher status individuals with high, rather than low, need to belong.
Finally, the third dispositional factor we examine (in Study 3) is people’s power distance orientation. Power distance orientation assesses the extent to which individuals believe that hierarchical differences among people are natural and desirable (Hofstede, 1980). Whereas those high on power distance readily accept and embrace hierarchical differences among individuals, those low on power distance are likely to be more skeptical of hierarchical differences and embrace them much less readily. Accordingly, when in a relatively higher status position, those high in power distance are likely to feel comfortable—and thus secure—in that position, whereas those low in power distance (i.e., those with more egalitarian inclinations) are likely to feel less comfortable—and thus less secure. Accordingly, these individuals will be more interested in social information that verifies the legitimacy of their status position. Like low self-esteem and high need to belong individuals, those low on power distance are less likely to take for granted a higher status position and are thus more likely to use information from others to verify their status position. As such, we predict that power distance orientation will moderate the outcome x process interaction in Figure 1(b), such that higher status individuals who are low on power distance will be more likely to display the interaction.

In sum, when people in higher status positions are low in self-esteem, high on need to belong, or low on power distance, they are more likely to seek information from their interaction partner that verifies or challenges their higher status position. To the extent that our hypotheses are correct that the outcome x process interaction in Figure 1(b) is rooted in status verification concerns, factors that heighten interest in status verification should make this interaction more likely to emerge.

**The present studies**

Below, we present three studies in which participants held a higher status position in a social encounter with a lower status other. Study 1 was designed to test whether or not the hypothesized higher status parties’ outcome x process interactive pattern emerges across a range of typical organizational interactions. As such, Study 1 examines the broad relevance of this interactive pattern for understanding organizational behavior. Study 2 extends these findings by testing the moderating effects of dispositional factors of self-esteem and need to belong on the interaction between outcome favorability and procedural
fairness. Study 3 follows up on Study 2 by examining the moderating impact of self-esteem, need to belong, and power distance orientation in a sample drawn from a different cultural context (i.e., China).

**STUDY ONE**

Study 1 was designed to determine whether or not the outcome favorability x procedural fairness interaction among people in a relatively higher status position depicted in Figure 1(b) was robust across a wide-range of real-world work settings and bases of status. To accomplish this, we conducted a recall study among a group of working professionals, whose experiences with lower status others were highly varied in terms of the nature of the issues and the basis of status in the encounter.

**Method**

*Participants and design.* Participants were 87 evening MBA students from the Northeast Region of the U.S. The study was part of an in-class activity in an organizational behavior class. Participants were 29 years old on average, 70% were male, and 92% were employed at the time of our study; the remaining 8% had all been employed full-time at some point. Participants averaged 6.5 years of work experience.

*Procedure.* The study consisted of a 2 (procedure: fair, unfair) X 2 (outcome: favorable, unfavorable) between-subjects design. Participants, who were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions, were told that the study was an investigation of interactions, communications, and negotiations that occur in the workplace. Instructions highlighted that people often distinguish between two aspects of these interactions: outcomes and processes. These two aspects were described to participants to ensure they understood their distinction. Participants were then asked to think of a single past interaction from their work lives in which they were interacting with someone of lower status, i.e., who was “their direct report, a colleague from a less influential department or division, or even a colleague at their same level who is less prominent than they are within the organization.” Notably, participants recalled experiences based on a variety of conceptions of status. For example, some used group memberships (such as department, division), while others used individual characteristics (such as position in the organization’s hierarchy, level of influence in the department, etc.). As such, the bases of status in this study were heterogeneous in nature.
Participants wrote brief descriptions of their experiences on a blank page that was provided to them. Then they completed a questionnaire that contained the manipulation checks and the dependent variables. Responses to items in this questionnaire, as well as to others in Studies 2 and 3, were all recorded on six-point scales. Debriefing, as well as inspection of the events recalled by participants, indicate that they understood the outcome/process distinction and the experimental manipulations.

**Independent variables.** The outcome favorability and procedural fairness manipulations were in the instructions to recall a specific experience, following the descriptions of what constitutes the outcomes and processes of an encounter. The outcome manipulation stipulated that participants should recall an experience in which they received an outcome that they regarded as favorable (in the high outcome favorability conditions) or unfavorable (in the low outcome favorability conditions). The process manipulation stipulated that they should recall an experience in which they felt the process was fair (in the high procedural fairness conditions) or unfair (in the low procedural fairness conditions).

**Manipulation checks.** The success of the procedural fairness manipulation was measured by asking participants: “1) How fair was the process that took place in the interaction? and 2) Did you feel that the process was handled fairly?” ($\alpha = .86$). The success of the outcome favorability manipulation was measured by asking participants: “1) How satisfied were you with the outcome of the situation? and 2) How favorably did you regard the outcome?” ($\alpha = .83$).

**Dependent variables**

Our dependent variables were 1) trust, an important and commonly used variable in social exchange and organizational research (Kramer & Tyler, 1996), and 2) desire for future interaction, which was the same as that examined in Chen et al. (2003).

**Trust.** We measured participants’ trust in the lower status party with a three-item measure (from Brockner, Siegel, Daly, Tyler & Martin, 1997): “1) How much did you trust the other person after the interaction? (1-not at all, 6-a lot), 2) How trustworthy would you describe the person in the interaction as?
(1-not at all, 6-very much), and 3) Did you feel the other person tried to take advantage of or mislead you? (1-not at all, 6-definitely; reverse coded)” ($\alpha = .85$).

**Desire for future interaction.** A three-item measure from Chen, et al. (2003) assessed participants’ desire for future interaction with the other party: 1) “How willing were you to introduce other people you work with to this person in the future?, 2) How much would you like to work with this person on a work-related project in the future?, and 3) How much do you want this person to continue to be your colleague? (1-not at all, 6-very much).” ($\alpha = .96$).

**Results**

Figure 2 presents the means, by condition, for both dependent variables. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) verified the proposed distinction between the two dependent variables, indicating that a two-factor model fit the data well ($\chi^2 = 8$, df = 8, CFI = .99, NFI = .99, IFI = .99) and was significantly better fitting than a one-factor model ($\Delta \chi^2 = 47.6$, df = 1, $p < .05$).

**Manipulation checks.** Manipulations of procedural fairness and outcome favorability were both successful. Those in the low procedural fairness conditions regarded the process as significantly less fair than those in the high procedural fairness conditions (3.25 vs. 4.32 respectively; $F (1, 83) = 19.86$, $p < .001$). Those in the low outcome favorability conditions regarded the outcome as significantly less positive than those in the high outcome favorability conditions (2.94 vs. 4.59, respectively; $F (1, 83) = 47.08$, $p < .001$).

To further verify the success of our manipulations, we examined contents of the recalled events. Participants recalled events as instructed. Outcomes described were highly varied, such as quality of a consulting presentation deliverable, completeness of an analysis report, and acceptance of a performance appraisal. Processes depicted were also wide-ranging and included eagerness/enthusiasm (or lack of) expressed in reaction to a request, (dis)respectful interpersonal treatment, and timing for declining/accepting a work request.
**Trust.** Analysis of variance showed a significant positive main effect of outcome favorability ($F(1, 83) = 8.54, p < .01$) and a significant interaction of outcome favorability x procedural fairness ($F(1, 83) = 5.55, p < .05$). The form of this two-way interaction (illustrated in Figure 2, Panel A) indicates that the impact of outcome favorability on higher status participants’ trust of lower status others was greater when procedural fairness was high rather than low. Indeed, when procedural fairness was low, the impact of outcome favorability was inconsequential. Consistent with the predicted high status parties’ interaction pattern, neither high outcome favorability nor high procedural fairness had the ability to compensate for low levels of the other. Post-hoc analyses revealed that participants’ trust in their interaction partner was lowest in the high procedural fairness/low outcome favorability condition. Differences between trust in this condition and either of the high outcome favorability conditions were statistically significant ($p < .05$); differences with the low procedural fairness/low outcome favorability condition were marginally significant ($p < .07$). Note that this latter condition (low procedural fairness, low outcome favorability) is where we might have generally expected the lowest ratings of trust.

**Desire for future interaction.** Analysis of variance yielded a significant positive main effect of outcome favorability ($F(1, 82) = 6.27, p < .01$) and a significant interaction of procedural fairness x outcome favorability ($F(1, 82) = 6.04, p < .05$). The pattern of this interaction (shown in Figure 2, Panel B) was similar to the results on the trust dependent variable. Once again, the impact of outcome favorability on desire for future interaction was greater when procedural fairness was high, rather than low. Indeed, the effect of outcome favorability was negligible when procedural fairness was low. Moreover, the results again indicate a trend such that participants’ desire for future interaction was lowest in the high procedural fairness/low outcome favorability condition. Post-hoc analyses, however, do not show that desire for future interaction in this condition was significantly lower than in the low procedural fairness/low outcome favorability condition ($p = .11$), though it was significantly lower than in the high procedural fairness/high outcome favorability condition ($p < .01$) and was marginally lower than in the low procedural fairness/high outcome favorability condition ($p < .08$).

**Discussion**
Study 1 demonstrates that the alternate pattern of reactions among higher status parties to outcome favorability and procedural fairness information from lower status others emerges across a wide range of social encounters and across a broad range of status bases. For both dependent variables, the outcome favorability x procedural fairness interaction was significant and showed that the impact of outcome favorability was stronger when procedural fairness was high, rather than low. In fact, when procedural fairness was low, outcome favorability had no effect at all.

These results are important for two reasons. First, there remains an insufficient focus on higher status parties’ reactions toward actions of lower status parties, particularly given the strong bi-directional influences between social exchange parties (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Ginzel, Kramer & Sutton, 1992). This study confirms the value of examining this alternate influence pattern. Second, the inclusion of a wide variety of work recall experiences (87, to be exact) greatly increases the generalizability of the pattern of reactions among higher status parties toward lower status others. Finding the same pattern of results as that found in previous research (Chen et al., 2003) across the current study’s heterogeneous set of contexts and bases of status provides important support for the generalizability of these effects. Yet while our results support the validity and generalizability of the higher status parties’ interactive pattern, neither they nor Chen et al. (2003) explain why higher status parties react in the way they do. Therefore, Studies 2 and 3 were conducted with the goal of examining the mechanisms that make high levels of both outcomes and processes so critical to high status parties in their interactions with low status others.

**STUDY TWO**

Like Study 1, Study 2 tested for the outcome favorability x procedural fairness interaction among higher status parties’ reactions to encounters with lower status others. The two dependent variables in this study were trust and liking. Trust was included to maintain linkages between Studies 1 and 2, while liking was included because it is a critical variable for understanding interpersonal relations (Byrne, 1971) and it extends the generalizability of the higher-toward-lower status reaction pattern to dependent variables other than desire for future interaction.
More central to the purpose of Study 2 was examination of the moderating effects of self-esteem and need to belong on the outcome favorable x procedural fairness interaction. We predicted that those low on self-esteem or high on need to belong would be more likely to show the outcome favorability x procedural fairness interaction depicted in Figure 1(b) than their counterparts with high self-esteem or low need to belong.

Method

Participants and design. One hundred forty six (146) full-time MBA students at a business school in the Northeast Region of the U.S. participated in the study. Participants were, on average, 28 years old, with five years of work experience; 61% were male.

Study 2 consisted of a 2 (procedural fairness: high, low) X 2 (outcome favorability: high, low) design. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions. Much like Study 1, Study 2 was framed as an effort to better understand people’s reactions to real-life workplace situations.

Procedure. Study 2 included two separate parts. First, one week prior to completing the experimental materials, all participants completed an online survey containing demographic questions and measures of self-esteem and need to belong. When completing the experimental materials one week later, they were provided with a vignette depicting a workplace situation and asked to imagine their reactions to the situation as if they were the focal person. To ensure the generalizability of the results and to alleviate any concern that results could be attributed to idiosyncrasies of the vignette itself, participants randomly received one of three different scenarios created for this study. All three scenarios portrayed a higher status person experiencing processes and outcomes from a lower status counterpart. One depicted an employee in an HR department fielding a request from a subordinate to help him/her with his/her work load; another depicted a consultant interacting with a subordinate in the context of a special team project; and another depicted an employee of a financial services firm evaluating the results of a subordinate’s ratings of him/her as part of a 360-degree feedback evaluation system. Scenario version is controlled for
in the analyses presented below. After reading the scenario, respondents completed a questionnaire containing the manipulation checks and dependent variables. Afterwards, participants were debriefed.

Independent variables

*Procedural fairness and outcome favorability.* The scenarios contained the procedural fairness and outcome favorability manipulations. The procedural fairness manipulation in the three scenarios was based on a broad definition of procedural fairness, including both treatment and decision making aspects of procedures (Blader & Tyler, 2003a, 2003b). Outcomes in the scenarios included positive/negative feedback, reciprocity (or lack of) of a favor, or recognition (or lack of) of one’s hard work on the project.

*Self-esteem.* Self-esteem was measured using the 18-item Janis-Field self-esteem scale (1959), which focuses on a person’s sense of their personal worthiness in social interactions (Brockner, 1988). A sample item is: “How often do you feel that you have handled yourself well at a social gathering?” Responses to this scale were recorded on a six-point scale ($\alpha = .83$).

*Need to belong.* A five-item measure of dispositional need to belong was included, based on the work of Leary (e.g., Leary, Kelly, Cottrell & Schreindorfer, 2001) as well as on scales used in previous research (e.g., DeCremer & Blader, 2006). Sample items included: “1) I try hard not to do things that will make people avoid or reject me, and 2) I want other people to accept me. ($\alpha = .82$).

Dependent variables

*Trust.* Trust was measured with the same three-item measure ($\alpha = .89$) from Study 1

*Liking.* Liking of the lower status person described in the scenario was assessed using the following three-item measure ($\alpha = .97$): “1) How well would you regard this person after the interaction? (1-not well at all, 6-very well), 2) How much would you like this person after the interaction? (1-not at all, 6-a lot), and 3) Based on the interaction described in the situation, how likeable would the person be to you? (1-not at all, 6-very).”

*Manipulation checks.* The procedural fairness manipulation was assessed with a question asking participants to indicate their overall impression of the fairness of the process depicted in the scenario. The
outcome favorability manipulation was measured by two questions: “1) How satisfied they would be with the outcome of the situation? and 2) How favorably they would regard the outcome?” The correlation between these items was $r = .89$, and thus they were combined into a single index.

**Results**

Correlations and descriptive statistics of all measured variables are presented in Table 1. In all analyses presented below, controls for scenario version were included. In addition, we also included the other dispositional variable as a control, even though the correlations among the two dispositional variables is fairly low ($r = -.28$). Analyses controlling for the other dispositional variable were done in two different ways: one that included the main effects of the other dispositional variable in the first step of the analysis, and another that examined the effects of the other dispositional variable in both the first step of the analysis, as well as in the interaction terms in subsequent steps. The overall results did not vary between these two approaches, and thus the results presented below are from the more parsimonious analysis, with the other dispositional variable entered only in the first step. Moreover, the significant results presented below do not change when controls for these dispositional variables are excluded.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to verify the distinction among the two dependent variables. The CFA indicated that the two factor model fit the data well ($\chi^2 = 30.1$, df = 8, CFI = .98, NFI = .98, IFI = .98), and was significantly better fitting than a one-factor model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 34.9$, df = 1, $p < .05$).

**Manipulation checks.** Participants in the low procedural fairness conditions viewed the process as significantly less fair than those in the high procedural fairness conditions, confirming the success of this manipulation ($\bar{x} = 2.80$ vs. $4.28$, $F(1, 144) = 47.97$, $p < .001$). Similarly, participants in the high outcome favorability conditions gave significantly more positive ratings on the outcome manipulation check than did participants in the low outcome favorability conditions ($\bar{x} = 2.21$ vs. $4.04$, $F(1, 144) = 86.66$, $p < .001$).

**The moderating role of self-esteem on outcome favorability x procedural fairness**
We hypothesized that the higher status parties’ outcome x process interactive pattern would be more likely to emerge among those with low, rather than high, self-esteem. To evaluate this prediction, we conducted multiple regressions involving self-esteem, procedural fairness, and outcome favorability as independent variables for both of the dependent variables. In each analysis, we entered the three independent variables, all possible two-way interactions, and the triple interaction of self-esteem x outcome favorability x procedural fairness. The results of these regression analyses on trust and liking are presented in Table 2. In all the results presented below, we followed the method proposed by Aiken and West (1991) whenever delineating the nature of interactions. As such, the plots in Figures 3 and 4 represent regression lines of trust and liking on outcome favorability and procedural fairness at one standard deviation below and above the mean on self-esteem (Figure 3) and need to belong (Figure 4).

**Trust.** The results from the multiple regressions for trust, presented in Table 2, revealed significant main effects of procedural fairness ($\beta = 0.43$, $p < .001$), outcome favorability ($\beta = 0.18$, $p < .05$), and self-esteem ($\beta = -0.40$, $p < .01$). There were also significant two-way interactions of procedural fairness x self-esteem ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < .001$), outcome favorability x self-esteem ($\beta = 0.40$, $p < .01$), as well as a marginally significant two-way interaction of procedural fairness x outcome favorability ($\beta = 0.18$, $p < .10$)—notably, of the form found in Study 1. Of greatest importance, however, was a significant triple interaction of procedural fairness x outcome favorability x self-esteem ($\beta = -0.44$, $p < .01$).

To determine the nature of the triple interaction, we examined the simple slopes of outcomes on trust at high vs. low levels of procedural fairness, at one standard deviation above and below the mean on self-esteem. The results of these analyses are graphed in Figure 3 (Panels A & B). As those figures suggest, the three-way interaction was due to the finding that the two-way interaction depicted in Figure 1(b) only emerged among those with lower self-esteem (i.e., those one standard deviation below the mean on self-esteem). Among those lower in self-esteem, outcomes impacted trust when procedural fairness was high ($b=.77$, $t (137) = 3.85$, $p < .001$), but not when it was low ($b = -.17$, $t (137) = -0.83$, ns). Importantly, the simple slopes for high vs. low procedural fairness among participants lower in self-
esteem were significantly different from one another ($t (136) = 3.32$, $p < .01$) (Dawson & Richter, in press). Among those higher on self-esteem (i.e., one standard deviation above the mean on self-esteem), there were significant effects of outcomes on trust when procedural fairness was both high ($b = .41$, $t (137) = 2.16$, $p < .05$) and low ($b = .71$, $t (136) = 3.46$, $p < .001$). These simple slopes for high vs. low procedural fairness among participants higher in self-esteem were not significantly different from one another ($t (136) = -1.08$, ns).

**Liking.** Regression analysis on the liking measure also revealed significant positive main effects of procedural fairness ($\beta = 0.47$, $p < .001$) and outcome favorability ($\beta = 0.36$, $p < .001$), a significant two-way interaction of outcome favorability x self-esteem ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < .05$), and a marginally significant two-way interaction of procedural fairness x outcome favorability ($\beta = 0.15$, $p < .10$). Most critically, there was a significant triple interaction of procedural fairness x outcome favorability x self-esteem ($\beta = -0.25$, $p < .05$).

To determine the nature of the three-way interaction, we followed the same approach described above, examining the simple slopes of outcomes on liking at high vs. low levels of procedural fairness, at one standard deviation above and below the mean on self-esteem. The results, graphed in Figure 3 (Panels C & D), show that the interaction pattern of outcome favorability x procedural fairness depicted in Figure 1(b) only appeared among those with lower self-esteem. For these individuals, outcomes impacted liking only when procedural fairness was high ($b = 1.56$, $t (136) = 5.09$, $p < .001$) and not when it was low ($b = 0.42$, $t (136) = 1.31$, ns). These simple slopes for outcomes on liking among those in the low vs. high procedural fairness conditions were significantly different from one another ($t (136) = 2.58$, $p < .01$). This was not the case among those high on self-esteem, for whom outcomes influenced liking to the same extent when procedural fairness was low ($b = 1.59$, $t (136) = 4.99$, $p < .001$) and when it was high ($b = 1.43$, $t (63) = 4.88$, $p < .001$) (difference between simple slopes: $t (136) = -0.40$, ns).

*The moderating role of need to belong on outcome favorability x procedural fairness*
We hypothesized that higher status parties’ outcome x process interactive pattern would be more likely to emerge among those with a stronger need to belong, as compared to those with a weaker need to belong. Multiple regression analyses similar to those described above were conducted to test this prediction. Results of these analyses are presented in Table 2.

**Trust.** Results revealed significant main effects of procedural fairness ($\beta = 0.46, p < .001$), outcome favorability ($\beta = 0.18, p < .05$), and need to belong ($\beta = 0.23, p < .05$). There were significant two-way interactions of procedural fairness x need to belong ($\beta = -0.29, p < .01$) and outcome favorability x need to belong ($\beta = -0.35, p < .05$). Most importantly, there was a significant three-way interaction of procedural fairness x outcome favorability x need to belong ($\beta = 0.41, p < .001$).

Figure 4 (Panels A & B) illustrates the nature of this three-way interaction. As can be seen, the typical higher status party interaction pattern only emerged among those higher on need to belong, whose outcomes were significantly related to trust when procedural fairness was high ($b=.74, t (136) = 4.09, p < .001$) but not when procedural fairness was low ($b = -0.13, t (136) = -0.62, \text{ns}$). These simple slopes were significantly different from one another ($t (136) = 3.19, p < .001$), which confirms the distinct pattern of effects that outcomes have on trust, depending on level of procedural fairness. However, among those low on need to belong, outcomes were marginally related to trust when procedural fairness was high ($b=.35, t (136) = 1.71, p < .10$) and were significantly related to trust when procedural fairness was low ($b=.67, t (136) = 3.29, p < .01$). As might be expected, these simple slopes were not significantly different from one another ($t (136) = -1.17, \text{ns}$).

**Liking.** Regression analysis revealed main effects of procedural fairness ($\beta = 0.49, p < .001$) and outcome favorability ($\beta = 0.36, p < .001$). There were no significant two-way interactions. Most importantly, the three-way interaction of outcome favorability x procedural fairness x need to belong was also significant ($\beta = 0.23, p < .05$). Figure 4, Panels C and D graph the form of this three-way interaction.

Among those higher on need to belong, the predicted higher-toward-lower status interaction pattern of outcome favorability x procedural fairness emerged, with a stronger influence of outcomes on
liking among those in the high procedural fairness conditions (b = 1.79, t (136) = 6.25, p < .001) than among those in the low procedural fairness conditions (b = .75, t (136) = 2.39, p < .01). These simple slopes were significantly different from one another (t (136) = 2.48, p < .01), which again confirms the distinct pattern of influence of outcomes on liking as a function of procedural fairness. However, among those low on need to belong, outcomes were equivalently related to liking, irrespective of procedural fairness (low procedural fairness: b = 1.27, t (136) = 4.06, p < .001; high procedural fairness: b = 1.09, t (136) = 3.44, p < .001; simple slopes not significantly different from one another, t (136) = .38, ns).

Discussion

The primary contribution of Study 2 lies in the progress it makes toward understanding the mechanism that drives higher status parties’ reactions. This is reflected in the findings regarding the moderating impact of self-esteem and need to belong. These two dispositional variables represent factors that we hypothesized would influence a person’s concern for verification and confirmation of their relatively higher status position. In particular, we predicted that those low on self-esteem or high on need to belong would feel less secure about their higher status, be particularly attuned to and affected by status-verifying information, and thus would be more likely to demonstrate the higher-toward-lower interactive pattern of outcomes and procedures than their counterparts high on self-esteem or low on need to belong. Results provided strong confirmation of these predictions. For both of our dependent variables—trust and liking—the results consistently showed significant moderation of the high-status parties’ outcome x process interaction for each of the two dispositional variables, with the interactive pattern only emerging among those low on self-esteem or high on need to belong.

**STUDY THREE**

Study 3 was designed to replicate and extend the results of Study 2 in two important ways. First, in addition to examining moderating impact of self-esteem and need to belong, Study 3 also examined the moderating effect of power distance orientation, another factor that we argue is linked to people’s status verification concerns. Second, we sought to examine the cross-cultural relevance of our findings in order to determine whether our argument about the status verification concerns of higher status individuals is
true outside of Western cultures as well. Therefore, participants in Study 3 consisted of top-level Chinese executives.

**Method**

**Participants and design.** One-hundred eight (108) EMBA students at a business school in Beijing, China, participated in the study. Ninety-eight (98) participants held senior positions of either General Manager or CEO in their companies; the remaining were mid-level managers. They had, on average, 18 years of work experience; 78% were male.

Like Study 2, Study 3 consisted of a 2 (procedural fairness: high, low) X 2 (outcome favorability: high, low) design. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions of the consulting team scenario that we employed in Study 2. We chose to use this particular scenario based on a focus group discussion conducted prior to the study. Participants in the focus group identified this scenario (among the three in Study 2) as the most appropriate and relevant to the context in China. The demographic, self-esteem, need to belong, and power distance questions were included in a questionnaire that was completed prior to presentation of the scenario. All materials were administered in Chinese, having first been translated from English to Chinese. The Chinese version was then back-translated by one of the authors of the paper who is also fluent in Chinese (Brislin, 1980). Any errors or disagreements in translation were then corrected or resolved.

**Independent variables**

**Procedural fairness and outcome favorability.** The manipulations of the independent variables in this study were identical to those used in Study 2 for the consulting scenario.

**Self-esteem and need to belong.** The self-esteem and need to belong measures were identical to those used in Study 2.

**Power Distance.** Power distance was measured with the scale developed by Earley & Erez (1997). Sample items included: “An organization is most effective when there is a clear hierarchy of authority” and “There should be established ranks in organizations with everyone occupying their rightful place regardless of whether that place is high or low in the ranking.” Responses were recorded on a six-point
scale (1-strongly disagree, 6-strongly agree). Consistent with past findings (Brockner, et al., 2001), internal reliability of the scale was slightly lower than .70 ($\alpha = .66$).

**Dependent variable**

Given the nature of our sample (i.e., high level executives), and to further test the generalizability of the outcome x process interaction pattern, we chose to focus on a dependent variable that was different from ones in Studies 1 and 2 and which capitalized on extensive experience in managerial judgments. The variable was participants’ assessments of future work potential of the target portrayed in the scenario. In particular, respondents answered the following three items: 1) “In your opinion, how much potential do you think this new consultant possesses to be promoted to the next level?”, 2) “How likely would you be to support future promotion decisions on this new consultant?”, and (3) “How much would you like to work with this new consultant on a work related project in the future?” ($\alpha = .91$).

Procedural fairness and outcome manipulation checks were the same as those in Study 2.

**Results**

**Manipulation checks.** Participants in the low procedural fairness conditions viewed the treatment they experienced from their lower status interaction partner as significantly less fair than did participants in the high fairness conditions ($x = 2.32$ vs. $5.00$, $F (1,102) = 172.24$, $p < .001$). Similarly, participants in the low outcome favorability conditions viewed outcomes less positively did participants in the high outcome favorability conditions ($x = 1.74$ vs. $5.31$, $F (1, 102) = 364.16$, $p < .001$).

**The moderating role of self-esteem on outcome favorability x procedural fairness.** We predicted that higher status parties’ outcome x process interaction pattern on participants’ assessments of the target’s future work potential would be more likely to emerge among those with low, rather than high, self-esteem. To test this, we conducted a three-way interaction regression analysis similar to that in Study 2. That analysis, presented in Table 3, revealed significant effects of procedural fairness ($\beta = 0.33$, $p < .001$) and outcome favorability ($\beta = .54$, $p < .001$). Most importantly, it also revealed the predicted significant triple interaction between outcomes x process x self-esteem ($\beta = -0.35$, $p < .05$).
To determine the nature of this three-way interaction, we examined the simple slopes of outcome favorability on assessments, at low vs. high levels of procedural fairness and at one standard deviation above and below the mean on self-esteem. The results, presented in Figure 5, show that the interaction pattern of outcome favorability x procedural fairness depicted in Figure 1(b) only appeared among those low in self-esteem. For these individuals, outcomes had a stronger impact on assessments when procedural fairness was high (b = 2.15, t (98) = 5.34, p < .001) than when procedural fairness was low (b = 1.02, t (98) = 2.55, p < .01). These simple slopes were significantly different from one another (t (98) = 1.99, p < .05). Among those in high in self-esteem, outcomes had an impact on assessments both when procedural fairness was high (b = 2.00, t (98) = 4.38, p < .001) and when procedural fairness was low (b = 1.36, t (98) = 3.69, p < .001). However, the difference between these effects of outcomes on impressions were not significantly different from one another (t (98) = -1.08, ns).

The moderating role of need to belong on outcome favorability x procedural fairness. We predicted that need to belong would moderate the higher status parties’ outcome x process interaction pattern, such that the interaction would be most pronounced among those high, as compared to those low, in need to belong. The results of a regression analysis testing this prediction, presented in Table 3, revealed significant main effects of procedural fairness (β = .35, p < .001) and outcome favorability (β = .51, p < .001) on future work potential assessments. Most importantly, the triple interaction of outcome x process x need to belong was not significant, indicating that our prediction about the moderating impact of need to belong was not supported in this Chinese sample.

The moderating role of power distance on outcome favorability x procedural fairness. We hypothesized that higher status parties’ outcome x process interaction pattern on future work potential assessments would be more likely to emerge among those low, rather than high, in power distance. Regression analysis testing our prediction, presented in Table 3, revealed significant influences of procedural fairness (β = 0.36, p < .001), outcome favorability (β = 0.51, p < .001), and a marginal influence of power distance (β = -0.22, p < .10). There was also a significant two-way interaction between
procedural fairness x power distance ($\beta = 0.47, p < .001$). Most importantly, there was a significant triple interaction of procedural fairness x outcome favorability x power distance ($\beta = -0.32, p < .01$).

To determine the nature of this three-way interaction, we examined the simple slopes of outcome favorability on future work potential assessments, at low vs. high levels of procedural fairness and at one standard deviation above and below the mean on power distance. The results, presented in Figure 5, show that the interaction pattern of outcome favorability x procedural fairness depicted in Figure 1(b) only appeared among those low on power distance. For these individuals, outcomes had a stronger impact on assessments when procedural fairness was high ($b = 2.27, t (98) = 6.09, p < .001$) than when procedural fairness was low ($b = 1.19, t (98) = 2.97, p < .01$). These simple slopes were significantly different from one another ($t (98) = 1.96, p < .05$). Among those high on power distance, outcomes had an impact on assessments both when procedural fairness was high ($b = 0.79, t (98) = 2.08, p < .05$) and when procedural fairness was low ($b = 1.71, t (98) = 4.49, p < .001$). These effects of outcome favorability on future work potential assessments were only marginally different from one another ($t (98) = -1.72, p < .10$).

**Discussion**

Study 3 replicated the moderating impact of self-esteem in Study 2 on the outcome x process interaction among a sample of senior executives in China, a cultural context very different from those of our first two studies. Moreover, results of Study 3 also supported our prediction regarding the moderating influence of power distance orientation on higher status individuals’ reactions toward lower status others. We predicted that those low on power distance—who presumably emphasize egalitarianism in their encounters with others—would feel less comfortable in a higher status position than their high power distance counterparts. As such, we predicted that they would be more attuned to and affected by status-verification information. Results indeed showed that the significant interactive pattern between outcome favorability and procedural fairness only emerged among low—and not high—power distance Chinese participants.
Results, however, did not replicate the findings on the moderating impact of need to belong in Study 2. This may be because acceptance and belongingness concerns may be less relevant in cultures such as China where acceptance may be more likely to be assumed. Nevertheless, results showing the moderating effects of self-esteem and power distance provide general support for our theoretical reasoning, as we found that two of three factors we predicted would make status verification and maintenance concerns more or less salient do actually make higher status individuals more or less likely to show the outcome x process interaction pattern in Figure 1(b).

**GENERAL DISCUSSION**

Taken together, the results of three studies provide important insight into higher status parties’ reactions toward outcome favorability and procedural fairness information in their social encounters with lower status parties. Among higher status parties, high procedural fairness and high outcome favorability did not have the same compensatory function that they do among lower status parties (Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996; Folger, Rosenfield & Robinson, 1983; Folger & Martin, 1986). Instead, when the significant interactive pattern between outcome favorability and procedural fairness emerged, it showed that the positive relationship between outcome favorability and higher status parties’ positive reactions (desire for future interactions, trust, liking, and assessment of future work potential) was stronger when procedural fairness was high, as compared to when procedural fairness was low. This was true across the variety of contexts and dependent variables in these studies.

Furthermore, results in Studies 2 and 3 supported our status-verification reasoning and provided empirical evidence suggesting why higher status parties tend to react to lower status others in the way they do. Consistent with our predictions, the interaction pattern between outcome favorability and procedural fairness among higher status parties primarily emerged among those with low self-esteem, high need to belong, or low power distance orientation. This was due to the influence of these factors on the extent to which people look to others for verification of their relatively higher status position. The fact that consistent results emerged across these related, but conceptually distinct, moderating dispositional
variables provides strong support for our status verification reasoning. Our general finding that these
effects replicate cross-culturally is another noteworthy element of our findings.

**Theoretical Implications**

Our current findings suggest several important theoretical implications for the literatures on social
relationships in work organizations, organizational justice, and status.

First, although status hierarchy (both formal and informal) is an inevitable and necessary aspect
of organizational life (Berger, Rosenholtz & Zelditch, 1980; Leavitt, 2003; Ridgeway, 1997) and although
the influence in most exchange interactions is likely to be bi-directional (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991;
Ginzel, Kramer & Sutton, 1992), management theory and research has tended to focus solely on the
responses of lower status parties toward higher status parties. While it is certainly essential to examine
the responses of higher status parties toward lower status parties. While it is certainly essential to examine
the responses of lower status parties toward higher status parties, our current results confirm that it is both
theoretically and practically valuable to examine the responses of higher status parties toward lower status
parties (Blau, 1964; Simmel, 1950). In light of our findings, research on other aspects of interactions and
relationships in organizations should examine whether findings regarding those aspects might also be
contingent upon relative status of the exchange party. Moreover, the current research makes clear that it is
important to not only identify whether the pattern of results change as a function of relative status of the
exchange party, but to also examine the underlying mechanisms that drive such differences in results.

Second, the current studies provide direct evidence for the theoretical assertion that higher-status
parties’ reactions are rooted in their tendency to assign great importance to maintaining their existing
higher status. As our results show, the interaction pattern between outcome favorability and procedural
fairness among higher status parties only emerged among those with dispositions that make them attuned
and sensitive to status verification in social relationships. Among those with low self-esteem, status
verification information is important in reconciling their relatively negative self-views with their
relatively positive status position (Swann, 1996). Among those with high need to belong, on the other
hand, vigilance for status verification is consistent with their chronic concern about social standing
(Baumeister & Leary, 1995). And among those low on power distance, status verification information compensates for their tendency to not regard their status position as inherently justified and as a given (as compared to their high power distance counterparts, who are more likely to view status differentials as natural and even desirable). By identifying among whom the typical higher-toward-lower interaction pattern between outcome favorability and procedural fairness is more or less likely to emerge, we advance our understanding of why this interaction occurs. More generally, we advance our understanding of the psychology of higher status parties.

Fourth, research in organizational justice has generally placed strong emphasis on the benefits of procedural fairness (Tyler & Blader, 2000) and the compensatory function of procedural fairness for low outcome favorability in people’s reactions to (higher status) others (Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996). Our findings suggest that this assertion needs to be modified when the target of focus is an individual of relatively higher status. As our results in Study 1 suggest, for higher status parties, high procedural fairness in conjunction with unfavorable outcomes might at times lead to responses just as negative as, if not more negative, than the combination of low procedural fairness and low outcome favorability. This is not to suggest that procedural fairness is not important to higher status parties. On the contrary, our results suggest that for higher status parties—particularly those concerned about status confirmation—high procedural fairness is a necessary, but insufficient component in eliciting positive responses toward lower status counterparts. Indeed, in the face of low procedural fairness, the favorability of outcomes appears to have little impact. Therefore, procedural fairness is important to both lower and higher status parties in social exchange—but in very different ways. Whereas high procedural fairness reduces the negative impact of low outcome favorability for lower status parties, low procedural fairness diminishes the positive impact of high outcome favorability for higher status parties.

**Organizational Implications**

Support from higher status others is of paramount importance to those of lower status in organizations. For example, support from higher status members of an organization legitimizes (lower status) newcomers as full-fledged members of the organization (Tyler & Lind, 1992). Moreover, in order
to move up the status hierarchy (formal and informal) within the organization or in any social group and system, it is often necessary for the lower status parties to seize support and endorsement from higher status influential others (Ridgeway, Boyle, Kuipers & Robinson, 1998). Our findings suggest two practical implications for the management of this upward influence. First, in order to obtain positive responses from higher status parties, lower status parties should strive to show regard and deference by rendering both favorable outcomes and fair processes in the exchange. As shown in three of our studies, positive responses from higher status parties are much less likely when there is a shortage of either. In addition, while justice researchers have long advocated the important benefits of procedural fairness (especially when outcome favorability is low), our findings in Study 1 suggest that in the condition of unfavorable outcomes, fair procedures may have a more detrimental impact on an exchange with a higher status party, as compared with unfair process. Unfavorable outcomes that are achieved fairly and squarely may be particularly threatening to the high status party’s esteem—especially when the exchange involves lower status others.

Second, despite the greater esteem and influence that often accompanies higher status, our findings suggest that even higher status parties have their own host of psychological concerns with which they grapple. Recognition of this among relatively lower status interaction partners may be a critical insight that enables them to successfully navigate upward influence processes. Indeed, it makes clear that efforts to effectively exert upward influence must be marked by both outcome and process-based demonstrations of high regard and social acceptance.

Perhaps most important, however, are the benefits of this insight to higher status parties, since it provides them with a framework for understanding the bases of how they react to their interaction partners. Indeed, self-awareness is critical for any effective manager or leader, and recognition of the importance of status verification and confirmation concerns is a fundamental element of any such self-awareness. Armed with this awareness, managers can better understand and control their reactions to situations they encounter in the workplace.

Limitations and Additional Suggestions for Future Research
Although the present studies yielded highly consistent findings with important implications, they do have a number of limitations. In calling attention to these limitations, we hope to simultaneously suggest additional avenues for future research.

First, although participants in our recall study reported their reactions to actual work experiences (in very different organizational settings and on highly varied bases of status), the findings from Studies 2 and 3 come from a fairly controlled setting. Additional studies need to be conducted in organizational field settings in order to further confirm the robustness of the high status party’s outcome x process interaction pattern. Future research should also consider examining this pattern on other important dependent variables.

Second, in these studies we focused on individual differences in order to examine the mechanism underlying higher status parties’ reactions. But if the psychological mechanisms suggested by the moderating effects of self-esteem, need to belong and power distance, are indeed the theoretical underpinnings of higher status responses toward lower status others, then contextual forces that activate status verification concerns should also make higher status parties more sensitive and attuned to status verification and confirmation information. For example, when organizations go through changes such as layoffs and restructuring, uncertainty about how the existing status hierarchy might be rearranged should make higher status parties more likely to show the interactive pattern of outcome favorability and procedural fairness in their social encounters with lower status parties. Future research should therefore explore the contextual conditions that activate the same types of reactions found using our individual differences approach.

Third, our Chinese sample in Study 3 did not show the moderating impact of need to belong on the outcome x process interaction. One possible explanation for this non-significant finding is the relational cultural context of our sample (Brewer & Chen, 2007). People in relational cultures such as China, in which networks of connections are highly valued and interpersonal support is often assumed (Hsee & Weber, 1999), presumably are less likely to experience chronic concerns of being accepted or rejected in social encounters. As a result, a dispositional orientation such as need to belong might have
much less relevance and thus much less of a differentiating effect among people in these cultures than in less relational cultures such as the U.S. Future research should explore this possibility and provide direct comparisons in the effect of need to belong across cultures.

Conclusion

The psychology of those with relatively higher status is significantly different than the psychology of those with relatively lower status. Given the prevalence of status differences in organizational life and the importance of understanding higher status parties, we hope our findings will inspire management researchers to more formally account for the role of relative status in their research and to expand their traditional focus on lower parties’ reactions toward higher status others and also include the examination of higher status parties’ responses toward lower status others.
References


Table 1

Study 2—Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations between Scales

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<td>2. Liking</td>
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* p <.05; ** p < .01
Table 2

Study 2—Regression analyses

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<td>PF X OF</td>
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Note: n = 146. ^ p < .10; * p < .05; ** p < .01

1 – Indicates moderator variable labeled on the first row of the table.
## Table 3

### Study 3—Regression analyses

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<td>.415</td>
<td>.285</td>
<td>.220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF X Mod</td>
<td>.489</td>
<td>.315</td>
<td>.245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PF X OF X Mod</td>
<td>-.876</td>
<td>.410</td>
<td>-.353 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total adjusted R²</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td></td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** n = 108. ¹ p < .10; * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

¹ – Indicates moderator variable labeled on the first row of the table.
Figure 1, Schematic representation of outcome x process interactions

(A) Reactions when in relatively lower status position

(B) Reactions when in relatively higher status position

Outcome Favorability

DV

Low

High

High procedural fairness

Low procedural fairness
Figure 2
Results, Study 1
Figure 3, Results, Study 2, Moderating effects of self-esteem
Figure 4, Results, Study 2, Moderating effects of need to belong

Panel A: Trust @ Low need to belong

Panel B: Trust @ High need to belong

Panel C: Liking @ Low need to belong

Panel D: Liking @ High need to belong
Figure 5, Results, Study 3, Moderating effects of self-esteem and power distance