The Denigration of Heroes? How the Status Attainment Process Shapes Attributions of Considerateness and Authenticity[1]

Oliver Hahl
Carnegie Mellon University

Ezra W. Zuckerman
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

This article develops and tests a theory to explain the common tendency to "denigrate heroes," whereby high-status actors are suspected of being inconsiderate and inauthentic relative to low-status counterparts. This tendency is argued to reflect two conditions typical of status attainment processes: (*a*) assertions of superiority over others and (*b*) the presence of incentives to pursue status. The latter is key since awareness of such incentives breeds suspicions of inauthenticity, which in turn undermine perceptions of prosocial intentions. This theory is validated in a series of online experiments, in which categorical status hierarchies emerge either via deference on a coordinated task or via competitive interactions. Results show that high-status actors may also be "celebrated" as authentic and considerate when the observable incentive structure is such that assertions of superiority appear as unintended by-products of prosocial action. Implications are drawn regarding the sources of instability and insecurity in status hierarchies.

INTRODUCTION

One of the bedrock observations of sociological research on status hierarchies is that such hierarchies are recognized and legitimized not only by

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the high-status actors who benefit from their position but even by the low-status actors who do not (Treiman 1977; see also Chase 1980; Jost and Burgess 2000; Lee and Fiske 2006). Indeed, this must be the case; were low-status actors to (publicly) disagree with their placement in the hierarchy, there would be no hierarchy—only multiple groups exhibiting greater regard for their own group than others. Accordingly, insofar as low-status actors do accept their position in the hierarchy despite the strong incentives to assert a higher position, it would seem that the status hierarchy is an undeniable social fact (Anderson et al. 2012), one which all actors accept even when it is injurious to them. As such, status hierarchies necessarily entail the public "celebration of heroes" (Goode 1978), and this celebration is joined by members of the public whose nonhero status is thereby reinforced.

But especially when considered from this perspective, an underrecognized theme in recent sociological and psychological research seems puzzling: the tendency for actors throughout the status hierarchy to question the moral character of high-status actors. Lamont's (2000) interview study is instructive, as it captures the two related themes that are broadly represented in past research. The most common complaint about high-status actors is that they are inconsiderate or cold toward others (Fiske et al. 2002; Judd et al. 2005; Ridgeway and Correll 2006). An interviewee of Lamont's, a car mechanic, levels this accusation when he laments, "When you get the almighty dollar, you hate to lose it. So you step on somebody's feet, or somebody's hand, or somebody's head to make sure you stay on top, which is not the greatest thing in the world" (Lamont 2000, p. 108). A second charge, which appears less prominently in past research (but see Halle 1996; Fine 2003; Zukin 2008) is that high-status actors are inauthentic or insincere. As another informant of Lamont's, a firefighter, puts it when asked about high-status elites, "Oh! You know what I hate? Two-face. I can't stand that. You're a fake, you're a fake. Why be a fake?" (Lamont 2000, p. 109). But insofar as high-status actors are often viewed as inconsiderate and inauthentic, why do we often denigrate the very heroes that are publicly celebrated?

This question demands sociological attention for two reasons. First, some theories of status rule out, by definition, the possibility that high-status actors could be denigrated for low moral character (e.g., Fragale, Overbeck, and Neale 2011). This might seem intuitive given that high-status actors often earn status specifically because of their "prosocial" behavior (Willer 2009), as exemplified by such moral heroes as Raoul Wal-

lenberg or Mother Teresa. On the other hand, the fact that demonstrations of moral virtue can be the basis for high status, and that public demonstrations of low morals tend to threaten a status position (Adut 2008; Graffin et al. 2013), does not mean that status cannot be achieved via morally neutral or even morally questionable ways, as long as the moral violations are ambiguous. Consistent with this point, research has shown that perceptions of moral character can vary for occupations that occupy equivalent positions in the occupational status hierarchy (Brambilla et al. 2010). More generally, evidence of high-status denigration combined with the contingent link between attributions of status and morality suggest that we define status strictly as public rank achieved for performing valued services for a particular audience or community (see Homans 1961, p. 339; cf. Ridgeway 1982; Phillips, Turco, and Zuckerman 2013). This definition allows us to ask the question of why and under what conditions the attribution of status and of moral character will move in the same direction and when they will not.

Second, it is particularly puzzling that high-status actors themselves seem to regard their own category of actors as less considerate and sincere. That is, it is not particularly surprising to hear such sentiment from low-status actors, such as were interviewed by Lamont (2000). Such sentiment could be dismissed as based on "sour grapes" by the losers in status competition, and it may be particularly unsurprising to hear such sentiment expressed privately and with respect to dimensions of value that are highly subjective. But in many cases, it is not only low-status actors who regard high-status actors as inconsiderate and inauthentic. Experimental research (see Ridgeway and Correll 2006; Kervyn, Yzerbyt, and Judd 2010) demonstrates that subjects who are experimentally manipulated to see themselves as a member of the more competent, higher status of two social categories tend to regard their own social category as lacking in "considerateness" or warmth toward others. In addition, a wide range of research suggests that high-status actors often consume cultural goods or affiliate with cultural practices associated with low-status groups and that the appeal of such displays seems to stem from the observation that these activities can increase an actor's perceived authenticity (e.g., Bryson 1996; Halle 1996; Martin 1998; Grounds 2001; Grazian 2005). Evidence that even high-status actors often suspect that actors from their own high-status category are inferior on these dimensions suggests that there may be something systematic in the tendency for high-status actors to be considered morally suspect. That is, just as low-status actors must acknowledge the undeniable reality of their low-status position, in some contexts there appears to be something undeniable about the low moral standing of high-status actors. And note in this regard that the denigration of high-status actors occurs

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specifically with respect to moral issues but does not seem to occur on other dimensions of worth (such as "healthfulness"; see Kervyn et al. 2010). What is the underlying mechanism that governs whether high-status actors are celebrated or denigrated on these dimensions of moral character?

In this article, we develop a theory to address this question, and we present three experimental studies to test our theory. In short, we argue that two features inherent to the status attainment process raise questions about a high-status actor's moral character such that, even without evidence demonstrating morally problematic action, the high-status actor is (privately) suspected of having gained status in a morally questionable way. The first issue pertains to the incentive structure typically associated with status attainment; in short, the rewards for attaining high status produce an incentive to feign one's capabilities or commitments. This implies that unless there is objective evidence of the actor's capabilities and a reason to think that the high-status actor was not motivated by the benefits afforded him by a high-status position, he will be suspected of being insincere or inauthentic. The second issue pertains to the interaction process by which status is typically achieved. In particular, status may be achieved (and observed) either via patterns of deference or through competition, and each of these interaction processes effectively require that one assert one's superiority and others' inferiority—actions that provide prima facie evidence that one is selfish and inconsiderate. This implies that unless there is some additional credible evidence that his motives were "prosocial," he will be suspected of being cold or inconsiderate. Furthermore, because these key features of the status attainment process lead to concerns that someone who achieves high status is inconsiderate and inauthentic, and credible prosocial evidence can overcome both of these concerns, this argument also explains why attributions of considerateness and authenticity made about high-status actors tend to move in the same direction. Finally, that denigration (or celebration) occurs on both dimensions of considerateness and authenticity is a key difference between our theory and previous work (e.g., Fiske et al. 2002; Judd et al. 2005).

By introducing this approach, we contribute to the sociological literature on status by highlighting how tensions inherent to the status attainment process determine whether suspicions are raised about the high-status actor's moral character. Furthermore, this theory is general enough to apply to the two general processes of status attainment discussed in academic literature on status: (1) patterns of deference in coordination as discussed in studies on task groups (see, e.g., Moore 1968; Berger, Cohen, and Zelditch 1972; Ridgeway 1982), and (2) public competition as discussed in studies on markets, science, and sports (see, e.g., Foote 1951; Geertz 1973; Goode 1978; Merton 1968).

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In the next two sections, we present our argument more fully and test it through a series of experiments that build on the main experiment in Ridgeway and Correll (2006). These experiments, which induce identification with two arbitrary social types based on the "minimal group" paradigm, serve both to validate our argument and to cast doubt on the prominent explanation for this phenomenon in the field of social psychology—that the tendency to denigrate high-status actors derives from a psychological motivation to "compensate" low-status actors by regarding them as more virtuous (Judd et al. 2005; Yzerbyt, Kervyn, and Judd 2008). While much previous evidence related to the denigration phenomenon has focused on the negative relationship between status and considerateness, we use these studies to validate our claim that denigration also exists for a high-status actors' perceived authenticity. In three experiments covering both general processes of status attainment (task group coordination or public competition) we vary the means by which status is attained (neutral or prosocial) and the prominence of incentives for performance to show that whether the high-status actor's moral character is celebrated (or denigrated) hinges on the existence (or absence) of prosocial behavior and the absence (or existence) of ulterior motives for performance in the attainment process.

THEORY: THE SUSPICIOUSNESS OF STATUS ATTAINMENT

Our theory is designed to explain why suspicions about the moral standing of high-status actors are common, and when such suspicions are overcome such that high-status actors achieve high moral standing. Our focus is on situations where a high-status actor is publicly validated as being high status based on their relative performance and there is no evidence that it has behaved in a problematic way. Under these conditions, we wish to understand the conditions under which community members may privately suspect high-status actors of being cold and inauthentic, and when such suspicions are overcome.

In developing this theory, we build on a basic tenet of sociological research on status, whereby status is conferred upon actors who have been publicly acknowledged for their superior performance or service to a community or audience due to the inference that such actors must be more competent and committed than others (see Homans 1961; Ridgeway 1982; Correll and Benard 2006; Phillips et al. 2013). At first blush, this tenet would seem logically incompatible with a tendency to suspect high-status actors as morally compromised. After all, if an actor has been validated as more competent and more committed to serving the audience and its values, this implies that it deserves higher moral standing. Under these con-

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ditions, the only possible explanation for denigrating such heroes would seem to involve attributing a motivation on the part of social observers to cast suspicion where there is no evidence for it. Note that any motivation-based theory must address the following issues: (i) why denigration seems to occur specifically with respect to the dimensions of considerateness and authenticity, but not other dimensions of worth such as "healthfulness" (Kervyn et al. 2010); (ii) how considerateness and authenticity are related to one another; and (iii) why high-status actors are often celebrated for their moral virtuousness rather than denigrated. Our theory is designed to address each of these issues.

In short, we argue that when social observers assess social actors, they pay attention not only to which actors have been socially validated as committed or capable, but how such status was attained. On the one hand, if the process of attainment provides objective evidence of the actor's superior capability and her superior commitment to serving the community and its values, then there is no reason for anyone to suspect high-status actors as being cold or inauthentic. To the contrary; such actors should be celebrated even by low-status actors. If this were not the case, there would be no such thing as a legitimate organizational hierarchy, whereby those in subordinate positions are happy to defer to the decisions of superordinates because they recognize their leaders as capable and committed to their interests. But on the other hand, many organizational hierarchies suffer from deficits of legitimacy precisely because subordinates have evidence to suspect that their superiors are not as competent or as committed as is suggested by their status (see Burke 1968; Gallagher and Burke 1974), perhaps owing to a promotion process that falls short of meritocratic ideals.

But the presence of social suspicion about high-status actors is not a mystery under such conditions. Thus, let us confine ourselves to situations where there is no evidence that there is anything broken about the status attainment process. For instance, suppose that status has been attained via higher performance according to an ostensibly transparent, meritocratic process and that social observers have no evidence that high-status actors are less authentic, more inconsiderate, or more generally, that they are any less committed to serving the audience and the values it upholds. Why might social suspicions arise under these conditions?

The answer, we suggest, derives from two basic features of the status attainment process. The first and most general of these two features pertains to the incentive structure typically associated with status attainment. In short, the issue is that the achievement of high status tends to confer significant benefits on the high-status actor, including greater access to resources and greater returns for a given input (Merton 1968; Podolny 2005; Correll et al. 2012; Sauder, Lynn, and Podolny 2012). Accordingly, even

though audiences will confer higher status on those who are capable and committed to that audience rather than themselves, the benefits of high status constitute an incentive to seek and preserve status even when one's status is not deserved. This raises questions regarding high-status actors: How does an audience know that a high-performing actor's performance was not faked in some way? How does an audience know that such a performer's apparent commitment to serving the audience is not a temporary matter of expedience, due to the benefits associated with recognition as high status?

The first question is often quite difficult to resolve (e.g., doping in sports); but as long as the competition seems fair, there is certainly no reason to suspect the high-status actor as less capable than the low-status actor. The second question is even more challenging because actors' intentions with respect to an audience involve unobservable mental states, which can change quickly. Insofar as it promises benefits to the holder, the very attainment of status fosters suspicion regarding the high-status actor's ulterior motives for achieving high levels of performance. And the contrast with low-status actors is key. Since low-status actors performed relatively poorly, one can hardly suspect them of being overly motivated by the fruits of a high-status position. But if there is anyone who is driven by such self-interested motives, they would seem to occupy the ranks of the high status. Thus, there is good reason for social suspicion about the authenticity of high-status actors to lurk.

This line of reasoning leads to the following general proposition:

> PROPOSITION A. Unless there is credible evidence that the high-status actor had prosocial rather than self-interested motivations, observers will regard high-status actors as more insincere or inauthentic than lower-status actors.

The second feature of status attainment processes that raises questions about high-status actors' moral character pertains to the interaction processes by which status is achieved. Status hierarchies may emerge in one of two ways: (*a*) deference patterns in coordination and (*b*) public competition. The first of these interaction processes is that which has traditionally been studied in task groups (see, e.g., Moore 1968; Berger et al. 1972; Ridgeway 1982); the second is that which has traditionally been studied in markets, science, and sports (see, e.g., Foote 1951; Geertz 1973; Goode 1978).

In the first set of contexts, status hierarchies emerge when two or more actors coordinate with one another and they must decide on a joint course of action. In such a context, as classically studied in the small groups literature (e.g., Ridgeway 1981, 1982; Ridgeway and Correll 2006; Anderson and Kilduff 2009; Anderson et al. 2012), a status hierarchy often emerges as a means to coordinate decisions. In particular, such a hierarchy

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emerges insofar as one actor (i) makes public claims of superiority (indirectly, by advocating for her preferred course of action) over another actor (j), and a reciprocal acknowledgment of inferiority is made by j (indirectly, by yielding to i's suggestion). Such interaction patterns are basic to the emergence of a clearly recognized status hierarchy in groups and are unremarkable in that respect. But they are also morally problematic in that actor i must effectively take action that causes a loss of face or respectability on the part of j (Goffman 1955; Ho 1976). In short, actor i may achieve high status in this way, but she also acts in a way that in the first instance signals a lack of care for someone else's dignity. We argue that it is this assertion of superiority and others' inferiority that lies at the heart of the accusation that the high-status actor is "cold" (e.g., Fiske et al. 2002; Fiske, Cuddy, and Glick 2007) or "inconsiderate" (Ridgeway and Correll 2006). To the extent that there is no evidence to counteract this concern, those who attain high-status positions will be suspected of being inconsiderate.

This line of reasoning leads to a second general proposition:

> PROPOSITION B. In a situation where one actor consistently defers to a second actor, unless the target of deference (TOD) engages in credible prosocial efforts to affirm the dignity of the deferring party, social observers will not only regard the TOD as higher status and more inauthentic but also regard the TOD as more inconsiderate than the deferring party.

One might suppose that suspicions of inconsiderateness and inauthenticity would not extend to the second set (b) of contexts where status hierarchies emerge, that is, through public competition such as in sports or in scientific competition. Certainly, this should be the case insofar as (1) the competition is structured in a fair manner, and (2) the public loss of face by the loser is an unavoidable side effect of the high-status actor's efforts to achieve a socially desirable performance. Whether the competition is held in the realms of athletics or science, beating the competition is a sign that one has greater competence or greater commitment to serving the public who seek great athletic or scientific achievement. But it is notable that despite the moral legitimacy of winning in such cases, social observers are highly sensitive to how the winner conducts himself during and after the competition. For example, consider the aftermath of a home run in baseball.[2] There is a very strict protocol for how the batter must behave. In particular, the norm is for the batter to trot quickly around the base paths so as not to prolong the pitcher's humiliation and to keep his head down and avoid eye contact with the pitcher, thus avoiding the suggestion that he is gloating. And note that while showboating and boasting are more prominent features in other sports, every sport has a normative line that

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[2] We thank an anonymous *AJS* reviewer for suggesting that we consider this example.

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distinguishes acceptable celebrating from unacceptable actions that cause an opponent to lose face (e.g., Eitzen 2001; cf. Goffman 1955).

These observations suggest that while victory per se does not cause suspicions of inconsiderateness and inauthenticity, it raises the risk of such suspicions in a way that defeat necessarily does not; the onus is placed on the high-status actor to avoid any action that might threaten the dignity of the low-status actor, else he be suspected of being inconsiderate and in-authentic, in that he presented himself as pursuing the social value from the competition when he in fact sought to humiliate his rival. Put differently, we argue that under the surface of such competitions, there are two competing reasons why a competitor might seek to defeat his rival: (*a*) to achieve a performance that fulfills the values for which the competition is publicly justified, whereby the defeat of the rival is a side effect; and (*b*) the humiliation of that rival. Accordingly, insofar as the social value of a competition may be greater or lower, such variation implies correspondingly different implications for suspicions of considerateness as well as for authenticity. In particular:

> PROPOSITION C. In a situation where status distinctions emerge from public competition, suspicions of coldness and inauthenticity of the victor turn on the extent to which the competition has recognized social value. Insofar as the competition has (no) recognized social value, social observers will regard the victor not only as (in)authentic but also as (in)considerate.

Finally, a key empirical implication of this argument is that, inasmuch as high-status denigration is driven by inferences made about the status attainment process, attributions of considerateness and authenticity will be positively correlated. Thus far, we have argued that the incentives and interaction process inherent to status attainment lead to questions about a high-status actor's considerateness and authenticity, unless this attainment is coupled with credible evidence that motives for such attainment were prosocial in nature. The idea that these features cause concern over the high-status actor's moral character relies on the premise that the audience makes inferences about what motivates these actors to attain status. The actual motivations for actors are difficult to ascertain because it would involve knowing unobservable mental states. Instead, audience members can be expected to rely on signals associated with these motivations. As it is difficult to distinguish whether the actor is motivated by pure intentions, is faking their commitment, or is driven by defeating another, these signals serve as the evidence for such inferences. Each type of suspicion—that high-status actors lack considerateness and that they lack authenticity—is triggered because the high-status actor benefits from the relative under-performance of another. Each type of suspicion can be overcome via credible prosocial signals. Furthermore, to the extent that denigration relies on comparing general expectations about high-status actors with those of

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lower-status counterparts, evidence that the high-status actor is lacking on one of these dimensions (considerateness or authenticity) should also increase concern about the other (authenticity or considerateness). Accordingly, we propose the following:

> PROPOSITION D. Attributions about the high-status actor's considerateness will be positively correlated with attributions of his authenticity, regardless of whether correlations between these two attributes are negatively correlated with status or when (credible prosocial behavior means that) they are positively correlated.

STUDIES AND RESULTS

Empirical Overview

We designed three experiments to test our argument that suspicions raised by status attainment influence whether the moral character of high-status actors is celebrated or denigrated. Many related studies use a stereotype approach to understand the conditions under which status is related to lack of warmth (e.g., Fiske et al. 2002; Fragale et al. 2011). They provide subjects with a series of occupations or even people in their network with different levels of status and ask them to explain their perceptions of these people. However, informational cues related to mode of attainment are often embedded in the specific individuals considered and the occupations asked about. As such, these studies cannot explain what drives the fact that high-status actors are at times denigrated and at times celebrated, nor is it the objective of the authors of these studies to do so. Instead, our approach was to limit these cues, which allows us to separate the effect of information on mode of attainment from the perceived status of the actor and other key variables. In these studies we do manipulate relative performance and ask subjects to evaluate the actors on perceived status, authenticity, and considerateness with the ultimate goal being to observe differences in these attributions across high and low performers.

In the three experiments we employ, we vary signals of performance either through patterns of deference in a task situation (studies 1 and 2) or via objective measures of performance in a competitive situation (study 3). The two key variables manipulated across all three studies are the amount of prosocial behavior exhibited by the higher performer and the incentives for performance. We first investigate the effects of status attainment as observed through patterns of deference, a general process through which status hierarchies are formed (Gould 2002). Study 1 is a near replication of the study in Ridgeway and Correll (2006, p. 444), in which they show that the higher-performing social type (revealed via deference to a member's assertions of greater competence) is regarded as more competent and higher status but also as less considerate. In addition to anchoring our experimental paradigm in prior literature, study 1 features two novel results

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that help validate our approach: (*a*) that members of a high-performing social type are not only denigrated for being inconsiderate but also for being inauthentic, and (*b*) that evidence of prosocial behavior nullifies this effect.

In study 2, we show that the basis for denigration is a matter not only of observed behavior but also of the incentives for such behavior; accordingly, the tendency to denigrate returns when there is an ulterior motive for prosocial behavior. In study 3, we examine how concerns about status attainment may arise even where objective relative performance in a competitive situation is the basis for attributions of status. This study, in which we vary the publicity of the performance and the recognized social value of the outcome of the competition, extends the lessons from the first two studies and deepens our understanding of the mechanisms involved. Each of the three studies was designed to test specific hypotheses derived from the propositions discussed above. For each study, we (*a*) compare attributions of considerateness and authenticity between high- and low-performing social types, (*b*) present pairwise correlations between attributions of considerateness and authenticity, and (*c*) present the (within-subject) differences in attributions of (i) status and considerateness and (ii) status and authenticity. For study 3, we perform an additional mediation analysis to clarify the inferences about motivation that drive denigration and celebration.

Design Description: Studies 1 and 2

The first two experiments have a common form and share most aspects except for each study's key manipulation. To limit redundancy, we first explain the characteristics and methods used across both of these studies. We then describe the two studies, separately explaining the manipulations specific to each study, the results, and the way each study relates to and tests our theory.

Introduction.—Subjects were informed that they were to observe the interaction of a team of three others. Two of the others were assigned the role of "discussant" and the third was assigned to the "commentator" role. Subjects were informed that the discussants and commentator were involved in a task in which these actors were to solve a series of problems as a team and that the subjects should pay close attention to the discussants' interaction as they came to a decision as a team. To control for potential gender effects, the discussants were presented as male. Subjects were informed that they would be evaluating the individual team members (discussants) based on how much they contributed to the success of the team overall. The purpose of the "commentator" role will be discussed below.

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Personality type assignment.—Before showing them the task, subjects responded to a test of "personal response style" and were informed that the discussants each took a similar test. This test was meant to randomly assign the subject to one of two "personality types": Q2 or S2. This was done using the classic Klee and Kandinsky style test paradigm for "minimal group" experiments (see Tajfel et al. 1971; Yamagishi and Kiyonari 2000). These studies show that even minimal criteria such as ambiguous group names cause actors to identify with their own type more than the other type. Subjects were shown a series of pictures and they were informed, based on their responses, that they fit the profile of either a Q2 type or an S2 type.[3] In addition, the two discussants were presented as a Q2 type interacting with an S2 type (see app. B). Study participants were informed that "responses to this test have proven to divide the world evenly based on personality and level of knowledge."

The first manipulation was whether the subject viewed the study through the eyes of a Q2 or an S2. In each study, the Q2 was designed to be what we henceforth label the "target of deference" (implying higher performance) and the S2 was designed to be the "deferring party." And insofar as subjects tended to ascribe higher (lower) status to the higher (lower) performer, this implies that Q2s would come to regard themselves as high status whereas S2s would come to see themselves as low status. This manipulation allowed us to observe the perceptions of individuals in high-performing categories, those subjects randomly assigned to the target of deference (Q2) type, who should be least disposed to denigrate that category.[4] Using the minimal group paradigm allowed us not only to manipulate subjects in this way but also to create general categories or types of actors (i.e., Q2 or S2) that cause subjects to think about stereotypes related to high performers in the manner presented, as opposed to any other potentially confounding characteristics. Recall that our theoretical discussion focused on why any audience might consider high-status actors as more morally suspect than a lower-status counterpart. And we noted that the fact that even high-status category members often seem to regard their own

[3] After the Klee and Kandinsky assignment portion of the study, subjects were asked to identify which type of category they fit, Q2 or S2. Subjects who answered incorrectly were asked to answer the question again until they knew. Only those subjects who answered this correctly were allowed to continue the task.

[4] In app. D, we present and discuss results from subjects assigned to view the task through the eyes of a member of the S2 (deferring party) type, for studies 1 and 2. The results and discussion in app. D not only show that our results are robust to in-group bias but also function as a manipulation check in support of our methodological decision (based on Ridgeway and Correll 2006) to use the minimal group setup to establish status signals by "type."

category as inconsiderate and inauthentic (e.g., Bryson 1996; Halle 1996; Grounds 2001; Ridgeway and Correll 2006) indicated that such "denigration of heroes" could not be fully explained by in-group bias. Thus, this manipulation allows us to test our theory while ruling out in-group bias as an explanation for any findings.

The task.—Subjects were informed that the "team" had been presented with a series of "contrast sensitivity tasks" similar to those used in experiments on status construction (Moore 1968; Berger et al. 1972; Willer and Walker 2007). This visual task was chosen because it was related to the previous Q2/S2 assignment and to reinforce the importance of skill as the basis for evaluating the members of each social category. In these tasks, subjects were presented with a picture containing 64 squares, with an equal number of white and black squares distributed throughout the image. The team's task was to figure out whether there were more black squares or white squares in each of the five pictures they were shown; in fact, there were 32 squares of each color, but this fact is very difficult to ascertain without painstakingly counting the squares. Subjects were informed that the discussants and commentator were given only five seconds to react to the picture.

Subjects were also informed that (*a*) the "discussants" had been tasked with discussing their answer until they came to a consensus on the "correct" answer, and (*b*) the "commentator's" role was then to either support the conclusion or ask them to return and deliberate some more. In both studies 1 and 2, the subjects were presented with a text transcript of the supposed interaction between the discussants and the response of the commentator. But as with the rest of what the subjects observed, this dialogue was written by the experimenters. Before they were shown the interaction, the subjects were reminded to observe the teams interacting as they came to a decision. It is important to note that the experiments were designed in a way that the commentator always played the "supportive" role based on the "supported" conditions in Ridgeway and Correll (2006). That is, the commentator never asked the subjects to deliberate some more. This supportive role served as the social validation of deference, making the nascent social hierarchy difficult to deny (see Anderson et al. 2012). As Ridgeway and Correll (2006) show, without this supportive role, or similar social validation of deference, status hierarchies are unlikely to form.

Dependent variable.—After viewing all five of the tasks, subjects were asked to answer a series of eight questions about the two discussant types observed in the study (Q2 and S2). We followed Ridgeway and Correll's (2006; cf. Correll et al. 2012) approach of asking about the "third-order beliefs" by asking subjects to "Please answer the next few questions about how *most people* would perceive a *typical member of each type* (*Q2 and S2*)?" (emphasis added). As a robustness check, we replicated two of the

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studies asking the same questions in a "first-order" manner: "How would *you* rate the *typical member of each type*?" (emphasis added) on each of the criteria. These findings are presented in appendix E. A comparison between these results and the corresponding results show that there is essentially no difference between asking in the third-order or first-order manner. This is consistent with evidence suggesting that in experimental situations subjects generally do not distinguish between what they think and what they think most people think (Marks and Miller 1987) because "perceptions of the views of most shape personal beliefs, and personal beliefs bias inferences about others' views" (Ridgeway and Correll 2006, p. 434).

An additional advantage to focusing on third-order beliefs is that they are more proximate to social action. As Ridgeway and Correll (2006; cf. Correll et al. 2012) argue convincingly, such beliefs are at the core of why social status has "force in social relations" (p. 434). Even when one does not believe that actor/group x is more competent than actor/group y, this still shapes one's decision making insofar as one believes that key audiences believe (that their audiences believe, etc.) that it does. Similarly, we believe that the key question for social coordination is not whether the subject personally believes that high-status actors are morally virtuous or not, but whether they think that most others think so. Finally, following the overall logic of the minimal group paradigm, framing the issue in terms of third-order beliefs likely directs subjects to stereotypes about categories of actors instead of loading the Q2 and S2 types with other confounding characteristics. That all said, appendix E indicates that the results are robust to the measurement strategy chosen.

The first set of three questions (presented in random order to the subjects) was related to the status of the actors. Subjects were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 7 the levels of prestige, respect, and competence first for one of the types (i.e., Q2 or S2) and then repeated for the other type (i.e., S2 or Q2).[5] These are standard questions borrowed from previous studies measuring status in a task-group context (e.g., Ridgeway and Correll 2006). Subjects were then asked a second set of four questions (again presented in random order). Two of these questions were related to the perceived considerateness and the other two were related to the perceived authenticity of the Q2 (S2) type. Subjects were asked to rate both types (on a scale of 1 to 7) on levels of considerateness and likability (combined for the considerateness score) and sincerity and authenticity (combined for the authenticity score). For each study, we present the difference in status, considerateness, and authenticity scores between actor types. For example, the

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[5] These questions were counterbalanced such that subjects were randomly assigned to attribute ratings for the Q2 (S2) type first and the S2 (Q2) type second.

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status score was constructed by taking the mean of the prestige, respect, and competence scores for each subject. Appendix A lists the questions and the respective Cronbach alphas or correlations for each set of questions across all three studies.

Subject recruitment.—Subjects were recruited using the Mechanical Turk tool from the Amazon.com website. They were recruited by promising payment of 25 cents upon completion of "feedback on a team development task." This tool has been used in experimental research and has been found to provide a subject pool slightly more educated and technologically savvy than the national average (Berinsky, Huber, and Lenz 2011; Buhrmester, Kwang, and Gosling 2011). Since we were looking for subjects who reflected this general audience, rather than an audience with a specific set of knowledge or skill, this was an effective way to recruit an appropriate subject pool.[6]

The Mechanical Turk tool provides access to many potential subjects but faces monitoring risk when compared to laboratory settings in universities. In particular, there is a risk that some subjects are strictly looking to get the task accomplished and do not pay as close attention to the task, limiting the effect of a manipulation. In order to confirm that our subjects paid close enough attention to the task, we asked them a series of attention questions scattered throughout the study (Mason and Suri 2011). For instance, we would ask which type (Q2 or S2) was initially correct on the previous answer screen or which type the subject was assigned to based on art preference. Those who could not answer these questions correctly were not able to finish the study and were not included in the results. Also, those who began the study and did not finish the status, considerateness, and authenticity attribution sections were not included in the final pool of subjects.[7] These two filtering criteria were not correlated with any condition in particular, supporting our claim that the final pool of subjects used to test our hypotheses were randomly assigned to their conditions across these first two studies. For instance, in study 1, 11 out of a total of original 56 potential subjects were removed from the sample. Of these, two were excluded for not answering the attention questions correctly (indicating that they were not paying attention to the study and would not be affected by the specific condition requirements). The remaining nine subjects were not included because they started but did not finish the study. In study 2, nine of the original 60 subjects were removed from the sample (one did

[6] Subjects for this study were limited to the pool of Amazon Mechanical Turk participants from the United States.

[7] The questions that made up our dependent variable were at the very end of the study. All subjects who made it as far as these questions finished the study and were included in the final sample. Nearly all who did not finish dropped out after the introductory screens.

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not correctly answer the attention questions, and eight started but did not finish).

Tests.—Unless otherwise noted, the key comparison of attributions on status, considerateness, and authenticity between "discussants" was done using a Wilcoxon signed rank test. In this test, differences in attribution scores from each subject about each discussant type are compared by (1) calculating the within-subject difference in attributions, (2) dropping the cases where there is no difference and ranking the remaining absolute difference scores, (3) multiplying these rankings by 1 or −1 depending on whether the difference was positive or negative, and (4) observing whether the distribution of these differences is higher or lower than zero (Wilcoxon 1945). These tests are particularly useful for the types of inferences made in this article for two key reasons. First, these nonparametric tests essentially compare the full distributions of the results rather than the means. With smaller sample sizes, this type of test is a more efficient predictor for the type of data we collected. Second, these tests compare the differences in attributions made within subject for each social type (Q2/S2), and as such, these tests avoid the type of ecological fallacy that occurs when inferences are made about grouped data. For instance, an alternative approach would be to compare the means of each attribution for the two social types separately in a test similar to a *t*-test. This would risk making individual-level inferences about population-level measures (means). Instead, our analysis, using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, tests whether the attributions made about each social type (Q2 or S2) within subject are more likely to be positive (celebration) or negative (denigration). We present the *z*-score associated with this test as the standardized difference between Q2 and S2 for each pair of status, considerateness, and authenticity attributions for each actor type.

Study 1: Denigration on Considerateness and Authenticity, and Prosocial Behavior

Purpose.—There are three purposes to this study. The first is to validate our method of establishing status in the lab with prior studies (e.g., Ridgeway and Correll 2006). These studies have shown that more assertive actors are regarded as possessing higher status but being less considerate than their more deferential counterparts. The second purpose of this study is to observe, consistent with our theory, whether status attainment leads to increased suspicions not only of inconsiderateness but also of inauthenticity. The final purpose of this study is to observe whether prosocial behavior can eliminate this effect of denigration on each of these dimensions of moral worth.

As discussed in the theory section, one general way through which status is observed is through patterns of deference when two or more parties

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directly coordinate their action and a choice must be made as to whose ideas or actions are more likely to increase performance (e.g., Gould 2002). Such a pattern of deference induces a status hierarchy. In addition, we expect that even when the target of deference does not act in an inconsiderate or inauthentic manner, attaining status through deference raises concerns about the high-status actor's considerateness and authenticity. First, because status provides benefits and deference entails the loss of dignity of the deferring party, then the target of deference benefits from the loss of dignity of another. This breeds concern that the recipient of deference is inconsiderate. Second, authenticity concerns arise from the fact that status confers benefits and, with it, an incentive to fake one's capability and commitment to the performance. The benefits related to status position constitute an ulterior motive to perform, resulting in a perceived commitment to the rewards that flow from high status as opposed to the group's performance.

But the fact that the status attainment process raises such concerns does not mean that they cannot be allayed. All things equal, actors earn status by engaging in actions that serve the audience conferring such status rather than by promoting their self-interest, narrowly construed (Willer 2009).[8] Accordingly, when the recipient of deference takes steps to preserve the dignity of the deferring party (e.g., by signaling that he regards the deferring party as his equal in capability and commitment), the high-status actor acknowledges the current status difference, but he does it in a way that potentially resolves concerns over the inconsiderate nature of status attainment. Indeed, by upholding the dignity of the deferring party and indicating that the target of deference is not motivated by self-interest, credible prosocial behavior also signals that the target of deference is truly committed to the audience and the values it espouses. Accordingly, study 1 tests the following hypothesis.

> HYPOTHESIS 1. Socially validated patterns of deference should result in higher attributions of status for the target of deference social type (relative to the deferring social type), but lower attributions of considerateness and authenticity (relative to the deferring social type), unless deference is gained through prosocial behavior.

Description.—The target of deference was designated in this study by showing one discussant consistently deferring to the superior judgment of the other discussant whenever there was a disagreement in their initial guesses, followed by support of this deference by the commentator. Of the five interactions, two were set up as initial agreements and three were set up as initial disagreements. The disagreements were resolved by showing one discussant (the S2) deferring to the other discussant (the Q2).

[8] We thank Julia DiBenigno for very helpful input on this point.

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In the first condition (plain assertive), we replicated the assertive character used by Ridgeway and Correll (2006).[9] This actor used short responses and did not waiver from asserting that his answer was correct. The commentator was used to help reinforce the nascent status hierarchy. It was also important that the assertive actor did not come across as mean or overly rude to create a backlash against his competence claims, as was found in earlier studies on status construction (Ridgeway and Diekema 1989). In short, the Q2 social type is designed to appear assertive but not dominating. And the assertive actor is thereby accepted as more competent in a socially validated way. Previous studies have shown that this type of assertive, higher-performing actor earns higher levels of status in task groups (e.g., Ridgeway and Correll 2006; Anderson and Kilduff 2009). In the second condition (prosocial assertive), we present a dialogue where one actor is still clearly assertive but uses more prosocial language when commanding deference. In order to do this, the target of deference discussant was portrayed using more supportive words in interacting with the deferring party type discussant. We wrote the dialogue such that the target of deference could be seen as a sort of teacher (as in cases of legitimate organizational hierarchy; e.g., Hodgson 2004) and seems to be rooting for the deferring party to succeed or improve. In this way, the target of deference can be seen as helping the deferring party to save face by both presenting the implied competence difference as temporary and assuring the deferring party that he can develop this competence as well. The deferring party's dialogue was only minimally changed from the dialogue in the first study. Appendix B compares one example each of the plain assertive and prosocial assertive styles of interaction.

Results.—Figure 1 shows the results from study 1 in which we compare the differences in status, considerateness, and authenticity ratings given by subjects randomly assigned to the target of deference (i.e., Q2) type. In the plain assertive condition, subjects ($N = 21$) attributed a typical member of their own type higher status than a typical member of the other type ($z = 3.78$, $P < .01$), but lower considerateness ($z = -3.46$, $P < .01$) and authenticity ($z = -2.17$, $P = .03$) than a typical member of the other type. In the prosocial assertive condition, subjects ($N = 24$) attributed a typical member of their own type higher status than a typical member of the other type ($z = 2.75$, $P < .01$), but did not attribute significantly different levels of considerateness ($z = -0.46$, $P = .32$) or authenticity ($z = -0.66$, $P = .25$) to a typical member of the other type.

Table 1 shows the results of tests on the correlations of these (differences in) attributions. The upper portion of table 1 shows pairwise correlations

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[9] Thanks to Shelley Correll, Cecilia Ridgeway, and Sara Jordan-Bloch for feedback on this experiment in particular.
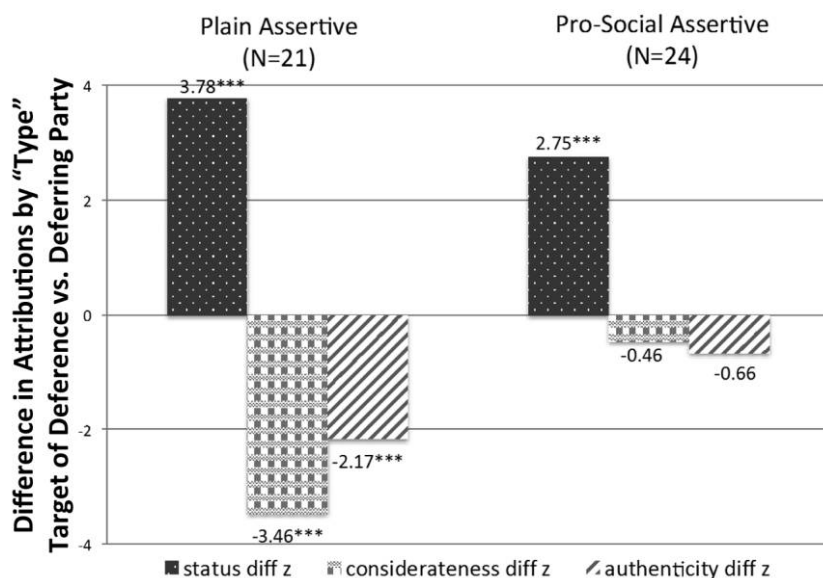
F$_{IG}$. 1.—Study 1: This figure shows the results of the standardized differences (z-score) in attributions between the "target of deference" and the "deferring party." The y-values are z-scores for differences in attributions of status, considerateness, and authenticity. In the condition on the left, the plain-assertive actor that is deferred to is attributed higher status, but lower considerateness and authenticity. In the condition on the right, the pro-social-assertive actor that is deferred to is attributed higher status, and there is no statistical difference in considerateness and authenticity.

between considerateness and authenticity. In both conditions, considerateness and authenticity are positively correlated in a statistically significant way (plain assertive $r = .81, P < .01$; prosocial assertive $r = .76, P < .01$). The lower portion of table 1 displays two simple ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions for each condition describing the relationship between the differences in status and considerateness (model 1) and the differences in status and authenticity (model 2). In the plain assertive condition, these (within-subject) differences are negatively correlated. In this condition, greater positive differences attributed to actor types in status (target of deference > deferring party) were correlated with larger negative differences between actor types in both considerateness and authenticity (deferring party > target of deference). By contrast, there was essentially no statistically significant correlation between these differences in the prosocial assertive condition.

Discussion.—These findings validate our method of constructing status in the lab by replicating established findings, particularly by Ridgeway and Correll (2006). In both conditions, the assertive social type was attributed more status than the deferring social type. This replicates the findings from

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TABLE 1
STUDY 1: CORRELATIONS BETWEEN STATUS ATTRIBUTIONS AND ATTRIBUTIONS OF CONSIDERATENESS AND AUTHENTICITY

	Plain Assertive Condition		Prosocial Condition	
Correlation: considerateness-authenticity	.806***		.763***	
	OLS REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS (SE)			
	Considerateness Difference	Authenticity Difference	Considerateness Difference	Authenticity Difference
Status difference	−.628***	−.580***	−.170	−.148
	(.181)	(.186)	(.128)	(.132)
Intercept	−.314	.401	−.018	.005
	(.418)	(.430)	(.227)	(.234)
N	21		24	
Adjusted R^2	.36	.30	.04	.01

NOTE.—The top part of the table presents pairwise correlations showing that attributions of considerateness and authenticity are positively correlated (regardless of status) in both conditions. The bottom part of the table shows an OLS regression comparing the difference in status on the difference in either considerateness or authenticity for each condition. Difference is measured by comparing attributions: target of deference-deferring party. Greater positive differences in status are correlated with more negative differences in considerateness and authenticity for the plain assertive condition, but there is no statistically significant correlation in the prosocial condition.

* $P < .10$.
** $P < .05$.
*** $P < .01$.

previous studies (e.g., Anderson and Kilduff 2009) by showing that when deference is socially validated, status can be attributed to actors who act more assertively. Consistent with proposition D from above, the attributions of considerateness and authenticity are positively correlated.

The first novel finding in this study comes from the plain assertive condition, where denigration of high-status social types is observed. In this condition, along with lower attributions of considerateness, subjects also acknowledge that the social types that were attributed higher status are suspected of being inauthentic, rating these types lower on attributions of authenticity. While the Wilcoxon tests show that subjects tend to rate the deferring social types as lower status, but more considerate and more authentic, the results from the regressions show that these negative attributions were correlated with more positive attributions of status. These regressions serve as a sort of mediation in that they are inconsistent with the possibility that attributions of status are not correlated with attributions of inconsiderateness and inauthenticity. This supports our contention that, when there are no prosocial signals, attaining status breeds suspicion of being both inconsiderate and inauthentic.

To be clear, what is particularly novel about this finding is not showing that status attainment leads to acknowledgment that the high-status actor is less considerate but that status attainment also leads to acknowledged concerns about the authenticity of the high-status actor. Because in study 1 higher performance is implied via one social type's deference to a more assertive (if not dominant) other, we acknowledge that it is possible that attributions of considerateness arise because the interaction style of the assertive social type is regarded as more cold or inconsiderate. But note well that there is little reason, based on the observed behavior of the discussants alone, why a higher-performing social type would be perceived as less sincere or authentic than the social type deferring to him, unless these suspicions arise because of status attainment itself. In other words, the acknowledgment, by subjects manipulated to consider themselves as part of the high-performing social type, that members of their type are not only higher status and less considerate but also inauthentic, without direct evidence to support such an attribution, supports our theory in that it cannot be explained by the observed behavior of the actor.

The second key finding in this study comes from the prosocial assertive condition. In this condition we eliminated denigration of the target of deference type by presenting the assertive social type as gaining deference while acting in a more supportive and prosocial way toward the deferring social type. This finding is important because it shows that being assertive is not always associated with being inconsiderate or inauthentic. However, it raises an important question about our theory. These findings might just indicate that whether a high-status actor is denigrated or celebrated is con-

tingent merely on the behavior that these actors display. In study 2, we test whether denigration can arise even when (prosocial) behavior is held constant, but the context changes such that ulterior motives for performance are more likely.

Study 2: Credibility of Prosocial Signals

Study 1 showed that when deference is gained in a prosocial way, that there is no denigration of high-status actors. However, this is only a partial validation of our theory. The results from study 1 might also suggest that overcoming denigration is merely a matter of behaving in a prosocial manner, which would imply that the features of the status attainment process are not what drives denigration, but instead denigration would be the result of observed indicators of moral character. To be sure, such an interpretation would not explain why attributions of authenticity might move in the same direction as considerateness. Nonetheless, our theory holds that denigration is a response not simply to observed behavior but to the incentive structure that shapes interpretations of such behavior. In particular, we argue that even apparently prosocial behavior may be regarded as inauthentic if there is an apparent ulterior motive for engaging in such behavior. And if the presence of such an ulterior motive casts doubt on the selflessness behind the apparent prosocial behavior, it will both resurrect suspicions of inconsiderateness and make salient the question of the high-status actor's authenticity (see Ridgeway 1981, p. 335,; 1982). We thus test the following hypothesis:

> HYPOTHESIS 2. When observers have evidence that the targets of deference (do not) have a private incentive to engage in prosocial behavior, this behavior loses (gains) credibility and observers thereby regard the targets of deference as both (neither) inconsiderate and (nor) inauthentic.

Description.—In this study, we continue to use the prosocial assertive dialogue between the discussants as introduced in study 1. The main manipulation in this study, as displayed in appendix C, was to create two conditions that varied on the team members' knowledge of incentives for prosocial behavior. In each condition, subjects were presented with the same setup as in the previous study but were informed that along with rewards for correct answers team members would also receive a "teamwork bonus." Subjects in the no incentives condition were informed that the teams (discussants and commentator) were not aware of this bonus. By letting the subjects know that the teams were not aware of an incentive, we strengthen the belief that there was no ulterior motive in acting in a prosocial way. In the incentives condition subjects were informed that teams were aware of this bonus. It is important to point out that inserting an incentive is not evi-

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dence that the prosocial behavior was indeed motivated by self-interest. Instead, by telling the subjects that the incentives were known, this condition aims to create a clear ulterior motive for engaging in prosocial behavior, but no change in actual behavior.

Results.—Figure 2 shows the results from study 2 in which we compare the status, considerateness, and authenticity ratings given by subjects randomly assigned to the target of deference type. This figure shows the results of the standardized differences (z-score) in attributions between the "target of deference" and the "deferring party." The y-values are the Wilcoxon signed-rank test z-scores for differences in attributions of status, considerateness, and authenticity. In the incentives condition, subjects ($N = 26$) still attributed a typical member of their own type more status than the other group ($z = 2.70, P < .01$), attributed essentially the same levels of considerateness to both types ($z = -1.47, P = .14$), and clearly less authenticity ($z = -2.82, P < .01$) to the typical member of their own type compared to the other type. In
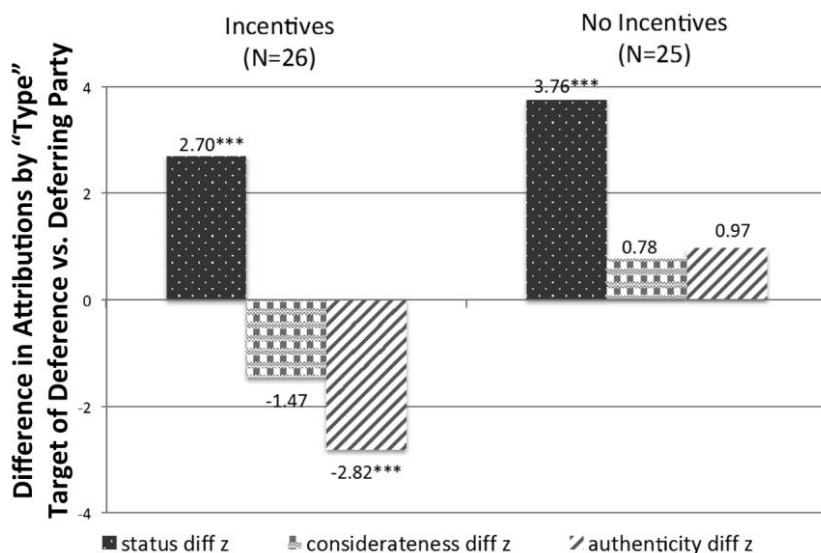

Fig. 2.—Study 2: Deference with prosocial interaction. This figure shows the results of the standardized differences (z-score) in attributions between the "target of deference" and the "deferring party." The y-values are z-scores for differences in attributions of status, considerateness, and authenticity. In each of these conditions there are clear patterns of deference combined with the target of deference acting more prosocial or supportive to the deferring party. In the first condition, where incentives for prosocial behavior (a "teamwork bonus") are known by the discussants in the study, the study participant attributes higher levels of status to the target of deference and no difference in considerateness between the two, but lower levels of authenticity to the target of deference. In the second condition, where the subject is informed that the incentives for prosocial behavior are unknown by the "team members," they attribute higher levels of status to the target of deference, but there is no difference in attributions of considerateness or authenticity.

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the no incentives condition, those subjects who were informed they were a "target of deference" type ($N = 25$) attributed a typical member of their own type more status than a typical member of the other type ($z = 3.76$, $P < .01$) and attributed a typical member of their own type essentially the same considerateness ($z = 0.78$, $P = .44$) and authenticity ($z = 0.97$, $P = .33$) as a typical member of the other type.

Table 2 shows the results of tests on the correlations of these (differences in) attributions. The upper portion of table 2 shows pairwise correlations between considerateness and authenticity. In both conditions, considerateness and authenticity are positively correlated in a statistically significant way (incentives $r = .53$, $P < .01$; no incentives $r = .48$, $P < .01$). The lower portion of table 2 shows two simple OLS regressions for each condition describing the relationship between the differences in status and considerateness (model 1) and the differences in status and authenticity (model 2). In the incentives condition, these differences are negatively correlated. In this condition, greater positive differences attributed to social types in status (target of deference > deferring party) were correlated with larger negative differences between actor types in both considerateness and authenticity (deferring party > target of deference). By contrast, there was essentially no statistically significant correlation between these differences in the no incentives condition.

Discussion.—The first important finding comes from the incentives condition. In this condition, the higher-performing type is once again denigrated. By inserting a clear incentive for prosocial behavior, the very same behavior that overcame some of the denigration concerns in study 1 is rendered ineffective. By holding behavior constant and instead changing the context in which status through prosocial behavior is attained, we show that simply acting in a prosocial manner is not enough to overcome the concerns related to the status attainment process. This result clearly supports our theory. The presence of a potential ulterior motive for these prosocial displays not only raises suspicion about the authenticity of the target of deference social type; in so doing, it causes audiences to attribute lower levels of considerateness to the target of deference social type using these inauthentic means of attaining deference. When actions meant to resolve the default impression that high-performing actors are cold may be understood as springing from self-interested motives, these displays are at best ineffective signals; and at worst, they portray the actor who benefits from attaining deference as a cold and calculating person.

The next important finding is that there is validity to our interpretation of the mechanism behind concern for authenticity in particular: an ulterior motive for performance. In the incentives condition, the target of deference social types are more highly denigrated on authenticity than on considerateness. When ulterior motives are highlighted for subjects, they readily

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TABLE 2

STUDY 2: CORRELATIONS BETWEEN STATUS ATTRIBUTIONS AND ATTRIBUTIONS OF CONSIDERATENESS AND AUTHENTICITY

	Incentives Condition		No Incentives Condition	
Correlation: considerateness-authenticity	.527***		.479***	
	OLS REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS (SE)			
	Considerateness Difference	Authenticity Difference	Considerateness Difference	Authenticity Difference
Status difference	−.529***	−.775***	−.207	.220
	(.130)	(.144)	(.283)	(.240)
Intercept	−.110	−.389	.632	−.208
	(.220)	(.243)	(.479)	(.406)
N	26		25	
Adjusted R^2	.30	.53	.00	.00

NOTE.—The top part of the table presents pairwise correlations showing that attributions of considerateness and authenticity are positively correlated (regardless of status) in both conditions. The bottom part of the table shows an OLS regression comparing the difference in status on the difference in either considerateness or authenticity for each condition. Difference is measured by comparing attributions: target of deference-deferring party. Greater positive differences in status are correlated with more negative differences in considerateness and authenticity for the incentives condition, but there is no statistically significant correlation in the no incentives condition.

* $P < .10$.
** $P < .05$.
*** $P < .01$.

make inferences about the lack of sincerity of the high-status actor's performance. The implications for considerateness are indirect and somewhat weaker.

Posttest.—While these results indicate a negative correlation between attributions of status and attributions of considerateness and authenticity when incentives for performance are clear to the audience, we have still not provided evidence that those social types attributed higher status are "denigrated," as would be consistent with our theory. It might be the case that the difference in attributions is the result of the deferring party being celebrated rather than the target of deference being denigrated, which our theory predicts. By comparing scores for considerateness and authenticity across conditions, we can see if there is a drop in considerateness and authenticity for the target of deference (high-status denigration) or an increase in considerateness and authenticity for the deferring party (low-status celebration) as a result of introducing incentives for attaining status.

Posttest results.—Table 3 presents an across-condition test on considerateness and authenticity by actor type moving from the no incentives condition to the incentives condition. Because this is an across-condition comparison we used a Mann-Whitney (Wilcoxon) U-test (Wilcoxon 1945; Mann and Whitney 1947), which is a generalized version of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, established for comparisons across conditions. This test essentially compares the sum total of each condition's rankings (U) with what the sum total of rankings would be for each condition if the distributions did not differ. Subjects' attributions of considerateness for their own type are lower ($z = -3.27$, $P = .001$, Mann-Whitney U-test $= .76$) in the incentives

TABLE 3
STUDY 2 POSTTEST: HIGH STATUS DENIGRATION OR LOW STATUS CELEBRATION?

MANN-WHITNEY U-TESTS COMPARING ATTRIBUTIONS ACROSS CONDITIONS	CHANGE IN ATTRIBUTIONS FROM NO INCENTIVES CONDITION TO INCENTIVES CONDITION	
	z-score	*P*-value
Target of deference (HS)		
Considerateness	−3.268	.001
Authenticity	−4.453	<.001
Deferring party (LS)		
Considerateness	−1.753	.080
Authenticity	−.182	.856

NOTE.—Results comparing attributions of considerateness and authenticity on the same type. The lower attributions of both considerateness and authenticity indicate a pattern of high-status denigration. Conversely, the attributions of the deferring party or low-status type were not higher across conditions for either considerateness (lower) or authenticity (no different) indicating no low-status celebration. HS = high status; LS = low status.

condition when compared to similar attributions in the no incentives condition. By contrast, attributions of considerateness for the other type were not higher ($z = -1.75$, $P = .08$, Mann-Whitney U-test $= .64$) across these two conditions. Subjects' attributions of authenticity for their own type are lower ($z = -4.45$, $P < .001$, Mann-Whitney U-test $= .85$) when incentives are introduced, while attributions of authenticity for the other type were once again not higher ($z = -0.18$, $P = .86$, Mann-Whitney U-test $= .51$) when comparing across these two conditions.

Posttest discussion.—These results indicate that when incentives for attaining status are introduced, the high-performing social type or target of this deference is attributed higher status, but denigrated with a decrease in attributions of considerateness and authenticity. The combination of the decrease in these scores for the high-performing social type and no change in these attributions for the lower-performing social type reflects the idea that high-status (categories of) actors are denigrated (considered morally suspect) when status is observed through patterns of deference. We argue that this reflects the fact that suspicions of inconsiderateness and inauthenticity are inherent in the status attainment process unless there is credible evidence to override these suspicions. In study 2, we have shown that these concerns can be overridden by credible prosocial behavior. In study 3 we consider the role that objective measures, publicity for performance, and the context in which competitions for status take place interact to produce high-status denigration or celebration.

Study 3: Objective Measures of Performance and Inferred Motivation

Purpose.—Studies 1 and 2 were designed to show how suspicions about the status attainment process arise and can be overcome where status emerges through patterns of deference. A second way in which status can emerge is through public competition, including those where performance is measured in an objective way. When status emerges in this way, it should resolve concerns about true differences in capability, but our theory (as summarized in proposition C) holds that there are still contexts in which the "denigration of heroes" can be expected to occur. As shown in study 2, authenticity concerns can arise when there are ulterior motives for the observed performance. Ulterior motives for performance create a concern that the actor is more committed to the benefits of status than they are to performing for the audience. There are various ways in which the context of the performance can lead to audience concern about ulterior motives. Consider the sports industry, where status is often established through public competitions, but sharp increases in pay for performance (particularly in professional baseball in the United States) created audience concern that the players were more committed to themselves than the fans or

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the game in general (Preston 2004; Haupert 2007; Hahl 2013). Beyond economic rewards, status can also bring social rewards through publicity or esteem from others. Those who attain status in these contexts (by performing higher than another) will be suspected of being less authentic than those who do not. Contexts in which the audience is concerned that the performance was motivated by instrumental (i.e., economic or social) reward will lead to lower attributions of authenticity for the higher performer than for the lower performer even where performance differences are measured objectively.

Public competitions can also engender concern about the considerateness of the high-status actor. Consider a status competition where two actors are vying for higher-status positions. When this competition is public, it creates the opportunity for the loser of the competition to lose face in the eyes of the audience. As discussed above, in such competitions there are two potential motivators for one competitor to seek to defeat another: (*a*) to achieve a performance that fulfills the values that underlie the competition, whereby the defeat of the rival is a side effect, and (*b*) the humiliation of that rival. If the nature of the competition is such that the outcomes from that competition are socially valued, audiences are more likely to infer that the defeat of a rival is secondary to the desire to achieve such outcomes. However, when the competition has no apparent social value, the only salient effect is the public defeat of a rival. Instead of avoiding this outcome, by not putting as much effort into the game or by giving the loser of the competition more space to maintain his dignity, the higher-status actor will seem to have been motivated by defeat of the rival.

> HYPOTHESIS 3. When competitions are public and (do not) produce socially valued outcomes, higher-performing actors will not only be regarded as higher status but also as both more (less) authentic and more (less) considerate than their lower-performing counterparts.

Description.—The key change in this study from studies 1 and 2 is how audiences observe performance differences between the two actors (Q2 type and S2 type). In the first two studies, performance differences were inferred through patterns of deference as one social type (Q2) influenced the other social type (S2) to change his answer and defer to the other (Q2). In study 3, subjects were again presented with two actors (representing two social types) competing on the same set of contrast sensitivity tasks. Instead of having to come to a consensus, both actors presented their answers independently and were then informed whether they were right or wrong. Once again, a third actor was present, performing a slightly altered role—subjects were informed that he (called the "proctor") was present to assure that the "rules were followed in the game." In each condition, the Q2 type was correct on all five of the tasks, while the S2 type was correct on

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only two of the tasks. This is similar to the previous study in which the S2 type deferred to the Q2 type in three out of the five tasks and they initially agreed on the other two tasks. The difference, then, was that the audience observed the difference in performance as objective instead of through deference, or implied influence.

Subjects were once again assigned a type through the Klee and Kandinsky painting preference. In this study, to maximize analysis power (sample size), all subjects were informed that they were a Q2 type (the type represented by the higher-performing actor in the experiment). The dependent variables (status, considerateness, and authenticity) were once again measured the same and the tests performed on the differences in these attributions for each social type were also the same as in the previous studies. Finally, subjects for this study were once again recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk tool. For study 3, 139 out of a possible 173 were used in the analysis (four subjects were not permitted to finish for answering the attention questions incorrectly, and 30 did not finish the experiment).

There were two manipulations in this study. The first manipulation varied whether there was a private incentive for performance. The second manipulation was whether the outcomes for the observed performance were recognized as socially valued or whether the competition was simply trivial. These manipulations are described below.

Public manipulation.—Subjects were randomly assigned to either a public condition or private condition. In the private condition, subjects were informed that results would be kept private and only known by each participant. In this sense, the actors were not competing for status. In the public condition, subjects were informed that the results would be posted publicly and observed by at least 30 of their peers. This manipulation was meant to trigger an ulterior motive for performance—that is, the public recognition for higher performance or status—in the public as opposed to the private condition.

Socially valued outcomes manipulation.—Subjects were also randomly assigned to conditions in which the outcomes of the performance had social value versus conditions in which there was no social value to the competition. In particular, in the charity conditions, subjects were informed that each correct answer for a participant in the game would result in a $10 donation (by the professor) to a local charity of the players' choice. This meant that differences in performance were attributed not just to actor competence but to motivations to contribute to socially valued objectives.

These two manipulations created four distinct conditions: public/no charity, public/charity, private/no charity, and private/charity. Thus study 3 was a 2 (public/private) × 2 (socially valued outcomes/trivial competition) design. The key tests and results are shown within subjects and within each

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condition as we have done in the previous studies. This also allows us to see main effects related to incentives and prosocial or socially valued outcomes.

Results.—Figure 3 shows the results of the standardized differences (z-score) in attributions between a higher-performing type and a lower-performing type counterpart. The y-values are z-scores for differences in attributions of status, considerateness, and authenticity. In the public/no charity condition, subjects ($N = 37$) again attributed a typical member of their own type more status than the other type ($z = 5.02, P < .01$) but attributed less considerateness ($z = -3.82, P < .01$) and less authenticity ($z = -3.59, P < .01$) to the typical member of their own type compared to the other type. By contrast, in the private/no charity condition, subjects ($N = 33$) attributed a typical member of their own (higher-performing) type more status than a typical member of the other (lower-performing) type ($z =$
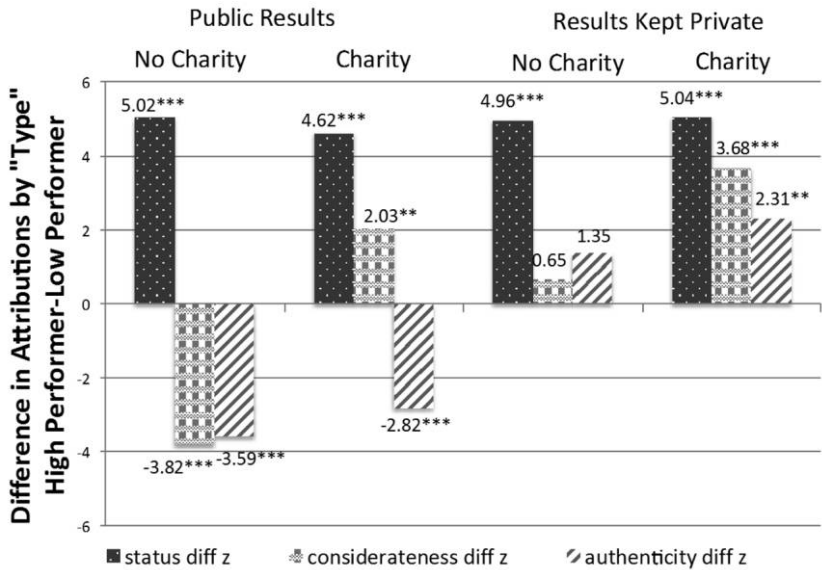

F IG. 3.—Study 3: Objective measures and status attainment. This figure shows the results of the standardized differences (z-score) in attributions between the higher-performing type and a lower-performing type counterpart. The y-values are z-scores for differences in attributions of status, considerateness, and authenticity. The key variables are whether the competition is linked with a private incentive (public results/social reward) and whether there is a recognized social value to the competition (charitable contribution linked with performance). When there is no recognized social value and a private incentive for performing, attributions of considerateness and authenticity are lower for higher-performing actors (denigration). When there is recognized social value to the performance but no private incentive (furthest to right) attributions of considerateness and authenticity are higher for higher-performing actors (celebration).

4.96, $P < .01$), while attributing a typical member of their own type essentially the same considerateness ($z = 0.65$, $P = .51$) and authenticity ($z = 1.35$, $P = .18$) as a typical member of the other type. By contrast, in the private/charity condition, subjects ($N = 34$) attributed a typical member of their own (higher-performing) type more status than a typical member of the other (lower-performing) type ($z = 5.04$, $P < .01$), and attributed a typical member of their own type higher considerateness ($z = 3.68$, $P < .01$) and authenticity ($z = 2.31$, $P = .02$) than a typical member of the other type. And finally, in the public/charity condition, subjects ($N = 35$) attributed a typical member of their own type both more status ($z = 4.62$, $P < .01$) and more considerateness ($z = 2.03$, $P = .04$) to the typical member of their own type even while they attributed less authenticity ($z = -2.82$, $P < .01$) to their own type compared to the other type. We refer to this last condition as a "mixed signals" condition, as it mixes an incentive for pursuing status (due to the publicness of the competition) with the fact that the competition has social value (since some of the proceeds go to charity).

Table 4 shows pairwise correlations between considerateness and authenticity. While considerateness and authenticity are positively correlated in all conditions, the correlation is weakest in the mixed signals condition. Table 5 shows two OLS regressions for each condition describing the relationship between the differences in status and considerateness (model 1) and the differences in status and authenticity (model 2). In the private incentive/ no charity condition (furthest left), these differences are negatively correlated: greater positive differences attributed to actor types in status (high-performing social type > low-performing social type) were correlated with larger negative differences between actor types in both considerateness and authenticity (low-performing social type > high-performing social type). In

TABLE 4
STUDY 3: CORRELATIONS BETWEEN ATTRIBUTIONS OF
CONSIDERATENESS AND AUTHENTICITY

Socially Recognized Value	Public Performance (Results Posted Publicly)	Private Performance (Results Remain Private)
No (no charity)	.921***	.572***
Yes (charity)	.203*	.567***

NOTE.—Correlations between considerateness and authenticity for each condition. While considerateness and authenticity are positively correlated in all conditions, the correlation is weakest in the condition where signals are mixed: socially valued outcome (charity) and private incentive (posted publicly).

* $P < .10$.
** $P < .05$.
*** $P < .01$.

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TABLE 5
STUDY 3: CORRELATIONS BETWEEN STATUS ATTRIBUTIONS AND ATTRIBUTIONS OF CONSIDERATENESS AND AUTHENTICITY

| | PUBLIC PERFORMANCE (RESULTS POSTED PUBLICLY) | | | | PRIVATE PERFORMANCE (RESULTS REMAIN PRIVATE) | | | |
| | No Charity | | Charity | | No Charity | | Charity | |
	Diff Warmth	Diff Authentic	Diff Warmth	Diff Authentic	Diff Warmth	Diff Authentic	Diff Warmth	Diff Authentic
Status difference	−.451***	−.644***	−.135	−.374**	−.216	.064	1.057***	.565***
	(.143)	(.157)	(.242)	(.171)	(.174)	(.216)	(.156)	(.139)
Intercept	−.239	.143	.993*	−.236	.452	−.032	−1.489***	−.923**
	(.458)	(.502)	(.533)	(.378)	(.388)	(.481)	(.468)	(.418)
N	37		35		33		34	
Adjusted R^2	.20	.31	.00	.10	.05	.00	.59	.32

NOTE.—Simple OLS regressions as tests for correlations between difference in status and difference in considerateness, and difference in status and difference in authenticity. Results are coefficients with SEs in parentheses.

* $P < .10$.
** $P < .05$.
*** $P < .01$.

the public/charity condition, higher attributions of status were correlated with lower attributions of authenticity but had no statistically significant relationship with differences in considerateness. In the private/no charity condition, there was no statistically significant correlation between these differences. Finally, in the private/charity condition, higher attributions of status were correlated with higher attributions of both considerateness and authenticity.

Table 6 is an additional analysis using OLS regression techniques to observe the main effect of incentives and socially valued outcomes. The presence of incentives results in greater negative differences in considerateness and authenticity (higher-performing social type < lower-performing social type). In addition, associating the competition with socially valued outcomes (charitable contributions) results in greater positive differences of both considerateness and authenticity (higher-performing social type > lower-performing social type).

Discussion.—These results show that the context in which status is achieved can influence whether the high-status social type is denigrated or celebrated, even when status hierarchies are validated through objective measures of performance. When there was a status incentive for high performance and the competition was trivial in nature, the winner of the competition is attributed higher status but is denigrated with lower attributions of both considerateness and authenticity. When the competition is trivial, but there is no status incentive, there is no denigration, nor is there celebration of those higher-performing types. We spend more time below dis-

TABLE 6
STUDY 3: INCENTIVES/CHARITY MAIN EFFECT

	ALL SUBJECTS	
	Considerateness Difference	Authenticity Difference
Public performance	−1.050***	−1.588***
	(.299)	(.270)
Charity	1.767***	.582**
	(.299)	(.270)
Intercept	.025	.598***
	(.350)	(.316)
N	139	
Adjusted R^2	.25	.20

NOTE.—This table is an analysis of how inserting public (incentives) or socially valued outcomes (charity) affects differences in considerateness and authenticity across all subjects in study 3. OLS regression techniques were used. Incentives and charity are dichotomous variables representing randomly assigned conditions. Results are coefficients with SEs in parentheses.

  * $P < .10$.
  ** $P < .05$.
  *** $P < .01$.

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cussing the results from the "mixed signals" condition in which there was a socially valued outcome, but the competition was public. Finally, when outcomes related to the competition are socially valued and there is no incentive to pursue status, there is no reason for the audience to assume that the higher-performing type is less considerate or less authentic than the lower-performing type. Once we have eliminated the concerns inherent to the status attainment process, the audience is free to celebrate the higher-performing type with higher attributions of status, considerateness, and authenticity.

The results from table 6 more directly validate hypothesis 3. First, these results show that when there are incentives for attaining status (social reward associated with publicly posting the results), the higher-performing social type is considered less authentic because it is unclear whether they are motivated by the competition or simply the rewards. Second, these results show that when the competition for status is associated with socially valued outcomes, that the higher-performing type is considered less authentic than the lower-performing type. While these results constitute strong evidence for our theory, in the following analysis we also show how the context in which status is attained affects the inferences made about high-status actors.

Motive inference analysis.—The setup of this study allowed us to perform an additional analysis to understand what drives attributions of inconsiderateness and inauthenticity separately. As summarized in proposition D, we expect that in general, attributions of considerateness and authenticity move in the same direction. Overall, our analysis of the correlations between these constructs showed that attributions were positively correlated across all conditions and studies. However, we argue that there are distinct reasons why we should expect that certain features of the status attainment process should lead to concerns about considerateness and authenticity. In particular, we argue that concerns about authenticity are triggered when it is clear that there are incentives for attaining status—where incentives to attain status are clear, those who are attributed higher status are also attributed lower authenticity because of concerns about ulterior motives for performance. We also argued that concerns about considerateness would be related to perceptions that the high-status actor shows little concern for the dignity of another in attaining status—either because of the trivial nature of the contest or when deference patterns were not accompanied by prosocial signals.

Each of these attributions is driven by inferences made by observers about the motivations of the higher-performing social type. We measured these inferences in this study in order to better understand the mechanisms behind each type of attribution. In order to measure inferred motivation, subjects randomly assigned to the public conditions were also asked to rate on a scale of 1 (low) to 7 (high) the likelihood that the Q2 (higher performer)

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and S2 (lower performer) were motivated by "the publicity related to the competition." Subjects randomly assigned to the charity conditions were also asked to rate on a scale of 1 (low) to 7 (high) the likelihood that the Q2 (higher performer) and S2 (lower performer) were motivated by the charitable contributions related to the competition. In this analysis, we focus solely on the inferred motivations of the higher-performing type (Q2).

Of the conditions in study 3, the public/charity condition was interesting in that it showed mixed results: positive differences in considerateness and negative differences in authenticity. This condition serves as an interesting setting in which to understand the effect of the mixed signals (higher incentive to pursue status, as well as higher incentive to promote social value) and to tease out the inferred motivations behind each type of attribution. We expect that variation in how subjects resolved the inference problem explains the divergence in attributions between considerateness and authenticity. In particular, the more a subject inferred that the high-performing type was motivated by the charitable contribution, the more positive are differences in attributions of considerateness (between the two types). Conversely, the more a subject inferred that the high-performing type was motivated by the publicity of the contest, the more negative are differences in attributions of authenticity (between the two types).

Table 7 shows the results of a multivariate regression comparing inferred motivations with differences in attributions of considerateness and authenticity. The column on the left shows the effect of perceived motive on difference in considerateness. Changes in inferences about being motivated by publicity have no effect on differences in considerateness, but a one unit increase in the strength of audience inferences that the actor was motivated by publicity leads to a .5 unit decrease in the difference (or increase in the negative difference) between the high- and low-performing type's authenticity. By contrast, a one unit increase in the strength of inferred motivation related to charity is correlated with a one unit increase (high-performing social type > low-performing social type) in the difference in attributions of considerateness.

These results indicate that the difference in attributions of considerateness and authenticity between the higher- and lower-performing types was driven by differences in inferred motivations. A key finding in this table is the negative correlation between inferences of the publicity motive and the charity motive. This negative correlation indicates that subjects tended to resolve the inference problem by deciding either that the socially valued outcomes or the publicity motivated the performance, but that both could not be operating simultaneously (even though this is theoretically possible). Where the subject inferred that the high-status actor might have been inspired by the social rewards, they attributed less authenticity to the

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TABLE 7
Study 3: Mechanism Analysis: Subjects' Inferences about Motive and
Attributions of Considerateness and Authenticity

	Mixed Signals: Charity and Public Performance Condition	
	Considerateness Difference	Authenticity Difference
Publicity motive	.038	−.543***
	(.139)	(.142)
Charity motive	.938***	−.026
	(.137)	(.140)
Intercept	−3.334***	2.008*
	(1.133)	(1.157)
N	35	
Adjusted R^2	.64	.34
Correlation: publicity motive—charity motive	−.523***	

Note.—The table shows only the condition with both the public and socially valued outcomes. Differences in considerateness are contingent on subjects assuming that charity is what motivates the higher-performing actor (higher values for charity motive are correlated with more positive differences in considerateness). Differences in authenticity are contingent on subjects assuming that publicity is what motivates the higher-performing actor (higher values for publicity motive are correlated with more negative differences in considerateness). Below, the table shows that the publicity motive and charity motive were negatively correlated (higher values for one meant lower values for the other). Results are coefficients with SEs in parentheses.

* $P < .10$.
** $P < .05$.
*** $P < .01$.

higher-performing social type than the to lower-performing type. When the subject inferred that the high-performing type was motivated by charity, they attributed higher levels of considerateness to the higher-performing type than to the lower-performing type. The key is not whether the audience is willing to give them the benefit of the doubt, but how the context influences whether the audience assumes a prosocial motivation or an instrumental motivation. The key finding from this conditions is that the inference made about the motivation of the high-performing social type determines whether the high-status actor is celebrated or denigrated.

DISCUSSION

The experimental results presented in this article validate our explanation of the common tendency to denigrate those in high-status positions. We have suggested that this puzzle should command our interest insofar as (*a*) the observers who denigrate a high-status social category are themselves members of that category and (*b*) the denigration occurs despite the absence

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of problematic behavior. Moreover, the "denigration of heroes" under these conditions is, at first blush, difficult to reconcile with the notion that status is conferred on the basis of prosocial behavior, as represented by such moral heroes as Raoul Wallenberg or Mother Teresa. Our theory resolves this puzzle. We argue and show how the incentives associated with status attainment can lead an audience to suspect high-status actors of inauthenticity because of the benefits accorded to these actors. While status is attributed because of recognized performance valued by an audience, the very fact that the attainment of status confers benefits raises the suspicion that high-status actors pursue their self-interest over that of the audience. Indeed, the salience of such suspicions is such that even attempts to resolve this concern through prosocial behavior are ineffective when an incentive for this behavior is known. Furthermore, the nature of the interaction processes through which status is attained raises suspicions regarding the high-status social type's warmth or considerateness for others. This is because deference entails inspiring a loss of dignity of another in order to attain and maintain this valued position. The implication is that the underlying motivation that threatens both the perceived authenticity and considerateness of a high-status actor is one of placing self before others, a perception that calls the actor's moral character into question. Our findings support the argument that status attainment, by itself, leads to (private) denigration of high-status actors.

The findings of this study cast serious doubt on the most prominent explanation for this phenomenon in either the sociological or psychological literatures: the "compensation hypothesis" (e.g., Judd et al. 2005; Yzerbyt et al. 2008). Judd and colleagues (2005; Yzerbyt et al. 2008) argue that attributions of lower morality to high-status actors stem from a psychological motivation to see the world as just. This motivation is said to cause people to compensate the losers in status competition by attributing greater moral worth to them. The individual is thought to achieve a sense of justice by making up for an imbalance on one dimension of worth (status) with a corresponding imbalance on another dimension of worth (morality).

Even if one disregards the experimental results of this study, which cast serious doubt on this mechanism, there are at least three interlocking theoretical difficulties with this theory. The first theoretical difficulty is that the very literature from which this argument derives, system justification theory (Jost and Banaji 1994; Kay, Jimenez, and Jost 2002; cf. Lerner 1980), also suggests that individuals can satisfy their need for justice with a very different psychological process that would not involve compensating low-status actors with greater morality. This alternative logic, described as being related to the Protestant work ethic (see Kay and Jost 2003), is particularly noteworthy because it helps explain why low-status actors tend to accept their low status. In particular, this theory suggests that individuals satisfy

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their need to believe that the world is just by understanding patterns of social inequality as reflecting deserved rewards on the parts of the actors (Kay and Jost 2003, p. 824). Thus, given the fact that the motivation to see the world as just can be met by regarding the status hierarchy as fair, it is unclear why high-status actors would instead compensate low-status actors by attributing greater morality to them.

Moreover, such compensation seems to assume a level of altruism that is rarely seen. It is far-fetched to believe that people will denigrate their own category just to balance out another category's lower status when there is no evidence to support such denigration. By denigrating one's own category, the high-status actor is placing value on another group at the expense of his own, implicating all members of the category. While individuals may have a psychological motivation to see the world as just, and this might even cause them to want to compensate losers in status competition with victories on other dimensions of worth, it is unclear why this need would systematically overwhelm more selfish motives (see Simpson and Willer 2008).

Beyond these theoretical difficulties, our experimental results cast doubt upon the "compensation theory" and support our "suspicious attainment" theory. As found in study 2, there is no evidence of a tendency to compensate low-status categories when observers see credible evidence that status was attained in a "prosocial" or morally virtuous way (study 2, no incentives condition) or when the context of the competition for status is such that there are private incentives to display higher competence than another (study 3, private condition).

Finally, and perhaps key to our puzzle, a problem with the "compensation theory" is that it cannot explain why high-status actors are sometimes celebrated for their morality, as we saw very clearly in the private/charity condition of study 3. If it is the case that there is a psychological motivation to compensate low-status actors with higher attributions of considerateness (and authenticity), then we should always see this negative relationship between status and any other dimension of worth. But as discussed in the introduction, it is clear that there are actors who gain high status precisely because of their moral virtue (Willer 2009). Moral heroes such as Mother Teresa or Raoul Wallenberg cannot be explained by a theory that assumes a psychological need to balance status hierarchies with moral hierarchies.

By contrast, such cases are well understood by sociological theory, which recognizes that audiences confer status on the basis of some combination of actors' capabilities and their commitment to use those capabilities on behalf of the audience (Correll and Benard 2006; Phillips et al. 2013; see, e.g., Ridgeway 1981). This logic has recently been extended to suggest that actors who engage in selfless "prosocial" activities receive more deference relative to those who work only on their own behalf (Willer 2009). Conversely, scandals leading to the loss of status are likely to erupt where it is

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revealed that a high-status actor has falsified his performance (e.g., doping scandals in sports, scientific fraud) or has betrayed the audience by serving himself (e.g., embezzlement) or rival groups (e.g., treason; Adut 2008; Phillips et al. 2013). Consistent with this perspective, in findings from study 2, we see that when observers see credible evidence that status was attained in a "prosocial" or morally virtuous way and where the context of the competition was such that there were private incentives or (study 3, private conditions) that high-status actors are at least rated no different than the low-status categories of actors on these dimensions of morality.

But while such sociological theory can explain cases where status is a function of morality, it has offered no explanation for the apparent contradiction that high-status actors are often denigrated as immoral. As such, our theory extends existing sociological theory by developing it further to explain the conditions under which celebration or denigration of high-status actors can occur. Instead of suggesting that exhibiting prosocial behavior is the only way that actors earn status (e.g., Fragale et al. 2011) our theory recognizes that there are many ways in which status can be attained and each can vary on the amount of prosocial signals that can be displayed. In particular, our theory relies on the premise that the display of prosocial behavior is a sufficient but not necessary condition of status attainment. In general, actors earn status from public recognition of their competence and their commitment (to use such capability) toward the benefit of the audience (Ridgeway 1982; Phillips et al. 2013). Displays of prosocial behavior provide evidence of such commitment. But in many cases, evidence of capability and commitment must be derived from actors' relative performance and from the deference that they receive, ostensibly due to such performance. We argue and show that the manner in which status is attained, including the level of ambiguity around sincere prosocial sentiment, determines whether a high-status actor's moral character is either denigrated or celebrated.

Three related implications of our study are worth noting. First, our theory and results potentially shed light on why audiences often quickly subvert status hierarchies when faced with evidence that supports these suspicions. Consider how rare it is to find the actor who forever overcomes these concerns à la Mother Teresa or Raoul Wallenberg. Adut's (2008) work on scandals shows that public denigration of high-status actors happens only when there is a level of common knowledge: everyone knows that everyone else knows that these erstwhile heroes should be denigrated. Our findings suggest that there may often be an underlying (privately held) concern about the morality of the high-status social type created by suspicions that status was gained in inauthentic or cold ways. As long as these suspicions remain private or unproven, the status hierarchy remains sup-

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ported. However, audiences are willing to turn heroes into villains when their concerns become validated. These high-status insecurities suggest the presence of a soft underbelly to status hierarchies; the willingness to (privately) denigrate high-status actors makes possible the rapid transitions from public celebration to scandal.

Second, the fact that attaining status leads to concerns about the moral character of the high-status actor can also help explain why high-status actors are often not penalized for poor expressions of capability, but are less immune to concerns about their commitment (Phillips et al. 2013). Recent work on constraints to high-status positions has shown that the increased attention given to those in high-status positions puts them at risk of falling from these lofty perches (Graffin et al. 2013). It is worth noting, however, that in these studies status loss occurs when evidence about selfish behavior comes to light (Wade et al. 2006; Graffin et al. 2013; cf. Adut 2008), but evidence of weakened capability can be overlooked (cf. Bothner, Kim, and Smith 2011). Because the status attainment process, unless associated with evidence of prosocial behavior, brings with it suspicions about an actor's interest in benefiting from these positions, audiences are often concerned about whether the actor is more loyal to the audience or to themselves. In other words, audiences can appreciate a high-status actor's performance but can also doubt that the commitment shown to them in this instance will not be turned against them if the incentives change. Thus, audiences often celebrate an actor's successful performance, but when presented with evidence that increases concern about the high-status actor's (lack of) commitment, audiences can penalize the high performer (Hahl 2013).

Finally, the realization that high-status actors, despite public acknowledgment that they carry high levels of both capability and commitment, are held under suspicion as lacking authenticity or considerateness can also help explain why, at times, high-status actors are seen aligning themselves with low-status culture (Hahl, Zuckerman, and Kim 2014). When high-status actors attain their positions in ways that do not refute the concerns that the status was truly earned, they are suspected of lacking considerateness and authenticity. Because their lower-status counterparts have not gained status, they are not held suspect on these dimensions. As a result these low-status actors tend to be attributed higher levels of considerateness and authenticity than the high-status actor. A high-status actor who can appropriate the symbols of this low-status culture, without threatening his own status, might be able to soften his image through the positive attributions of morality that come with such adoptions. This can help explain why we see high-status actors consuming low-status culture (e.g., Bryson 1996; Martin 1998; Grazian 2005; Strausbaugh 2006) and displaying images or activities normally re-

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served for low-status actors (e.g., Halle 1996; Grounds 2001; Johnston and Baumann 2007; Hahl and Gosline 2012). Doing so allows the high-status actor to appropriate the low-status culture's high levels of authenticity and considerateness and presents an image less fraught with these same morality concerns.

That there is a need for high-status actors to resolve denigration concerns by engaging in prosocial activities, or presenting prosocial symbols in the way described above, was acknowledged in previous literature on emerging roles and specialization in task groups (e.g., Bales 1955; Slater 1955). This work suggested that when leaders emerge in task groups they can be disliked if they are seen to claim their role simply because they take on extra work and not on the basis of competence. In response, work by Burke and colleagues (1968; Gallagher and Burke 1974) argues that because of this concern for legitimacy of the leader, the group is more effective when another person in the group takes on the role of "socio-emotional" leader while supporting the task leader. This work can be seen as consistent with our theory in that these researchers acknowledge that a potential source of disliking task group leaders comes from how these emergent go-getters can appear to seek after this role through status attainment, which, we add, raises questions about motives and concern for others. While they suggest a need for specialization in the competence and prosocial tasks, our findings suggest that there is no need for specialization of this sort when the leader can present prosocial behavior to his audience, thereby, resolving the denigration concerns on his own.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the common tendency to (privately) denigrate our heroes by attributing lower levels of morality (considerateness and authenticity) to actors in high-status positions derives from suspicions that arise inherent to the process of status attainment. Because status confers benefits to the holder, the high-status actor, while publicly acknowledged as acting in concert with group interest, tends to appear inauthentic in its commitment to serve the group interest above self-interest. Because deference patterns, through which audiences observe status, entail both claims to superiority and affirmation of inferiority, a target of deference tends to be seen as harming the deferring party by benefiting from another's loss of dignity. Audiences will infer insincere or inconsiderate motives unless high-status actors are seen as credibly prosocial and selfless in support of the group's goals, without the clear potential of ulterior motives for these displays. Thus, the status attainment process raises suspicions that can either be fulfilled with common knowledge of inauthentic or inconsiderate behavior or overcome with common knowledge of credible prosocial behavior.

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APPENDIX A

Status Questions: Cronbach's alpha = .854

How would most people rate the typical Q2 (S2) member on measures of respect?

How would most people rate the typical Q2 (S2) member on measures of prestige?

How would most people rate the typical Q2 (S2) member on measures of competence?

"Considerateness" questions: Cronbach's alpha = .838

How would most people rate the typical Q2 (S2) member on measures of likability?

How would most people rate the typical Q2 (S2) member on measures of considerateness?

"Authenticity" questions: Cronbach's alpha = .82

How would most people rate the typical Q2 (S2) member on measures of authenticity?

How would most people rate the typical Q2 (S2) member on measures of sincerity?

APPENDIX B

Example of Plain Assertive versus Prosocial Assertive Text for Study 1

Example of Plain Assertive Dialogue

Condition Dialogue for Disagreement 1:
Q2 Male: I am pretty sure black covers the most space.
S2 Male: I thought it might be white. Are you sure?
Q2 Male: It feels right—let's say black.
S2 Male: OK
Commentator: I agree with Q2, let's choose black.

Example of Prosocial Assertive Dialogue

Condition Dialogue for Disagreement 1:
Q2 Male: I am pretty sure black covers the most space.
S2 Male: I thought it might be white. Are you sure?
Q2 Male: Why did you think white?
S2 Male: It seemed like there was a chunk of white right in the middle that stuck out to me.
Q2 Male: I can see that logic. But measuring on the middle might be misleading because your eyes will be drawn to the big chunks of color. I chose black because there were long strips of it along the sides. Does that make sense?

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S2 Male: Yes, that makes sense. It sounds good, let's choose black.
Commentator: I agree with Q2, let's choose black.

APPENDIX C

Study 2

Incentives Condition

Introduction to the team task.—We presented a "contrast sensitivity task" to teams of three people. Each team's objective was to come to a decision about the correct answer on the presented task. Each team had to decide on **only one answer**. After answering the question by themselves, the team members discussed among the group and came to a consensus.

The teams were informed that they would receive a **reward based on the number of questions they got correct**. One correct answer won them $25 and each correct answer after that doubled the total amount they won. For instance, two correct answers won them $50, three won them $100, four won them $200, and if they got all five correct they would win $400 to split among the three of them.

Additionally, it has been shown that teams are more effective when they elicit a full range of opinion from their members. Teams were allocated a **"teamwork bonus"** based on how well they fulfill these criteria. We explain how this was allocated later in the description. **Teams were informed up front that this "teamwork bonus" was possible.** Furthermore, **they were informed, in general terms, the criteria on which this bonus would be allocated.**

No Incentives Condition

Introduction to the team task.—We presented a "contrast sensitivity task" to teams of three people. Each team's objective was to come to a decision about the correct answer on the presented task. Each team had to decide on **only one answer**. After answering the question by themselves, the team members discussed among the group and came to a consensus.

The teams were informed that they would receive a **reward based on the number of questions they got correct**. One correct answer won them $25 and each correct answer after that doubled the total amount they won. For instance, two correct answers won them $50, three won them $100, four won them $200, and if they got all five correct they would win $400 to split among the three of them.

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Additionally, it has been shown that teams are more effective when they elicit a full range of opinion from their members. Teams were allocated a **"teamwork bonus"** based on how well they fulfill these criteria. We explain how this was allocated later in the description. **Teams were *NOT* informed up front that this "teamwork bonus" was possible, *nor* were they informed the criteria on which this bonus would be allocated.**

APPENDIX D

S2/Q2 Manipulation Check: In-Group Bias or the "Sour Grapes" Effect

Since all subjects in the studies discussed above were assigned to the higher-status type, these studies demonstrate that lower attributions of considerateness and authenticity cannot be explained simply by in-group bias. While our primary puzzle centered on why actors might at times negatively relate status with considerateness and authenticity within their own type, our design allows us to examine the effects of the in-group "sour grapes" argument. In fact, if our manipulation of audience status did not take, and for some reason all subjects identified more readily with the less competent (deferring party) type, then these results might be explained by in-group bias. Because we relied heavily on designs established in the mere difference line of literature (Tajfel et al. 1971; Yamagishi and Kiyonari 2000; Ridgeway and Correll 2006), we are confident that our status manipulation was effective. To be sure, we used a concentration question in each study to assure that only those subjects who knew which type they were assigned (Q2 or S2) were included in the study. Only three subjects across all three studies did not answer this question correctly. Nonetheless, we analyzed results of studies from the perspective of the deferring party (S2) to serve as our own manipulation check.

The rest of this appendix discusses how results on similar studies from the perspective of the less competent type subjects serve as a manipulation check on the attempt to assure that both groups did not automatically identify with the S2 or deferring party type. Showing the manipulation within these results is tricky because our argument suggests that the negative relationship between attributions of status and attributions of considerateness and authenticity is driven primarily by a cognitive mechanism that leads to suspicion simply because of the position of the actor in question. As such, we expect little difference between the results from the target of deference (Q2) and deferring party (S2) types for most of the studies. We expect that in-group bias will be most visible in studies where the high-status actors were not expected to be denigrated. In other words, there should be some dampening of the positive effects for prosocial activities engaged in by the high-status actor.

Manipulation Check Studies

We replicated the study 1 assertive prosocial condition, but from the "deferring party" audience perspective. We also replicated both conditions of study 2, again from the "deferring party" audience perspective. We expect that the deferring party audience will be less willing to accept these prosocial signals, resulting in the persistence of a negative relationship between status and considerateness for the deferring party audience results.

Comparison of Prosocial Effect for "Deferring Party" Type Audience

Figure D1 shows the results for the manipulation check studies. In study 1, prosocial condition, subjects randomly assigned to the deferring party type ($N = 26$) attributed a typical member of the other group more status than their own group ($z = 4.22$, $P < .01$) but attributed lower levels of considerateness ($z = -1.71$, $P = .09$) to the other type and essentially the same levels of authenticity ($z = -0.72$, $P = .47$) to teach type. In the study 2 conditions, subjects randomly assigned to the deferring party type ($N = 18$) in the no incentives condition, attributed more status ($z = 3.04$, $P < .01$) to
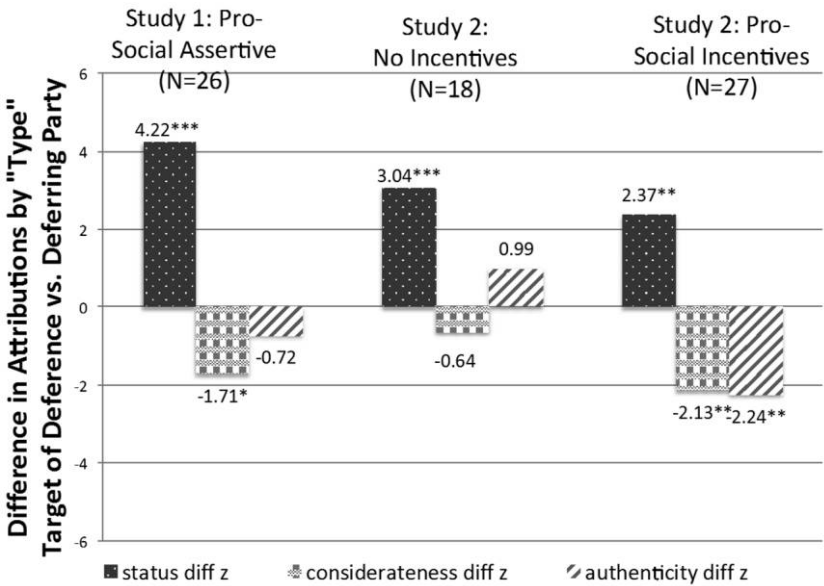

Fɪɢ. D1.—Manipulation check: Prosocial conditions for subjects randomly assigned to the "deferring party" type. Results, when compared with similar conditions of target of deference types, show an in-group bias as prosocial behavior has a weaker effect on correcting negative attributions of considerateness and authenticity of high-status actors.

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the other type compared with the typical member of their own group but attributed essentially the same considerateness ($z = -0.64$, $P = .52$) and authenticity ($z = 0.99$, $P = .32$) to the other type compared to its own type. In the incentives condition where incentives were known, subjects randomly assigned to the deferring party type ($N = 27$) also attributed higher status ($z = 2.37$, $P = .02$) to the other type above that attributed to their own type but attributed lower considerateness ($z = -2.13$, $P = .03$) and authenticity ($z = -2.24$, $P = .02$) to the other type compared with their own type.

In-Group Effects Discussion

The key patterns provide further support for our theory. When prosocial signals are observed without incentives for this behavior (study 2 replication), there is essentially no difference in considerateness or authenticity attributions between their own and the other group. Recall that in study 1 above, the high-status subjects attributed the same amount of considerateness between their own type and the lower-status type when prosocial behavior was observed. By contrast, in the replication of this condition, the deferring party continued to attribute more considerateness to their own lower-status type even when these same prosocial signals were observed. In all, these results support the "sour grapes" or in-group effect, which is also evidence that our manipulation, following the minimal group or mere difference tradition, was effective.

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APPENDIX E

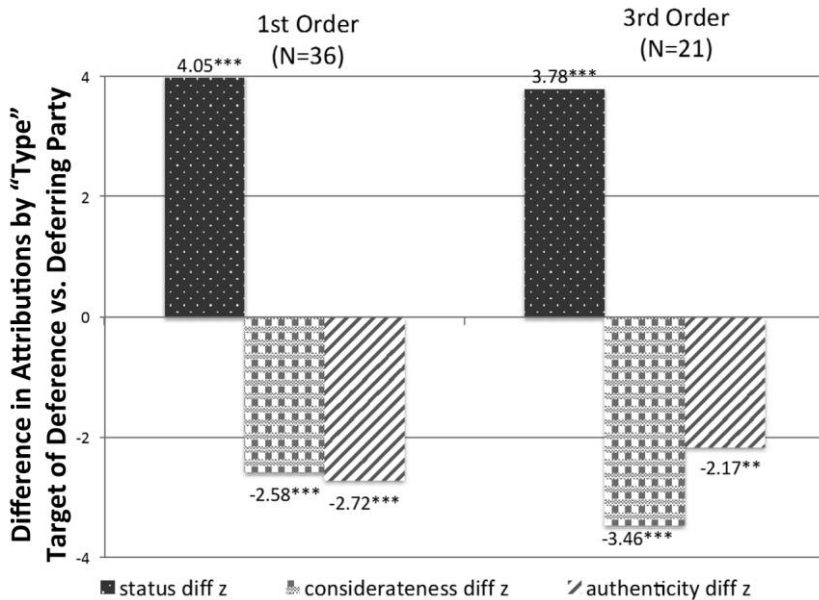First-Order versus Third-Order Results

Fig. E1.—This figure shows results from the plain assertive condition in study 1. On the left side, the subjects were asked the dependent variable in a first-order way ("how would you rate . . . "), and on the right side we present the results from the previously reported third-order questions ("how would most people rate . . ."). The results show no difference in the negative relationship whether it was first or third order.
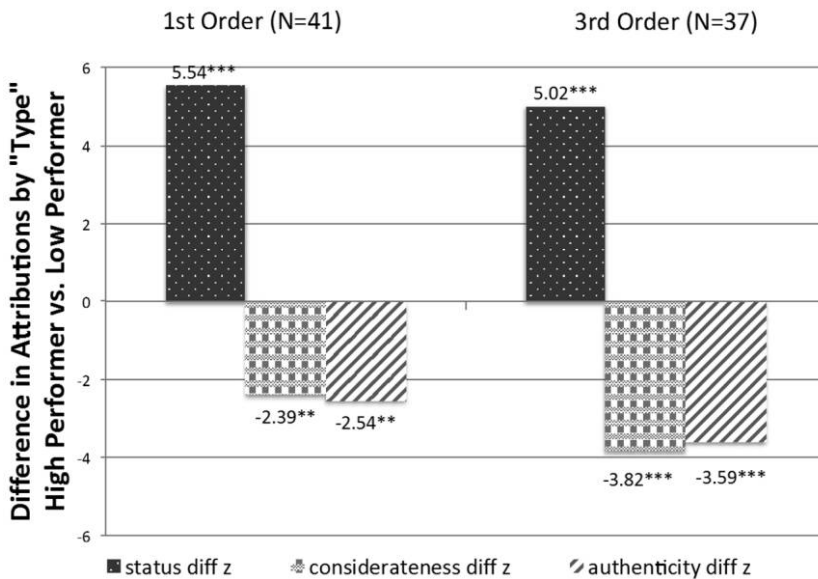
Fig. E2.—This figure shows results from the public/no charity condition in study 3. On the left side, the subjects were asked the dependent variable in a first-order way ("how would you rate . . ."), and on the right side we present the results from the previously reported third-order questions ("how would most people rate . . ."). The results show no difference in the negative relationship whether it was first or third order.

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