Organization Science

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To cite this article:
Jiyin Cao, Edward Bishop Smith (2021) Why Do High-Status People Have Larger Social Networks? Belief in Status-Quality Coupling as a Driver of Network-Broadening Behavior and Social Network Size. Organization Science 32(1):111-132. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2020.1381

http://pubsonline.informs.org/journal/orsc

ORGANIZATION SCIENCE
Vol. 32, No. 1, January–February 2021, pp. 111–132
ISSN 1047-7039 (print), ISSN 1526-5455 (online)

Why Do High-Status People Have Larger Social Networks? Belief in Status-Quality Coupling as a Driver of Network-Broadening Behavior and Social Network Size

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Received: June 20, 2017
Revised: October 25, 2018; September 4, 2019; February 24, 2020
Accepted: May 31, 2020
Published Online in Articles in Advance: October 9, 2020

https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2020.1381

Abstract. Previous research has demonstrated that the size and reach of people's social networks tend to be positively related to their social status. Although several explanations help to account for this relationship—for example, higher-status people may be part of multiple social circles and therefore have more social contacts with whom to affiliate—we present a novel argument involving people's beliefs about the relationship between status and quality, what we call *status-quality coupling*. Across seven separate studies, we demonstrate that the positive association between social status and network-broadening behavior (as well as social network size) is contingent on the extent to which people believe that status is a reliable indicator of quality. Across each of our studies, high- and low-status people who viewed status and quality as tightly coupled differed in their network-broadening behaviors, as well as in the size of their reported social networks. The effect was largely driven by the perceived self-value and perceived receptivity of the networking target. Such differences were significantly weaker or nonexistent among equivalently high- and low-status people who viewed status as an unreliable indicator of quality. Because the majority of participants—both high- and low-status—exhibited beliefs in status-quality coupling, we conclude that such a belief marks an important and previously unaccounted-for driver of the relationship between status, network-broadening behaviors, and social networks. Implications for research on social capital, advice seeking, and inequality are highlighted in the discussion section.

Supplemental Material: The online appendices are available at https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2020.1381.

Keywords: status • status-quality coupling • networking • network-broadening behavior • social networks • psychological processes • experimental design

Introduction

Research on social networks has demonstrated time and time again that the size, breadth, and reach of people's social networks are positively correlated with several beneficial outcomes, including access to valuable opportunities, resources, and information (e.g., Burt 1992, Wasserman and Faust 1994). Consequently, an important ongoing research agenda for social, organizational, and network science involves identifying differences in the kinds of social networks people have and the origins of these differences (e.g., Hall and Wellman 1985, Campbell et al. 1986, McPherson et al. 2001). Among the many findings from this research, one of the most common, and most robust, is that across a range of scales and contexts, high-status people tend to have larger, more expansive social networks than low-status people (e.g., Wasserman and Faust, 1994, Brashears 2011, Smith et al. 2012).[1] The motivating question for the present paper is, in a word, why?

Existing research offers two potential answers. One potential answer is *experience-centric* and proposes that high-status people, relative to low-status people, are more likely to be part of multiple social circles, in part as a function of higher educational attainment and greater professional mobility (e.g., Hill and Dunbar 2003); as a result, they accumulate more social connections over time. A second answer, which invokes a more *alter-centric* perspective, builds on the premise that people are generally status seeking in their social affiliations (e.g., Bothner et al. 2010, Yu and Xie 2017). As a result, high-status people benefit from their increased likelihood of being sought out by others, which can increase the size and reach of their social networks.

By comparison, this paper builds upon the recent swell of research examining the psychological underpinnings

of social network phenomena (e.g. Kilduff and Krackhardt 1994, Smith et al. 2012, Brashears 2013, Casciaro et al. 2014, Kuwabara et al. 2018, Mehra et al. 2001, Menon and Smith 2014, Shea et al. 2015) and proposes an *ego-centric* behavioral mechanism to further explain the relationship between social status and social network structure. Specifically, the ego-centric perspective that we advance here proposes that one's status position influences individual psychology and behaviors, which subsequently changes social network structure. The ego-centric perspective provides a significant extension for the current social networks and status literature, which often emphasizes the role of structural availability in shaping individual social networks (Ibarra 1992, Reagans 2005, Kleinbaum et al. 2013) and studies the status dynamic largely from the perspective of the status-observers (Merton 1968, Berger et al. 1972, Webster and Entwisle 1976, Rosenthal and Jacobson 1992, Hardy and Van Vugt 2006, Van Der et al. 2006, Larivière and Gingras 2009). By comparison, we pay attention to the agentic role that individuals play in creating their social networks and study the status dynamic from the perspective of the status-holders.

Our core argument consists of two main parts. First, we propose that high-status people are more likely than low-status people to engage in network-broadening behaviors—that is, to reach out to friends of friends or others with whom they are not well acquainted. Importantly, we anticipate this tendency to hold, independent of whether high-status people have more ties in their "potential networks" to begin with, as we suspect they do (Smith et al. 2012).[2] As compared with the initial two mechanisms that we highlight, we will investigate how status affects people's psychology and influences their likelihood of engaging in network-broadening behaviors. Second, we hypothesize that a primary enabler of network-broadening behaviors among high-status people, and simultaneously a primary deterrent of such behavior among low-status people, relates to people's belief in the extent to which social status is legitimate (Tyler 2006); in other words, social status and quality are tightly coupled. In short, we argue that the frequently observed positive relationship between social status and network size may be driven by people's belief that status is a reliable indicator of quality. This belief, combined with social status, produces a joint effect on people's network-broadening behaviors. When the belief is high, high-status people are likely to view themselves as valuable to others. Given that networking is about resource and value exchange (Lin 1999, 2001; Burt 2000), the heightened perceived self-value leads high-status people to expect that others will be receptive to their attempts at networking, which subsequently increases high-status people's willingness to network broadly. By comparison, we theorize that low-status people who believe status and quality to be tightly coupled will be less likely to think of themselves as valuable to others and subsequently lower their expected receptivity from the targets of their networking, thereby rendering them more reluctant to engage in network-broadening. When people do not believe status and quality to be tightly coupled, by contrast, the positive relationship between status and network-broadening will diminish, because status is no longer associated with the level of value that one perceives herself has.

Results of seven separate studies, including one pilot study, support our predictions. High- and low-status people who believe that status and quality are tightly coupled differ—in the expected directions—in their network-broadening behaviors, as well as in the size of their reported social networks, or "ego-networks." These same differences are significantly weaker or nonexistent among high- and low-status people who view social status and quality as less tightly coupled. Importantly, our data also indicate that both high- and low-status people tend to believe that social status is in fact a reliable indicator of quality, both in their workplaces and in general. This observation presents important implications for research on the psychology of status, the dynamics of social networking, and the maintenance of social hierarchy. Whereas a belief in status-quality coupling is likely to benefit high-status people, it may simultaneously undermine low-status people's willingness and ability to both build and benefit from larger social networks.

We review two important streams of status research that adopt two different conceptualizations of status: the admiration and respect conceptualization (Ridgeway and Walker 1995, Magee and Galinsky 2008) and the unobserved-quality conceptualization (Podolny 1993, Benjamin and Podolny 1999, Lynn et al. 2009). Next, we synthesize the two conceptualizations and formally introduce the concept of belief in status-quality coupling. Lastly, we explain the specific mechanisms by which people's beliefs (or disbeliefs) in coupling affect how they network.

Social Status and Network-Broadening

Research in sociology and social psychology commonly invokes one of two definitions of *status*. The first, which is the focus of the present section, is that status amounts to rank positions in a social hierarchy that both emerge from and subsequently affect the extent to which an actor is respected, admired, or deferred to by others (e.g., Homans 1961, Blau 1964, Ridgeway and Walker 1995; see also Magee and Galinsky 2008, Bothner et al. 2010, Manzo and Baldassarri 2015). According to this view, status is both the currency accumulated by those who receive deference from others and the lens through which others ascribe

favorable views toward those with high status (Bothner et al. 2011). The benefits of status for those accruing it are numerous. As compared with low-status people, high-status people (and organizations) are treated more favorably (Stuart et al. 1999, Phillips and Zuckerman 2001, Anderson et al. 2012, Lount and Pettit 2012, Pettit and Sivanathan 2012), receive greater attention (Merton 1968, Rosenthal and Jacobson 1992, Larivière and Gingras 2009) and more encouraging feedback (Word, Zanna, and Cooper 1974, Camic, 1992, Bothner et al. 2011), are imbued with elevated expectations (Berger et al. 1972, Webster and Entwisle 1976), and are seen as more desirable teammates (Hardy and Van Vugt 2006, Van Der et al. 2006).

In addition to these benefits—which focus on how *others* respond to a person's status—research also has explored the effects of status on the status-holder herself (Anderson et al. 2012, Blader and Chen 2012, Lount and Pettit 2012, Pettit and Sivanathan 2012, Anicich et al. 2015, Hays and Bendersky 2015, Blader et al. 2016, Hays and Blader 2017). An important finding of this work is that high-status people tend to see their social environments more positively than low-status people (Anderson et al. 2012, Lount and Pettit 2012, Pettit and Sivanathan 2012). For example, experimental research has shown that high-status people perceive the same level of applause to be louder and the same facial expressions to be friendlier, as compared to lower-status people (Pettit and Sivanathan 2012). Similarly, relative to low-status people, high-status people also perceive the world to be more trustworthy (Lount and Pettit 2012) and life to be both happier and more satisfying (Anderson et al. 2012). These results highlight a core premise underlying much of the existing social scientific research on status: occupying different status positions can alter individuals' psychology and in turn affect their behavior (e.g., Blader and Chen 2012, Bothner et al. 2012, Hays and Bendersky 2015, Blader and Yu 2017, Hays and Blader 2017).

By extending this prior research to a social network context, we hypothesize that high-status people are more likely to engage in *broadening* forms of social networking or networking meant specifically to expand the scope of a person's information seeking and professional opportunities (Whiting and de Janasz 2004). Because high-status people tend to view themselves *and* their social surroundings more favorably, we posit that high-status people are more likely than low-status people to expect a positive reaction to their attempts at social networking (see Huo et al. 2010; see also Perrow 1961, Han 1994, Henrich and Gil-White 2001, Gould 2002). This perceived greater receptivity should be particularly impactful for networking behaviors due to the fact that social networking involves a nontrivial probability of social rejection, which prior research has shown to be psychologically unpleasant and even physically painful (Eisenberger et al. 2003, MacDonald and Leary 2005). If high-status people expect greater receptivity on average, as compared to low-status people, then they should be more likely to engage in active social networking than low-status people. Accordingly, we propose the following.

Hypothesis 1. *Social status is positively associated with network-broadening behavior.*

A Critical Enabler: Belief in Status-Quality Coupling

Hypothesis 1 rests on two critical assumptions. First, individuals engage in social networking in part as a means of exchanging information and other resources (Lin 1999, 2001; Burt 2000) and are more likely to engage in network-broadening behavior when they believe they have value to offer others. Following Leary et al. (2014), we define value as "perceived instrumental social value" or the perception that a person possesses "resources and/or personal characteristics that are important for the attainment of . . . goals" (pp. 160). Second, by linking value to status, Hypothesis 1 also rests on the assumption that the social hierarchy is instrumentally legitimate (Tyler 2006), meaning that status is coupled with quality (Thibaut and Kelley 1959, Blau 1964, Berger et al. 1972, Leary et al. 2014, Anderson et al. 2015).[3] This brings us to a second conceptualization of status: status as a signal of underlying, unobserved quality (Podolny 1993, Benjamin and Podolny 1999, Lynn et al. 2009). According to this view, which is not mutually exclusive from the first, status is important due to the fact that an object or actor's quality is often difficult, if not impossible, to observe. In light of this unobservability, social status is often viewed as a proxy for an actor's quality. In organizational contexts, *quality* often refers to performance or task competence (Blau 1964, Driskell and Mullen 1990). A range of empirical studies have supported the appropriateness of this proxy and shown that high-status people indeed demonstrate higher task competence compared to lower-status people (Anderson and Kilduff 2009).

Belief in Status-Quality Coupling

Acknowledging that status is a "signal of quality" does not imply, however, that status is a perfect signal of quality or a wholly accurate proxy. In certain contexts, at certain times, and according to certain people, status and quality may become meaningfully *decoupled*, such that a given status ranking does not correspond to the underlying quality distribution it is meant to represent. The resulting status-quality decoupling occurs due to one very simple empirical fact: social

status is conferred based on how much value one is *perceived* to offer to the group (Blau 1964, Leary et al. 2014), which is inherently subjective. In other words, because status conferral is subjective and quality is not entirely observable, status conferral requires individuals to not only have quality but also *look like* they have quality.

Indeed, the expectation states theory (Berger et al. 1972, 1977) proposes that status emerges from the *expectation* that others have for one's performance, as opposed to actual performance. Performance expectation is influenced by both quality- *and* nonquality-related factors, or as the status characteristics theory (Berger et al. 1972, 1980) puts it, "specific" and "diffuse" status characteristics (see also Cohen and Roper 1972, Biernat and Kobrynowicz 1997, Foschi 2000, Magee and Galinsky 2008, Anderson et al. 2012b). Specific status characteristics are individual attributes, such as past performance and education, that directly relate to a given task and thus closely align with a person's quality vis-à-vis that task. By comparison, diffuse status characteristics include attributes such as gender, race, social category, and demeanor, which, despite having little or no link to a person's quality, can nevertheless become the basis for status accrual when a group imbues such characteristics with status (Berger et al. 1972, Correll and Ridgeway 2003).

A wide range of empirical evidence supports the idea that status and quality could be decoupled and that non-quality-related factors play a role in the allocation of social status (Reskin 1979, Hargens and Hagstrom 1982, Ridgeway 1987, Fiske et al. 2002, Cuddy et al. 2007, Anderson and Kilduff 2009, Anderson et al. 2012b). For example, people high on trait dominance (Anderson and Kilduff 2009), demonstrating more assertive behaviors (Ridgeway 1987, Anderson et al. 2012b), or appearing to be humorous (Bitterly et al. 2017) tend to be afforded with greater status, holding their objective quality constant. In a similar vein, the stereotyping literature has repeatedly shown that men, whites, and members of the upper middle class are perceived as more competent, independent of their actual competence (Fiske et al. 2002, Cuddy et al. 2007). Similar findings describe the nature of status accrual in science: the prestige awarded to scientists is not only related to the quality of their work but also to the prestige of their mentors (Reskin 1979) and their affiliated academic institutions (Hargens and Hagstrom 1982). Furthermore, because individuals influence and build on the judgment of each other, decoupling that results from judgment errors at the interpersonal level is likely to be amplified at the collective level, leading to the robustness of decoupling (Lynn et al. 2009).

We expect that a number of situational and individual factors further contribute to the variation in status-quality coupling and, most importantly, variation in people's beliefs regarding status-quality coupling. In other words, we expect that the belief in status-quality coupling emerges as a result of the specific situation and general individual differences. At the situational level, for example, organizational change (Burkhardt and Brass 1990, Neeley and Dumas 2016), the level of meritocracy in the promotion system (Elvira and Graham 2002, Salimäki and Jämsén 2010), and quality uncertainty (Audia and Brion 2007) are all likely to influence the extent to which individuals believe in coupling for a specific situation, because they introduce ambiguity into how quality is defined or measured. At the individual level, individual differences, such as individuals' general tendency to believe in system fairness (belief in a just world; Lerner and Miller 1978), are also likely to impact the belief in coupling.

The belief in status-quality coupling is an important driver, or moderator, of many status-related effects by influencing the amount of value that individuals perceive themselves to have. For example, the ethnographic research at an elite boarding school found that teaching students that the belief in coupling—the belief that their elite status is justified given their talent and efforts—is an important part of an elite education and serves as a critical factor underlying the future success of the elite students, because subscribing to this belief leads them to attribute their privilege position to their personal value, as opposed to other external factors, and feel more comfortable with their privilege position (Khan 2011). In addition, Hays and Blader (2017) found that the belief in coupling (or, in their terms, status legitimacy) moderates the effect of status on generosity. Specifically, high-status individuals behave less (more) generously than low-status individuals when they (do not) believe in coupling, because (dis)belief in coupling makes them feel that they offer high (low) value to the group and do not need to be generous any more (need to be more generous) (Hays and Blader 2017).

We argue that the perceived self-value mechanism will be particularly impactful in network-broadening contexts, because the goal of network-broadening is resource/value exchange (Lin 1999, 2001; Burt 2000), and personal value is likely to be highlighted in the context. As such, the perceived self-value is likely to be a critical factor in determining the expected outcome of network-broadening (e.g., whether the other side would be receptive) and influence individuals' likelihood to engage in network-broadening. In the following section, we more formally introduce the hypothesis regarding the interaction effect of status and belief in coupling on network-broadening via

perceived self-value and perceived receptivity of a networking target.

Belief in Status-Quality Coupling Moderates the Effect of Status on Network-Broadening

We hypothesize that the belief in status-quality coupling moderates the positive relationship between status and network-broadening behaviors, because the interaction between status and belief in coupling influences how much value individuals perceive they have, which subsequently influences how receptive they perceive the other side to be. Specifically, we predict that when the belief in status-quality coupling is high, high-status people should be more likely to view themselves as having greater value. Given that networking is about resource and value exchange (Lin 1999, 2001; Burt 2000), we further propose that such positive value assessments will enhance one's positive expectations about the reception one is likely to have from others following attempts at network-broadening, which should subsequently increase the individual's likelihood of engaging in that network-broadening. By comparison, when low-status people exhibit similarly strong beliefs in status-quality coupling, we expect them to view themselves as having less value and being less likely to receive positive responses from a networking target. This should subsequently decrease their likelihood of networking broadly. When beliefs in status-quality coupling are low, by contrast, the positive relationship between status and network-broadening should diminish, because status is no longer associated with the level of value that one perceives herself has. Accordingly, we propose a moderating effect (Hypothesis 2) and a moderated serial indirect effect (Hypothesis 3):

Hypothesis 2. *Belief in status-quality coupling moderates the relationship between status and network-broadening. Specifically, the positive relationship between status and network-broadening will be stronger among individuals who believe that status-quality coupling is high than among those who believe that status-quality coupling is low.*

Hypothesis 3. *The interaction between status and belief in coupling will have an indirect effect on network-broadening via (a) perceived self-value and (b) perceived receptivity of a networking target.*

Network-Broadening Behavior and Network Size

Our fourth and final hypothesis brings us full circle, as it involves the relationship between network-broadening behaviors and network structure (Mehra et al. 2001, Sasovova et al. 2010, Fang et al. 2015, Tasselli and Kilduff 2015). Quite simply, we propose that network-broadening behaviors will lead to larger social networks. This proposition is both intuitive and widely supported by multiple lines of research emphasizing the role of active networking in creating network advantage (Ibarra 1992, Wanberg et al. 2000, Casciaro et al. 2014). For example, in a longitudinal study, Wanberg et al. (2000) found that unemployed individuals with high levels of extroversion and conscientiousness were more likely to be reemployed because they engaged in more active networking. Similarly, Casciaro et al. (2014) showed that the enhanced performance of high-power lawyers was attributable in part to high-power lawyers feeling less "dirty" about the idea of networking and subsequently networking more. Ibarra (1992) offered a related argument about the relationship between gender and networking to explain the persistent network advantage of men—who presumably engage in more network-broadening behaviors—over women in organizational contexts. Combining this proposition with our core interest in status-quality coupling, we argue as follows.

Hypothesis 4. *When status-quality coupling is high, status is positively associated with network-broadening behaviors, which leads to larger social networks; however, when status-quality coupling is low, this indirect effect is weakened.*

Research Overview

We tested our hypotheses across seven studies. A pilot study used data from a large, nationally representative sample, the General Social Survey (GSS), and sought to corroborate the premise that motivated our research, such that high-status individuals indeed have larger networks. Additionally, it explored the moderating effect of belief in status-quality coupling. Study 1 created hypothetical work-related network-broadening scenarios and explored the relationship between social status and network-broadening behavior. Study 2 used the same paradigm as Study 1 and explored the moderating effect of belief in status-quality coupling. Study 3 asked participants to report on their actual networking behaviors at work rather than respond to a hypothetical scenario as in the prior two studies. Additionally, Study 3 collected participants' network data using the name-generator method (e.g., Burt 1984), allowing us to test whether the interaction effect of status and belief in status-quality coupling on network-broadening behavior could also help to explain the variance in participants' reported network size. Study 4 established causal effects by manipulating both status and belief in status-quality coupling and then measuring participants' network-broadening intentions. Study 5 created an interactive task and tested the causal effect of status and belief in status-quality coupling on actual network-broadening behaviors, as opposed to intentions or self-reports. Using the same interactive task as Study 5, Study 6

identified the serial mechanisms (perceived self-value and perceived receptivity) that we theorize to underlie the interaction effect of status and status-quality coupling on network-broadening behaviors. Across the studies, we operationalized network-broadening in various ways, including advice seeking and help offering in a hypothetic organization (Studies 1, 2, 4), building new contacts at the workplace (Study 3), and advice seeking in a real online task community (Studies 5, 6).

Pilot Study: A Preliminary Demonstration of the Interaction Effect of Status X Coupling on Network Size in the GSS

The pilot study used data from the 1985 General Social Survey (GSS), a national probability sample survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago. The 1985 survey is unique in that it included questions about respondents' social networks, as well as variables that we were able to use as proxies for respondents' status and their beliefs in status-quality coupling. Given that we do not have control for the exact measures, our goal in the pilot study was not to test any hypotheses, but rather to demonstrate the premise that motivated our research, such that high-status individuals indeed have larger networks, as well as explore the moderating effect of belief in status-quality coupling.

Method

Sample. Of the 1,395 total respondents in the 1985 GSS, 894 participants (M_{age} = 39.28, SD = 13.24; 477 men and 417 women) were included in the final analysis after removing participants who either had not been asked or had not provided answers to the relevant questions. There were 794 Caucasians, 69 African Americans, and 31 others included in our final sample.

Status. We used data on participants' self-reported yearly income (in constant dollars, logged) as a proxy for status (M_{income} = 9.50, SD = 1.11). Given our conceptualization of status, we acknowledge that an individual's income is not a perfect measure of status. However, income remains a core component of the sociological concept of socioeconomic status.

Belief in Status-Quality Coupling. No question in the GSS directly captures the extent to which participants view status as a reliable indicator of quality. To best account for belief in status-quality coupling, we instead used participants' responses to the question, "Some people say that people get ahead by their own hard work; others say that lucky breaks or help from other people are more important. Which do you think is most important?" Response choices included "Hard work," "Luck or help," and "Both equally." When responding to this question, 67% of participants selected the "Hard work" option, 14% selected "Luck or help," and the remaining 19% selected "Both equally." For the sake of our analyses, we coded the response "Hard work" as indicative of high-status-quality coupling, leaving the remaining two options to indicate low coupling.

Network Size. The GSS utilized a name-generator method (e.g., Burt 1984) and asked participants to name up to five people with whom they discuss important matters. Network size was measured as the number of people whom participants mentioned (Msize = 3.20, SD = 1.39).

Control Variables. We controlled for respondents' age, ethnicity, and gender, as well as their marital and work statuses. Ethnicity is coded in the GSS as "white," "black," or "other." We chose these control variables based on overlap with our other studies, as well as the scope of data included in the GSS.

Results

Table 1 shows the results of our analyses. The dependent variable is network size. Model 1 includes participants' logged income and each of the control variables. As expected, income was positively associated with network size [B = 0.13, SE = 0.06, β = 0.10, $t(893)$ = 2.36, p = 0.019]. Model 2 includes our proxy measure for belief in status-quality coupling, which proves to be significantly and positively associated

Table 1. Regression Analysis Predicting Network Size in the GSS Data (Pilot Study)

Independent variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Log income	0.134 (0.059)*	0.115 (0.059)*	−0.016 (0.085)
Age	−0.005 (0.004)	−0.005 (0.005)	−0.005 (0.005)
Female	0.228* (0.112)	0.211 (0.112)	0.220 (0.112)
Ethnicity–Black	−0.575 (0.186)**	−0.480 (0.190)*	−0.481 (0.190)*
Ethnicity–"Other"	−0.204 (0.277)	−0.189 (0.277)	−0.177 (0.276)
Status-quality coupling		0.318 (0.109)**	−1.584 (0.910)
Log income × Status-quality coupling			0.202 (0.096)*
Constant	2.202 (0.588)**	2.178 (0.590)**	3.384 (0.822)**
R^2	0.04	0.04	0.05
N	894	894	894

Notes. The interaction effect of income and coupling on network size is significant. Standard errors included in parentheses.
*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$.

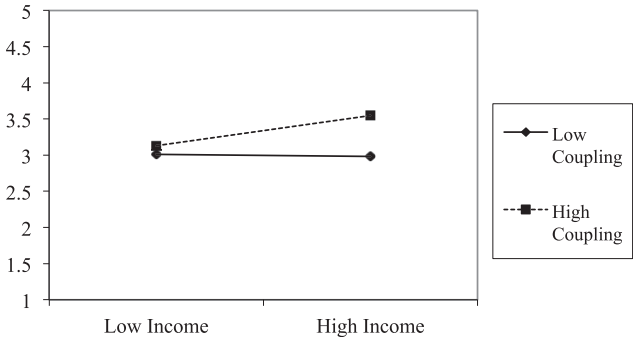
with network size [$B = 0.32$, $SE = 0.11$, $\beta = 0.10$, $t(893) = 2.96$, $p < 0.01$]. The main effect of income remains significant in Model 2 [$B = 0.12$, $SE = 0.06$, $\beta = 0.09$, $t(893) = 1.99$, $p = 0.046$]. Model 3 includes an interaction between participants' logged income and status-quality coupling, and is significant [$B = 0.20$, $SE = 0.10$, $\beta = 0.61$, $t(893) = 2.10$, $p = 0.036$]. When coupling is equal to zero—that is, when participants responded to the question about getting ahead by marking either "Luck or help" or "Both equally"—there is no association between income and reported network size [$B = -0.022$, $SE = 0.103$, $\beta = -0.018$, $t(285) = -0.22$, $p = 0.824$]. By contrast, when coupling is equal to one, the relationship between status and network size is statistically significant in the expected direction [$B = 0.204$, $SE = 0.073$, $\beta = 0.147$, $t(607) = 2.78$, $p < 0.01$]. High-income respondents who were also high in status-quality coupling reported significantly larger networks than low-income respondents who were equivalent in their beliefs about coupling. Figure 1 includes a visual representation of the interaction effect.

The pilot study corroborated the premise of our research that high-status individuals tend to have larger networks. In addition, it demonstrated that the effect of status is contingent upon the level of belief in coupling. Whereas the result suggested the robustness of the phenomenon, the data were drawn from an existing survey, and the operationalization of variables was imperfect. We designed Studies 1–6 to directly test the core hypotheses.

Study 1: Status is Positively Associated with Network-Broadening

Study 1 tested our first hypothesis by exploring the relationship between status and network-broadening. We recruited participants from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) platform and measured status as an individual's subjective perception of the amount of respect and deference they receive from others (Anderson et al. 2012c). We measured network-broadening behaviors by capturing the likelihood that a person engages in mobilizing weak ties (i.e., friends of friends) in a variety of different situations. In addition, we collected and controlled for several demographic characteristics and a range of personality metrics to best isolate the effect of status on network-broadening.

Figure 1. Reported Network Size as a Function of Log-Transformed Income (+/−1 *SD*) and Coupling in the GSS Data (Pilot Study)



Method

Sample. We used MTurk to recruit participants. Research has shown that MTurk is a reliable and high-quality data source for general social science research (Buhrmester et al. 2011) and for organizational research in particular (Landers and Behrend 2015, Woo et al. 2015). More relevantly, researchers have been using MTurk to study professional networking (Casciaro et al. 2014, Raj et al. 2017). In all the studies that recruited participants from MTurk, we prevented participants who had previously participated from joining a study again. Studies took 10 to 20 minutes, depending on the specific study. Participants were paid at a $6 hourly rate.

We recruited 296 participants. The final sample size was 232 ($M_{age} = 34.94$, $SD = 10.75$; 136 men and 96 women) after screening out incomplete answers and failed attention checks. There were 177 Caucasians, 15 African Americans, 5 Hispanics, 17 East Asians, 16 South Asians, and 4 others.

Status. We measured status using the four-item scale (Cronbach's alpha = 0.95) in Anderson et al. (2012a). The items included "I have a high level of respect in others' eyes," "Others admire me," "I have high social standing," and "Others look up to me." Participants indicated the extent to which the items described their situation at their workplace (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

Network-Broadening. We developed several scenarios to measure network-broadening intentions. Specifically, we focused on instrumental network-broadening that is common in the workplace. We asked participants to first imagine themselves working in an organization. Participants were told that there was a person (Person Y) with whom they shared a common friend (Person X) but had not yet met. We presented six scenarios in which they and Person Y could connect, if they were willing to initiate various network-broadening activities. We then asked the extent to which a participant was willing to engage in those activities. Example scenarios included, "If you experience difficulties with a certain task at work and you know person Y is an expert in that task, how likely would you ask Y for help?" The full text of each scenario is included in Online Appendix 1. We measured network-broadening by averaging a participant's responses to each scenario ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 0.95$). The overall reliability is high

(Cronbach's alpha = 0.86). Following the recommendations in Hinkin (1998), we conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with a promax rotation, which suggested that network-broadening is a unidimensional construct. Only one factor had an eigenvalue greater than one (eigenvalue = 3.50) and accounted for 58.40% of the variance, with all the items having high factor loadings (ranging from 0.67 to 0.82).

Control Variables. We measured and controlled for personality traits by using the short version of the Big Five personality survey (Costa and McCrae 1992, Gosling et al. 2003). The five traits included (1) extraversion, (2) agreeableness, (3) neuroticism, (4) conscientiousness, and (5) openness to experience. We also controlled for gender, age, and ethnicity (Caucasian or not). We controlled for personality and demographic variables, as prior research has shown them to be associated with both status (Ridgeway 1991, Anderson et al. 2001) and networking (Wanberg and Kammeyer-Mueller 2000). Lastly, we controlled for power, using Anderson et al.'s (2012a) sense of power scale (Cronbach's alpha = 0.44).[4] The power scale included items such as, "If I want to, I get to make the decision" and "My wishes do not carry much weight (reverse score)." Participants rated each item on a seven-point Likert scale (M = 4.94, SD = 1.32) (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations between variables are shown in Table A.1 of Online Appendix 2. Model 1 of Study 1 in Table 2 includes only status and network-broadening and indicates that status is positively related to network-broadening [B = 0.20, SE = 0.04, β = 0.29, $t(230)$ = 4.55, $p < 0.01$]. Model 2 confirms that the effect of status remains statistically significant when controlling for demographic information, personality variables, and power [B = 0.20, SE = 0.06, β = 0.28, $t(230)$ = 3.07, $p < 0.01$]. The results of Study 1 support Hypothesis 1, that social status is positively associated with network-broadening.

Study 2: Belief in Status-Quality Coupling Moderates the Relationship Between Status and Network-Broadening

Study 2 explored the moderating role of belief in status-quality coupling on the relationship between social status and network-broadening. Specifically, we aimed to assess whether the positive effect of status on network-broadening is dependent upon the extent to which participants believed that status and quality are coupled. We measured status (Cronbach's alpha = 0.92) and network-broadening using the same scale and scenarios as Study 1. We also measured control variables identical to those used in the prior study. Thus, Study 2 served as both a replication of

Table 2. Regression Analyses Predicting Network-Broadening Behaviors

	Study 1		Study 2			Study 3		
Independent variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Social status	0.20** (0.04)	0.20** (0.06)	0.16** (0.05)	0.17** (0.05)	0.09(0.06)	0.24** (0.03)	0.24**(0.03)	0.15**(0.03)
Coupling		.	0.03(0.05)	0.06(0.05)	0.01 (0.05)	0.10**(0.03)	0.11**(0.03)	0.10**(0.03)
Status × Coupling				0.06*** (0.04)	0.07*(0.03)		0.04* (0.02)	0.04*(0.02)
Gender (0 = male, 1 = female)		0.11 (0.12)			–0.18*** (0.11)			–0.08 (0.06)
Age		0.01 (0.01)			–0.00 (0.01)			–0.01*(0.00)
Ethnicity group (0 = nonwhite, 1 = white)		0.03 (0.14)			–0.10 (0.13)			–0.12*** (0.07)
Extraversion		0.07*** (0.04)			0.11**(0.04)			0.12**(0.02)
Conscientiousness		0.15** (0.05)			0.03 (0.05)			–0.05*** (0.03)
Agreeableness		0.14** (0.05)			0.22**(0.05)			0.02 (0.03)
Neuroticism		–0.01 (0.05)			–0.00 (0.04)			–0.01 (0.03)
Openness		0.04 (0.05)			–0.03 (0.05)			0.06* (0.03)
Power		–0.15*(0.07)			0.00 (0.07)			
Organizational size (log)								–0.03(0.04)
Tenure (year) (log)					.			0.22*(0.10)
Hierarchy								–0.00 (0.02)
Constant	4.11**(0.06)	3.93**(0.22)	4.14**(0.06)	4.12**(0.06)	4.45**(0.20)	2.16**(0.03)	2.14**(0.03)	2.27**(0.07)
Adjusted R^2	0.08	0.19	0.05	0.06	0.18	0.27	0.28	0.41
F test of model	20.68**	6.56**	6.79**	5.68**	4.99**	57.98**	40.34**	14.81**

Notes. The table represents unstandardized regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. All continuous variables are mean-centered. Study 1, N = 232; Study 2, N = 226; Study 3, N = 320)

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; $^{+}p < 0.10$.

Study 1 and as an initial test of the moderating effect of belief in status-quality coupling between status and network-broadening.

Method

Sample. We recruited 252 participants from MTurk to participate in an academic survey. The final sample size was 226 (M_{age} = 34.45, SD = 11.20; 129 men and 97 women) after screening out incomplete answers and failed attention checks. There were 174 Caucasians, 12 African Americans, 12 Hispanics, 20 East Asians, six South Asians, and two others.

Belief in Status-Quality Coupling. Following the procedure of scale development (Hinkin 1998), we developed a four-item scale to measure status-quality coupling. The four items included "People's positions are justified, given their performance," "People who are at higher positions usually have better ideas," "People's positions reflect their capability to contribute to their organization," and "People get ahead by luck rather than by performance" (reverse scores). Participants indicated the extent to which they believed these statements describe their work environment using a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) (Cronbach's alpha = 0.77). We again performed an EFA with a promax rotation including all the items from the status and coupling measures. The results confirmed that they loaded on two factors (eigenvalue = 1.86, explaining 71.92% variance, factor loadings for all items ranging from 0.43 to 0.86), indicating that status and belief in status-quality coupling are indeed two distinct concepts.

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations between variables are shown in Table A.2 of Online Appendix 3. Model 1 of Study 2 in Table 2 includes status, belief in status-quality coupling, and network-broadening, and reveals a strong main effect of status on network-broadening [B = 0.16, SE = 0.05, β = 0.24, $t(223)$ = 3.64, $p < 0.001$], as in Study 1. Status-quality coupling has no main effect on network-broadening [B = 0.03, SE = 0.05, β = 0.04, $t(223)$ = 0.60, p = 0.55]. Models 2 and 3 include an interaction between status and status-quality coupling, which proves marginally significant when no control variables are included [B = 0.06, SE = 0.04, β = 0.12, $t(222)$ = 1.82, p = 0.07], and significant at the p = 0.05 level when control variables are added [B = 0.07, SE = 0.03, β = 0.14, $t(213)$ = 2.09, p = 0.038] (see Model 3 of Study 2, Table 2). A slope analysis indicates that when participants reported status and quality to be more tightly coupled, status positively predicted network-broadening [b = 0.17, $t(115)$ = 2.26, p = 0.03]. However, when participants reported low coupling, status did not predict network-broadening [b = 0.01, $t(115)$ = 0.18, p = 0.86] (see Figure 2). This result supports our hypothesis that belief in status-quality coupling moderates the relationship between status and network-broadening behaviors. Put differently, high-status (low-status) people were more (less) likely to engage in broad networking when they believed status to be a reliable indicator of quality. The relationship between status and networking was insignificant among participants who reported low status-quality coupling, thus supporting Hypothesis 2.

Study 3: Testing the Indirect Effect of Status × Coupling on Network Size via Network-Broadening

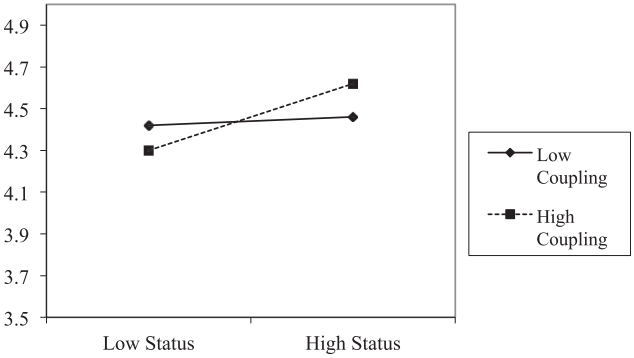
Studies 1 and 2 established that status is positively related to network-broadening behaviors and that this relationship is driven in large part by the belief that status and quality are tightly coupled. Study 3 aimed to achieve two goals. First, we aimed to replicate the findings of Studies 1 and 2 using an alternative measure of network-broadening. Study 3 asked participants to report their actual network-broadening behaviors (Wolff et al. 2011), as opposed to responding to hypothetical scenarios. Second, we assessed whether network-broadening behaviors correlated with larger reported social networks.

Method

Sample. We recruited 340 participants from MTurk to join an academic survey. The final sample size was 320 (M_{age} = 35.63, SD = 11.47; 176 men and 144 women) after screening out incomplete answers and failed attention checks. There were 244 Caucasians, 18 African Americans, 19 Hispanics, 16 East Asians, 16 South Asians, and seven others.

Status. We measured status using the same scale as the previous studies (Cronbach's alpha = 0.93).

Figure 2. Network-Broadening as a Function of Status (+/−1 SD) and Coupling (Study 2)



Belief in Status-Quality Coupling. We measured coupling using the same scale as Study 2. In addition, we included one further item: "People get ahead by receiving personal favors rather than by performance" (reverse-coded) (Cronbach's alpha=0.82).[5] We performed an EFA with a promax rotation including all the items from the status and coupling measures. The result showed that they loaded on two factors (eigenvalue = 2.29, explaining 70.62% variance, factor loadings for all items ranging from 0.41 to 0.79), again suggesting that status and belief in status-quality coupling are two distinct concepts.

Network-Broadening. We measured network-broadening by asking participants to report about their actual networking behaviors in the workplace (Wolff et al. 2011). The original scale had three dimensions that related to building contacts, maintaining contacts, and using contacts. Given that we were interested in the effect of status and status-quality coupling on network-broadening, we collected data only on the items related to building contacts. The final network-broadening scale had 12 items. Example items included, "In my company, I approach employees I know by sight and start a conversation," "I use company events to make new contacts," and "I use business trips or training programs to build new contacts." The full text of all 12 items is included in Online Appendix 4. Participants were asked to indicate how often they engaged in each activity (1 = never/very seldom, 2 = sometimes, 3 = frequently, 4 = very often/always) (Cronbach's alpha = 0.92). We conducted an EFA with a promax rotation including all the items. The result suggested that network-broadening is a unidimensional construct (eigenvalue = 6.51, explaining 54.24% variance, factor loadings for all items ranging from 0.61 to 0.80).

Network Size. We used the network name-generator method (e.g., Burt 1984) to measure network size. Specifically, participants were asked to name people in their current workplace with whom they discussed important matters. Participants were allowed to name up to 10 people. Network size was measured as the number of names participants provided.

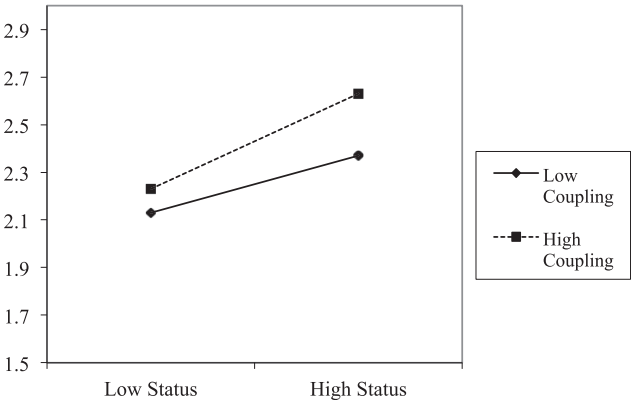
Control Variables. We measured and controlled for variables similar to those in Studies 1 and Study 2. In addition, we controlled for several variables that were related to the organizations in which participants worked. For example, we controlled for the size of the organization, the length of time the participant had been employed by the organization, and the extent to which the participant felt the organization was hierarchically organized, as each of these variables is likely to influence the number of networking opportunities available and the resultant network size.

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations between variables are shown in Table A.3 of Online Appendix 5. Model 1 of Study 3 in Table 2 indicates that both status and belief in status-quality coupling predicted network-broadening [$B = 0.24$, $SE = 0.03$, $\beta = 0.44$, $t(317) = 8.86$, $p < 0.001$; $B = 0.10$, $SE = 0.03$, $\beta = 0.18$, $t(317) = 3.61$, $p < 0.001$, respectively]. Model 2 confirms that the interaction effect of status and coupling on network-broadening was significant in the expected direction [$B = 0.04$, $SE = 0.02$, $\beta = 0.10$, $t(316) = 1.99$, $p = 0.047$] (see Model 2 of Study 3, Table 2). The interaction effect remained significant after controlling for demographics, personality, and organizational variables [$B = 0.04$, $SE = 0.02$, $\beta = 0.10$, $t(305) = 2.14$, $p = 0.03$] (see Model 3 of Study 3, Table 2). A slope analysis (Figure 3) reveals that status positively predicted network-broadening when belief in coupling was high [$b = 0.20$, $t(305) = 5.35$, $p < 0.001$]; the effect became weaker, though still significant, when belief in coupling was low [$b = 0.11$, $t(305) = 2.91$, $p < 0.01$]. Thus, the results of both Studies 1 and 2 were replicated.

We next used the PROCESS macro (Model 7) (Hayes 2013) with bootstrapping procedures of 5,000 iterations to analyze the indirect effect of network-broadening on the relationship between the interaction of status and belief in coupling, and network size. The total indirect effect proved significant after a bootstrapping test ($b = 0.02$, CI [0.001, 0.05]). When belief in coupling was high, status positively influenced network size via network-broadening behaviors ($b = 0.08$, CI [0.003, 0.18]). When belief in coupling was low, the effect was still significant, but notably smaller ($b = 0.04$, CI [0.003, 0.12]). The results demonstrated that the interaction of status and belief in coupling influenced network-broadening behaviors, which subsequently impacted the size of the networks reported by participants, thereby supporting both Hypotheses 2 and 4.

Figure 3. Reported Workplace Network-Broadening as a Function of Status (+/−1 *SD*) and Coupling (Study 3)



Study 4: Testing the Causal Effect of Status and Coupling on Network-Broadening Intention

Studies 1–3 offered support for Hypotheses 1, 2, and 4, but they had three important limitations. First, because both status and belief in status-quality coupling were measured (as opposed to manipulated) attributes, the studies fall short of establishing a *causal* relationship between status and coupling, and network-broadening. Second, the studies did not yet directly test the mechanism underlying the relationships between status, coupling, and network-broadening. Third, the measure of coupling focused on status in terms of rank, as opposed to respect and admiration. In Study 4, we addressed these limitations by manipulating both status and coupling, by measuring the first mechanism, perceived self-value, *and* by manipulating coupling in a way that is more closely related to respect and admiration. Specifically, we created a hypothetical network-broadening scenario and examined whether putting participants under different conditions influenced their perceptions of self-value and their tendencies to engage in network-broadening.

Method

Sample. We recruited 199 individuals from MTurk to participate in an academic survey. The final sample size was 178 (M_{age} = 37.75, SD = 12.46; 80 men and 98 women) after screening out incomplete answers and failed attention checks. There were 126 Caucasians, 15 African Americans, 10 Hispanics, 17 East Asians, seven South Asians, and three others.

Manipulation of Status and Coupling. Participants were randomly assigned to read and then imagine one of four different hypothetical scenarios, which manipulated both status and belief in status-quality coupling. We manipulated status using a method common in prior literature (e.g., Blader and Chen 2012, Anicich et al. 2015). Specifically, participants read, "Imagine that you work in a company. You have a great deal of (very little) status and (or) prestige within the company. People at the organization seem to genuinely respect you and hold you in high regard (have little respect for you and hold you in low regard)." Next, participants received the manipulation for belief in status-quality coupling: "Additionally (However), you believe that in this company, social status is (not) a good indicator of the value of people's work. In other words, those who are respected and admired by others also have (do not necessarily have) better performance and more to offer."

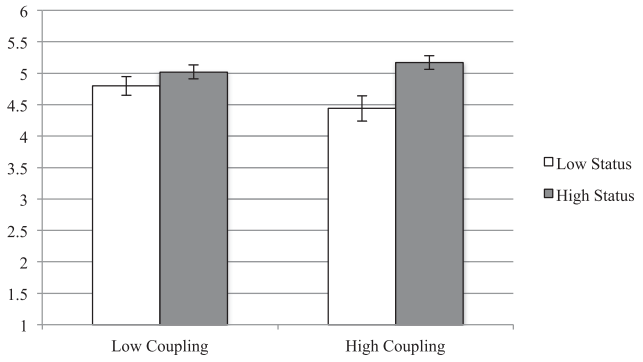
Perceived Self-Value and Network-Broadening Intention. Following the manipulation of status and status-quality coupling, we presented participants with a network-broadening scenario. Similar to Studies 1 and 2, we focused on networking behaviors related to mobilizing resources from an acquaintance in a professional setting. Specifically, participants read, "You are working on a new project related to a foreign market (country alpha). However, you do not have any experience with this market. You want to know more about this foreign market. You know Sara is an expert in this area and is also working in the same company. You have interacted with Sara a few times, but you don't know her very well." Participants were then asked to indicate "how likely would you reach out to Sara for more information" on a 1–6 Likert scale (1 = not at all likely, 6 = extremely likely). Finally, we measured perceived value by asking, "How valuable do you think you are to the company?" and "How valuable do you think you are to your colleagues?" on a 1–6 Likert scale (1 = not at all, 6 = extremely).

Results

We conducted a 2×2 analysis of variance (ANOVA) to test the hypothesized interaction effect. There was a main effect of status on network-broadening intention such that people assigned to the high-status condition (M = 5.10, SD = 0.73) were more likely to engage in network-broadening behaviors than participants assigned to the low-status condition [(M = 4.63, SD = 1.16), $F(1,174) = 10.90$, $p < 0.01$], supporting Hypothesis 1. The main effect of status-quality coupling on network-broadening behavior was insignificant, as in Studies 2 and 3. People assigned to the high coupling condition (M = 4.83, SD = 1.10) had a similar tendency to engage in network-broadening as participants in the low-coupling condition [(M = 4.91, SD = 0.88), $F(1,174) = 0.55$, $p = 0.46$]. The predicted interaction effect of status and coupling on network-broadening behavior was marginally significant [$F(1,174) = 3.21$, $p = 0.075$] in the predicted direction. Specifically, in the high-coupling condition, participants assigned to experience high status (M = 5.17, SD = 0.74) were significantly more likely to engage in broad social networking than those assigned to experience low status [(M = 4.44, SD = 1.31), $t(85) = 3.28$, $p < 0.01$]. By comparison, in the low-coupling condition, high-status participants (M = 5.02, SD = 0.72) were no different in their network-broadening intentions than low-status participants [(M = 4.80, SD = 1.00), $t(89)$ = 1.19, $p = 0.24$]. This effect corroborates Hypothesis 2 and further suggests the existence of a causal effect. Figure 4 is a representation of the interaction effect.

We next conducted a 2×2 ANOVA to test the hypothesized interaction effect on perceived self-value. There was a main effect of status on perceived self-value, such that people in the high-status condition (M = 4.97, SD = 0.70) believed that they had greater

Figure 4. The Interaction Effect of Status and Coupling on Network-Broadening Intention (Study 4)



Note. Error bars represent ±1 standard error of the mean.

value than participants in the low-status condition [($M = 2.70$, $SD = 1.18$), $F(1,174) = 257.29$, $p < 0.01$]. The main effect of status-quality coupling on perceived self-value was insignificant [(high coupling, $M = 3.83$, $SD = 1.37$, vs. low coupling, $M = 3.90$, $SD = 1.61$), $F(1,174) = 0.01$, $p = 0.92$]. The predicted interaction effect of status and status-quality coupling on perceived self-value was significant [$F(1,174) = 8.86$, $p < 0.01$] in the predicted direction. In the high-coupling condition, high-status participants ($M = 5.17$, $SD = 0.71$) reported feeling more valuable than low-status participants [($M = 2.48$, $SD = 1.03$), $t(85) = 14.36$, $p < 0.01$]. In the low-coupling condition, high-status participants ($M = 4.77$, $SD = 0.64$) also believed that they had greater value than low-status participants ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 1.27$), but the effect magnitude was notably smaller [$t(89) = 8.77$, $p < 0.01$].

Lastly, we ran an indirect effect test to assess whether perceived self-value indeed mediated the relationship between status and belief in status-quality coupling on network-broadening intentions. We used the PROCESS macro (Model 7) (Hayes 2013) with bootstrapping procedures of 5,000 iterations to analyze the indirect effect. The indirect effect proved significant after a bootstrapping test ($b = 0.20$, CI [0.06, 0.44]). When coupling was high, status had a strong indirect effect on networking intentions via perceived self-value ($b = 0.63$, CI [0.24, 1.03]). When coupling was low, status still had an indirect effect via perceived self-value, but that effect was notably smaller and less significant (b=0.44, CI [0.16, 0.74]). According to these results, perceived self-value is an important mechanism underlying the relationship between status and status-quality coupling and network-broadening intentions. People's networking intentions vary depending on their status and belief in status-quality coupling because the interaction between those variables impacts the extent to which individuals believe that they are valuable. The first mechanism in Hypothesis 3 was supported.

Study 5: Testing the Causal Effect of Status and Coupling on Network-Broadening Behavior

Study 5 builds directly on the previous study by providing a behavioral measure of network-broadening, as opposed to the intention measure used in the last study. Like the prior study, Study 5 manipulated both status and belief in status-quality coupling to assess causality. In Study 5, we formed an online task community and allowed participants to engage in an interactive task involving network-broadening with others—in this case, reaching out to seek advice from and offering advice to other participants.

Method

Sample. We recruited 434 participants from MTurk to participate in an estimation task. After we excluded four participants with incomplete data, the final sample included 430 participants ($M_{age} = 35.97$, $SD = 11.12$; 215 men, 215 women). There were 338 Caucasians, 27 African Americans, 32 Hispanics, 11 East Asians, 14 South Asians, and eight others.

Design. The study had a 2 (high status vs. low status) × 2 (high coupling vs. low coupling) between-subjects design. We experimentally manipulated both status and coupling. We created an online community that allowed participants to interact with each other. We led participants to believe that there were two teams in the online community. Each team had specific expertise in one of the tasks being completed, thus giving participants an opportunity to exchange valuable information. More specifically, participants were given a chance to seek advice from a person whom they did not know but who had expertise that they did not have—a specific, but nonetheless important form of network-broadening. The research design also allowed us to assess not only where a participant was willing to reach out, but also to whom (high-status vs. middle-status vs. low-status member). Following this, participants also had an opportunity to offer advice to a member of the other team on a task for which they had greater expertise. Study 5 thus enabled us to assess two things simultaneously: first, whether the interaction between status and status-quality coupling influenced the likelihood that a person engages in active network-broadening; and second, to whom the network-broadening behavior was directed. Only the advice-seeking aspect of network-broadening was our focus. The advice-giving aspect of network-broadening was not our focus because it could have been influenced by confounding factors (e.g., whether participants sought advice in the first place). To ensure the completeness and believability of the experimental conditions, we still included the advice-giving

part of network-broadening. We reported the procedure and results related to advice giving in Online Appendix 6. The result showed a similar pattern as advice seeking.

The study included three major parts.

Part 1: Introduction. Participants were required to create a username and were told that they were going to form a six-person online community with five other MTurk participants who were currently participating in the same task. In actuality, the other five participants were computer generated and programmed by the experimenters. The task involved both an independent component and an interactive component. The interactive part allowed—but did not require—participants to seek advice from and give advice to others in their community.

Part 2: Manipulation of Status and Coupling. We asked participants to complete two types of estimation tasks and explained to them that their performance on the tasks would determine their subsequent team assignment, as well as their within-team status. Specifically, participants were asked to complete a weight-estimation task that involved guessing the weight of a person in a picture (Gino et al. 2012, Brooks et al. 2015) and a coin-estimation task (Gino et al. 2012, Brooks et al. 2015), which asked them to estimate the value of money in a jar. Participants were told to provide estimations as accurately as possible and that the top performer in each task would be given a "Task Master" badge and be assigned to either the "Weight-Estimation Group" or the "Coin-Estimation Group," according to her performance. The remaining four participants would be randomly assigned to the weight-estimation group or the coin-estimation group. They would also receive a badge based on their relative performance in the task. The second performer would receive a "Senior Task Worker" badge. The last performer would receive a "Junior Task Worker" badge. In reality, all research participants were assigned to the weight-estimation group and were randomly assigned as either the Task Master (high status condition) or the Junior Task Worker (low status condition). This manipulation of status is consistent with previous literature, which manipulated status by giving participants different work roles (idea producer vs. idea worker) (Hays and Blader 2017).

We manipulated status-quality coupling by having participants read one of two different messages. For the high-coupling condition, participants read, "Previous research suggests that participants' score in the weight-estimation task is a good indicator of their ability to answer other similar weight-estimation tasks." Those in the low-coupling condition read, "Previous research suggests that people's performance in weight-estimation tasks change a lot depending on the specific picture. The score in this weight-estimation task does not reflect people's ability to answer other similar weight estimation tasks."

Part 3: Measuring Network-Broadening Behaviors. After being assigned to the Weight-Estimation Group and either the Task Master or Junior Task Worker roles, participants were directed to complete another round of estimations. In contrast to the first round, which was purely individual, participants were further given the option to both seek advice from someone in the Coin-Estimation Group and update their estimate as a result, and give advice to someone from the other team on a weight-estimation task. This design allowed us to measure network-broadening behaviors of two kinds: advice seeking and advice giving. Participants first performed the coin-estimation task, which the other team had an expertise on. To incentivize accuracy, we told participants that they would earn an extra $0.25 if their answer was within 20 cents of the actual answer. To facilitate network-broadening, participants were given the usernames of the three participants in the coin-estimation group, along with their status badges and asked (1) whether they would like to send a request for advice and, if so, (2) to whom they wanted to send the request. Participants understood that a request for advice did not guarantee a response—that is, a participant was not required to reply, and if a participant received multiple requests, then the participant could only choose to respond to one—thus creating the opportunity for social rejection. The dependent variable that most interested us was whether a participant requested advice from the Task Master in the Coin-Estimation Group. All requests for advice were responded to, thus enabling participants to revise their estimation as they saw fit. As noted above, participants were also given an opportunity to offer advice. The description of the procedure and results of the associated analysis are included in Online Appendix 6.

Manipulation Check. Participants completed several manipulation-check questions after receiving their team assignment and status badge. Example items included, "I have high social standing in this online task community" (status) and "My badge title is a good indicator of my ability to solve weight estimation tasks" (coupling). Participants rated it on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

Results

We first completed a manipulation check by using a 2×2 ANOVA. The manipulation was successful. Participants in the high-status condition ($M = 5.06$, $SD = 1.27$) reported higher scores on the status manipulation-check

items than participants in the low-status condition [(M = 2.58, SD = 1.58), F(1,426) = 331.55, $p < 0.01$]. Similarly, participants in the high-coupling condition (M = 4.85, SD = 1.72) reported higher scores on the coupling manipulation-check items than did participants in the low-coupling condition [(M = 4.43, SD = 1.79), F(1,426) = 9.76, $p < 0.01$].

We conducted a logistic regression to test the interaction effect of status and coupling on the advice-seeking form of network-broadening. There was a main effect of status on advice seeking, such that people in the high-status condition (55.7%) were more likely to seek advice than participants in the low-status condition (42.65%) (B = 0.53, SE = 0.20, $Wald$ = 7.35, $p < 0.01$), providing both causal and behavioral support for Hypothesis 1. The main effect of coupling on reaching-out behavior was insignificant, as in the prior studies. People in the high-coupling condition (50%) were equally likely to reach out, as were participants in the low-coupling condition (48.6%) (B = 0.08, SE = 0.20, $Wald$ = 0.16, p = 0.69). The interaction effect of status and coupling on advice seeking behaviors was significant (B = 0.75, SE = 0.39, $Wald$ = 3.65, p = 0.05) in the predicted direction. Specifically, in the high-coupling condition, high-status participants (61.32%) were more likely to seek advice than were low-status participants (39.10%) [χ^2(1, 216) = 10.67, $p < 0.01$]. By comparison, in the low-coupling condition, high-status participants (50.44%) were equally likely to seek advice as low-status participants (46.53%) [χ^2(1, 214) = 0.33, p = 0.57]. This effect corroborates Hypothesis 2. Figure 5 is a visual representation of the interaction effect.

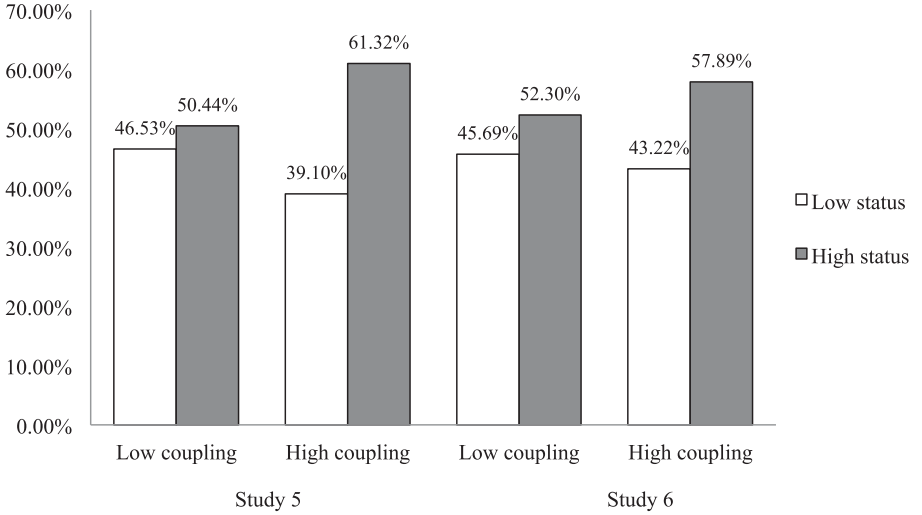
Although our main focus was whether a participant sought advice from the highest-status person (i.e., the Task Master), in Online Appendix 7 (Table A.4), we provide a more thorough view of the data by illustrating from whom participants sought advice (high-status vs. middle-status vs. low-status counterpart). We combined the data for middle-status and low-status counterparts because both indicated information from a less-ideal counterpart. There was no main effect of status and coupling and no interaction effect of status and coupling on advice seeking from middle-/low-status counterparts ($ps > 0.10$). Overall, this result suggests that, whereas high status increased the likelihood of advice seeking from the person who was supposed to have the best answer, particularly in the high-coupling condition, low status did not increase the likelihood of advice seeking from the less-ideal counterpart, such as the middle- and low-status counterpart.

Study 6: Mechanisms Test: Perceived Self-Value and Perceived Receptivity of the Networking Target

Study 5 provided a powerful test to demonstrate that status increased network-broadening behaviors and that the belief in coupling significantly moderated this effect. We designed Study 6 to both replicate these effects and explore the mechanisms underlying them. We used the same paradigm as in Study 5 and added multiple mechanism measures, specifically, perceived self-value and perceived receptivity of the networking target as a serial mediation, to test Hypothesis 3.

Sample. For the study, 533 participants from MTurk were recruited to participate in an academic survey. After we excluded participants who provided incomplete data and failed the attention check, the final sample included 497 participants (M_{age} = 35.00, SD = 11.25; 241 men, 256 women). There were 350 Caucasians, 61 African Americans, 40 Hispanics, 23 East Asians, nine South Asians, and 14 others.

Figure 5. The Interaction Effect of Status and Coupling on Advice-Seeking Behaviors (Studies 5 and 6)



Design. The study had a 2 (high status vs. low status) × 2 (high coupling vs. low coupling) between-subjects design. The procedure was identical to Study 5, except for the mechanism measures described in the next paragraph and an additional control variable. We controlled for confidence because the interaction between status and coupling might impact confidence and change the level of the perceived necessity of seeking advice. This is important, because in Studies 1, 2, and 4, we made it very clear to participants that they needed to reach out. Confidence was measured by asking participants, "How confident are you about your answer?"

Mechanisms. We measured the two potential mechanisms: perceived self-value and perceived receptivity of the networking target. Perceived self-value was measured by "In the upcoming interactive weight estimation task, my advice would provide significant value to ____." Perceived receptivity was measured by "If you had sent a request for advice to____, how confident would you be that he/she would respond with advice?" Participants rated each statement three times, once for each person in the coin-estimation group (i.e., the high-status, middle-status, and low-status counterparts). We were only interested in the ratings associated with the high-status counterpart.[6] As in Study 6, we gave participants the opportunity to offer advice. As before, this component of the study was mainly for the completeness. We report the procedure and results on advice given in Online Appendix 6. Again, the result pattern was largely similar to advice seeking.

Results

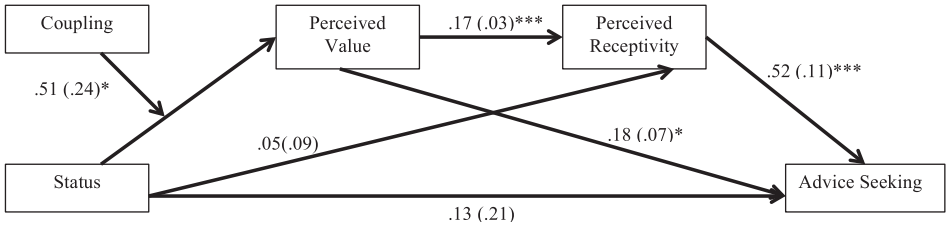
Correlations between variables are shown in Table A.5 of Online Appendix 8. We first completed a manipulation check by using a 2×2 ANOVA. The status and coupling manipulations were both successful. Participants in the high-status condition (M = 5.02, SD = 1.27) reported higher scores on the status manipulation-check items than did participants in the low-status condition [(M = 2.68, SD = 1.64), $F(1,493)$ = 318.35, $p < 0.01$]. Similarly, participants in the high-coupling condition (M = 4.91, SD = 1.76) reported higher scores on the coupling manipulation-check items than participants in the low-coupling condition [(M = 4.31, SD = 1.92), $F(1,493)$ = 17.44, $p < 0.01$].

We conducted a logistic regression to test the interaction effect of status and status-quality coupling on the advice-seeking form of network-broadening behavior. The results largely replicated the effects of the prior study. There was a main effect of status on advice seeking such that people in the high-status condition (55.13%) were more likely to seek advice than participants in the low-status condition (44.44%) (B = 0.43, SE = 0.18, $Wald$ = 5.64, p = 0.02). The main effect of status-quality coupling on advice-seeking behavior was insignificant. People in the high-coupling condition (51.00%) were equally likely to seek advice as participants in the low-coupling condition (49.19%) (B = 0.07, SE = 0.18, $Wald$ = 0.16, p = 0.69). The interaction effect of status and coupling on advice-seeking behaviors was insignificant (B = 0.33, SE = 0.36, $Wald$ = 0.81, p = 0.37); however, the cross-status group differences in each coupling condition revealed an identical pattern as in Study 5. Specifically, in the high-coupling condition, high-status participants (57.89%) were significantly more likely to seek advice than low-status participants (43.22%) [$\chi^2(1, 251) = 5.39$, p = 0.02]. By comparison, in the low-coupling condition, high-status participants (52.30%) were equally likely to reach out as low-status participants (45.69%) [$\chi^2(1, 246)=1.07$, p = 0.30]. Figure 5 is a visual representation of the result pattern.

Next, we explored a moderated serial mediation model, using model 83 in PROCESS 3.1 (Hayes, 2013) with bootstrapping procedures of 5,000 iterations. Specifically, we tested whether the interaction effect of status and coupling on advice seeking operated via perceived self-value and perceived receptivity of the networking target. The moderated serial mediation model was significant (b = 0.05, SE=0.03, CI [0.002, 0.11]), suggesting that the size of the serial mediation was different across different coupling conditions. When coupling was high, the indirect effect of status on advice seeking via higher perceived self-value and higher receptivity was significant (b = 0.14, SE = 0.05, CI [0.07, 0.24]). Similarly, when coupling was low, the indirect effect of status on advice-seeking behavior via higher perceived self-value and higher receptivity was significant, but notably smaller (b = 0.09, SE = 0.03, CI [0.04, 0.16]). The indirect effect of perceived self-value on advice seeking remained significant (b = 0.09, SE = 0.06, CI [0.001, 0.24]), suggesting that the indirect effect of perceived self-value operated only partially via enhanced perceived receptivity. When coupling was high, the positive indirect effect of status on advice seeking via greater perceived self-value was significant (b = 0.28, SE = 0.12, CI [0.07, 0.54]). Similarly, when coupling was low, the positive indirect effect of status on advice seeking via greater perceived self-value was significant but smaller (b = 0.19, SE = 0.08, CI [0.04, 0.37]). Figure 6 depicts the full model visually.

We also explored whether perceived self-value and receptivity serves as parallel mediators by using the PROCESS 3.1 macro (Model 7) (Hayes 2013) with bootstrapping procedures of 5,000 iterations. The result did not support parallel mediators. There was only an indirect effect of perceived self-value (b = 0.09, SE = 0.06, CI [0.001, 0.24]) but not perceived

Figure 6. The serial mediated moderation model (Study 6)



Notes. The direct effect of status on advice seeking was not significant ($b = 0.13$, $SE = 0.21$, CI [−0.28, 0.55]). The indirect effect via perceived value was significant ($b = 0.09$, $SE = 0.06$, CI [0.001, 0.24]). The indirect effect via perceived receptivity was not significant ($b = 0.03$, $SE = 0.05$, CI [−0.07, 0.13]). The serial indirect effect of perceived value and perceived receptivity was significant ($b = 0.05$, $SE = 0.03$, CI [0.002, 0.11]). When coupling is high, the conditional effect of status on advice-seeking behaviors via perceived value and perceived receptivity is significant ($b = 0.14$, $SE = 0.05$, CI [0.07, 0.24]).When coupling is low, the conditional effect of status on advice-seeking behaviors via perceived value and perceived receptivity is also significant but notably smaller ($b = 0.09$, $SE = 0.03$, CI [0.04, 0.16]). When coupling is high, the conditional effect of status on advice seeking via perceived value is significant ($b = 0.28$, $SE = 0.12$, CI [0.07, 0.54]). When coupling is low, the conditional effect of status on advice-seeking behaviors via perceived value is significant but smaller ($b = 0.19$, $SE = 0.08$, CI [0.04, 0.37]). $^*p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{***}p < 0.001$

receptivity ($b = 0.04$, $SE = 0.10$, CI [−0.14, 0.24]). In other words, perceived receptivity only served as a serial mechanism following perceived self-value and did not operate as a separate mechanism.

As in Study 5, we looked at the complete picture of the advice-seeking behavior by accounting for the target of advice seeking (see Table A.4 in Online Appendix 7). Consistent with Study 5, there was no main effect of coupling and no interaction effect of status and coupling on the likelihood of advice seeking to a middle-/low-status counterpart ($ps > 0.12$). Again, low status did not make people more likely to reach out to and seek advice from a middle- or low-status counterpart.

Internal Meta-Analysis

We performed an internal meta-analysis for the set of studies by using comprehensive meta-analysis software (Borenstein et al. 2013). An internal meta-analysis allows researchers to identify the overall effect size and is particularly useful when the pattern of the results is inconsistent or relatively weak across studies (Goh et al. 2016). Our main goal here is to identify whether there is an interaction effect of status x coupling on network-broadening and the effect size of status on network-broadening in different coupling conditions. We only did a meta-analysis for Studies 4, 5, and 6, because the interaction effect in the other studies was significant and the data were in different formats (correlational vs. experimental, continuous vs. dichotomous), making it difficult to combine and estimate an interaction effect. A meta-analysis based on a random-effects approach showed that status had a positive main effect on network-broadening ($Mr = 0.17$, CI [0.09, 0.25], $Z = 4.14$, $p < 0.001$). More importantly, the effect of status on network-broadening varied significantly depending on the level of coupling [$Q(1) = 3.90$, $p = 0.048$]. Specifically, when coupling was high, status had a positive effect on network-broadening ($Mr = 0.22$, CI [0.14, 0.31], $Z = 4.99$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting a small- to medium-size effect; in contrast, when coupling was low, the effect of status on network-broadening was not significant ($Mr = 0.08$, CI [−0.04, 0.19], $Z = 1.36$, $p = 0.17$). A meta-analysis based on a fixed-effects approach produced a similar result. Overall, the internal meta-analysis confirmed the interaction effect, such that when coupling was high, status increased network-broadening; in contrast, when coupling was low, status had no effect on network-broadening.

General Discussion

Across seven studies, we established a behavioral mechanism rooted in individual psychological beliefs to help explain why high-status people tend to mobilize and maintain larger social networks than low-status people. Our results can be summarized in three parts. First, the commonly observed correlation between status and network size is likely related to an increased propensity among high-status people to engage in network-broadening behaviors (across six studies). The effect is robust across various settings, including network-broadening in a hypothetical organization (Studies 1, 2, and 4), building new contacts at work (Study 3), and advice seeking in a newly formed online community (Studies 5 and 6). Second, people's belief in status-quality coupling, a construct that we suggest varies both interpersonally and intersituationally, is a critical moderator of the relationship between status and network-broadening behavior. Specifically, Studies 2 and 3 found that the positive relationship between status and both network-broadening and network size was strongest among people—both high- and low-status—who believed that status is a reliable indicator of quality. Studies 4, 5, and 6 offered causal support for this relationship. Third, and finally, we demonstrated that status-quality coupling is important because it leads high-status (low-status) people to perceive that they have more (less) value to

offer others (Studies 4 and 6) and that others are more (less) likely to be receptive to them (Study 6), which subsequently impacts people's likelihood to engage in network-broadening behaviors.

In addition to these empirical findings, our paper makes important contributions to research on social status, social capital, and inequality more generally. Whereas much of the existing research linking status to social networks adopts the perspective of network "alters"—showing, for instance, that high-status people tend to be sought out more often and by more people than low-status people (Bothner et al. 2010)—our paper operates from the perspective of network "ego." By ascribing "ego" with personal agency (see Kuwarabra et al. 2016 for a theory on the role of individual belief in network formation), we have shown that status affects the networking behavior and network size of the status-holder herself via an interaction with ego's beliefs about the relationship between status and quality.

The serial mediated moderation model in Study 6, which showed that perceived receptivity of the target of ones' networking was in fact the most proximate mediator of network-broadening, supports the idea that status causes people to be more outward oriented and that high-status people's behaviors, in particular, are heavily influenced by how those behaviors will be responded to by others (Blader and Chen 2012, Blader et al. 2016). Because status is based on others' conferral, high-status individuals need to constantly monitor others' responses to assess their level of status. The outward nature of status distinguishes it from another important element of social hierarchy, power, which makes individuals inward oriented and less concerned about others' responses (Blader and Chen 2012, Blader et al. 2016). Our data suggest that status and power might operate through unique mechanisms to enhance networking for individuals occupying more advantaged social positions. Whereas power increases social networking by reducing people's concerns regarding the "dirtiness" of networking (Casciaro et al. 2014) and by a greater objectification of the networking target (Gruenfeld et al. 2008), status increases networking by a sense of elevated personal value and greater receptivity from the networking target.

The moderating effect of status-quality coupling also highlights the importance of considering context when studying social status (Torelli et al. 2014, Kuwabara et al. 2016, Li et al. 2016, Neeley and Dumas 2016, Hays and Blader 2017, Miyamoto et al. 2018). We are not the first to make this argument, of course. For example, Neeley and Dumas (2016) analyzed how high- and low-status employees react to a new social hierarchy when status is considered unearned. Kuwabara et al. (2016) found that status increases punishment in Eastern cultures but decreases it in Western cultures; this is largely the result of the two cultures ascribing different expectations to high- and low-status people. Our study highlights an additional contextual variable: status-quality coupling.

Our research also provides a new perspective to the relationship between help seeking and status dynamics. Previous research suggests that help seeking is a critical form of status conferral (Henrich and Gil-White 2001). When individuals seek help from another person, they confer status to that person. As a result, help seeking often goes from low-status individuals to high-status individuals. Our finding suggests that high-status individuals are more likely than low-status individuals to seek help from an expert, if high-status individuals feel that their status is justified and coupled with their quality. In other words, when high-status individuals feel secure about their status, help seeking might not be seen as status conferral but rather just as a means to accomplish the task. Again, it is related to our previous point that it is important to consider the context, and a typical status-conferral behavior might have different implications depending on the context.

Lastly, we believe that our paper has broader implications for the function and persistence of social hierarchy. Status hierarchies are often conceptualized as sorting mechanisms that allow people to identify both their own value and the value of others in a given social context (Thibaut and Kelley 1959, Blau 1964, Berger et al. 1972, Leary et al. 2014). As sorting mechanisms, however, the efficiency of status hierarchies builds upon a critical assumption: that people believe status is in fact a reliable indicator of quality. The novel theoretical construct introduced here, belief in status-quality coupling, captures variance in this critical assumption. Relatedly, status-quality coupling may also be an important mechanism contributing to the persistence of social hierarchy, especially in contexts where the majority of people believe that status and quality are tightly coupled. Consider, for example, the pilot study. Of the GSS respondents included in our sample, 69% and 65% of respondents in the top and bottom halves of the income distribution were coded as believing in status-quality coupling, respectively. This is important, given what we now know about the moderating effect of status-quality coupling on the relationship between status and social networks. Belief in status-quality coupling leads high-status people to network more. In contrast, a belief in status-quality coupling also appears to prevent low-status people from expanding their social networks. Accordingly, if a majority of the people in a given context—whether organizational or societal—believes that status is a reliable indicator of quality, then status hierarchies are likely to remain more stable, and high-status people should be more likely to reap the benefits that come from sitting atop those hierarchies.

Organizational Implications

Our findings have practical implications for managers. The functional view of social hierarchy proposes that hierarchy is good because it motivates high-value people to contribute more via the promise of upward mobility (Weber 1946, Tannenbaum 1974, Magee and Galinsky 2008, Anderson and Brown 2010). Our findings suggest that, aside from creating promotion incentives, managers should also pay attention to employees' beliefs regarding status-quality coupling. When belief in coupling is low, high-status people may question their value and limit their network-broadening behavior as a result. Similarly, when belief in coupling is high, lower-status employees may attribute less value to themselves and be more reticent to mobilize valuable network ties. Studies 2, 4, 5, and 6 speak to this potential consequence. In each of these studies, our scenarios and tasks were unambiguous regarding the value of network-broadening (i.e., presenting a tie as having necessary, useful information). However, in each of our studies, low-status individuals who reported high coupling (or who had been assigned to a condition wherein status and quality were tightly coupled) still tended to hold back. Managers may be wise to not only encourage low-status employees to understand the value of social networks—if and when the situation calls for it—but also to encourage lower-status employees to identify their own unique value.

Our data also suggests that decoupling is not altogether uncommon in organizations. In our studies involving workplace scenarios, the mean reported status-quality coupling was only slightly above the middle point ($M = 4.58$; $SD = 1.13$ for Study 2; $M = 4.52$; $SD = 1.13$ for Study 3). We further suspect organizations to exhibit even lower average beliefs in status-quality coupling when performance is difficult to measure (Audia and Brion 2007), organizational culture is less merit-based (Rusbult et al. 1995, Fischer and Smith 2004), and organizational change is frequent (Neeley and Dumas 2016). In such cases, managers should actively monitor the level of status-quality coupling belief among employees. In addition, managers could treat the belief in coupling as a critical intervening variable that could be introduced by changing related contextual factors.

Lastly, our paper, like many others before it, is both motivated by and supportive of the premise that individual effort can actively shape one's social network and the resulting social capital to which a person has access. As many organizational leaders undoubtedly know, there are significant benefits to motivating employees to develop their social networks. However, our finding also suggests an important caveat. Despite their potential value, exercises meant to increase employee networking may also contribute to the perpetuation of social hierarchy, as low-status individuals are less likely than their high-status counterparts to engage in networking when beliefs in status-quality coupling are ubiquitous.

Limitations and Future Research

Our study is not without limitations. The first limitation relates to the fact that the majority of our study sample came from MTurk, except for the pilot study. Although numerous research has supported the validity and reliability of recruiting participants from MTurk (Buhrmester et al. 2011), future studies should explore the topic in more organizational related settings. Second, our focus of network-broadening has mostly been on advice seeking, although network-broadening in the forms of help offering (Studies 1–2) and actively building new contacts (Study 3) were also explored. Focusing on advice seeking has many benefits, as this form of network-broadening has a clear goal, which has a stronger impact on performance (Wolff and Moser 2009, Casciaro et al. 2014) and fulfills the purpose of resource-exchange better (Lin 1999, 2001). However, the extent to which the effect can be extended to other types of network-broadening (e.g., going to networking events, networking in more social and emotional contexts) still needs further investigations.

Another limitation relates to the fact that we did not test the full model, including all the variables, specifically, status, coupling, perceived self-value, perceived receptivity, network-broadening, and network size, in any of the studies. In most studies, we focused on testing network-broadening as the outcome, as opposed to network size. We took this approach, because the idea that networking leads to larger network size is relatively straightforward. Future research should try to design a study that tests the full model.

It is also worthy to note that we are unable to draw conclusions regarding the effect of coupling on people at the same status level.[7] There are several possible reasons for this. The first is statistical and stems from the high average level of status-quality coupling that we observed among our study participants. More conceptually, this result may also indicate that changing people's beliefs regarding status-quality coupling may not be sufficient to change their network-broadening behavior. Future research could address this issue directly by collecting data in organizational or cultural contexts in which beliefs in status-quality coupling are lower, more normally distributed, or change over time. It will be particularly interesting to assess whether growing disbelief in status-quality coupling might empower low-status people to network more broadly and aggressively.

Further research is also needed to better understand with whom high-status (low-status) people network. Studies 5 and 6 explored this topic by providing participants with multiple networking targets.

The results suggested that low-status people seemed to be more likely to reach out to middle- and low-status counterparts than high-status people, although in both studies, the results did not reach statistical significance ($p = 0.10$ and $p = 0.12$, respectively). Future research could further explore whether lower status reduces individuals' overall network-broadening tendency or changes the targets of that networking.

We conceptualized status-quality coupling at the context level, namely, the extent to which one believes that the status hierarchy is coupled with quality. In contrast, there are two other similar concepts operating at different levels, namely, belief in personal status-quality coupling (i.e., the extent to which one believes that *her status* is coupled with quality) and intersubjective belief in status-quality coupling (i.e., the extent to which *most people* in the hierarchy believes that the status hierarchy is coupled with quality). Even though these beliefs often align, future research could examine the interplay of status and the coupling belief at these different levels. It could help us identify at which level, the coupling belief has the strongest enabling effect for the relationship between status and network-broadening, as well as discovering different underlying mechanisms. We suspect the enabling effect of belief in personal coupling to be weaker, because network-broadening involves recognizing the values of two sides, the initiator and the target, and the belief in personal coupling only captures self-value, and not the value of others. In other words, the belief in personal coupling does not provide clues about the quality of the networking target, making networking in such an environment less effective. In contrast, we suspect that the intersubjective belief in coupling still enables the effect, but via a different mechanism, specifically, via directly influencing the perceived receptivity without influencing perceived self-value. Indeed, research from cultural psychology suggests that intersubjective belief drives strategic behaviors, leading people to adjust their behaviors based on the expected reactions from others (Zou et al. 2009, Chiu et al. 2010).

Lastly, our research is built upon the notion that status conferral is based on perceived competence (Blau 1964). On the other side, previous research suggests that generosity is another important source of status conferral (Flynn 2003, Willer 2009). Future research could examine how the current framework works in a social hierarchy that is based on generosity, as opposed to competence. We believe that such a setting provides a unique circumstance to test how the roles of status-quality coupling and status-legitimacy might diverge. Our speculation is that status would still have a positive effect on network-broadening behavior. However, the effect is more likely to be enabled by the belief in overall status legitimacy, as opposed to belief in coupling. In addition, we predict expected receptivity to be the main driver of the effect, as opposed to being a serial mechanism via perceived self-value.

Conclusion

Our paper offers a novel explanation for a long-standing empirical observation: high-status people typically have larger networks than low-status people. We found first that a greater propensity to network broadly among high-status people is an important behavioral mechanism driving the positive relationship between status and network size. More importantly, we also demonstrated that the belief in status-quality coupling is a critical enabler of the relationship. The effect of status on network-broadening is stronger when the belief in coupling is high than when it is low, and the effect operates via a greater sense of self-value and a greater perceived receptivity of the networking target.

Endnotes

[1] Among network researchers, this statement may seem tautological, as status is often conceptualized and measured by network researchers as an individual's connectedness or centrality in a social network (e.g., Bonacich 1987, Bothner et al. 2010). We adopt a more general view of status here. We will define *status* more specifically in the theory section.

[2] Smith et al (2012) advocate a three-part conceptualization of networks, including the *potential network*, the *cognitively activated network*, and the *behaviorally mobilized network*. The *potential network* corresponds to the entirety of a person's social network, or all of the social contacts to which one might turn at a given time.

[3] *Instrumental legitimacy* refers to the extent to which status is conferred based on one's ability to promote the material interests of the group and individual members (Weber 1946, Hollander and Julian 1970, Hollander 1980). We see instrumental legitimacy and status-quality coupling as largely similar. We use the term *status-quality coupling* from now on because it is more intuitive to the phenomenon (i.e., the relationship between status and quality) that we are interested in and has also been widely used in the sociology literature. By doing so, we hope to bridge status literatures from different fields.

[4] Recent research suggests that power and social status are distinct components of social hierarchy. Although power was not our research focus, we controlled for it to help isolate the unique effects of social status and status-quality coupling. We did a factor analysis and found that two items drove the low Cronbach's alpha value. When we dropped the two items, the Cronbach's alpha value reached 0.94. We compared the regression results of including either the six-item or the eight-item power measure. The results did not differ. We reported the results only with the eight-item power measure because it was the original scale.

[5] We added this item as a way to further validate our measure. The results are consistent, regardless of whether we include the item in the measure of belief in status-quality coupling.

[6] We still asked them to rate the middle- and low-status counterpart because it would be unnatural for participants who did not choose the high-status counterpart for advice seeking to rate only the high-status counterpart.

[7] Directionally speaking, our within-status group results are consistent with our theory—namely, high status and high coupling results in an elevated likelihood of broadening one's network as compared with high status and low coupling, and vice versa for low-status people.

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