

Supplemental Materials for:

The Vicious Cycle of Status Insecurity

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Study 1: Establishing the Reliability and Validity of the ChatGPT Measures

After developing the status insecurity and status sharing scales, we asked ChatGPT (version 4-0613, date 01/06/2024 – 01/07/2024) to generate three example speeches for each scale point. In the prompt, we entered the following description of Survivor:

“Survivor is filmed on an isolated location, where contestants compete in challenges that test their physical and mental abilities to win the title of Sole Survivor and a \$1,000,000 prize. Contestants are progressively eliminated from the competition as they are voted out by their fellow contestants. On the final day, two or three players hold a final pitch in front of the jury, which consists of all former contestants. In the pitch, players make their case for why they should win the competition.”

Mirroring the 72 speeches from our data set, we instructed ChatGPT to write speeches that would be, on average, 164 words long (min: 64, max: 309 words). To allow for creativity and diversity in the generated speeches, we set the temperature and Top P settings to 1.

For example, for the status security scale, ChatGPT generated the following Low Status Security (0) speech:

“Members of the jury, I am here not to stand behind a veil of forced positivity, but to face the reality. Surviving in this game was an uphill task, the social dynamic tested my mettle from day one. Our tribe held many strong personalities and finding my place amongst them was an ongoing battle. The relationships I’ve managed to build have been shaky, under threat from the constant upheavals of the game. This journey has not been an easy one, with more ups and downs than I might have envisioned. As I stand before you, my heart heavy but hopeful, I present the raw, unfiltered version of my journey.”

ChatGPT generated the following High Status Security (1) speech:

“Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, from the moment I set foot on this island, I felt an immediate connection with each one of you. I strode into this game with a goal not just to outwit, outplay and outlast, but to forge strong connections with my fellow contestants, my tribe-mates. I believe I have achieved exactly that. Why? Because I stand here today knowing I have given my everything to deserve this social standing - standing tall, standing strong. Even in the roughest of waters, my optimism prevailed. I’ve treated this as more than just a game, cherishing each person for their unique attributes. The positivity I held even in the darkest of days and the helping hand I extended to you all, I hope it’s been noted. I’ve played this game with passion, resilience, and integrity, affording you all the warmth, respect, and truth - the cornerstones of our tribe, of our shared experience here.”

For the status sharing scale, ChatGPT generated the following speech under No Status

Sharing (0):

“Surviving on this island took not only physical strength, but also mental strength. It was a test of endurance, of resilience, of adaptation. I stepped up to every challenge and proved my supremacy over and over. I fought battles, took risks, and emerged victorious every time. The strategic plays I made laid the foundations of my journey in this game. My mental agility and strength kept me ahead of my competitors, allowing for infiltrating alliances and moving around with stealth. I am proud to say I am the one who prevailed in this ruthless competition. It’s my strength, my resilience, my strategic mind, that kept me here until the final day and that should enable me to claim the title of Sole Survivor.”

ChatGPT generated the following Status Sharing (1) speech:

“Today, I stand here, a testament not only to my dedication and tenacity but also to the collaborative effort and camaraderie that blossomed amongst us. I acknowledge and greatly appreciate the role that everyone has played in my journey. My alliances threw lifelines in the direst of times, and it is through their support that I am here today. My gratitude extends to each of you, for your individual contributions and for making this a journey of growth, experience, and ambition. Each decision I made, although strategic, was significantly impacted and guided by our team’s collective intelligence.”

In total, ChatGPT generated nine speeches for the status security scale (three speeches for each of the three scale points) and nine speeches for the status sharing scale (three speeches for each of the three scale points; see OSF for the code and generated examples).

To ensure that the illustrative speeches would facilitate valid few-shot learning, we first tested whether ChatGPT (version 4-0613, date 01/06/2024 – 01/07/2024) would rate each speech on the scale point for which it was originally designed. To avoid dependencies, we opened a new chat for every speech. In the prompt, we entered one of the speeches and its respective scale and asked ChatGPT to rate the speech on the scale. This time, we set the temperature and Top P settings to 0 to ensure highly deterministic and consistent outputs. For both the nine status security speeches and the nine status sharing speeches, ChatGPT successfully rated every speech on the scale point for which it was originally designed, suggesting internal consistency (see OSF for the code and output).

In addition, we asked six human coders (three research assistants and three Ph.D. students in behavioral science departments at a university) to validate the scales. The coders read the general overview of the show *Survivor* from above. Every coder rated all the speeches generated by ChatGPT, and we randomized whether they first rated the nine status security speeches (on status security) or the nine status sharing speeches (on status sharing). We informed coders that we had created three speeches for every scale point and asked them to identify the appropriate score for each speech (see OSF for the instructions and results). For both scales, the speeches were presented in random order. Overall, there was a strong overlap with the scores generated by ChatGPT. For the status security scale, 100% of the coders agreed with ChatGPT on six speeches, 83% (5 out of 6) agreed with ChatGPT on two speeches, and 67% (4 out of 6¹) agreed with ChatGPT on one speech. For the status sharing scale, 100% of the coders agreed with ChatGPT on six speeches, and 83% (5 out of 6) agreed with ChatGPT on the remaining three speeches. Overall, these findings suggest that ChatGPT produces internally consistent ratings for the two scales that largely agree with human ratings.

Full Prompts Used in the Survivor Study

Below are the full prompts used in the main study, consisting of a scale and its nine validated example speeches facilitating few-shot learning:

Status Security Few-Learning Prompt

“Please rate the text on the extent to which it contains language indicating security related to social status. Please also explain your score:

* High Status Security (1): The speaker displays a strong sense of confidence in the relationships they built with the other players and their overall social standing within the tribe. The speaker reflects on the game with slightly more positivity than negativity.

Three examples for High Status Security (1):

¹ The other two coders did not overlap in their rating.

1. Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, from the moment I set foot on this island, I felt an immediate connection with each one of you. I strode into this game with a goal not just to outwit, outplay and outlast, but to forge strong connections with my fellow contestants, my tribe-mates. I believe I have achieved exactly that. Why? Because I stand here today knowing I have given my everything to deserve this social standing - standing tall, standing strong. Even in the roughest of waters, my optimism prevailed. I've treated this as more than just a game, cherishing each person for their unique attributes. The positivity I held even in the darkest of days and the helping hand I extended to you all, I hope it's been noted. I've played this game with passion, resilience, and integrity, affording you all the warmth, respect, and truth - the cornerstones of our tribe, of our shared experience here.

2. Friends of the jury, we have been through so much together on this island. We laughed, cried, faced triumphs and shared losses. Yet here we stand, proud warriors of the game. I joined this game, not just to win but to create bonds that would last a lifetime. I can affirmatively say that I never felt safer, never felt stronger than I do with you all by my side. The relationships I have built here, the love and respect I share with each of you, it's unmistakably real, clearly indicated by my presence here today. We faced the storm, shoulder to shoulder, and here we are. I navigated this journey with as much positivity as I could possibly muster, keeping you guys at the center, your needs, your emotions, and your respect. Victory or not, I rest easy knowing that I honoured you all through every step of this journey.

3. Fellow tribe members on the jury, my voice holds steady as I look out at the faces of the people I now call family. In the beginning, I was unsure about my place on this island, but now I stand before you confidently as a worthy opponent. I feel a deep sense of community as I convene with you all today, my social safety stemming from the relationships I have fostered during our time together. Born out of shared adversity and kinship, my status within this tribe is a testament to the bonds we have nurtured together. Even amidst the constant shift of allegiance and tactics, I consciously decided to let positivity be my leverage. I played with honesty, respect, and genuine concern for each one of you, demonstrating that at the heart of this game, we are simply people, seeking connection. That's my pitch to you, ladies and gentlemen, a game played with high spirits, resolute confidence, and enduring fellowship.

* Moderate Status Security (0.5): The speaker displays moderate confidence in the relationships they built with the other players and their overall social standing within the tribe. The speaker reflects on the game with a balance of positivity and negativity.

Three examples for Moderate Status Security (0.5):

1. Friends on the jury, today I stand here with an undeniable mix of apprehension and confidence. This game has been a rollercoaster ride, where I attempted to create strong relationships with you all. I believe I made genuine connections with many, despite some bumps along the way. The ups and downs, the trials and successes— through it all, I tried to maintain a balance between optimism and reality. Winning, for me, was not just about being the last one standing but about standing sturdy and reliable. I stood up for you, and championed our tribe's spirit within the chaos. While the challenges tested my faith in our bonds, I persevered, aiming to reassure you, to let you know that our relationship was

more important to me than the game itself.

2. Members of the jury, from day one, my goal was to build solid relationships with each of you. While I confess that I might have stumbled in this quest, I believe I have managed to earn the respect of some of you. My aim was always to maintain positivity and connect on a deeper level, despite the inherent competitiveness this game encourages. There were moments of uncertainty, moments of self-doubt, and yes, they shook my confidence, but they never broke my spirit. I took each day as an opportunity to prove my worth, not just as a competitor, but a valued member of the tribe. I tried to be the beacon of optimism, amidst the continuous tests. As I stand here today, I feel satisfied seeing how far I've come. I've played with integrity, acknowledging my strengths and weaknesses, that I believe is what makes me deserving of this title.

3. Esteemed jury, as I stand before you today, I do so with a sense of moderate confidence in my social standing. Within our tribe, I aimed to be more than just a contestant: I strived to be a friend, a confidante, a support system. Admittedly, my journey was one with its fair shares of triumphs and trials, joy and disappointments. Positivity was my driving force, even when the tide of the game seemed against me. Reflecting on the journey, I am proud of the fact that in every situation, I aspired to act in the best interest of this remarkable tribe. The relationships I have built with you - they may not be perfect, but they are real and grounded in respect. For the player who enters this game banking on genuine human connection, I believe I have done justice.

* Low Status Security (0): The speaker displays uncertainty in the relationships they built with the other players and their overall social standing within the tribe. The speaker reflects on the game with slightly more negativity than positivity.

Three examples for Low Status Security (0):

1. Dear jury, from the day I stepped onto this island, I found myself in a world that swung between certainty and doubt—challenging my every step and connection I attempted to build. The relationships I set out to nurture struggled with hurdles, and to say that I navigated this game comfortably would be a stretch. The uncertainties outweighed the joy at times, and here I stand reflective of those dark days. Yet, also remembering the small moments of triumph. I often found myself hanging by the thread of hope, my status as a member of this close-knit tribe constantly wavering. Yet, even in the face of adversity, I continued to push forward—believing in my unique journey that's marked by resilience.

2. Members of the jury, I am here not to stand behind a veil of forced positivity, but to face the reality. Surviving in this game was an uphill task, the social dynamic tested my mettle from day one. Our tribe held many strong personalities and finding my place amongst them was an ongoing battle. The relationships I've managed to build have been shaky, under threat from the constant upheavals of the game. This journey has not been an easy one, with more ups and downs than I might have envisioned. As I stand before you, my heart heavy but hopeful, I present the raw, unfiltered version of my journey.

3. Fellow survivors on the jury, I commenced this journey with purpose and potential but was soon swallowed by the incessant battles of the game. The honesty in my approach was often mistaken, making me question the relationships I was building. The façade of confidence was replaced with self-doubt, and moments of negativity often clouded the

brighter aspects of the game. I stand here today, my pride battered, but not defeated. This journey has not only been about surviving the game but also struggling with my place within it. As I share my journey, I acknowledge the dips, the torment, and the struggle, infused with fleeting moments of triumph and resilience. Through it all, I've emerged stronger and truer, and that is my biggest victory.

Here is the speech I'd like you to rate:"

Status Sharing Few-Learning Prompt

Please rate the text based on whether the speaker shares their status by acknowledging the other players' contributions to their success. Please also explain your score:

* No Status Sharing (0): The speaker focuses on their own strategic game play and achievements, with no mention of the other players' contributions to their success. Overall, the language is characterized by self-promotion and a lack of gratitude expressions, inclusivity, and cooperation.

Here are three example speeches for No Status Sharing (0):

1. From the first day on this island, I played the game strategically, crafting alliances to stay afloat. There's an undeniable skill in staying uneliminated, and it's a testimony of the power I wield in this competition. No one can deny that I have been the leading force in virtually every decision made within our alliance. I outwitted, outlasted, and outplayed. I have deftly navigated each challenge presented to me and made every single strategic move to secure my place here today. I feel deserving of the million-dollar prize and title of the Sole Survivor as it's my dedication, ingenuity, and resilience that brought me this far.
2. Reflecting back, I compelled everyone in this competition. The moves I made, the steps I took, they were all instruments of my strategic plan. I had my eyes on the prize from day one. I crafted bonds not out of gratitude, but from tactical necessity. Every step was a chess match, and I was always one step ahead. I played this game not with gratitude for others but with my cunning strategy and tenacity. I ensured my own survival throughout this game. It's my survival instinct and strategic vision that makes me deserving of the title of Sole Survivor.
3. Surviving on this island took not only physical strength, but also mental strength. It was a test of endurance, of resilience, of adaptation. I stepped up to every challenge and proved my supremacy over and over. I fought battles, took risks, and emerged victorious every time. The strategic plays I made laid the foundations of my journey in this game. My mental agility and strength kept me ahead of my competitors, allowing for infiltrating alliances and moving around with stealth. I am proud to say I am the one who prevailed in this ruthless competition. It's my strength, my resilience, my strategic mind, that kept me here until the final day and that should enable me to claim the title of Sole Survivor.

* Partial Status Sharing (0.5): The speaker mainly focuses on their own strategic game play and achievements. At times, they mention the other players' contributions to their

success. However, the occasional acknowledgment of the other players is general and lacks depth or specificity. Overall, the language is still characterized mainly by self-promotion and shows a limited level of gratitude expressions, inclusivity, and cooperation.

Here are three example speeches for Partial Status Sharing (0.5):

1. In narrating my journey in this competition, I unquestionably owe a part of my achievement to the alliances formed. However, at the core of every decision and strategic move was my vision and strategy. I stood as a pillar of resilience, agility, and mental strength in the face of every challenge presented on this island. While I am aware of the contributions made by the other players, it is the culmination of my decisions and meticulous plans that have brought me here today. I've played this game assertively, bringing my A-game every single day, and that's what makes me deserving of the title of the Sole Survivor.

2. In my journey to stand here today, other players played a role, but it doesn't diminish the fact that my strategic moves, maneuvers, and resilience are what ultimately got me here. Confronting every hurdle, whether it be in challenges or decisions within alliances, I acted with dexterity and determination. I was often one step ahead, ensuring my position in this game was secured. Although not without assistance from fellow contestants, the majority of my journey was characterized by my own tactics and strategies.

3. Being here on the last day is indicative of my strategic approach and mental strength more than anything else. Whilst the other players have their part in my journey here, it was my foresight, decision-making, and survival skills that kept me in the game. Each challenge was met with a steely perseverance, every alliance carefully negotiated, and every move calculated. Although I acknowledge the collaborative efforts of others, it is my determination, grit, and inherent survivor instincts that have predominantly steered my course in this competition. These, I believe, are what make me the rightful Sole Survivor.

* Status Sharing (1): While the speaker mentions their own strategic game play and achievements, they also place emphasis [on] the other players' contributions to their success. The speaker refers to the role specific players and their alliances played in getting them this far in the game. Overall, the language is characterized by self-promotion but also rich in gratitude expressions, inclusivity, and cooperation.

Here are three example speeches for Status Sharing (1):

1. I stand here today, not just due to my strategic game play and resilience, but equally because of the significant contributions of my fellows. We formed alliances, and each person played a role as a piece of a well-crafted puzzle. Thank you all for allowing me to partake in these alliances, in good times and in times of strife. I am immensely grateful for all the support I received, helping me to survive through the toughest challenges. Although I take pride in my strategic focus, without my allies' insights and collaborations, it wouldn't have been nearly as effective. I sincerely believe that I am here because of our collective efforts.

2. Today, I stand here, a testament not only to my dedication and tenacity but also to the

collaborative effort and camaraderie that blossomed amongst us. I acknowledge and greatly appreciate the role that everyone has played in my journey. My alliances threw lifelines in the direst of times, and it is through their support that I am here today. My gratitude extends to each of you, for your individual contributions and for making this a journey of growth, experience, and ambition. Each decision I made, although strategic, was significantly impacted and guided by our team's collective intelligence.

3. My journey on this island wasn't navigated by my strength and savvy alone. Respect and gratitude towards my fellow players who have played significant roles in our collective endeavor are due. We survived together, strategized together, and overcame challenges together. Every alliance formed gave me valuable insights, reinforcing my strategy and solidifying my purpose. I significantly value the collaboration and mutual respect we shared, for it has helped mold me into the Survivor standing before you today. The shared experience and collective strength, I believe, are what make me worthy of the title of Sole Survivor.

Here is the speech I'd like you to rate:"

Study 3b (Supplemental): Status Sharing in an Incentive-Compatible Ideation Game

Study 3b extended the prior studies by using an incentive-compatible design.

Specifically, we had participants generate creative names for a new App and told them that they would be considered for a bonus payment if their ideas exceeded a certain threshold. Moreover, participants received help in the form of feedback from an ostensible fellow contestant designed to improve their performance in the ideation game. After the idea submission, all participants were informed that their ideas met the threshold and that they were potentially eligible to receive a bonus payment. Participants then submitted a speech to share their thoughts on getting past the first hurdle of the competition. Overall, this study offers enhanced experimental realism as participants produced real work and received real help. We predicted that those who were insecure would be less likely to acknowledge the help they received.

Method

Participants

A total of 253 participants completed a paid online study on Amazon Mechanical Turk (via Cloud Research), and 235 participants passed our attention check and were included in the

analysis ($M_{\text{age}} = 41.1$, 56.2% female). This sample allowed for the detection of small-to-medium effects ($\phi = 0.18$ at 80% power and $\phi = 0.21$ at 90% power) in a 2 x 2 contingency table.

Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to an *insecurity* or *security* condition.

Insecurity Manipulation. We first induced baseline insecurity through competence concerns (refer to Table 1 for this source of status insecurity) by asking participants to recall a time when they felt secure [insecure] about their ability to meet an important creative goal either because of their own abilities [inabilities] / favorable [unfavorable] context or because of others' creative inabilities [abilities] / unfavorable [favorable] context.

Next, we informed all participants they would be competing in an ideation game to create innovative names for a new App designed to connect startups with investors using Artificial Intelligence. We told them that they would be eligible for a potential bonus payment of \$0.25 if their ideas exceeded a threshold. In the *insecurity* condition, we embedded additional information highlighting upward social comparison (refer to Table 1 for this source of status insecurity): "Note that a number of other contestants (MTurkers) may be better set up for success than you are because they already participated in a previous ideation competition and have more experience with the task." This manipulation was aimed to induce doubt among participants about their ability to win the competition and earn respect and admiration for their ideas in comparison to other contestants.

Help Received. Participants were told they would receive advice from a contestant, Alex, who had already completed the survey previously. Alex's advice, which we experimentally created, explained how the name for the Dating App Tinder was developed to signify how the App provides the platform (the tinder) to create a romantic spark between two people. Alex

recommended thinking about the kind of interaction the new fundraising App is designed to create between founders and investors (see OSF for full instructions).

Ideation Generation. Participants were given one minute to generate as many names as possible for the App. On average, participants developed 4.6 names. Examples included Moneyseed, 2getherFunds, Launchpad, and Eden. After the brainstorming session, participants were told that their ideas were being evaluated in real time. All participants were told that they were eligible for a bonus payment, and all participants received the bonus at the end of the study.

Status Sharing Dependent Variable. Participants were asked to write a speech elaborating on their thoughts about overcoming this first hurdle of the ideation game. In the *insecurity* condition, we reinforced the upward social comparison (presented in bold font, see OSF): “You are hoping that this speech can help you keep up with the other contestants even though they are better set up for success than you are.”² As in previous studies, participants could freely choose the content and length of their speeches. We coded the speeches for whether they explicitly mentioned Alex. For example, the following speech mentioned Alex and was coded as 1 = Status Sharing³:

“I must thank Alex for the great idea on thinking of the relationship between the founder and startup. It really helped spark my ideas! I am grateful to get past this first hurdle and I want to be successful in my future!”

In contrast, the following speech was coded as 0 = No Status Sharing:

“I put on my creative hat and started to think of clever word combinations. I came up with a few that were interesting and catchy sounding.”

² As noted during the review process, the *insecurity* condition’s text was slightly longer (15%) than the *security* condition’s text.

³ An external auditor checked whether the mentions of Alex were positive (all except one mention were positive: “Alex’s advice is not accurate”), whether the speeches were sensible (e.g., “no speech” was coded as non-sensible), and whether Alex was mentioned directly (“Alex”) or indirectly (e.g., “I would like to thank those who gave me some helpful advice on coming up with a name.”).

Control Variables. We measured and controlled for mood (1 = *very bad* to 7 = *very good*). In addition, we had participants guess Alex's gender and report their gender, age, and income level.

Results and Discussion

A 2 x 2 contingency table confirmed that participants in the *insecurity* condition were less likely to share status with Alex (6.1%) than those in the *security* condition (19.2%): $\chi^2(1) = 9.02$, $p = .003$, $\phi = 0.20$.⁴⁵ This main result held in a binary logistic regression that controlled for participants' mood, the guess of Alex's gender, and participants' demographics: $b = -1.35$, $SE = 0.49$, $z = -2.74$, $p = .006$.⁶

Study 3b extended our prior findings by using an actual ideation game, having participants recall an experience with insecurity, inducing real stakes in the form of a bonus payment, and providing actual help to participants. This experiment also suggested mood does not account for our observed effect.

Studies 4b-d (Supplemental): Status Sharing in a Venture Capital Competition

Studies 4b-d tested whether status insecurity reduces status sharing. We manipulated status insecurity in three ways. Study 4b manipulated status insecurity using a similar language to Study 2's. Studies 4c-d manipulated two major sources of status insecurity identified in the Pilot Study. Study 4c manipulated status insecurity through *public failure*, and Study 4d

⁴ The overall percentages of spontaneous status sharing were noticeably below those of the venture capital studies. The following reasons could cause this: 1) Participants were put in a highly competitive environment, 2) the incentive-compatible design likely made participants highly concerned with the self-centered goal of receiving the bonus, and 3) participants were actively engaged in generating creative ideas so they had more to share about their own efforts than in the scripted venture capital studies.

⁵ The result remained significant when only counting positive mentions of Alex as status sharing ($N = 29$), when only keeping sensible speeches in the analysis ($N = 231$), and when counting direct and indirect mentions of Alex as status sharing ($N = 42$).

⁶ Mood did not vary by condition in this study ($p = .297$) and did not mediate the effect of insecurity on status sharing.

manipulated status insecurity through *upward social comparison*. For our experimental context, we created an entrepreneurial competition in which participants won the first round and were asked to hold a victory speech. We coded whether participants spontaneously shared status by acknowledging another person's help. Because Studies 4b-d are similar in design, we report them together here and note differences between the studies where relevant.

Method

Participants

For Study 4b, we recruited 234 participants from Prolific Academic who completed our study. In line with the preregistration, we excluded participants who failed an attention check ($N = 17$), which left 217 responses for the analysis ($M_{\text{age}} = 39.2$, 39.2% female). For Study 4c, 251 participants recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk (via Cloud Research) completed our study, and 233 passed our attention checks and were included in the analysis ($M_{\text{age}} = 36.4$, 52.8% female). For Study 4d, 251 participants from Amazon Mechanical Turk (via Cloud Research) completed our study, and 221 passed our preregistered attention checks and were included in the analysis ($M_{\text{age}} = 37.7$, 60.2% female). These samples allowed for the detection of small-to-medium effects (Study 4b: $\phi = 0.19$ at 80% power and $\phi = 0.22$ at 90% power, Study 4c: $\phi = 0.18$ at 80% power and $\phi = 0.21$ at 90% power, Study 4d: $\phi = 0.19$ at 80% power and $\phi = .22$ at 90% power) in 2 x 2 contingency tables.

Preregistration

Study 4b: https://aspredicted.org/57W_38Q; Study 4d: https://aspredicted.org/LCP_M33

Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to an *insecurity* or a *control* condition. They first read a general description of a venture capital competition and were told about their role:

“You are participating in this year’s competition (in the education sector). You are the founder of Tuned, an online platform that offers graphic design courses. Tuned’s courses integrate the principles of gaming to engage students in the art and science of graphic design.”

Insecurity Manipulations. Study 4b’s *insecurity* condition used language closely aligned with our definition: “Giving a convincing pitch is critical to your startup. You are feeling insecure, unsure and doubtful that others think you have what it takes to win the competition and turn your startup into a success.”⁷

Study 4c’s *insecurity* condition highlighted *public failure*: “You participated last time, and your presentation did not go well...Giving a convincing pitch is critical to your startup as your presentation skills have been criticized in the past and you almost did not get invited this year.”

Study 4d’s *insecurity* condition highlighted *upward social comparison*: “Giving a convincing pitch is critical to your startup as you constantly feel that the other contestants are better set up for success than you (e.g., more resources, better connections, more established, etc.).”

Next, all participants were given the following information about their preparation for the pitch, interaction with another contestant, and outcome of the first round:

- “Every contestant had to pitch their venture with a compelling presentation.
- While you were working on your presentation, you received help from Blake, who is competing in the hospitality sector of the competition.
- Blake suggested that you tailor your presentation to elegantly use the principles of graphic design as a way of highlighting your venture.
- You ended up using user experience design elements throughout your slides to emphasize the appeal of your venture.
- To highlight Tuned’s interactive gaming features even better, you also included motion design elements.

⁷ In Studies 4b-d, the entire manipulation texts were presented in bold font (see OSF for full study details).

You gave a strong presentation and won the competition in the education sector. This means that you advance to compete across all sectors for the grand prize. When receiving the prize for the education sector, you are supposed to submit a speech of your final thoughts.”

Study 4b reinforced the *insecurity* condition with the following prompt: “As you prepare your speech, you are still feeling insecure, unsure and doubtful that others think you have what it takes to win the competition and turn your startup into a success.”

Study 4d’s *insecurity* condition included: “You are hoping that this speech can help you keep up with the other contestants even though they are better set up for success than you are.”

Status Sharing Dependent Variable. All participants wrote a victory speech.⁸ Participants could choose the content and length of their speeches.⁹ We coded the speeches for whether participants spontaneously shared status by acknowledging Blake’s efforts. Our outcome measure was binary, coded as 1 for mentioning Blake and 0 for not mentioning Blake.¹⁰ For example, the following speech was coded 1 (Status Sharing) because it acknowledged Blake:

“I am very happy to be moving on to the next step of the competition. I hope to continue improving my company ‘Tuned’ regardless of the outcome. I would also like to thank Blake for his suggestions and help earlier in this competition. I hope he can make it to the next step as well. I look forward to my next presentation and improving from here.”

In contrast, the following speech was coded as 0 (No Status Sharing) because it did not acknowledge Blake:

“I’m so happy and proud for Tuned to be competing for the grand prize. In a world where you need to make your product stand out, Tuned offers the course material and education to better equip yourself for this task. Much like our product, we look to make ourselves stand out in the final competition!”

⁸ Note that all participants gave a victory speech and expressing gratitude in these types of speeches is customary. For our dependent variable, we focused on whether participants explicitly mentioned Blake, as status sharing only impacts Blake if they are explicitly named (see Study 6).

⁹ Studies 4c and 4d required a minimum entry of 20 characters.

¹⁰ An external auditor checked whether the mentions of Blake were positive (all mentions were positive), whether the speeches were sensible (e.g., “the prize i am get so many helped” was coded as non-sensible), and whether Blake was mentioned directly (“Blake”) or indirectly (e.g., “I received help from a fellow colleague”).

Studies 4b-d, 4f Manipulation and Mood Checks. In Study 4b, we measured the extent to which our manipulation affected participants' feelings of status insecurity at the end of the study with the following items: "How insecure do you feel about winning this competition?"; "How insecure do you feel about receiving the funding for your start-up?"; "How insecure do you feel about your social standing in this competition?"; 1 = *not at all insecure*, 7 = *extremely insecure*, three items displayed in randomized order, $\alpha = .93$).

The insecurity manipulations of Studies 4c, 4d, and 4f were pretested in a separate study (MTurk; $N = 502$ who completed the study and passed an attention check; $M_{\text{age}} = 40.4$, 42.2% female). Participants read the venture capital competition overview and were randomly assigned to one of the following five conditions:

- Study 4c Insecurity Condition: Past Failure
- Study 4d Insecurity Condition: Upward Social Comparison
- Studies 4c and 4d Control Condition
- Study 4f Insecurity Condition: High-Stakes Status Advancement Concerns
- Study 4f Control Condition

After reading the entire scenario, participants answered the following five status insecurity items:

- How insecure do you feel about winning this competition?
 - How insecure do you feel about receiving the funding for your start-up?
 - How insecure do you feel about your position in this competition?
 - How insecure do you feel about your social standing in this competition?
 - How insecure do you feel in this competition?
- (1 = *not at all insecure*, 7 = *extremely insecure*, $\alpha = .96$)

At the end of the study, we also assessed participants' overall mood: "Please rate your current mood: 1 = *very bad*, 7 = *very good*."

Control Variables. Participants reported their age, income level, and gender. Because we purposely picked gender-neutral names, we also asked participants to guess Blake's gender to test whether gender norms influenced our results.

Results

Studies 4b-d, 4f Manipulation and Mood Checks. The manipulation in Study 4b successfully manipulated participants' feelings of status insecurity; those in the *insecurity* condition reported significantly higher levels of status insecurity ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 1.46$) than those in the *control* condition ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 1.74$): $t(215) = 6.99$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.95$.

The *insecurity* manipulation in Study 4c increased participants' state of status insecurity ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 1.61$) compared to the *control* condition ($M = 2.67$, $SD = 1.41$): $t(199) = 3.22$, $p = .002$, $d = 0.45$. Similarly, the *insecurity* manipulation in Study 4d increased participants' feelings of status insecurity ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 1.72$) compared to the *control* condition ($M = 2.67$, $SD = 1.41$): $t(197) = 5.03$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.71$.

Studies 4c-d's *insecurity* manipulations did not affect mood: Study 4c: $t(199) = 0.39$, $p = .697$; Study 4d: $t(197) = 0.67$, $p = .507$. The effect of the manipulations on feelings of status insecurity remained significant when controlling for mood; Study 4c: $b = 0.66$, $SE = 0.20$, $t(198) = 3.29$, $p = .001$; Study 4d: $b = 1.05$, $SE = 0.20$, $t(196) = 5.29$, $p < .001$.

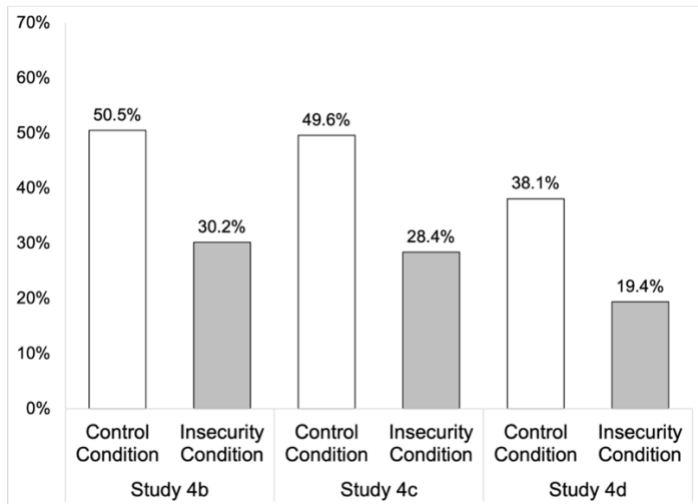
For Study 4f, an independent samples t test revealed that participants in the *insecurity* condition reported higher levels of status insecurity ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 1.47$) than those in the *control* condition ($M = 2.19$, $SD = 1.34$): $t(200) = 5.71$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.80$. Study 4f's *insecurity* manipulation reduced general mood ($M_{\text{insecure}} = 5.11$, $SD_{\text{insecure}} = 1.25$ vs. $M_{\text{control}} = 5.46$, $SD_{\text{control}} = 1.09$; $t(200) = 2.10$, $p = .037$, $d = .30$). However, in a linear regression, the effect of the manipulation on self-reported status insecurity remained significant even after controlling for mood: $b = 1.00$, $SE = 0.19$, $t(199) = 5.25$, $p < .001$.

Although each study manipulated status insecurity in a different way, as summarized in Table 2 in the main manuscript, they all similarly affected feelings of status insecurity.

Status Sharing. Two-by-two contingency tables revealed that participants in the *insecurity* conditions were significantly less likely to share their status by acknowledging Blake in their speech (Study 4b: 30.2%, Study 4c: 28.4%, Study 4d: 19.4%) than those in the *control* conditions (Study 4b: 50.5% with $\chi^2(1) = 9.23, p = .002, \phi = 0.21$; Study 4c: 49.6% with $\chi^2(1) = 10.92, p < .001, \phi = 0.22$; Study 4d: 38.1% with $\chi^2(1) = 9.29, p = .002, \phi = 0.21^{11}$; Figure 1).¹² The main result held in binary logistic regressions that controlled for participants' demographics and guess of Blake's gender; Study 4b: $b = -0.87, SE = 0.29, z = -2.95, p = .003, OR = 0.42, 95\% CI [0.23, 0.74]$; Study 4c: $b = -0.87, SE = 0.29, z = -3.05, p = .002, OR = 0.42, 95\% CI [0.24, 0.73]$; Study 4d: $b = -1.00, SE = 0.32, z = -3.10, p = .002, OR = 0.37, 95\% CI [0.19, 0.68]$.

Figure 1

Percentage of Participants Sharing Status by Mentioning Blake in Their Speeches



¹¹ For consistency with the other studies, we report the main result as a chi-square test. The preregistered binary logistic regression shows that insecure participants are less likely to mention Blake than those in the *control* condition: $b = -0.93, SE = 0.31, z = -3.01, p = .003, OR = 0.39, 95\% CI [0.21, 0.72]$.

¹² Study 4b's main result remained significant when only keeping sensible speeches ($N = 204$). Study 4b's main result also remained significant when counting direct ($N = 88$) and indirect mentions of Blake ($N = 2$) as status sharing (total $N = 90$ status sharing). Study 4c's main result remained significant when only keeping sensible speeches ($N = 231$). Study 4c's main result also remained significant when counting direct ($N = 91$) and indirect mentions of Blake ($N = 4$) as status sharing (total $N = 95$ status sharing). Study 4d's main result remained significant when only keeping sensible speeches ($N = 211$). Study 4d's main result also remained significant when counting direct ($N = 64$) and indirect mentions of Blake ($N = 3$) as status sharing (total $N = 67$ status sharing).

Discussion

Status insecurity consistently reduced people's willingness to spontaneously share their status with others, regardless of how it was manipulated (directly varying self-doubt, public failure, or upward social comparison).

A limitation of the insecurity manipulations in these supplemental studies is that they might have also affected participants' self-esteem insecurity. For example, in Study 4c, because of their public failure, participants might have experienced doubt in their abilities (self-esteem insecurity) and others' belief in their abilities (status insecurity). To address this limitation, we disentangled status insecurity and self-esteem insecurity in Study 3, which used the same entrepreneurial context.

Another limitation of Supplemental Studies 4b-d is that the status insecurity information in the *insecurity* conditions was added on top of the text of the *control* condition, resulting in longer text. To ensure that our main effect is not driven by differential text length, Studies 2-4 reported in the main manuscript reduce this concern by manipulating status insecurity versus status security (rather than status insecurity versus baseline) and by using comparable word count in both conditions. Regardless of whether we compared status insecurity to a *baseline* condition or a *status security* condition, status insecurity reduced status sharing.

Study 4e (Supplemental): Status Difference as a Potential Moderator of Status Insecurity on Status Sharing

In Study 4e, we examined whether the status difference between the help giver and the help recipient moderates the effect of status insecurity on status sharing. We had two competing predictions. On the one hand, the status contagion literature suggests that people associate with higher-ranked others to boost their status (Goldstein & Hays, 2011; Podolny, 2008). Thus, to

maintain or enhance their status, the status insecure may be more likely to acknowledge the contributions of a high-status helper. On the other hand, the status insecure may be particularly averse toward acknowledging help from higher-status others as they may fear it will make them seem particularly incompetent. We further acknowledge that these two processes may cancel each other out, reducing status differences as a potential moderator of the effect of status insecurity on status sharing.

Method

Participants

A sample of 646 MBA students completed our study as part of a course ($M_{\text{age}} = 28.0$, 46.1% female). This sample allowed for the detection of small-to-medium effects ($\phi = 0.11$ at 80% power and $\phi = 0.13$ at 90% power) in 2 x 2 contingency tables.

Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to a 2 (insecurity vs. control) x 3 (Blake's relative status: lower vs. similar vs. higher) between-participants design.

Insecurity Manipulation. We used the same status insecurity manipulation and venture capital competition from Study 4b.

Relative Status Manipulation. We manipulated Blake's relative status in a single sentence: "Blake is a fellow MBA student and therefore has similar status to you;" "Blake is a successful alum and therefore has higher status than you;" or "Blake is an undergraduate student and therefore has lower status than you." As a reminder, Blake was not competing with the participants in the education sector.

Status Sharing Dependent Variable. As in our previous venture capital studies, participants wrote a speech after winning the first round of the competition. We coded the

speeches for whether they included the word Blake (1 = Status Sharing) or not (0 = No Status Sharing).¹³

Manipulation Check. We assessed the effectiveness of our manipulation through the following two measures: “How insecure do you feel about winning this competition?” and “How insecure do you feel about your social standing in this competition?” (1 = *not at all insecure*, 7 = *extremely insecure*; $r = .68$).

Control Variables. We collected participants’ gender and age.

Results and Discussion

A two-tailed independent samples t test revealed that the insecurity manipulation effectively increased participants’ feelings of status insecurity; *insecurity* condition ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.19$) versus *control* condition ($M = 2.92$, $SD = 1.37$): $t(644) = 8.87$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.70$. A 2 x 2 contingency table showed that participants made to feel insecure were less likely to share status with Blake (27.4%) than those in the *control* condition (48.3%): $\chi^2(1) = 29.95$, $p < .001$, $\phi = 0.22$.¹⁴ This result held in a binary logistic regression of condition on status sharing that controlled for participants’ gender and age: $b = -0.93$, $SE = 0.17$, $z = -5.48$, $p < .001$, $OR = 0.40$, 95% CI [0.28, 0.55].

Next, we ran a binary logistic regression with an interaction between status insecurity (insecurity coded as 1 and control coded as 0) and Blake’s relative status (with a linear effect where we coded lower as 0, similar as 1, and higher as 2), with the main effects entered in step 1 and the interaction term added in step 2. In step 1, we found a main effect of status insecurity (b

¹³ An external auditor checked whether the mentions of Blake were positive (all mentions were positive), whether the speeches were sensible (e.g., “I would empathize on the importance of the education industry against the industries other contestants are in” was coded as non-sensible), and whether Blake was mentioned directly (“Blake”) or indirectly (e.g., “fellow competitor”).

¹⁴ The result remained significant when only keeping sensible speeches ($N = 639$). The result also remained significant when counting direct ($N = 245$) and indirect mentions of Blake ($N = 9$) as status sharing (total $N = 254$ status sharing).

= -0.91, $SE = 0.17$, $z = -5.42$, $p < .001$, $OR = 0.40$, 95% CI [0.29, 0.56]) and no main effect of Blake's relative status: $b = 0.02$, $SE = 0.10$, $z = 0.16$, $p = .877$. In step 2, we did not find a significant interaction: $b = 0.15$, $SE = 0.21$, $z = 0.72$, $p = .474$.

Study 4e tested whether the status difference between the help giver and the help recipient moderates the effect of status insecurity on status sharing. We found that it did not. Status insecurity reduced people's willingness to share status irrespective of the status of the person who gave them help. Thus, Supplemental Study 4e demonstrates the robustness of the effect of status insecurity regardless of relative status.

Study 4f (Supplemental): The Role of Zero-Sum Status Beliefs

Study 4 was designed to test our proposed mechanism in Stage 1 of The Vicious Cycle of Status Insecurity Model: Status insecurity reduces status sharing because it increases zero-sum thinking. Using the venture capital competition context, we manipulated status insecurity through the high stakes of a status advancement opportunity (source identified in Pilot Study, see Table 1) and examined its effect on status sharing and zero-sum status beliefs.

Method

Preregistration

https://aspredicted.org/QYH_9N6

Participants

We recruited 249 participants from Amazon Mechanical Turk (via Cloud Research). We removed 59 responses that failed at least one of the two preregistered attention checks, leaving 190 responses for the analyses ($M_{age} = 38.2$, 53.7% female).¹⁵ This sample allowed for the

¹⁵ Note that one attention check asked participants whether they were done with the entire competition: "Given that you won the education sector, are you done with the competition or moving on to another round?" Done with the competition/Moving on to another round. Forty-two participants failed in the *control* condition, whereas 17 participants failed in the *insecurity* condition, suggesting differential attrition. However, because we preregistered

detection of small-to-medium effects ($\phi = 0.20$ at 80% power and $\phi = 0.24$ at 90% power) in a 2 x 2 contingency table and small-to-medium effects ($d = 0.41$ at 80% power and $d = 0.47$ at 90% power) in two-tailed independent samples t tests.

Procedure

We randomly assigned participants to one of two conditions: *insecurity* or *control*.¹⁶ Participants read the venture capital competition description from Studies 3 and 4b-e, including their interaction with Blake (see OSF for full materials).

Insecurity Manipulation. We manipulated status insecurity by varying whether the venture capital competition was successfully completed (*control* condition) or whether there was an additional round with status advancement opportunities involving high stakes (*insecurity* condition). In the *control* condition, we told participants:

“You gave a strong presentation and won the competition in the education sector. When receiving the prize for the education sector, you are supposed to submit a speech of your final thoughts. Please write down your speech.”

In the *insecurity* condition, participants were told that winning the education sector competition meant they would move on to the next round involving high stakes and potential status advancement (see Table 1 for these sources of status insecurity; bolded text below was bolded in the experimental materials):

“You gave a strong presentation and won the competition in the education sector. **This means that you advance to compete across all sectors for the grand prize.** When receiving the prize for the education sector, you are supposed to submit a speech of your final thoughts. **As you prepare your speech, you recognize the stakes** as it gives you a

the study with this attention check, we report the analyses accordingly and moved the study to the Supplemental Materials. All participants passed the second attention check: The scenario was about A venture capital competition/A board meeting.

¹⁶ For consistency, we named these conditions *insecurity* and *control*. In the preregistration, the *insecurity* condition is described as “insecurity (external, and future),” suggesting the nature of an external status advancement opportunity, and the *control* condition is described as “control.”

great chance to set yourself up for success in the next round. Please write down your speech.”¹⁷

Thus, in both conditions, participants gave a victory speech, but the status-insecure participants faced higher stakes and potential status gains ahead.

Insecurity Manipulation Pretest. We pretested this manipulation of status insecurity in a separate pretest that is reported in the Supplemental Materials above. Participants in the *insecurity* condition reported higher levels of status insecurity than participants in the *control* condition.

Status Sharing Dependent Variable. As in the other venture capital studies, we coded whether each speech mentioned Blake (coded as 1) or not (coded as 0) as our measure of status sharing.¹⁸

Zero-Sum Beliefs. After participants had written their speech, we measured their zero-sum beliefs as a potential mediator of the effect of status insecurity on status sharing using six items (e.g., “The more credit given to Blake, the less credit I receive;” 1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*, $\alpha = .93$).

Control Variables. Participants guessed Blake’s gender and reported their gender, age, and income level.

Results and Discussion

A 2 x 2 contingency table revealed that participants in the *insecurity* condition were significantly less likely to share their status with Blake (36.4%) than those in the *control*

¹⁷ As noted during the review process, the *insecurity* condition’s text was slightly longer (14% in total) than the *control* condition’s text. However, the effect of insecurity on zero-sum thinking and the mediation by zero-sum thinking mitigate the possibility that the *insecurity* condition only reduced status sharing due to differential word count.

¹⁸ Participants were required to enter at least 20 characters in this study.

condition (53.8%): $\chi^2(1) = 5.86, p = .015, \phi = 0.18$.^{19,20} These results held in a binary logistic regression that controlled for participants' demographics and their guess of Blake's gender: $b = -0.75, SE = 0.30, z = -2.46, p = .014$.

Participants in the *insecurity* condition reported significantly higher beliefs that status is zero-sum ($M = 2.55, SD = 1.34$) than those in the *control* condition ($M = 2.16, SD = 1.24$): $t(188) = 2.10, p = .037, d = 0.30$ (not preregistered). A formal mediation analysis in R with a bootstrap method of 5,000 iterations confirmed that zero-sum beliefs mediated the effect of status insecurity on status sharing with a significant mean indirect effect = $-0.06, 95\% CI [-0.12, -0.01], p = .032$.²¹

Study 4f found mediational evidence that zero-sum status beliefs explain the link from status insecurity to status sharing. In this study, we manipulated status insecurity through the high stakes of a status advancement opportunity, directly building on our inductive identification of the sources of status insecurity in the Pilot Study.

Study 5b (Supplemental): Status Insecurity Increases Zero-Sum Thinking

Supplemental Study 5b tested the hypothesis that status insecurity increases zero-sum beliefs about status. We manipulated status insecurity by having participants recall a time they felt secure or insecure about achieving an important goal at work. We chose the work context

¹⁹ For consistency, we report the main effects of binary choices using chi-square statistics throughout the studies. Here, we also report the preregistered binary logistic regression result: $b = -0.71, SE = 0.30, z = -2.41, p = .016, OR = 0.49, 95\% CI [0.27, 0.87]$.

²⁰ Unaffiliated auditors coded whether the mentions of Blake were positive (100% were positive), whether speeches were sensible, and whether Blake was mentioned directly ($N = 85$) or indirectly ($N = 0$). All results held when only keeping sensible speeches ($N = 184$). All results held when Blake was mentioned directly or indirectly ($N = 85$ status sharing).

²¹ The indirect effect in this study, where the dependent variable is binary, was also analyzed using Hayes' PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2017), which yielded an indirect effect of $b = -0.26, 95\% CI = [-0.60, -0.01]$. The discrepancy in effect sizes when dealing with a binary dependent variable may be attributed to differences in underlying model assumptions, the handling of non-linear relationships, and the specific bootstrapping method used.

because achieving organizational objectives increases one's respect and admiration within the organization and is thus tightly intertwined with status (Magee & Galinsky, 2008).

Method

Preregistration

https://aspredicted.org/GHP_8J8

Participants

We recruited 250 participants who responded to a paid online study on Amazon Mechanical Turk (via Cloud Research). We removed two responses that failed the attention check, leaving 248 responses for the analysis ($M_{\text{age}} = 40.1$, 61.3% female). This sample allowed for the detection of small-to-medium effects ($d = 0.36$ at 80% power and $d = 0.41$ at 90% power) in two-tailed independent samples t tests.

Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to an *insecurity* or a *security* condition.

Insecurity Manipulation. Participants recalled a time at work when they felt insecure or secure. In the *insecurity* condition, participants were told:

“Please think of a time in which you felt insecure at work. That is, a situation in which you felt uncertain or doubted your ability to meet an important goal either because of your own abilities/unfavorable context or because of a coworker's abilities or favorable context. Please recall this sense of insecurity and describe what it was and how it felt.”

In the *security* condition, participants were told:

“Please think of a time in which you felt secure at work. That is, a situation in which you felt certain about your ability to meet an important goal either because of your own abilities/favorable context or because of a coworker's inabilities or unfavorable context. Please recall this sense of security and describe what it was and how it felt.”

Zero-Sum Beliefs Dependent Measure. We measured zero-sum status beliefs with two measures. The first measure was adapted from Sirola and Pitesa (2017) and captured zero-sum

status beliefs more generally: e.g., “The overall amount of status of individuals within a group can grow so there is enough for everyone,” (reverse coded) 1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*, three items, $\alpha = .71$; see OSF for all items). The second measure connected status to the praise and respect one receives for one’s accomplishments: e.g., “The more credit given to other people, the less credit I receive,” 1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*, four items, $\alpha = .93$; see OSF for all items). We presented the two zero-sum measures in randomized order to participants.

Manipulation Check. Participants rated their level of security: “To what extent did the recall make you feel secure?” (1 = *very insecure*, 7 = *very secure*).

Control Variables. Last, participants reported their gender, age, and income level.

Results

A two-tailed independent samples t test found that participants who recalled a time they felt insecure reported lower levels of security ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 1.79$) than those who recalled a time they felt secure ($M = 5.80$, $SD = 1.22$): $t(246) = 14.00$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.78$.

Consistent with our theorizing, participants in the *insecurity* condition reported higher levels of general zero-sum status beliefs ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 1.31$) than those assigned to the *security* condition ($M = 2.55$, $SD = 1.27$): $t(246) = 2.49$, $p = .014$, $d = 0.32$.²² This result held in a linear regression that controlled for participants’ demographics: $b = 0.47$, $SE = 0.16$, $t(234) = 2.88$, $p = .004$.²³

Participants in the *insecurity* condition also reported higher levels of zero-sum status beliefs with regard to the respect one receives for one’s accomplishments ($M = 2.68$, $SD = 1.57$)

²² Preregistered ANOVA: $F(1,246) = 6.18$, $p = .014$, $f = 0.14$.

²³ Preregistered ANCOVA: $F(1,234) = 8.26$, $p = .004$, $f = 0.18$.

than those in the *security* condition ($M = 2.30$, $SD = 1.38$): $t(246) = 2.01$, $p = .046$, $d = 0.26$.²⁴

This result held in a linear regression that controlled for participants' demographics: $b = 0.41$, $SE = 0.19$, $t(234) = 2.16$, $p = .032$.²⁵

Study 6b (Supplemental): Status Difference as a Potential Moderator of Status Sharing on Ascribed Status

Study 6b examined whether the status difference between the help giver and the help recipient offers a boundary condition for the positive effect of status sharing on status conferral. The status contagion literature suggests that people take on the status of those around them, with connections to high-status others increasing one's status (Sauder et al., 2012), and connections to low-status others decreasing one's status (Blau, 2017). However, an alternative possibility is that associating with a higher-status individual via status sharing could reduce the status sharer's perceived competence (Magee and Galinsky 2008) because any success may be attributed to the higher-status individual.

Consider a Ph.D. student on the academic job market who chose a particularly well-respected senior faculty advisor. On the one hand, consistent with status contagion literature (Sauder et al., 2012), associating with a high-status faculty could improve one's standing on the job market. On the other hand, the association with a high-status faculty could reduce the student's perceived competence because the quality of the research may be attributed to the advisor and not the doctoral student. This competing argument suggests that associating with a high-status person may hurt individuals, keeping the work quality constant. We tested these competing predictions in this study.

Method

²⁴ Preregistered ANOVA: $F(1,246) = 4.04$, $p = .046$, $f = 0.14$.

²⁵ Preregistered ANCOVA: $F(1,234) = 4.65$, $p = .032$, $f = 0.14$.

Participants

We recruited a sample of 232 MBA students²⁶ who participated as part of a course ($M_{\text{age}} = 28.6$, 39.2% female). This sample allowed for the detection of small-to-medium effects ($f = 0.24$ at 80% power and $f = 0.27$ at 90% power) in a 2 x 3 ANOVA and small-to-medium effects ($d = 0.37$ at 80% power and $d = 0.43$ at 90% power) in two-tailed independent samples t tests.

Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to a 2 (Status sharing: Yes vs. No) x 3 (Blake's relative status: Lower (i.e., undergraduate student) vs. Similar (i.e., fellow MBA student) vs. Higher (i.e., successful alum) between-participants design. Participants read about the venture capital competition used in prior studies.

Status Difference Manipulation. Participants read about Taylor, an MBA student and candidate in the competition (see OSF for full details). The study manipulated the relative status of Blake, who helped create Taylor's presentation: "Taylor, a MBA student, participated in this year's competition (in the education sector). Taylor is the founder of Tuned, an online platform that offers graphic design courses. While working on his presentation, Taylor received help from Blake, [an undergraduate student/a fellow MBA student/a successful alum]. Blake is competing in the hospitality sector of the competition."

Status Sharing Manipulation. Participants then read that Taylor gave an outstanding presentation and won the competition in the education sector. We manipulated whether Taylor shared status with Blake. In the *no status sharing* condition, participants read: "Thank you so much! It's been years of hard work for me, and I am proud of how far I've come. I am happy I put together a compelling presentation." In the *status sharing* condition, participants read:

²⁶ The cohorts of MBA students in all reported studies were different, negating any concern about duplicate participants.

“Thank you so much! It’s been years of hard work for me, and I am proud of how far I’ve come. I want to acknowledge Blake, who helped me put together a compelling presentation.”

Status Measure. We assessed both Taylor’s and Blake’s status by asking participants to answer three questions, adapted from prior research (Bellezza et al., 2014): “How much social status does [Taylor/Blake²⁷] have?” (1 = *low social status*, 7 = *high social status*); “How likely is [Taylor/Blake] to become a millionaire entrepreneur one day?” (1 = *extremely unlikely*, 7 = *extremely likely*); “How competent is [Taylor/Blake]?” (1 = *not competent at all*, 7 = *extremely competent*) ($\alpha_{\text{Taylor}} = .68$, $\alpha_{\text{Blake}} = .69$). We also assessed Taylor’s and Blake’s likability: “How likable is [Taylor/Blake]?” (1 = *not likable at all*, 7 = *extremely likable*).

Control Variables. We asked participants to guess the gender of both Taylor and Blake.

Results and Discussion

An independent samples *t* test revealed that when Taylor shared status with Blake, participants conferred more status on Blake ($M_{\text{shared status}} = 4.88$, $SD = 0.92$ vs. $M_{\text{no shared status}} = 4.50$, $SD = 0.84$): $t(230) = 3.28$, $p = .001$, $d = 0.43$. Importantly, participants also conferred more status on Taylor ($M_{\text{shared status}} = 5.03$, $SD = 0.90$ vs. $M_{\text{no shared status}} = 4.32$, $SD = 0.93$): $t(230) = 5.99$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.79$.²⁸ The results held in linear regressions that controlled for the guess of Blake’s and Taylor’s genders: Blake’s status: $b = 0.38$, $SE = 0.12$, $t(228) = 3.25$, $p = .001$; Taylor’s status: $b = 0.70$, $SE = 0.12$, $t(228) = 5.86$, $p < .001$.

²⁷ In the condition in which Blake had relatively higher status and Taylor shared status, the item for Blake read: “How would you rank the social status of Blake? (1 = *low social status*, 7 = *high social status*). This condition also included an item “How well respected is Blake by peers? (1 = *not respected at all*, 7 = *extremely well respected*), which was omitted from the analysis. These items were not correctly updated before the survey was launched.

²⁸ Taylor was also liked more when they shared status ($M = 5.45$, $SD = 1.19$) than when they did not ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.42$): $t(230) = 11.74$; $p < .001$, $d = 1.54$. Blake’s likability, however, did not differ ($M_{\text{shared status}} = 5.38$, $SD = 1.14$ vs. $M_{\text{no shared status}} = 5.21$, $SD = 1.10$): $t(230) = 1.15$, $p = .252$. We did not find any interaction with Blake’s relative status.

Moreover, a 2 (Status sharing: Yes vs. No) x 3 (Blake's relative status: Lower vs. Similar vs. Higher) between-participants ANOVA confirmed that both Taylor and Blake experienced a status increase, irrespective of Blake's relative status. For Blake's perceived status, the two-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect for status sharing ($F(1, 226) = 10.67, p = .001, f = 0.23$), no significant main effect for Blake's status ($F(2, 226) = 1.16, p = .314$), and no significant interaction ($F(2, 226) = 0.30, p = .742$). Similarly, for Taylor's perceived status, the two-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect for status sharing ($F(1, 226) = 35.37, p < .001, f = 0.40$), no significant main effect for Blake's relative status ($F(2, 226) = 0.02, p = .978$), and no significant interaction ($F(2, 226) = 0.30, p = .745$).

Supplemental Study 6b found that both the help giver and the help recipient benefit from status sharing, irrespective of their relative status difference. These findings suggest that status sharing is a powerful tool to boost one's status and that status differences do not reliably moderate this effect.

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