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**ARTICLE**

# Becoming Better: When and Why Positive Status Change Induces Prosocial Behavior Versus Self-Interested Behavior

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**Abstract**

Prior research on status has focused primarily on the cognitive perspective, exploring the effects of status and offering a limited understanding of the impact of positive status change and its emotional mechanisms. This study draws upon the two-facet model of pride to examine how positive status change influences the behaviors of new status holders. Specifically, we propose that when status differentiation is low, positive status change enhances new status holders' prosocial behavior through their authentic pride, while in cases of high status differentiation, it increases their self-interested behavior through their hubristic pride. To test our hypotheses, we conducted a series of studies, including a laboratory experiment, a scenario experiment, and a time-lagged multilevel and multisource field study. Our multilevel analyses of the data provided strong support for our hypotheses. Our findings shed light on when and why positive status change triggers different behaviors among new status holders, offering important insights into the emotional mechanisms that underlie the effects of status change.

**摘要**

以往关于地位的研究主要采用认知视角来探讨地位变化对人的影响，但对地位上升对人的情感机制的影响理解有限。本研究认为一个人在低位上升时产生的骄傲感有双重面向，并考察了地位变化如何影响新地位持有者的行为。具体而言，我们提出了如下假设：当人与人之间地位差别较小时，地位上升能够增加个人的真实骄傲感，并促进其亲社会行为；而在地位差别较大时，地位上升会增加个人的自大骄傲感（即傲慢）及其自利行为。我们进行了系列研究，包括一个实验室实验、一个情景实验以及一个多时间点、多层次的实地研究。所有数据都支持了我们的假设。我们的研究结果揭示了地位上升为什么会引发新地位持有者的不同行为，提供了关于地位变化影响人的情感机制的重要见解。

**Keywords:** authentic pride; hubristic pride; positive status change; prosocial behavior; self-interested behavior; status differentiation
**关键词:** 积极地位变化; 真实的骄傲; 虚荣的骄傲; 亲社会行为; 自利行为; 地位差异

## Introduction

John worked at a marketing firm for several years, but his specialized skills in database management were not initially considered crucial to the company's main business activities. This left him in a middle-status position within the company. However, when the company's focus shifted, John's expertise suddenly became highly valuable. He devoted himself to work and experienced a positive status change, which comes along with respect, esteem, and prestige from others (Anderson, John, Keltner, & Kring, 2001).

Prior literature on status has primarily focused on the concept of status (e.g., Anicich, Fast, Halevy, & Galinsky, 2016; Hays & Blader, 2017). These studies mainly take a cognitive perspective and examine the effect of status on justice toward others (Blader & Chen, 2012), efforts in social exchange (Castellucci &

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Ertug, 2010), and sense of insecurity (Prato, Kypraios, Ertug, & Lee, 2019), ignoring gaining status, namely positive status change (Doyle & Lount, 2023), and its underlying emotional-based process. That said, we contend that, to paint a more complete picture, it is imperative to also take into account the construct of positive status and its underlying emotional mechanism (beyond the traditional construct of status and its cognitive perspectives; e.g., justice perspective or social exchange perspective). Toward this end, we take a novel lens – the perspective of pride (Tracy, Shariff, & Cheng, 2010) – to better understand how positive status change affects new status holders' discrete emotions and in turn their behaviors.

Following from the above, we draw specifically on the two-facet model of pride (Tracy et al., 2010), a theory that outlines when and how a positive event (i.e., an achievement) can induce different types of pride, which are functional in people's distinct behaviors, to develop and test a model proposing the impact of positive status change on new status holders. Drawing on the two-facet model of pride (Tracy et al., 2010), key contextual factors may shape new status holders' interpretation, which influences their types of pride and subsequent behaviors. We focus on how status is distributed given its relevance to the Chinese management context. In practice, there may exist an uneven distribution of status in Chinese organizations because China is characterized by high-power distance, that is, an uneven distribution of power (Brockner et al., 2001; Farh, Hackett, & Liang, 2007). Moreover, status and power are both sources of influence over others (Hays et al., 2022; Magee & Galinsky, 2008). Therefore, we propose status differentiation as the key contextual factor that determines whether new status holders experience authentic pride or hubristic pride, which in turn affects their behaviors. Specifically, when status differentiation is low, a positive new status change can be regarded as a result of new status holders' unstable efforts or specific strength and thus evokes their authentic pride, which in turn encourages new status holders to continue to do good things and devote their efforts and thus increases their prosocial behavior (Tracy et al., 2010). When status differentiation is high, new status holders may interpret their stable and global ability as contributing to their positive status change and thus experience hubristic pride, which leads to self-interested behavior (Tracy et al., 2010) (see Figure 1).

In sum, we draw on the two-facet model of pride (Tracy et al., 2010) to suggest that when status differentiation is low, positive status change is more likely to induce new status holders' authentic pride, which motivates their prosocial behavior. However, when status differentiation is high, a positive status change may lead to hubristic pride among new status holders, which in turn leads to their self-interested behavior. To robustly test our model, we adopted a 'full cycle research approach' (Chatman & Flynn, 2005: 774) to examine our research questions using field and experimental settings to enhance both the internal and external validity of the findings. Specifically, we conducted three studies that (a) employ different methodologies (i.e., a laboratory experiment, a scenario experiment, and a multilevel and multiwave field study) and (b) recruit participants from different research settings (i.e., laboratory and field). Overall, these studies provide a thorough examination of our model across research methods and contexts.

This research makes significant contributions to the research of status in organizational literature and the two-facet model of pride in three meaningful ways. First, we contribute to the status literature by adopting a person-in-context interactionist perspective to demonstrate that status differentiation is a crucial context that shapes new status holders' distinct types of pride and behavior. Second, we meaningfully anchor on an emotional (pride)-based perspective (via the two-facet model of pride; Tracy et al., 2010) to provide a deeper understanding of the complex effects of positive status change on individuals' behavior. In doing so, we offer a more nuanced understanding of how positive status change can elicit two contrasting behaviors through the experience of two types of pride. Third, while previous literature on the two-facet model of pride (Tracy et al., 2010) has primarily focused on the outcomes of pride, we meaningfully extend the two-facet model of pride (Tracy et al., 2010) by highlighting the antecedent of different types of pride and the important contextual factor.

## Theoretical Background and Hypotheses
### Theoretical Background: Two-Facet Model of Pride

According to the two-facet model of pride (Tracy et al., 2010), emotions are usually generated by events. However, discrete emotions are uniquely elicited and distinguished from each other – not
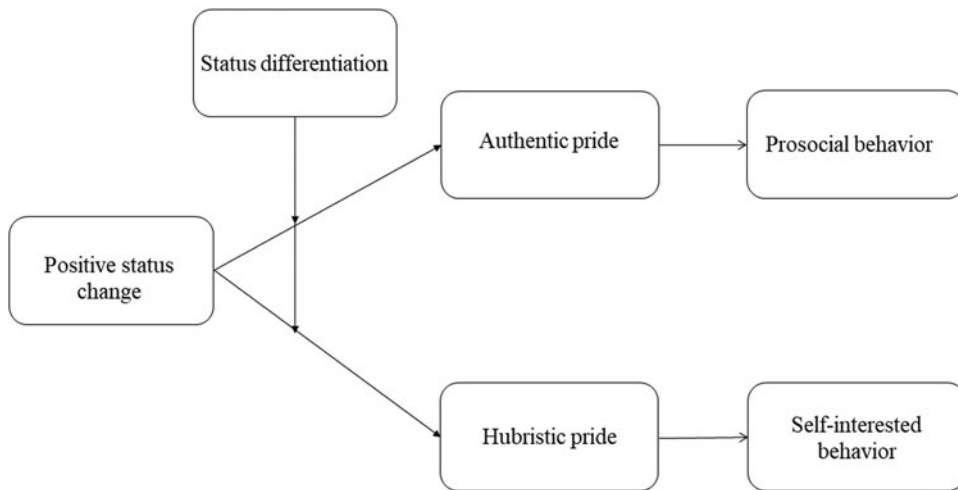
**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework

based on distinct events, but rather by how those events are interpreted or appraised. That is, the same event can elicit distinct emotions, depending on how it is appraised. To this end, the two-facet model of pride has uncovered two types of pride, namely, authentic and hubristic pride, which are theorized to be elicited by two different interpretations of a positive event and motivate distinct behavioral reactions (Tracy et al., 2010). Specifically, pride (including two types) is generated by a positive event, such as a positive outcome. However, individuals may interpret or appraise positive events differently. Specifically, when individuals appraise that their good outcomes result from unstable, specific, and controllable factors, they experience authentic pride. Conversely, when they believe that success is due to stable, global, and uncontrollable factors, they experience hubristic pride (Tracy et al., 2010). Furthermore, the two-facet model of pride (Tracy et al., 2010) and related research suggest that social context plays a vital role in shaping the interpretation and appraisal of emotion-eliciting events. The way individuals view and construe such events is highly influenced by contextual factors (Bolló, Bőthe, Tóth-Király, & Orosz, 2018; Figure 2).

In terms of positive status change, it is often desirable because people seek to receive respect and deference from others (Bai, Ho, & Liu, 2020; Kim & Pettit, 2015; Pettit, Doyle, Lount Jr., & To, 2016). In essence, achieving status is a fundamental human goal (Bai et al., 2020). In line with this, scholars have argued that 'high status is so desirable, individuals do "many things" (Barkow et al., 1975) to fulfill their fundamental motive to attain status' (Bai et al., 2020: 127). Moreover, individuals stand to gain several advantages from the status they acquire. For example, positive status change often brings individuals self-esteem, opportunities, promising careers, and even good health (Hardy & Van Vugt, 2006; Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003; Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Ouyang, Xu, Huang, Liu, & Tang, 2018).

Drawing on the two-facet model of pride, positive status change can be seen as a positive event or outcome that triggers new status holders' pride. However, new status holders may interpret or appraise this event differently and experience distinct types of pride (i.e., authentic pride and hubristic pride) and this interpretation or appraisal is determined by contextual factors. That is, given that status is socially determined and conferred by others in a team (Berger, Cohen, & Zelditch Jr, 1972; Correll & Ridgeway, 2006; Hays et al., 2022), how positive status change is interpreted is likely to be affected by the context of the team (Bunderson, 2003; Campbell, Liao, Chuang, Zhou, & Dong, 2017; Kim & Wiesenfeld, 2017; Kim, McClean, Doyle, Podsakoff, Lin, & Woodruff, 2021; Swaab, Schaerer, Anicich, Ronay, & Galinsky, 2014). Building on the above, we use the two-facet model of pride (Tracy et al., 2010) to recognize status differentiation as a crucial contextual factor that significantly affects how new status holders interpret their status changes. Status differentiation was defined as the relative
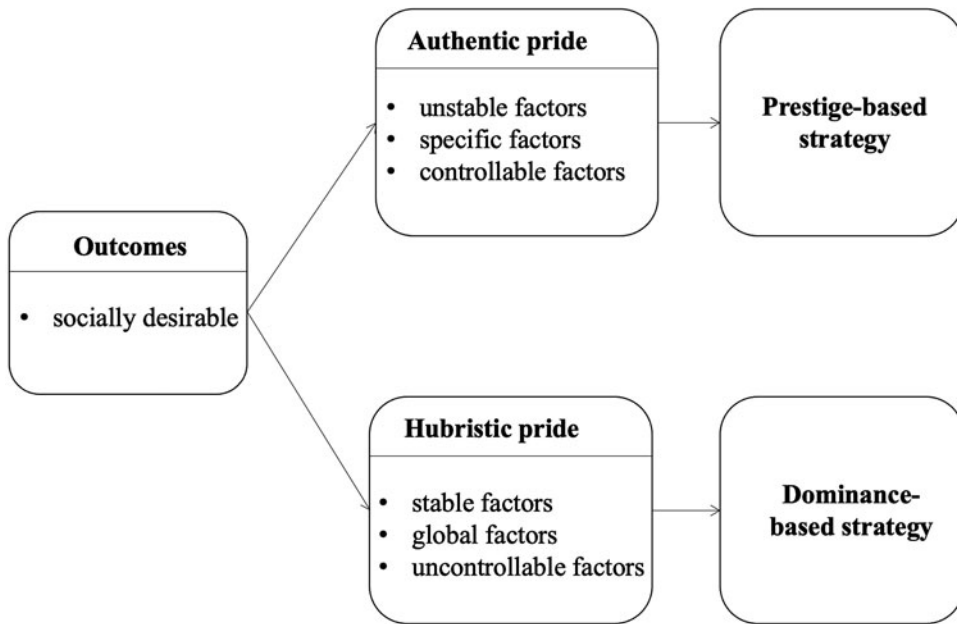
**Figure 2.** Two-facet model of pride

concentration of status among members of a team (Hays et al., 2022). Higher status differentiation is observed in teams where status is concentrated in one or two members, whereas lower status differentiation is observed in teams where status is relatively evenly distributed among all members (Hays et al., 2022). Furthermore, since status shares similar characteristics with power as a form of influence (Hays et al., 2022; Magee & Galinsky, 2008), the distribution of status could raise significant concerns for organizations operating in China.

Our research employs the two-facet model of pride to propose that status differentiation can play a crucial role in shaping teams' climate and goals, shifting them from the self-oriented to the other-oriented (Hays & Bendersky, 2015). In turn, this factor can determine whether new status holders experience authentic (hubristic) pride and engage in prosocial (self-interested) behavior after a positive status change.

### Authentically Proud Reaction: Positive Status Change in Teams with Low Status Differentiation

As outlined above, the core argument of the two-facet model of pride is that authentic pride is experienced because the interpretation of a positive event is based on unstable, specific, and controllable factors (Tracy et al., 2010). Accordingly, we explain why positive status change evokes authentic pride in teams with a low level of status differentiation.

When teams have a low level of status differentiation, a positive status change can motivate employees to interpret their status gain more objectively and authentically, resulting in a greater experience of authentic pride. In these teams, where all team members are held in relatively equal regard, minimizing status differentiation can reduce the salience of status gain (Hays et al., 2022). This can prompt new status holders to view their positive status change more authentically and interpret it as the outcome of their unstable yet controllable factors such as their efforts (Tracy et al., 2010). Specifically, prior studies have suggested that employees are likely to believe that they devote more time to help their team achieve a goal and thus attain a positive status change (Flynn, 2003; Flynn, Reagans, Amanatullah, & Ames, 2006; Willer, 2009). Such unstable yet controllable factors generate feelings of achievement and fulfillment, which can lead to the experience of authentic pride (Verbeke, Belschak, & Bagozzi, 2004).

Furthermore, when status differentiation is low, new status holders are more likely to evaluate the specific skills or advantages that contribute to their positive status change and enhance their authentic pride. Supporting this, the two-facet model of pride also highlights that authentic pride is experienced when the interpretation of a positive event is a specific strength (Tracy et al., 2010). Accordingly, employees who are on teams with low differentiation are more likely to cautiously see their positive status change and attribute such achievement to a specific skill (Bunderson, 2003), fostering a sense of accomplishment and authentic pride. In sum, we draw on the two-facet model of pride (Tracy et al., 2010) to submit that a team with low levels of status differentiation, where status is distributed more evenly among team members (Hays et al., 2022), new status holders can authentically interpret this positive event and consequently experience heightened authentic pride. Based on these arguments, we predict that:

> *Hypothesis 1 (H1): The effect of positive status change on authentic pride is more (vs. less) positive in teams with lower (vs. higher) status differentiation.*

## Hubristically Proud Reaction: Positive Status Change in Teams with High Status Differentiation

We further draw on the two-facet model of pride (Tracy et al., 2010) to submit that positive status change can also elicit hubristic pride in teams with a high level of status differentiation. In teams with high levels of status differentiation, a positive status change motivates employees to interpret their status gain more hubristically, which induces new status holders' hubristic pride. In such teams, where only a select few team members are given respect, the high status differentiation makes a positive status change much more salient (Hays et al., 2022). This can lead new status holders to hubristically overestimate their contribution to the positive status change, attributing it to their stable and uncontrollable factors, such as innate ability or talent (Nijs, Dries, Van Vlasselaer, & Sels, 2022). That is, when gaining status, employees in such teams may view themselves as superior and believe they possess higher intelligence and are more competent than other members of the organization (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009). As a result, these new status holders in a team with high levels of status differentiation are likely to experience hubristic pride.

Moreover, when status differentiation is high, new status holders are more likely to interpret that their global strengths contributed to their success, that is, positive status change (Judge & Bono, 2001). This interpretation involving an individual's global strengths elicits feelings of pride, which include arrogance and conceitedness, leading to the hubristic pride of new status holders in teams with high levels of status differentiation (Tracy et al., 2010). Supporting this idea, the two-facet model of pride points out that hubristic pride is experienced when the interpretation of a positive event is the global strength (Tracy et al., 2010). In sum, when new status holders are in a team with a highly imbalanced status distribution where only a few are able to be respected by others, positive status change becomes an exceedingly rare and difficult achievement (Hays et al., 2022). This leads to an overestimation of the significance of the positive status change, causing new status holders to develop a hubristic view of themselves, ultimately resulting in hubristic pride. Based on these arguments, we suggest that:

> *Hypothesis 2 (H2): The effect of positive status change on hubristic pride is more (vs. less) positive in teams with higher (vs. lower) status differentiation.*

## Downstream Outcome of Authentic Pride

We also draw on the two-facet model of pride and its relevant research to shed light on how authentic pride can lead to new status holders' prosocial behavior (Tracy et al., 2010; Tracy & Robins, 2007a, 2007b). The two-facet model of pride posits that two types of pride, namely, authentic and hubristic, can motivate distinct behaviors (Tracy et al., 2010). The two-facet model of pride and its relevant research has shown that pride, regardless of type, facilitates navigation in the social hierarchy (Bolló et al., 2018). In terms of

positive status change, pride encourages new status holders to maintain or enhance their status (Tracy et al., 2010). However, the two-facet model of pride highlights that different types of pride motivate new status holders to do it in different manners (Bolló et al., 2018; Tracy & Robins, 2007a, 2007b). Specifically, authentic pride (e.g., feeling 'accomplished' and 'successful') triggers a prosocial reaction, which helps new status holders maintain and enhance their status through a prestige-based strategy such as displaying desirable traits and abilities that benefit the organization (Maner & Mead, 2010; Tracy et al., 2010). By contrast, hubristic pride (e.g., feeling 'arrogant' and 'conceited') triggers a self-interested reaction that motivates new status holders to maintain their status through a dominance-based strategy, that is, prioritizing personal capacities for dominance over the needs of the organization (Cheng, Tracy, & Henrich, 2010; Maner & Mead, 2010; Tracy et al., 2010; Yeung & Shen, 2019).

We accordingly suggest that authentic pride guides new status holders to maintain and enhance their status in a prosocial way, such as through prestige-based status maintenance (Tracy & Robins, 2007a, 2007b). Specifically, new status holders who experience authentic pride tend to engage in prosocial behaviors, such as sharing their expertise and helping others, thus maintaining respect and recognition from others (Yeung & Shen, 2019). As an old Chinese saying goes, the water that bears the boat is the same water that swallows it up (Hutton, 2014). In this saying, new status holders who experience authentic pride regard themselves as the boat (i.e., receiving admiration and respect from others), whereas the other members consider themselves as the water that determines whether or not to continue conferring status. In line with this, prior research shows that authentic pride is related to many prosocial traits or behaviors. For example, Wubben, De Cremer, and Van Dijk's (2012) experimental research found that authentic pride is related to prosocial behavior (Wubben et al., 2012). Yeung and Shen (2019) further linked authentic pride to prosocial traits, such as consideration. Therefore, we draw upon the two-facet model of pride to suggest that positive status change is positively related to prosocial behavior through authentic pride.

In addition, new status holders who feel authentically proud tend to have an accurate self-view (Tracy et al., 2010), which informs them that they are not superior to the other members of their organization and that they need to continue their efforts. Consequently, authentic pride encourages new status holders to keep contributing to their organization and engage in some prosocial behaviors (Tracy et al., 2010). Thus, we suggest:

*Hypothesis 3 (H3): Authentic pride is positively related to new status holders' prosocial behavior.*

### Downstream Outcome of Hubristic Pride

We also draw on the two-facet model of pride to submit that new status holders who experience hubristic pride believe that they have the global capability to control their future outcomes (Tracy & Robins, 2007a), such as status maintenance, hence motivating them to maintain and enhance their status through a dominance-based strategy, specifically via intimidation, aggression, and coercion, to create fear in others (Cheng et al., 2010; Yeung & Shen, 2019). By doing so, status-gainers who experience hubristic pride tend to extract and overexploit the advantages of their status and maintain their status via dominance. For this purpose, they tend to enhance their self-interested behavior to greedily control more resources for themselves (Graffin et al., 2013). Therefore, we draw upon the two-facet model of pride (Tracy et al., 2010) to predict that positive status change is positively associated with new status holders' self-interested behavior through hubristic pride.

In addition, hubristic pride also breeds an inflated self-view among new status holders (Tracy et al., 2010). That is, hubristic feelings encourage new status holders to believe they are superior to others, which leads them to overlook others, become self-centered (Bowles, Thomason, & Al Dabbagh, 2017; Graffin, Bundy, Porac, Wade, & Quinn, 2013), and act in a self-interested manner because they do not care about others. In line with this view, prior status studies have shown that high-status people tend to ignore those coming from the low status group (e.g., increased feelings of isolation from low status employees; Galperin, Bennett, & Aquino, 2011) and engage in unethical behavior and law-

breaking for their own interests (Galperin et al., 2011; Piff, Stancato, Côté, Mendoza-Denton, & Keltner, 2012). Thus, we suggest:

> *Hypothesis 4 (H4): Hubristic pride is positively related to new status holders' self-interested behavior.*

Taken together, we suggest that status differentiation determines how positive status change affects new status holders. When status differentiation is low, new status holders are more likely to experience authentic pride, which leads to an increase in prosocial behavior. On the other hand, when status differentiation is high, new status holders are more likely to experience hubristic pride, which leads to an increase in self-interested behavior. Our model clarifies contextual characteristics (i.e., high or low status differentiation) and emotional pathways (i.e., authentic pride and hubristic pride) that affect new status holders' behaviors. Thus, we suggest the following:

> *Hypothesis 5 (H5): The indirect effect of positive status change on prosocial behavior is more (vs. less) positive in teams with low (vs. high) status differentiation due to increased (vs. decreased) authentic pride.*

> *Hypothesis 6 (H6): The indirect effect of positive status change on self-interested behavior is more (vs. less) positive in teams with high (vs. low) status differentiation due to increased (vs. decreased) hubristic pride.*

## Overview of Studies

To examine our hypothesized model, we conducted three studies that employ different research methodologies (i.e., laboratory experimental, scenario experimental, and field design) and recruited participants from various research settings (i.e., participants in universities and full-time employees). Our research employs both experimental and field settings to examine the phenomenon in what Chatman and Flynn (2005: 774) called 'full cycle' research. This approach enhances the internal and external validity of the findings.

In Study 1, a laboratory experiment, we manipulated positive status change and status differentiation to examine the effects on new status holders' emotions and behaviors. In Study 2, the scenario experiment, we replicated the findings of Study 1 and further demonstrated the moderating effect of status differentiation on the relationship between positive status change and authentic pride. In Study 3, the time-lagged multilevel and multisource field study, we tested our full model in a field setting. This mixed-method design (i.e., experimental and field studies) helped establish both the internal and external validity of our theoretical model. The mixed-method approach we have adopted provides strong evidence for our hypothesized relationships. The dataset supporting the conclusions of this article is available in the Open Science Framework repository, accessible via DOI 10.17605/OSF.IO/JTX8W. We next discuss the methods and results of the three studies.

## Methods

### Study 1

#### Participants and procedure

We recruited 219 students from a large university in China. Before collecting data, a power analysis was conducted with G*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007). The analysis indicated that for tests using an $F$ statistic across six conditions, a sample size exceeding 211 is required to achieve adequate statistical power, set at 0.80, with an alpha of 0.05, for detecting a medium effect size of 0.25 (Cohen, 1988). A total of 220 students registered for our experiment, but 219 students completed it. Each participant was offered 20 RMB as a reward for his/her participation. The participants had a mean age of

23.08 years (SD = 1.78) and 39.73% were men. Among them, 57.08% were undergraduate students and 42.92% were graduate students.

They were randomly assigned to a 3 (positive status change versus high status with no change versus low status with no change) × 2 (high status differentiation versus low status differentiation) design. Thirty-seven participants were in the high status differentiation group, moving from low to high status (i.e., positive status change); 37 participants were in the high status differentiation group, remaining at low status; 36 participants were in the high status differentiation group, remaining at high status; 36 participants were in the low status differentiation group, moving from low to high status; 37 participants were in the low status differentiation group, remaining at low status; 36 participants were in the low status differentiation group, remaining at high status.

Upon their arrival at the laboratory, the participants were led to believe that they would be divided into groups of six to complete some tasks. However, in reality, their group members were all virtual. Consistent with the practices of Marr and Thau (2014) and Pettit et al. (2016) participants were asked to write a brief self-introduction to their group members, after which they also received ostensible introductions from their group members. Following the computer-based introductions, participants were informed that they would be working together in a nearby breakout room later in the study. However, prior to the group's main task, they would each complete a series of tasks that would assess each group member's status.

### Manipulation

**Positive status change.** To manipulate status change, we followed Marr and Thau (2014), asking the participants to complete two 'idea persuasion tasks'. Participants were told they would initially be networked with other participants and would have interactions with their group members after tasks. In reality, participants were not networked together, and no group interaction was ever to take place. In the experiment, participants were asked to write a persuasive argument about their stance on the topic (e.g., 'Should euthanasia be legal?') and a few minutes later, they would be shown arguments written by their group members (actually, all group members' arguments were pre-programmed) and were allowed to award their group members 'respect points'. Participants were instructed in advance that the respect points meant their respect and admiration toward other group members (Anderson et al., 2001). That is, participants were told that the respect points represented their status in the group.

After the first task, the participants evaluated one another as they had done in the first task, which served to establish an initial status for each participant. Subsequently, they engaged in a second task, during which they experienced a positive change or remained at their initial status level.

In the positive-status-change group, the participants were shown the message, 'Congratulations! You gain more respect points and you are respected and admired by your group members', and were offered a large blue name tag that presented their names in a more prominent font and accentuated by gold stars (Hays et al., 2022).

In the from-high-status-to-high-status group, the participants were shown the message, 'You maintain the same level of respect and admiration from your group members towards you', and were offered a large blue name tag that presented their names in a more prominent font and accentuated by gold stars across two tasks (Hays et al., 2022).

In the from-low-status-to-low-status group, the participants were shown the message, 'You maintain the same level of respect and admiration from your group members towards you' and were offered a red name tag without any prominent font or accentuating stars. Thus, the two latter groups experienced no status change (Hays et al., 2022).

**Status differentiation.** Following Ronay, Greenaway, Anicich, and Galinsky's (2012) manipulation of hierarchical differentiation, we manipulated status differentiation by varying the proportion of high status individuals, which is consistent with the concept of status differentiation (i.e., a team's distribution of status; Hays et al., 2022). The participants were randomly assigned into high versus low status differentiation groups before performing their tasks. In the high status differentiation condition, only one out of six members had high status, representing less than 20% of the group.

However, in the low status differentiation condition, five out of six members had high status, representing more than 80% of the group.

After the positive status change and status differentiation manipulation and measurements of behaviors, the participants completed the manipulation checks, reported their two types of pride, prosocial behavior, and self-interested behavior, and finished some demographic questions.

### Manipulation checks

**Positive status change.** Positive status change was measured using an adapted version of Marr and Thau's (2014) two-item scale, which was originally designed to check status loss manipulation. We adapted this scale by changing the word 'decrease' to 'increase' in the items to check the degree of gaining status, that is, positive status change. A sample item is 'To what extent do you feel like your status in the group increased after the second task' (1 = 'not at all' and 5 = 'very much', $\alpha$ = 0.90) (Marr & Thau, 2014). The results of one-way ANOVA on the positive status change manipulation check revealed that the participants in the positive status change condition reported that they experienced a greater extent of positive status change (M = 3.84, SD = 0.90) than the participants in the from-high-status-to-high-status condition (M = 2.98, SD = 1.15), and the participants in the from-low-status-to-low-status condition (M = 3.16, SD = 1.08), $F(2, 216) = 13.35$, $p = 0.00$, $\eta^2 = 0.11$. Moreover, we also compared the positive status change for the two control groups (i.e., the from-high-status-to-high-status condition and the from-low-status-to-low-status condition, M = 3.16 versus M = 2.98, SD = 1.08 versus 1.15, $F(1, 144) = 0.88$, $p = 0.35$, $\eta^2 = 0.01$). These results showed that participants in these two control groups did not vary in perceptions of their status changes.

**Status differentiation.** The participants were asked, 'To what extent do you agree that status in our group is concentrated in one group member' (1 = 'strongly disagree' and 5 = 'strongly agree', $\alpha$ = 0.82) (Hays et al., 2022). A *t*-test on the status differentiation manipulation check revealed a significant effect, $t(217) = 18.03$, $p = 0.00$. The participants in the high status differentiation condition reported that their group had a higher status differentiation (M = 3.52, SD = 0.54) than those under the control condition (M = 2.18, SD = 0.56).

### Measures

**Hubristic pride.** Hubristic pride was assessed using Tracy and Robins's (2007b) 7-item scale. A sample item is 'smug' (1 = 'not at all', and 5 = 'very much'; $\alpha$ = 0.88).

**Authentic pride.** Authentic pride was assessed using Tracy and Robins's (2007b) 7-item scale. A sample item is 'accomplished' (1 = 'not at all', and 5 = 'very much'; $\alpha$ = 0.88).

**Prosocial behavior.** Prosocial behavior was measured using Rodell's (2013) 5-item scale. A sample item is 'Give your time to help the group' (1 = 'not agree at all', and 5 = 'very agree'; $\alpha$ = 0.93).

**Self-interested behavior.** Self-interested behavior was measured using Rus, Van Knippenberg, and Wisse (2010) 8-item scale. A sample item is 'Negotiate a bonus for yourself that is substantially higher than the bonus received by other group members' (1 = 'not agree at all', and 5 = 'very agree'; $\alpha$ = 0.99). Given that the original scale focuses more on leaders' self-interested behavior, we adapted the items to the context of employees' or individuals' self-interested behavior. To examine that this measure mapped onto the definition of employees' self-interested behavior (i.e., employees' actions that benefit the self and come at a cost to the common good, DeCelles, DeRue, Margolis, & Ceranic, 2012) and to ensure that it did not inadvertently conflate employee self-interested behavior with other relevant (i.e., leader self-interested behavior), we have conducted a content validation study following the procedures developed by Colquitt, Sabey, Rodell, and Hill, (2019). Specifically, we recruited 220 working adults in China. Participants were presented with the definitions of employees' self-interested behavior and asked to rate how good of a job each item did in matching the construct's definition (1 = 'extremely bad' and 5 = 'extremely good').

Mean definitional correspondence for our items was 4.36, which was greater than the alternatives (2.91 for leader self-interested behavior). Results further revealed that our 8-item scale of employees' self-interested behavior showed good correspondence with its definition (Hinkin Tracey correspondence index (htc) = 0.87) and strong distinctiveness from the alternative measurements (Hinkin Tracey distinctiveness index (htd) = 0.36). Together, this evidence suggests that our eight-item employees' self-interested scale has strong content validity (Colquitt et al., 2019).

### Results

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations.

Given the three-condition independent variable (i.e., positive status change condition, from-high-status-to-high-status condition, and from-low-status-to-low-status condition) in the experiment, we created two dummy-coded variables: The first (independent variable) had status change (i.e., from-low-status-to-high-status) coded as 1, and the no-change conditions coded as 0. In the second variable (the control), the high initial status was coded as 1, while the low initial status was coded as 0. We controlled for the initial status.

We began by conducting two-way ANOVAs to test H1 and H2. H1 predicted that status differentiation would moderate the relationships between positive status change and authentic pride. The results show that when status differentiation is low, the participants in the positive status change condition reported that they experienced a greater extent of authentic pride (M = 4.13, SD = 0.45) than the participants in the from-high-status-to-high-status condition (M = 4.00, SD = 0.37), and the participants in the from-low-status-to-low-status condition (M = 3.55, SD = 0.90). When status differentiation is high, the participants in the positive status change condition reported that they experienced a similar extent of authentic pride (M = 3.96, SD = 0.72) with the participants in the from-high-status-to-high-status condition (M = 3.55, SD = 0.90) and the participants in the from-low-status-to-low-status condition (M = 3.69, SD = 0.73). However, the ANOVA results did not indicate a significant interaction effect, with $F(2, 213) = 0.01$, $p = 0.92$, and $\eta^2 = 0.00$. Thus, H1 was not supported.

H2 predicted that status differentiation would moderate the relationships between positive status change and hubristic pride. The ANOVA results indicated that with a significant positive status change × status differentiation, $F(2, 213) = 29.87$, $p = 0.00$, $\eta^2 = 0.12$. Specifically, when status differentiation is high, the participants in the positive status change condition reported that they experienced a greater extent of hubristic pride (M = 4.50, SD = 0.49) than the participants in the from-high-status-to-high-status condition (M = 3.71, SD = 0.85), and the participants in the from-low-status-to-low-status condition (M = 3.81, SD = 0.73). When status differentiation is low, the participants in the positive status change condition reported that they experienced a similar extent of hubristic pride (M = 3.11, SD = 1.00) with the participants in the from-high-status-to-high-status condition (M = 3.56, SD = 0.71) and the participants in the from-low-status-to-low-status condition (M = 3.62, SD = 0.81). These results supported H2 (Figures 3 and 4).

To test H3 and H4, we conducted regressions. H3 predicted that authentic pride would increase new status holders' prosocial behavior. In support of this hypothesis, the effect of authentic pride ($B = 0.73$, SE = 0.05, $p = 0.00$) on prosocial behavior was positive. H4 predicted that hubristic pride would enhance new status holders' self-interested behavior. In support of this hypothesis, the effect of hubristic pride ($B = 0.80$, SE = 0.05, $p = 0.00$) on self-interested behavior was positive.

We further used the PROCESS macro (Model 7) to conduct moderated mediation analyses. The number of bootstrap samples extracted was 5,000. H5 predicts that the indirect relationship between positive status change and prosocial behavior through authentic pride is moderated by status differentiation, such that the relationship is stronger when status differentiation is low. The conditional indirect effect of positive status change and prosocial behavior through authentic pride was significant when status differentiation was low (estimate = 0.31, 95% CI [0.128, 0.524]) and high (estimate = 0.30, 95% CI [0.077, 0.536]). Moreover, the difference between conditional indirect effects was not significant (estimate = 0.01, 95% CI [−0.300, 0.235]). Thus, H5 was unsupported.

**Table 1.** Means, standard deviations, and correlations of the variables for Study 1

|  | M | SD | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (1) Positive status change | 0.33 | 0.47 | 1.00 | | | | | |
| (2) Status differentiation | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0.01 | 1.00 | | | | |
| (3) Authentic pride | 3.81 | 0.70 | 0.23** | −0.11 | 1.00 | | | |
| (4) Hubristic pride | 3.72 | 0.88 | 0.08 | 0.33** | −0.30** | 1.00 | | |
| (5) Prosocial behavior | 3.25 | 0.75 | 0.39** | −0.24** | 0.74** | −0.32** | 1.00 | |
| (6) Self-interested behavior | 2.81 | 1.01 | 0.44** | 0.46** | −0.07 | 0.72** | −0.16* | 1.00 |

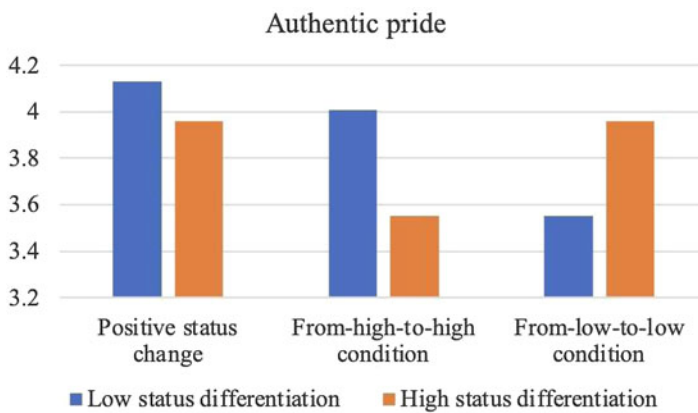*Notes: n = 219. \*p < 0.05. \*\*p < 0.01. Two-tailed tests.*



**Figure 3.** The moderating effect of status differentiation on the relationship between positive status change and authentic pride for Study 1
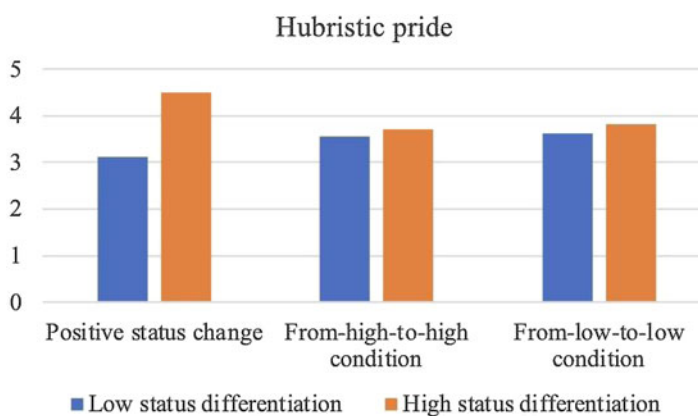


**Figure 4.** The moderating effect of status differentiation on the relationship between positive status change and hubristic pride for Study 1

H6 predicts that status differentiation moderates the indirect relationship between positive status change and self-interested behavior through hubristic pride, such that the indirect relationship is stronger when status differentiation is high. Specifically, the conditional indirect effect of positive status change and self-interested behavior through hubristic pride was significantly positive when status

differentiation was high (estimate = 0.56, 95% CI [0.354, 0.765]) rather than low (estimate = −0.41, 95% CI [−0.762, −0.090]). Moreover, the difference between conditional indirect effects was significant (estimate = 0.97, 95% CI [0.600, 1.378]).

In sum, the results from Study 1 supported H2, H3, H4, and H6. One limitation of this study is that positive status change and status differentiation were manipulated in a laboratory setting. This setting may have constrained us to effectively observe authentic pride, which could explain why H1 and H5 did not yield significant results. To examine our hypotheses in a real-world setting, we designed Study 2 based on scenarios from Pettit et al. (2016) to better manipulate positive status change and status differentiation by using a full-time employee sample.

## Study 2

### Participants and procedure

Before collecting data, a power analysis was conducted with G*Power (Faul et al., 2007). The analysis indicated that for tests using an $F$ statistic across four conditions, a sample size exceeding 128 is required to achieve adequate statistical power, set at 0.80, with an alpha of 0.05, for detecting a medium effect size of 0.25 (Cohen, 1988). A total of 180 employees registered for this study, but 176 employees completed the experiment. Therefore, a total of 176 full-time employees from various industries, including mechanical, educational, aviation, information technology, financial, and service industries, were recruited. These participants had a mean age of 29.73 years (SD = 6.53) and comprised 42.6% males, 75% holding undergraduate degrees, and 25% holding postgraduate degrees. They were randomly assigned to a 2 (positive status change versus control) × 2 (high status differentiation versus low status differentiation) design. Specifically, the group experiencing a positive status change coupled with high status differentiation comprised 45 participants. Similarly, the group subjected to a positive status change but with low status differentiation also included 45 participants. In contrast, the control group with high status differentiation consisted of 43 participants, and the control group with low status differentiation also included 43 participants.

At the beginning of the task, the participants were instructed to read a description of a realistic workplace scenario, which was varied based on manipulations of positive status change and status differentiation. We created the following description based on Pettit et al. (2016) at the beginning of the scenario: 'Although you were not the highest status member in the group, you were certainly not the lowest'. Consistent with Pettit et al. (2016), we also created a realistic situation that participants have contributed to the organization and are therefore very likely to gain status, 'You had picked up additional work separate from your duties in the main workgroup to make up for a couple of employees in another part of the group, one who had been sick and another who went on vacation'. We finally introduced the real positive status change, 'You made a successful presentation and **gained status**' (see Appendix for the full description). Consistent with Emery, Booth, Michaelides, and Swabb's (2019) LMX differentiation, we used a similar approach to manipulate status differentiation. The scenarios included full descriptions of both positive status change and status differentiation (see Appendix).

After reading the vignette scenario, the participants reported their authentic pride, hubristic pride, prosocial behavior, self-interested behavior, and demographic profiles.

### Manipulation checks

Positive status change.  Positive status change was measured using the same items in Study 1 ($\alpha = 0.95$). A $t$-test on the positive status change manipulation check revealed a significant effect, $t$ (174) = 31.20, $p = 0.00$. The participants under the positive status change condition reported that they experienced a greater positive status change compared with those under the control condition (M = 4.07 versus 1.24, SD = 0.66 versus 0.54).

Status differentiation.  Status differentiation was measured using the same items in Study 1. A $t$-test on the status differentiation manipulation check revealed a significant effect, $t$ (174) = 8.77, $p = 0.00$. The

participants in the high status differentiation condition reported a higher status differentiation (M = 3.60, SD = 0.64) compared with those under the control condition (M = 2.82, SD = 0.55).

### Measures

**Authentic pride.** Authentic pride was measured using the same items in Study 1 ($\alpha = 0.94$).

**Hubristic pride.** Hubristic pride was measured using the same items in Study 1 ($\alpha = 0.81$).

**Self-interested behavior.** Self-interested behavior was measured using the same items in Study 1 ($\alpha = 0.87$).

**Prosocial behavior.** Prosocial behavior was measured using the same items in Study 1 ($\alpha = 0.93$).

### Results

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations.

We began by conducting a two-way ANOVA to test H1 and H2. H1 predicted that status differentiation would moderate the relationships between positive status change and authentic pride. The result revealed that participants in the condition of positive status change experienced significantly more authentic pride (M = 4.35, SD = 0.44) than participants in the control condition (M = 3.39, SD = 1.11), $F(1, 172) = 10.97$, $p = 0.00$, $\eta^2 = 0.06$, when status differentiation is low.

H2 predicted that status differentiation would moderate the relationships between positive status change and hubristic pride. The result revealed that participants in the condition of positive status change experienced significantly more hubristic pride (M = 3.11, SD = 0.58) than participants in the control condition (M = 1.94, SD = 0.48), $F(1, 172) = 27.42$, $p = 0.00$, $\eta^2 = 0.14$, when status differentiation is high. These results supported H1 and H2 (Figures 5 and 6).

We further used the PROCESS macro (Model 7) to conduct moderated mediation analyses. The number of bootstrap samples extracted was 5,000. H3 predicted that authentic pride would increase new status holders' prosocial behavior. In support of this hypothesis, the effect of authentic pride ($B = 0.66$, SE = 0.04, $p = 0.00$) on prosocial behavior was positive.

H4 predicted that hubristic pride would enhance new status holders' self-interested behavior. In support of this hypothesis, the effect of hubristic pride ($B = 0.47$, SE = 0.08, $p = 0.00$) on self-interested behavior was positive.

We then estimated the conditional indirect effects. H5 predicts that the indirect relationship between positive status change and prosocial behavior through authentic pride is moderated by status differentiation, such that the relationship is stronger when status differentiation is low. As predicted, the conditional indirect effect of positive status change and prosocial behavior through authentic pride was significant when status differentiation was low (estimate = 0.64, 95% CI [0.371, 0.940]) rather than high (estimate = 0.03, 95% CI [−0.252, 0.279]), thereby supporting H5.

H6 predicts that status differentiation moderates the indirect relationship between positive status change and self-interested behavior through hubristic pride, such that the indirect relationship is stronger when status differentiation is high. As predicted, the conditional indirect effect of positive status change and self-interested behavior through hubristic pride was significant when status differentiation was high (estimate = 0.55, 95% CI [0.240, 0.870]) rather than low (estimate = 0.11, 95% CI [−0.021, 0.270]), thereby supporting H6.

Both Study 1 and Study 2 provide evidence supporting the internal validity of the effect of positive status change on employees' hubristic pride and self-interested behavior. Moreover, we find that status differentiation moderates the relationship between positive status change and authentic pride and the indirect effect between positive status change and self-interested behavior. To increase the external validity, we performed a field study in Study 3.

**Table 2.** Means, standard deviations, and correlations of the variables for Study 2

|  | M | SD | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (1) Positive status change | 0.51 | 0.50 | 1.00 | | | | | |
| (2) Status differentiation | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0.00 | 1.00 | | | | |
| (3) Authentic pride | 3.66 | 1.00 | 0.26** | −0.22** | 1.00 | | | |
| (4) Hubristic pride | 2.49 | 0.72 | 0.49** | 0.06 | 0.01 | 1.00 | | |
| (5) Prosocial behavior | 4.09 | 0.85 | 0.07 | −0.20** | 0.74** | −0.14 | 1.00 | |
| (6) Self-interested behavior | 2.23 | 0.71 | −0.13 | 0.16* | -0.28** | 0.30** | −0.34** | 1.00 |

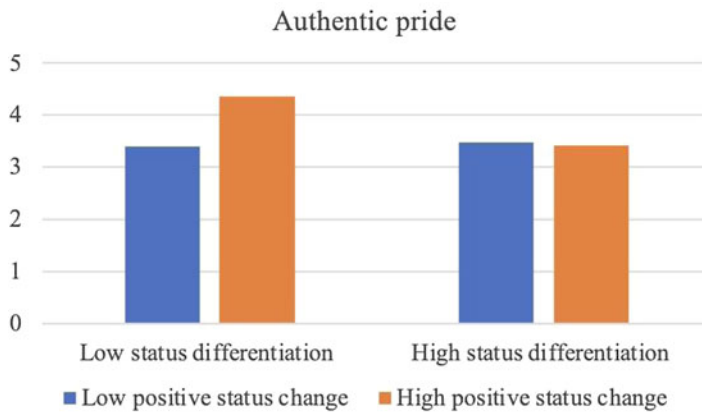*Notes:* $n = 176$. *$p < 0.05$. **$p < 0.01$. Two-tailed tests.



**Figure 5.** The moderating effect of status differentiation on the relationship between positive status change and authentic pride for Study 2
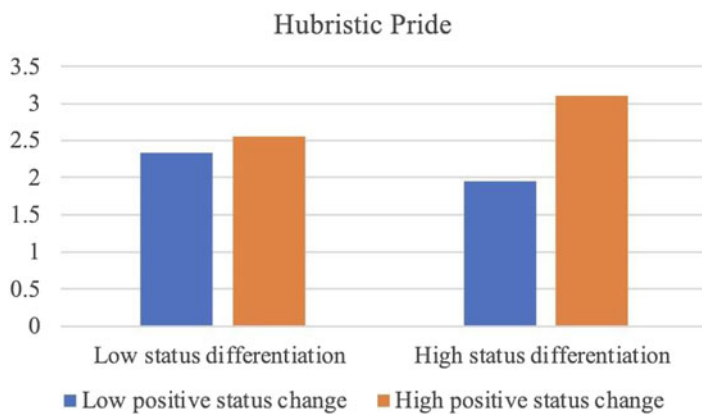


**Figure 6.** The moderating effect of status differentiation on the relationship between positive status change and hubristic pride for Study 2

## Study 3

### Sample and procedure

We conducted a time-lagged multilevel and multisource field study to test our theoretical model. The data were collected from multiple divisions of a large company in China. Management provided a list

of 109 work groups that were eligible for the study. In the sample group selection, only those group members who work and interact with one another frequently were entitled to confer status to another group member. In this way, positive status change and status differentiation can be observed from the sample. Among the 109 groups and their leaders, 90 groups comprising 535 employees agreed to participate in the study.

Surveys were administered across three time periods. At Time 1, we assessed the participants' positive status change, status[1], and control variables, including their age, gender, education, organizational tenure, and the group mean status. In this study, we identified status differentiation as a relatively stable trait of a team and followed Gray, Bunderson, Van der Vegt, Rink, and Gedik (2023) to measure status differentiation at Time 1. After two weeks (Time 2), we assessed their authentic and hubristic pride. After another two weeks (Time 3), following prior studies on prosocial behavior and self-interested behavior (Chen, Zou, & Liu, 2022; Hafenbrack, Cameron, Spreitzer, Zhang, Noval, & Shaffakat, 2020; van Dijke, De Cremer, Langendijk, & Anderson, 2018), we invited group leaders to assess the participants' self-interested and prosocial behaviors.

After matching the responses from the three time points and excluding the invalid responses, 474 employees nested in 85 groups completed all three waves of the investigation, thereby yielding a final response rate of 88.6%. These participants had a mean age of 39.88 years (SD = 9.21), and 53.6% of whom were men. Their average tenure was 8.51 years (SD = 6.95). In terms of education, 19% of the participants completed their high school education, 32.3% held associate degrees, 41.6% held undergraduate degrees, and 7.2% received postgraduate degrees. The average group size was 5.3 members.

### Measures
Positive status change. We used the same items in Studies 1 and 2 to measure participants' recent positive status change ($\alpha = 0.75$).

Status. Following Hays et al. (2022), we assessed the participants' status using Hays and Blader's (2017) 3-item scale. A sample item is 'How much respect do you usually have in the group over the past few months?' (1 = not at all, 5 = very much; $\alpha = 0.75$).

Status differentiation. Following Hays et al. (2022), we calculated the status differentiation values for each group as the coefficient of variation (CV), a standard measure of differentiation on a valued attribute, that is, status (Harrison & Klein, 2007; Hays et al., 2022). Therefore, status differentiation was computed as the CV of the participants' status scores in each group.

Authentic pride. Authentic pride was measured using the same items in Studies 1 and 2 ($\alpha = 0.81$).

Hubristic pride. Hubristic pride was measured using the same items in Studies 1 and 2 ($\alpha = 0.80$).

Prosocial behavior. Prosocial behavior was measured using the same items in Studies 1 and 2 ($\alpha = 0.76$).

Self-interested behavior. Self-interested behavior was measured using the same items in Studies 1 and 2 ($\alpha = 0.82$).

Internal attribution. We assessed the participants' internal attribution using Liu, Wang, Liao, and Shi's (2014) 3-item scale. A sample item is 'To what extent do you agree that your positive status change was due to your own effort' (1 = not at all, 5 = very much; $\alpha = 0.89$).

### Analytic strategy
Our theoretical model encompasses constructs at both the individual and group levels of analysis, making it multilevel in nature. Therefore, we conducted multilevel modeling analyses to test our

hypotheses. We used the Mplus 8.3 to analyze our data. The key variables in our model were at the individual level (Level 1), including positive status change, authentic pride, hubristic pride, prosocial behavior, self-interested behavior, status, and internal attribution. The moderator, status differentiation, and mean status of the group were placed at the group level (Level 2). We controlled for the participants' age, gender, education, tenure, status, internal attribution, and mean status of the group. We initially performed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to establish the discriminant validity of our key variables and then partitioned the variance at the individual and group levels. Afterward, we conducted multilevel mediation and multilevel moderated mediation analyses to test our hypotheses.

## Results

CFA results. Following Anderson and Gerbing (1988), we examined the construct validity of our variables before testing our hypotheses. We conducted a series of CFA by using AMOS 18.0 to examine the construct distinctiveness of major variables in our model (i.e., positive status change, status, internal attribution, authentic pride, hubristic pride, prosocial behavior, and self-interested behavior[2]). The predicted seven-factor model had a greater fit to the data ($x^2$ [539] = 634.92, $p < 0.01$, CFI = 0.98, TLI = 0.98, RMSEA = 0.02) compared with all possible alternative models (e.g., the six-factor model that combines authentic and hubristic pride; $x^2$ [545] = 1,363.90, $p < 0.001$, CFI = 0.85, TLI = 0.83, RMSEA = 0.06), hence confirming that all measurements have good discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Hypothesis testing results. We followed established procedures in all analyses (Hofmann, 1997; Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). We tested a null (one-way analysis of variance [ANOVA]) model without predictor variables to estimate the amount of variance in outcomes predicted by the variation among groups. We estimated the amount of between-group variance in the outcome variables by computing ICC1. The ICC1 values for authentic pride, hubristic pride, prosocial behavior, and self-interested behavior were 28.78%, 31.54%, 18.21%, and 20.33%, respectively, hence confirming that multilevel modeling analysis is appropriate for this study.

Table 3 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations.

To test our hypotheses, we conduct multilevel analyses. Following typical practice for multilevel analyses, we group mean centered our exogenous level 1 predictors including positive status change, and other level-1 control variables (e.g., age, gender, education, tenure, status, and internal attribution), while allowing Mplus to latently center our endogenous mediators (Lanaj, Gabriel, & Chawla, 2021; Tang, Yam, Koopman, & Ilies, 2022). We grand-mean centered our level-2 moderator (i.e., status differentiation) and the control (i.e., mean status). The number of samples extracted was 10,000.

H1 predicted that status differentiation would moderate the relationships between positive status change and authentic pride. Specifically, we expected the relationship between positive status change and authentic pride to be stronger at lower levels of status differentiation, compared with higher levels (H1). H1 was supported ($\gamma = -4.45$, SE = 0.85, $p = 0.00$; see Table 4). As expected, the relationship between positive status change and authentic pride was positive and significant at lower levels of status differentiation ($\gamma = 0.47$, SE = 0.10, 95% CI [0.256, 0.666]) but non-significant at higher levels ($\gamma = -0.32$, SE = 0.10, 95% CI [−0.514, −0.116]). Specifically, the difference between these two slopes was significant ($\gamma = -0.78$, SE = 0.16, 95% CI [−1.082, −0.467]).

H2 predicted that status differentiation would moderate the relationships between positive status change and hubristic pride. Specifically, we expected the relationship between positive status change and hubristic pride to be stronger at higher levels of status differentiation, compared with lower levels (H2). H2 was supported ($\gamma = 2.39$, SE = 0.80, $p = 0.00$; see Table 4). As expected, the relationship between positive status change and hubristic pride was significant at higher levels of status differentiation ($\gamma = 0.26$, SE = 0.08, 95% CI [0.097, 0.418]) but non-significant at lower levels ($\gamma = -0.02$, SE = 0.09, 95% CI [−0.190, 0.144]). Specifically, the difference between these two slopes was significant ($\gamma = 0.29$, SE = 0.13, 95% CI [0.130, 0.532]) (Figures 7 and 8).

**Table 3.** Means, standard deviations, and correlations of the variables for Study 3

| | M | SD | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) | (9) | (10) | (11) | (12) | (13) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Level 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| (1) Age | 39.88 | 9.21 | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| (2) Gender | 1.47 | 0.50 | 0.02 | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| (3) Education | 2.37 | 0.87 | −0.02 | 0.03 | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | | |
| (4) Organizational tenure | 8.51 | 6.95 | 0.67** | 0.07 | 0.02 | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | |
| (5) Status | 3.20 | 0.72 | −0.01 | −0.08 | −0.05 | 0.06 | 1.00 | | | | | | | | |
| (6) Internal attribution | 2.64 | 0.77 | −0.02 | 0.06 | 0.03 | −0.05 | −0.07 | 1.00 | | | | | | | |
| (7) Positive status change | 3.29 | 0.77 | 0.07 | −0.08 | 0.00 | 0.04 | 0.47** | −0.08 | 1.00 | | | | | | |
| (8) Authentic pride | 3.22 | 0.68 | −0.07 | −0.05 | −0.03 | −0.04 | 0.31** | −0.11* | 0.26** | 1.00 | | | | | |
| (9) Hubristic pride | 3.20 | 0.63 | −0.01 | 0.01 | −0.08 | 0.01 | 0.64** | −0.12** | 0.54** | 0.41** | 1.00 | | | | |
| (10) Prosocial behavior | 3.14 | 0.62 | −0.01 | −0.08 | 0.04 | −0.02 | 0.09 | 0.01 | 0.13** | 0.50** | −0.01 | 1.00 | | | |
| (11) Self-interested behavior | 3.01 | 0.58 | 0.07 | −0.01 | −0.07 | 0.07 | 0.43** | −0.02 | 0.41** | 0.01 | 0.55** | 0.07 | 1.00 | | |
| Level 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| (12) Mean status | 3.20 | 0.45 | −0.07 | 0.03 | −0.10* | 0.01 | 0.62** | −0.13** | 0.27** | 0.42** | 0.57** | 0.19** | 0.36** | 1.00 | |
| (13) Status differentiation | 0.19 | 0.09 | 0.06 | 0.04 | 0.04 | 0.00 | −0.41** | 0.06 | −0.18** | −0.36** | −0.42** | −0.17** | −0.25** | −0.67** | 1.00 |

*Notes: n* = 474. *$p < 0.05$. **$p < 0.01$. Two-tailed tests.

**Table 4.** Regression results for Study 3

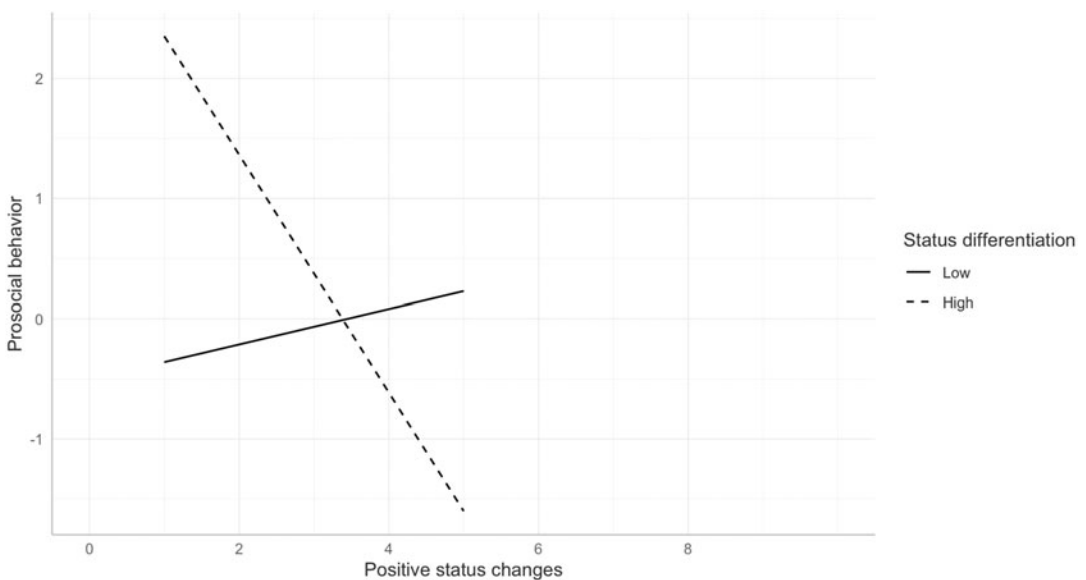| | Authentic pride | | Hubristic pride | | Prosocial behavior | | Self-interested behavior | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Estimate | SE | Estimate | SE | Estimate | SE | Estimate | SE |
| Predictors | | | | | | | | |
| Age | −0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.01* | 0.00 |
| Gender | −0.04 | 0.05 | 0.03 | 0.04 | −0.03 | 0.05 | −0.04 | 0.04 |
| Education | −0.01 | 0.03 | −0.04* | 0.02 | 0.04 | 0.04 | −0.01 | 0.03 |
| Organizational tenure | −0.00 | 0.01 | −0.00 | 0.00 | −0.01 | 0.01 | −0.00 | 0.00 |
| Status | 0.08 | 0.05 | 0.20** | 0.03 | 0.03 | 0.05 | 0.04 | 0.04 |
| Mean status | 0.47** | 0.11 | 0.73** | 0.07 | 0.26 | 0.09 | 0.46** | 0.07 |
| Internal attribution | −0.00 | 0.03 | −0.02* | 0.03 | 0.02 | 0.03 | 0.03 | 0.03 |
| Positive status change | −4.56** | 0.91 | 1.65* | 0.75 | 0.12** | 0.04 | 0.16** | 0.04 |
| Status differentiation | −1.22* | 0.72 | −0.53 | 0.35 | −0.52 | 0.67 | −0.17 | 0.43 |
| Positive status change*Status differentiation | −4.45 ** | 0.85 | 2.39** | 0.80 | | | | |
| Authentic pride | | | | | 0.45** | 0.04 | | |
| Hubristic pride | | | | | | | 0.39** | 0.05 |

Notes: n = 474. *p < 0.05. **p < 0.01.



**Figure 7.** The moderating effect of status differentiation on the relationship between positive status change and prosocial behavior for Study 3

H3 predicted that authentic pride would increase new status holders' prosocial behavior. In support of this hypothesis, the effect of authentic pride ($\gamma = 0.45$, SE = 0.04, $p = 0.00$) on prosocial behavior was positive, when hubristic pride was controlled.
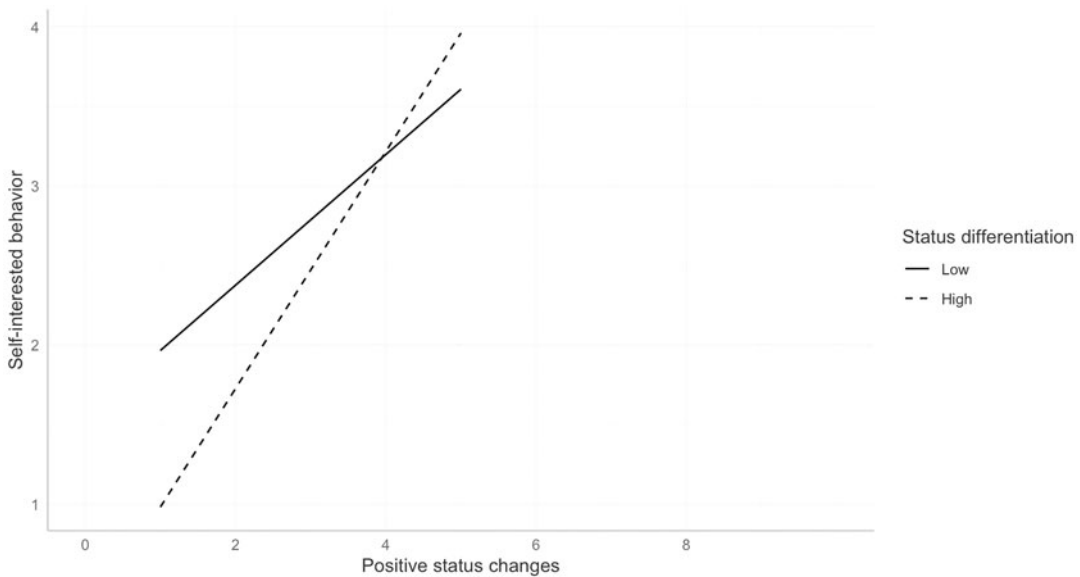
**Figure 8.** The moderating effect of status differentiation on the relationship between positive status change and self-interested behavior for Study 3

H4 predicted that hubristic pride would increase new status holders' self-interested behavior. In support of this hypothesis, the effect of hubristic pride ($\gamma = 0.39$, SE = 0.05, $p = 0.00$) on self-interested behavior was positive, when authentic pride was controlled.

We then estimated the conditional indirect effects. H5 suggests that status differentiation moderates the indirect relationship between positive status change and prosocial behavior through authentic pride, such that this indirect relationship is stronger when status differentiation is low. The conditional indirect effects through authentic pride are positive and significant when status differentiation is lower ($B_{\text{indirect-lower}} = 0.21$, SE = 0.05, 95% CI [0.124, 0.314]), but negative when status differentiation is higher ($B_{\text{indirect-higher}} = -0.13$, SE = 0.05, 95% CI [−0.224, −0.045]). Specifically, the difference between these two slopes was significant ($B_{\text{differentiation}} = -0.35$, SE = 0.07, 95% CI [−0.497, −0.211]).

H6 suggests that status differentiation moderates the indirect relationship between positive status change and self-interested behavior through hubristic pride, such that this indirect relationship is stronger when status differentiation is high. The conditional indirect effects through hubristic pride are positive and significant when status differentiation is higher ($B_{\text{indirect-higher}} = 0.14$, SE = 0.04, 95% CI [0.070, 0.224]), but non-significant when status differentiation is lower ($B_{\text{indirect-lower}} = -0.02$, SE = 0.04, 95% CI [−0.087, 0.054]). Specifically, the difference between these two slopes was significant ($B_{\text{differentiation}} = 0.16$, SE = 0.06, 95% CI [0.052, 0.278]).

Furthermore, we then did a supplementary analysis to estimate the alternative conditional indirect effects. Specifically, the conditional indirect effect of positive status change on self-interested behavior through authentic pride is positive when status differentiation is higher ($B_{\text{indirect-higher}} = 0.09$, SE = 0.04, 95% CI [0.024, 0.170]), but negative when status differentiation is lower ($B_{\text{indirect-lower}} = -0.15$, SE = 0.04, 95% CI [−0.241, −0.078]). Specifically, the difference between these two slopes was significant ($B_{\text{differentiation}} = 0.25$, SE = 0.06, 95% CI [0.132, 0.379]). Moreover, the conditional indirect effects on prosocial behavior through hubristic pride are negative and significant when status differentiation is lower ($B_{\text{indirect-higher}} = -0.19$, SE = 0.04, 95% CI [−0.287, −0.114]), but non-significant when status differentiation is higher ($B_{\text{indirect-lower}} = -0.04$, SE = 0.04, 95% CI [−0.027, 0.117]). Specifically, the difference between these two slopes was significant ($B_{\text{differentiation}} = 0.23$, SE = 0.06, 95% CI [−0.364, −0.130]).

Through the use of a field design, Study 3 offers evidence of external validity with regard to our hypothesized relationships. Specifically, similar to Studies 1 and 2, the hypotheses were supported

via the sample of participants who had real experiences of status change. Although we observed that positive status change was significantly related to prosocial (self-interested) behavior through authentic (hubristic) pride when status differentiation was high and low, we still found some support for the moderated indirect relationships because the differences between the two slopes (when status differentiation was high versus low) was significant. This is because Study 3 was conducted in a real workplace setting. Data were collected at three different points in time, and although significant differences were observed under conditions of high and low status, the complex nature of real-world work environments may have tempered these differences. As a result, the differences were rendered less pronounced, albeit still significant. We also did the supplementary analysis to examine the moderated indirect relationships between positive status change and prosocial (self-interested) behavior through hubristic (authentic) pride. Overall, the results from Studies 1, 2, and 3 lend strong support to our theorizing that positive status change increases new status holders' authentic pride and prosocial behavior when status differentiation is low. By contrast, positive status change increases new status holders' hubristic pride and self-interested behavior when status differentiation is high.

## Discussion

In this research, we report the results of three studies examining how positive status change affects new status holders' behavior. Our laboratory experiment, scenario experiment, and field study show that the presence of a high (versus low) level of status differentiation influences new status holders' emotions and behaviors. This effect is crucial to our arguments about why status differentiation serves as a vital factor that determines new status holders to enhance their prosocial behavior via authentic pride, and their self-interested behavior via hubristic pride.

### *Theoretical Implications*

First, this research contributes to the literature on status by adopting a person-in-context interactionist perspective to examine how a contextual factor (i.e., status differentiation) can play a crucial role in determining the emotions and behaviors exhibited by individuals who have recently gained new status. Of note, prior status-related studies primarily focused on how individual characteristics affect status. For example, how the legitimacy of individuals affects the behaviors of status holders. Given that individuals are embedded in teams within the organizational context, it is essential to adopt a person-in-context interactionist perspective to identify status-related characteristics of context as the important factor. Thus, we specifically add to the status literature by showing that, in teams with low status differentiation, positive status change evokes more positive reactions (i.e., authentic pride and prosocial behavior) among new status holders. While in teams with high status differentiation, positive status change is likely to induce rather negative outcomes, such as hubristic pride and self-interested behavior. Moreover, our findings also contribute to a better understanding of positive status change in China. Given that Confucian values emphasize the responsibilities of individuals who gain status (Yiu, Wan, Ng, Chen, & Su, 2014), we develop and test a theoretical model to examine the double-sword effects of positive status change.

Second, this research contributes to the status literature by better unpacking the mixed influences of positive status change on new status holders' behaviors through a relatively new lens, namely emotion (pride)-based perspective (via the two-facet model of pride; Tracy et al., 2010). Whereas the previous research mainly focuses on the cognitive perspective (e.g., Blader & Chen, 2012; Castellucci & Ertug, 2010; Prato et al., 2019), we examined and tested that positive status change induces an emotional response, that is, different types of pride shown on new status holders through a laboratory experiment and a field experiment. In doing so, we reveal a 'black box' of how positive status change influences the new status holder's behavior. Also, given that Chinese society stresses the duties of status holders (Yiu et al., 2014), we provide a more nuanced understanding of how positive status change may induce positive and negative outcomes in the Chinese context.

Third, this research meaningfully extends the two-facet model of pride (Tracy et al., 2010) by focusing on the antecedent of different types of pride and the important contextual factor. Of note, previous

literature on the two-facet model of pride (Tracy et al., 2010) has primarily focused on the outcomes of pride, such as how different types of pride motivate people to engage in status-seeking behaviors (Bolló et al., 2018). In this research, we shift the focus to how to induce different types of pride. Moreover, although the two-facet model of pride (Tracy et al., 2010) suggests that the interpretation of emotion-eliciting events determines which type of pride (e.g., authentic pride and hubristic pride), we also shed light on the important contextual factor that influences people's interpretation, leading to a deeper understanding of the two types of pride.

### Practical Implications

Our research focuses on an important topic of positive status change. We develop a theoretical model specific to the Chinese context that offers valuable insights for organizations operating in China. Our findings have practical implications for constructing teams and managing the consequences of positive status change.

Given that status is dynamic while status changes are prevalent, both Chinese scholars and practitioners have started paying attention to positive status change. For example, Liu, Ge, and Peng (2016) investigated how different status-conferral ways influence employees' innovation. However, an equally important and widespread phenomenon is that not all new status holders exhibit prosocial behavior. Therefore, we aim to provide insights to organizations and their managers on how to prevent the negative outcomes of positive status change.

First, organizations and practical managers in China should recognize that while positive status changes can be advantageous, prosocial behavior is not an inevitable outcome. In Chinese society where high status comes with significant responsibility (Yiu et al., 2014), organizations must be vigilant about the potential for newly elevated employees to engage in self-interested behaviors. To mitigate these risks, it is crucial for organizations to provide these employees with a thorough understanding of their new roles and responsibilities, training them to balance their personal interests with the collective good, especially after experiencing positive status changes.

Second, our research highlights effective strategies to curb self-interested behaviors among new status holders in China, while promoting their prosocial actions. We specifically explore status differentiation as a vital contextual factor. Our findings support the notion that in Chinese organizations, where hierarchical respect and collective harmony are highly valued, minimizing status differentiation can act as a lever to modify the emotions and behaviors of new status holders. Specifically, when status differentiation is low, new status holders tend to experience authentic pride and engage in prosocial behavior. Organizations should aim to create a more egalitarian environment with lower status differentiation, where positive status change is attainable for a greater number of employees. High levels of status differentiation may increase the likelihood of new status holders exhibiting negative behaviors, such as experiencing hubristic pride and engaging in self-interested behavior.

### Limitations and Future Research Directions

Our research also has some limitations. First, although we have controlled for mechanisms pertaining to attribution (i.e., internal attribution), we suggest that the perspective of attribution can be a meaningful avenue for future research to investigate the consequences of positive status change. Specifically, it may be useful to investigate how individuals attribute their status change and how these attributions (i.e., internal attribution and external attribution) influence their subsequent behaviors. Moreover, the attributions of new status holders can be a potentially important factor that affects their interpretation of positive status change and thus affects their emotional and behavioral reactions. Thus, future research on positive status change should take into account the perspective of attribution.

Second, we focus primarily on subjective perceptions of positive status change. However, the literature on status and different types of pride has highlighted that subjective and objective have different effects on status holders' behavior (Bolló et al., 2018). Thus, future research should also extend this

study by including objective measures of status and comparing how objectively and subjectively positive status change affects new status holders' pride and behaviors.

Third, although we have controlled for status, it is important to differentiate positive status change from status. Notably, we assessed status at Time 1 and used it to calculate status differentiation in Study 3, considering such hierarchical differentiation a relatively stable characteristic within teams. Moreover, we draw on the two-facet model of pride (Tracy et al., 2010) to identify status differentiation as the key contextual factor, and thus focus mainly on the status at Time 1, which depicts the stable status distribution before any status changes occur. Given the complex and dynamic nature of status in teams (Doyle & Lount, 2023), we encourage future research to assess status at multiple time points, particularly before any positive status changes occur. Additionally, exploring how positive status change, along with initial or final status, may independently or jointly influence individual behaviors would be valuable.

Fourth, in our studies (i.e., Study 1), we found that authentic pride is related to hubristic pride. In terms of this, some scholars challenged (Holbrook, Piazza, & Fessler, 2014) the authentic pride and hubristic pride scale developed by Tracy and Robins's (2007b). To this end, we have controlled for one type of pride when testing the pathway of the other type of pride. Future studies should consider developing an additional scale that effectively distinguishes between authentic pride and hubristic pride.

Finally, our study only investigates the influence of positive status change on authentic (hubristic) pride within a Chinese context. Therefore, we suggest that future research explore these effects across diverse cultural contexts, including Western contexts.

## Conclusion

Drawing on the two-facet model of pride, we propose a dual emotional pathway model to illustrate how employees behave following a positive status change. Our research, including a laboratory experiment, a scenario experiment, and a field survey, demonstrates that new status holders in a context with low status differentiation are more likely to experience authentic pride and engage in prosocial behavior. Conversely, new status holders in a context with high status differentiation are more likely to experience hubristic pride and increase their self-interested behavior. We hope that our research will inspire future scholars to explore how employees behave after experiencing positive status changes.

## Notes

**1.** Our assessment of status aligns with previous research on status change (Marr & Thau, 2014) and status differentiation (Gray et al., 2023), wherein we measure status at Time 1.
**2.** Given that status differentiation was measured by CV, we followed prior research on differentiation (e.g., Harris, Li, & Kirkman, 2014) and did not add status differentiation to the CFA factors.

## Appendix

The scenario in Study 2
  *Manipulation of positive status change*
  Imagine you were an employee working in a 10-person workgroup in a large organization. You and the main workgroup had worked hard over the last year, and you had earned some fellow group members' respect. Although you were not the highest status member in the group, you were certainly not the lowest.
  *Positive status change condition.* Over the last few weeks, you had picked up additional work separate from your duties in the main workgroup to make up for a couple of employees in another part of the group, one who had been sick and another who went on vacation. After that, you on behalf of your group delivered a presentation in front of your group members and other workgroups. You made a successful presentation and **gained status**.

*The control condition.* Over the last few weeks, you did your routine tasks and completed your in-role tasks including communicating with your group members and joining a presentation in front of your group members and other workgroups. You finished your in-role tasks as usual and **maintained your current status**.

*Manipulation of status differentiation*

Concerning status, status is respect, esteem, and prestige in the eyes of others. In your group, **all members [Only one or two members]** process status. **Everyone [Only one or two members]** is respected and admired by other group members.

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