

**SUBVERTING VALUE HIERARCHIES:**  
Essays on the Causes and Responses to Shifts in Demand for Authenticity

by

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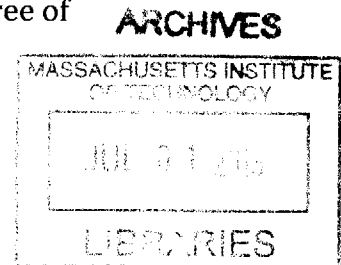
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**ABSTRACT**

This dissertation includes three essays on the causes and responses to shifts in demand for authenticity. In the first chapter, I answer the question: why do previously cast-off products, practices, or styles abruptly return to popularity? I use a mixed-methods approach in analyzing archival data on the case of venue design in Major League Baseball throughout the twentieth century. My analysis of the baseball industry, including comparison to the professional football industry (NFL) as a counterfactual case, shows that the re-emergence of a once popular, but long-forsaken style arose in response to fan concern over the increased prominence of an ulterior, mercenary motive for performance. I argue and show that this “commitment crisis” invalidated the prevailing popular style, and in its place the retro ballpark style was valued as an expression faithful to the traditional roots of the industry. In the second chapter, I describe one of the causes for shifts in demand for authenticity. In this essay we develop theory that addresses the tendency for high-status actors to be deemed less considerate and more inauthentic than low-status actors. We argue that this tendency stems from two features of the typical status attainment process: (a) the incentive structure, through which the benefits of a high-status position encourage actors to feign capability and commitment, leading to suspicions of inauthenticity; and (b) the interaction process, in which the high-status actor asserts its superiority and another’s inferiority, leading to suspicions of inconsiderateness. In the third chapter, I describe and show how firms can effectively reduce penalties for categorical deviance. This essay builds a bridge between the organizational impression management and status perspectives by showing how organizational status influences the effectiveness of anticipatory impression management tools like pre-emptive verbal accounts. We show that high-status firms are better off when they appear assertive in anticipatory impression management signaling – while the opposite is true for middle-status firms. Mediation analysis shows that the same type of framing is perceived differently depending on the status of the restaurant, but that too much perceived effort in framing the deviance will lead to negative results.

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## **Acknowledgments**

I have always considered myself a curious person. This often led me to annoy teachers, teammates, or co-workers with questions that were more difficult than they or I could handle. However, instead of cultivating this curiosity, I spent most of my youth playing baseball, a hobby that brought me to the University of Pennsylvania, and on a whim, the Wharton School. With my fellow student-athlete peers, I often spent more time perfecting my swing or strengthening my body than I did pursuing intellectual endeavors. It was not until baseball ended for me that I realized how fulfilling these intellectual pursuits could be. The turning point for me, in deciding to pursue academia as a career, came when I returned to school for my MBA at the Yale School of Management. Engaging in fascinated debate and discussion over the causes and effects of social behavior with such amazing minds as Joel Podolny, Jim Barron, Fiona Scott-Morton, Amy Wrzesniewski, Sharon Oster, and others taught me both that I could pursue this career and that it would be much more fulfilling for me than life inside of an organization where seeking answer to the types of questions that intrigued me was often frowned upon. From this point, although I did not know what much of it meant, I knew that I would be not be content unless I pursued fascinating questions at the intersection of economics, sociology, and social psychology, in a field broadly defined as management or organization theory. While over the last five years, I have many times cursed this decision to pursue a PhD degree, at its completion I can now admit that I will be forever grateful to those at SOM who (knowingly or otherwise) sent me down this path.

Among the faculty who took the responsibility to help train my less experienced, but overly-confident mind, I owe most of what I have become as a social scientist to Ezra Zuckerman. I am grateful for the training I received through endless conversations and email exchanges where he, almost always patiently and always thoroughly, taught me how to pursue lines of inquiry and logic that I had not yet explored. What I am most grateful to Ezra for, however, is his personal example. Ezra, an unbelievably brilliant and capable academic, has shown me that you can maintain these skills while still being a genuinely honest individual who is just as deeply committed and concerned about those around him. I am not sure if that is rare in academia, but I am grateful that I was trained by someone who could show me that good academic work and commitment to others is

not only possible, but at some level necessary for one seeking to be a successful academic. I appreciate his friendship and coaching.

Many other people at MIT helped coach me along. I am particularly grateful for Renée Gosline's painstakingly patient explanations of experimental design; long sessions with Jason Davis discussing theory and paper construction; Kate Kellogg's consistent prodding and insightful directions not only with this dissertation, but in any seminar or working group setting; Evan Apfelbaum's and Olenka Kacperczyk's willingness to discuss almost any topic and provide insight; and the rest of the MIT Sloan faculty who cultivate a culture of openness and interaction that was necessary in my development. I must also single out two others who not only provided the types of support discussed above, but will forever shape my life inside and outside of academia because of their brilliance and vigilance in helping me stay on the right path. First, Roberto Fernandez who, although he has trained many more successful students than me, was always willing to provide comments, insights, and direction that even I could grasp. His perspective will forever shape my research. Finally, Cat Turco's guidance not only in seminar times, but in the darkest moments of this process certainly saved me emotionally. Her amazing capability and seeming concern for my success and well-being, along with Ezra and Roberto, provides the example of who I would like to emulate in my own career. Lastly, the fellow students at MIT, most especially my cohort and fellow Economic Sociology Program travellers have always been willing to hear my concerns, provide feedback, and even receive my feedback – a system of support that I hope will last well into the future. My thanks to all of you.

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me lifts my spirit, especially during the sad times. It was our trips to “the jumpy place” that got me through the most trying times. Josephine, your sweet spirit always calms my heart. I have often felt incapable of providing the attention the four of you needed while pursuing this goal, but you are the reasons why I did not give up and I hope to repay that gift for the rest of your lives. Most importantly, I must thank the love of my life Elise. You are everything to me. I will never be able to capture, on this page, how important your friendship, guidance, and love is to me. We had no idea what this would entail when we made this decision, but your support and belief in me, although often undeserved, is what got me through. I dedicate this work to you and the amazing four children you have blessed us with.

While all of these people have inspired and directed me in this work, all errors are my responsibility alone.

Oliver Hahl  
May 16, 2013

## *Chapter 1*

# Authenticity Concerns and Retro Fashion Turns: Baseball's Commitment Crisis and the Re-Popularization of Discarded Cultural Forms<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Ezra Zuckerman, Renee Gosline, Kate Kellogg, and Cat Turco for their comments and discussion on earlier drafts as well as seminar participants at the MIT Economic Sociology Working Group, the Harvard/MIT Economic Sociology Seminar, the Chicago Organizations and Markets Workshop, NYU Stern and Yale SOM; Gary Gillette and the Society for American Baseball Researchers for sets of interesting discussions on the history of baseball and ballparks; and the staff at the Cincinnati Public Library Information and Reference Public Desk for their guidance in data collection. All remaining errors are the responsibility of the author.

<sup>2</sup> Fisher, Dennis. (2003, September 30) Vet Reminds Us of What is Wrong with Baseball. *Lancaster New Era*, p. C-1, emphasis added

### Abstract

Why do previously cast-off products, practices, or styles abruptly return to popularity? This question has particular salience in the context of endogenous models of fashion, which explain fashion change as an incremental and unidirectional process, and thus cannot account for the type of retro fashion change that motivates this paper. I use a mixed methods approach in analyzing archival data on the case of venue design in Major League Baseball throughout the twentieth century. My analysis shows that the re-emergence of a once popular, but long-forsaken style arose in response to concern over the increased prominence of an ulterior, mercenary motive for performance. I argue and show that this “commitment crisis” invalidated the prevailing popular style, and in its place the retro ballpark style was valued as an expression faithful to the traditional roots of the industry. I also rule out the possibility that the retro turn was due to a broader “*zeitgeist*” shift by comparing deviant and counterfactual cases, in both MLB and neighboring professional football (NFL). Finally, I discuss the generalizability of how commitment concerns can increase demand for cultural expressions from the past.

“The Vet is a cold, clammy, concrete circle, long overdue for a dynamite doomsday... For me, the Vet has become *a symbol of what has gone wrong with baseball in the last 33 years*. Since it was built, *salaries have skyrocketed...and owners have seemed more interested in making money than in winning pennants*. I know I'm not the only one who has been turned off by all this.”<sup>2</sup>

### **The Puzzling Case of Retro Fashion Turns**

Fashion, or the rise and fall in popularity of cultural forms, has long interested sociologists. Fashion processes lead to change in what is valued over time, particularly in cultural domains where performance is difficult to measure objectively (Simmel 1957; Sapir 1931; Blumer 1969; Robinson 1976; Lieberman 2000; Strang and Macy 2001). Clarifying the processes behind fashion cycles sheds light on what determines selection and diffusion of cultural forms, as well as reasons behind change in prevailing tastes over time (Blumer 1969; Hirsch 1972; Lieberman 2000). These processes play an important role in determining actors' social position in a hierarchy: differentiation signals distinction from the ever-emulating masses (Simmel 1957; Veblen 1899), and the ability to recognize the fashionable often distinguishes the elite from the less cultured (Bourdieu 1984). Given the important role that differentiation plays in these fashion processes and how it determines position in social hierarchy, it is puzzling that we would ever see *retro* fashion turns, where popular forms, once discarded, are copied and abruptly reemerge as the dominant form in a domain. Examples include the art world's re-welcoming of turn-of-the-century Art Nouveau in the 1960s (Guffey 2006), “indie” music's twenty-first century recreation of 1970s punk styles (Reynolds 2011), country music's retrenchment in the 1920s and 1970s (Peterson 1997), the reemergence of 1910s venue patterns in 1990s Major League Baseball (Loverro 1999; Rosensweig 2005), the re-adoption of late nineteenth century clothing styles by the British “Teddy Boy” of the 1950s (Guffey 2006) and the 1990s “sixties scene” in Germany (Jenß 2004).

Popular cultural forms are not discarded on a whim. Whether it is perceived to be a more appealing aesthetic form, a more useful product, or a more effective practice,

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<sup>2</sup> Fisher, Dennis. (2003, September 30) Vet Reminds Us of What is Wrong with Baseball. *Lancaster New Era*, p. C-1, emphasis added

producers and consumers of each new iteration typically justify the change as progress along already valued dimensions (Blumer 1969; Abrahamson and Eisenman 2008). Discourse is used to promote the newer version and highlights the shortcomings of the older form (Abrahamson and Fairchild 1999; Hirsch 1972). Thus, readopting these previously popular, or retro, forms once left behind for their inferiority, evokes the case of the proverbial fool returning to his folly. Retro fashion turns are even more puzzling when we consider that they often come on abruptly, disrupting the gradual evolution of change in cultural forms discussed in the fashion literature (Meyersohn and Katz 1957; Blumer 1969; Robinson 1976; Lieberman 2000). So why would these cast-off styles ever abruptly reemerge as the most popular form in the same domain in which they were so summarily dismissed?

There are two ways that this question has been approached and each has yet to fully account for retro fashion change. Scholars who focus on forces external to any domain, such as a broad societal shift in a *zeitgeist*, or spirit of the times, argue that general social or political upheaval cause affected audiences to demand practices, products, or styles from the past as reminders of a less chaotic time (Davis 1979; Boym 2001). But since these forces influence audiences across many domains, this type of *zeitgeist* argument cannot account for why retro fashion emerges in some domains and not others, at any given time (Lieberman 2000:10–13). Various examples, from art’s retro turn and music’s contemporaneous modern push in the 1960s (compare Guffey 2006; Reynolds 2011) to professional football’s modern stadium spree alongside professional baseball’s retro ballpark boom in the 1990s (see below), suggest that a shift in the *zeitgeist* is not a sufficient condition for retro fashion turns. A second view, which espouses the idea that fashion change is the result of forces endogenous to a domain (Lieberman 2000; Kaufman 2004), predicts that each popular form builds on the one that preceded it, allowing for the possibility that past styles, such as hem lengths from a bygone era, will eventually become popular again (e.g., Richardson and Kroeber 1940; Robinson 1976; Lieberman 2000). But this “ratchet effect” model (Lieberman 2000:92–111) cannot account for the cases where steady patterns of incremental change were abruptly halted in favor of returns to older styles (e.g., Guffey 2006; Peterson 1997; Rao, Monin, and Durand 2003; Gillette et al. 2009).



My approach in this paper is to build on the ratchet effect model by revisiting one of its key assumptions – that the current popular form in a domain is always legitimate – and developing a theory that specifies the conditions under which this assumption will not hold and thereby trigger a retro turn. In addition to building on Lieberman’s model, my approach also draws on a lesson from Peterson’s (1997) work on changes in popular country music styles, which shows that a current popular form can be re-defined as illegitimate or inauthentic. Once the current popular form is not just on the decline, but is re-defined as inauthentic to the domain, it would be detrimental to borrow from it in developing the next form, leading to demand for forms from the past that fill demand for authentic cultural expression in the domain. But while Peterson’s work provides evidence that the questioned assumption in Lieberman’s model does not always hold, it does not provide a clear mechanism behind this re-definition and, thus, we are left to wonder when and, ultimately, why a current popular form will be re-defined as inauthentic. Moreover, the diffuse manner in which the term authenticity is invoked, as discussed in previous literature on authenticity, only serves to reinforce this puzzle (cf., Turner 1976; Trilling 1972). Therefore, what is missing from previous work on authenticity, and our understanding of when fashion will turn to the past, is a clear picture of what causes the currently popular form to be re-defined and accepted as inauthentic.

In response to this question, I argue and demonstrate that re-definitions of this type, and corresponding retro trends, happen during a *commitment crisis*, or periods of audience concern that the domain’s actors are no longer focused on serving the audience as much as serving themselves. The key insight that links concerns about lack of authenticity with commitment comes from work by Hahl and Zuckerman (2012), who find that the clear presence of ulterior, instrumental motives leads an audience to question the authenticity of an actor’s performance (cf., Ridgeway 1981:335). This is consistent with work in many settings that shows that perceived lack of commitment leads an audience to devalue an actor (e.g., Carroll and Swaminathan 2000; Beverland 2005; Phillips, Turco, and Zuckerman 2013). When activities in the domain increase the visibility or prominence of the actors’ ulterior motives for performance (i.e., individual rewards) across the domain, the same cultural expressions that were once valued will be understood as merely posturing so as to gain benefits. Under these conditions, previously

cast-off cultural forms will re-emerge as the dominant form in a domain—as symbols of commitment to a domain now gone astray.

My examination of Major League Baseball's (MLB) return to a once-outmoded style of ballpark validates this theory. The mid-1990s in MLB saw collective re-adoption of an old-style, "Retro Era" ballpark, which was an abrupt departure from the gradual change in ballpark styles that celebrated ever-larger and more modern playing venues in the first nine decades of the twentieth century. I use historical archive data to show that demand for this type of change was the result of the increased visibility of the players' economic rewards, related to the advent of free agency and the public bickering that ensued. This caused the audience (media and fans) for MLB to doubt the sincerity of the players' performance and commitment to the domain. As the epigraphical quote suggests, this concern for greed contaminated the ballpark style of the era, causing a turn back to styles preceding this commitment crisis in the MLB. I also rule out the alternative that this style change was due to a *zeitgeist* that increased the value of tradition and authenticity for audiences across all domains in that period by showing that similar construction projects in a neighboring domain (professional football) continued on a modernizing trajectory, and that the NFL and MLB differed in their exposure to audience perceptions of inauthentic performance. The paper concludes with a discussion of the implications of this theory for explanations of cultural change more broadly.

### **Fashion Changes In 20<sup>th</sup> Century MLB Ballpark Design**

The dynamics that form the focus of this study are cases when the most popular cultural form evolves along established dimensions of value but then abruptly returns to previously discarded, or retro, forms. I investigate the case of style changes in Major League Baseball (MLB) ballparks throughout the twentieth century. In the mid-1990s, the MLB industry saw an abrupt shift in popularity from a succession of ever more modern venue designs to ones that attempted to match a historical model, an era in ballpark design known as the Retro Era (Loverro 1999; Gillette et al. 2009).

This case is instructive for at least three reasons. First, the fashion turn fit the type of retro fashion change yet to be explained by the extant literature in that the change was an abrupt return to a past style that involved the rejection of the current popular form.

Second, ballparks are central to the identity of the domain's actors, prominently displayed on the "front-stage" of the audience (fans)-actor (players, teams) interface (Goffman 1959). Ballparks are the location in which audiences experience the game, particularly in the period I will discuss, and as the team's home, serve as the image of the team for the city, becoming the symbols of the performance in any period. Along with serving as the local symbol of the team, ballpark design involves large investments of money and other resources in ways that eliminate the possibility that the retro turn was motivated through a desire to only temporarily experiment with a style. Finally, the MLB ballpark trends in the 20<sup>th</sup> century have a comparable counterfactual case in the major American professional football league (NFL), which continued on its modern trend while MLB was turning retro. The NFL is a useful comparable case because it shares a complementary audience with MLB and also constructed playing venues, in many cases at the same time after sharing a stadium with an MLB franchise. By comparing similar sets of measures and holding constant important variables from alternative theories (i.e., zeitgeist) this design can be used to test whether the proposed causal mechanism, increased prominence of rewards and a shift in audience demand for authenticity, is present in baseball and not football.

Note finally that one might suggest that a retro shift of this type in professional baseball is unsurprising because Major League Baseball, as a valued piece of Americana, has long been discussed as a domain in which its history is prized (e.g., Leifer 1998; Tygiel 2001). To the contrary, in the case of ballpark design, as I will show, baseball had a long history of choosing modernity over tradition. Furthermore, even if baseball as a setting has arguably always valued its history more than other cultural domains, this explains neither why retro fashion in ballpark design took place when it did, nor why it occurred so thoroughly and abruptly. Therefore, this aspect of the case only serves to sharpen the question that animates this study.

Era	Pre-Classic	Classic Ballpark	Stadium	Super Stadium and Dome	Retro Ballpark
Construction Years (roughly)	1845?-1908	1909-1916	1923-1961	1962-1991	1992-2006
Number of Ballparks Built	Many	14	8	18	17
Exterior	Ornate Wood and Brick	Ornate Brick	Ornate and Minimalist Concrete	Minimalist Pre-Fab Concrete	Ornate Brick
Primary Building Materials	Wood	Brick, Concrete and Steel	Concrete and Steel and Reinforced Concrete	Reinforced Concrete	Brick, Concrete and Steel
Outfield Dimensions	Open	Asymmetric	Asymmetric and Symmetric	Symmetric	Asymmetric
Playing Surface	Grass	Grass	Grass	AstroTurf	Grass
Seating Arrangement	Grandstand	Double-Decked Grandstand and Outfield Bleachers	Multi-Decked Grandstands and Decked Bleachers	Complete Wrap Around Multi-Deck Seating	Double-Decked Grandstand and Outfield Bleachers
Naming Practice	Ballpark or Field	Ballpark or Field	Stadium	Stadium	Ballpark or Field

Table 1 – This table shows the different style eras and primary features of ballparks throughout the twentieth century. The Classic Era and Retro Era ballparks are highlighted to show just some of the primary features of the Classic Era replicated by the Retro Era designs.

### Physical Changes: From Evolution to Copying Past Styles

The shifts in ballpark style have two major features: physical and rhetorical. Data on physical changes in the parks were collected from primary archival historical sources, such as architectural drawings or first-hand observation, as well as secondary historical

records that document these changes (e.g., Benson 1989; Lowry 1992; Gershman 1993; Gillette et al. 2009). Table 1 lists some of the primary features in each era that served as visible style markers, the rough time period that each style dominated the baseball landscape, and the number of ballparks built with each style. Note that the Retro Ballpark Era copies the Classic Ballpark Era features listed in the table. In the following sections, I will discuss how these patterns evolved and how the Retro Era not only copied Classic Era physical features, but did so even in the face of technological advances that made these features clearly outdated and unnecessary.

*Period 1 - Pre-Classic Era (Mid 1800s-1909)* Baseball was a game originally played in an open field by groups of amateurs. Initially, there was no obvious need for a specific area set apart as a baseball park. As long as someone had a ball, a bat, and could imagine four bases, any open field would do. Crowds often gathered, without paying admission, to watch behind the batter and along the baselines as these offered the best places to observe most of the action. As baseball grew in popularity, towards the end of the nineteenth century, makeshift wooden structures were built around the playing field with paid admission seating located behind home plate and along the base lines—an area known as the “grandstand.” Collecting admissions fees changed the game significantly as teams began to set aside playing areas as “home” parks, coordinating with local supporters who benefited from knowing when and where they could come and watch their local team (Leifer 1998; Schaefer 2011). Owners promoted their fields to attract additional fans by claiming to have the finest park in the land (Gershman 1993:30). Thus, from its inception, the ballpark was a major driver of both the organization’s image and the economic returns of the professional game, causing the owners to think hard about the styles and materials used to attract fans to the parks.

*Period 2 - The Classic Era (1909 to 1915)* Because many of these Pre-Classic Era ballparks were destroyed by fire, baseball organizations began to build similarly styled larger and more permanent structures, which came to be known as “Classic Era” (e.g., Gillette et al. 2009) or “Jewel Box” (e.g., Benson 1989; Gershman 1993) Ballparks. These styles captured benefits from this increased popularity primarily by augmenting the number of seats for which owners could charge admission through adding a second deck of grandstand seating. These ballparks used steel and brick not only as adornments or

reinforcements for the basic wooden structure, but as primary components of a much-enlarged structure and were closed off to almost every possible nonpaying spectator with the advent of new seats beyond the outfield fence called bleachers. Furthermore, teams attempted to maximize space by filling out the entire shape of an allotted city block (or two), giving each park a unique asymmetrical design.

*Period 3 – Stadium Era (1923-1962)* By 1915, all sixteen teams played in one of these Classic Era ballparks. Following the barrage of construction in the Classic Era, no new ballparks were built until 1923 when Yankee Stadium, the first ballpark to be called “Stadium” and one that is often mistakenly linked with the Classic Era (Gillette et al. 2009), was built in response to the amazing growth and fan support for the New York Yankees and their star Babe Ruth. While Yankee Stadium was primarily built for the baseball club, it had multiple purposes in mind and, as such, was discussed as the prototype for multipurpose stadiums (Serby 1930), setting the standard that would continue up until the Retro Era.<sup>3</sup> The Stadium Era ballparks, just like each ballpark style before them, were envisioned and built to maximize paid attendance primarily by increasing the size and number of grandstand decks and limiting non-paid attendance by locating near highways and in larger urban and sub-urban lots, eliminating access from nearby rooftops. In order to achieve these larger sizes, the exteriors of the ballparks were often made with pre-fabricated reinforced concrete, giving the facades a minimalist look and replacing the more ornate brick structures that dominated the Classic Era.

*Period 4 – The Super Stadium (1964-1973)* Between 1964 and 1973, 12 new ballparks, the so-called “Super Stadiums” (Gillette et al. 2009), appeared in rapid order with numerous similarities and were built with a more explicit dual-sport model in mind. The new stadium style was yet another update to the existing ballpark model, based on the same objective: maximize potential attendance. While continuing the pre-fabricated, minimalist look instituted in the Stadium Era, the Super Stadiums increased the number of seats by creating larger circular structures that included new sections of “Upper Deck Bleachers.” This new feature not only increased potential attendance to upwards of

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<sup>3</sup> Strictly speaking, multipurpose use was not new to Stadium Era ballparks. Most parks housed multiple categories of sports or entertainment. There are reports of Chicago owner Charlie Comiskey inviting the circus to perform on his field in order to ensure that the field was rarely sitting idly by as potential revenue opportunities presented themselves.

70,000 (from the 30,000 seat parks they replaced), it also ensured that no fan could watch the game without paying. By 1973, 20 of the 24 teams had built a new ballpark in the Stadium or Super Stadium Era. Only the Boston, Detroit, and two Chicago ballparks survived this period without change, although many local newspaper articles of the time called for their upgrade (Trumpbour 2006:163). Even Yankee Stadium was renovated to look more like the symmetrical “modern” Super Stadium structures.

Another important change, which had its roots in the desire to smooth out the playing surface and limit rain cancellations, was the introduction of an artificial playing surface. This surface, branded AstroTurf because it was first used in Houston’s Astrodome, was essentially a carpet painted green to look like grass. It was seen as progress for the game because it allowed for fewer unpredictable misplays caused by surface irregularities in the infield. Furthermore, in previous ballpark models, if the forecast called for rain, fans would stay away resulting in loss of revenue from lower ticket, merchandise, and food sales. With AstroTurf surfaces, fewer fans would be turned away because as long as the rain stopped at some point on the day the game was scheduled, the field could be dried and the game could go on.

*Period 4.5 Domes (1976 – 1991)* The ballpark construction boom took a pause after 1973 as only six new venues were built from 1976 to 1991. The major innovation that five of these six parks adopted was the use of a dome. This too can be linked to an important concern raised and addressed as far back as the Classic Era parks. While the Classic Era parks used new drainage and field-cover technology to address concerns over rain cancellation and the Super Stadiums used AstroTurf, domes were the innovation that completely guaranteed that the “show will go on”. Playing indoors would eliminate rain cancellation entirely. Building on this innovation, in 1989, the Toronto franchise built a stadium that incorporated a retractable roof, which would allow for coverage from rain as well as outdoor play on sunny days. Along with a retractable roof, fans enjoyed an incomparable amount of food options, including in-house restaurants, and they could even choose to stay overnight at the in-house stadium hotel. As part of a self-contained stadium ‘world’, these retractable-roof models were set to be the wave of the future as the 1990s approached.

*Period 5 – Retro Era (1992-2006)* Then something unusual happened. Despite the presence of these alternative dome models, this pattern of modernization was abruptly halted for a return to the past. From 1992 through 2006, 17 new ballparks were built and all of them were built disregarding the natural progression of twentieth century changes in ballpark design by turning whole-heartedly to a retro style meant to recall the Classic Era ballpark designs. Each sought to incorporate features in ways that copied the Classic Era styles (Loverro 1999).

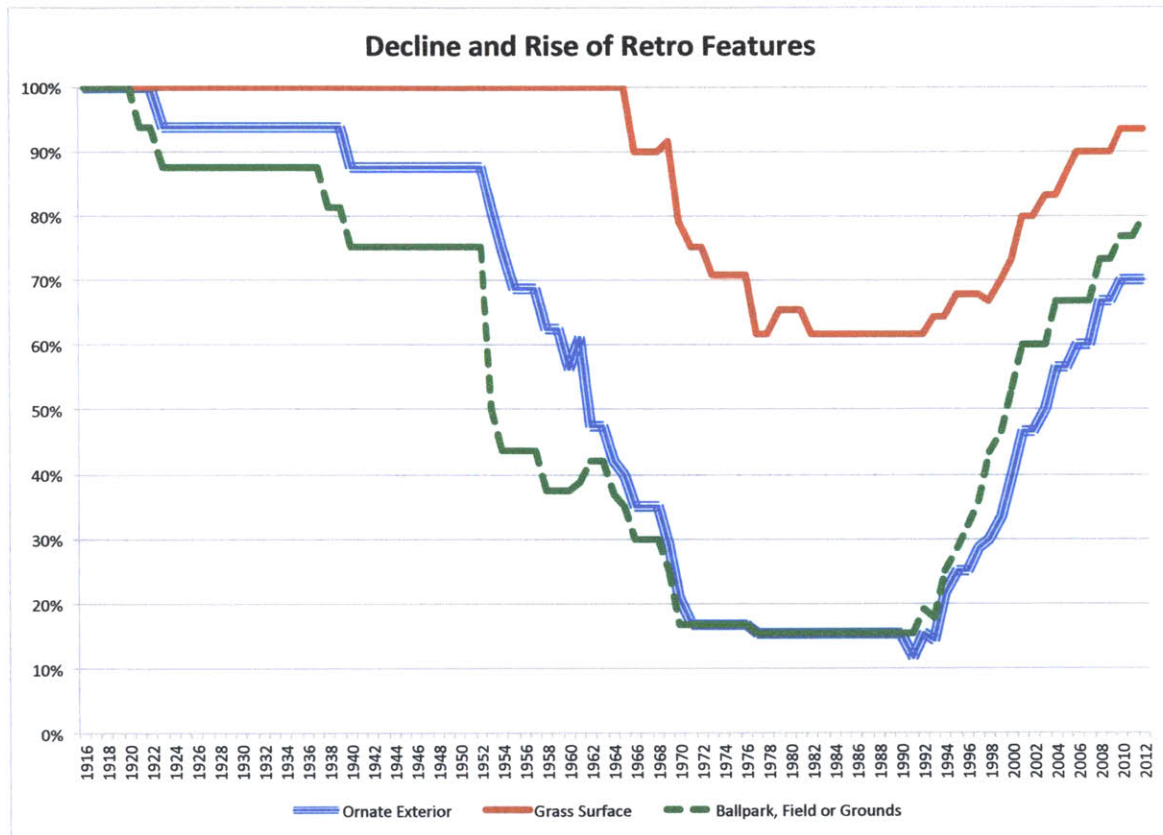


Figure 1 - A graph of the decline and sharp rise of three features used in the Retro Era to replicate Classic Era designs: 1) Ornate brick exteriors and entrances that replaced minimalist concrete styles, 2) Grass playing surfaces that were replaced by and eventually replaced carpeted artificial surfaces, and 3) the practice of naming the venue “Ballpark”, “Field”, or “Grounds” initially replaced by the Stadium moniker.

Figure 1 shows the gradual decline and drastic increase of three of these features used prominently to replicate the Classic Era: ornate brick entrances, grass surfaces, and



naming practices.<sup>4</sup> The determined attempt to replicate the Classic Era was captured by a baseball historian who noted that many of the features in these new ballparks were included solely to recreate some of the aspects that improvement on the Classic Era styles had left behind:

“At the classic parks, a swimming pool or a railroad track might sit next to a ballpark by coincidence; now, pools and train tracks were built deliberately to be part of the ballpark experience. The pitcher’s path, formerly a naturally worn erosion of turf between the pitcher’s mound and home plate, now became a landscaper’s carefully groomed creation.”  
(Gillette et al. 2009:401)

Completely reversing the trend of the previous 100 years of ballpark design, these replications were even accomplished at the expense of ballpark size as organizations that replaced Stadium or Super Stadium ballparks with Retro designs reduced seating capacity by 25%, on average.<sup>5</sup>

#### Justifications for Change: From Progress to Authenticity

Beyond these physical changes, justifications for ballpark styles over time show a similar pattern of valuing progress for a long stretch followed by an abrupt concern for authenticity in Retro Era styles. To analyze why these styles were valued and changed, I follow established practices in sociological research by content coding the justifications for replacement of the previous style presented in primary historical archive data (cf., Boltanski and Chiapello 1999; Boltanski and Thevenot 2006; Swidler 2003). I collected data on local coverage of ballpark openings and closings in various cities. Appendix 1-A shows the list of cities, newspapers and dates for which I collected these data. To analyze the themes and the shifts, I compare counts of content-coded articles across periods.<sup>6</sup> The results from the article counts are presented below in Figure 2, and were focused primarily on four cities—Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and St. Louis—that each built ballparks during the three major moments of collective style adoption across the

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<sup>4</sup> I will discuss the changes in naming practices in more detail in the below section on rhetorical shifts in ballpark justifications.

<sup>5</sup> This number is an average across the 14 Retro Ballparks built to replace Stadiums, not including Detroit’s Retro Ballpark, which was actually built to replace the Classic Era Tiger Stadium.

<sup>6</sup> Inter-rater reliability score for this coding was .88. A more complete discussion of the coding process and how this score was generated can be found in Appendix 1-D.

major leagues. For this analysis, I counted only those articles that were written up to a week before and up to a week after the new ballpark was built or the old ballpark was closed (N=221, see Appendix 1-D for a more detailed description of the process). I coded these articles by the types of justifications used in replacing the old ballpark or constructing the new one. Appendix 1-C shows the counts of these articles broken down by city, theme and period.

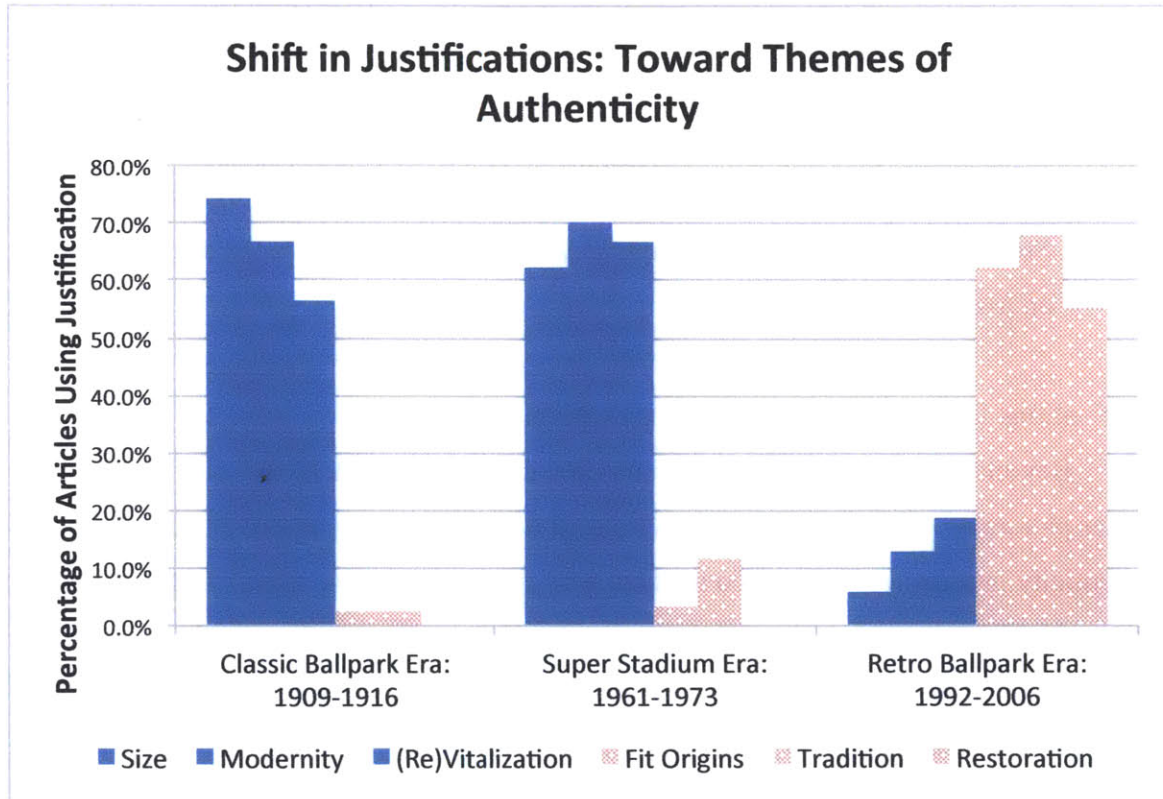


Figure 2 – Percentage of articles by period that use justifications for the styles based on the various criteria. The size, modernity, and revitalization themes dominate the first 90 years of the twentieth century. The Retro Era styles, however, are justified in terms of their propriety, and match with tradition, as well as their role in restoring, as opposed to revitalizing, the city. This is a clear shift in theme to show that these retro ballparks were valued for their traditional authenticity as opposed to their progress along established dimensions of value.

In coding these articles, I found justifications that fall into six major themes (as shown in the previous sections): size, modernity, city revitalization, propriety, tradition, and city restoration. Figure 2 shows a clear shift in justifications from valuing progress in earlier eras to focusing on authenticity in the Retro Era. While the themes of size, modernity, and city revitalization represent the progress emphasized in the first 90 years of the twentieth century, propriety, tradition, and restoring the city are themes that

dominate discussion of the Retro Era ballparks and emphasize authenticity as the reason for the appeal of these ballparks. I will give a brief discussion of each of these themes and report the count by percentages of articles across each of these periods.

The *increased size* of the new ballparks was by far the most prominent theme in local newspaper coverage of the pre-Retro Era ballparks. A typical article about the new ballpark was hyperbolic about the grandness of the stands or the size of crowds these new structures could accommodate.<sup>7</sup> The Classic and Super Stadium Eras highlight increases in size as a reason to value the ballpark in 74.4% and 62.1% of the articles, respectively, while in the Retro Era only 5.8% of the articles mention size in a comparative way as a reason to value the ballpark.

Discussion on modernity across these periods took the form of describing the technological advances that came along with the new ballpark. For example, in Cincinnati, one entire article focused solely on the new lighting for the field.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the strongest symbol of modernity was the use of non-grass artificial turf in lieu of natural grass playing surfaces in most Super Stadium ballparks. This surface would later become very controversial, but at its introduction, it was lauded as the next great advancement in modernizing the game<sup>9</sup> even by future Hall of Fame manager Sparky Anderson, who loved the surface so much that he predicted, “I think in 10 years you won’t have any dirt infields left in the big leagues.”<sup>10</sup> The Classic and Super Stadium Eras highlight modernity as a reason to value the ballpark in 66.7% and 70.1% of the articles from the respective eras, while in the Retro Era only 13.0% of the articles mention modernity in a comparative way as a reason to value the ballpark.

Primarily in the pre-Retro Era, some articles focused on justifying the new ballpark as a symbol of progress and improvement for the city itself. Philadelphia, the first to capitalize on this new form, played up the importance of this new ballpark in the city’s quest to be recognized as a forward-looking city:

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<sup>7</sup> e.g., Anon. (1909, April 13). Greatest Baseball Crowd at Shibe Park Sees Athletics Win Opening Game 8 -1. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, p. 1

<sup>8</sup> Klumpe, Jack. (June 30, 1970) ‘Day’ Light: Even inexpensive cameras can see in arena’s glow. *Cincinnati Post*, Stadium Supplement, p. 12-13

<sup>9</sup> e.g., West, Tommy. (1970, July 15) Corridor of Caution. *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, p. 13; Anon. (1970, July 15) Synthetic Top Hard to Beat. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Special Section on Three Rivers, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Quote attributed to Cincinnati Reds’ manager Sparky Anderson in Schottelkotte, Jim, (1970, June 14). Jewel to Queen’s Crown Breathtaking. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Supplement to the All-Star Game, p. 8

“Shibe Park is one of the greatest institutions in the bounds of Philadelphia. Too much praise cannot be given of it and that sterling bond of sportsmen who were sponsors of it ... In our days there were no Shibe Parks, but nothing is too good for baseball. It is the greatest sport of the Nation ... With the Opera House and Shibe Park, Philadelphia has two immense structures that can cause Philadelphians to rebuke any reference to the city being slow.”<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, echoing a sentiment from articles written nearly 60 years earlier about their Classic Era ballparks, articles about a city’s new Super Stadium emphasized how this new marvel symbolized a new face of the city.<sup>12</sup> The Classic and Super Stadium Eras highlighted the ballparks role in revitalizing or upgrading the city as a reason to value the ballpark in 56.4% and 66.7% of the articles, respectively, while in the Retro Era only 18.8% of the articles mention this theme as a reason to value the ballpark.

As Figure 2 shows, these three themes dominated earlier periods, but were replaced in numbers by themes that, instead, stressed a newfound concern for authenticity. While size was the most prominent theme in earlier eras, the most prominent theme in the Retro Era shifted to justifying the ballparks based on their propriety or suitability with the game, i.e., how things “should be” in baseball. This was done primarily in two ways: 1) discussing the ballpark’s name, and 2) describing the playing surface. First, the trend of calling ballparks “Stadiums” was clearly over in the Retro Era. From 1923 when New York’s new ballpark took on the name Yankee Stadium, until 1990, 19 baseball structures were built with the name Stadium. Of the six other ballparks built during this time period, five incorporated the term dome instead of stadium and only one outlier called itself a “park”: Candlestick Park built in 1960 by the San Francisco franchise. From 1991 to 2006, 18 ballparks were built and all of these ballparks have avoided the name stadium and in place used some variation of Field, Park, or Ballpark as part of the name. Even Tampa’s Florida Suncoast Dome, a domed ballpark built in 1990 and put into use in 1998 for the expansion Devil Rays, was renamed Tropicana Field. The purpose for avoiding the Stadium moniker was clear – despite past celebration of the

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<sup>11</sup> Anon, (1909, April 13). Praise and Admiration Heard on Every Hand. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, p. 10.

<sup>12</sup> e.g., Feck, Luke. (1970, December 27) Cincinnati Riverfront Stadium. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, p. 1-4.

name stadium, it was now defined that a “stadium” was not a proper place in which to play baseball.<sup>13</sup>

The second important feature that focused on propriety was the promotion of grass over AstroTurf. The Orioles’ new ballpark, built in 1992, was the first stadium designed with grass instead of AstroTurf in 24 years.<sup>14</sup> All 17 of the Retro Era ballparks followed suit. Perhaps more interesting than the choice of the surface, was the way AstroTurf was relentlessly derided and grass was promoted. By the 1990s, team doctors had begun to notice that the AstroTurf playing surface was not ideal for an athlete’s joints. It was essentially like playing on a slightly cushioned concrete surface. However, instead of discussing the turf as physically damaging, it was discussed as unnatural and improper:

“There is just something romantic about playing baseball on grass, the way it looks and smells, I firmly believe *that’s the way baseball is supposed to be played.*”<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, All-Star Shortstop Jimmy Rollins captured grass’s authentic appeal by saying, “It [the grass surface] just makes you feel like you’re really playing baseball.”<sup>16</sup>

Propriety, or articles citing a ballpark’s fit with “the way things should be” is presented as a reason to value the new ballpark in 2.6% and 3.4% of the articles in the Classic and Super Stadium Eras, respectively. On the other hand, in the Retro Era authors cited propriety in 62.3% of the articles about the new ballpark.

In contrast to the previous eras’ emphasis on modernity, traditionalism became an important theme in the Retro Era. Where the earlier periods focused on how opening day at the new ballpark would mean new and unique experiences, much of the focus in the Retro Era was on how these parks tied back to the history of baseball in the town.<sup>17</sup> The fact that the dominant theme in the rhetoric of this period focused on tradition over

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<sup>13</sup> Luksa, Frank. (1994, April 1) The Ballpark is Everything It was Built to Be. *Dallas Morning News*, p. 6b

<sup>14</sup> Chicago’s New Comiskey Park was also built with grass and opened in 1991, but it was designed in 1989. Oriole Park at Camden Yards was designed starting in 1987 even though it opened later.

<sup>15</sup> Quote attributed to Cincinnati Reds’ CEO John Allen in Erardi, John. (2002, October 17) Riverball. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, p. C1, emphasis added

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Steinberg, Don. (2004, April 3) Baseball Bonanza. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, p. A01

<sup>17</sup> e.g., Miklasz, Bernie. (2006, April 10) Take me out to the new ballpark, an urban paradise for Cardinals fans. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, p. A4

mentions of upgrades and modernity is particularly poignant when one considers that there were some considerable advances in these retro ballparks, including more varieties of food, wider, more comfortable seats, and larger scoreboards in the outfield. Tradition and history are used as justifications in 2.6% and 11.5% of the articles discussing the ballpark changes in the Classic and Super Stadium Eras, respectively. On the other hand, in the Retro Era authors cited tradition and history as a reason to value the ballpark change in 68.1% of the articles about the new ballpark.

As discussed above, the prior eras seemed most interested in replacing existing structures to (re-)vitalize the city and used justifications that emphasized the ballpark's ability to generate progress. This changed in the Retro Era, where coverage emphasized restoring past patterns seeking to recapture an idealized, historical urban landscape now lost to modernity (see Rosensweig 2005). The key was to build it in a way that linked it to an older version of the city (even in cases where the Retro Era ballpark was not built in an urban environment). Restoring the urban landscape is mentioned in *none* of the articles discussing the ballpark changes in the Classic and Super Stadium Eras, whereas, in the Retro Era authors cited the importance of the urban landscape and the features it creates in 55.1% of the articles about the new ballpark.

Just like the physical changes documented above, this comparison of article counts on justifications for ballpark styles shows a clear shift from valuing the ballparks for the sake of progress to valuing it for the sake of its match with a traditional ideal or its appeal as a symbol of authenticity. What, then, explains this apparent shift in taste?

### **Theory: Commitment Crises, Demand For Authenticity and Retro Fashion Change**

The theory derived to answer this question relies on three elements. First, I will build on Lieberman's (2000; Lieberman and Lynn 2003) work on endogenous fashion change in predicting what will be the next style, by revisiting a key assumption that does not hold in cases of retro fashion change—that the current popular form always carries legitimacy from which the next form can borrow. Second, Peterson's (1997) work on country music style changes shows that this assumption does not always hold and that the turn to the past will be valued as an expression of authenticity. However, this work is less clear about why authenticity is at issue, which leaves the mechanism and timing of such a

change unclear. Finally, to answer when and why the retro turn happens, I build on work about changes in perceptions of authenticity (Hahl and Zuckerman 2012; cf., Ridgeway 1981) to argue that the clear presence of ulterior motives causes an audience to doubt that the actors in the domain are committed and sincere in their performance. These *commitment crises*, or increased public perception that actors across the domain are more committed to themselves than the audience, cause a popular form to become re-defined as inauthentic to the domain, increasing demand for authentic cultural forms from the domain's past as expressions of re-commitment to the audience.

### Predicting What Will Emerge As the "Next Thing"

Fashion, or the process by which cultural expressions, such as practices, products, or styles rise and fall in popularity (Simmel 1957; Sapir 1931; Strang and Macy 2001), is driven by the dual endogenous forces of differentiation and emulation (Lieberson 2000; cf., Kaufman 2004). The popularity of a product, practice, or style leads to higher rates of adoption and emulation (Banerjee 1992; Salganik, Dodds, and Watts 2006), until some point when actors seeking to distinguish themselves from the masses will adopt something different, hoping to gain the esteem of audiences that value such distinction (Simmel 1957; Lieberson and Lynn 2003). Through this process, popular cultural expressions are replaced as other actors in the domain emulate the new products, practices, and styles, and a new popular cultural expression emerges (Abrahamson and Fairchild 1999; Simmel 1957; Zuckerman 2012).<sup>18</sup>

At first glance, understanding that the engine of fashion change is differentiation does not necessarily predict what form the newly popular cultural expression will take. There are various directions an actor can go to differentiate, but in order for the activity to rise in popularity others must also emulate the behavior. For it to be emulated, it must be the case that an audience values this activity over what it replaces, even if this value is more ceremonial than functional (Meyer and Rowan 1977). Accordingly, producers typically frame the previous cultural expression as inferior to the newly popular cultural

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<sup>18</sup> Strang and Macy (2001) discuss an alternative mechanism for fashion change, showing how the inability to know, *a priori*, whether a cultural form will work for actors leads to over-adoption and consequent discarding of these forms when they are deemed less useful than expected (see Zuckerman 2012). The key is that this process also leads to a similar puzzle when considering retro fashion change because in each case the popular cultural form is discarded for perceived inferiority.

expression (Abrahamson and Fairchild 1999; Blumer 1969; Strang and Macy 2001). Since the fashion apparatus ensures that the new activity is framed, at least implicitly, as being better than what came before it, it is puzzling that an older form, having been discarded for its inferiority, would ever re-emerge as the most popular form.

This puzzle is reinforced when we consider the implications of the endogenous fashion change perspective on *what* will emerge as the new popular cultural expression. As mentioned above, Lieberman (2000; Lieberman and Lynn 2003) argues that the changes in content of popular cultural expressions are governed by a mechanism he calls the *ratchet effect*, which has two components. First, because actors seek to distinguish themselves from the masses, they cannot copy cultural forms that were recently popular, since such fashions are now associated with those who are not “with” the latest fashion. This is not inconsistent, in principle, with retro fashion change, which entails re-adopting past styles that are no longer in use by the masses. In fact, if differentiation were the only mechanism, then the content of the next most popular form could be anything from a) returning to a discarded form (i.e. retro fashion), b) incorporating some new components into the current form, or c) introducing a completely new and heretofore unseen form.

The second component of the ratchet effect narrows the possible outcomes, but it also makes it difficult to account for the type of (retro) fashion change that motivates this paper. As mentioned above, in order for a cultural form to become popular, it must be emulated. The styles that are most likely to be emulated will be those already considered legitimate in the eyes of the audience (cf., Meyer and Rowan 1977). Cultural expressions that are completely new to a domain are more difficult for an audience to understand (cf., Zuckerman 1999; Hsu 2006) and are less likely to catch on as a result. Perhaps even more problematic, engaging in cultural expressions that are completely new might be interpreted as attempts by actors to distance themselves from the audience or serve another audience altogether (cf., Obukhova, Zuckerman, and Zhang 2011). This line of reasoning makes a completely new form, option c above, unlikely. This leaves only options a, returning to a long discarded form, or b, building on the current form, as likely alternatives. At this point Lieberman makes a key assumption that eliminates option a: the currently most popular cultural form will always be considered more legitimate, or more readily accepted as a representative form, than any other alternative (i.e., than recent or



long discarded forms). Based on this premise, Lieberman argues that new fashions will necessarily incorporate some components of the current or most recent dominant patterns. Thus, the ratchet effect implies that the change in content of the next most popular cultural expression in any period will be incremental, combining new components with some component of the current form, and “fairly persistent in one direction” (Lieberman 2000:95).

Lieberman’s approach can explain incremental and unidirectional change in popular cultural expressions (e.g., Richardson and Kroeber 1940; Robinson 1976), but the ratchet effect cannot account for the abrupt re-adoption of a historically popular, but previously discarded style. Besides the example of baseball venue design that is the focus of this paper, other studies of retro turns, or turns to past styles, include: the art world of the 1960s, which abruptly departed from realist trends back to turn-of-the-century styles like Art Nouveau (Guffey 2006); music genres like country (Peterson 1997) and indie or punk music styles (Reynolds 2011), which, at different times, saw the abrupt re-emergence of older forms in appearance and sound; or clothing styles where sub-groups of youth populations emulate discarded patterns of dress, like the Teddy Boy look in 1950s Britain (Guffey 2006) and the “Sixties” scene in early 21<sup>st</sup> century Germany (Jenß 2004).<sup>19</sup> Robinson (1958:128–9) observes a similar abrupt departure in women’s headdress styles in late eighteenth-century Europe, which saw increasingly larger and more unwieldy styles give way to simple combinations of curls and ribbon that celebrated “classical attitudes.” These types of fashion changes are unexplained by the ratchet effect model.

This empirical difficulty is the result of a key theoretical issue in the ratchet effect model. In arguing that the next popular cultural expression must incorporate components from the current popular form, Lieberman relies on the key assumption that the current popular form will always be considered legitimate. At first glance, this seems a reasonable assumption, since the current popular expression is something already valued by the audience and modifications to this style are more easily compared and framed as improvements. However, this assumption does not always hold. Whether the next popular

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<sup>19</sup> Note that this is not an attempt to create a comprehensive list. It is only a few examples of patterns of fashion change that see the abrupt re-popularization of discarded cultural forms.

cultural expression will build upon the current form or return to the past hinges on understanding the conditions under which this assumption about the current popular form's legitimacy does not hold.

To appreciate this point, Peterson's (1997) study of changing forms in the country music industry shows that a current popular form, although initially valued, can be re-defined as inauthentic. Peterson initially observes a pattern consistent with the ratchet effect as each new popular artist's style, i.e., change in sound and appearance, was rewarded for its distinctiveness, while still maintaining enough similarities with the most recent popular patterns to be accepted within the same category or genre of music. At some point, however, the audience, assisted by some cultural entrepreneurs in the media, re-defined the current popular form as inauthentic to the origins of the genre. In place of these now illegitimate forms, audiences made an abrupt return to the past by celebrating a new breed of, "hard-core neo-traditionalists." (Peterson 1997:229) This example provides two important insights. First, the current popular form can be re-defined as inauthentic even though it was initially accepted as a valued representation of the genre. Second, forms from the past can be repurposed as emblems of authenticity (see also Jenß 2004 on this point). This leads to two related questions: what caused the current form to be re-defined as inauthentic and what caused increased demand for authenticity?

Work on authenticity allows for the possibility that as an object's context changes it can be re-defined as more or less authentic in this way, but this work has yet to fully explicate the conditions under which this type of re-definition occurs or link it with retro fashion change. Work on authenticity highlights the fact that audiences define cultural expressions as authentic in two, potentially conflicting, ways: 1) being consistent with or "true to" the origins of a domain and 2) making distinctive progress towards an ultimate ideal (Turner 1976; see also Trilling 1972; Peterson 1997). Each of these tropes of authenticity can be seen in the case of baseball venue design. On the one hand, the "Super Stadium Era" style was initially valued for its authenticity as defined by making progress towards an ideal, as exemplified by this quote about how AstroTurf leads to a more "real" baseball experience:

“This is a *true ballpark*. You get a *true hop in the infield* and that means that a *hit is really a hit*.”<sup>20</sup>

However, this style was later re-defined as inauthentic to the origins or traditions of the domain because of these same modern features.<sup>21</sup> These examples highlight an idea well-established in the authenticity literature: authenticity is a function of the cultural expression’s context and not inherent to a cultural expression (Grazian 2005; Peterson 2005; Wherry 2006). As such, the moment in which the dominant style is re-defined as inauthentic is not a result of the product, practice, or style, but is the result of changes in audience perceptions in the domain. Therefore, in order to explain when the next expression will turn retro or when it will continue along its incremental course we must establish the conditions that lead to increased audience doubt about the authenticity of performance in a domain.

#### Commitment Crises and Increased Demand For the Past

In this section, I argue that increased demand for representations of the past will arise through the increased prominence of rewards, which creates doubt about the actors’ commitment to the domain. As discussed above, fashion cycles are driven by differentiation, which is rewarded by audiences when cultural expressions distinguish these actors from the masses. However, the very rewards that promote continual displays of distinction also threaten the actor’s perceived commitment to the audience and domain. Hahl and Zuckerman (2012) show, through a series of experiments, that the clear presence of ulterior, selfish motives for performance, like performing merely to gain rewards, induces (private) audience concern about the authenticity of an actor’s performance. This is consistent with Ridgeway’s (1981:335) and Willer’s (2009) argument that actors are attributed higher value from a group (audience) when they *credibly* show that their performance is motivated by concern for the group over external, or non-group centered, motivation such as self interest. When activities in the domain

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<sup>20</sup> Quote attributed to Cincinnati Reds’ player Jim Merritt in Schottelkotte, Jim, (1970, June 14). Jewel to Queen’s Crown Breathtaking. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Supplement to the All-Star Game, p. 8, emphasis added.

<sup>21</sup> e.g., Luksa, Frank. (1994, April 1) The Ballpark is Everything It was Built to Be. *Dallas Morning News*, p. 6b; this point is also suggested in works that document these changes (e.g., Loverro 1999; Richmond 1993; Gillette et al. 2009)

increase the prominence or size of the rewards that drive distinction and fashion change, a clear ulterior, selfish motive for performance emerges and an audience will doubt the actor's commitment to the domain. This puts the domain at risk of a *commitment crisis*, which I define as public concern that the actors are no longer committed to the audience and instead are committed, purely, to their own benefits.

This argument is consistent with findings in diverse lines of research that show returns to traditional styles accompanied with apparent concern for over-commercialization or overt reward seeking. For instance, Peterson discusses how country music's turn towards the "hard-core" style meant that performers turned away from decidedly more commercial venues like stadium's or larger theaters and instead the newly popular, traditional forms were to be found in more intimate and less commercial settings such as "bars, honky-tonks, and college area clubs." (1997:229) Similarly, from Carroll and Swaminathan's (2000) study of the beer market, organizations promoting micro-brews, a beer type that emphasizes an artisan tradition over mass-produced modernity, arose in response, at least partially, to concerns about the over-commercialization and increased scale of larger nation-wide brands.

Work on scandals helps to clarify the mechanisms involved. This research indicates that private concern about actors' deviance, which lack of commitment to a domain would entail, is a necessary but insufficient condition for re-defining a valued actor or activity as deviant. An audience's private doubts can turn into crisis in a domain when there is common knowledge of this concern such that each audience member knows that each audience member knows (and so on) that the actors are deviant (Adut 2005). Common knowledge about the increased prominence of rewards and actors' lack of commitment in the domain can be generated by activities such as public events (e.g., trials, strikes, etc) or promotion by cultural entrepreneurs (e.g., journalists or critics) (Adut 2008; Chwe 2003). When the increased prominence of rewards for performance is coupled with public displays in which actors are seen to choose rewards over performance, this evidence will turn private concern about lack of commitment into the necessary public concern that leads to re-definition.

When the domain faces a commitment crisis, the current popular cultural forms, as the prominent symbols in the domain during this commitment crisis, may become de-

legitimized, and retro fashion may be valued in its place. Since the de-legitimized, but current popular form no longer signals commitment to the domain, borrowing components from these forms will not provide the signal of legitimacy implicit in the operation of the ratchet effect. Furthermore, historically popular forms, while previously discarded as inferior, represent a time when motives for performance are remembered as being purer and concern for ulterior motives less predominant.<sup>22</sup> These perceptions infuse traditional and historical forms with a sense of authenticity and a symbol of commitment to the domain, as a genuine and credible representation of the original intentions of the domain. Figure 3 shows the resulting model of fashion change, based on the theory derived in this section. Predicting when fashion will change along established dimensions of value and when it will turn retro hinges on whether a commitment crisis takes place in the domain. The following section validates this model by comparing the MLB case with a counterfactual setting in the National Football League (NFL).

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<sup>22</sup> The perception that performance in these historical periods was not contaminated with these instrumental motives for gaining rewards need not match with well-documented evidence. Instead, these perceptions can be a function of a socially constructed collective memory that idealizes the past as a simpler time, less tainted with the instrumental motivations prevalent in the domain's present (cf., Fine 2003; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Osman 2011; Peterson 2005).

## Model For Increased Demand for Discarded Forms

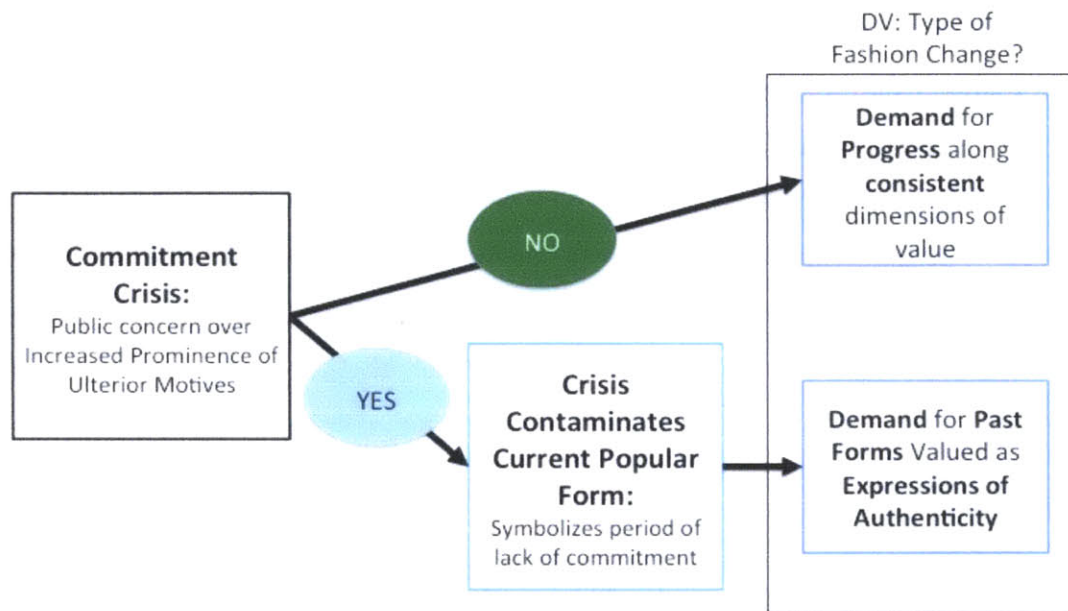


Figure 3 - Model for Increased Demand for Discarded Forms. If there is no commitment crisis, then fashion will change as prescribed by ratchet effect, along established dimensions of value. When the domain faces a commitment crisis, the current popular form will be re-defined as inauthentic, symbolic of commitment crisis period, and will lead to demand for past forms.

## **Empirical Validation of Commitment Crisis Mechanism**

This section will validate this model of fashion change and establish the commitment crisis mechanism. First, I will establish an important counterfactual case in the NFL and, in the process, cast doubt on the primary alternative argument presented in the literature: the zeitgeist argument. Next, I will describe how a commitment crisis arose in MLB, but not in the NFL, and use quantitative models to show that there was a clear shift in public outcry about ulterior motives in MLB, but not in the NFL, prior to the stadium design changes in the 1990s. Finally, I will address a key null hypothesis, i.e., that these changes in popular forms are arbitrary or unassociated with any proposed social process, by showing that the Super Stadium came to symbolize the commitment crisis in MLB.

### **I – Ruling out Zeitgeist and Establishing NFL as Counterfactual**

It is useful to first address the most prominent argument used across various lines of literature to explain this type of retro shift in taste, and fashion changes more generally, which is that these changes are the result of a shift in the *zeitgeist* reflecting a changed mood across a broader swath of society covering many domains. This argument has been proposed and accepted in various lines of research (e.g., Davis 1979; Stern 1992; S. Brown 2001; Boym 2001; Reynolds 2011) where retro changes are attributed to large patterns of social upheaval, which creates demand for cultural representations of a safer or more comfortable time. While there is evidence that *individuals* look to the past when faced with more chaotic moments in their lives (Wildschut et al. 2006; Routledge et al. 2008; Loveland, Smeesters, and Mandel 2010), extending this theory to a broader population leads to the key empirical implication that *all* domains that share a similar audience should turn retro at the same time (compare Guffey 2006; Reynolds 2011).

If this explanation is valid, then we should find evidence of a tendency to return to the dominant fashion of an earlier period, at the very least, in other cultural domains that utilize a similar cultural form (i.e., stadium design) and have the same or similar audience with MLB during this time period (i.e., popular American sports in the 1990s). Accordingly, I will compare the same type of data used to analyze the MLB shift while analyzing the counter-factual case of the National Football League (NFL). Just as MLB

was turning to retro styles for venue construction, the NFL had its own stadium construction boom in the 1990s. However, unlike the retro ballparks in MLB, the new playing venues constructed for NFL franchises were distinctly and intentionally an upgrade of the previous Super Stadium model.

Along with the fact that this divergence in style trends happened at the same time, a fact that itself casts doubt on the *zeitgeist* model, the NFL is a useful comparison case for at least three reasons. First, as a major American-specific outdoor sport, it is under similar economic pressure to build playing venues that fans can reward and appreciate with attendance and monetary support. Second, as an American-specific sport with a playing season largely different from that of baseball there is a clear overlap in audience between the two industries.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, various national surveys from the time in question (1980-1995), cite professional baseball and football as the only two sports for which the majority of Americans considered themselves fans, indicating that there is a clear crossover between the two fan bases (e.g., L. Harris 1984; Taylor 1993).

Finally, it is important to point out that the NFL, similar to MLB, had some older-style templates to consider when they collectively decided to go modern in style in the 1990s. The classic stadium version for football incorporates archways and columns similar to the Roman Coliseum. There were even some examples of these stadiums still in use, such as Soldier Field in Chicago,<sup>24</sup> the LA Coliseum and Rose Bowl in Southern California, and various college stadiums that still stood from their original construction in the first few decades of the twentieth century. This style could have been redone to allow for the important corporate boxes and larger seating capacity football demanded in the 1990s. These would have been akin to baseball's turn to the Classic Era ballparks as they were built in a time well before Super Stadiums became the norm.

Archival data about physical changes in NFL playing venue designs during the building boom of the 1990s and early 2000s shows a clear pattern of modernization.

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<sup>23</sup> To gain insight into my research setting, I interviewed 14 MLB and 3 NFL executives, sampled using a snowball method, over a 6-month period in 2012. When asked whether they ever considered their local or closest NFL (MLB) franchise a competitor for fans, *all* interviewees answered no and 11 of the 17 said that they considered the NFL (MLB) franchise a complementary product.

<sup>24</sup> It is worth noting that Soldier Field, a football only playing venue used by one of the NFL's oldest franchises, was renovated and modernized during this time, but MLB's Fenway Park and Wrigley Field, two similarly storied and aged venues, were used as templates by MLB's Retro Era designers.



Instead of turning to the classical-style columns and archways from football stadiums of the past, the NFL used modern materials like visible glass and metal, sharp angles, avant-garde dome arrangements and an overall futuristic look that made the now-supplanted Super Stadium structures look distinctly old-fashioned. As discussed earlier, from 1992 on, new MLB ballparks were built 25% smaller, on average, than the Super Stadiums they replaced. In contrast, the NFL's new stadiums were built 26% larger<sup>25</sup> than the Super Stadium models they replaced. Finally, of all new playing venues completed after 1991, no new MLB ballparks incorporated artificial turf playing surfaces, but 60% of all new NFL stadiums (15/25) were built with artificial turf installed.

Archival news coverage of justifications for these new NFL stadiums in cities that concurrently built a new MLB ballpark are important comparative data that controls for potential effects in differences caused by variance in the previous stadium, specific metropolitan conditions, and/or the local fan base. In addition, we are comparing the exact same element of the cultural domain—playing venues—that are potentially influenced by the same external forces (e.g., architectural trends and technological and material limits). I use the same data and data collection methods in this section as in the sections covering MLB.<sup>26</sup> I focused on three cities that shared venues with MLB teams—Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Cincinnati (N=53). All three of these cities built modern football and retro baseball venues on the previous site of the shared Super Stadium. I also included Chicago and Baltimore to provide further validation that these three cities were not unique in the way they justified their venues.

A comparison of the coverage of these new NFL stadiums with MLB's Retro ballparks built during the same time, shows that the NFL's popular style was clearly not valued on the basis of its traditional authenticity. While baseball coverage focused on the inauthenticity of the Super Stadium's turf and stark concrete exterior, the NFL continued to use the stadium upgrade justifications employed in the prior eras of the twentieth century. A majority (62%) of the articles used justifications for increased size based on

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<sup>25</sup> This number is an average across the 23 new NFL stadiums built to replace Super Stadium Era models, not including the Raider franchise's move from the LA Coliseum or Chicago's renovation of Soldier Field – both of which were built previous to the Super Stadium Era.

<sup>26</sup> See Appendix 1-D. A small sample of NFL articles were also included in the sub-sample used to generate the inter-rater reliability score.

the stadium's ability to help the team compete economically,<sup>27</sup> while far fewer (15%) of the articles discussed football-propriety or fit with football's origins as a reason for the change. While baseball media justified the new, Retro Era parks on the basis of traditionalism over function, only three articles (5.7%) discussed tradition as reasons for the change in the NFL, while 94% of the articles covering NFL stadiums used justifications of modernity for football often focusing on the new uses of technology like heated playing surfaces. Some even went so far as to claim that traditional was "boring":

"The Eagles' owner, Jeffrey Lurie, could have chosen any architectural style for his team's new \$512 million home, the most expensive to date in professional football. But Lurie...decided to appeal to the boutique-hotel set rather than the Union League crowd. *The result is a stadium... that forges far beyond the wood-paneled world of conservative Philadelphia and looks boldly into a dynamic future.* 'Traditional,' Lurie explained in an interview, cutting to the chase, '*completely bores us.*'"<sup>28</sup>

The physical changes and justifications used for these changes emphasized progress along established dimensions of value in the NFL in contrast to the MLB's retro turn and emphasis on authenticity. The fashion changes in venue design for the NFL and MLB went in different directions despite similar potential alternative models. This divergence in style cannot be explained by a broader shift in audience concern for authenticity in the time period, as this would, at least, affect these two industries, which share a similar base audience. Thus, this evidence casts doubt on the zeitgeist argument as an explanation for why MLB ballparks saw a retro fashion turn.

## II – Commitment crisis and the Advent and Fight Over of Free Agency

Now that I have established the NFL as a counterfactual, I will provide additional evidence for the claim that a commitment crisis was the reason for this return to discarded styles in MLB. This section's analysis will show that the increased prominence of economic activity in MLB, related mostly to the advent of free agency, between the Super Stadium Era and the Retro Era, from 1976-1995, caused a commitment crisis in the domain. The visibility of increasing rewards and the public battle about these rewards

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<sup>27</sup> e.g., Dvorchack, Bob. (2000, December 18) The House That Roared: Steelers and Fans Made the Place Come Alive. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Sports Section, p. C-1.

<sup>28</sup> Saffron, Inga. (2003, August 3) The Linc to Tomorrow. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, p. A01, emphasis added.

between the players and owners caused the fans to doubt that the performance on the field was for their benefit and instead fostered the public belief that the industry's actors were more committed to their own selfish ends. This doubt increased demand for authentic expression and resulted in the Retro Era. A brief history of labor relations in MLB will help explain why economic rewards became so conspicuous in the period preceding the Retro Era. This historical outline will be followed by evidence of public concern for ulterior, mercenary motives in MLB, but not in the NFL.

*The Reserve Clause and Free Agency in MLB.* From before the inception of the two leagues in Major League Baseball, in 1901, owners had taken steps to limit the player movement between clubs with a *reserve clause* (Flynn 2006). This clause, in the league's by-laws, stipulated that owners would not compete with each other over a player's services. At the end of each season, only the owner for the player's current team had the right to re-sign the player. The only way a player could move between teams was by owner consented trade. In this way, the reserve clause eliminated any kind of labor market for players, which greatly limited player salaries. In effect, the owners were not called upon to share the growing profits earned due to the game's rising popularity.

The reserve clause also helped to reinforce a myth that professional baseball players were not concerned with money and performed strictly for the love of the game. In endorsing this myth, the game's promoters created a situation in which players were actually lower-status "professionals, yet they are received and regarded as high amateurs" (Evers and Fullerton 1912:41).<sup>29</sup> During the first half of the twentieth century, players were often lauded for working for relatively low wages and for taking pay cuts. In reality, because of the reserve clause, players had no other option but to accept the offered contract if they wanted to continue to play in the major leagues. News coverage of the sport celebrated the myth of the unselfish player through articles that applauded players for their pure motives "untouched by the sickness of greed that is crippling the world."<sup>30</sup> Because the reserve clause was so misunderstood (Thornley 2007; Hertz 1970), the myth of the high-amateur ballplayer lived on.

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<sup>29</sup> As quoted in Murphy (2007:183).

<sup>30</sup> Cannon, Jimmy. (1946, October 16) Joe Garagiola Rides Clouds. *The Sporting News*, p. 14.

This all changed in the early 1970s. Through a combination of negotiation, a 1972 player strike, and a landmark courtroom battle, the reserve clause was made ineffective by the start of the 1976 season (Thornley 2007). The consequences were immediate. Players not only showed that they were interested in money, by accepting and at times demanding salary increases, they also showed that they were willing to leave a city and its fans behind in order to offer their services to the highest bidder. To pay for these salaries, aggressive new owners stepped in with valuable TV contracts in hand.

Coverage of free agency and related labor issues dominated the baseball industry over the next two decades. From 1876, when the first professional league began, until 1971 there were no league-wide labor stoppages of any kind. However, over the next 23 years (1972-1994) there were eight work stoppages, including three that caused cancellations of parts of the playing season and four that postponed the start of the regular season. These work stoppages culminated in 1994-95 when a players' strike cancelled the last 30% of the regular season and all of the playoffs, including the World Series, marking the first season without an ultimate championship in 90 years. The World Series had been staged during major wars, natural disasters, and economic depressions, but it could not overcome the extraordinary public bickering over who was getting the spoils of the increased economic success in the game. Fan response was clear as Schmidt and Berri (2002) estimate that the 1994-95 strike caused a 20% drop in attendance the following year, the largest drop in attendance in the league's history (ignoring disruptions in attendance caused by World War II).

All of these activities, the public bickering and work stoppages, the visibility of players' salary increases, and players' willingness to leave their original team for the highest bidder helped shatter the players' wholesome high-amateur image. Furthermore, these activities increased the attention placed on the economics of the game and highlighted the rewards the players and teams were getting at the fans' expense.

*Public Concern About Greed in MLB.* In order to show that this period's increased focus on economic rewards led to increased public denigration of the players and owners over their lack of commitment to the domain, I collected primary historical archive data at the industry (MLB) level to evaluate how the audience viewed MLB throughout the twentieth century. The aim of this analysis was to assess whether there

was an across-period increase in public concern for ulterior motives and more specifically greed or selfish motivation, resulting from the changes in baseball's economic model discussed above. By comparing periods within the same domain, my data strategy for this stage was similar to Jenkins and Perrow (1977) who compared perceptions of farm labor disputes in one period versus another by content coding and statistically analyzing national level newspaper articles covering farm worker movements from 1946-1972. In order to measure concern for ulterior motives, I performed a search for the words "greed" and various synonyms<sup>31</sup> in the *The Sporting News*, a national sports journal that began to cover baseball in 1886 and had searchable archives through 2003. The result was 948 articles that included some version of the word greed over those 118 years. I then coded these articles by date, sport, and whether the mention was positive or negative towards the sport. Below is a prototypical quote from the period preceding the Retro Era (1972-1994). Where fans were once recorded as lauding the player's pure motives, fan concern over sincere player commitment was clear:

"The antics of so-called baseball 'heroes' is sickening ... In their haste to cash in on good seasons with outrageous demands, players ... showed that their loyalty rests not with their teams, and certainly not to the lowly fans, but to themselves, their greed and their bank accounts. Why should the fans root for and loyally support their local teams when the stars themselves bail out and go elsewhere at the drop of a dollar? Loyalty works both ways."<sup>32</sup>

This was a quote from 1984 about baseball and the mention of greed was coded as negative (as opposed to saying that players were not greedy, a positive mention). This type of article, despite its intense level of negativity, was counted as one negative mention.

Figure 4 shows the measures of these article counts by year from 1886 until 2003. Note that there is a distinct increase, compared to earlier periods, in the amount of journalistic content devoted to "greed" in baseball after 1972, when the public fight over free agency began. This trend increases up through the mid 1990s, culminating around

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<sup>31</sup> Synonyms of note included the words selfish and avarice. All other synonyms were rarely mentioned.

<sup>32</sup> Quote attributed to fan in Rabin, Nathan. (1984, November 26) Where's the Loyalty. *The Sporting News*, p. 7

the major player strike in 1994 and begins to decline as the Retro Ballpark trend was taking off.

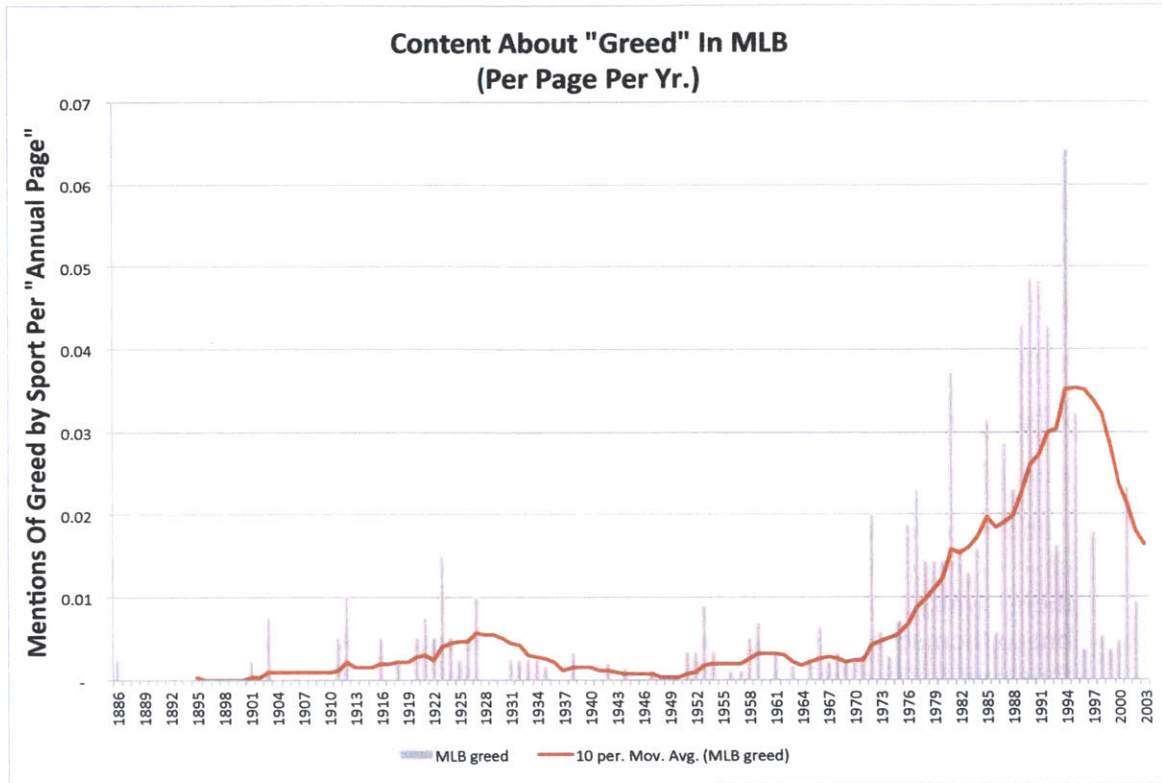


Figure 4 - Mentions of greed in articles related to baseball in *The Sporting News* from 1886 until 2003. Annual measure is the number of mentions of the word greed (or avarice or other synonyms) per page of content about baseball (excluding advertisements and number of pages covering other sports), per year.

Table 2 shows results from a series of negative binomial regressions predicting the count of articles that discuss greed and baseball by year. To observe the period effect, the primary explanatory variable is a dummy variable for the period starting in 1976 when free agency was introduced and the Super Stadium was the dominant model. Another dummy variable for each year there was a work stoppage is included to capture the effect related specifically to these events. There are three key control variables. Since both overall size of the journal and content specific to baseball varies over these 118 years, I include controls for the number of annual pages covering baseball and the percentage of the journal dedicated to the sport. I calculated this variable by compiling a random sample of five journals every five years, starting in 1942 when sports besides baseball began to be covered in the journal, and counting the number of pages dedicated to each sport.<sup>33</sup> Finally, I control for any increase or decrease in the propensity to discuss greed across society more generally by including annual counts of articles or op-eds in the New York Times that mention the word greed.

The number of greed counts (DV) for the models shown in the left-most columns of Table 2 include a large number of zeros early on in MLB's existence and, as such, these models are zero-inflated negative binomial models. In order to eliminate the effect of these zeros, I predict the zeroes independently by the number of years the league has been in existence. The idea is that the earlier in the league's existence the role of a journalist would be to promote the league, to ensure the game's existence and a sports journalist's employment. This would lead to a lower likelihood of mentioning anything negative.

In the left-most column of Table 2, the period effect shows a more than four-fold increase in the incidence of greed after the advent of free agency (after 1975) when compared to the 90 years of coverage prior to free agency. The right-most column is a more focused model. It eliminates the early period and only compares the 20 years prior to free agency (1956-1975) and the first 20 years of free agency (1976-1995). Once again, net of a more general propensity to discuss greed (*NY Times* greed counts) the period after 1976 sees a three-fold increase in the incidence of articles negatively

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<sup>33</sup> Because of the potential for measurement error in this variable, I performed robustness checks, which show no change in significance or direction, including varying the percentage of coverage in the sport from 0% to 100% of the journal's overall coverage.

mentioning greed in MLB coverage. This analysis supports the claim that there is a clear increase in concern for greed leading up to the Retro Era, while the Super Stadium was the dominant form.

<i>Zero-Inflated Negative Binomial Regression</i> <i>Predicting number of articles mentioning greed by year</i>		Incident Rates (standard errors)		<b>1976-1995 vs. 1956-1975 Baseball (MLB)</b>
		<b>Baseball (MLB)</b>		
		Period Effect	Net of work stoppage	Period Effect
Period Effect (Post 1975)		4.322 *** (1.638)	4.532 *** (1.354)	3.063 *** (0.958)
Work Stoppage			2.336 *** (0.515)	1.681 ** (0.383)
NY Times Greed		0.998 (0.001)	0.998 (0.001)	1.004 *** (0.001)
# of pages of coverage		0.999 (0.001)	0.999 (0.001)	1.001 (0.002)
% coverage by sport		0.206 ** (0.145)	0.339 * (0.193)	0.069 (0.259)
<i>Inflate (logit predict 0)</i>				
Life of Pro League		-0.124 ** (0.063)	-0.119 * (0.069)	Neg. Binomial (not zero inflated)
cons		4.052 * (2.304)	3.993 (2.435)	
N		118	118	40
Non Zero Obs		72	72	
Zer Obs		46	46	
LR Chi2		157.66	187.98	141.77
(df)		(4)	(5)	(5)

\*\*\*p<.01, \*\*p<.05, \*p<.10, two-tailed tests

Table 2 - Negative binomial regression predicting the number of articles mentioning greed by year in the Sporting News. Coefficients are incidence rate ratios and standard errors are reported in parentheses below the coefficients. The result is a more than four-fold increase in the incidence of greed after the advent of free agency when compared to the 90 years of coverage prior to free agency. The right-most column eliminates this early period and only compares the 20 years prior to free agency and the first 20 years of free agency. Once again, net of a more general propensity to discuss greed (NY Times greed counts) the period after 1976 sees a three-fold increase in the incidence of articles negatively mentioning greed and the MLB. This analysis supports the claim that there is a clear and positive period effect in the amount of greed.



*Comparing NFL and MLB on Concern About Greed.* Based on the sharp divergence in stadium styles, if the driver behind retro fashion is a commitment crisis created by increased concern over ulterior motives for performance, then there should be *no increase* in suspicion about authentic motivation for performance in the NFL relative to prior periods. There are reasons to believe that the NFL is less likely to experience an increase in concern based on cultural differences created by diverging models of organization between the two sports (Leifer 1998; Yost 2006). In fact, national level surveys conducted at the time indicate that concern for greed was larger in baseball than in football (L. Harris 1986). In the same span of time that the MLB had eight work stoppages, the NFL had three (1974, 1982, 1987) and saw few games cancelled (only seven per team total over two strikes). Furthermore, factors like the existence of salary caps or limits constituted by the NFL, revenue-sharing across teams, and a much more limited form of “free agency” have reduced the NFL player’s ability to increase salary as dramatically as MLB players (Leifer 1998; Yost 2006). In fact, the NFL has rules in place (a so-called “franchise tag”) that essentially eliminate any chance that a star player could leave his teams through free agency. At the same time, while baseball player contracts are guaranteed, an NFL player, who is much more at risk of being injured, could essentially be cut at any time and not get paid. Finally, professional football was originally presented as a distinctly mercenary game, in contrast to the, at the time, more popular amateur collegiate football. This means that the NFL would not see the same shift that baseball saw during this same time period in which fans realized that MLB players were not actually the pure amateurs that the fans dreamed them to be.

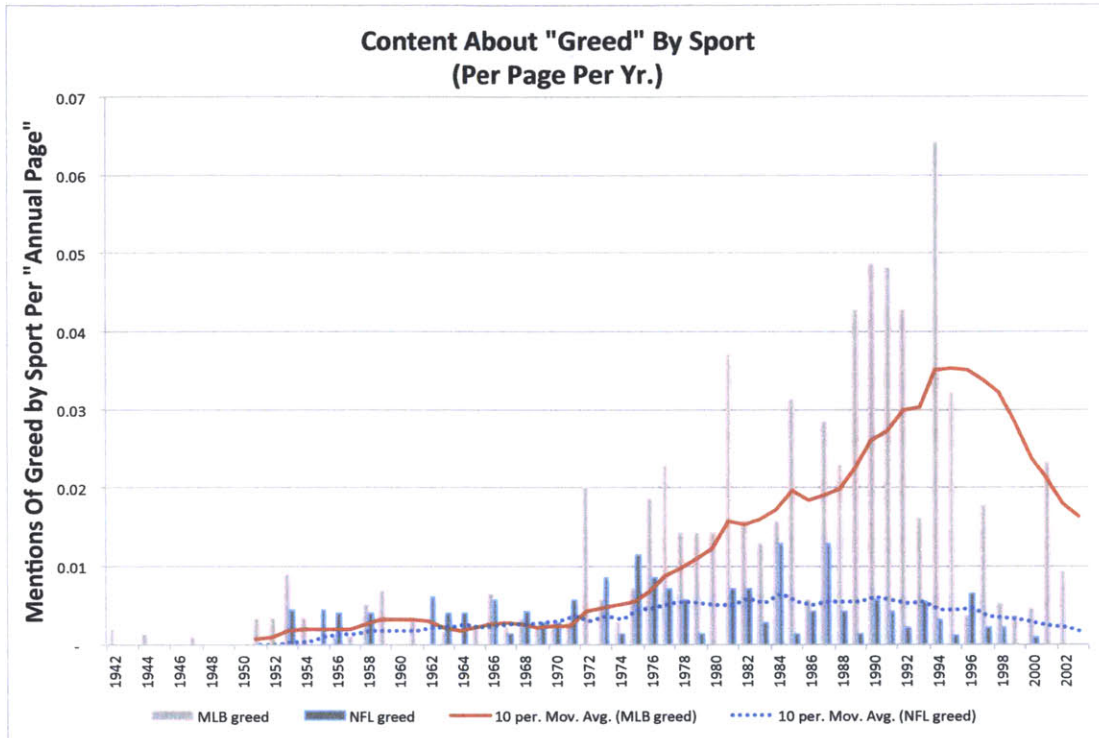


Figure 5 - Comparison of articles covering the greed of baseball (red) with articles covering the greed of NFL since *The Sporting News* began covering the NFL in 1942. The comparable trend lines show that while concern for greed in MLB spiked in the period starting in the mid 1970s, concern for greed in the NFL changed very little.

Zero-Inflated Negative Binomial Regression			Incident Rates (standard errors)			
Predicting number of articles mentioning greed by year	Football (NFL) 1942-2003		Baseball (MLB) 1942-2003		1976-1995 vs. 1956-1975	
	Period Effect	Net of work stoppage	Period Effect	Net of work stoppage	Baseball (MLB)	Football (NFL)
Period Effect (Post 1975)	1.690 (0.682)	1.637 (0.687)	4.703 *** (1.85)	4.828 *** (1.503)	3.063 *** (0.958)	1.098 (0.473)
Work Stoppage		1.399 (0.475)		2.273 *** (0.512)	1.681 ** (0.383)	1.418 (0.484)
NY Times Greed	0.999 (0.002)	0.999 (0.002)	0.998 (0.002)	0.998 (0.002)	1.004 *** (0.001)	1.002 (0.002)
# of pages of coverage	1.000 (0.001)	1.000 (0.002)	1.002 (0.001)	1.002 (0.001)	1.001 (0.002)	1.004 ** (0.002)
% coverage by sport	0.000 * (0.000)	0.000 (0.001)	0.010 *** (0.014)	0.044 (0.089)	0.069 (0.259)	0.000 ** (0.000)
Inflate (logit predict 0)					Neg. Binomial (not zero inflated)	
Life of Pro League	-0.276 ** (0.112)	-0.282 *** (0.110)	-0.113 (0.086)	-0.131 (0.088)		
cons	10.370 *** (3.719)	10.599 *** (3.616)	-2.700 (21.508)	7.882 (9.102)		
N	62	62	62	62	40	40
Non Zero Obs	39	39	51	51		
Zer Obs	23	23	11	11		
LR Chi2 (df)	7.34 (4)	9.27 (5)	81.14 (4)	77.57 (5)	141.77 (5)	13.09 (5)

\*\*\*p<.01, \*\*p<.05, \*p<.10, two-tailed tests

Table 3 - Negative binomial regression predicting the number of articles mentioning greed by year in coverage of professional football (NFL) in the *Sporting News*. These are the same regressions performed on the data related to MLB from the same source (see table 2 for description). When compared with the similar regressions on baseball, these results support the claim made in this paper that an increase in greed and concern for authenticity is not the result of a shifting *zeitgeist*, but is the result of industry specific behaviors that increase concern for ulterior motives.

To be clear, the usefulness of the NFL as a counterfactual case is not based on comparing mentions of greed across the sports, but rather on whether there was a commitment crisis in football leading up to the 1990s building boom and popularity of modern styles. Figure 5 shows that at the same time audiences' concern for greed in MLB saw a significant shift upwards, the concern for greed in the NFL remained relatively unchanged over the period of coverage in the national sports journal *The Sporting News*. Table 3 shows the same negative binomial regressions used above in the context of baseball, this time applied to coverage of professional football, predicting the number of articles covering football that negatively mention greed. Although there was a significant period effect for baseball on the amount of concern for greed, Table 3 shows that there was *no significant period effect* on the concern for greed in football even when only comparing periods in which *The Sporting News* covered both football and baseball (1942-2003).

These results validate the idea that a key difference between the two industries prior to their respective building booms in the 1990s was an increase in public concern

for greed in MLB. In other words, MLB faced a commitment crisis prior to their 1990s building boom, while the NFL did not. This supports the claim made in this paper that retro fashion will arise in domains with a marked increase in concern for ulterior motives of performance. Another way of understanding the counterfactual research design employed in this paper is to view the NFL as the control condition, where no commitment crisis occurred, and the MLB as a treatment condition where the “treatment” was the presence of a commitment crisis, or public audience concern that the actors were no longer committed to the domain. The resulting outcomes in style design across the two domains are consistent with predictions articulated in the model (Figure 3): the MLB (treatment) turned back to the past while the NFL (control) continued on its established course. While it is acknowledged that these two domains are not perfect substitutes for each other, the key cultural differences, discussed above, contributed to this lack of increase in public concern about the player’s commitment to the game in the NFL, and help explain why baseball, in contrast, saw such a marked increase.

### III – Linking Greed with the Stadium Style

To this point, I have established that a commitment crisis occurred prior to MLB’s retro turn and that the Retro Era forms were valued as expressions of authenticity. In order to validate the model described by the theory above, it must also be the case that the Super Stadium style, as the dominant form in the domain, became de-legitimized through association with this commitment crisis. A potential null hypothesis related to this step in the argument is that these types of retro fashion changes might just be arbitrary (e.g., Robinson 1958). If this is the case, then the justifications of the retro change observed in MLB are only a reflection of the selected style and do not reflect any deeper demand by the audience. Ideally, to test this step in the model one would need to observe what would have happened if the ballparks maintained association with the Super Stadium form even after the “treatment” of the commitment crisis. Reaction to a deviant case, Chicago’s “New Comiskey Park”—a Super Stadium style ballpark built one year prior to the Retro Era boom (Gillette et al. 2009)—can serve as this counterfactual case. The commitment crisis argument implies that a Super Stadium ballpark would be disliked in the early 1990s, as concern for greed was at its height, specifically because it

represented the era of greed and not because it is not original or distinct enough, as implied by the ratchet effect model.

In 1991, after a battle in which their owners publicly threatened to leave Chicago for Florida, the Chicago White Sox replaced their Classic Era Comiskey Park with a new version, New Comiskey, replicating the Super Stadium style.<sup>34</sup> To understand what justifications fans used to de-legitimize or react negatively about this form, I collected articles written about New Comiskey one week prior and one week after the opening of the new ballpark.<sup>35</sup> My main source of articles was the *Chicago Tribune*, but I also conducted a search over the same time period for three national newspapers *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, and *The Washington Post*. This resulted in 18 articles. From these articles, I coded reports of fan discussion of the new ballpark. I was particularly interested in what justifications fans would use in saying that they *disliked* the new ballpark. The local sports journalists may have been wary of negative reporting for fear of offending an ownership that was prepared to leave only a few years prior (Trumpbour 2006). 7 of the 18 articles actually make a negative comment about the ballpark. This is a much higher ratio when compared to the 221 coded articles previously discussed (of which only three made any negative statement about the new ballpark). I coded the complaints made by fans in these negative articles about New Comiskey Park. Below are two examples of the type of quotes found in these articles:

“And it seemed a *bittersweet vindication for some downhome fans who have been complaining that the team has become too uppity with the new ball park*, outfitting it with 90 skyboxes and suites and ticket attendants in tuxedos. Ralph Edders, a steel worker, and Henry Ruiz, a truck mechanic, left the new park in disgust after the third inning with the score already 6-0, but not before taking a last look at old Comiskey. *‘If they were losing in the old park, I’d stay,’ Mr. Edders said. ‘These rich people are just taking over. You see all these people in suits. You see these limousines. You see these suites. I’m just a regular steelworker. We’re out of here.’*”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> For coverage discussing its features as a Super Stadium and not a Retro-style ballpark, see Goldberg, Paul. (1990 September 30) Comiskey: No Field of Dreams, But Real Park in Gritty City. *New York Times*, Section 8 p. 3

<sup>35</sup> Coding was done in the same process described in Appendix 1-D. Inter-rater reliability scores for this portion of the articles was .89 (8/9 MTurk workers coded these articles in the same way).

<sup>36</sup> Wilkerson, Isabel. (1991, April 19) A 16-0 Day to Forget at New Comiskey Park. *The New York Times*, Sec. A p. 1, emphasis added

“*Comiskey Park is built for the rich. We have season tickets in the upper deck, and there's not an inch to spare between seats. The best thing is it's still on the south side,*’ said Jim Rigney of suburban Morton Grove.”<sup>37</sup>

Out of 7 total articles in which fans were reported to have made negative comments about New Comiskey Park, 6 of them (like the ones above) cited concerns about greed, money or class while just 3 articles mentioned concerns related to functionality or location.

New Comiskey was not the only Super Stadium ballpark that was treated this way. As reported earlier, there was a clear shift in justifying the Retro Era ballpark style in terms of authenticity, implying that the previous style (Super Stadium) lacked authenticity. By zeroing in on only those articles that discussed closing the old ballpark (N=33), a subset of the data analyzed and discussed previously in this paper, one can clearly observe that the shift towards authenticity in the Retro Era was a) related to the Super Stadium ballparks’ perceived lack of authenticity, and b) primarily driven by concern that the Super Stadium style was a symbol for this era of greed. Of the 33 articles about closing a ballpark in my data, 5 were from the Classic Era, 14 were from the Super Stadium Era, and 14 were from the Retro Era. 100%, or 19/19, of the articles in the Classic and Super Stadium Eras talked about closing the old ballpark because it was outdated and needed upgrading. In contrast, only 2 of the 14 articles from the Retro Era mention this same reason. Conversely, all 14 of the Retro Era articles regarded the to-be-closed Super Stadium as inauthentic in some way. Of these 14 articles 11 discussed how the Super Stadium needed to be replaced because it represented an era of baseball related to greed or selfish and impure motives.<sup>38</sup> The epigraphical quote used at the front of this paper is an example of this kind of sentiment, expressed in an article from 2003 about the demolition of Philadelphia’s Super Stadium known as “The Vet”:

“The Vet is a cold, clammy, concrete circle, long overdue for a dynamite doomsday... For me, the Vet has become *a symbol of what has gone wrong with baseball in the last 33 years*. Since it was built, *salaries have skyrocketed...and owners have seemed more interested in making money*

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<sup>37</sup> Antonen, Mel and Jerry Bonkowski. (1991, April 19) Players Sing Praises of New Comiskey. *USA Today*, Page 4C, emphasis added

<sup>38</sup> 8 of the 14 articles also mention that the Super Stadium is not authentic because of its role as an NFL venue as well.

*than in winning pennants. I know I'm not the only one who has been turned off by all this.*"<sup>39</sup>

The fact that the Retro Era ballparks were valued as expressions of authenticity provided some preliminary evidence in support of the idea that the Super Stadium had become symbolic of the concern over inauthentic performance and greed prevalent in this era. The major negative reaction to Chicago's New Comiskey Park, a Super Stadium ballpark built in the Retro Era, was that it was symbolic of greed. Furthermore, that the Super Stadium closings were celebrated as closure on an era of greed supports the claim that the Super Stadium style had become symbolic of the commitment crisis.

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

The foregoing analyses support the claim that baseball's return to the Classic Era ballpark style, or the Retro Era, arose in response to a commitment crisis in the domain of professional baseball – the widespread perception that the players were more committed to the size of their own wallets than to performing for their audience. While the burgeoning spoils of the professional game were hidden (or less obvious) for many years by baseball's anti-competitive labor practices, the advent of free agency sparked an onslaught of public battles between owners and players trying to capture more of the economic pie. These battles were epitomized by labor stoppages where players and executives chose not to perform for the fans in the name of winning their ongoing economic battle. Among devoted and even casual fans, a sense of betrayal arose from the perceived mismatch between the engagement of the fans and the commitment of the players and owners. As a result, the fans (audience) grew to doubt the owners' and players' (actors) commitment to the game and, hence, to the audience itself.

Concern about the ulterior, mercenary motive for performance across the domain became so prevalent during the era in which the Super Stadium style dominated ballpark design that this style, as a prominent "front-stage" (Goffman 1959) image of the team and game, became symbolically linked with this concern for greed. Even though the Super Stadium style had been the natural outgrowth of nearly a century of fashion processes in

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<sup>39</sup> Fisher, Dennis. (2003, September 30) Vet Reminds Us of What is Wrong with Baseball. *Lancaster New Era*, p. C-1, emphasis added

the industry, and initially accepted as authentic for that reason, it was derided and could no longer lend legitimacy to styles that would have incorporated its components into the next iteration of ballpark style. Instead, fans rewarded displays of tradition, which came in the form of Retro Era ballparks that physically and rhetorically hearkened back to the Classic Era, a time that pre-dated this concern for greed. These historically popular cultural forms were welcomed as displays of commitment to the domain and its audience – reminders of traditional settings, values, and performance.

#### Alternative Arguments: Commitment, Category Confusion or Competition?

*Inadequacy of Category Confusion Mechanism.* The use of the NFL as a counterfactual case helped to rule out the zeitgeist argument and it can also be interpreted as casting doubt on a second alternative mechanism that might drive increased demand for authenticity. Peterson (1997) argued that country music returned to the traditional or “hard core” because the most recent iterations of style had caused country music to look too much like the mainstream, popular music genre. The more general argument would be that if an established domain, genre, or category evolves in such a way that it shares too many features with a similar, but distinct domain, genre, or category, the audience will demand a return to traditional forms as a way to create a distinct product. However, Peterson’s own work does not clearly identify this as the mechanism. Consider that as country music forms moved along the “soft-shell” trajectory, each new iteration of popular country music form looked increasingly like the mainstream form. Even if category confusion were the mechanism that led an audience to re-define a cultural form as inauthentic, it is unclear, from his study, why the currently popular form was re-defined as inauthentic when it was (i.e., as opposed to any previously popular iteration).

If we had considered only the MLB case, we would not be able to rule out this alternative, but the comparison to the NFL is instructive in not only ruling out this alternative, but in validating the mechanism proposed in this paper. One justification for discarding the Super Stadium style discussed in archival news coverage analyzed in this paper was the desire for a baseball-only playing venue. By 1992, seven of the 26 MLB teams shared a Super Stadium-style playing venue with an NFL franchise. One could argue that the return to the Classic Era style in baseball happened because of confusion



about the venue (i.e., was it built for baseball or football?), which would increase desire to construct a unique image for the league.<sup>40</sup> The category confusion mechanism should also affect NFL teams who were similarly leaving these shared venues for their own stadiums. In fact, the NFL was motivated to construct a football-only playing venue, but universally built their venues in more modern styles. If the mechanism really is one of category confusion, as both leagues sought a sport-specific venue, then the NFL would also turn to its past and replicate styles from its own still-standing classic era templates (e.g., Soldier Field, the LA Coliseum, etc.). Given that both leagues were seeking their own venues, the divergence in style between the two leagues and the different emphases on authenticity support the idea that category confusion did not lead to MLB's increased demand for authenticity and eventual retro form. This counterfactual research design is critical in ruling out key alternative arguments and pointing towards the commitment mechanism proposed in the paper.

*Inadequacy (and Complementarity) of Competitive Response Mechanism.* A final alternative argument would consider the role that competition between the NFL and MLB plays in creating the observed divergence in playing venue styles. During the commitment crisis period in MLB, the NFL gained in relative popularity to the point where it took over as the most popular sport in America by the mid 1980s (L. Harris 1984), breaking MLB's long stranglehold on the top position. Some might suggest that the MLB, losing in the popularity race, made a competitive decision to differentiate and turn to the past in ways that the NFL could not copy. However, as discussed above in the section on NFL stadiums, the MLB did not have a monopoly on historical images and styles. Furthermore, there is no discussion of concern over football's popularity in any of the archival data analyzed about justifications for the retro ballpark designs in MLB.<sup>41</sup> Conversely, as shown above, the discussion about why to replace MLB's Super Stadium style focused on returning to a better time in the game, in particular a time when

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<sup>40</sup> This argument should hold for only those MLB organizations that shared their venue with NFL teams. Therefore, it does not explain why retro-style ballparks in MLB were adopted universally across the league, independent of whether a NFL franchise shared parking lot space or a local fan base with a MLB franchise. Nor does it explain why the Super Stadium style was derided specifically for symbolically representing this era of greed.

<sup>41</sup> Executives interviewed (see footnote 23) never mentioned competitive concern for the other sport as a reason to choose a certain style and, when asked, said that local MLB styles were not a point of discussion when deciding on their new stadium's style.

problems related to dramatic salary increases, spontaneous player relocations and perceived player greed were not present. At the same time, the NFL was looking forward, unhampered by the commitment crisis that dominated MLB. In fact, the fashion literature shows that poor performance relative to comparables is a reason actors adopt forward-looking styles (Abrahamson and Fairchild 1999; Abrahamson and Eisenman 2008). Thus, there is no evidence to support the idea that the retro fashion change in MLB ballpark design was a direct competitive response to the NFL's increase in popularity.

While not a sufficient condition for retro fashion change, it is worth considering how these competitive dynamics enhanced the proposed mechanism and indirectly contributed to the resulting divergence in styles between the NFL and MLB. In particular, the MLB's relative loss in popularity could have, more indirectly, worked to enhance the commitment crisis mechanism and value of the images from the past in two ways. First, the fact that MLB lost ground to the NFL during their commitment crisis, further engendered an image of the past as the golden era of baseball. Second, this loss of relative popularity could have also served to underline the severity of the problems in the game, i.e., the commitment crisis, which led to demand for the past by boosting the urgency of the public outcry over greed in the game. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to say that the competitive dynamics between the sports indirectly led to the divergence in style outcomes, a mechanism that would be consistent with and complementary to the proposed commitment crisis mechanism.

#### Generalizability of the Commitment Crisis Mechanism

The analysis in this paper has shown that the retro turn in MLB ballpark design was motivated by a commitment crisis. Although this is a single case study that considers a counterfactual case to gain analytical traction, the mechanisms behind the commitment crisis are potentially quite general. In particular, the theory presented in this paper is consistent with findings that show that the prominence of ulterior motives can affect selection or survival of individuals, firms, or brands in various settings. Concern about commitment to rewards over group goals has been shown to lead to lower attributions of worth by group members (Hahl and Zuckerman 2012; R. Willer 2009; Ridgeway 1981). The image that a large-scale beer producer is more concerned with economies of scale

and profits than producing a product for a particularly knowledgeable (i.e., connoisseurs) subset of customers, is one reason why micro-brews, a product valued for its traditional nature, gained traction in the beer market (Carroll and Swaminathan 2000). Similarly, firms struggle when they are seen to value profits over externally promoted pro-social goals (Beverland 2005; Turco 2012). The theory presented in this paper extends these ideas to fashion cycles by articulating how a commitment crisis can affect not just individual actors, but an entire domain. I argue that the critical conditions necessary for a commitment crisis driven retro turn in a domain are a) increasing rewards for actors in the domain and b) common knowledge events that highlight these rewards as ulterior motives across the domain.

It seems reasonable to suppose that the first condition, increasing rewards from an audience, is a very general condition implicit in all fashion changes. Whether it is economic rewards, as shown in the case of MLB above, or social rewards like attention or status, audiences increasingly reward actors that can distinguish themselves from the masses. For instance, in the case of 18<sup>th</sup> century women's headwear, Robinson (1958:128–9) discusses how headdresses had become so large that seats had to be removed from carriages so that women could sit on the floor and fit their headdresses inside the carriage. The next iteration of these styles celebrated “classic attitudes” with smaller and simpler arrangements of ribbon and lace. The rewards in this context were not economic, but social, because larger headdresses increased attention. Differentiation leads to, and is perhaps driven by, increasing rewards related to improvement along dimensions of value, and, thus, is implicit in markets where fashion cycles govern adoption and selection processes.

The second condition necessary for a commitment crisis, common-knowledge events that turn private concern into public outcry about a domain as a whole, is certainly less prevalent than increasing rewards, but possible in almost any setting. In the MLB case, there was a large buildup of these activities, in the form of strikes, lockouts, and enormous press coverage, before the most popular styles in playing venues actually changed. This is, in part, due to the fact that there were very few ballparks being built between 1976, the onset of free agency, and 1994 when the concern reached its height. Once organizations saw how much fans appreciated the first movers toward retro, like

Baltimore, Texas, and Cleveland, it was an easy decision to emulate these styles with their own versions of the retro model (Loverro 1999; Richmond 1993). The public events in the sphere of baseball's labor relations enhanced the level of concern and eliminated the pluralistic ignorance that dominates in a world in which most negative beliefs about publicly valued actors and activities are only privately held (Centola, R. Willer, and Macy 2005). My argument is consistent with work on crises and scandals, which posit that the cultural entrepreneurs serve a necessary, but insufficient role for a change in perception from publicly lauded to publicly denigrated (compare E. Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994; Adut 2008). The key difference lies in attributing these crises to entire domains instead of individual actors. Once again, successful cultural entrepreneurs might be less common than increasing rewards in a domain, but the possibility that cultural entrepreneurs can play a role is a quite general condition across many, if not all, cultural domains.

The key mechanism behind this retro turn is the change in public perception that causes audiences to believe that actors are less committed to the audience than they were in the past. In the case of MLB this came in the form of actors publicly choosing selfish motives over commitment to the audience. Along with publicly choosing selfish interest over audience concerns, audiences might just as likely be concerned about commitment when they perceive that actors are committed to a second audience, inconsistent with the original audience (Phillips et al. 2013). In order to further demonstrate the generalizability of this mechanism, more work could be done to consider the effect of publicly perceived dual commitment to competing audiences on changes in the most popular and representative cultural expressions. If this theory holds, more generally, audiences will seek actors who represent images from the past as expressions of commitment to a domain gone astray. This mechanism would produce an outcome consistent with the category-confusion type of argument proposed by Peterson (1997), but the key difference lies in whether the demand is driven by audience confusion or audience concern for betrayal.

## Conclusions

This paper contributes to scholarship about the relationship between the differing pressures of authenticity and trends in popular culture. While the term “authentic” has become colloquially related to traditional cultural expressions, authentic cultural expression has long been recognized as a tension-laden activity, fulfilled at times by displaying progress towards the perfect ideal of a domain and at other times by displays that emphasize faithfulness to the foundations of a traditional template (Turner 1976; Trilling 1972; cf., Carroll and Wheaton 2009). The shift in demand for different playing surfaces (from grass to AstroTurf and back to grass) in ballparks discussed in this paper exemplifies the different ways in which authenticity can be used to justify a product or style. When AstroTurf began to replace the more traditional grass surface, this synthetic surface, and the Super Stadium style in which it was a fixture, was lauded as an advancement that would be instrumental in realizing an ultimate ideal in playing the game. Later, this same surface was called “unnatural”<sup>42</sup> and grass was extolled as a representation of the traditional, the surface on which baseball “should be played.”

While previous work acknowledges the dialectic relationship between shifting definitions of authenticity and changes in what an audience values, (Peterson 1997; Negro, Hannan, and Rao 2011), this work is not clear on when an audience will accept, or even demand, a return to the traditional sort of authenticity over the definition that highlights progress towards an ultimate ideal. In fact, the diffuse manner in which the term authenticity is invoked means it can be, and often is, applied to almost any cultural expression. My argument and analysis help to clarify this puzzle by showing that an audience will demand traditional displays when there is a commitment crisis in the domain, as audiences perceive that the actors are performing merely to obtain rewards instead of out of sincere commitment to perform for this focal audience. In the absence of this crisis, the ratchet effect proposed by Lieberman (2000) should hold as calls for authenticity emphasize the unique, distinctive, and perfected style.

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<sup>42</sup> e.g., Blum, Ronald. (2009, September 24) Artificial turf goes way of the dead ball. *Bleacher Report*. Retrieved August 11, 2012 (<http://bleacherreport.com/articles/260763-artificial-turf-goes-way-of-the-dead-ball>).

Finally, this work supports recent theories that suggest that cultural change in a domain can be explained primarily by forces internal or specific to the domain (Kaufman 2004; Lieberman 2000). It is a further demonstration that changing popularity in practices, products or styles are primarily the result of forces internal to any domain, rather than a changing *zeitgeist* or even producer whims, either of which could act independently of recent patterns or trends in a cultural domain. This paper shows that, along with concern for differentiation, shifts in audience perceptions of actors' commitment to the domain will influence whether the content of popular cultural forms will support continued differentiation along these established patterns, as the ratchet effect suggests, or whether they will shift back to historically popular, but previously-discarded styles. This is not to say that external factors have no influence, as recent work indicates that rare events, such as China's Cultural Revolution, can modify the influence of these endogenous forces (Obukhova et al. 2011). Actors are rewarded for successfully performing in ways that meet demand for differentiation and emulation. However, increased prominence of these rewards for performance, be they financial or otherwise, can cause an audience to doubt the actors' sincere motivation to serve the audience, and eventually lead to increased demand for more traditional forms as expressions of authentic commitment to a domain gone astray.

*Chapter 2*

**Denigration of Heroes:  
Why High-Status Actors are Typically Considered  
Inconsiderate and Inauthentic<sup>43</sup>**

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<sup>43</sup> Ezra Zuckerman is co-author of this essay. The authors would like to thank, Shelley Correll, Julia DiBenigno, Sara Jordan-Bloch, Cecilia Ridgeway, Catherine Turco, and participants in the Economic Sociology Working Group at MIT for their comments and discussion on earlier drafts. The usual disclaimer applies.

### Abstract

We develop theory and report on experiments that address the tendency for high-status actors to be deemed—even by high-status actors themselves—less considerate and more inauthentic than low-status actors. We argue that this tendency is consistent with the idea that status is accorded on the basis of an actor’s capability and commitment, and that it stems from two features of the typical status attainment process: (a) the incentive structure, through which the benefits of a high-status position encourage actors to feign capability and commitment, leading to suspicions of inauthenticity; and (b) the interaction process, in which the high-status actor asserts its superiority and another’s inferiority, leading to suspicions of inconsiderateness. Three experimental studies are designed to validate this theory. Based on the “minimal group” paradigm, our studies ask subjects to evaluate two arbitrary social categories based on members’ performance in a joint cognitive task. These studies also help rule out an alternative hypothesis, which explains that the negative correlation between status and morality derives from a psychological need to view the world as just—leading evaluators to compensate those who lack status with higher attributions on other dimensions of worth. Implications are drawn regarding high-status insecurity and the sources of instability in status hierarchies.



*“Oh! You know what I hate? Two-face. I can’t stand that. You’re a fake, you’re a fake. Why be a fake?”*  
-Richard Wrong, car mechanic, commenting on those in higher-status occupations (Lamont 2000:108)

*“When you get the almighty dollar, you hate to lose it. So you step on somebody’s feet, or somebody’s hand, or somebody’s head to make sure you stay on top, which is not the greatest thing in the world.”*  
-Dennis Young, firefighter, commenting on those in higher-status occupations (Lamont 2000:109)

## **Introduction**

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

But especially when considered from this perspective, an under-recognized theme in recent sociological and psychological research seems puzzling: the tendency for actors throughout the status hierarchy to question the moral character of high-status actors. Consider the epigraphical quotations drawn from Lamont’s (2000) interviews. The sentiments expressed by her interviewees capture two related suspicions about the moral character of high-status (categories of) actors, which are broadly represented in past research: (a) the charge that they are more inauthentic or insincere (Lamont 2000; cf. Halle 1996; Fine 2003; Zukin 2008) and (b) the charge that they are colder or more

inconsiderate towards others (Fiske et al. 2002; Judd et al. 2005; Ridgeway and Correll 2006). Why do we seem to denigrate the very heroes that are publicly celebrated?

This question demands sociological attention for two reasons. First, since high-status actors often earn status precisely because of their “pro-social” behavior (R. Willer 2009), and that their commitment to a given community is a key basis for the conferral of status (Ridgeway 1982; Phillips et al. 2013), it seems a contradiction on its face for high-status actors to be denigrated for low moral character. Second, it is particularly puzzling that high-status actors themselves seem to regard their own category of actors as less considerate and sincere. That is, it is not particularly surprising to hear such sentiment from low-status actors, such as were interviewed by Lamont (2000). Such sentiment could be dismissed as based on “sour grapes” by the losers in status competition, and it may be particularly unsurprising to hear such sentiment expressed privately and with respect to dimensions of value that are highly subjective. But it is not just low-status actors who regard high-status actors as inconsiderate and inauthentic. Experimental research (see Ridgeway and Correll 2006; Kervyn, Yzerbyt, and Judd 2010) demonstrates that subjects who are experimentally manipulated to see themselves as a member of the more competent, higher status of two social categories tend to regard *their own social category* as lacking in “considerateness” or warmth toward others. In addition, a wide range of research suggests that high-status actors often consume cultural goods or affiliate with cultural practices associated with low-status groups, and that the appeal of such displays seems to stem from the perception that it is more authentic (e.g., Halle 1996; Bryson 1996; Grazian 2005; Grounds 2001; Martin 1998). Evidence that *high-status* actors suspect that they are inferior on these dimensions suggests that there may be something systematic in the tendency for high-status actors to be considered morally suspect. And note in this regard that the denigration of high-status actors occurs specifically with respect to moral issues, but does not seem to occur on other dimensions of worth (such as “healthfulness”, see Kervyn et al. 2010).

What is the underlying mechanism that governs the denigration of high-status actors; and if such attributions are systematic, why are high-status actors sometimes celebrated for their moral virtues? Resolving this puzzle promises to shed light on the social foundations of status hierarchies; and it may also illuminate the dynamics of

scandals (see Adut 2008), whereby publics seem surprisingly quick to switch from public celebration to public vilification of erstwhile high-status actors.

In this paper, we develop a theory to address this question, and we present three experimental studies to test our theory against a prominent alternative in the psychological literature. In short, while status hierarchies are publicly justified based on objective standards of performance benefitting a given audience, and while the achievement of high status is incompatible with common knowledge that the actor has clearly and willfully violated widely-shared norms, we argue that the manner in which status is typically attained raises concerns about the high-status actor's moral character. In particular, two features inherent to the status attainment process, namely the *incentive structure* and the *interaction process*, lead to questions about a high-status actor's moral character such that, *in the default situation, the high-status actor is (privately) suspected of having gained status in a morally questionable way*. The first issue pertains to the *incentive structure* typically associated with status attainment in that the rewards for status attainment create an incentive to feign one's capabilities or commitments. This implies that unless there is objective evidence of the actor's capabilities or there is some reason to think that the high-status actor was not motivated by the benefits accorded him from a high-status position, he will be suspected of being insincere or inauthentic. The second issue pertains to the *interaction process* by which status is typically achieved. In particular, status is typically achieved via patterns of deference that effectively require that one assert one's superiority and others' inferiority and such actions are *prima facie* evidence that one is selfish and inconsiderate. This implies that unless the high-status actor has engaged in credible "pro-social" efforts to assert the worth of the deferring party, he will be suspected of being "cold" or inconsiderate.

In the next two sections, we present our argument more fully and test it through a series of experiments that build on the main experiment in Ridgeway and Correll (2006). These experiments, which induce identification with two arbitrary social types based on the "minimal group" paradigm, serve both to validate our argument and to cast doubt on the idea that the tendency to denigrate high-status actors derives from a psychological motivation to "compensate" low-status actors by regarding them as more virtuous (Judd et al. 2005; Yzerbyt, Kervyn, and Judd 2008). Beyond the theoretical difficulties with this

version of the “just world” theory, our experiments provide two main results that cast doubt upon it and support our “suspicious attainment” theory: (a) the mere introduction of information about socially-validated deference patterns leads observers to attribute lower authenticity and considerateness to higher-status social categories without attributing greater authenticity and considerateness to the lower-status category; and (b) there is no evidence of a tendency to compensate low-status categories when observers see credible evidence that status was attained in a “pro-social” or morally virtuous way (cf., R. Willer 2009). Another important aspect of our experiments is that they are designed to isolate the specific aspects of attainment-mode that determine whether doubts about an actor’s warmth/considerateness will be salient or whether the actor’s sincerity/authenticity will be salient.

## **Theory**

### **A Puzzling Tendency**

In trying to explain why high-status actors are so often denigrated, it is useful to first put aside one straightforward mechanism—i.e., in-group bias. Insofar as they identify with their social category, members of a given social category are generally motivated to regard their own category as superior to other categories. As a result, it is unsurprising that low-status actors tend to “denigrate” high-status actors—i.e., by asserting that they are more considerate or authentic than high-status actors. Yet, if in-group bias were the only factor involved in social evaluation, consensual status hierarchies would never emerge. In fact, a wide range of research shows that members of low-status categories tend to recognize their low status (e.g., Treiman 1977; Chase 1980; Jost and Burgess 2000; Lee and Fiske 2006; Anderson et al. 2012), and Ridgeway and Correll (2006) show that such acceptance can emerge so long as patterns of deference receive consistent social validation. Thus low-status actors apparently yield to a social reality that is unfavorable to them because this social reality is undeniable. Yet it is harder to explain why this general acceptance of the status hierarchy might be accompanied by general acceptance of an inversion of the status hierarchy when it comes to such moral dimensions of worth as considerateness and authenticity. The key question is why high-status actors seem to share the view that they are more inconsiderate (e.g., Kervyn et al. 2010; cf., Halle 1996;

Grounds 2001)(Grounds 2001; cf., Halle 1996; e.g., Kervyn et al. 2010)(e.g., Ridgeway and Correll 2006; Kervyn et al. 2010) and more inauthentic (e.g., Halle 1996; Bryson 1996) than low-status actors, especially when such attributions seem quite *deniable*, in that they are not explicitly stated or enacted in deference patterns (see especially Study 2 below).

One possible explanation for this self-denigration on the part of high-status actors has been suggested in the recent psychology literature. In particular, Judd and colleagues (2005; Yzerbyt et al. 2008) argue that attributions of lower morality to high-status actors stem from a psychological motivation to see the world as just. This motivation is said to cause people to compensate the losers in status competition by attributing greater moral worth to them. Thus the individual achieves a sense of justice by making up for an imbalance on one dimension of worth (status) with a corresponding imbalance on another dimension of worth (morality).

Yet there are at least three interlocking difficulties with this explanation. The first difficulty is that the very literature from which this argument derives, “System Justification Theory” (Jost and Banaji 1994; Kay, Jimenez, and Jost 2002; cf. Lerner 1980), also suggests that individuals can satisfy their need for justice with a very different psychological process that would not involve compensating low-status actors with greater morality. This alternative logic, described as being related to the Protestant work ethic (see Kay and Jost 2003), is particularly noteworthy because it helps explain why low-status actors tend to accept their low status. In particular, this theory suggests that individuals satisfy their need to believe that the world is just by understanding patterns of social inequality as reflecting deserved rewards on the parts of the actors (Kay and Jost 2003:824). Thus given the fact that the motivation to see the world as just can be met by regarding the status hierarchy as fair, it is unclear why high-status actors would instead compensate low-status actors by attributing greater morality to them.

Moreover, such compensation seems to assume a level of altruism that is rarely seen. It is far-fetched to believe that people will denigrate their own category just to balance out another category’s lower status when there is *no evidence to support such denigration*. By denigrating one’s own category, the high-status actor is placing value on another group at the expense of his own, implicating all members of the category. While

individuals may have a psychological motivation to see the world as just, and this might even cause them to want to compensate losers in status competition with victories on other dimensions of worth, it is unclear why this need would systematically overwhelm more selfish motives (cf., Simpson and R. Willer 2008).

Finally, and perhaps key to our puzzle, a problem with the “just world” thesis is that it cannot explain why high-status actors are sometimes celebrated for their morality. If it is the case that there is a psychological motivation to compensate low-status actors with higher attributions of considerateness and authenticity, then we should always see this negative relationship between status and these two dimensions. But as discussed in the introduction, it is clear that there are actors who gain high status precisely because of their moral virtue (R. Willer 2009). Moral heroes such as Mother Teresa or Raoul Wallenberg cannot be explained by a theory that assumes a psychological need to balance status hierarchies with moral hierarchies.

By contrast, such cases are well understood by sociological theory, which recognizes that audiences confer status on the basis of some combination of actors’ capabilities and their commitment to use those capabilities on behalf of the audience (see e.g., Ridgeway 1981; Correll and Benard 2006; Phillips et al. 2013). This logic has been extended to suggest that actors who engage in selfless “pro-social” activities will be attributed more status relative to those who work only on their own behalf (R. Willer 2009)(Merton 1968; Podolny 2005; Azoulay, Stuart, and Wang 2012; Correll et al. 2012)(Merton 1968; Podolny 2005a; Azoulay, Stuart, and Wang 2012; Correll et al. 2012)(Azoulay, Stuart, and Wang 2012; Correll et al. 2012; Merton 1968; Podolny 2005). Conversely, scandals leading to the loss of status are likely to erupt where it is revealed that a high-status actor has falsified his performance (e.g., doping scandals in sports, scientific fraud) or has betrayed the audience by serving himself (e.g., embezzlement) or rival groups (e.g., treason; Adut 2008; Phillips et al. 2013). But while such sociological theory can explain cases where status is a function of morality, it has offered no explanation for the apparent contradiction that high-status actors are often denigrated as immoral.

#### The Proposed Theory: The Suspiciousness of Status Attainment

We propose a theory to resolve this conundrum. Our theory addresses this question by focusing not on psychological needs or motivations but on features of the status attainment process that are recognized by social observers. In particular, while we agree with past sociological research that status is conferred upon those who demonstrate the highest competence at serving a group or community and the greatest commitment to it, we argue that it is crucial to recognize that such demonstrations generally occur in ambiguous contexts. Moreover, two basic features of these contexts have a systematic tendency to raise suspicions about the high-status actor's authenticity and considerateness. We contend that the general implication of these two features is that unless observers are provided with credible evidence to overcome their default interpretations of the status attainment process, they will attribute less authenticity and more inconsiderateness to the high-status actors.

The first and most general of these two features pertains to the *incentive structure* typically associated with status attainment. In short, the achievement of high status tends to confer significant benefits on the high-status actor, including greater access to resources and greater returns for a given input (Merton 1968; Podolny 2005; Azoulay et al. 2012). Accordingly, even though audiences will confer higher status on those who are capable and committed to that audience rather than themselves, the benefits of high status constitute *an incentive to misrepresent one's true capability and/or commitments*. This raises questions regarding high-status actors (but not low-status actors): How does an audience know that a high-performing actor's performance was not faked in some way? How does an audience know that such a performer's apparent commitment to serving the audience is not a temporary matter of expedience, due to the benefits associated with recognition as high-status? The first question is often quite difficult to resolve (e.g., doping in sports) but may be resolved if there is objective evidence as to the high-status actor's performance. The second question is even more challenging because actors' intentions with respect to an audience involve unobservable mental states, which can change quickly. Insofar as it promises benefits to the holder, the very attainment of status fosters suspicion regarding the high-status actor's ulterior motives in exhibiting commitment to the audience. This line of reasoning leads to the following general proposition:

*Proposition A: Unless there is objective evidence of the actor's capabilities or credible evidence that the high-status actor was not motivated by the benefits of a high-status position, high-status actors will be suspected of being more insincere or inauthentic than lower-status actors.*

The second feature of status attainment processes that raises questions about high-status actors' moral character pertains to the *interaction process* by which status is typically (but not always) achieved—i.e., deference. In its most basic form, deference hierarchies emerge from one actor (*i*)'s public claims of superiority over another actor (*j*), and reciprocal acknowledgement by *j* of his relative inferiority. While such interaction patterns are basic to the emergence of a clearly recognized status hierarchy, they are also morally problematic in that actor *i* must effectively take action that causes a loss of face or respectability on the part of *j* (Goffman 1955; Ho 1976). In short, actor *i* may achieve high status in this way but he also acts in a way that necessarily involves a lack of care for someone else's dignity. We argue that it is this assertion of superiority and others' inferiority that lies at the heart of the accusation that the high-status actor is “cold” (e.g., Fiske et al. 2002; Fiske, Cuddy, and Glick 2007) or “inconsiderate” (Ridgeway and Correll 2006). Because the deferring party must belittle himself by acknowledging his inferiority, one actor (the target of deference) benefits from the loss of dignity or worth of another. And this is even more problematic if the target of deference takes active steps to assert the inferiority of the second party. In short, the very process by which status hierarchies emerge from deference patterns places the onus on the high-status actor to reassert the dignity of the low-status actor, else he be suspected of being cold and inconsiderate.

*Proposition B: Unless the high-status actor engages in credible “pro-social” efforts to affirm the worth of the low-status actor, the high-status actor will be suspected of being colder and more inconsiderate than lower-status actors.*

### Empirical Validation

Our empirical strategy for validating the proposed “suspicious attainment” theory pivots on three related differences that distinguish it from the “just world” theory



discussed above. The first difference lies in the way each theory understand the negative association between an actor's moral character and status. In the "just world" theory this association is driven by attributions of *high morality to low-status actors* (as a means of compensating them for their loss in status competition). By contrast, we argue that this association is primarily driven by the attribution of *low morality to high-status actors* (because they are presumed to have ulterior motives and/or to have robbed others of their dignity). To distinguish these two perspectives, consider two social situations—one where members of socially recognized social categories enact a clear status hierarchy via their patterns of deference and one where no status hierarchy is enacted. The "just world" theory implies that in the former situation, the observers will be motivated to compensate the *low-status actor* with higher attributions of morality. On the other hand, an important implication of our "suspicious attainment" argument is that the presence of a status hierarchy implies a decrease in perceived considerateness and authenticity for the *high-status actor*, but does not imply any gains for the low-status actor. The objective of the second study below is thus geared to testing the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 1: All things equal, the presence of a status hierarchy will cause observers to attribute reduced levels of considerateness and authenticity to higher- status actors, without attributing higher levels of considerateness or authenticity to low-status actors.*

The second and third differences between the two approaches pertain to two issues on which the "just world" theory is silent: (a) why high-status actors are sometimes *not* regarded as morally deficient and may even gain status because of their moral virtue; and (b) why the dimensions by which high-status actors are denigrated are specifically those of considerateness/warmth and sincerity/authenticity. By contrast, the propositions developed above both cover the default conditions under which high-status actors are suspected as being morally compromised and, thereby, specific the forms of evidence that override these default conditions. In particular, we discussed three forms of such evidence above: (a) evidence that the superior performance of the high-status actor was not faked and thus represents an objective capability difference; (b) evidence that the structure of the situation does not incentivize actors to fake their performance; and (c)

evidence that the process of interaction was such that the high-status actor took credible, “pro-social” steps to preserve the dignity of the low-status actor.

The third experiment discussed in the next section is designed to test implications (b) and (c). We focus on these implications for two reasons. First, implication (a) is difficult to test given the challenge of coming up with an objective definition of performance. In addition, implications (b) and (c) interrelate in a way that affords the possibility of showing how the key mechanisms are triggered when social situations are altered in subtle ways. In particular, these two implications are potentially relevant in situations where actors engage in pro-social behavior. All things equal, it seems reasonable to expect that actors will gain status when they engage in actions that provide benefits to others rather than promoting their self-interest, narrowly construed (R. Willer 2009).<sup>44</sup> In particular, when a high-status actor takes steps to preserve the dignity of the deferring party (e.g., by signaling that he regards the deferring party as his equal in capability and commitment), the high-status actor acknowledges the current status difference, but he does it in a way that potentially resolves concerns over the inconsiderate nature of status attainment.

However, only when such pro-social behavior is considered authentic or sincere will it be effective in overriding the default attribution of coldness to high-status actors. If instead it is regarded as fake, it should *both* resurrect suspicions of inconsiderateness and make salient the question of the high-status actor’s authenticity. As Ridgeway (1981:335, 1982) argues, the effectiveness of signals of commitment to the group, or pro-social behavior, is compromised when observers suspect ulterior motives. If there is reason to think that the pro-social behavior is a response to private incentives, it should compromise the credibility of the high-status actor’s attempts to assert the dignity of the low-status actor. In other words, if an audience knows that the actor benefits by acting in a pro-social way, these pro-social displays lose credibility because it suggests that the actor is not really committed to the other’s dignity. Accordingly, these suspicions can be dampened when observers are given specific reason to think that no such incentives exist. We thus test the following hypothesis:

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<sup>44</sup> We thank Julia DiBenigno for very helpful input on this point.

*Hypothesis 2: When observers have evidence that actors (do not) have a private incentive to engage in pro-social behavior, this behavior loses (gains) credibility and observers thereby regard high-status actors as both (neither) inconsiderate and (nor) inauthentic.*

## **Studies and Results**

### **Empirical Overview**

We designed three experiments to test our argument that suspicions raised by status attainment influence whether the moral character of high-status actors is celebrated or denigrated. Many related studies use a stereotype approach to understand the conditions under which status is related to lack of warmth (e.g., Fiske et al. 2002; Fragale, Overbeck, and Neale 2011). They provide subjects with a series of occupations or even people in their network with different levels of status, and ask them to explain their perceptions of these people. However, informational cues related to mode of attainment are often embedded in the specific individuals considered and the occupations asked about. Instead, our approach was to construct status in the laboratory in a way that limited these cues and allowed us to separate the effect of information on mode of attainment from the status of the actor and other key variables. More specifically, our first study (Study 1) is a near-replication of the study in Ridgeway and Correll (2006), in which they show that assertive actors are regarded as more competent and higher status, but also less considerate. By replicating these findings in the first study we validate our approach and work off of this model to create a default case where there is essentially no information about the process of status attainment (Study 2). In the final study (Study 3) we introduce pro-social behavior and vary the incentives for acting in a pro-social way.

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

## General Design Description

*Introduction:* Subjects were told that they were to observe the interaction of a team of three others. Two of the others were assigned the role of “discussant” and the third was assigned to the “commentator” role. Subjects were told that the discussants and commentator were involved in a task in which they were to solve a series of problems as a team. To control for potential gender effects, subjects were told that each discussant in the study was male.<sup>45</sup> Subjects were told that they would be evaluating the individual team members based on how much they contributed to the success of the team overall.

*Personality Type Assignment:* Before showing them the task, subjects responded to a test of “personal response style” and were told that the discussants each took a similar test. This test was meant to *randomly* assign the subject to one of two “personality types”: Q2 or S2. This was done using a Klee and Kandinsky style test, as is done with many “minimal group” experiments (Tajfel et al. 1971; Yamagishi and Kiyonari 2000). These studies show that even minimal criteria such as ambiguous group names cause actors to identify with their own type more than the other type. Subjects were shown a series of pictures and told, based on their responses, that they fit the profile of either a Q2 type or S2 type.<sup>46</sup> Along with assigning each subject to a type, in each condition subjects were presented with two discussants, one of which was presented as a Q2 type and the other was presented as an S2 type.

The first manipulation was whether the subject viewed the study through the eyes of a Q2 or S2. In each condition where status hierarchies are enacted (all but one condition in Study 2), the Q2 was designed to be the more competent actor and the S2 the less competent actor. Our theoretical discussion considered why *any* audience might consider high-status actors as more morally suspect than a lower-status counterpart. The particular puzzle that gave indication that this could *not* be explained by an in-group bias was the evidence that even high-status category members would consider their own

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<sup>45</sup> We will discuss the implications of this decision in the final section of this paper.

<sup>46</sup> After the Klee and Kandinsky assignment portion of the study, subjects were asked to identify which type of category they fit, Q2 or S2. Subjects who answered incorrectly were asked to answer the question again until they knew. Only those subjects who answered this correctly were included in the final sample. There will be more on subject recruitment below.

category suspect in terms of considerateness and authenticity (e.g., Ridgeway and Correll 2006; Halle 1996; Bryson 1996; Grounds 2001). Therefore, we will first focus on the results from those subjects randomly assigned to the Q2 (or target of deference) type. After each of the three studies is discussed, in a fourth section we will show and discuss results from subjects assigned to view the task through the eyes of a member of the S2 (or deferring party) type. This discussion will not only serve to show potential in-group bias, it will also serve as a manipulation check in support of our methodological decision (based on Ridgeway and Correll 2006) to use the minimal group set up to establish status groups.

*The Task:* The “team” was presented with a series of “contrast sensitivity tasks” similar to those used in experiments on status construction (Moore 1968; Berger, Cohen, and Zelditch 1972; D. Willer and Walker 2007). This visual task was chosen because it was related to the previous Q2/S2 assignment and to reinforce the importance of skill difference between the deferring party and the target of deference. In these tasks, subjects were presented with a picture containing 64 squares, some of which were white and some of which were black. The team’s task was to figure out whether there were more black squares or white squares in each of the five pictures they were shown. In reality, the black and white squares were evenly distributed in each picture, but subjects were not told this fact. Subjects were told that the discussants and commentator were given only five seconds to react to the picture. The possibility that neither black nor white would be the correct answer and the fact that “discussants” were only given 5 seconds to look at the picture created a level of uncertainty about the “correct” answer. This uncertainty is an important condition in our theory because it introduces the possibility that status is being attributed through perceptions, leaving room for character doubt.

The “discussants” were tasked with discussing their answer until they came to a consensus on the “correct” answer. Then the “commentator” was there to either support the conclusion or ask them to return and deliberate some more. In Studies 1 and 3, the subjects were presented with a text transcript of the supposed interaction between the discussants and the response of the commentator. In reality, this was a dialogue written by the experimenters. In Study 2, only the discussants’ answers and commentator support is shown (i.e., no interaction text), leaving less information about the interaction that

created the pattern of deference. Before they were shown the interaction, the subjects were reminded to observe the teams interact as they came to a decision. It is important to note that the experiments were designed such that the commentator always played the “supportive” role from the “supported” conditions in Ridgeway & Correll (2006). This supportive role served as the social validation of deference. As Ridgeway & Correll (2006) show, without this supportive role or social validation of deference, status hierarchies are unlikely to form.

*Dependent Variable:* After viewing all five of the tasks, subjects were asked to answer a series of eight questions about how they would evaluate the average target of deference and deferring party types. They were told that their evaluation was not to be about the discussant types (Q2 or S2) they observed in the task, necessarily, but how they expected the average Q2 and S2 types to be rated on the various criteria presented. The first set of three questions (presented in random order to the subjects) was related to the status of the actors. Subjects were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 7 the levels of prestige, respect, and competence first for one of the types (i.e., Q2 or S2) and then repeated for the other type (i.e., S2 or Q2).<sup>47</sup> These are standard questions borrowed from previous studies measuring status in a task-group context (e.g., Ridgeway and Correll 2006). Subjects were then asked a second set of four questions (again presented randomly). Two of these questions were related to the perceived considerateness and the other two were related to the perceived authenticity of the Q2 (S2) type. Subjects were asked to rate the Q2 type (on a scale of 1 to 7) on levels of considerateness and likability (combined for the considerateness score) and sincerity and authenticity (combined for the authenticity score). For each study we will present the status, considerateness and authenticity scores for each actor type. For example, the status score was constructed by taking the mean of the prestige, respect, and competence scores for each subject. Appendix 2-A lists the questions and the respective Chronbach alpha's or correlations for each set of questions.

*Tests:* Unless otherwise noted, the key comparisons were done using a Wilcoxon signed rank test. In this test, attribution scores from each subject are ranked and compared within conditions. These non-parametric tests essentially compare the full

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<sup>47</sup> These questions were counterbalanced such that subjects were randomly assigned to attribute ratings for the Q2 (S2) type first and the S2 (Q2) type second.

distributions of the results rather than the means (Wilcoxon 1945).<sup>48</sup> With smaller sample sizes, this type of test is a better fit for the type of data we collected.

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

The Mechanical Turk tool provides access to many potential subjects, but faces the risk that some subjects are strictly looking to get the task accomplished and do not pay as close attention to the task, limiting the effect of a manipulation. In order to confirm that our subjects paid close enough attention to the task, we asked them a series of attention questions scattered throughout the study (Mason and Suri 2011). Those who could not answer these questions correctly were not included in the results. Also, those who began the study and did not finish the status, considerateness and authenticity attribution sections were not included in the final set of subjects.<sup>49</sup> These two filtering criteria were not correlated with any condition in particular, supporting our claim that the final set of subjects used to test our hypotheses were randomly assigned to their conditions across the three studies. For instance, in Study 1, 90 out of a total of 122 potential subjects were kept in the sample. Of these five were excluded for not answering the attention questions correctly (indicating that they were not paying attention to the study and would not be affected by the specific condition requirements). The remaining 27 subjects were not included because they started, but did not finish the study.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Tests using simple t-tests on the mean difference between ratings for each category type resulted in similar findings, but our data violated assumptions about normal distribution and sample size, so the tests we perform are more efficient predictors of difference in perception.

<sup>49</sup> The questions that made up our dependent variable were at the very end of the study. All subjects who made it as far as these questions finished the study and were included in the final sample. Nearly all who did not finish dropped out after the introductory screens.

<sup>50</sup> These numbers were: 106 kept out of 157 for study 2 (9 did not answer attention questions correctly and 42 started but did not finish); 96 kept out of 136 for study 3 (9 did not correctly answer attention questions and 31 started but did not finish). The ratios are essentially the same meaning these studies did not differ in

## Study 1 – Negative Relationship Between Status and Considerateness and Authenticity

*Purpose:* Our first study serves to validate our method of establishing status in the lab with prior studies (e.g., Ridgeway and Correll 2006). These studies have shown that high-status actors are regarded as less considerate than their lower-status counterparts. Along with establishing that our study is consistent with these previous studies, the novel aspect of this study is that we also test whether status attainment, as it has been tested previously in the lab, leads to higher suspicions of inauthenticity compared to lower-status actors.

*Description:* The target of deference was designated in this study by showing one discussant consistently defer to the initiative and judgment of the other discussant each time there was a disagreement in the initial guess, followed by confirmation of this judgment by the commentator (social validation). Of the five interactions, two were set up as initial agreements and three were set up as initial disagreements. The disagreements were resolved by showing one discussant gain deference from the other discussant.

We recreated the assertive character used by Ridgeway and Correll (2006). This actor used short responses and did not waiver from asserting that his answer was correct. The commentator was used to help reinforce a status hierarchy. It was also important that the assertive actor did not come across as mean or overly rude to create a backlash against his competence claims as was found in earlier studies on status construction (Ridgeway and Diekema 1989). Because the target of deference is not using dominance to gain status, yet is assertive and confident in his claims, it is a good example of a situation in which competence is claimed and deference is accepted without evidence for violations of widely held norms, such as using overt power or dominance.

Furthermore, the uncertainty in quality created by the tasks and the underlying incentive that arises from gains in status opens the door for concern over the assertive actor's authenticity. In asserting competence, in the way that the target of deference is presented as doing, he might just be covering up for an underlying lack of quality. This can be risky because they leave the assertive actor vulnerable to the loss of status that comes from the denial of such a claim by an alter (Leifer 1988). But because deference

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amount of subjects dropped, nor did condition type induce more subjects to drop out of the study before finishing. Thus, results are missing at random across all studies.



takes place and the “commentator” supports such deference, a status hierarchy should emerge even though the competence of the actor is still uncertain. There is also little reason, based on the setup, why a high-status actor would be perceived as less sincere or authentic than someone deferring to him. The desire to gain status or be viewed as more competent than the other creates a lone incentive for faking capability.

	Target Audience (Q2)	
	N	21
	Target (Q2)	Defering (S2)
Status Quartile 1	4.83	3.00
Status Quartile 2	5.33	3.67
Status Quartile 3	6.17	4.17
<b>signrank z</b>	<b>3.78***</b>	
Considerate Quart 1	3.00	5.00
Considerate Quart 2	4.00	5.50
Considerate Quart 3	4.75	6.00
<b>signrank z</b>	<b>-3.46***</b>	
Authenticity Quart 1	3.50	4.00
Authenticity Quart 2	4.50	5.00
Authenticity Quart 3	5.50	6.00
<b>signrank z</b>	<b>-2.17**</b>	

\*\*\*p<.01, \*\*p<.05, \*p<.10

Table 4 - Study 1 Target of Deference Subjects, Change in pro-social level of deference attainment. Comparing attributions of Status, Considerateness and Authenticity. Including conditions where deference is granted an “Assertive” actor and where deference is granted a “Pro-Social” actor.

*Study 1 Results:* Table 4 shows the results from Study 1 in which we compare the status, considerateness, and authenticity ratings given by subjects randomly assigned to the target of deference type. Those “target of deference” or Q2 type subjects (N=21) attributed a typical member of their own type *higher* status than a typical member of the other type ( $z=3.78$ ,  $p<.01$ ), but *lower* considerateness ( $z=-3.46$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and authenticity ( $z=-2.17$ ,  $p=.03$ ) than a typical member of the other type.

*Study 1 Discussion:* These findings validate our method of constructing status in the lab by replicating findings established, particularly by Ridgeway and Correll (2006). The assertive actor was rated higher on status, but lower on considerateness than the less assertive actor. The assertive actor was also rated lower on authenticity than the lower-

status actor indicating a concern for fakery in asserting a position. This replicates the findings from previous studies by showing that even when there is no evidence that norms were violated, status can be attributed to actors who assert more competence, but these actors will be considered less considerate than their seemingly less competent counterparts. The only novel finding in this study is that along with lower attributions of considerateness, the high-status actor also received lower attributions of authenticity. This is consistent with our contention that status breeds suspicion of being both inconsiderate and inauthentic. However, the limitation of Study 1 is that it does not capture a default condition, where the mere fact of attainment via deference leads to lower attributions of considerateness and authenticity for the high-status actor. Instead, this study shows an actor who gains status via assertive behavior. As such, Study 2 eliminates the assertive dialogue and compares a condition with clear patterns of deference enacted and one without these deference patterns enacted to test whether merely attaining status leads to suspicions around the high-status actor's lack of authenticity and considerateness.

#### Study 2 – Status Effects: The Default Assumptions About Status Attainment

*Purpose:* In Study 2, we test the first hypothesis of our argument: that the high-status actor will be penalized with lower attributions of authenticity and considerateness. In doing so we adjudicate between our “suspicious attainment” argument and the “just world” argument by comparing a situation in which there is no clear deference pattern and seeing what happens to each actor's considerateness and authenticity scores when a pattern of socially-validated deference is introduced. Contrary to reducing the *high-status* actor's attributions of authenticity and considerateness, the just world thesis predicts that if one actor has a clear status advantage over another, then subjects will compensate the *lower-status* actor by attributing higher attributions of considerate and authenticity to the loser of the status competition.

*Study 2 Description:* The key manipulation in this study was moving from conditions in which no deference pattern existed (“No Deference Enacted”) to one in which there was a clear deference pattern between the two discussants (“With Deference Enacted”). We did this by first eliminating all interaction text. In Study 1, subjects are

privity to the interaction that creates deference either by hearing a taped conversation or reading a recorded text. In Study 2, instead of seeing a) an initial guess, b) an interaction between the discussants, and c) a final consensus with commentator support, subjects were only shown a) the initial guess and b) the final consensus with commentator support. Appendix 2-B shows an example of the information presented to subjects about the interaction among team members. Subjects were presented with five tasks that included this type of information after the task. In the “No Deference Enacted” condition, there were *four* disagreements and each discussant was the target of deference twice, meaning there was no discussant being deferred to more often between the two. In the “With Deference Enacted” condition, there were three disagreements and one of the discussants was the lone target of deference in all three of these situations. Again, subjects were randomly assigned to each condition. Note that whereas an observer might construe the Q2’s (or high-status discussant’s) interaction style in Study 1 as inconsiderate or insincere, in Study 2 we have eliminated this possibility by only showing the original and final choices, implying that one actor defers to the other as described above.

*Study 2 Results:* Table 5 shows the results from Study 2 in which we compare the status, considerateness, and authenticity ratings given by subjects randomly assigned to the target of deference type as a test of Hypotheses 1. This table shows each quartile by discussant type and condition as well as the z-score of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test. In the “No Deference Enacted” condition, subjects randomly assigned to the Q2 type (N=24) attributed the same levels of status ( $z=0.27$ ,  $p=.78$ ), considerateness ( $z=0.36$ ,  $p=.72$ ) and authenticity ( $z=0.84$ ,  $p=.40$ ) to both their own (Q2) type and the other (S2) type. In the “With Deference Enacted” condition, subjects (N=27) attributed *greater* status ( $z=2.74$ ,  $p<.01$ ) to a typical member of their own group over the other group, but attributed *less* considerateness ( $z=-2.28$ ,  $p=.02$ ) and authenticity ( $z=-1.88$ ,  $p=.06$ ) to the typical member of their own type than the typical member of the other type.

N	Target Audience (Q2)			
	No Deference		With Deference	
	24		27	
	Target (Q2)	Defering (S2)	Target (Q2)	Defering (S2)
Status Quartile 1	4.08	4.08	4.00	3.67
Status Quartile 2	5.00	4.67	5.33	4.00
Status Quartile 3	5.67	5.92	6.00	5.00
<b>signrank z</b>	<b>0.27</b>		<b>2.74***</b>	
Considerate Quart 1	4.00	4.13	4.00	4.00
Considerate Quart 2	5.50	5.00	4.00	4.50
Considerate Quart 3	6.00	6.00	4.50	6.00
<b>signrank z</b>	<b>0.36</b>		<b>-2.28**</b>	
Authenticity Quart 1	4.50	4.00	4.00	4.00
Authenticity Quart 2	5.00	5.00	4.50	4.50
Authenticity Quart 3	5.50	5.50	5.00	6.00
<b>signrank z</b>	<b>0.84</b>		<b>-1.88*</b>	

\*\*\*p<.01, \*\*p<.05, \*p<.10

Table 5 - Study 2 Results, Target of Deference Subjects, Comparing attributions of Status, Considerateness and Authenticity. Including conditions without a status hierarchy (“No Deference”) and ones with a status hierarchy enacted (“With Deference”).

The key test for Hypothesis 1, the change in attributions of authenticity and considerateness, is an across-condition test moving from the “No Deference” condition to the “With Deference” condition. Because this is an across condition comparison we used a Mann-Whitney (Wilcoxon) U test (Wilcoxon 1945; Mann and Whitney 1947), which is a generalized version of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, established for comparisons across conditions. The results of this test are shown in Table 6. This test essentially compares the sum total of each condition’s rankings (U) with what the sum total of rankings would be for each condition if the distributions did not differ (which was equal to 324 in this study). Under the deference enacted condition, the attributions of considerateness *are lower* (U=175.1, z=-2.89, p<.01) for their own type, while attributions of considerateness scores remained essentially the same (U=287.6, z=-0.70, p= .48) for the other type. Similarly across these conditions, the attributions of authenticity *are lower* (U=198.0, z=-2.44, p=.01) for their own type, while they remained essentially the same (U=309.9, z=-0.27, p=.79) for the other type.



	Target Audience (Q2)	
	Target (Q2)	Deferring (S2)
n1	24	
n2	27	
mn/2	324	
Considerate U	175.1	287.6
Considerate z	-2.89***	-0.7
Authenticity U	198.0	309.9
Authenticity z	-2.44**	-0.27

\*\*\*p<.01, \*\*p<.05, \*p<.10

Table 6 - Study 2 Results, Target of Deference Subjects, Test *across conditions*, Comparing Change in Attributions of Considerateness and Authenticity when deference is introduced.

*Study 2 Discussion:* There are two key findings in these results. The first is consistent with our argument and the just world hypothesis. In particular we show that a pattern of socially-validated deference to competence, whereby one actor is supported more often than another with no other information about how this pattern gets established, results in a negative relationship between status and both authenticity and considerateness. Therefore, it would seem that in the default condition, high-status actors are more likely to be denigrated than celebrated. These results matched Study 1 and the consistent finding in the literature that status is often negatively related with morality (e.g., Lamont 2000; Ridgeway and Correll 2006; Fiske et al. 2002; Judd et al. 2005). Furthermore, in Study 1, one could have argued that the lower relative attributions of considerateness were the result of the way the text was presented to subjects. The text shows that the more assertive character, while not being rude or demeaning to the other discussant, is not positively supportive of this actor either. By eliminating the text, we have focused the audience’s perception away from the content of the text to the mere fact that status was somehow attained. Our results, therefore, support an idea that is shared both by our theory and the just world theory—i.e., that attributions of morality move in the opposite direction of attributions of status even without evidence to support such claims.

The second key finding supports Hypothesis 1 and, thereby, adjudicates between how the two theories (our “suspicious attainment” argument and the “just world”

argument) understand the process that underlies this negative relationship between status and these characteristics of morality. When a status hierarchy is introduced, instead of compensating the low-status type with higher scores in considerateness and authenticity, the subjects manipulated to see the study through the eyes of a high-status category member *denigrate their own type* with lower attributions of considerateness and authenticity. If compensation were the mechanism behind this negative relationship, we should have seen an increase in the lower-status actor's considerateness and authenticity scores when moving from the "No Deference Enacted" condition to the "With Deference Enacted" condition. Instead, there is statistically no difference between conditions for the low-status actor. The decrease in these scores for the high-status actor reflects the idea that high-status (categories of) actors are considered morally suspect *even when there is no information on mode of attainment*. We argue that this reflects the fact that suspicions of inconsiderateness and inauthenticity are inherent in the status attainment process unless there is credible evidence to override these suspicions. Study 3 is designed to test this aspect of the theory.

### Study 3 – Limits to Pro-Social Signals: The Role of Perceived Motive on Authenticity

*Purpose:* Studies 1 and 2 show that there is a consistent negative relationship between attributions of status and attributions of both considerateness and authenticity. Building on literature about pro-social means of status attainment (e.g., R. Willer 2009), we have argued that pro-social behavior can serve as a way to quell concerns raised about considerateness and authenticity related to status attainment. However, the benefits of status could make the status attainer's motives for presenting this pro-social behavior suspect. Study 3 focuses on this problem and in doing so directly tests Hypothesis 2: knowledge about ulterior motives for pro-social behavior will negatively affect the ability of these displays to overcome the suspicion that status was attained in suspect ways.

*Description:* In this study we reintroduced the dialogue used in Study 1, but instead of the plain assertive character, we introduce a dialogue that is assertive, but more pro-social in nature. In this case, the target of deference discussant was portrayed using more supportive words in interacting with the deferring party type discussant. We wrote the dialogue such that the target of deference could be seen as a sort of teacher and seems

to be rooting for the deferring party to succeed or improve. In this way, the target of deference can be seen as helping the deferring party to save face by both presenting the implied competence difference as temporary and assuring the deferring party that he is educable. The deferring party's dialogue was only minimally changed from the dialogue in the first study. Appendix 2-C shows a comparison of one example each of the "Plain-Assertive" and "Pro-Social Assertive" styles of interaction.

The main manipulation in this study was to create two conditions that varied on the team members' knowledge of incentives for pro-social behavior. By including incentives for pro-social behavior, we make clear that there is a potential ulterior motive for these displays. However, we also vary the knowledge that the discussants supposedly had about these incentives. Appendix 2-D shows the key difference in language between these conditions. In each condition, subjects were presented with the same setup as the previous study, but were told that along with rewards for correct answers that team members would also receive a "teamwork bonus."

Subjects in the "No Incentives" condition were told that the teams (discussants and commentator) were *not aware* of this bonus. By letting the subjects know that the teams were not aware of an incentive, we make clear that there was *no ulterior motive* in acting in a pro-social or supportive way. In the "Incentives" condition subjects were told that teams were aware of this bonus. It is important to point out that inserting an incentive is not evidence that the pro-social behavior was motivated by self-interest. Instead, by telling the subjects that the *incentives were known*, this condition aims to create *a clear ulterior motive* for engaging in pro-social behavior.

*Study 3 Results:* Table 7 shows the results from Study 3 in which we compare the status, considerateness, and authenticity ratings given by subjects randomly assigned to the target of deference type. In the "No Incentives" condition, those subjects who were told they were a "target of deference" type (N=25) attributed a typical member of their own group *more* status than a typical member of the other group ( $z=3.76$ ,  $p<.01$ ), and attributed a typical member of their own group *essentially the same* considerateness ( $z=0.78$ ,  $p=.44$ ) and authenticity ( $z=0.97$ ,  $p=.33$ ) than a typical member of the other group. In the "Incentives" condition, subjects (N=24) still attributed a typical member of their own group *more* status than the other group ( $z=2.71$ ,  $p<.01$ ), but attributed lower

considerateness, although *statistically insignificant* at the 90% level ( $z=-1.47$ ,  $p=.14$ ) and clearly *less* authenticity ( $z=-2.82$ ,  $p<.01$ ) to the typical member of their own type compared to the other type.

N	Target Audience (Q2)			
	No Incentive		Incentive	
	25		26	
	Target (Q2)	Defering (S2)	Target (Q2)	Defering (S2)
Status Quartile 1	4.67	3.00	4.00	3.25
Status Quartile 2	5.67	3.67	5.00	4.00
Status Quartile 3	6.33	4.83	6.00	5.00
<b>signrank z</b>	<b>3.76***</b>		<b>2.70***</b>	
Considerate Quart 1	5.00	5.00	3.38	4.00
Considerate Quart 2	6.00	6.00	4.50	5.00
Considerate Quart 3	6.00	6.25	5.13	6.00
<b>signrank z</b>	<b>0.78</b>		<b>-1.47</b>	
Authenticity Quart 1	5.00	4.00	4.00	4.50
Authenticity Quart 2	5.50	5.50	4.00	5.00
Authenticity Quart 3	6.00	6.00	5.00	5.50
<b>signrank z</b>	<b>0.97</b>		<b>-2.82***</b>	

\*\*\* $p<.01$ , \*\* $p<.05$ , \* $p<.10$

Table 7 - Study 3 Target of Deference Subjects, Changes in Incentives for Pro-social Behavior, Comparing attributions of Status, Considerateness and Authenticity. Including conditions with “No Incentives” for pro-social behavior and conditions “With Incentives” for pro-social behavior.

*Study 3 Discussion:* The first important finding in support of our argument comes from the “No Incentives” condition. In showing a condition where the high-status actor is *not denigrated*, we present more evidence contrary to the argument that this negative relationship between status and considerateness is based on the audience’s desire to compensate the lower-status actor (Judd et al. 2005; Yzerbyt et al. 2008). If the mechanism behind this negative relationship were in line with the “just world” argument, then the means of status attainment, whether it was earned through pro-social behavior or not, should not have affected the negative relationship between status and considerateness or authenticity.

The next important finding validates our interpretation of the mechanism behind concern for authenticity in particular: *an ulterior motive for performance*. When the audience knows that there is an incentive to display pro-social behavior, and they also know that the actors are aware of this, the displays of pro-social behavior that were



effective in the “No Incentives” condition, are no longer as effective. The mere introduction of this incentive leads an audience to suspect the high-status actor of inauthentic or insincere performance. The potential ulterior motive for these pro-social displays not only raises suspicion about the authenticity of the actor, in so doing it essentially eliminates the positive effect on considerateness shown in the “No Incentives” condition. When actions meant to resolve the default impression that high-status are cold may be understood as deriving from self-interested motives, these displays are not effective signals.

### S2/Q2 Manipulation Check: In-Group Bias or The “Sour Grapes” Effect

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

The rest of this section will discuss how results on similar studies from the perspective of the less competent type subjects serve as a manipulation check on the attempt to assure that both groups did not automatically identify with the S2 or deferring party type. Showing the manipulation within these results is tricky because our argument suggests that the negative relationship between attributions of status and attributions of considerateness and authenticity is driven primarily by a cognitive mechanism that leads to suspicion simply because of the position of the actor in question. As such, we expect

little difference between the results from the target of deference (Q2) and deferring party (S2) types for most of the studies. In fact, Appendix 2-E shows that the results of Studies 1 and 2 from the perspective of the deferring (low-status) group are essentially the same as those from the HS group. However, these studies were primarily about how high-status actors (the other type) were denigrated. We expect that in-group bias will be most visible in studies where the high-status actors were not expected to be denigrated. In other words, there should be some dampening of the positive effects for pro-social activities engaged in by the high-status actor.

*Manipulation Check Studies:* The studies performed were all based on Study 3 discussed above. Manipulation Check 2 was a replication of Study 3, but from the LS audience perspective. Manipulation Check 1 removed the incentive manipulation from Study 3, instead focusing only on the pro-social efforts employed by the HS actors and leaving incentives for the observed pro-social behavior ambiguous. In effect, this study attempts to increase perceived considerateness, by manipulating considerateness. However, we expect that the deferring party audience will be less willing to accept these signals, resulting in the persistence of a negative relationship between status and considerateness for the deferring party audience results.

*Comparison of Pro-Social Effect between HS audience and LS audience:* Table 8 shows the results for Manipulation Checks 1 and 2. In Manipulation Check 1, the “Target Audience” condition, subjects randomly assigned to the target of deference type (N=24) attributed a typical member of their own group *more* status than the other group ( $z=2.78$ ,  $p<.01$ ), and attributed each type with essentially *the same* levels of considerateness ( $z=-0.46$ ,  $p=.64$ ) and authenticity ( $z=-0.67$ ,  $p=.51$ ). In the “Deferring Audience” condition, subjects randomly assigned to the deferring party type (N=26) attributed a typical member of the other group *more* status than their own group ( $z=4.22$ ,  $p<.01$ ), but attributed *lower* levels of considerateness ( $z=-1.71$ ,  $p=.09$ ) to the other type and essentially the same levels of authenticity ( $z=-0.72$ ,  $p=.47$ ) to teach type.

	Manipulation Check 1				Manipulation Check 2			
	Pro-Social Ambiguous Incentives				Deferring Audience (S2)			
	N	Target Aud. (Q2)		Deferring Aud. (S2)		No Incentive		Incentive
	24	26	18	27	Target (Q2)	Defering (S2)	Target (Q2)	Defering (S2)
Status Quartile 1	4.75	3.75	4.00	3.33	4.67	3.50	4.00	3.33
Status Quartile 2	5.83	4.50	4.67	4.00	5.67	4.33	5.33	4.00
Status Quartile 3	6.33	5.33	5.58	5.00	6.00	5.00	6.00	4.67
<b>signrank z</b>	<b>2.78***</b>		<b>4.22***</b>		<b>3.04***</b>		<b>2.37**</b>	
Considerate Quart 1	4.63	5.00	3.13	4.00	4.50	4.50	3.50	4.00
Considerate Quart 2	5.75	5.75	4.00	5.00	5.00	5.25	4.50	5.00
Considerate Quart 3	6.38	6.38	4.50	6.00	5.63	6.00	5.50	6.00
<b>signrank z</b>	<b>-0.46</b>		<b>-1.71*</b>		<b>-0.64</b>		<b>-2.13**</b>	
Authenticity Quart 1	5.00	5.00	3.63	4.00	5.00	5.00	4.00	4.50
Authenticity Quart 2	5.50	5.50	4.00	5.00	5.50	5.00	4.50	5.00
Authenticity Quart 3	6.00	6.00	5.00	6.00	6.00	5.63	5.00	6.00
<b>signrank z</b>	<b>-0.67</b>		<b>-0.72</b>		<b>0.99</b>		<b>-2.24**</b>	

\*\*\*p<.01, \*\*p<.05, \*p<.10

Table 8 - Status Manipulation Check - Results for Pro-Social manipulation on Audience Identified as Low-Status in Studies. Results show a stronger concern for considerateness about the HS actor than the HS audience showed in these studies.

In Manipulation Check 2, the “No-Incentive” condition, subjects randomly assigned to the deferring party type (N=18) attributed *more* status ( $z=3.04$ ,  $p<.01$ ) to the other type compared than the typical member of their own group, but attributed *essentially the same* considerateness ( $z=-0.64$ ,  $p=.52$ ) and authenticity ( $z=0.99$ ,  $p=.32$ ) to the other type compared to its own type. In the “Incentives” condition where incentives were known, subjects randomly assigned to the deferring party type (N=27) also attributed *higher* status ( $z=2.37$ ,  $p=.02$ ) to the other type above that attributed to their own type, but attributed *lower* considerateness ( $z=-2.13$ ,  $p=.03$ ) and authenticity ( $z=-2.24$ ,  $p=.02$ ) to the other type compared with their own type.

*In-group effects Discussion:* The key patterns provide further support for our theory. When pro-social signals are observed without incentives for this behavior (Manipulation Check 2), there is essentially *no difference* in considerateness or authenticity attributions between their own and the other group. However, pro-social signals by themselves do not serve to modify the negative relationship between status and considerateness shown by the subjects who identified with the target of deference. The high-status subjects attributed the same amount of considerateness between their own type and the lower-status type when pro-social behavior was observed. But the deferring

party continued to attribute more considerateness to their own lower-status type even when these same pro-social signals were observed. In all, these results support the “sour grapes” or in-group effect, which is also evidence that our manipulation, following the minimal group or mere difference tradition, was effective.

### **Discussion Section**

The experimental results presented in this paper validate our argument that there is a clear tendency to denigrate those in high-status positions because of suspicions that arise from activities inherent to status attainment. The incentive structure feature of status attainment leads an audience to suspect high-status actors of inauthenticity because of the benefits accorded to these actors. While status is attributed because of acknowledged competence in group-valued activities, the fact that status benefits the high-status actor leads observers to suspect high-status actors of putting self before the group. This paradox raises questions about the high-status actor’s commitment to the audience over self-interest such that even attempts to resolve this concern through pro-social signals are ineffective when an incentive for this behavior is known. The interaction process feature of status attainment means that attaining a high-status position, particularly when status emerges through interaction and patterns of deference, threatens the high-status actor’s perceived compassion or considerateness of others because deference entails subjugation of another in order to attain and maintain this valued position. The implication is that the underlying motivation that threatens both the perceived authenticity and considerateness of a high-status actor is one of placing self before others, a perception that calls the actor’s moral character into question. Our findings support the argument that status attainment, by itself, leads to (private) denigration of high-status actors.

The findings and discussion of this paper cast serious doubt on the most prominent explanation for this phenomenon in either the sociological or psychological literatures: the compensation hypothesis (e.g., Judd et al. 2005; Yzerbyt et al. 2008). As discussed in our theory section, we argued that the compensation theory focused too heavily on only one half of the Just World Theory (see Kay and Jost 2003) to derive its own explanation of the phenomenon. In constructing the compensation hypothesis, these scholars argued that a desire to see the world as just would inspire an audience to

compensate a loser in a status competition, ignoring the alternative that suggested the opposite implication. Furthermore, this theory could not explain why this type of compensation was limited to attributions relating to moral character and not other valued dimensions, nor was it able to explain situations in which the moral character of high-status actors is, in fact, not denigrated (e.g., R. Willer 2009). Beyond these theoretical difficulties, our experiments provide two main results that cast doubt upon it and support our “suspicious attainment” theory. First, as found in Study 2, the mere introduction of information about socially-validated deference patterns leads observers to attribute lower authenticity and considerateness to higher-status social categories without attributing greater authenticity and considerateness to the lower-status category. Second, as found in Study 3, there is no evidence of a tendency to compensate low-status categories when observers see *credible* evidence that status was attained in a “pro-social” or morally virtuous way.

Our study raises questions about how it is that status can derive from pro-social behavior while at the same time, the status attainment process creates suspicions about an actor’s moral character. We believe that it is indeed problematic if we go beyond recognizing that displays of pro-social behavior are key ways actors earn status to suggesting that exhibiting such behavior is *the only way* that actors earn status (e.g., Fragale et al. 2011). In particular, our theory is consistent with the idea that the display of pro-social behavior is a sufficient *but not necessary* condition of status attainment. In general, actors earn status from public recognition of their competence and their commitment (to use such capability) towards the benefit of the audience (Ridgeway 1982; Phillips et al. 2013). Displays of pro-social behavior provide evidence of such commitment. But in many cases, evidence of capability and commitment must be derived from actors’ relative performance and from the deference that they receive, ostensibly due to such performance. It is the ambiguity of inferring capability and commitment from such contexts that creates suspicions about the means of attainment, and specifically the private denigration we observe in our study. More generally, we argue and show that the manner in which status is attained, including the level of ambiguity around sincere pro-social sentiment, will determine whether a high-status actor’s moral character is either denigrated or celebrated.

One potential limitation to the generalizability of this study's implications for perceived considerateness comes from our experiments' use of influence patterns as a means of constructing and displaying competence and status hierarchies. This methodological device was based on established studies in the field typically related to status construction theory and constructing status in the laboratory (e.g., Ridgeway and Correll 2006; Moore 1968; Berger et al. 1972; D. Willer and Walker 2007). The advantage of this device is that it strips away all potential social cues that might inform subjects of the study about the actor more generally. This method for constructing status hierarchies is advantageous over other similar studies, often related to the stereotype content model (Fiske et al. 2002), which construct status using characteristics like race, gender, nationality or occupation that communicate implied levels of considerateness based on expectations around the activities in which these types of actors generally engage (e.g., Conway, Pizzamiglio, and Mount 1996). However, influence patterns might also communicate a sense that status was gained through power, which would inspire concern about considerateness (cf., R. Willer et al. 2012). To be clear, this issue is orthogonal to the ulterior motive mechanism shown to inspire concerns for lack of authenticity among high-status actors. However, it suggests a scope condition on the generalizability of the effect of status attainment on perceptions of *considerateness*, limiting this claim only to the conditions under which status emerges from interaction, a, nonetheless, rather general condition.

With this scope condition in mind, the implications of our study can help explain why audiences often readily subvert status hierarchies when faced with evidence that supports these suspicions. Consider how rare it is to find the actor who forever overcomes these concerns à la Mother Theresa or Raoul Wallenberg. Adut's (2008) work on scandals shows *public* denigration of high-status actors happens only when there is a level of common knowledge: everyone knows that everyone else knows that these erstwhile heroes *should* be denigrated. Our findings suggest that there is an underlying concern about the morality of the high-status actor created by suspicions that status was gained in inauthentic or cold ways. As long as these suspicions remain private or unproven, the status hierarchy remains supported. However, audiences are willing to turn heroes into villains when their concerns become validated. These high-status insecurities

suggest the presence of a soft underbelly to status hierarchies; the willingness to (privately) denigrate high-status actors makes possible this transition from public celebration to scandal.

The realization that high-status actors, despite public acknowledgement that they carry high levels of both capability and commitment, are held under suspicion as lacking authenticity or considerateness can also help explain why, at times, high-status actors are seen aligning themselves with low-status culture. When high-status actors attain their positions in ways that do not refute the concerns that the status was truly earned, they are suspected of lacking considerateness and authenticity. Because their lower-status counterparts have not gained status, they are not held suspect on these dimensions. As a result these low-status actors tend to be attributed with higher levels of considerateness and authenticity than the high-status actor. A high-status actor that can appropriate the symbols of this low-status culture, without threatening its own status, might be able to soften his image through the positive attributions of morality that come with such adoptions. This can help explain why we see high-status actors consuming low-status culture (e.g., Bryson 1996; Martin 1998; Grazian 2005; Strausbaugh 2006) and displaying images or activities normally reserved for low-status actors (e.g., Halle 1996; Grounds 2001; Johnston and Baumann 2007; Hahl and Gosline 2012). Doing so allows the high-status actor to appropriate the low-status culture's high levels of authenticity and considerateness and presents an image less fraught with these same morality concerns.

An important future consideration that this work cannot yet resolve comes from the design decision to make all "discussants" in the study male. Because the gender-competence mix brings with it its own set of perceptions and concerns around considerateness, we chose to avoid the issue of gender in this study in order to focus mainly on the dynamics we were testing. Part of our concern for dealing with it in this study and an impetus for further study, comes from the fact that the literature does not provide a clear prediction on how mixing gender in these studies might influence the audience's perceptions of authenticity and considerateness. Some results from related studies on gender indicate that women are often considered more inconsiderate or colder than men when each are in high-status positions (Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick 2004). This suggests that including females in the discussant roles would enhance the negative

relationship between status and considerateness or warmth indicating that it might be more difficult for pro-social signals to reverse this effect. However, other work indicates that women's influence increases when their claims to competence come with increased displays of communality or warmth (Carli 2001). This comment, although not directly tested in the literature, would indicate that displays of pro-social behavior could overcome suspicions surrounding high-status females. Beyond these predictions, however, one must also address how mixed pairs (male-female) of discussants might influence audience attributions of status, considerateness, and authenticity in relations to the status attainment process. Thus, distinct from the more general approach on the status attainment process used in this paper, the hypothesized influence of variables such as gender, or similarly other secondary status characteristics like race and nationality, should be developed separately to deal with this additional level of complexity.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, the general propensity to (privately) denigrate our heroes by attributing lower levels of morality (considerateness and authenticity) to actors in high-status positions is the result of suspicions that arise inherent to the process of status attainment. Because status confers benefits to the holder, the high-status actor, while publicly acknowledged as acting in concert with group interest, tends to appear inauthentic in its commitment to serve the group interest above self-interest. Because deference patterns, through which audiences observe status, entail both claims to superiority and affirmation of inferiority, a target of deference tends to be seen as harming the deferring party by benefiting from the debasement of another. Only when high-status actors are seen as credibly pro-social and selfless in support of the group's goals, without the clear potential of ulterior motives for these displays, does this propensity for denigration change to celebration.



### *Chapter 3*

## **May I Deviate, Please? Status Effects on Anticipatory Impression Management<sup>51</sup>**

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<sup>51</sup> Renée Richardson Gosline is co-author on this essay. We are grateful for the comments on earlier drafts from Ezra Zuckerman, Vanina Leschziner, Fiona Murray, Ray Reagans, Christophe Van den Bulte, attendees at the MIT-Harvard Economic Sociology Seminar, the MIT Economic Sociology Working Group and participants at the 2011 ASA Conference session on the Creative Economy. All remaining errors are the responsibility of the authors.

### Abstract

How can firms effectively reduce penalties for categorical deviance? Past research on organizational impression management indicates that firms can do this by pre-emptively using verbal accounts that present deviant behavior in a way that makes it acceptable to an audience. However, this work has yet to explore how organizational status might interact with these strategies to influence audience perceptions of a firm engaging in these types of activities. This paper builds a bridge between the organizational impression management and status perspectives by showing how organizational status influences the effectiveness of anticipatory impression management tools like pre-emptive verbal accounts. We propose that high-status firms are better off when they do not appear deferential, or overly apologetic, in anticipatory impression management – while the opposite is true for middle-status firms. Mediation analysis shows that the same type of framing differently affects perceptions of skill and confidence depending on the status of the firm, but that too much perceived effort in framing the deviance will lead to negative results. Our findings support the claim that an organization's attempts to manage audience impressions with verbal accounts must be aligned with the perceived status of the firm, such that status positively interacts with assertive styles of anticipatory impression management and negatively interacts with more deferential styles.

## **Introduction: Impression Management, Status and Style**

It is a basic premise in research on organizations that audiences (e.g., customers, analysts, critics, etc.) evaluate firms and that firms gain or lose resources based on these evaluations (e.g., Zuckerman 1999, 2000). Accordingly, for organizations to be successful, they must manage the impressions that their activities convey to their audience (Elsbach 2006a; cf., Goffman 1959). This is particularly important when organizations engage in activities that might be portrayed as deviating from business as usual, or categorical expectations. Firms may want to engage in behavior that deviates from the expectations associated with their category in order to break into new areas of profitability and differentiate from competitors. However, engaging in categorically deviant activities can signal to a firm's audience that the firm is not willing or capable of serving them at the levels they require (Hsu 2006; Phillips and Zuckerman 2001). This deviance can result in either reward or penalty from an audience. A key factor in deciding whether the activity is interpreted as differentiation (reward) or deviance (penalty) is how the firm manages audience impressions of the activity. Whether it is the message communicated by a firm's investor relations arm to analysts or politicians' attempts to describe seemingly inconsistent policy decisions, examples abound of organizational impression management in which organizations use verbal accounts to justify behavior that might, on the surface, seem at odds with an overall image.

Consider two examples from the popular press. First, two jewelers with different reputations for elite quality, attempted to meet increased demand for jewelry that incorporated turquoise stones. These semi-precious stones were previously considered the purview of airport gift shops. Both firms tried to reassure their customers by confidently claiming that the new line was selected based on the same high standards customers have come to trust – one was successful and one was not (e.g., Leung 2002; Podolny 2005:12–13). Second, the image of an elite fashion designer was destroyed when it partnered with a mass department store chain. This penalty occurred despite efforts to reassure customers and shareholders that the firm would be willing to back out if the venture did not work (e.g., Kirby 1998). While many factors might be at play in each of these particular cases, taken together, they illustrate a consistent pattern in which a firm attempts to manage the impressions that their unexpected activities convey to their

audience. Two important variables seem to be at play: 1) past reputation for quality (status) and 2) the level of assertiveness or confidence with which these firms conveyed their message. In this paper we seek to understand the role that these variables play in explaining success and failure in managing audience perceptions of potentially deviant activities?

Work on organizational impression management<sup>52</sup> to date has focused on the ways firms can use *verbal accounts*, or language that positions previously unvalued offerings or activities as acceptable (Elsbach 2006a, 2006b; Elsbach and Sutton 1992; cf., Orbuch 1997). When effective, strategies that prospectively address a deviant activity can expand the range of activities that an audience finds acceptable for an actor in a given category. However, existing work on organizational impression management cannot explain why pre-emptive attempts to manage audience perceptions of an organization engaging in categorically deviant activities is effective in some situations and not others. There are two reasons for this. First, most work on the effectiveness of such strategies considers *ex post facto* strategies for organizations dealing with *unintended* activities that deviate from expectations (e.g., Elsbach 1994) rather than *pre-emptive* strategies for dealing with *intended* activities that deviate from expectations. Second, the few studies that address anticipatory impression management strategies only consider positive cases, because they seek to elaborate the process rather than the outcome of impression management (M. Arndt and Bigelow 2000; Elsbach, Sutton, and Principe 1998; Elsbach 2006a:111–132). Therefore, we are left to wonder about the conditions under which pre-emptive attempts to manage audience perceptions of erstwhile deviant activities are effective in their aims.

Furthermore, this work has not considered the influence of organizational status, an important social cue that has been shown to positively influence audience interpretation of activities otherwise considered deviant (Phillips et al. 2013). The fact that higher-status organizations benefit in this way has been shown in industries as disparate as law (Phillips et al. 2013), jewelry (Podolny 2005:1–21), and food (Rao, Monin, and Durand 2005; Johnston and Baumann 2007). However, while work on status

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<sup>52</sup> Research on how organizations manage audience interpretation of activities has been called organization *impression* management (e.g., Elsbach 1994) and organization *perception* management (Elsbach 2006a). For simplicity, we use the former term, but either could apply.

suggests that the use of pre-emptive verbal accounts seems to differ by status level (Phillips and Zuckerman 2001:386), scholars in this area do not directly test the effect of these pre-emptive impression management strategies.

In this paper, we develop theory and experiments designed to test how status and different types of pre-emptive verbal accounts interact in order to highlight conditions under which organizations are more (and less) effective in managing audience impressions. Our theory builds on previous work in organizational impression management by first acknowledging that verbal accounts influence audience interpretation of activities. Beyond this first step, it also adds the overlooked premise that the status of an actor is yet another frame through which audiences interpret activities (e.g., Goffman 1959, 1974; Phillips et al. 2013) such that an audience will interpret the same action differently when it is taken by organizations of differing status levels. We propose that high-status firms are able to deviate more successfully only when they do so with the confidence that befits their status – by not asking for permission to deviate, but by leveraging their status to assert an alternative interpretation for audiences to accept. We build upon previous literatures on firm deviance impression management (e.g., Elsbach 1994, 2006b), firm status (e.g., Phillips and Zuckerman 2001), and language assertiveness (e.g., Becker, Kimmel, and Bevill 1989; Kronrod, Grinstein, and Wathieu 2012) to show that effective impression management is contingent on the status of the firm and the manner in which the firm frames the deviance through verbal accounts. In particular, an audience will be more likely to overlook deviant activities when undertaken by a high-status organization, whose capability is not questioned because of an established pattern of high performance (Phillips and Zuckerman 2001). However, because high-status positions are reified by displays of assertiveness and undermined by displays of deference (Gould 2002; Chase 1980; Ridgeway and Correll 2006; cf. Ridgeway and Diekema 1989) and pre-emptive impression management strategies can vary on the degree to which they express deference to an audience, we argue that this advantage accorded to high-status organizations will be lost when pre-emptive impression management strategies are deferential to their audience.

We follow previous research designs in organizational impression management literature (Elsbach 1994) by testing this theory experimentally in one industry setting –

food – and discussing our theory’s generalizability to other settings. Articles in popular press in recent years have revealed that elite restaurants have been maintaining their reputations for elite cuisine, including the *Michelin Guide*’s highest ratings, while serving traditionally low-status dishes like hamburgers and macaroni and cheese (Bruni 2004; McLaughlin 2010). Serving hamburgers and macaroni and cheese, simple dishes that evoke backyard barbecues, drive-thru windows, truck-stop diners and screaming toddlers, raise concerns about the restaurant’s ability or willingness to meet expectations for high quality on the more difficult dishes or more complex components of its service. While it is clear that the food industry celebrates new culinary innovations (Leschziner 2007), this activity is not new, but explicitly recognized as “lowbrow” or fare only expected at lower-status establishments. We consider how restaurants are more or less effective in influencing audiences to accept this activity. We argue and show, through a series of experiments, that an organization’s status will positively (negatively) interact with assertive (deferential) attempts to pre-emptively manage its audience’s impression of its image while engaging in deviant activity because it is interpreted as a sign of confidence and skill in a high-status setting, something not true for the middle-status setting. We also show that making too many assertive claims will lead to a “protest too much” effect, such that audiences will no longer interpret these assertive displays as signs of confidence and skill, but instead as providing too much effort to cover up potential mistakes. These findings are consistent with the idea that firms are more effective at impression management when they align their verbal account style with their status. We conclude the paper with a discussion on the generalizability of this theory in settings beyond the food industry.

### **Theory: Status and Impression Management Consistency**

#### *Current Limitations of the Impression Management Perspective*

Categorical deviance, which involves attempting to serve the *same audience* with activities that are *known and not valued*, can cause an audience to question an organization’s underlying capability or quality. Audiences use an actor’s activities and associations as signals of quality because only those who can successfully deliver on high levels of quality will be able to consistently associate with these more valued indicators

(Spence 1974). On the flip side, engaging in activities that require less capability and are non-exclusive will not positively distinguish the actor from the rest of the group. The non-exclusive nature of these activities makes them more accessible to high-status aspirants and raises concern about an organization's true capability. This concern can lead to audience penalty or social sanction, be it from customers, suppliers, or other types of audiences. As such, scholars have long argued that organizations, or social actors more generally, seeking to maintain a valued image are limited to associating only with valued inputs and other actors (Podolny 1993; Weber 1978). Yet at times, organizations will engage in these very types of activities in order to differentiate from competitors (e.g., Johnston and Baumann 2007; Phillips et al. 2013; Rao et al. 2003). How can organizations manage audience impressions such that they are able to use these activities to differentiate and not be penalized?

Work on impression management begins to address this problem by discussing tools through which organizations can actively influence an audience's interpretations of activities that might threaten the organization's perceived capability. Impression management is defined as organizational spokespersons' "use of verbal accounts to defend, excuse, justify, or enhance organizational behaviors and protect legitimacy." (Elsbach 1994:58) For instance, Elsbach (1994) showed, experimentally, that when the cattle industry faced a crisis related to mad-cow disease, cattle firms that a) acknowledged the issue and b) embedded their response in previously accepted institutional patterns or procedures would be more effective at relieving audience concern than if they avoided the issue and/or provided an assurance based on technical issues related to the crisis.

Organizations can even attempt to manage audience impressions prospectively while engaging in intentional attempts to deviate from what is expected of them. Building on work on disclaimers from the social interactionist paradigm (Hewitt and Stokes 1975), Arndt and Bigelow (2000) discuss how hospitals use pre-emptive impression management when seeking to prepare its audience for what might be deemed deviations from standard practice. Similar to previous work on impression management, these authors argue that in order to manage impressions hospital administrators will frame the questionable activity as part of standard operating procedure. While no work has been

done exploring the effectiveness of these practices, this work suggests that actors do engage in pre-emptive impression management when they are concerned that their customers might penalize them for what might otherwise be considered non-standard practice. When effective, impression management that anticipates an audience's negative reaction can expand the range of activities that an audience would find acceptable for an actor in a given category.

While this literature has argued that pre-emptive accounts can influence audience interpretation of potentially deviant activities, this work has yet to account for the role that an organization's status plays in influencing the effectiveness of these tactics. We seek to address this gap in the literature with the present study. If it is true that effective anticipatory impression management is the result of merely using language in order to self promote (Elsbach et al. 1998) or give the activity accepted institutional grounding (M. Arndt and Bigelow 2000), then we should see all organizations using these tools and we should rarely see audience penalty for elective categorical deviance. However, both the use of prospective verbal accounts and the penalties for engaging in activities that threaten the organization's perceived capability differ systematically by organizational status (Phillips and Zuckerman 2001). Therefore, the question becomes: what influence does an organization's status have on the effectiveness of anticipatory impression management tactics?

### *Status and Style Consistency for Effective Impression Management*

Implicit in the impression management perspective is the assumption that an actor can influence an audience's perception of an activity by engaging in *verbal accounts*, which are "verbal statements made by one social actor to another to explain behaviors that are unanticipated or deviant." (Orbuch 1997:456) This idea has its roots in work by Goffman (1959), who discussed how people present themselves to others in ways that protect or enhance their own image. The validity of this perspective relies on the premise that any activity can have multiple meanings or interpretations and that an audience's interpretation is dependent on the context in which that activity occurs. An audience interprets an activity's meaning through frames made up of contextual cues, like who undertakes the activity and when, why, and where it takes place (Goffman 1974; cf., Tilly



2006). While the current organizational impression management literature has focused on the active side of impression management – such as verbal accounts or activities that firms engage in to actively change audience perceptions – Goffman’s work points out the that passive factors – such as an actor’s identity – also influence audience interpretation of performance. Therefore, an audience’s interpretation of activities that deviate from standard practice can be influenced both by (passive) who the actor is and by the (active) actor’s attempt to explain why, or reframe potentially offensive activities as acceptable. In fact, we argue that there is reason to believe that actor’s identity and the manner in which they present their message must be consistent in order for impression management to be effective. In order to elucidate this argument, we will first discuss the role that organizational status plays on audience interpretation of deviant activities and then introduce the idea that impression management effectiveness is not only contingent on a firm’s status, but also on the manner in which they frame the deviant act.

While impression management research has focused primarily on the accounts used by organizations to manage audience perception of activities, work on high-status deviance focuses on organizations’ perceived reputation for capability and commitment (relative to other firms) in serving the audience as an important contextual cue that influences audience interpretation of an activity. Phillips and Zuckerman (2001) revive a long-dormant literature by arguing why status influences the likelihood of an actor to deviate from categorical norms without penalty (cf. Menzel 1960; Blau 1960; Homans 1961; Giordano 1983). When undertaken by high-status actors, audiences positively interpret certain deviant activities that would otherwise threaten the capability of less elite counterparts (Phillips et al. 2013). Those in high-status positions within a category will be treated differently than those who are termed “middle-status”, who have not shown the requisite capability and commitment to distinguish themselves as certainly elite. Furthermore, a middle-status actor is distinct from a low-status actor, which is one who is not even considered part of the category and as such is not evaluated by the audience. Whether the audience is willing to accept an alternative interpretation of a previously unvalued activity will depend on how willing the audience is to trust the organization in question. Because engaging in activities that are potentially deviant because they are primarily associated with lower-status categories threatens the perceived capability of an

organization, an audience will be more willing to positively interpret erstwhile deviant acts when undertaken by organizations that have established a pattern of high capability (i.e., high-status firms).

The key to our argument is that high-status organizations maintain their advantage in this regard only in so far as their attempts to manage impressions do not undermine their high-status identity. It is a basic tenet of work on status that status hierarchies are reified by public displays of deference, such that high-status actors receive deference from lower-status others, or else risk losing their position (Gould 2002; Chase 1980). The assertiveness or deference that language communicates is also an important variable in work on psycholinguistics, which has shown that requests from high-status individuals are more accepted when they are given in a more assertive, less deferential, manner (Becker et al. 1989). While deference can lead to perceptions of politeness and increase compliance to a request (Goldsmith and MacGeorge 2000), an actor's high status might be a condition in which politeness is not expected or valued (Vollbrecht, Roloff, and Paulson 1997). Finally, in business relationships in particular, individuals with high status are expected to make more assertive requests of others (Bargiela-Chiappini and S. J. Harris 1996). This work, while about compliance to requests and not impression management, per se, provides some indication that the assertiveness of the actor interacts with status in important ways.

In fact, work at the individual level has found that when faced with uncertainty, assertive actors often ascend to high-status positions in groups. In these conditions, assertiveness displays a level of confidence and implies a capability befitting a high-status actor (Anderson and Kilduff 2009). However, assertive claims to high-status positions can be rejected (Chase 1980; Ridgeway and Diekema 1989), leaving the actor will be worse off than had they deferred to the group (Leifer 1988). On the flip side, when displays of assertiveness are socially validated, the assertive claim will be effective in leading to higher perceptions of competence (Ridgeway and Correll 2006; Hahl and Zuckerman 2012).

Although this work on the relationship between assertiveness and perceptions of competence at the individual level has only considered how status evolves in conditions of uncertainty, it provides an important insight into our context in which reputation

precedes the assertive or deferential manner of addressing deviance. The question in the above cited research is whether others will sustain an actor's assertive claim or not. To the extent that status communicates a reputation for high performance, it can serve as social validation for the assertive behavior. Therefore, when a high-status firm asserts its competence, it shows the confidence associated with its position and its past performance serves as evidence that it has right to this assertive tone. This will lead audiences to dismiss any concerns about capability that might have arisen because of deviant activity in question. However, if a high-status organization shows deference to an audience, the elite organization implicitly expresses its own concerns about engaging in these low-status activities and undermines the benefits associated with their reputation and past performance. Furthermore, an assertive middle-status actor, without such a reputation to support its assertive claim, will be worse off than if they had been deferential. In this way, there is a negative relationship between status and deference – a relationship that can be manifest in impression management style as described below.

Prospective verbal accounts employed to manage audience impressions can vary on the amount of deference shown to the audience. Ultimately, it is the interaction between this variance and the firm's status that is the focus of our research. We argue that high-status firms will be more effective at managing audience impressions when they assertively acknowledge their deviant activity than when they are deferential or hide the activity. On the flip side, assertive verbal accounts from a deviant middle-status actor, without a pattern of elite performance as its backdrop, will be seen as incongruent with a less established image. In sum, firms will be more effective in managing impressions when their manner and status are aligned:

*Proposition: Organizations will be more effective at managing audience impressions when their manner of framing deviant activities is consistent with status expectations.*

In the next sections we will derive and test implications of this argument about the importance of status and impression management consistency within a concrete setting: the food industry. We will first discuss how these variables are operationalized in the food industry and then discuss the tests and results that validate this theory.

## **Empirical Setting and Studies: Food Industry and Impression Management Tactics**

### *Verbal Accounts and Status in the Food Industry*

Empirically, observing the effect of verbal accounts as distinct from the effect of status and other social cues can be difficult because of the specific contexts in which these impression management tactics are employed and understood. In many settings, because the social cues that cause changes in audience interpretation can become implicit and well-established when the audience-actor interaction is deeply embedded in a highly concentrated network of industry insiders (Uzzi 1999; Chwe 2003), a well-known brand or identity can already communicate messages from past interaction with an audience. Verbal accounts often incorporate language specific to cultural and industry contexts and, as such, are meaningless outside of a specific industry.

In order to overcome these difficulties, we use an experimental approach and focus on the food industry, which has seen a recent surge in elite restaurants engaging in categorical deviance with comfort food dishes. These dishes fit the type of categorical deviance we discuss in this paper because they are primarily associated with low-status restaurants – fast food dishes and dives. We experimentally test the effect of pre-emptive verbal accounts and firm (restaurant) status on elite audience evaluation of these firms when they engage in distinctly non-elite activities (comfort foods) (see Johnston and Baumann 2007, 2009 for discussion of comfort foods in these elite settings). This setup is similar to previous work on the effectiveness of *ex post* impression management tactics, which also used an experimental design embedded in a specific industry (Elsbach 1994).

In the food industry, verbal accounts used to frame firm activity are most often communicated in the way restaurants discuss or present their dishes in menus or press coverage. Through the extant literature on the food industry (e.g., Johnston and Baumann 2007, 2009; Leschziner 2007, 2010; Carroll and Wheaton 2009) and our own content analysis of elite restaurant menus, we found that one way restaurants attempt to manage impressions of the dining experience is through verbal accounts that frame the dish selections on the menu itself. These verbal accounts can vary in their amount of deference shown to the customer by expressing a restaurant's willingness, or conversely a disinclination, to accommodate customer tastes. Some chefs pride themselves on committing only to the dishes on the menu, while others express deference to the

customer by accepting substitutes for items on a menu. When these tactics are used while serving comfort foods, they communicate a more (or less) assertive way of interpreting these dishes as acceptable fare within the elite restaurant mold.

Furthermore, reception of food can be influenced by social-structural factors like status (Wansink, Payne, and North 2007; Rao et al. 2005). The primary indicator of a restaurant's status is the restaurant's star rating – usually derived from some combination of critical and customer evaluation.<sup>53</sup> Elite, non-chain establishments can be ranked anywhere from a three to five stars on a five-star scale. In this context, middle-status restaurants, as organizations whose identities as member of a high-status category are still questionable (Phillips and Zuckerman 2001), are best operationalized as restaurants that receive a three-star rating from a major restaurant rating guide. Unlike those who receive a five-star rating, which only includes those restaurants that have unquestioned quality and rare food achievement, the three-star restaurant category runs the gamut, including both well-established chain restaurants and celebrity chef establishments. A diner seeking a unique experience from a creative single-chef establishment will be sure to find one at a five-star restaurant, but not so confident that such an exceptional night out will be found at a three-star establishment. Furthermore, we do not test these effects on one or two star restaurants because serving comfort foods in these restaurants is not deviant, but expected. By separating the verbal accounts and *a priori* status ranking of restaurants we are able to test the interaction of these factors on customer (audience) perception of the restaurant, once again the focus of this paper.

### *Empirical Overview*

With this as our backdrop we constructed three studies to validate the argument presented in the theory section of this paper. The purpose of our experiments is to pinpoint the causal relationship between the audience's evaluation of an organization (restaurant) and two key impression management tools: anticipatory verbal accounts (operationalized as statements on the menu that frame the deviant activity in a deferential

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<sup>53</sup> There are various types, from Michelin's three star system to Zagat's 30-point system. We use the five-star system both because it is the most common and easily understood by the public and because it is distinct from more unique systems like Michelin and Zagat allowing for a clear means of operationalizing both the high and middle-status actor without the cultural cues specific to these rating guides.

or assertive way), and *a priori* status (operationalized as restaurant rating). We employed a between-subjects design in all of the experimental studies included in this paper and randomly assigned subject participants to each of the conditions. This allowed us to minimize bias and draw causal conclusions, while eliminating confounding variables.<sup>54</sup>

In Study 1, we show that expressing deference to the customer after deviance through menu flexibility in anticipation of audience preferences is less effective for high-status restaurants and more effective for middle-status restaurants. In Study 1a, we show that this negative relationship between status and deference is mediated by perceptions of confidence and capability. For high-status actors, assertive framing increases these factors, while it does the opposite for middle-status actors. In Study 2, we show that the relationship between perceptions of confidence and displays of assertiveness are further mediated by displays of effort such that too much effort is seen as “protesting too much”, lowering perceived confidence and skill. Taken together, these studies validate the idea that, to be effective, the impression management tactics employed by an organization must be consistent with status expectations held by the audience.

### Study 1 – The Effect of Verbal Account Deference by Status

In Study 1 we test the primary claim of this paper that the amount of deference shown by verbal accounts that frame the activity is differentially effective depending on the status of the organization. Acting deferentially towards customers, adhering to the adage that the customer is always right, can be valued unless it is inconsistent with the status expectations held by the customer. For high-status actors assertive framing of the seemingly deviant behavior will be more effective at positively influencing audience impressions than deferential framing of this behavior because assertive claims are more consistent with high-status expectations. As such, deferential framing will undermine the social position and perceived expertise of a high-status firm. However, assertive language used by middle-status restaurants to pre-emptively manage audience impressions of the firm will be seen as over-reaching and will be less effective for these firms than deferential framing would be. This leads to a specific hypothesis:

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<sup>54</sup> Had we employed a within-subjects design, we would have risked demand effects, as study participants might have adjusted their answers to fit researcher expectations, cued by comparing across the conditions.

*Hypothesis 1: Status and deference should negatively interact in regards to the effectiveness of impression management.*

*Procedure.* In order to test this argument, we manipulated two factors in this study resulting in a 2 (Status) by 2 (Deference) design. Participants were told that the purpose of the study was to collect information to determine the appropriate value of a gift certificate to be offered in an upcoming raffle. Study participants were first presented with descriptions for each of the rating categories in a restaurant guide (one star through five stars), and then randomly assigned to either a High or Middle-Status condition, serving as the status manipulation described below. After a filler task that involved questions about ambiance, seating location preference, and music preference (to minimize manipulation suspicion and avoid demand effects), participants were once again reminded of the status description of the restaurant. Participants were then presented with a menu of items, the same menu across all conditions. This menu included three standard elite sounding dishes and two comfort food dishes: Hamburger and Macaroni & Cheese. These dishes were selected from menus of actual five star restaurants in the New York City area to ensure external validity. On the top of these menus in bold, participants were either told that the chef would or would not accommodate changes to the menu, serving as the deference manipulation described below. Participants were then asked to provide what they expected patrons of this restaurant would pay for a dinner for two (including appetizers, entrees, drinks, and desserts). Participants were reminded that their evaluation should not be based on their own willingness to pay, but what they *expected others to pay*, ostensibly so we could determine the appropriate value of a gift certificate. This methodological device was employed in order to avoid demand effects and access “third-order beliefs” rather than individual private preference (Ridgeway and Correll 2006). This evaluation of price served as the dependent variable for this study.

*Status manipulation:* Participants were randomly assigned to either the middle-status (three-star) or high-status (five-star) condition.<sup>55</sup> Participants in the middle-status

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<sup>55</sup> The composition of participants that made up each category did not differ on variables like cultural capital (knowledge and interest in food), income, education level, and age. This supports the claim that the condition assignment was in fact random.

condition were told they would be evaluating the three-star restaurant and were reminded about the description of this category:

“The restaurant is known for its inventive American cuisine. It has received a 3 STAR rating (description below):

Three-Star restaurants offer skillfully prepared food with a focus on a specific style or cuisine. Dining room staff provides warm and professional service. The décor is well coordinated with fixtures and decorative items that are of excellent quality and in keeping with the atmosphere. These restaurants include a combination of high-end chains, like Morton's, and high-quality non-chain establishments.”<sup>56</sup>

Similarly, participants assigned to the high-status condition were told that they would be evaluating a five-star restaurant and were reminded of the guide's five-star category description:

“The restaurant offered is known for its inventive American cuisine. It has received a 5 STAR rating, the top rating in the guide (description below): A rare, elite and exclusive group, Five-Star restaurants deliver a flawless dining experience, consistently providing exceptional food, superlative service, elegant décor and exquisite presentations. Every detail that surrounds the experience is attended to.”<sup>57</sup>

This manipulation was chosen to represent actual 3 and 5 star distinctions and to prime participants to evaluate the organization's behavior in context of its status.

*Deference Manipulation:* We manipulated deference, as discussed above, by changing the degree to which the comfort food dishes (hamburger and Macaroni & Cheese) were framed assertively or deferentially for the customer. In this study we used a series of statements based on research related to assertive or deferential framing and compliance at the individual level (Kronrod et al. 2012; Becker et al. 1989). This research

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<sup>56</sup> This description, along with the other four descriptions listed in the menu was a combination of descriptions from the Michelin (<http://www.michelinguide.com/us/guide.html> accessed 8/2/2010) and Mobil (<http://www.forbestravelguide.com/restaurants-channel.htm> accessed 8/2/2010) Online Restaurant Guides.

<sup>57</sup> This description was also taken from the above source.



suggests that the willingness to comply with a suggested activity (customer purchase or individual conforming to a request) can vary based on how assertive (or deferential) the request is. Becker et al. (1989), provide a basic framework in constructing assertive or deferential requests for compliance. Assertive requests are those that come across as a command or a statement (e.g., Eat the food, Enjoy the dishes). Deferential requests use the basic content, but turn the statement into a question (e.g., Will you eat the food?) or express doubt about the outcome (e.g., We hope you enjoy the dishes.). In a separate pre-test we asked subjects to evaluate a series of statement on their level of deference and assertiveness (1=deferential to 7=assertive). We found eight statements that were consistent in the amount of deference (or lack of deference): 4 assertive ( $\alpha=.89$ ) and 4 deferential ( $\alpha=.85$ ) (See Appendix 3-A for the list of statements). Participants were randomly assigned to see one of these statements leading to either a deferential condition or assertive condition.

*Recruitment.* In this study we recruited participants through the Mechanical Turk tool in Amazon. Amazon's Mechanical Turk tool has been used in various studies of this type and has been shown to recruit participants similar to other random sample tools (Berinsky et al. 2011; Buhrmester et al. 2011; Mason and Suri 2011). Because participants self-selected into the study, our participant pool was skewed above population norms to those interested in food and elite restaurants, a better representation of an audience for this category than general population would be. On entering the online survey, participants were randomly assigned to either the Study 2 conditions described above or the Study 3 conditions described below. Thus no participants were able to participate in both studies,<sup>58</sup> ensuring the between subjects design. Overall 644 were recruited and randomly assigned to Study 2. Of these 72, 82, 125, and 126 were randomly assigned to the High-Status/Assertive, High-Status/Deferential, Middle-Status/Assertive, and Middle-Status/Deferential Conditions, respectively. Only those participants that reported to have attended an elite restaurant of three or five-star quality were included in this sample.

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<sup>58</sup> Participants for Study 1 were recruited 6 months prior to recruitment for Studies 2 and 3 and likely participated in many different studies in between. So while it is not clear that there were not repeat participants between the first round of recruitment (Study 1) and the second round (Studies 2 and 3), it is unlikely that this would affect the results.

*Note on the tests.* In Study 1 we test the main effect, whether the expected price is no different in the relevant conditions, using Mann-Whitney (Wilcoxon) U tests (Wilcoxon 1945; Mann and Whitney 1947). This is a non-parametric test that compares the underlying distributions of the two independent groups by summing the ranking of each value in the control and treatment groups. These tests are more efficient estimations where parametric assumptions like normal distribution and equal variance do not hold (Fay and Proschan 2010). Since the values are not normally distributed and the respective variances of these values in each condition are not equal, this test is more appropriate than a simple comparison of means like a t-test, which includes (violated) parametric assumptions. Compared to a t-test, this test should be less influenced by the effects of outliers or fat tails in the distribution. In our study, this amounts to reducing the influence from the overly zealous comfort-food lover (or hater).

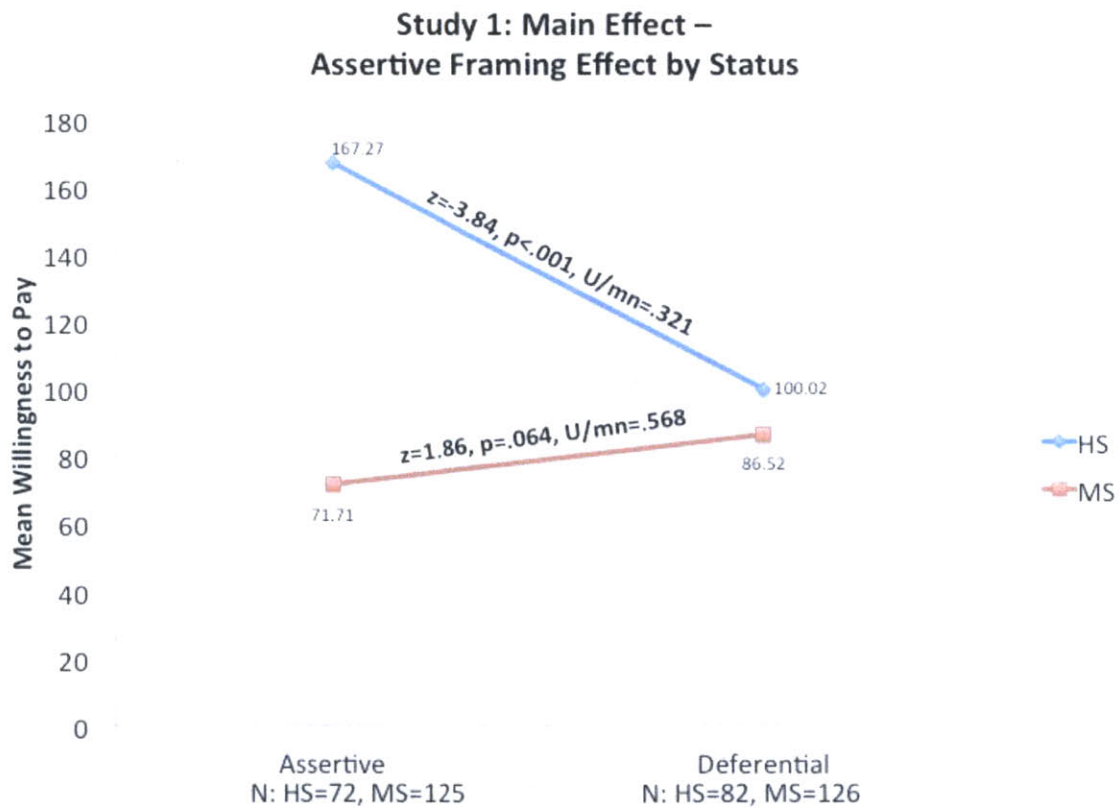


Figure 6 - Study 1: Assertive framing is more effective in the High-Status Condition and less effective in the Middle-Status Condition.

*Study 1 Results.* Figure 6 shows the results for tests comparing the change, at each status level, in expected price at a restaurant that uses a deferential framing of their deviant activity as opposed to a more assertive framing of these activities. In the *high-status conditions*, the underlying distribution of expected price for a restaurant in the High-Status/Deferential condition (N=82, mean=100.02) was significantly *lower* (U/mn=.321,  $z=-3.84$ ,  $p<.001$ ) than for the High-Status/Assertive condition (N=72, mean=167.27). In the *middle-status conditions*, the underlying distribution of expected price for a restaurant in the Middle-Status/Deferential condition (N=126, 86.52) was significantly *higher* (U/mn=.568,  $z=2.011$ ,  $p=.064$ ) than for the Middle-Status/Assertive condition (N=125, 71.71).

*Study 1 Discussion.* Study 1 shows that the status of the restaurant influences the relative effectiveness of verbal accounts that differ on amount of deference shown to the audience. The key finding validates our argument that the status of an organization (positively) negatively interacts with the (assertiveness) deference shown in managing audience impressions. The high-status restaurant is more effective at managing impressions when it employs more assertive statements and the middle-status restaurant is more effective when it employs more deferential statements. This evidence supports our claim that the higher relative status of an organization can positively influence audience interpretation of deviant activity when the organization uses an assertive framing of the activity, but this advantage can be undermined when the framing is more deferential to the customer. In a second part to this study, we use mediation analysis to further explore the interaction between assertive manner and status and show how perceived confidence in an organization's capability mediates this relationship.

#### Study 1a – Mediation Analysis: Perceived Confidence and Skill Predicts WTP

The purpose of Study 1 was to establish the negative relationship between status and deference in the effectiveness of impression management tactics. In the second part to this study we will answer why this is the case by evaluating the factors that mediate this relationship. In the theory section, we proposed that assertive framing of deviant activities fit with expectations of a high-status firm, and therefore, is more effective for

these types of firms. If it is the case that the underlying force behind this relationship is the perceived (mis)alignment between status and displays of deference that lead to audience penalty for high-status actors, then we should see that assertive displays are perceived differently depending on the status of the firm. In the context of a high-status actor, one who has an established pattern of elite levels of performance, an assertive display will be read as a sign of confidence and an assurance that capability will not be compromised even while engaging in these erstwhile deviant acts. In ambiguous contexts, assertive actors are often accepted as having high competence when their claims are supported by another party (Ridgeway and Correll 2006; Ridgeway and Diekema 1989; Chase 1980). Those with established high ranking, like five-star restaurants, have received this support. Therefore, assertive framing of the deviant activity will increase perceptions of confidence and skill for the high-status actor, when compared to deferential framing, because assertiveness is consistent with expectations of actors at this elite level.

*H2a: Assertive framing by high-status actors will lead to higher perceptions of confidence and skill, more effective impression management when compared to deferential framing.*

However, when actors without such a reputation or established pattern of performance attempt to be assertive, this behavior should backfire (Leifer 1988). No longer will it be seen as a sign of confidence or skill, but as a sign of defensiveness, covering up for deviant activity. Therefore, for the middle-status actor, assertive framing will lead to lower levels of perceived confidence and skill – resulting in less effective impression management.

*H2b: Assertive framing by middle-status actors will lead to lower perceptions of confidence and skill, less effective impression management when compared to deferential framing.*

*Procedure.* After answering the willingness to pay question analyzed in Study 1, participants were asked a series of questions about their perceptions of the restaurant based on the menu of items and the language used on the menu. Participants were asked to rate on a scale from 1 (low) to 7 (high) on a series of variables that served as the

mediating variables we would evaluate for this study. For the variable related to perceived confidence in skill, participants were asked: how confident the restaurant seemed in their ability to execute elite dishes and how skilled the chef seemed to be (Chronbach’s Alpha=.81). To assess whether it was a matter of perceived language fit with the assertive or deferential language used in the condition, participants were also asked how surprised they were at the language used on the menu. These variables were used as the intermediated dependent variables in mediation analysis with the willingness to pay variable once again used as the ultimate dependent variable.

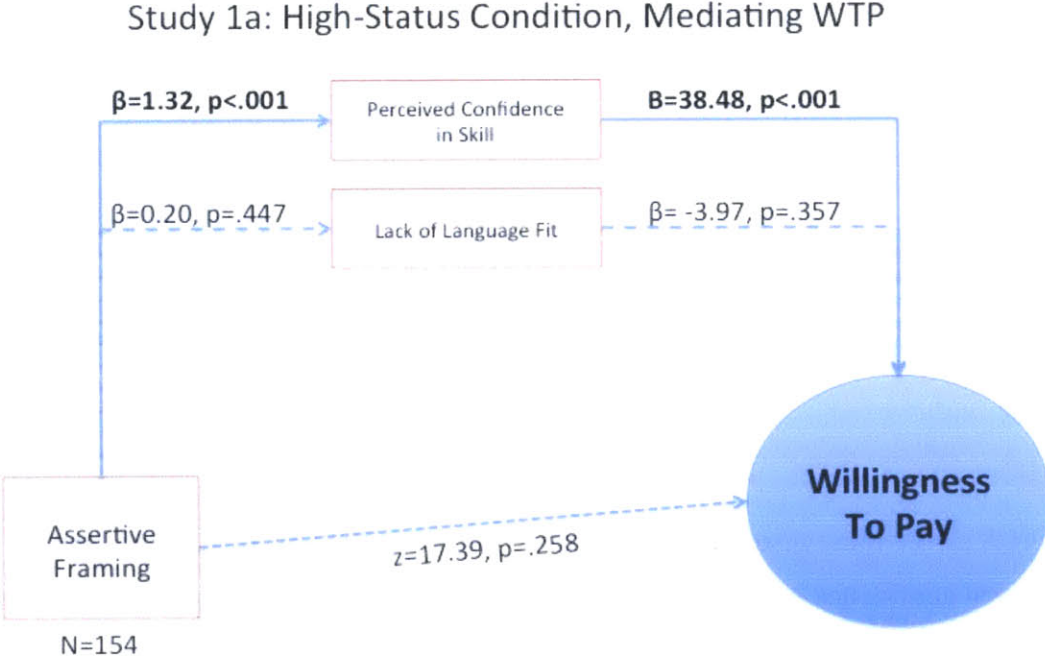


Figure 7 - Study 1a High-status condition, mediation analysis. Assertive framing increases perceived confidence in the restaurant's ability, which increases impression management effectiveness (willingness to pay).

*Study 1a Results.* Figure 7 shows the results of the mediation analysis for the relationship between assertive framing of deviance and impression management effectiveness in the High-Status Condition. In the High-Status Condition, assertive framing of deviance increases the audience perceptions of the restaurant’s confidence in skill (b=1.32, p<.001), which in turn increases (b=38.48, p<.001) the effectiveness of

impression management (i.e., willingness to pay). Conversely, the surprise at the type of language variable had no effect on willingness to pay ( $b=-3.97$ ,  $p=.357$ ) and was not affected by the different language conditions ( $b=0.02$ ,  $p=.447$ ).

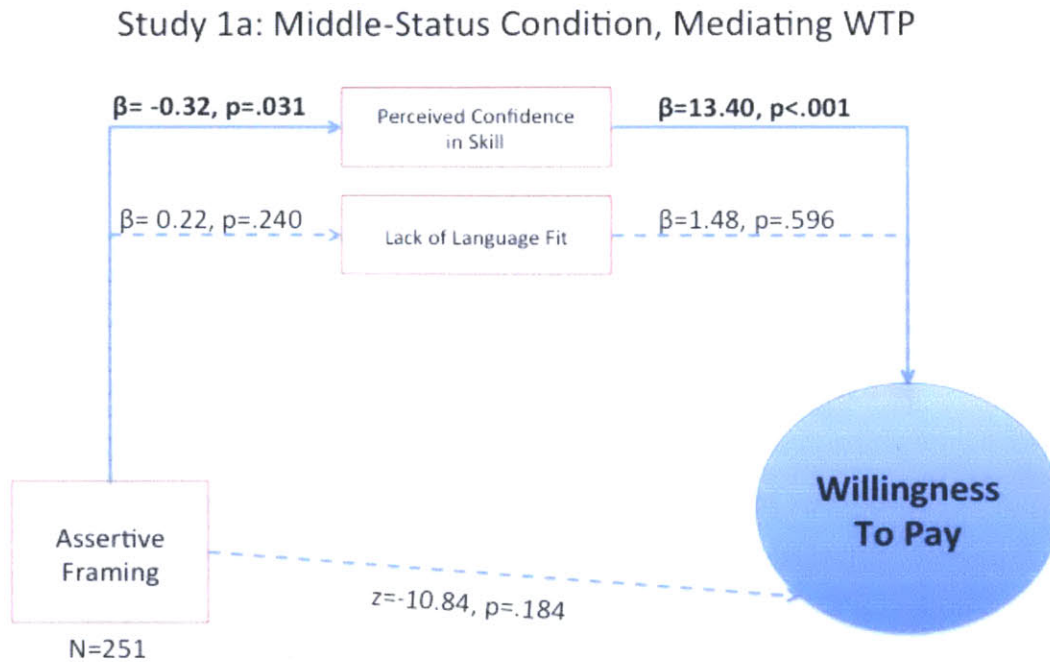


Figure 8 - Study 1a Middle-Status Condition, mediation analysis. Unlike the high-status condition, middle-status restaurants are perceived to have less confidence when they use assertive framing, which reduces impression management effectiveness (wtp).

Figure 8 shows these results for the Middle-Status Condition. It is still the case that perceived confidence increases ( $b=13.40$ ,  $p<.001$ ) impression management effectiveness. However, in this Middle-Status condition, the assertive framing *decreases* the perceived confidence ( $b=-0.32$ ,  $p=.031$ ) in the restaurant's ability to deliver elite dishes. Once again, the surprise at the type of language variable had no effect on willingness to pay ( $b=1.48$ ,  $p=.596$ ) and was not affected by the different language conditions ( $b=0.22$ ,  $p=.240$ ).

*Study 1a Discussion.* These results show that assertive framing of deviance is interpreted differently depending on the status of the actor in question. Assertive framing by the higher-status actor is perceived as a sign of confidence in one's ability. However,



assertive framing has a negative effect on perceptions of confidence for a less elite firm. This evidence supports our claim that actors are more effective at impression management for deviant activity when they align their tactics or manner of framing the deviance with audience expectations of an actor in that status level. Both the high and middle-status restaurants are valued more highly when they come across as confident. However, while assertiveness is interpreted as confidence in the high-status case, it is not as readily accepted in the middle-status case, and shows of deference come across as more confident in these cases.

### Study 2 – Perceived Effort and Impression Management Effectiveness

This final study addresses the role that perceived effort plays in the effectiveness of impression management. While analyses from Study 1 have shown that high-status actors benefit from an assertive framing of erstwhile deviant activity, we still might ask if there is any limit to this positive relationship between assertiveness and status. In other words, it is not clear whether it is the assertiveness that the audience is responding to or the fit with expectations. If it is merely the case that being assertive is all that is needed, then we should see increasing benefits from increasing levels of assertiveness for high-status actors. However, it is our contention that the assertive manner of impression management is effective for high-status actors because it fits with audience expectations for such actors, increasing perceived confidence in their ability. Instead of increasing benefits to increasing levels of assertiveness, the high-status actor can depart from expectations by incorporating too much effort in framing their deviant activity. In this way, a high-status organization can seem to “protest too much”<sup>59</sup> if it is perceived to go over-the-top in trying to fit with status expectations. This is consistent with the idea that status is not just a matter of performance, but of appearance as well (Bourdieu 1984:e.g., 5; Johnston and Baumann 2007). Displaying effort is not consistent with high-status

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<sup>59</sup> The phrase “protest too much” comes from William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* in which the Queen responds to Hamlet’s inquiry about a play they are watching by saying, “The lady doth protest too much, methinks.” (Shakespeare 2010:II.iii.230) She is telling Hamlet that the actor playing the woman in question is trying too hard, or displaying too much effort to act like a woman. At the time, women did not act in plays, so the apparent over-feminization (and over-compensation) of the actor undermined the goal of convincing the Queen that the actor portrayed a female, and, rather, reminded her that there was an underlying mismatch (Macrone 1990).

expectations and will be seen as trying too hard to appear as if one fits the expectations. Increasing the amount of assertive statements should be seen as showing too much effort. By protesting too much, in this way, the framing moves from reinforcing the firm's fit with status expectations to seeming less confident in its ability. Showing too much effort should reduce the perceived confidence in the firm's ability and be less effective in managing audience impressions of high quality.

*Hypothesis 3: Increasing the amount of assertive framing will increase perceptions of effort, which will reduce perceptions of confidence and reduce impression management effectiveness.*

*Procedure.* Participants for this study, an independent sample collected concurrently with the Study 1 sample, followed the same exact procedure as Study 1, except that they were all presented with a 5-Star (high-status) restaurant. The key manipulation was the amount of assertive statements used to frame the inclusion of comfort food dishes (described below). Participants were randomly assigned to see a menu with one assertive statement, or a combination of two, three, four or five assertive statements. This meant a 1 (High-Status) by 5 (amount of assertive statements) condition design.

*Assertiveness Amount Manipulation:* Participants were presented with the same menus as in Study 1, except at the bottom of the menu there was either one assertive statement about the comfort food or a combination of assertive statements varying from 2 to 5 statements at maximum. Four of the assertive statements were the same as those used in Study 1 (see Appendix 3-A), but the fifth was an additional assertive statement: Try the chef's comfort food selections (the overall alpha on level of assertiveness for these five statements was .77). The statements were counterbalanced such that each statement was randomly placed in the first, second, third, fourth or fifth slot. For instance, assertive statement 1 was placed by itself, with another statement in the first or second slot, with two others in the first, second, or third slot, and so on. This meant that the effect between each condition cannot be attributed to the addition or removal of any statement in particular.

*Recruitment.* As described above, subjects were recruited at the same time as Study 2 and randomly assigned to either Study 2 or Study 3 conditions. Overall 355



number of participants were assigned to the Study 3 conditions and 67, 67, 67, 75, and 79 were assigned to the One, Two, Three, Four and Five Assertive Statement Conditions, respectively.

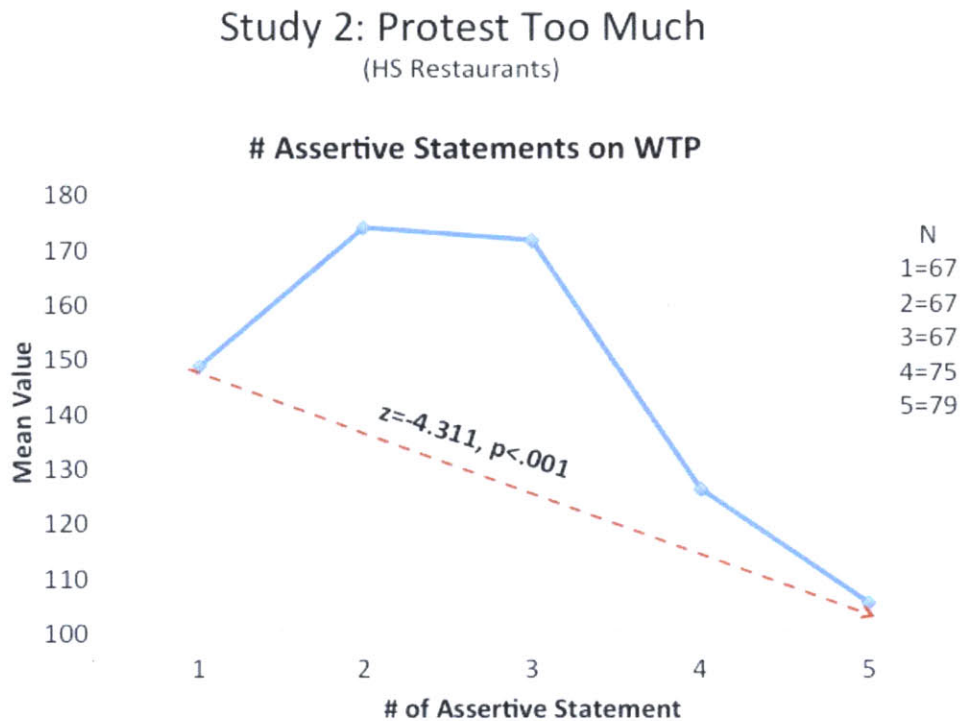


Figure 9 - Study 2: The more assertive statements made by a high-status actor, the less effective they are at managing audience impressions. There seems to be a curvilinear relationship between number of assertive statements and effectiveness.

*Study 2 Results:* Figure 9 shows the means for each condition and the results of a test (Mann-Whitney U Test) comparing the difference between the One Assertive Statement Condition and the Five Assertive Statement Condition. The underlying distribution of expected price for a restaurant in the One Assertive Statement condition (N=67, mean=148.05) was significantly *higher* ( $z=-4.311, p<.001$ ) than a restaurant in the Five Assertive Statement Condition (N=79, mean=104.94).

Figure 10 shows the results of mediation analysis showing the effect of the perceived amount of effort on perceptions of confidence and willingness to pay. Increasing the amount of assertive statements *increases* ( $b=0.44, p<.001$ ) the perception of effort. Increasing perceptions of effort lead to *decreases* ( $b=-0.46, p<.001$ ) in

perceptions of confidence in skill, which again *increase* ( $b=34.97, p<.001$ ) willingness to pay (impression management effectiveness). While perceived effort also increases ( $b=0.49, p<.001$ ) the surprise at the language used in the condition, lack of language fit does not have an effect ( $b=1.81, p=.739$ ) on the willingness to pay.

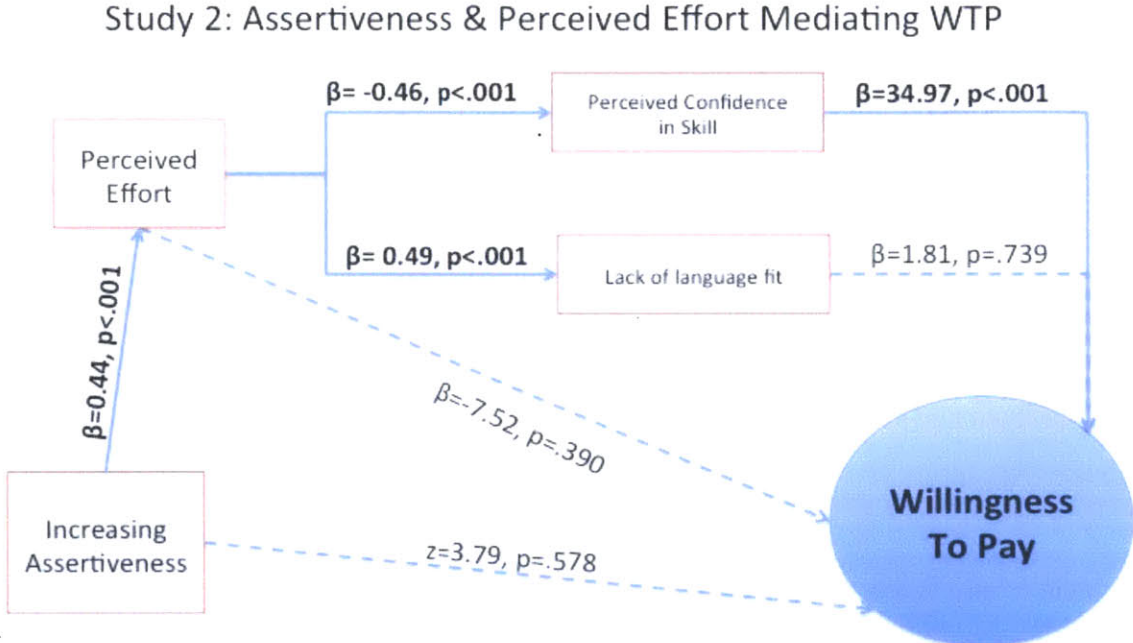


Figure 10 - Study 2 mediation analysis. The more assertive statements a high-status actor uses, the more effort they are perceived to be employing in addressing the deviant activity. Increased effort leads to decreased perceptions of confidence, reducing impression management effectiveness (wtp).

*Study 2 Discussion:* These results serve as evidence in support of the claim that increased perceptions of effort will lead to decreases in perceptions of confidence and reduce impression management effectiveness. Assertive framing of deviance is consistent with expectations of a high-status actor, but when an actor engages in this framing through too much effort, it reduces the effectiveness of this style to the point where it is detrimental to the impression management. Instead of looking more like a high-status actor, increasing the amount of assertive statements leads an audience to doubt the actor's underlying quality, raising concerns about the actor's confidence in its own ability to execute at an elite level.

## **Discussion**

The question that motivated this paper was how status influenced the effectiveness of impression management. We studied this relationship in the context of elective deviant behavior, in which a firm chooses to deviate from business as usual, but pre-emptively attempts to manage impressions related to this deviation. The status of the firm, like other social cues, affects the way audiences interpret behaviors in which the actor engages. Results from three experiments show that high-status actors are more effective at managing audience impressions of quality when they frame their behavior in a more assertive way. This assertive framing is consistent with high-status expectations and increases the perceived confidence the actor has in its skills to execute at high levels of quality. However, when a middle-status actor employs the same impression management tools while engaging in the same type of deviance, the audience interprets this as a sign of lack of confidence, resulting in lower perceptions of quality than if the middle-status actor had been more deferential in its framing of the deviant activity. Finally, consistent with the idea that audiences do not expect high-status actors to show too much effort in addressing their deviant activity, there is a curvilinear affect on the amount of assertiveness used in framing the activity. Initially, assertive framing leads to increased perceptions of confidence and more effective impression management. However, as the quantity of assertive reassurances increase, the perceived effort increases, reducing the perceptions of confidence and reducing the effectiveness of impression management. In all, the effectiveness of impression management tactics is

contingent on the status of the actor; the better they meet status expectations, the more effective they are in managing audience perceptions of high quality.

This research has important implications for firm behavior, indicating the types of activities a firm can use to differentiate. Audiences evaluate firms based on the activities in which they engage and allocate resources based on perceptions of quality. Research on firm status has shown that firms are, at times, limited in their ability to engage in certain activities. In particular, activities that are more closely associated with low-status actors are off limits if a firm wants to maintain audience perceptions of high quality. Low-status deviance potentially raises questions about a firm's ability to execute at high levels of quality because these activities are often easier to execute and do not distinguish them from the unvalued, lower-quality types. However, if a firm can manage audience perceptions such that these activities are seen as consistent with high quality expectations, this creates an opportunity to engage in activities for which other elite firms (competitors) might be penalized. The more effective a firm is at managing audience perceptions of erstwhile deviant activities, the larger the range of activities that firm can engage in without audience penalty and the more ability they have to differentiate from competitors.

The extant literature on organizational impression management ignores the role that an organization's status plays in influencing audience perceptions of firm quality. This paper addresses this gap by arguing and showing that effective impression management is contingent on the status of the firm. Previous literature has shown that firms are more effective at managing audience impressions when they address the deviant activity and embed it in existing institutional frames (Elsbach 1994; M. Arndt and Bigelow 2000). However, this paper shows that merely addressing the behavior is not enough. Firms looking to manage audience impressions effectively must meet status expectations with the manner in which they frame the erstwhile deviant activity. If high-status firms break from status expectations by showing more deference to their audience, they will be less effective than if they maintain a high-status image by framing the activity in a more assertive way.

These findings also contribute to literature on organizational status. It has long been documented that actors of higher status levels receive benefits that those who are

lower-status do not (Merton 1968). One of these advantages was the privilege to cross category boundaries with impunity (Phillips and Zuckerman 2001). Recent work has shown and argued that, in the default case, audiences are more willing to overlook categorical infractions by high-status firms when the deviant activity only threatens the perceived capability of an actor (Phillips et al. 2013). However, this only holds if the organization, or social actor, is not perceived to be protesting too much in reminding the audience that it should be treated as an elite actor. By expressing too much deference or effort, the high-status actor undermines his elite position. This supports the idea that status not only influences audience interpretation of activities, but also the effectiveness of the accounts used to justify such deviant activities.

This paper also contributes to research on how organizational status influences audience interpretation of deviant activities. Various lines of research have highlighted a positive relationship between assertive behavior and actor status (e.g., Chase 1980; Gould 2002; cf., Ridgeway and Diekema 1989). High-status actors are expected to engage in assertive behavior (Bargiela-Chiappini and S. J. Harris 1996; Vollbrecht et al. 1997; cf., Hahl and Zuckerman 2012) and are more effective when they request (Becker et al. 1989; Goldsmith and MacGeorge 2000; cf., Kronrod et al. 2012). This paper is the first to show that status influences the perceptions of confidence in one's ability communicated by assertive framing of deviant activity. Not only is assertive behavior consistent with expectations of high-status actors, but it increases perceptions of the actor's confidence in its ability to execute at high levels of quality. This relationship is flipped for the middle-status actor. When these actors frame their activities with assertive statements, they are seen to be less confident in their ability. Once again, this evidence supports the claim that impression management effectiveness is contingent on the status of the organization and that effective impression management is the result of meeting status expectations held by the audience.

Finally, this research supports Bourdieu's (1984) conception of status as being as much about appearance as any objective measures of performance. Elite firms are more effective at managing audience impressions of potentially deviant behavior when their impression management strategies do not undermine their perceived social position. In our study, the five-star restaurant were less effective at getting audiences to accept the

comfort foods as part of an elite menu when they presented these dishes in a more deferential way, less committed and assertive. By not appearing with the confidence and surety expected of an elite restaurant, these activities undermined the five star ranking these restaurants had established. Thus perceptions of quality are not just about past performance, but continued consistency with the style and manner expected of those in such lofty social positions. Firms are more effective at managing audience impressions when their style of approaching their audience is consistent with status expectations.



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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1-A – MLB New Stadium Construction History

<u>Era</u>	<u>Ballpark Name (at opening)</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Teams</u>	<u>Year Opened</u>
Classic	Baker Bowl	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	Phillies	1895
Classic	Sportsman's Park	St. Louis, Missouri	Browns	1909
Classic	Shibe Park	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	Athletics, Phillies	1909
Classic	Forbes Field	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	Pirates	1909
Classic	League Park	Cleveland, Ohio	Indians	1910
Classic	Comiskey Park	Chicago, Illinois	White Sox	1910
Classic	National Park	Washington, D.C.	Senators	1911
Classic	Fenway Park	Boston, Massachusetts	Red Sox, Braves	1912
Classic	Crosley Field	Cincinnati, Ohio	Reds	1912
Classic	Navin Field	Detroit, Michigan	Tigers	1912
Classic	Polo Grounds	Manhattan, New York City	Giants, Yankees, Mets	1912
Classic	Ebbets Field	Brooklyn, New York City	Dodgers	1913
Classic	Wrigley Field	Chicago, Illinois	Cubs	1914
Classic	Braves Field	Boston, Massachusetts	Braves	1915
Stadium	Yankee Stadium	Bronx, New York City	Yankees	1923
Stadium	Cleveland Municipal Stadium	Cleveland, Ohio	Indians	1931
Stadium	Milwaukee County Stadium	Milwaukee, Wisconsin	Braves, Brewers	1953
Stadium	Memorial Stadium	Baltimore, Maryland	Orioles	1950
Stadium	Kansas City Municipal Stadium	Kansas City, Missouri	Athletics	1955
Stadium	Candlestick Park	San Francisco, California	Giants	1960
Stadium	Metropolitan Stadium	Bloomington, Minnesota	Twins	1956
Stadium	Dodger Stadium	Los Angeles, California	Dodgers, Angels	1962
Super Stadium	D.C. Stadium	Washington, D.C.	Senators, Nationals	1961
Super Stadium	Shea Stadium	Queens, New York City	Mets	1964
Super Stadium/Dome	Astrodome	Houston, Texas	Astros	1962
Super Stadium	Anaheim Stadium	Anaheim, California	Angels	1966
Super Stadium	Oakland Coliseum	Oakland, California	Athletics	1968
Super Stadium	Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium	Atlanta, Georgia	Braves	1966
Super Stadium	Busch Memorial Stadium	St. Louis, Missouri	Cardinals	1966
Super Stadium	San Diego Stadium	San Diego, California	Padres	1967
Super Stadium	Riverfront Stadium	Cincinnati, Ohio	Reds	1970
Super Stadium	Three Rivers Stadium	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	Pirates	1970
Super Stadium	Veterans Stadium	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	Phillies	1971
Super Stadium	Kauffman Stadium	Kansas City, Missouri	Royals	1973
Super Stadium/Dome	Olympic Stadium	Montreal, Quebec	Expos	1976
Super Stadium/Dome	Kingdome	Seattle, Washington	Mariners	1976
Super Stadium/Dome	Metrodome	Minneapolis, Minnesota	Twins	1982
Super Stadium/Dome	Sky Dome	Toronto, Ontario	Blue Jays	1989
Super Stadium/Dome	Florida Suncoast Dome	St. Petersburg, Florida	Rays	1990
Super Stadium	New Comiskey Park	Chicago, Illinois	White Sox	1991
Retro	Oriole Park at Camden Yards	Baltimore, Maryland	Orioles	1992
Retro	Jacobs Field	Cleveland, Ohio	Indians	1994
Retro	Rangers Ballpark in Arlington	Arlington, Texas	Rangers	1994
Retro	Coors Field	Denver, Colorado	Rockies	1995
Retro	Turner Field	Atlanta, Georgia	Braves	1996
Retro	Edison Int'l. Field of Anaheim	Anaheim, California	Angels	1998
Retro/Dome	Chase Field	Phoenix, Arizona	Diamondbacks	1998
Retro/Dome	Safeco Field	Seattle, Washington	Mariners	1999
Retro	Comerica Park	Detroit, Michigan	Tigers	2000
Retro	Pacific Bell Park	San Francisco, California	Giants	2000
Retro	The Ballpark at Union Station/Enron Field	Houston, Texas	Astros	2000
Retro/Dome	Miller Park	Milwaukee, Wisconsin	Brewers	2001
Retro	PNC Park	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	Pirates	2001
Retro	Great American Ball Park	Cincinnati, Ohio	Reds	2003
Retro	Citizens Bank Park	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	Phillies	2004
Retro	PETCO Park	San Diego, California	Padres	2004
Retro	Busch Stadium	St. Louis, Missouri	Cardinals	2006

## APPENDIX 1-B – Archival Newspaper Data Sources

City	Opening/Clo	Ballpark	Type	Dates	Newspaper	Collection Process
Cincinnati	Opening	Redland Field (Crosley Field)	Classic Era	4/1-4/30/1912	Cincinnati Enquirer	Library of Congress Archived Newspaper collection
	Closing	Crosley Field Closing	Classic Era	1968-1972	Cincinnati Enquirer	Cincinnati Public Library Search System
				1968-1972	Cincinnati Post	
	Opening	Riverfront Stadium	Super Stadium Era	1968-1972	Cincinnati Enquirer	Cincinnati Public Library Search System
				1968-1972	Cincinnati Post	
Closing	Riverfront Stadium	Super Stadium Era	9/15-9/30/2002	Cincinnati Enquirer	Library of Congress Archived Newspaper collection	
Opening	Great American Ballpark	Retro Ballpark	3/15-4/15/2003	Cincinnati Enquirer	Library of Congress Archived Newspaper collection	
Philadelphia	Opening	Shibe Park	Classic Era	1908-1910	Philadelphia Inquirer	Philadelphia Library Online Newspaper Archive Search
	Closing	Connie Mack Stadium (Shibe Park)	Classic Era	9/15-10/15/1970	Philadelphia Inquirer	Philadelphia Public Library Newspaper Archive
				9/15-10/15/1970	Philadelphia Daily News	Philadelphia Public Library Newspaper Archive
	Opening	Veterans Stadium	Super Stadium Era	4/1-30/1971	Philadelphia Inquirer	Philadelphia Public Library Newspaper Archive
				4/1-30/1971	Philadelphia Daily News	Philadelphia Public Library Newspaper Archive
	Closing	Veterans Stadium	Super Stadium Era	9/15-10/15/2003	Philadelphia Inquirer	Philadelphia Library Online Newspaper Archive Search
				9/15-10/15/2003	Philadelphia Daily News	Philadelphia Library Online Newspaper Archive Search
Opening	Citizens Bank Park	Retro Ballpark	4/1-4/15/2003	Philadelphia Inquirer	Philadelphia Library Online Newspaper Archive Search	
			4/1-4/15/2003	Philadelphia Daily News	Philadelphia Library Online Newspaper Archive Search	
Pittsburgh	Opening	Forbes Field	Classic Era	6/15-7/15/1909	Pittsburg Post-Gazette	Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh Newspaper Archive
				6/15-7/15/1909	Pittsburg Press	Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh Newspaper Archive
	Closing	Forbes Field	Classic Era	6/15-7/15/1970	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette	Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh Newspaper Archive
				6/15-7/15/1970	Pittsburgh Press	Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh Newspaper Archive
	Opening	Three Rivers Stadium	Super Stadium	7/1-7/30/1970	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette	Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh Newspaper Archive
			7/1-7/30/1970	Pittsburgh Press	Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh Newspaper Archive	
Closing	Three Rivers Stadium	Super Stadium	9/15-10/15/2000	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette	Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh Newspaper Archive	
Opening	PNC Park	Retro Ballpark	4/1-4/15/2001	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette	Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh Newspaper Archive	
St. Louis	Opening	Sportsman's Park	Classic Era	4/1-4/30/1909	St. Louis Post-Dispatch	Library of Congress Archived Newspaper collection
	Closing	Busch Stadium (Sportsman's Park)	Classic Era	5/1-5/15/1966	St. Louis Post-Dispatch	Library of Congress Archived Newspaper collection
		Busch Memorial Stadium	Super Stadium	5/1-5/30/1966	St. Louis Post-Dispatch	Library of Congress Archived Newspaper collection
		Busch Memorial Stadium	Super Stadium	10/1-10/30/2006	St. Louis Post-Dispatch	Library of Congress Archived Newspaper collection
		Busch Stadium (III)	Retro Ballpark	4/1-4/15/2006	St. Louis Post-Dispatch	Library of Congress Archived Newspaper collection
New York	Opening	Yankee Stadium	Stadium	4/14-4/22/1923	New York Times	ProQuest Historical New York Times (1851-2008)
Los Angeles	Opening	Dodger Stadium	Stadium	4/6-4/14/1962	Los Angeles Times	ProQuest Historical Los Angeles Times (1881-1988)
Dallas	Opening	The Ballpark at Arlington	Retro Ballpark	3/25-4/8/1994	Dallas Morning News	ProQuest Research Library (ProQuest Newspapers)
Chicago	Opening	Comiskey Park	Classic Era	1909-1911	Chicago Tribune	ProQuest Historical Chicago Tribune (1849-1988)

**Appendix 1-C – Article Counts By City, Theme, and Style Era**

% Articles (N)	Size			Propriety or “the way things should be”		
	Classic	Super	Retro	Classic	Super	Retro
Philadelphia	87.5% (8)	71.4% (21)	7.1% (14)	12.5% (8)	4.8% (21)	64.3% (14)
Pittsburgh	75.0% (12)	65.2% (23)	0% (16)	0% (12)	0% (23)	56.3% (16)
Cincinnati	66.7% (12)	52.0% (25)	5.6% (18)	0% (12)	8.0% (25)	66.7% (18)
St. Louis	71.4% (7)	61.1% (18)	9.5% (21)	0% (7)	0% (18)	61.9% (21)
TOTAL	74.4% (39)	62.1% (87)	5.8% (69)	2.6% (39)	3.4% (87)	62.3% (69)

Table 9 - Percentage of articles by “Era” and city that make a comparative statement using Size or Propriety to justify the new ballpark. For comparison sake, only those articles that were in the newspaper up to one week before or after were included in the sample.

% Articles (N)	Modernity			Tradition/History		
	Classic	Super	Retro	Classic	Super	Retro
Philadelphia	75.0% (8)	57.1% (21)	7.1% (14)	12.5% (8)	4.8% (21)	64.3% (14)
Pittsburgh	58.3% (12)	78.3% (23)	6.3% (16)	0% (12)	21.7% (23)	62.5% (16)
Cincinnati	75.0% (12)	76.0% (25)	11.1% (18)	0% (12)	4.0% (25)	66.7% (18)
St. Louis	57.1% (7)	66.7% (18)	23.8% (21)	0% (7)	16.7% (18)	76.2% (21)
TOTAL	66.7% (39)	70.1% (87)	13.0% (69)	2.6% (39)	11.5% (87)	68.1% (69)

Table 10 - Percentage of articles by “Era” and city that make a comparative statement using Modernity or Tradition and History to justify the new ballpark. For comparison sake, only those articles that were in the newspaper up to one week before or after were included in the sample.

% Articles (N)	Revitalizing the City			Restoring the City		
	Classic	Super	Retro	Classic	Super	Retro
Philadelphia	87.5% (8)	71.4% (21)	14.3% (14)	0.0% (8)	0.0% (21)	50.0% (14)
Pittsburgh	58.3% (12)	52.2% (23)	25.0% (16)	0.0% (12)	0.0% (23)	56.3% (16)
Cincinnati	41.7% (12)	64.0% (25)	11.1% (18)	0.0% (12)	0.0% (25)	55.6% (18)
St. Louis	42.9% (7)	83.3% (18)	23.8% (21)	0.0% (7)	0.0% (18)	57.1% (21)
TOTAL	56.4% (39)	66.7% (87)	18.8% (69)	0.0% (39)	0.0% (87)	55.1% (69)

Table 11 - Percentage of articles by “Era” and city that make a comparative statement using language that seeks to revitalize the city or to restore the city in order to justify the new ballpark. For comparison sake, only those articles that were in the newspaper up to one week before or after were included in the sample.

## **Appendix 1-D – Coding and Inter-Rater Reliability Scores**

### *Coding Process*

I followed a process of inductively deriving themes from articles similar to the processes described in other qualitative work (Charmaz 2006; Jenkins and Perrow 1977). I began by searching for articles that were tagged with the words baseball, stadium, ballpark, or Major Leagues from *The Cincinnati Enquirer* from three separate ranges of years: 1911-12, 1967-1972, 1997-2003. These years were selected for their proximity to the announcement, construction and opening of the three new ballparks built in the twentieth century for the city's team. This search, with the aid of the Cincinnati Public Library's research team, resulted in 1,672 articles. I quickly sorted these articles to find that 105 of them were about the closing or opening of new ballparks in the city. After reading these 105 articles, I began to notice themes about the ballparks in each of the periods. I then narrowed the search to a two-week period (one week prior and one week after) around the opening and closing of the ballparks and repeated this process for each of the cities' major newspapers listed in Appendix 1-B.

As described, in the paper and Appendices, the major themes that cohered across this whole sample were size, modernity, city revitalization, fit with "the way things should be", tradition, and city restoration. Articles could have more than one theme. If an article used a type of justification (e.g., tradition) it was counted once even if it used this theme many times throughout the article. A single article could be counted in multiple themes depending on how many themes it used to justify the ballpark's style change. If the article made a statement that described why the new ballpark (or old ballpark) was better than what it replaced (or was worse than what was to come), the reason used was coded. All articles coded made at least one of these statements and many made more than



one of these statements. This process of analysis is similar to previous work using newspaper content analysis to evaluate changing patterns of justifications (Boltanski and Chiapello 1999; cf., Boltanski and Thevenot 2006).

#### *Inter-Rater Reliability Rating Process and Score*

I used Amazon's Mechanical Turk tool to test the reliability of my coding. This meant that raters were unknown to me and had no training from me on how I expected them to code. I numbered all of the 221 articles counted for Tables 4, 5, and 6 in Appendix 1-C and 60 more articles across football, and other stadiums and eras. I then, through a random number generator, created 22 unique numbers that corresponded to 22 articles. In other words, the articles selected to test my coding were randomly selected. The result was 4 articles from the Classic Era, 2 from the Stadium Era, 5 from the Super Stadium Era, 6 from the Retro Era, 3 about New Comiskey Park, and 2 about the NFL stadiums discussed in the paper. Workers on Mechanical Turk were asked to click on a link, read the article, and then answer three questions about the article. The first two questions were used to test how closely the workers had read the article: "what sport is this article about" and "what is the topic of this article". These were open-ended questions. Only those workers who answered these questions correctly were kept in the sample (Mason and Suri 2011). Workers were then given a list of 8 words and asked to select the words that best described the major themes in the article (they could select all that they felt applied). The eight words include the six themes discussed above and the words: delicious and blue (nonsense words also used to weed out those who did not pay attention). Those asked to re-code the New Comiskey Park articles were presented asked

to describe whether the article seemed negative about the new ballpark and then asked to similarly pick from a list of words including greed, money, location, design, and layout.

Each article was reviewed by three unique workers, which meant that there were 66 unique observations across the 22 articles. Observations were coded as “correct” if workers reported at least one theme the same as was coded by the author and did not report any of the opposing themes (i.e., if they reported modernity for an article originally coded as tradition, then it was coded as incorrect. The overall score, as reported above was .879, meaning that 58/66 observations fit with the author’s coding. All of the 22 articles were coded the same by the author and at least two of the workers. Overall 13 of the 22 articles were coded the same by the author and all three workers and the remaining 9 of the 22 articles were coded the same by two of the three workers.

## **APPENDIX 2-A**

**Status Questions:** *Chronbach's alpha = .848*

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

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

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

**“considerateness” questions:** *Chronbach's Alpha = .813*

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

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

**“authenticity” questions:** *Chronbach's alpha = .775*

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

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

## **Appendix 2-B (Study 2)**

**Answers prior to discussion:**

**S2 Male:** Black

**Q2 Male:** White

**Answers AFTER discussion:**

**S2 Male:** Black

**S2 Male:** Black

**Commentator:**

Agree with final answer.

No status condition: 4 disagreements, 2 times Q2 defer to S2, 2 times S2 defer to Q2

Status Condition: 3 disagreements, 3 times S2 defer to Q2

## **Appendix 2-C (Studies 1 and 3)**

### **Plain-Assertive (Study 1)**

Condition Dialogue for Disagreement 1:

Q2 Male: I am pretty sure black covers the most space.

S2 Male: I thought it might be white. Are you sure?

Q2 Male: It feels right – let's say black.

S2 Male: OK

Commentator: I agree with Q2, let's choose black.

### **Pro-Social Assertive (Study 3)**

Condition Dialogue for Disagreement 1:

Q2 Male: I am pretty sure black covers the most space.

S2 Male: I thought it might be white. Are you sure?

Q2 Male: Why did you think white?

S2 Male: It seemed like there was a chunk of white right in the middle that stuck out to me.

Q2 Male: I can see that logic. But measuring on the middle might be misleading because your eyes will be drawn to the big chunks of color. I chose black because there were long strips of it along the sides. Does that make sense?

S2 Male: Yes, that makes sense. It sounds good, let's choose black.

Commentator: I agree with Q2, let's choose black.

## Appendix 2-D (Study 3)

### Incentives Condition

#### **Intro to the Team Task**

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

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

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

### No Incentives Condition

#### **Intro to the Team Task**

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

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

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

**Appendix 2-E – Results from Studies 1 and 2 for Deferring (Low-Status) Audience**

	Study 1		Study 2			
	Deferring Audience (S2)		Deferring Audience (S2)			
	N	19	No Deference 23		With Deference 32	
	Target (Q2)	Deferring (S2)	Target (Q2)	Deferring (S2)	Target (Q2)	Deferring (S2)
Status Quartile 1	5.00	3.00	4.00	4.33	4.00	3.33
Status Quartile 2	5.67	3.67	4.67	4.67	4.67	4.00
Status Quartile 3	6.00	4.67	5.33	6.00	5.58	5.00
<b>signrank z</b>	<b>3.51***</b>		<b>-0.46</b>		<b>1.60</b>	
Considerate Quart 1	3.00	4.50	5.00	4.00	3.13	4.00
Considerate Quart 2	4.00	5.50	5.00	5.50	4.00	5.00
Considerate Quart 3	4.50	6.00	5.50	5.50	4.50	6.00
<b>signrank z</b>	<b>-2.84***</b>		<b>-0.48</b>		<b>-2.32**</b>	
Authenticity Quart 1	3.00	4.25	4.50	4.50	3.63	4.00
Authenticity Quart 2	4.00	4.50	5.00	5.00	4.00	5.00
Authenticity Quart 3	5.50	6.00	5.00	5.50	5.00	6.00
<b>signrank z</b>	<b>-2.37**</b>		<b>-0.65</b>		<b>-1.82*</b>	

\*\*\*p<.01, \*\*p<.05, \*p<.10

Table 12 – Studies 1 and 2 Results, Deferring Subjects (S2)

	Deferring Audience (S2)	
	Target (Q2)	Deferring (S2)
n1	23	
n2	32	
mn/2	368	
Considerate U	128.5	339.1
Considerate z	-4.16***	-0.6
Authenticity U	202.9	350.1
Authenticity z	-2.88***	-0.31

\*\*\*p<.01, \*\*p<.05, \*p<.10

Table 13 - Study 2 Across Conditions, Deferring Subjects (S2): Comparing Change in Attributions of Considerateness and Authenticity when deference is introduced.

*Results from each study for the “deferring party” Identified Subjects:* Tables 12 and 13 show the results for each study of the attributions of status, considerateness and authenticity by the subjects randomly assigned to the deferring party type. In Study 1

subjects (N=19) attributed *higher* status ( $z=3.51$ ,  $p<.01$ ) to the typical target of deference type over the typical member of their own group, but attributed *lower* levels of both considerateness ( $z=-2.84$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and authenticity ( $z=-2.37$ ,  $p=.02$ ) for the other group compared to their own group.

In study 2, in the “No Deference” condition, subjects who were randomly assigned to this type (N=23) attributed the essentially the same levels of status ( $z=-0.46$ ,  $p=.65$ ), considerateness ( $z=-0.48$ ,  $p=.63$ ) and authenticity ( $z=-0.65$ ,  $p=.51$ ) to the other type compared to their own type. In the “With Deference” condition, subjects (N=32) also attributed slightly more status to the other type compared with a typical member of their own group ( $z=1.60$ ,  $p=.11$ ), but rated the typical target of deference *lower* than their own type in considerateness ( $z=-2.32$ ,  $p=.02$ ) and authenticity ( $z=-1.82$ ,  $p=.07$ ). Shown in Table 6, the shift from the “No Deference” condition to the “With Deference” condition resulted in *decreases* in attributions of considerateness ( $U=128.5$ ,  $z=-4.16$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and authenticity ( $U=202.9$ ,  $z=-2.88$ ,  $p<.01$ ) for the other type and essentially no difference for their own type (considerateness:  $U=339.1$ ,  $z=-0.60$ ,  $p=.55$ ; authenticity:  $U=350.1$ ,  $z=-0.31$ ,  $p=.76$ ).

A “low-status” observer attributes high status, but low considerateness and authenticity when status is gained through assertive means (Study 1). The low-status subjects also attributed lower levels of considerateness and authenticity to the high-status group and did not reward their own type with higher attributions of these dimensions (Study 2). There is one final, puzzling finding consistent across both the “deferring party” subjects and the “target of deference” subjects. In Study 2, we test Hypothesis 1 that the high-status actor will be penalized by a reduction in authenticity and considerateness

without an increase in attributions of authenticity and considerateness for the lower-status actor. Our results support this hypothesis, as discussed. However, it is interesting that in each condition, when there is a clear deference pattern the attributions of considerateness and authenticity for the lower-status category are *reduced* as well. The reduction of considerateness and authenticity is much larger for the high-status actor. But the fact that the low-status actor also is attributed less authenticity and considerateness, while not affecting our puzzle directly, is a finding worth considering on its own. It might be the case that the introduction of deference patterns in and of itself soils the actors in question. Instead, when there is no clear deference pattern, there might be less competition for influence and there might be more assumed mutual support among the discussants.



**Appendix 3-A – Assertive/Deferential Framing from Study 1**

## Framing: Assertive/Deferential

**Assertive Framing**

*Chronbach's alpha = .89*

1. Eat the chef's comfort food selections!
2. Experience the chef's comfort food selections!
3. You must try the chef's comfort food selections!
4. Eat the chef's comfort food selections! You will love it.

**Deferential Framing**

*Chronbach's alpha = .85*

1. Why not experience the chef's comfort food selections?
2. Why don't you try the chef's comfort food selections
3. We hope you try the chef's comfort food selections
4. Why don't you try the chef's comfort food selections? We hope you will love it.