Research Collection Lee Kong Chian School Of Business

Lee Kong Chian School of Business

8-2019

Middle-status conformity revisited: The interplay between achieved and ascribed status

Matteo PRATO
University of Svizzera

Emmanuel KRYPRAIOS
University of Svizzera

Gokhan ERTUG
Singapore Management University, gokhanertug@smu.edu.sg

Yonghoon G. LEE
Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Citation

Middle-status Conformity Revisited:

The Interplay between Achieved and Ascribed Status

Matteo Prato
Università della Svizzera italiana
matteo.prato@usi.ch

Emmanuel Kypraios
Università della Svizzera italiana
emmanuel.kypraios@usi.ch

Gokhan Ertug
Singapore Management University
gokhanertug@smu.edu.sg

Yonghoon G. Lee
The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
yglee@ust.hk

Middle-status Conformity Revisited:

The Interplay between Achieved and Ascribed Status

Abstract

Decisions about conforming to or deviating from conventional practices in a field is an important concern of organization and management theory. The position that actors occupy in the status hierarchy has been shown to be an important determinant of these decisions. The dominant hypothesis, known as middle-status-conformity, posits that middle-status actors are more likely to conform to conventional practices than high- and low-status actors do. We challenge this hypothesis by revisiting its fundamental assumptions and developing a theory where actors' propensity to conform based on their achieved status further depends on their ascribed status that actors inherit from their social group. Specifically, we propose that middle-status conformity applies only to actors who have a sense of security, based on their high ascribed status. For actors with low ascribed status, we propose that high-and low-status actors show greater conformity than middle-status actors. We test our hypotheses using data from the U.S. symphony orchestras from 1918 to 1969.

INTRODUCTION

Actors, whether as individuals or organizations, face a fundamental trade-off in the social contexts they operate in: on the one hand, conforming to conventional practices facilitates their acceptance as legitimate players (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Hannan & Freeman, 1984; Stinchcombe, 1965), whereas, on the other hand, deviating from such practices might help them gain an advantage over others (Deephouse, 1999; see Zhao, Fisher, Lounsbury, & Miller, 2017 for a review). Thus, actors strive to find the level of "reconciliation of opposing needs for assimilation and differentiation from others" (Brewer, 1991: 475) that their audience finds optimal (Askin & Mauskapf, 2017; Zhao, Ishihara, Jennings, & Lounsbury, 2018). In their endeavor to balance these countervailing pressures, however, actors should consider that their degree of conformity is assessed differently depending on their individual characteristics (e.g., Hong, Kubik, & Solomon, 2000; Thomas-Hunt & Phillips, 2011). Actors' position in the status hierarchy plays a pivotal role in this respect (Ridgeway, 1978; Durand & Kremp, 2016; Phillips, Turco, & Zuckerman, 2013; Phillips & Zuckerman, 2001).

The dominant perspective in the literature that relates status positions to conformity suggests that middle-status actors conform more (or deviate less) than actors who are low- or high-status, resulting in inverted-U-shaped relationship (Durand & Kremp, 2016; Phillips & Zuckerman, 2001). Even though middle-status-conformity is commonly invoked in scholarly dialogue as the default expectation, it explicitly builds on a set of scope conditions. Specifically, it builds on "assumptions about the social-psychological dispositions characteristic of low- and high-status actors, which parallel assumptions about their structural positions" (Phillips & Zuckerman, 2001: 388). These assumptions are that the status hierarchy is relatively stable, so that high-status actors can feel entitled to deviate without being subject to penalties, and that there is a proximate alternative audience that low-status actors can feasibly turn to, so that low-status actors feel less anxious of being on the periphery of a focal audience's attention and accordingly freer to take the risk of deviating in the eyes of this focal audience.

As Phillips and Zuckerman acknowledge, these scope conditions imply "a rather narrow range of contexts in which it is appropriate to expect a curvilinear relationship between status and conformity" (2001: 382). Thus, "the ultimate validation of the proposed framework should come only when the proposed scope conditions are transformed into contextual variables and are then tested for their implied interaction with the IUS [inverted-U-shaped] curve." (2001: 420). Despite this emphasis to heed the theory's scope conditions, however, research has rarely further investigated or validated these conditions, and has instead applied the middle-status-conformity hypothesis as it is, to find, for example, that it affects different types of conformity (Durand & Kremp, 2016) or different types of behavior (Perretti & Negro, 2006).

We depart from extant literature by uncovering more parsimonious conditions that shape the social-psychological dispositions toward conformity. Moreover, instead of focusing exclusively on the conditions that yield an inverted-U-shaped relationship between status and conformity, we advance the literature by exploring the conditions under which the middle-status conformity hypothesis does not apply and in fact a different relational form is to be expected. We do so by drawing insights from the resurging interest on multiple status hierarchies (Jensen & Wang, 2018; Kovács & Liu, 2016; Zhao & Zhou, 2011) and from the distinction between ascribed status—the status that actors inherit based on their association to groups due to nominal characteristics such as gender, race, or country of origin —and achieved status—the status that actors receive based on their own individual accomplishments (Linton, 1936; Thomas-Hunt & Phillips, 2011). Specifically, we argue that a diffuse status characteristic such as ascribed status filters the extent to which individuals feel secure or excluded based on their social position and modulates the dispositions towards conformity that are formed on the basis of achieved status. Hence, we develop a theory which proposes that middle-status-conformity is a special case, rather than a universal case.

4

Our theory suggests that ascribed status either cements (when it is high) or undermines (when it is low) the sense of security brought by high-achieved status; and either reinforces (when it is low) or mitigates (when it is high) the sense of exclusion caused by low-achieved status. Hence, we do not expect that all high-achieved status actors will muster the confidence to adopt nonconformist behavior: those with high-ascribed status will feel secure enough to deviate without fear of serious consequence, whereas those with low-ascribed status will be likely to be more cautious so as not to expose and undermine their status-inconsistent standing. Similarly, nor do we expect that all low-achieved status actors will accept the risk to deviate: whereas low-achieved status actors with high-ascribed status can leverage their inherited legitimacy to behave unconventionally with little risk, low-achieved status actors with low-ascribed status will be more likely to adopt conformist behavior to reduce the risk of being further marginalized. These dispositions (toward deviance in the case of low- and high-status actors in the high-ascribed group, and toward conformity for low- and high-status actors in the low-ascribed group) will be mitigated for those in the middle of the achieved status hierarchy, so that, overall, we expect that the relationship between status and conformity for high-ascribed status actors is inverted-U-shaped, whereas for low-ascribed status actors it is U-shaped.

We test our hypotheses in the context of U.S. symphony orchestras between 1918 and 1969. Consistent with our predictions, we find an inverted U-shaped relationship between achieved status and conformity among conductors with high-ascribed status (i.e., German or Austrian conductors). In contrast, we find a U-shaped relationship between achieved status and conformity among actors without high-ascribed status (non-German and non-Austrian conductors).

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Research in sociology and management has shown that benefits accrue to actors, be they individuals or organizations, for the status positions that they occupy. Actors that achieve

greater status gain access to resources at a lower cost (Podolny, 1993), have more leeway in deviant behavior (Phillips & Zuckerman, 2001), benefit from greater effort from their exchange partners (Castellucci & Ertug, 2010), and receive more credit for their achievements (Merton, 1968). Because of the numerous benefits that status brings, actors aspire to enhance their status (Askin & Bothner, 2016), while at the same time behave in ways to ensure that they will not lose the status they have achieved (Bettencourt, Dorr, Charlton, & Hume, 2001). One of the mechanisms through which actors can gain or maintain status is by showing conformist or deviant behavior (Hollander, 1958; Ridgeway, 1978). The psychological dispositions inducing an actor to favor risky deviance over safe conformity, however, themselves depend on the position that this individual occupies in the status hierarchy (Fast & Joshi, 2014). Middle-status-conformity theory (Phillips & Zuckerman, 2001) suggests that the dispositions to take the risk to deviate (in an attempt to preserve or enhance one's status) are highest for low- and high-status actors, thus making middle-status actors comparatively more conformist.

Even if widely accepted in the scholarly dialogue as the standard expectation for the relationship between status and conformity, the theory of middle-status conformity hinges on a set of restrictive, and typically overlooked, scope conditions about the status structure that are needed to trigger the assumed socio-psychological orientations. First, it is assumed that "the status structure in question is sufficiently stable such that it confers security on high-status players and frees them to deviate" (Phillips & Zuckerman, 2001: 388). At the same time, it is also expected that, "while the status structure must be highly stable for the inverted U-shaped relationship to emerge, it cannot be so stable that there is no mobility, especially in a downward direction. If downward mobility were not an expected consequence of nonconformity there would be little reason for middle-status candidates to conform" (Phillips & Zuckerman, 2001: 389). Finally, even though it is assumed that "the lowest status actors are relatively permanent outsiders, such that they cease to identify with the interface" (Phillips & Zuckerman, 2001:

6

388), at the same time it is expected that these low status actors can find an alternative interface (i.e., audience) with which to identify, that "lessen [their] anxiety about being on the periphery of a focal audience's attention" (Phillips & Zuckerman, 2001: 420). However, "[u]nless alternative audiences are available, low-status outsiders have little choice but to redouble their efforts to signal membership through greater conformity" (Phillips & Zuckerman, 2001: 389).

Thus, the scope conditions we reference above (and others that are spelled out in the original article) limit the applicability of the middle-status-conformity theory to a narrow set of contexts. Nonetheless, the original framework continues to offer important insights that can be elaborated further to develop a more general theory of how status affects conformity. In the original framework, the deviance of low-status actors is premised on the presence of an alternative audience that alleviates the anxiety of being low status with respect to the focal audience. However, this reasoning implicitly assumes that these actors are *not* low status in the eyes of the alternative audience as well. If these low-status actors are also low status in the eyes of the alternative audience, they would be permanent outsiders for both audiences they might face, as a result of which their anxiety would increase rather than decrease. Hence, in this situation, low-status actors might be likely to conform even further, rather than to deviate.

Moreover, the presence of an alternative audience (and the status ranking in this audience) might affect not only low-status actors but also high-status ones. For example, the sense of security that an actor has acquired by achieving high status in the eyes of an audience can be undermined if another audience deems the actor as low status. In this scenario, the high-status actor might be prone to conform rather than deviate. This extended reasoning has implications for middle-status actors as well. As Phillips and Zuckerman themselves note: "A middle-status candidate may not conform to a particular audience's expectations if she is oriented toward a different audience – perhaps one where she has achieved greater success" (Phillips & Zuckerman, 2001: 388). Therefore, a joint consideration of the different status

positions that an actor occupies in different status rankings can yield a more general theory about the relationship between status and conformity.

It is important to emphasize that in studying how multiple status rankings affect conformity, we do not invoke – as Phillips and Zuckerman do – the presence or absence of different audiences (see Ertug, Yogev, Lee, & Hedstrom, 2016 for a study of multiple audiences). As Philips and Zuckerman also note, the assumed presence of two different audiences between which an actor can easily switch is a rather restrictive scope condition that limits the applicability of the theory. In developing our theory, we shift the focus from the context-specific structural features that characterize status rankings to the two most general forms of status on which actors are ranked by their main audience, namely ascribed and achieved status. Linton (1936: 115), who coined the two terms, defined "ascribed status" as "assigned to individuals without reference to their innate differences or abilities" and "achieved status" as "requiring special qualities" and "open to individual achievement." Thus, ascribed status is typically characterized as an "indelible" (Galtung, 1964: 101) or "irreversible" (Schnore, 1961: 412) dimension that is defined by an "accident of birth" (Foladare, 1969: 53). Achieved status is instead a "delible", or "reversible" dimension that allows for social mobility by means of "performance or effort or volition" (Foladare, 1969: 53).

Ascribed status is not under an individual actor's control because it is given to him/her based on the status of the social group with which the actor shares some nominal characteristic inherited at birth, such as gender, race, or country of origin. The status of such social groups is formed through a process of status belief diffusion. This diffusion originates from the interaction between members of two groups with different nominal characteristics, where one of these groups own, possibly by chance, a superior exchangeable resource (Ridgeway, 1991) or some other consensually valued object or characteristic—for example, physical attractiveness, years of education, skill in mathematics, public speaking, or athletics (Berger &

8

Fisek, 2006; Jasso, 2001; Webster & Hysom, 1998). As the credence that the nominal characteristic is associated to the valued characteristic propagates, so as to form widely-shared status beliefs in society (see Ridgeway, 1991 and Ridgeway & Correll, 2006 for different mechanisms through which these beliefs can diffuse), they become "part of the cultural stereotypes of the categorical groups involved and add a distinctive evaluative component to those stereotypes [Fiske et al., 2002]" (Ridgeway & Correll, 2006: 433).

Different stereotypes about worthiness and competence become salient in different settings (Berger & Webster, 2006), including stereotypical evaluations based on country or geographical region of origin. For example, research has suggested that Hispanic Americans (Nadler & Clark, 2011) and African Americans (Steele & Aronson, 1995) experience negative stereotypes in academic contexts, whereas Asian immigrants enjoy a positive one (e.g., Shih, Pittinsky, & Ambady, 1999). Research also shows that African-Americans experience positive stereotypes in rap music and basketball, but are negatively evaluated in the Senate and corporate America, whereas Mexicans enjoy a positive stereotype in Tejano Music (Inman, Huerta, & Oh 1998). The relevance of country or region-based stereotypes is also evident for products and organizations. At the product level, research in marketing has shown that consumers use information on a product's country-of-origin to make inferences about its quality, regardless of whether they are familiar with the product (Han, 1989). More broadly, some companies and their products or services might be perceived as more "authentic" and as having superior status in a specific domain of competence, based on their geographical origin. For example, Scottish whisky producers (McKendrick & Hannan, 2013), French (Ody-Brasier & Vermeulen, 2014), and Napa Valley wine producers (Benjamin & Podolny, 1999) are typically ascribed superior status on the basis of their geographical origin.

Many country-based stereotypes associated to individuals—as well as to organizations—that persist today originated decades, if not centuries, ago in nations that, at the

time, owned or invested in superior resources in a specific domain of competence and gave birth to exceptional masters or organizations that are renown worldwide in that domain. The persistence of such beliefs is due to the fact that once a widely-shared status belief about the worthiness of the social group in a setting is institutionalized, it is difficult for a single actor to change it (Bettencourt et al., 2001; Fiske, 2010).

As Ridgeway (2014: 5) has argued "because individuals expect others to judge them according to these beliefs, they must take status beliefs into account in their own behavior, whether or not they personally endorse them." Thus, "these implicit status biases shape both the 'supply side' and the 'demand side' of people's everyday efforts to achieve the resources and positions of power by which we gauge material inequality. Status biases affect the confidence and energy with which people put themselves forward in a situation. When status beliefs are implicitly salient, they bias people's expectations for their own and the other's competence and suitability for authority in a situation." (Ridgeway 2014: 5). However, we propose that these feelings might be manifest differently based on the status that the individual has achieved on her/his own. Similarly, an actors' sense of security or exclusion, as based on their position in the achieved status hierarchy, is likely to be filtered by the status that they have inherited. Therefore, a joint consideration of ascribed and achieved status is needed to make further progress in understanding how status affects conformity.

To study the change of dispositions toward conformity as actors from low- or high-ascribed status groups climb the (achieved) status hierarchy, we build on the insight that individuals set different reference points when they engage in risky behavior (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Mitra, Jenkins, Gupta & Shaw, 2015). Management research suggests that two reference points are important in decision making with respect to such behavior: the survival point, which is associated with preserving continued participation in the field (Moliterno, Beck, Beckman, & Meyer, 2014) and the aspiration point, which is associated with the desire to

enhance one's status (Boyle & Shapira, 2012). Greater attention to the survival point prompts threat-rigidity and leads actors toward safe, conforming behavior (Audia & Greve, 2006; Staw, Lance, & Dutton, 1981). Attention to the aspiration point, conversely, prompts riskier and bold actions that can end up enabling actors to climb the social hierarchy.

--- Insert Table 1 about here ---

We explore the implications of how ascribed status might channel the attention of actors towards a survival or an aspiration point as they climb the status hierarchy in the four ideal-typical configurations in Table 1: two where an actor's achieved and ascribed status are consistent (quadrant 2 and 3) and two where they are inconsistent (quadrant 1 and 4). In the two status-consistent positions, the actor will be either unambiguously low status or unambiguously high status. In both cases, the actor will be subject to relatively clear and strong social expectations (McCranie & Kimberly, 1973), but whereas in the unambiguously low-status case, the actor will be exposed to expectations towards conformity; in the unambiguously high-status case, the actor will be susceptible to expectations of deviance. In the two status-inconsistent positions, the actor will instead face conflicting expectations that will be resolved differently depending on whether the status dimension that is lagging behind is the one that the actor cannot change, i.e. ascribed status. We discuss these cases in detail below.

HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT
Status and conformity among members of high-ascribed status groups

We start by considering actors who are members of a high-ascribed status group. Our leading assumption is that these actors will anchor their assessments of their achieved status on the expectations that are linked to their high-status reference group, and will base their decision to conform or deviate on the degree of (in-)consistency between their achieved status and the status of their ascribed group. We elaborate on the implications of this for each of the three cases (low-, middle-, and high-status actors).

11

Low-status actors from high-ascribed status groups. Quadrant 1 in Table 1 characterizes actors who are associated with a high-ascribed status group but who have not yet achieved high individual status. This situation yields an inconsistency between the two status dimensions. Research has shown that status inconsistency generates anxiety (Jackson, 1962; Stryker & Macke, 1978). In this particular case, in which the inconsistency (and the resulting anxiety) can be resolved by enhancing the status dimension that is malleable (i.e., achieved status), we expect that actors will be likely to engage in riskier, less conventional behavior.

Unconventional behavior has the potential to bring positive returns and rewards. By attracting audience attention (Ridgeway & Jacobson, 1977), behavior that does not conform to what is typically performed by others is likely to make the actor stand out and gain credit for unconventional choices, if these choices are deemed valuable by the audience. High potential returns, however, are often accompanied by higher risk. In cases where the unconventional behavior ends up being negatively valued by the audience, the actor can face penalties for such bold choices, which might even be considered misconduct (Benner, 2010; Hong et al., 2000). The risks that are associated with unconventional behavior, however, are reduced for individuals from high-status groups, including those individuals from these groups who have low individual status.

All else being equal, actors from high-status groups receive more favorable evaluations (Foschi, 2000), and are also less likely to be penalized for deviant behavior by their audiences (Giordano, 1983; Ridgeway, 1991; Sharkey, 2014).[1] This is because, despite their individual low status, actors who are members of a high-status group inherit legitimacy in the field for their mere affiliation to a high-status category (Ridgeway, 1991; Thomas-Hunt & Phillips, 2011). This category-lent legitimacy has two consequences that are pertinent for the

---

[1] Recent studies have refined this to suggest that high-status actors get more punished once a deviant behavior is unambiguously considered as illegitimate (Graffin, Bundy, Porac, Wade, & Quinn, 2013) or as an act of betrayal (Phillips et al., 2013).

dispositions of low-status actors with respect to conformity. On the one hand, it reduces the anxiety that might otherwise be related to low individual status, and thereby mitigates the associated fear to be excluded from the consideration set of an audience. On the other hand, however, it increases one's anxiety of not having achieved what might be expected of oneself based on membership to a high-status group, and thus reinforce the wish to demonstrate deserving and rightful membership to the high-status reference group. The former condition (that is, the reduced anxiety that might be tied to the risk of exclusion) suggests that, especially when compared with low-status actors from low-status groups, low-status actors from high-status groups will be less attentive to the "survival point"[2] (i.e., to establish or maintain their continued participation in the field) and therefore be less subject to threat-rigidity that might produce safe, conforming behavior. The second condition (that is, the increase in anxiety that is linked to the inconsistency between achieved and ascribed status) suggests that low-status actors from high-status groups will turn instead their attention to the "aspiration point" of enhancing their status so as to establish consistency with that of their group, and thereby behave in bolder ways that might allow them to stand out and gain credit in the field. Thus, as a result of both the decreased attention to the survival point that is enabled by their reference group, and the increased attention to the aspiration level associated with this same group, low-status actors from a high-status group will be likely to behave in less conventional (or more unconventional) ways.

High-status actors from high-ascribed status groups. Actors in this scenario, as depicted in quadrant 2 in Table 1, are unambiguously recognized and categorized as having

---

[2] The survival point has been shown to play a role in decision-making of both organizations taking strategic actions to avoid failing (Audia & Greve, 2006) and individuals aiming at maintaining their participation in a domain (Boyle & Shapira, 2012). As Moliterno et al. (2014: 2) note, "to establish the standards of group membership, continued participation in a particular group is conceptually analogous to 'survival' in behavioral theory of the firm literature". Individuals' attention to the survival point can relate, for example, to efforts to avoid being fired (Hong et al., 2000).

"high-status" – both achieved and ascribed. As a result, these actors will face little risk of losing their achieved status due to unconventional choices. Not only will adverse implications of unconventional behavior, in cases when these are not valued or appreciated, be buffered by the "idiosyncrasy credits" they have achieved (Hollander, 1958), but the high-status of their ascribed category will also provide an additional shield (Ridgeway, 1991; Sharkey, 2014). At the same time, as these actors occupy an unambiguously high-status position in the field, their audience is also more likely to expect distinctive behavior from them (Hogg, 2010). Therefore, we expect that, especially when compared to high-status actors who do not enjoy high-ascribed status (which we discuss later below), high-status actors from high-ascribed status groups will be more likely to favor risky nonconforming behavior.

Middle-status actors from high-ascribed status groups. Similar to Phillips and Zuckerman (2001), we base our expectation about the conformity-related behavior of middle-status-actors, as depicted in the "middle" column in Table 1, on the assumptions we make about the dispositions of low-status and high-status actors. Middle-status actors are in a grey area (in between low- and high-status) where the above-described pressures will be mitigated. Specifically, middle-status actors from high-ascribed status groups are less subject to the pressures of demonstrating that they deserve their claim to membership to their high-status reference group (when compared to low-status actors in this same group). At the same time middle-status actors are not yet as secure (as high-status actors in this group are) of their standing in the field.

As low-status actors increase their achieved status, their incentive to be nonconforming and bold decreases, because the anxiety that was due to the inconsistency between their achieved and ascribed status diminishes. As a result, these (now) middle-status actors would feel less deprived of the individual recognition that is expected on the basis of their ascribed status. Being less anxious of realigning their individual status to that of their reference group,

these actors will become progressively more likely to favor safe conformity over risky nonconforming behavior.

This reduced incentive to display deviance is coupled with the fact that actors in a middle-status position – unlike actors with a consolidated position (i.e., actors who are both high-achieved status and high-ascribed status) – are not yet buffered from the risk of losing their achieved status. As a result, compared to either low-status or high-status actors, middle-status actors from these groups will consider to a greater degree the risk of losing the status they have achieved when they contemplate undertaking nonconforming behavior. Whereas for both low-status and high-status actors, nonconforming behavior that is not valued by the audience is unlikely to come with genuinely adverse consequences, the same outcome would present a greater risk for a middle-status actor.

> ***Hypothesis 1 (H1):*** *There is an inverted-U-shaped relationship between achieved status and conformity among actors from high-ascribed status groups.*

Status and conformity among members of low-ascribed status groups

We now turn to cases in which actors do not have high-ascribed status. The path traced for these actors is different, as we will detail below. Accordingly, this path generates a different relationship between achieved status and conformity than the one we posit in Hypothesis 1.

Low-status actors from low-ascribed status groups. Actors in this group who have low-achieved status, as in quadrant 3 in Table 1, cannot rely on the status of their ascribed category to shield them from the penalties of deviant behavior. As a result of being unambiguously low-status, these actors might be regarded as permanent outsiders in the field. Phillips and Zuckerman (2001) suggest that permanent outsiders will resolve the anxiety that such a position brings by searching for an alternative audience for whom they can claim and assert their membership. However, "finding neighboring interfaces may often be quite difficult"

15

(Phillips & Zuckerman, 2001: 389). Even if such an audience were available, low-status actors from low-ascribed status groups might suffer from the implications of their low-ascribed status characteristic in their interactions with that audience as well. This might happen because ascribed status is a form of "diffused status" (Correll & Ridgeway, 2003): it is not necessarily tied to a particular context and is possibly applicable to a variety of situations, especially when compared to achieved status. As a result, because they might end up as permanent outsiders for an alternative audience, just as they are for the focal one, actors who have both low-ascribed status and low-achieved status "have little choice but to redouble their efforts to signal membership through greater conformity" (Phillips & Zuckerman, 2001: 389).

Deviant behavior can be penalized not only based on the low individual status of the specific actor, but also due to their association to a low-ascribed-status group. As described by Thomas-Hunt and Phillips (2011: 255) for the case of low-status racial groups: "possession of distinctive racial characteristics may be used to make attributions about the non-normative behavior, further heightening the salience of race. When the non-normative behaviors are perceived to be extreme, individuals may be labeled as 'deviants,' an event which elicits negative reactions." Thus, receiving little support or forbearance, but instead disapproval and scrutiny on the basis of their association to a low-ascribed status group, and lacking individual recognition in the field due to their low-achieved status, actors that occupy this position will be attentive to the survival point and more concerned about preserving their participation in the field (Boyle & Shapira, 2012; Moliterno et al., 2014). When facing such a risk, actors are likely to become "rigid and unable to generate risky courses of action" (Audia & Greve, 2006: 85–86), and thus more likely to secure their position by following consensus practices, conventional and conforming behavior, in the field (cf. Hong et al., 2000).

In conclusion, as different from low-achieved-status actors from high-ascribed-status groups (who are more likely to deviate), low-achieved-status actors from low-ascribed-status

groups are more likely to conform. The precarious status of these unambiguously low-status actors in the field directs their attention toward survival-point related concerns about continuing their participation (rather than higher aspirations), which channels them to less risky, conformist behavior.

High-status actors from low-ascribed status groups. The situation is different in quadrant 4, where actors from low-ascribed status groups have achieved high individual status. This position yields an inconsistency between the high status they have individually achieved and the low ascribed status that they have inherited. Status inconsistency generates anxiety (Stryker & Macke, 1978). However, the anxiety in this case would be different from the one we have described in the case of actors with low-achieved status and high-ascribed status, where the anxiety was rooted in not getting what one deserves, or what is expected based on one's group membership. In the present case, the anxiety is of a different kind, because the dimension that is lagging is the one that cannot be changed, rather than the more malleable one. As a result, the anxiety in this quadrant corresponds to having achieved what might not have been expected, due to actors and audiences being more likely to anchor their evaluation to the low expectations linked to these actors' low ascribed status. Actors from low-status ascribed categories are more likely to underestimate their abilities (Beyer, 1990) and attribute their success to others rather than to their own superior competence (Haynes & Heilman, 2013). Instead of using self-serving attributions and taking credit for their success, these actors are more likely to be cautious in their self-presentation and conform to what is accepted as standard in the field to fend off worrying future re-evaluation (cf. Zuckerman, 1979). This tendency to conform might also be reinforced by the assessment of audiences. Audiences might be more likely to question and scrutinize the achievements of actors from low-status groups (Cowman & Ferrari, 2002; Ridgeway, Johnson, & Diekema, 1994), since these achievements are

17

inconsistent with audience expectations based on the actors' group (Correll & Ridgeway, 2003; Foschi, 2000; Thomas-Hunt & Phillips, 2011).

Not having the confidence that might be granted by membership in a high-status group and facing greater scrutiny for their achieved status, high-status actors from low-ascribed status groups might be more likely to wish "fly under the radar" and conform to the status quo, seeking to minimize the risk of a revaluation of their status.

Middle-status actors from low-ascribed status groups. Similar to the case for their peers from high-ascribed-status groups, middle-status actors in these groups will also find themselves in a gray area where the pressures that low-status and high-status actors face are mitigated. However, in contrast to their peers from high-ascribed status groups, middle-status actors from low-ascribed status groups have relative freedom from pressures to conform, rather than from pressures to deviate. Specifically, middle-status actors from low-ascribed status groups will be less subject to the conformity pressure that low-status actors from the same group are subject to. This is because, having managed to achieve some individual status in the field, they will have moved up and away from the survival point and the associated concerns about being permanently excluded faced by low-status actors. On the other hand, when compared to actors from this same low-ascribed status group who have achieved high status, middle-status actors do not occupy a position that draws greater scrutiny on account of its unusual standing.

To sum up, whereas we expect middle-status-conformity among actors who have high-ascribed status, as we have formalized in H1, for actors with low ascribed status, we expect a different relationship between status and conformity. Specifically, we expect that:

> ***Hypothesis 2 (H2):*** *There is a U-shaped relationship between achieved status and conformity among actors from low-ascribed status groups.*

DATA AND METHODS

We test our hypotheses using data on the 27 largest symphony orchestras (by operating budget) in the United States from 1918 to 1969. In our period, these orchestras represent the set of organizations operating in the same league, and their conductors also compete for status in the same hierarchy (Durand & Kremp, 2016). A number of properties make this a suitable setting to test our hypotheses.

First, during this period, the music programming (repertoire) decisions were consolidated in the principle conductor (also known as music director during our study period), who was in charge of selecting which compositions to play in a given season. Thus, as similar to the case for CEOs in many industries (e.g., Graffin, Wade, Porac, & McNamee, 2008), the individual characteristics of the leading organizational figures in our setting can play a pivotal role in determining the decision to conform to or deviate from conventional practices in the field.

Second, conventional practices are institutionalized in the field and can be tracked over time in classical music. Orchestral classical music has been infused with tradition and rules, which indicate the composers that represent the *canon* that concert-goers expect to see performed. The musical canon, as embodying an exaltation of particular compositions and composers, originated in the 1800s in Europe and diffused to the United States via traveling musicians (Dowd, Liddle, Lupo, & Borden, 2002). It is epitomized in the composers "that were revered for their greatness and were performed on a continual basis" (Weber, 1992: 21) and thus, as the American Musicology Society defined it in 1987, is what is known as "standard repertoire" (Citron, 1990: 102).

Due to the venerated, almost "sacred," standing of certain composers in classical music (DiMaggio, 1982), playing the canon corresponds to compliance with a normative prescription and is therefore a safe option for a conductor to gain legitimacy in the field. However, as in many other social contexts where deviating from conventional practices presents a means to

stand out and be distinctive, conductors who deviate from the canon and play less-performed composers might gain recognition if this unconventional choice end up being well-received (Durand & Kremp, 2016). Naturally, this latter option comes with higher risk. If the bold repertoire choice ends up not being appreciated, the status of the conductor might be undermined. As Pompe and his colleagues (2011: 168) note: "Historically, new compositions have often been poorly accepted initially. For example, at the 1913 premier in Paris of Stravinsky's Rite of Spring, the audience erupted into a yelling and fighting mob during the performance. Today, the Rite of Spring is considered to be one of the most important compositions in the entire repertoire and performed regularly by major SOs". Similarly, in 1923 the Hungarian conductor and composer Ernst von Dohnányi premiered Bartók's Dance Suite, which "suffered a shocking failure, as Dohnányi could not find his way in the music and so of course the players could not find theirs either" (Lebrecht, 1991: 9).

In brief, conforming to the canon satisfies the condition by which the "pressure for conformity pertains to an action that the audience *generally uses to ascertain who is a player*. That is, a scope condition pertaining to the action in question is that there must be a significant threat that the benefits of undertaking it will be outweighed by its capacity to signal that the actor is illegitimate. At the same time, it must not be the case that the action is so discrediting that it will tarnish even a secure, high-status player" (Phillips & Zuckerman, 2001: 390, italics in the original text). As a result, whereas actors who are unequivocally celebrated in the field (in our framework, those who are in the high-achieved-status and high-ascribed-status quadrant) will not realistically have their standing questioned even for an unsuccessful experimentation with less conventional repertoire, actors who do not enjoy such consolidated status will have to balance the risk (costs) of performing bolder repertoire with the returns that this distinctive choice might bring.

Third, this setting allows us to study the two forms of status we are concerned with: the individual's *achieved status*, as symbolized by the recognition that the conductor has received in the field—operationalized by the recordings of the conductor, and the individual's group *ascribed status*, bestowed upon the conductor based on the prominence of his national affiliation within the musical tradition. In this context, two countries, namely Germany and Austria, are regarded as unequivocally high-status, due to the stature of composers from those countries such as Bach, Mozart, Brahms, Beethoven, and a long list of others.

Data and Sample

We collected the repertoire of compositions played by the 27 symphony orchestras from 1918, the first year in which more than one conductor in our sample produced recordings, to 1969, through a dataset originally assembled by Mueller (1973), which we retrieved from the Cultural Policy and the Arts National Data Archive (CPANDA). This database was compiled over a period of almost 40 years by John Henry Mueller and Kate Hevner Mueller (Mueller, 1973). We further checked and updated this dataset by incorporating the recently digitized version of repertoire information from New York Philharmonic. Following Dowd and colleagues (2002), we exclude season repertoires that have fewer than 10 performances (i.e., compositions played). There are 17 such cases in our sample, that is 1.6% of the total season repertoires (which can also be referred to as conductor-year observations) in our sample. Compared with an average of about 71 performances in a season, these are irregular seasons that pertain to formation years of symphony orchestras and are not comparable to regular seasons. However, our results are robust if we include these 17 cases.

In addition to the repertoire of compositions played by these orchestras, the dataset also includes information on the nationality of composers. We complement this information with hand-collected data on the conductors. First, we collected biographical information for all 100 principle conductors of these 27 major U.S. symphony orchestras in the period 1918–1969.

This included life and career histories from publicly available sources, such as encyclopedias, books, and symphony orchestra websites, as well as more specialized sources, such as the website Ancestry.com.

In addition, to assess the status of conductors we collected information on orchestral classical music recordings from *A Classical Discography* (classical-discography.org, data retrieved in July 2018). *A Classical Discography* is a well-known specialized database among collectors of classical music recordings. It is compiled by Michael Gray, Music Librarian for the Voice of America in Washington, D.C. This dataset has been compiled over decades "of research in the archives of recording companies in the United States and in Western and Central Europe" (Gray, 2018). It contains 182,353 matrices (master recordings) of orchestral music where a conductor was identified (the database also includes classical non-orchestral music that we do not consider in our analysis). For each such matrix (master recording) the database includes information about the date in which the recording took place, the conductor, the orchestra, and the label that made the recording. Using these data, we identified all of the recordings of performances that were conducted by any of the 100 conductors in our sample. This process yielded 11,335 matrices (master recordings, which are the original recordings of a performance from which any later copies are made) for the conductors in our estimation data, from the beginning of the recording era until 1969.

Dependent variable

Conductor conformity. To assess the degree to which conductors show conformity to what is established in the field, we develop a measure that captures the extent to which the repertoire played by a conductor *i* at time *t* leans toward canonical composers, versus more unconventional composers. To this end, we first identify the canonical (unconventional) composers at time *t* as those composers who have been more (less) widely played in the field in the previous five years (*t-1 to t-5*). Specifically, we measure the proportion of compositions

written by each composer *c* that was performed by other conductors (*-i*) in the previous 5 years in the field. We also run sensitivity tests computing the proportion in the previous 3 and 7 years. Results with either the shorter or the longer window provide very similar levels of statistical support to our hypotheses as the ones reported below using the 5-year window. More formally, we compute:

$$Composer\ conventionality_{c,i,t} = \frac{Num.of\ compositions_{c,-i,(t-1,t-5)}}{Num.of\ compositions_{-i,(t-1,t-5)}} \qquad (1)$$

We then scaled this composer conventionality score, calculated as above, by the most played composer, so that the most played composer gets a value of 1. For example, if other conductors in the field played 100 compositions, 95 of which are by Beethoven and 5 of which are by Moszkowski, Beethoven would be regarded as the epitome of the canon and get a conventionality score of 1, whereas Moszkowski would be weakly representative of the canon (i.e., an unconventional composer) and, accordingly, get a score of about 0.05, calculated as (5/100)/(95/100). As a result, conductors who include Beethoven's compositions in their repertoire are conforming to the canon more, whereas those who include Moszkowski conform to the canon less (or deviate from it). Specifically, a focal conductor's conformity will depend on the relative prominence of conventional composers (e.g., Beethoven) over unconventional ones (e.g., Moszkowski) in the conductor's repertoire in a given year.

Thus, *conductor conformity* is the weighted average of the conventionality of composers' in the repertoire, where the weight is calculated as the number of compositions by a composer ($n_{c,i,t}$) that are included in the repertoire, divided by the total number of all compositions played by the conductor (N_i). More formally:

$$Conductor\ conformity_{i,t} = \frac{\sum_c Composer\ conventionality_{c,i,t} \times n_{c,i,t}}{N_i} \qquad (2)$$

To illustrate, if a conductor played 3 compositions by Beethoven and 1 by Moszkowski, he will be conforming to the canon more, $0.7625 = (1 \times 3 + 0.05 \times 1)/4$, than if he played 3

compositions by Moszkowski and 1 by Beethoven, $0.2875 = (1 \times 1 + 0.05 \times 3)/4$. Thus, our conductor conformity variable can range between 0 and 1, where a value of 0 indicates a repertoire that includes solely those composers who are not played by any other conductors in the field, and a value of 1 indicates a repertoire that is based only on the most representative composer(s) in the canon (i.e., Beethoven in the example above).

Independent variables

Ascribed status. We consider ascribed status as the status that is ascribed to someone as a result of their membership in a particular category. In our case, this category is the conductor's country of origin. Country of origin represents one of the most salient categories in our setting, as it is well known that certain countries enjoy superior status in classical music. For example, when talking about the pantheon of classical music, Theodore Thomas, the conductor of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra between 1891 and 1905, noted: "Bach, Handel, Mozart and Beethoven are the sons of God!" (Levine, 1988: 118). The Germanic (Austro-German) repertoire from Bach to Mozart to Richard Strauss to Schoenberg, became synonymous with uncompromising adherence to high standards, and achieved an almost sacred status in the concert hall (Bowen, 2003).

Status of a given country is bequeathed to conductors originating from that country, thus constituting their ascribed status. As Mueller (1973: xii) explains "the Central European tradition which gave these [U.S.] orchestras many, indeed most, of their early conductors would in itself account for the dominance of the Austro-German music in the early repertoires; it always comprised more than half of the music presented. This dominance continues however through the later decades when conductors from many other cultures were on the podiums, and when audiences were very much aware of the richness and variety of musical resources from many other European and Far Eastern countries". Austro-German conductors' authority in the field of classical music was recognized by audiences and peers alike. In his book *The Virtuoso*

Conductors, Raymond Holden (2005: 1), for example, writes about the Austro-German conductors that "their unique relationship with the music that they performed set them apart from the other schools of conducting that emerged during the same period." Additionally, he writes that the "British and American audiences were impressed by Austro-German musicians and considered that their interpretations of works from the Central European repertoire had greater authority than those of conductors from other ethnic backgrounds" (Holden, 2005: 200). Thus, even though some conductors of U.S. orchestras who come from other nationalities have certainly achieved high individual status over time (both in the past and today), those coming from Germany-Austria have enjoyed superior ascribed status.

To measure the ascribed status of the conductor, we use an indicator variable that is coded 1 for conductors who have high-ascribed-status (conductors from Germany or Austria), and 0 otherwise.

Achieved status. We measure conductors' achieved status on the basis of the number of recordings they made. The birth of recorded sound toward the end of the 19th century produced a musical revolution in the beginning of the 20th century, marking a shift in classical music. The importance of the recording industry has been well noted and discussed in the literature (DiMaggio, 1991, 1992; Dowd et al., 2002). First, it gave access to classical music to a widespread audience, which was no longer confined to the vicinity of the orchestra's location: "as phonographic technologies provided a means… [for] people to experience music not by attending unique live performances or by producing music themselves in their homes but instead by purchasing recordings" (Thompson, 1995: 132). As an advertisement in 1904 put it: "In your own home, miles and miles away from London…you can be seated comfortably round your fire listening to the Best Songs, the Best Bands, and the best of the World's Musical Talent" (Doggett, 2015: 16). Owing to such widespread distribution, some singers, instrumentalists, and conductors became worldwide stars whose status transcended time and space. Because of

these attributes, the recording industry won over even initial skeptics like Toscanini, who "came to regard it [recording] as a means of affirming his superiority by achieving clearer sound and bigger sales than other conductors" (Lebrecht, 1991: 72). Recording deals became coveted and conductors vied for such recognition and rarely turned down a chance. In the case of orchestral classical music, especially, it should be noted that being allowed and invited to record is an important act of deference, particularly when such an invitation comes from the more prominent labels in the field. Status is expressed by (or formed through) acts of deference from high-status parties (Podolny, 1993; Sauder, Lynn, & Podolny, 2012).

Accordingly, we assessed the achieved status of a conductor at time t as the cumulative number of recordings, from the beginning of his career up to the current year, where we assigned greater (lower) weight to recordings the conductor made under more (less) prominent labels. We computed the prominence of a label as the proportion of recordings made under that label in a given year (at time t) over the total number of all recordings made under all labels in that year. Thus, we consider that a composition that is recorded with a prominent, major label such as Victor will give a greater boost to the status of the conductor, whereas a composition recorded with a less-known label like Syrena Record will add less to the status of the conductor. To reflect the idea that status reflects one's relative position in a social hierarchy (Podolny, 1993; Gould, 2002) and to facilitate the comparability of conductors across different eras in terms of recording conventions (due to different tastes/trends, technology, and finances), we construct such a relative standing by calculating the percentile ranking position that a given conductor occupies in the status hierarchy in a given year. This is obtained by ordering conductors based on the overall number of recordings as described before (so that conductors with a greater number of cumulative recording with prominent labels get a higher ranking) and scaling the obtained ranking position by the total number of active conductors that year. For example, if the focal conductor has the highest score on the basis of cumulative recordings,

and there are 10 conductors competing for status in the field that year, the focal conductor gets a percentile ranking of 1 (indicating that no other conductor in the field has a higher status than the focal conductor). If he has the second highest score of recordings that year, his percentile ranking will be 0.9 (indicating that 10%, i.e., 1 out of the 10 in the field has a greater status than the focal conductor), and so on. If the field is more populated and encompasses for example 20 conductors, the first and second conductor get percentile ranking scores of 1 and 0.95 respectively, signifying that to be ranked as second in a more competitive field is a greater achievement. If more than one conductor has the same recording score, we assign such conductors the midpoint value of the ranks they take up (cf. Hong et al., 2000).

Control variables

We control for several conductor and orchestra attributes that might relate to both the level of conformity displayed by a conductor and his achieved status.

We start with a description of the orchestra characteristics that we control for. First, we controlled for the orchestra's *Repertoire size* in a given year: the number of compositions that an orchestra has performed in the current year. We control for this variable to ensure that conformity or deviance is not simply an artifact of the number of compositions played. *Repertoire size* might also be regarded as a control of the orchestra size, since bigger orchestras can afford to schedule performance more often during their concert seasons (Durand & Kremp, 2016). As a further indicator of orchestra size, we also used an indicator variable capturing whether the conductor is directing any one of the orchestras that are conventionally known as the *Big five orchestras*, which are the New York Symphony Orchestra and the Philharmonic Symphony of New York (which were merged in 1928 to form the New York Philharmonic), the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Cleveland Orchestra, and the Philadelphia Orchestra. This indicator variable is coded 1 if in the current year the conductor was employed at one of these "Big Five" orchestras, and 0 otherwise. The term "Big

Five" comes from the fact that these were the first orchestras in the U.S. that had the resources to offer concert seasons without interruption, thereby establishing them as full-time orchestras and not "music societies" (Mueller, 1973). Third, to tease out other potential confounding effects due to the fact that the conductor might work for an organization that is a trend-setter, with the reputation to adopt successful innovative choices in the field, we followed Durand and Kremp (2016) and controlled for *Orchestra centrality*, and also its quadratic form to account for a possible curvilinear effect (also as in Durand & Kremp, 2016) in a network constructed from a diffusion pattern of new composers.

We also controlled for several conductor-level characteristics. First, we controlled for *Conducting experience in the U.S.*: the number of years since a conductor made his debut as a conductor in one of the 27 symphony orchestras in our sample. Second, we controlled for *Conductor tenure at the orchestra*: the number of years that a conductor has been in that role in the current orchestra. Third, because the status of being a newcomer can influence the extent to which a conductor might feel pressured to conform (March, 1991), we controlled for whether the current year was the first year of a conductor's tenure at his current orchestra, labeled *First year with the orchestra*. Fourth, because it might be possible that achieved status itself is related to moving between orchestras, we controlled for the number of prior orchestras in our sample that a conductor had served in as a conductor, labeled *Num. of prior orchestras*. Fifth, we controlled for *Conational composer popularity:* the extent to which composers who are of the same nationality as the conductor are popular in the field, by measuring the proportion of all compositions played by all orchestras in the previous five years that were written by composers of the same nationality as the conductor. This control is important to ensure that the effect of our ascribed status measure is indeed an unmalleable status trait and not confounded by a trend in the field whereby a certain nation becomes more popular in a given period. Sixth, to account for the tendency by which conductors might favor composers of their own nationality, we also

controlled for how much a conductor performed compositions written by conational composers. We measure this *Preference toward conational composers* as the number of compositions that are written by composers from the same nationality as the conductor that the conductor performed in the previous five years. Seventh, we controlled for decade fixed effects to account for period specific trends in the level of conformity. In order to keep the decimal points consistent, we divided *Repertoire size*, *Orchestra centrality*, *Conducting experience in the U.S.*, *Conductor tenure at the Orchestra,* and *Preference toward conational composers* by 100.

Finally, we accounted for time-invariant heterogeneity across conductors (for example, the intrinsic talent of the conductor, his personality traits, experience prior to joining an orchestra in the U.S. such as educational background before becoming a conductor, and behavioral tendencies that might be associated to the country of origin such as those stemming from the country's culture) by including conductor fixed effects. Because of the inclusion of conductor fixed effects, the main effect of ascribed status (being the country of origin and not varying over time for a given individual) is absorbed and will not be estimated in our OLS regressions. In the robustness section however, we also used the hybrid model (Allison, 2009), which allows us to estimate both the between effects and the within effects from the fixed effects regression specification, thus providing estimates also for the main effect of ascribed status.

Analysis

We used ordinary least squares (OLS) models with a pooled panel design to estimate the level of conformity that a conductor displays in his choice of the repertoire for a given year. Formally, we estimated the following model, which includes conductor fixed effects (α_i) and decade fixed effects (δ_t).

$$Y_{i,t} = \beta_1 (Achieved\ status \times High\ Ascribed\ status)$$

$$+\beta_2 (Achieved\ status\ squared \times High\ Ascribed\ status)$$

$$+\beta_3(Achieved\ status) + \beta_4(Achieved\ status\ squared)$$

$$+ \textbf{\textit{X}}_{i,t}\boldsymbol{\gamma} + \alpha_i + \delta_t + \varepsilon_{i,t} \tag{3}$$

β_3 and β_4 are the coefficients that are used to test the U-shaped relationship between *Achieved status* and conformity for the group of conductors who have low-ascribed-status characteristics, that is for the cases in which the *High Ascribed Status* dummy variable is equal to zero. As we hypothesized in H2, we expect a U-shaped relationship between achieved status and conformity for this group, that is we expect β_3 to be negative and β_4 to be positive.

In H1, we hypothesized instead that for the group of conductors with *High Ascribed Status* (i.e., when that dummy variable is equal to one), the relationship between *Achieved status* and *Conductor conformity* is inverted U-shaped. To test this functional form, we have to consider all four coefficients: β_1, β_2, β_3, and β_4. First, we expect β_1 to be positive and β_2 to be negative. But to ensure that the relationship is indeed curvilinear and that having high-ascribed status does not simply flatten the U-shaped relationship estimated in β_3 and β_4, but rather indeed reverses the curvilinear form, the estimated coefficients should also satisfy the following condition: $\beta_1 + \beta_3 < 0$ (is negative) and $\beta_2 + \beta_4 > 0$ (is positive). $\textbf{\textit{X}}_{i,t}$ is the vector of time-varying controls and $\boldsymbol{\gamma}$ is the vector of their coefficients. To account for possible heteroscedasticity in the error terms, for example due to variables that are not distributed normally, we used robust standard errors.

RESULTS

Table 2 displays the descriptive statistics and the correlations between the covariates. We note that conductors' tenure at an orchestra is on average about seven years. The most mobile conductors (Artur Rodzinski and Leopold Stokowski) have directed four orchestras in our sample, but most conductors (78 out of 100 conductors) directed just one orchestra during our study period. 15 of the 100 conductors in our sample have high ascribed status.

30

Table 3 shows the results from our estimation models. Model 1 is the baseline model with the control variables. In Models 2 through 4 we introduce each of our variables of interest in a stepwise approach before testing our hypotheses using the full specification in Model 5. In Model 2, we add the simple effect of *Achieved status*. In Model 3, we add *Achieved status squared*. Then, we add the interaction between the simple effect of *Achieved status* and the *High Ascribed status* dummy in Model 4. Finally, we add the interaction between *Achieved status squared* and the *High Ascribed status* dummy in Model 5. Model 5 is the fully specified model that corresponds to equation (3), which is accordingly the model that we use to test our hypotheses. To see if multicollinearity might cause problems for our inference, we check whether the VIF and condition number in Model 5 are within conventionally accepted levels. The maximum VIF is 6.18 and the average VIF is 2.41, and the condition number of the model is 6.61. These figures are within accepted levels.

As discussed above, our hypothesis for the group of conductors with high ascribed-status (H1) would be confirmed if $(\beta_1 + \beta_3) > 0$, and $(\beta_2 + \beta_4) < 0$, and our hypothesis for the low-ascribed-status group (H2) would be confirmed if $\beta_3 < 0$ and $\beta_4 > 0$. The coefficients associated with *Achieved status* (β_3) and *Achieved status squared* (β_4) reported in Model 5 provide support for H2: β_3 is negative and significant ($p < .05$) and β_4 is positive and significant ($p < .01$).

Consistent with H1 the coefficient of *Achieved status* × *High Ascribed status* (β_1) is positive and the coefficient of *Achieved status squared* × *High Ascribed status* (β_2) is negative. As we have mentioned, however, to test whether these coefficients reverse the U-shaped relationship estimated with the β_3 and β_4 coefficients, we also need to check whether $\beta_1 + \beta_3$ is significantly positive and $\beta_2 + \beta_4$ is significantly negative. To do this, we use the non-linear combination (*nlcom*) method in STATA 14, which calculates the joint standard error needed

31

to test the statistical significance of the joint effect of two coefficients (Phillips & Park, 1988). A Wald test of the joint effect indicates that $\beta_1 + \beta_3$ is positive and statistically significant ($p < .01$) and $\beta_2 + \beta_4$ is negative and statistically significant ($p < .01$), thereby supporting H1. In Figure 1, we graphically represent the two estimated curvilinear forms (and the scatterplot) for the relationship between achieved status and conformity for high-ascribed status and low-ascribed status, respectively. In the top panel, we also include the histograms of *Achieved status* for each ascribed status group.

--- Insert Figure 1 about here ---

The figure shows that *Achieved status* within each *Ascribed status* group is well-distributed across different ranges. The inverted U-shaped relationship for high-ascribed-status conductors appears to be more pronounced than the U-shaped relationship for low-ascribed-status ones.

Robustness Checks

We perform a set of robustness tests to check (1) the significance of the curvilinear form estimated in our main model (Haans, Pieters, & He, 2016), and (2) the robustness of our results with a regression approach (the hybrid method) that allows us to also estimate the main effect of ascribed status while including conductor fixed effects (Allison, 2009).

To provide further tests of the significance of the curvilinear relationships, we follow Haans, Pieters, & He (2016), who propose that in addition to the significance of the coefficients of the relevant (first-order and quadratic) terms, two additional tests should be performed, assessing: (1) the presence of significant slopes at the minimum and maximum levels of the independent variable, (2) the presence of an inflection point that is inside the observed range of the independent variable.

Table 4 shows the result of these two tests. The first test reported in Panel A shows that the slopes at the minimum and at the maximum values are significant and in the predicted

direction, both for conductors who have *High Ascribed status* (German/Austrian conductors) and conductors with *Low Ascribed status* (non-German/non-Austrian conductors). The second test (reported in Panel B) shows that the inflection point and its 95 percent confidence interval are inside the range of *Achieved status* in our estimation sample, providing further support for the inverted U-shaped relationship for conductors who have *High Ascribed status* (as predicted in H1) and the U-shaped relationship that we predict for conductors with *Low Ascribed status* (as predicted in H2).

--- Insert Tables 4 and 5 about here ---

When testing a moderation of curvilinear forms, whereby the curvilinear form is expected to change in the different conditions (or sub-samples), Haans and his colleagues (2016) also proposed to test the two curvilinear forms in a split sample. We provide this test by splitting the sample based on to the dummy moderating variable *Ascribed status*. Table 5 shows the results from this analysis. The results reported in Model 6 are for the subsample that consists of only conductors with *High Ascribed status* (German/Austrian). The positive effect of *Achieved status* ($p < .05$) and the negative effect of *Achieved status squared* ($p = .071$) provide further robust results for the inverted U-shaped relationship hypothesized in H1. The results reported in Model 7 are from a subsample that includes only conductors with *Low Ascribed status* (non-German/non-Austrian). The negative effect of *Achieved status* ($p < .05$) and the positive effect of *Achieved status squared* ($p < .01$) supports the U-shaped relationship hypothesized in H2.

We test the robustness of our results also with the hybrid (between-within) model proposed by Allison (2009; see Certo, Withers, & Semadeni, 2017 for a recent use of these models in management). In following this approach, we demean the predictor variables and add the mean of these variables as a separate set of predictors. The demeaned predictor variables will estimate the within estimator of the fixed effects OLS model and the means of

these variables will estimate the between estimator of the fixed effects OLS model (Greene, 2003). For robust inference, the hybrid model is estimated with conductor random effects (Schunck, 2013). Table 6 shows the results from the hybrid method. Consistent with our results in our main analysis, as reported in Model 5 of Table 3, we find that the coefficient associated to *Achieved status* for *Low ascribed status* conductors (β_3) is negative and significant ($p < .05$) and the coefficient associated to the squared term of *Achieved status* (β_4) is positive and significant ($p < .01$), thereby supporting H2. In addition, $\beta_1 + \beta_3$ is positive and statistically significant ($p < .01$) and $\beta_2 + \beta_4$ is negative and statistically significant ($p < .01$), thereby supporting H1. Model 9 and Model 10 are the estimates from the split sample between *High ascribed status* and *Low ascribed status* using the hybrid model. The results are consistent: the coefficients show an inverted U-shaped relationship with *High ascribed status* and U-shaped relationships with *Low ascribed status*.

--- Insert Table 6 about here ---

DISCUSSION

Decisions about conforming to or deviating from conventional practices is an important topic in research on sociology, organizations, and management (DiMaggio & Powell 1983; Thornton, 2002; Askin & Mauskapf, 2017; Zhao et al., 2018). The position that decision makers occupy in the status hierarchy is a crucial factor affecting these decisions (Durand & Kremp, 2016; Phillips & Zuckerman, 2001). To resolve the debate about different relational forms between status and conformity that have been proposed in the literature, Phillips and Zuckerman (2001) turned the focus to specific structural conditions, which end up making low-status and high-status actors less constrained and therefore freer to deviate. Accordingly, under specific structural scope conditions, Phillips and Zuckerman (2001) argued, the relationship between status and conformity is inverted U-shaped. Yet, subsequent research has largely overlooked these structural scope conditions and considered middle-status conformity as a generally expected, default, relationship.

We challenge this status quo by departing from Phillips and Zuckerman (2001) in several important aspects. We do this by acknowledging the possibility that actors can have different status positions in different hierarchies and that their position in a more stable hierarchy can have implications for their sense of security or exclusion based on their position in the other, less stable, hierarchy. By exploring the effect of one status dimension on the implications of the other, we argue that the relationship between status and conformity depends on the specific conditions that make high-status and low-status actors either more prone to deviate or more likely to conform. In doing so, we relax the numerous assumptions needed to justify the middle-status-conformity theory and build our theory instead on the interplay between two of the most studied forms of status in the literature: ascribed and achieved status. For actors from high-ascribed-status groups, we hypothesize and find that the relationship between achieved status and conformity is inverted U-shaped (H1). For actors from low-ascribed-status groups, we find the relationship between achieved status and conformity to be U-shaped, as hypothesized (H2).

The main contribution of our study is to revisit the fundamental underpinnings that shape the propensity of actors to adopt conforming behavior. By studying the interplay between the positions that actors occupy in different status hierarchies, we redefine the scope conditions under which middle-status-conformity arises, and uncover novel conditions by which the opposite, middle-status deviance, unfolds. Thus, our theory and results reorient the literature on status and conformity by suggesting a parsimonious condition that leads to different relationships between status and conformity. Even though our results contribute primarily to the study of how actors position themselves in the conformity-distinctiveness spectrum based on their status, they also offer insights to the literature on how such a positioning affects the audiences that evaluate these actors. A burgeoning literature has been focusing on uncovering the level of optimal distinctiveness that maximizes the audience's evaluation of actors (Askin

& Mauskapf, 2017; Zhao et al., 2018). Our results point indicate that the study of the level of optimal distinctiveness should not be disjointed from a consideration of the attributes of the actors that produce it, and specifically that this level might vary depending on the ascribed and achieved status of actors.

Our work can also inform research in other areas as well, such as the one that relates CEO's characteristics to firm behavior. The status of the CEO is recognized as a relevant characteristic in this literature. A stream of research has focused on the status that the CEO has achieved, often to explain CEO and Top Management Teams' compensation (Graffin et al., 2008; Wade, Porac, Pollock, & Graffin, 2006). A separate stream of research has investigated the role of CEO's ascribed status characteristics, showing, for example, that the CEO's gender and race affect investors' reaction to news (Lee & James, 2007), career opportunities and compensation (Cook & Glass, 2014; Hill, Upadhyay, & Beekun, 2015), and employee motivation within the firm (McDonald, Keeves, & Westphal, 2017). Our framework offers a way to bridge these two streams of research on CEOs' status by considering how their diffuse characteristics (such as gender, race and, as we emphasize in our study, country of origin) and individual status together, in their interplay, affect their strategic decisions, for example decision about differentiating their product offerings with respect to those of their competitors.

Our study also adds to the stream of research based on the reinvigorated interest in the status literature to consider the possible implications of multiple status hierarchies in which an actor, whether this actor is an individual or an organization, can be ranked (Jensen & Wang, 2018; Kovács & Liu, 2016). Our contribution to this stream is in emphasizing the importance of an attribute that distinguishes status hierarchies: their malleability. This difference in the malleability in the status hierarchies in which an actor is ranked becomes particularly important when assessing the effects of status inconsistency. Research in sociology has suggested (Jackson, 1962; Stryker & Macke, 1978) that status inconsistency creates anxiety for actors.

By leveraging the difference in malleability between different types of status, we identify different types of anxiety for status-inconsistent actors and suggest that these different types of anxiety yield different behaviors. When the inconsistency is such that actors can realign their low-status position in the more malleable status ranking, to the high-status they enjoy in the less malleable ranking, these actors would be subject to the anxiety to increase the status that is lagging, to achieve status consistency. Such anxiety is likely to translate to deviant behavior, which has a chance of making these actors stand out and potentially enhance their status. When the inconsistency is such that the actor suffers instead from a low-status position in a ranking that is less malleable, while having a high-status position in the more malleable ranking, the actor's anxiety would be about not undermining the more malleable status position, and thus "preserving" the inconsistency. Such anxiety is likely to translate to low-risk conformist behavior. The actor's position in the less malleable ranking functions as an anchoring device for the choice to conform or deviate.

Limitations and Future research

It is important to note the scope conditions of our theory. Our theory applies only to contexts where participants show variation on some salient status characteristics. For example, if in our context all conductors were German/Austrian, then conductors from these countries could not claim membership to a "distinctive" group. Moreover, our framework, and the context we test it in, is characterized by a clear discontinuity between two groups: the high-status and low-status ones. Many social contexts have been considered in such a dichotomous fashion (e.g., male/female, white/ non-white, majority/minority, etc.). Actors who are in the low-status category in these settings are generally discriminated on the basis of their inherited characteristic. However, in some contexts, the spectrum of ascribed status might be more variegated. Our theory does not address cases that present that kind of nuance in the levels of ascribed status, such as the one that can emerge, for example, in contexts with actors who

introduce a third category. If these actors are categorized by their audience differently in their status, one can imagine that ascribed status can be divided into three, or more, categories. The interplay of achieved status and ascribed status in these multi-faceted contexts remains an open question for future research.

In addition, we conceptualize and operationalize ascribed status as a fixed characteristic of the actor. There are circumstances in which changes in nominal status characteristics may reposition the actor in the ascribed status hierarchy. But, even if in some instances actors can change – at least on the surface – their inherited nominal characteristics, there are reasons to believe that the original characteristics that actors inherit at birth are likely to leave a fundamental imprinting on how they are assessed by others. Bourdieu (1984) has argued, for example, that even if actors can change their social class during the course of their life, the one that they inherit at birth is written into their habitus, i.e., in their ways of being. Similarly, even if individuals can change their nationality, the one that they inherit at birth is likely to leave an important enough status marker on them. At the extreme, individuals might even be affected by the nationality or race (or some other geography-based association) of their relatives or progenitors, as can be observed by the fact that some U.S. citizens are labeled by audiences as "Italian"-American, "African"-American or "Hispanic/Latino"-American even if their Italian, African, or Hispanic origins might be several generations behind. How such changes, whether as degradation or elevation, in ascribed status affects conformity remains to be studied. Similarly, how unexpected or sudden status losses or gains in one dimension, due to scandals or institutional changes (Graffin et al., 2013; Neeley & Dumas, 2016) are filtered by other status lenses can be an area of further study.

Another potential limitation of our study is that we focus on individual actors. However, we do not believe that the implications of our theory are confined solely to individuals. The particular ascribed-status marker we study, country of origin, characterizes many organizations

as well, as recent work in producers' authenticity suggests (e.g., Lehman, Kovács, & Carroll, 2014). Firms and their products are ascribed superior status on the basis of their geographical origin, independently of the organizational status they achieve through their accomplishments. Similar to the case for individuals that we discussed above, companies will not lose their perceived links to their country of origin either, even if they change their incorporation into other countries. For example, even if Burger King moves its headquarters to Canada, it is still likely to be perceived and evaluated as authentically American by its audience. Likewise, companies like Gucci can be incorporated in the U.S. but would still be perceived and evaluated as Italian, generally speaking. Therefore, an (in-)consistency between the "inherited" geographical attribute and the achievement of the specific organization can lead to similar conclusions in the way these firms embrace conformist or deviant behavior. Our theory points to the implications of differences in the malleability across multiple status hierarchies in which an actor is ranked. More research is needed to better understand how the interaction between the status that organizations acquire and the one that they derive from their category affect their behavior. For example, future research can explore the interplay between the malleable achieved organizational status with the less malleable status that is transferred by affiliation to a high-status industry (Sharkey, 2014).

REFERENCES

Allison, P. D. 2009. *Fixed effects regression models*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Askin, N., & Bothner, M. 2016. Status-aspirational pricing: The "Chivas Regal" strategy in U.S. higher education, 2006–2012. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 61(2): 217–253.

Askin, N., & Mauskapf, M. 2017. What makes popular culture popular? Product features and optimal differentiation in music. *American Sociological Review,* 82(5): 910–944.

Audia, P., & Greve, H. 2006. Less likely to fail: Low performance, firm size, and factory expansion in the shipbuilding industry. *Management Science,* 52(1): 83–94.

Benjamin, B. A., & Podolny, J. M. 1999. Status, quality, and social order in the California wine industry. *Administrative Science Quarterly,* 44(3): 563–589.

Benner, M. J. 2010. Securities analysts and incumbent response to radical technological change: Evidence from digital photography and internet telephony. *Organization Science,* 21(1):

42–62.

Berger, J., & Fisek, H. 2006. Diffuse status characteristics and the spread of status value: A formal theory. *American Journal of Sociology*, 111(4): 1038–1079.

Berger, J., & Webster, M. 2006. Expectations, status, and behavior. *Contemporary Social Psychological Theories,* 268–300.

Bettencourt, B., Charlton, K., Dorr, N., & Hume, D.L. 2001. Status differences and in-group bias: a meta-analytic examination of the effects of status stability, status legitimacy, and group permeability. *Psychological Bulletin*, 127(4): 520-542.

Beyer, S. 1990. Gender differences in the accuracy of self-evaluations of performance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59(5): 960 – 970.

Bourdieu, P. 1984. *Distinction: A social critique of the judgment of taste.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bowen, J. A. (Ed.). 2003. *The Cambridge companion to conducting.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Boyle, E., & Shapira, Z. 2012. The liability of leading: Battling aspiration and survival goals in the "Jeopardy!" tournament of champions. *Organization Science,* 23(4): 1100–1113.

Brewer, M. B. 1991. The social self: On being the same and different at the same time. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin,* 17(5): 475–482.

Castellucci, F., & Ertug, G. 2010. What's in it for them? Advantages of higher-status partners in exchange relationships. *Academy of Management Journal,* 53(1): 149–166.

Certo, S. T., Withers, M. C., & Semadeni, M. 2017. A Tale of two effects: Using longitudinal data to compare within- and between-firm effects. *Strategic Management Journal,* 38(7): 1536–1556.

Citron, M. J. 1990. Gender, professionalism and the musical canon. *The Journal of Musicology,* 8(1): 102–117.

Cook, A., & Glass, C. 2014. Above the glass ceiling: When are women and racial/ethnic minorities promoted to CEO? *Strategic Management Journal,* 35(7): 1080–1089.

Correll, S. J., & Ridgeway, C. L. 2003. Expectation states theory. In J. Delamater (Ed.), *Handbook of Social Psychology:* 29–51. New York, NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

Cowman, S. E., & Ferrari, J. R. 2002. "Am I for real?" Predicting impostor tendencies from self-handicapping and affective components. *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal,* 30(2): 119–126.

Deephouse, D. L. 1999. To be different, or to be the same? It's a question (and theory) of strategic balance. *Strategic Management Journal,* 31(13): 1410–1430.

DiMaggio, P. J. 1982. Cultural entrepreneurship in nineteenth-century Boston: The creation of an organizational base for high culture in America. *Media, Culture and Society,* 4: 33–50.

DiMaggio, P. J. 1991. Social structure, institutions, and cultural goods. In P. Bourdieu & J. S. Coleman (Eds.), *Social Theory for a Changing World:* 133–155. Boulder, CO: Westview

Press.

DiMaggio, P. J. 1992. Cultural boundaries and structural change. In M. Lamont & M. Fournier (Eds.), *Cultivating Differences:* 21–57. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. 1983. The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review,* 48(2): 147–160.

Doggett, P. 2015. *Electric shock: From the gramophone to the iPhone - 125 years of pop music.* London: The Bodley Head.

Dowd, T. J., Liddle, K., Lupo, K., & Borden, A. 2002. Organizing the musical canon: the repertoires of major U.S. symphony orchestras, 1842 to 1969. *Poetics,* 30(1-2): 35–61.

Durand, R., & Kremp, P. A. 2016. Classical deviation: Organizational and individual status as antecedents of conformity. *Academy of Management Journal,* 59(1): 65–89.

Ertug, G., Yogev, T., Lee, Y.G. & Hedström, P. 2016. The art of representation: How audience-specific reputations affect success in the contemporary art field. *Academy of Management Journal*, 59(1): 113-134.

Fast, N. J. & Joshi, P. D. 2014. Decision making at the top: Benefits and barriers. In Cheng, J.T, Tracy, J.L. & Anderson, C. (Eds.), *The Psychology of Social Status*: 227-242, New York, NY: Springer.

Fiske, S. T. 2010. Interpersonal stratification: Status, power, and subordination. In Fiske, S.T., Gilbert, D.T. & Lindzey, G. (Eds.), *Handbook of Social Psychology* (5th ed.): 941–982, New York, NY: Wiley.

Foladare, I. S. 1969. A clarification of "ascribed status" and "achieved status". *The Sociological Quarterly,* 10(1): 53–61.

Foschi, M. 2000. Double standards for competence: Theory and research. *Annual Review of Sociology,* 26(1): 21–42.

Galtung, J. 1964. A structural theory of aggression. *Journal of Peace Research,* 1(2): 95–119.

Giordano, P. C. 1983. Sanctioning the high-status deviant: An attributional analysis. *Social Psychology Quarterly,* 46(4): 329–342.

Gould, R. 2002. The origins of status hierarchies: A formal theory and empirical test. *American Journal of Sociology,* 107(5): 1143–1178.

Graffin, S. D., Bundy, J., Porac, J. F., Wade, J. B., & Quinn, D. P. 2013. Falls from grace and the hazards of high status: The 2009 British MP expense scandal and its impact on parliamentary elites. *Administrative Science Quarterly,* 58(3): 313–345.

Graffin, S. D., Wade, J. B., Porac, J. F., & McNamee, R. C. 2008. The impact of CEO status diffusion on the economic outcomes of other senior managers. *Organization Science,* 19(3): 457–474.

Gray, M. 2018. A Classical Discography (https://classical-discography.org/; accessed on September 6, 2018).

Greene, W. H. 2003. *Econometric analysis* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Haans, R. F. J., Pieters, C., & He, Z. 2016. Thinking about U: Theorizing and testing U-and

inverted U-shaped relationships in strategy research. *Strategic Management Journal,* 37(7): 1177–1195.

Han, C. M. 1989. Country image: Halo or summary construct? *Journal of Marketing Research,* 26(2): 222.

Hannan, M. T., & Freeman, J. 1984. Structural inertia and organizational change. *American Sociological Review,* 49(2): 149–164.

Haynes, M. C. and Heilman, M. E. 2013. It had to be you (not me)! Women's attributional rationalization of their contribution to successful joint work outcomes. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 39(7): 956-969.

Hill, A. D., Upadhyay, A. D., & Beekun, R. I. 2015. Do female and ethnically diverse executives endure inequity in the CEO position or do they benefit from their minority status? An empirical examination. *Strategic Management Journal,* 36(8): 1115–1134.

Hogg, M. A. 2010. Influence and leadership. In S. T. Fiske, D. Gilbert, & L. Gardner (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (5th ed.): 1166–1207. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Holden, R. 2005. *The virtuoso conductors: The central European tradition from Wagner to Karajan.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Hollander, E. P. 1958. Conformity, status, and idiosyncrasy credit. *Psychological Review,* 65(2): 117-127.

Hong, H., Kubik, J. D., & Solomon, A. 2000. Security analysts' career concerns and herding of earnings forecasts. *The RAND Journal of Economics,* 31(1): 121.

Inman, M., Huerta, J., & Oh, S. 1998. Perceiving discrimination: The role of prototypes and norm violation. *Social Cognition,* 16(4): 418–450.

Jackson, E. F. 1962. Status consistency and symptoms of stress. *American Sociological Review,* 27(4): 469–480.

Jasso, G. 2001. Studying status: An integrated framework. *American Sociological Review,* 66(1): 96–124.

Jensen, M., & Wang, P. 2018. Not in the same boat: How status inconsistency affects research performance in business schools. *Academy of Management Journal,* 61(3): 1021–1049.

Kahneman, D., & Tversky, A. 1979. Prospect theory: An analysis of decision under risk. *Econometrica,* 47(2): 263–291.

Kovács, B., & Liu, C. 2016. Audience structure and status multiplicity. *Social Networks,* 44: 36–49.

Lebrecht, N. 1991. *The maestro myth.* New York: Carol Publishing Group.

Lee, P. M, & James, E. H. 2007. She'-E-Os: Gender effects and investor reactions to the announcements of top executive appointments. *Strategic Management Journal,* 28(3): 227–241.

Lehman, D. W., Kovács, B., & Carroll, G. R. 2014. Conflicting social codes and organizations: Hygiene and authenticity in consumer evaluations of restaurants. *Management Science,* 60(10): 2602–2617.

Levine, L. W. 1988. *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The emergence of cultural hierarchy in America.*

Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Linton, R. 1936. *The study of man.* New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc.

March, J. G. 1991. Exploration and exploitation in organizational learning. *Organization Science,* 2: 71–87.

McCranie, E. W., & Kimberly, J. C. 1973. Rank inconsistency, conflicting expectations and injustice. *Sociometry*, 36(2): 152–176.

McDonald, M., Keeves, G. D., & Westphal, J. 2017. One step forward, one step back: White male top manager organizational identification and helping behavior toward other executives following the appointment of a female or racial minority CEO. *Academy of Management Journal,* 61(2): 405-439.

McKendrick, D. G., & Hannan, M. T. 2013. Oppositional identities and resource partitioning: Distillery ownership in Scotch whisky, 1826–2009. *Organization Science,* 25(4): 1272–1286.

Merton, R. 1968. The Matthew effect in science. *Science,* 159(3810):56-63.

Mitra, A., Jenkins, G. D., Gupta, N., & Shaw, J. D. 2015. The utility of pay raises/cuts: A simulation experimental study. *Journal of Economic Psychology,* 49: 150–166.

Moliterno, T. P., Beck, N., Beckman, C. M., & Meyer, M. 2014. Knowing your place: Social performance feedback in good times and bad times. *Organization Science,* 25(6): 1684–1702.

Mueller, K. H. 1973. *Twenty-seven major American symphony orchestras.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Studies.

Nadler, J.T., & Clark, M.H. 2011. Stereotype threat: A meta-analysis comparing African Americans to Hispanic Americans. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*. 41(4): 872-890.

Neeley, T. B., & Dumas, T. L. 2016. Unearned status gain: Evidence from a global language mandate. *Academy of Management Journal,* 59(1): 14–43.

Ody-Brasier, A., & Vermeulen, F. 2014. The price you pay: Price-setting as a response to norm violations in the market for Champagne grapes. *Administrative Science Quarterly,* 59(1): 109–144.

Perretti, F., & Negro, G. 2006. Filling empty seats: How status and organizational hierarchies affect exploration versus exploitation in team design. *Academy of Management Journal,* 49(4): 759–777.

Phillips, D. J., Turco, C. J., & Zuckerman, E. W. 2013. Betrayal as market barrier: Identity-based limits to diversification among high-status corporate law firms. *American Journal of Sociology,* 118(4): 1023–1054.

Phillips, D. J., & Zuckerman, E. W. 2001. Middle-status conformity: Theoretical restatement and empirical demonstration in two markets. *American Journal of Sociology,* 107(2): 379–429.

Phillips, P. C. B., & Park, J. Y. 1988. On the formulation of Wald tests of nonlinear restrictions. *Econometrica,* 56(5): 1065–1083.

Podolny, J. M. 1993. A status-based competition model of market. *American Journal of Sociology,* 98(4): 829–872.

Pompe, J., Tamburri, L., & Munn, J. 2011. Factors that influence programming decisions of US symphony orchestras. *Journal of Cultural Economics,* 35(3): 167–184.

Ridgeway, C. L. 1978. Conformity, group-oriented motivation, and status attainment in small groups. *Social Psychology,* 41(3): 175–188.

Ridgeway, C. L. 1991. The social construction of status value: Gender and other nominal characteristics. *Social Forces,* 70(2): 367–386.

Ridgeway, C. L. 2014. Why status matters for inequality. *American Sociological Review,* 79(1): 1–16.

Ridgeway, C. L., & Correll, S. J. 2006. Consensus and the creation of status beliefs. *Social Forces*, 85(1): 431–453.

Ridgeway, C. L., & Jacobson, C. K. 1977. Sources of status and influence in all female and mixed sex groups. *The Sociological Quarterly,* 18(3): 413–425.

Ridgeway, C. L., Johnson, C., & Diekema, D. 1994. External status, legitimacy, and compliance in male and female groups. *Social Forces,* 72(4): 1051–1077.

Sauder, M., Lynn, F., & Podolny, J. M. 2012. Status: Insights from organizational sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology,* 38(1): 267–283.

Schnore, L. F. 1961. Social mobility in demographic perspective. *American Sociological Review,* 26(3): 407–423.

Schunck, R. 2013. Within and between estimates in random-effects models: Advantages and drawbacks of correlated random effects and hybrid models. *Stata Journal,* 13(1): 65–76.

Sharkey, A. J. 2014. Categories and organizational status: The role of industry status in the response to organizational deviance. *American Journal of Sociology,* 119(5): 1380–1433.

Shih, M., Pittinsky, T. L., & Ambady, N. 1999. Stereotype susceptibility: Identity salience and shifts in quantitative performance. *Psychological Science,* 10(1): 80–83.

Staw, B., Lance, E., & Dutton, E. 1981. Threat rigidity effects in organizational behavior: A multilevel analysis. *Administrative Science Quarterly,* 26(4): 501–524.

Steele, C. M., & Aronson, J. 1995. Stereotype threat and the intellectual test performance of African Americans. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 69(5): 797-811

Stinchcombe, A. L. 1965. Social structure and organizations. In J. G. March (Ed.), *Handbook of organizations,* vol. 7: 142–193. Chicago: Rand McNally.

Stryker, S., & Macke, A. 1978. Status inconsistency and role conflict. *Annual Review of Sociology,* 4: 57–90.

Thomas-Hunt, M. C., & Phillips, K. W. 2011. The malleability of race in organizational teams: A theory of racial status activation. In J. L. Pearce (Ed.), *Status in management and organizations:* 238–266. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Thompson, J. B. 1995. *The media and modernity: A social theory of the media.* Palo Alto, Ca.: Stanford University Press.

Thornton, P. H. 2002. The rise of the corporation in a craft industry: Conflict and conformity

in institutional logic. *Academy of Management Journal*, 45(1):81-101.

Wade, J. B., Porac, J. F., Pollock, T. G., & Graffin, S. D. 2006. The burden of celebrity: The impact of CEO certification contests on CEO pay and performance. *Academy of Management Journal,* 49(4): 643–660.

Weber, W. 1992. *The rise of musical classics in eighteenth-century England: a study in canon, ritual, and ideology.* Oxford University Press, USA.

Webster, M., & Hysom, J. S. J. 1998. Creating status characteristics. *American Sociological Review*, 63(3): 351–378.

Zhao, E. Y., Fisher, G., Lounsbury, M., & Miller, D. 2017. Optimal distinctiveness: Broadening the interface between institutional theory and strategic management. *Strategic Management Journal,* 38(1): 93–113.

Zhao, E. Y., Ishihara, M., Jennings, P. D., & Lounsbury, M. 2018. Optimal distinctiveness in the console video game industry: An exemplar-based model of proto-category evolution. *Organization Science,* 29(4):588-611.

Zhao, W., & Zhou, X. 2011. Status inconsistency and product valuation in the California wine market. *Organization Science,* 22(6): 1435–1448.

Zuckerman, M. 1979. Attribution of success and failure revisited, or: The motivational bias is alive and well in attribution theory. *Journal of Personality,* 47(2): 245–287.

TABLE 1. INTERACTION BETWEEN ACHIEVED AND ASCRIBED STATUS

			Malleable Status Dimension		
			Individual-Specific Achieved Status		
			Low	**Middle**	**High**
Unmalleable Status Dimension	Group-Bestowed Ascribed Status	**High**	(1) **Inconsistency** *Deviance* (Legitimate actors with less focus on survival point and more on enhanced aspiration)	Border Region of Conformity | Deviance Pressure-Alleviation	(2) **Consolidated High** *Deviance* (Actors with unquestioned stature, enjoying idiosyncrasy credits)
		Low	(3) **Consolidated Low** *Conformity* (Peripheral actors with a strong focus on a survival point)		(4) **Inconsistency** *Conformity* (Actors with precarious standing, under audience scrutiny)

TABLE 2. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND PAIR-WISE CORRELATIONS [a]

	Variables	Mean	S.D.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
(1)	Conductor conformity	0.31	0.06											
(2)	Repertoire size [b]	0.71	0.30	-0.03										
(3)	Big five orchestras	0.26	0.44	-0.03	0.58									
(4)	Orchestra centrality [b]	0.00	0.01	-0.11	0.53	0.53								
(5)	Conducting experience in the U.S. [b]	0.10	0.09	0.01	0.23	0.32	0.27							
(6)	Conductor tenure at the orchestra [b]	0.07	0.07	-0.10	0.18	0.31	0.33	0.68						
(7)	First year at the orchestra	0.12	0.32	0.08	-0.04	-0.05	-0.08	-0.24	-0.36					
(8)	Num. of prior orchestras	0.30	0.57	0.16	0.20	0.23	0.12	0.63	0.01	0.01				
(9)	Conational composer popularity	0.10	0.11	-0.13	-0.07	0.01	0.18	0.16	0.31	-0.06	-0.09			
(10)	Preference toward conational composers [b]	0.33	0.51	-0.18	0.27	0.28	0.42	0.38	0.57	-0.22	-0.02	0.72		
(11)	Achieved status	0.53	0.28	0.09	0.38	0.55	0.28	0.44	0.26	-0.08	0.36	-0.03	0.15	
(12)	Ascribed status	0.17	0.38	-0.03	-0.03	0.00	0.19	0.12	0.19	-0.02	0.05	0.83	0.58	0.03

[a]: The number of observations is 1031. $|\rho| > 0.05$ is significant at $p < 0.05$.

[b]: Variables are re-scaled by 1/100 for ease of presentation of the regression coefficients.

TABLE 3. CONDUCTOR CONFORMITY [a]

Variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
Repertoire size	-0.023*	(0.011)	-0.023*	(0.011)	-0.024*	(0.011)	-0.024*	(0.011)	-0.025*	(0.011)
Big five orchestras	0.016+	(0.0096)	0.012	(0.0100)	0.0082	(0.0099)	0.0078	(0.0099)	0.0060	(0.0098)
Orchestra centrality	-1.21*	(0.60)	-1.14+	(0.61)	-0.95	(0.62)	-0.93	(0.62)	-0.76	(0.63)
Orchestra centrality squared	31.4	(35.4)	28.7	(35.3)	18.9	(35.9)	18.1	(35.8)	16.5	(35.9)
Conducting experience in the U.S.	-0.20*	(0.078)	-0.20*	(0.078)	-0.20**	(0.077)	-0.20**	(0.077)	-0.20**	(0.077)
Conductor tenure at the orchestra	0.061	(0.066)	0.044	(0.066)	0.034	(0.067)	0.034	(0.067)	0.013	(0.067)
First year with the orchestra	0.012*	(0.0058)	0.012*	(0.0058)	0.012*	(0.0058)	0.012*	(0.0058)	0.013*	(0.0058)
Num. of prior orchestras	0.020+	(0.010)	0.017+	(0.010)	0.016	(0.010)	0.016	(0.010)	0.016	(0.010)
Conational composer popularity	0.021	(0.14)	0.037	(0.14)	0.045	(0.14)	0.039	(0.14)	0.082	(0.15)
Preference toward conational composers	0.0031	(0.011)	0.0037	(0.011)	0.0030	(0.011)	0.0031	(0.011)	0.011	(0.011)
Achieved status × Ascribed status							-0.020	(0.043)	0.73***	(0.20)
Achieved status squared × Ascribed status									-0.61***	(0.16)
Achieved status			0.023	(0.015)	-0.073	(0.066)	-0.074	(0.066)	-0.15*	(0.068)
Achieved status squared					0.088	(0.058)	0.091	(0.058)	0.16*	(0.060)
Observations	1031		1031		1031		1031		1031	
AIC	-3248.3		-3248.6		-3249.5		-3247.7		-3260.4	
BIC	-2714.9		-2710.3		-2706.3		-2699.6		-2707.3	

[a]: Heteroscedasticity robust standard errors are in parentheses. All tests are two-tailed. +: p < .10; *: p < .05; **: p < .01; ***: p < .001

48

TABLE 4. TESTING CURVILINEAR EFFECTS

PANEL A. TESTING SLOPES AT MIN AND MAX POINTS BASED ON MODEL 5

	At Minimum		At Maximum	
German/Austrian (High-ascribed-status)	0.50**	(0.17)	-0.27**	(0.10)
Non-German/Austrian	-0.12*	(0.06)	0.16**	(0.06)

PANEL B. TESTING INFLECTION POINT BASED ON MODEL 5

	German/Austrian (High-ascribed status)	Non-German/Austrian
Range of Achieved status	[0.08, 0.93]	[0.08,1]
Inflection point	0.64	0.47
Std Error of the inflection point	0.04	0.06
95% confidence interval	(0.56, 0.72)	(0.35, 0.59)

TABLE 5. SPLIT SAMPLE

Variables	German/Austrians Only Model 6		Non-German/Austrians Only Model 7	
Repertoire size	-0.0058	(0.042)	-0.025*	(0.012)
Big five orchestras	0.052	(0.034)	0.0045	(0.012)
Orchestra centrality	-2.31	(2.19)	-0.39	(0.68)
Orchestra centrality squared	113.9	(83.9)	6.08	(41.6)
Conducting experience in the U.S.	-0.71+	(0.43)	-0.21*	(0.085)
Conductor tenure at the orchestra	0.54	(0.41)	0.027	(0.075)
First year with the orchestra	0.0080	(0.017)	0.014*	(0.0063)
Num. of prior orchestras	0.046	(0.031)	0.020+	(0.012)
Conational composer popularity	-0.13	(0.30)	0.012	(0.21)
Preference toward conational composers	0.00073	(0.018)	0.013	(0.016)
Achieved status	0.51*	(0.23)	-0.16*	(0.069)
Achieved status squared	-0.34+	(0.19)	0.16**	(0.062)
Observations	176		855	
AIC	-529.1		-2713.2	
BIC	-430.8		-2257.1	

[a]: Heteroscedasticity robust standard errors are in parentheses. All tests are two-tailed. +: $p < .10$; *: $p < .05$; **: $p < .01$; ***: $p < .001$

TABLE 6. RESULTS FROM HYBRID MODEL WITH CONDUCTOR RANDOM EFFECTS

Variables	Full sample Model 8		German/Austrians Only Model 9		Non-German/Austrians Only Model 10	
Between effects						
Repertoire size	0.012	(0.017)	-0.62**	(0.22)	0.00017	(0.015)
Big five orchestras	0.015	(0.012)	-0.19	(0.18)	0.024*	(0.010)
Orchestra centrality	-1.03	(0.64)	15.4	(9.90)	-0.60	(0.58)
Orchestra centrality squared	11.4	(28.9)	-359.5	(301.3)	-25.9	(32.2)
Conducting experience in the U.S.	-0.095	(0.17)	-0.19	(1.34)	-0.10	(0.14)
Conductor tenure at the orchestra	0.14	(0.19)	0.26	(1.54)	0.075	(0.18)
First year at the orchestra	0.0078	(0.017)	0.66**	(0.22)	-0.019	(0.020)
Num. of prior orchestras	0.011	(0.016)	0.067	(0.069)	0.0098	(0.014)
Conational composer popularity	-0.040	(0.074)	-0.94	(0.71)	0.088	(0.087)
Preference toward conational composers	-0.024	(0.018)	0.29+	(0.15)	-0.069**	(0.026)
Ascribed status	-0.039	(0.038)				
Achieved status × Ascribed status	0.31	(0.21)				
Achieved status squared × Ascribed status	-0.27	(0.22)				
Achieved status	0.0020	(0.059)	-0.069	(0.22)	0.0015	(0.051)
Achieved status squared	0.0010	(0.057)	-0.015	(0.27)	0.0032	(0.050)
Within effects						
Repertoire size	-0.018*	(0.0079)	-0.010	(0.027)	-0.018*	(0.0086)
Big five orchestras	0.0041	(0.0076)	0.037	(0.030)	0.0028	(0.0090)
Orchestra centrality	-0.55	(0.49)	-2.04	(1.69)	-0.30	(0.53)
Orchestra centrality squared	10.8	(26.8)	68.8	(64.1)	3.26	(31.0)
Conducting experience in the U.S.	-0.15*	(0.062)	-0.49	(0.39)	-0.16*	(0.068)
Conductor tenure at the orchestra	0.0071	(0.052)	0.36	(0.39)	0.023	(0.058)
First year at the orchestra	0.0097*	(0.0041)	0.0062	(0.012)	0.011*	(0.0045)
Num. of prior orchestras	0.011	(0.0075)	0.030	(0.033)	0.015+	(0.0085)
Conational composer popularity	0.058	(0.10)	-0.033	(0.21)	0.0076	(0.16)
Preference toward conational composers	0.0086	(0.0079)	-0.0012	(0.013)	0.010	(0.012)
Achieved status × Ascribed status	0.56***	(0.16)				
Achieved status squared × Ascribed status	-0.47***	(0.13)				
Achieved status	-0.11*	(0.049)	0.42*	(0.17)	-0.12*	(0.049)
Achieved status squared	0.12**	(0.043)	-0.30*	(0.14)	0.12**	(0.044)
Observations	1031		176		855	

[a]: All tests are two-tailed. +: $p < .10$; *: $p < .05$; **: $p < .01$; ***: $p < .001$

FIGURE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF *CONDUCTOR CONFORMITY* AND *ACHIEVED STATUS* BY HIGH AND LOW *ASCRIBED STATUS* & THE ESTIMATED EFFECTS BASED ON MODEL 5 IN TABLE 3
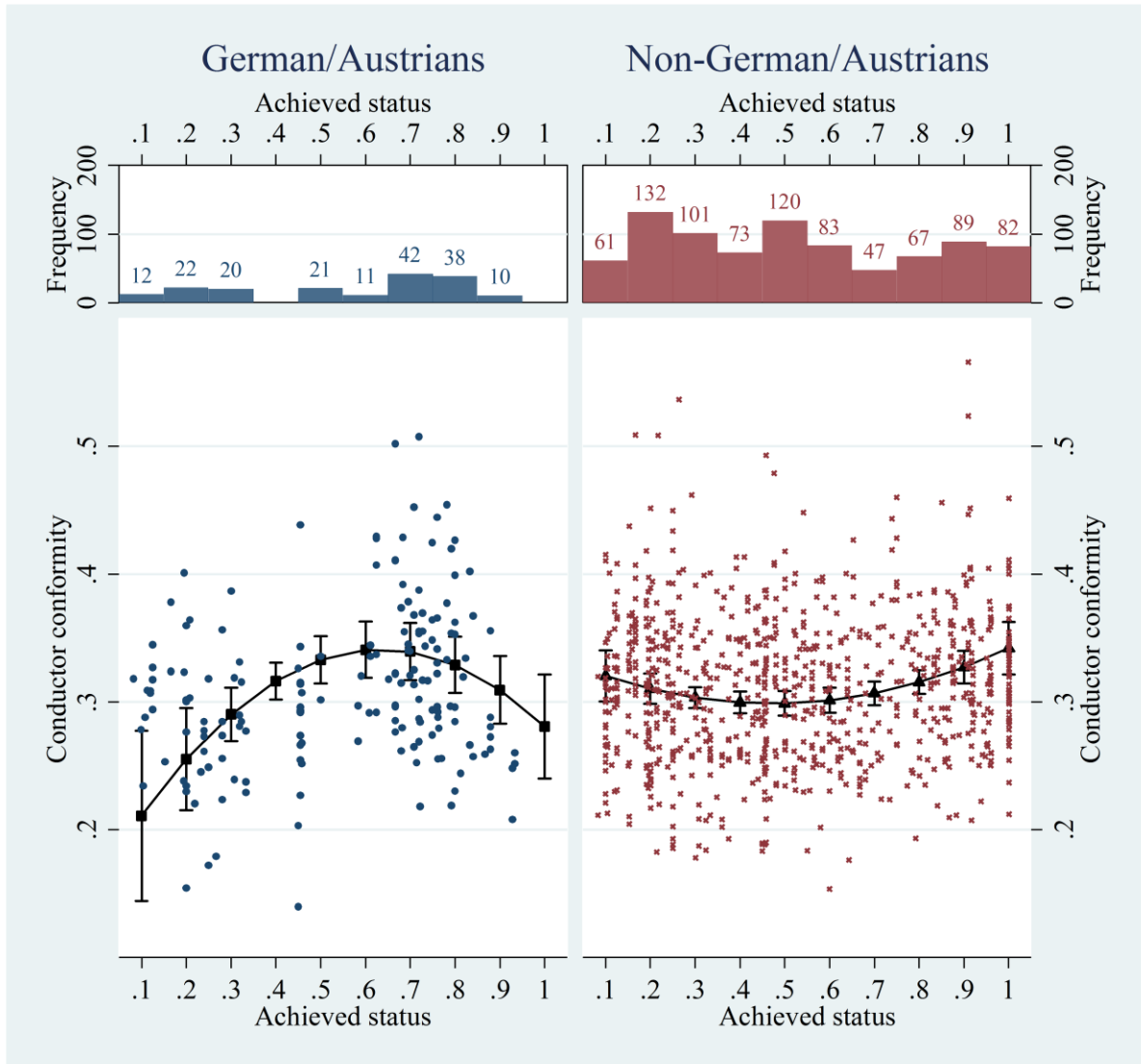
Matteo Prato (matteo.prato@usi.ch) is an associate professor of organization theory at the Università della Svizzera italiana. He holds a Ph.D. in management from IESE Business School. His research examines how social structures (e.g.,status hierarchies, social networks, and classification systems) affect actors' behavior and shape market valuations.

Emmanuel Kypraios (emmanuel.kypraios@usi.ch) will be joining NUI Maynooth as a Lecturer in Management at the School of Business. He received his Ph.D. in Management at the Università della Svizzera italiana. His research focuses on how social classification systems of worth (e.g., status, rankings, ratings and categorical affiliation) support rational decision making in both traditional and dynamic markets.

Gokhan Ertug (gokhanertug@smu.edu.sg) is an associate professor of strategic management at the Lee Kong Chian School of Business, Singapore Management University. He received his Ph.D. from INSEAD.

Yonghoon G. Lee (yglee@ust.hk) is an assistant professor in the Department of Management at the Hong Kong University of Science Technology. He received his Ph.D. from INSEAD. His current research focuses on the role of network and social status on individuals' career attainment.