

Social status is as old as human beings. Already ancient sources attribute rights and allocate assets based on status (DiTella, Haisken-DeNew & MacCulloch, 2001). Status ranks individuals on socially-valued individual characteristics and group membership (Ball & Eckel, 1996; Hong & Bohnet, 2004; Loch, Huberman & Stout, 2000; Ridgeway & Walker, 1995). At the same time, surprisingly scarce is the information on how individuals perceive status changes and how their social conscientiousness is related to social endowments. In general, social status upward prospects are seen as favorable – but the downside of social status losses is rather vaguely described and no stringent framework exists on how status prospects impact human decision making and actions.

One of the most influential theories explaining human decision making under uncertainty is prospect theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). Prospect theory holds individuals' perceptions about prospective outcomes as individually-evaluated changes from the status quo. Laboratory experiments find individual aggravation over losing monetary resources to be greater than the pleasure associated with gaining the same amount (Bazerman & Moore, 2008). Originally prospect theory was captured for monetary gains and losses but replicated in various fields (Levy, 1997). In the application of prospect theory, social comparisons have mildly been touched on – if we consider the impact social identities have on our day-to-day judgment, decision making and actions (Loewenstein, Thompson & Bazerman, 1989). Understanding social status prospects' influence on individual behavior, however, could explain the underlying socio-psychological motives of decision making in the social compound. More concretely, if certain social status prospects are found to be perceived as more or less favorable, they are prone to elicit certain behavior and may steer respective action. In individuals' constant striving for

favorable social status enhancement, social status prospects could put people into a specific mindset that drives pro-social acts.

As a pro-social behavior, ethicality is socially-honored. In the social compound, ethicality offers social status elevation prospects derived from respect for socially-valued altruism. Ethicality as a noble act may thus grant social status elevating opportunities. In reverse, social status perspectives could be used to nudge people into pro-social behavior. If ethicality is related to social status gain perspectives, social-status awareness could become a means to nurture a favorable climate within society. Social status endowments may thus be the core of socially responsible behavior; social status prospects the driver of the warm glow.

In accordance with prospect theory holding that status losses loom larger than status gains, foremost social status losses may steer ethicality in the wish to regain social status based on a reference point relative to previously-held status positions. In the light of ethicality being an implicit social status enhancement tool, social status losses are potentially answered by pro-social behavior. Social status manipulation could thereby serve as a non-monetary nudge to foster ethicality in society. The following paper applies prospect theory to social status and proposes ethicality as a means of social status enhancement with attention to regaining prior social status losses.

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