The Local Ladder Effect: Social Status and Subjective Well-Being

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Abstract

Dozens of studies in different nations reveal that socioeconomic status only weakly predicts an individual's subjective well-being (SWB). These effects suggest that although the pursuit of social status is a fundamental human motivation, achieving high status has little impact on one's SWB. However, we propose that sociometric status – the respect and admiration one has in face-to-face groups (e.g., one's friendship group or workplace) – has a stronger effect on SWB than does socioeconomic status. Using correlational, experimental, and longitudinal methodologies, four studies found consistent evidence for a "Local Ladder Effect": sociometric status significantly predicted satisfaction with life and the experience of positive and negative emotions. Longitudinally, as sociometric status rises or falls, SWB rises or falls accordingly. Furthermore, these effects were driven by feelings of power and social acceptance. Overall, individuals' sociometric status – their respect and admiration in local, face-to-face groups – matters more than their socioeconomic status for SWB.

The pursuit of social status is a powerful motive that drives much of social behavior. But does achieving higher status bring happiness? Prior research suggests social status plays little role in subjective well-being (SWB). For example, within countries, there is only a weak association between socioeconomic status and dimensions of SWB, including life satisfaction and the experience of positive and negative emotions (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999). In fact, individuals who strongly value wealth and material possessions – components of socioeconomic status -- tend to experience lower SWB (Kasser & Ryan, 1993). This robust literature seems to suggest that attaining high status provides little benefit for one's SWB.

However, prior research linking status and SWB has focused almost exclusively on socioeconomic status (SES) – material dimensions of status that arise from income and wealth – raising the question of whether other forms of status may have a stronger impact. Sociometric status is a distinct form of social status – it represents the respect and admiration individuals have in their face-to-face groups, such as their neighborhoods, workplaces, or among classmates (Anderson, John, Keltner, & Kring, 2001). A long tradition of research has documented how rank-order differences in sociometric status emerge in all kinds of face-to-face groups (Bales, Strodtbeck, Mills, & Roseborough, 1951), just as they do in the hierarchies of non-human species, with some individuals attaining more respect and admiration than others.

Two features of sociometric status distinguish it from SES and make it potentially more important to SWB: how it is defined – locally rather than globally – and its connections to a set of psychological and social processes that shape SWB.

First, sociometric status is defined locally, in the context of face-to-face groups, whereas SES is typically defined as global status within one's country. Individuals' comparisons with others immediately around them affect their happiness more than do distant comparisons

(Festinger, 1954). As Bertrand Russell noted, "Beggars do not envy millionaires, though of course they will envy other beggars who are more successful" (Russell, 1930, pp. 90). Supporting our argument that local status matters more to SWB than global status, prior research has shown that individuals with higher income relative to others in their county reported higher life satisfaction (Boyce, Brown, & Moore, 2010).

However, we hypothesize that sociometric status matters even more for SWB than one's SES rank in the local environment because of how it is defined. Sociometric status is based in peer respect rather than by income or wealth (Berger, Rosenholtz, & Zelditch, 1980; Blau, 1964). As a reflection of respect and admiration among peers, sociometric status is likely to strongly impact the personal sense of power and feelings of social acceptance, which are both critical determinants of psychological well-being (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003; Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Individuals high in sociometric status have more control over group decisions, autonomy, and influence over others' opinions (Berger et al., 1980). Sociometric status is then likely to determine the personal sense of power and control. Moreover, individuals higher in sociometric status have more friends and are more frequently included by others in social activities (Thibault & Kelley, 1959). Sociometric status is thus a specific form of status that should boost the sense of belongingness and interpersonal connection. Although SES can also shape the sense of power (Anderson, John, & Keltner, in press), these effects tend to be weaker. In addition, people with higher SES show signs of impoverished social connections (Kraus & Keltner, 2009).

In light of this analysis, we propose a *Local Ladder Effect*, where higher sociometric status leads to higher SWB. We expect this effect to emerge because it will shape two important determinants of psychological well-being: an increased sense of power, and a sense of social

acceptance. Further, given that some prior research has found significant (albeit modest) effects of SES on SWB, we also thought it important to test and establish that the effects of sociometric status on SWB are stronger than the effects of SES. Therefore, we tested whether sociometric status on SWB will have a stronger effect than that of SES.

Overview

To triangulate on our central research question, the link between status and SWB, we conducted four studies using a diverse set of complementary designs. Study 1 examined status and SWB in intact groups and used multiple measures of sociometric status, including peer reports. Study 2 examined a broader national sample and tested the mediating mechanisms of power and social acceptance. Whereas Studies 1 and 2 established ecological validity, Study 3 used experimental methods to test causal effects of sociometric status relative to SES. Study 4 used a longitudinal design that allowed us to assess whether changes in status lead to changes in SWB: we predicted that as an individual's sociometric status rises or falls after a significant life transition that their SWB would rise or fall accordingly.

Study 1: Status and Well-being in Extant Groups

In Study 1 we examined the associations between sociometric and socioeconomic status and well-being in college student groups such as sororities and ROTC groups. College students value their membership in these kinds of groups and spend considerable time with fellow group members. Moreover, this design allowed us to collect multiple measures of sociometric status, including peer- and self-report as well as life-outcome data.

Methods

Participants. Eighty-eight members of 14 college student groups participated (53% male; 56% White, 18% African-American, 10% Latino/a, 24% Asian-American, 1% Native

American, 10% "other."; average age=20.4 (*SD*=1.3)). Two groups provided unreliable peer-ratings of status (see below) and were excluded from the analyses, leaving 80 participants from 12 separate groups.

Sociometric status. We measured sociometric status with three indices. First, participants rated each fellow group member on whether he/she was respected, admired, and looked up to in the group, on a scale from 1 ("*Strongly disagree*") to 7 ("*Strongly agree*"). We used Kenny and La Voie's Social Relations Model (SRM; 1984) to analyze these peer-ratings. Two groups showed very low consensus in their peer-ratings of status (α's of .00 and .08) and were thus excluded from the analyses. There was high consensus among the remaining participants, α=.71. Second, participants rated their own status with five items, "I have a high level of respect in others' eyes," "Others admire me," "Others look up to me," "I have high social standing," and "I am held in high regard by others," using a scale from 1 ("*Strongly disagree*") to 7 ("*Strongly agree*"). These items were combined into an overall measure of self-perceived status (α=.93). Third, we measured the number of leadership positions participants had held in their House or committee (e.g., President, Rush Chairman; *M*=1.71, *SD*=1.56). We then formed an overall index of participants' sociometric status by standard-scoring each of the three indicators and averaging them together (α=.60). We also centered this and all other variables around their group mean to control for group effects.

Family income. SES was measured using a standard scale of family income (Adler, Epel, Castellazzo, & Ickovics, 2000). Participants rated their "total household income," which included their parents' combined income: (1) under $15,000, (2) $15,001–$25,000, (3) $25,001–$35,000, (4) $35,001–$50,000, (5) $50,001–$75,000, (6) $75,001–$100,000, (7) $100,001-$150,000, and (8) over $150,000. The average rating was 6.17, *SD*=1.44, indicating the average

was between $75,000 and $100,000. Family income was then centered around the group mean to reflect participants' local income relative to other group members.

SWB. We measured SWB in this and all other studies using its three main components: the Satisfaction with Life Scale, or one's global, cognitive assessment of one's life as a whole (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985), and the Positive Affect (PA) and Negative Affect (NA) Schedules, which measure the experience of positive and negative emotions (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). As in previous research (Sheldon, King, Houser-Marko, Osbaldiston, & Gunz, 2007), we combined the SWLS (α=.77, *M*=5.38, *SD*=.94), and the PA (α=.89, *M*=3.84, *SD*=.72) and NA scales (α=.83, *M*=1.80, *SD*=.53), after reverse scoring the latter. Because gender and ethnicity (in particular, minority status) sometimes predict sociometric status (Berger et al., 1980) and SWB (Diener et al., 1999), we also controlled for both in all analyses.

Results

In a simultaneous regression, we found that sociometric status predicted SWB (β=.35, B=.33, SE=.10, *p*=.002) whereas family income rank, locally defined relative to other group members (β=.02, B=.01, SE=.06, *p*=.85) did not predict SWB, nor did gender (β=.05, B=.08, SE=.15, *p*=.63), or ethnicity (white/non-white, β=-.04, B=-.06, SE=.15, *p*=.72) (see Supplemental materials for analyses of each of the individual components of SWB in all studies).

To examine whether sociometric status predicted SWB more strongly than did income, we compared the residual from the usual regression estimation (in which sociometric status and income are entered into the regression separately) with the residual from a regression estimation in which the predictors being examined have been combined (sociometric status and income are summed together; Adler et al., 2000). The ''unrestricted'' model with both predictors entered

separately had significantly less error variance than the ‘‘restricted’’ model in which the predictors were summed together, $F(1,78)=14.15$, $p<.001$, demonstrating there was stronger relation between sociometric status and SWB relative to the association between SES and SWB.

Study 2: Status and Well-being in a National Sample

To generalize the findings from Study 1 to a broader population, Study 2 examined a national on-line sample of participants that had a wider range of income, education, and backgrounds (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). We also examined the sense of power and social acceptance as possible mediators. Finally, we controlled for the personality trait extraversion, which predicts both sociometric status (Anderson et al., 2001) and SWB (Diener et al., 1999) to rule out the possibility that it might drive a spurious link between sociometric status and SWB.

Methods

Participants. Participants were 315 individuals recruited on-line from around the United States (36% male, 64% female; 74% White, 5% African-American, 6% Latino, 7% Asian-American, 9% Native American, 10% “other.”; average age=32.8 years (SD=11.0)) via Amazon Mechanical Turk.

Socometric status. Participants rated their respect and admiration in their three most important groups to which they belong (e.g., friends, family, work group). For each group, participants indicated their agreement with four items: “I have a high level of respect in others’ eyes,” “Others admire me,” “I have high social standing,” and “Others look up to me.” These four items correlated with each other (average α=.94 in the three groups). Furthermore, participants’ sociometric status in the three groups was intercorrelated, α=.62, indicating

individuals had either consistently high or consistently low sociometric status in their three groups. We thus combined their sociometric status in each group (α=.62, *M*=5.16, *SD*=.93).

Socioeconomic status. We measured SES by combining total household income and education as an aggregate measure (Kraus, Piff, & Keltner, 2009). Total household income was measured as in Study 1; the mean was 4.12 (*SD*=1.94), indicating the average income was between $35,001-$50,000, consistent with the mean US income (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2010). We measured education with a previous index (*M*=2.66, *SD*=.75; Willer, 2009). As in prior work (Kraus et al., 2009), we standardized household income and education and combined them to form an overall measure of SES.

SWB. We measured SWB the same as in Study 1: With the SWLS (α=.92, *M*=4.29, *SD*=1.47), PANAS PA (α=.90, *M*=3.38, *SD*=.78), and PANAS NA measures (α=.91, *M*=2.08, *SD*=.82). These three measures were combined as in Study 1, after reverse-scoring NA.

Extraversion. We measured extraversion with the Big Five Inventory (*M*=3.01, *SD*=.82, α=.88) (John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991).

Personal sense of power. Participants reported their sense of power in each of the three groups using the Sense of Power scale (Anderson et al., in press), which asked about the power they have in their relationships with others in that group (average α=.90 in the three groups). Further, participants' aggregate scores across the three groups correlated with each other, α=.54. Therefore, individuals who felt more (or less) powerful in one group tended to feel more (or less) powerful in their other groups. These three scores were combined to form an overall measure of the sense of power (*M*=4.82, *SD*=.75).

Social acceptance. Based on previous research (Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995), participants rated their social acceptance, or how much they felt accepted, included, liked,

and welcomed by others in each of the three groups (average α=.96 in the three groups). Further, participants' aggregate scores across the three groups correlated with each other, α=.57. Therefore, individuals who felt accepted in one group tended to feel accepted in their other groups. These three scores were combined to form an overall measure of acceptance (*M*=5.80, *SD*=.79).

Results

As shown in Table 1, sociometric status predicted SWB, and this relationship held even after controlling for SES, gender, ethnicity (white/non-white), and extraversion. Moreover, consistent with Study 1, sociometric status predicted SWB more strongly than did SES, as the unrestricted model had less error variance than the restricted model, $F(1,313)=14.13$, $p < .001$.

Mediation analyses demonstrated that sociometric status predicted SWB through the indirect effects of sense of power and social acceptance. Sociometric status predicted the sense of power (β=.57, B=.47, SE=.04, $p < .001$) and when both sense of power and sociometric status simultaneously predicted SWB, there was a drop in the effect of sociometric status (Sobel z=4.90, p <.001, See Model 5, Table 1). Sociometric status also predicted social acceptance (β= .65, B=.56 SE=.04, $p < .001$) and when both sociometric status and social acceptance simultaneously predicted SWB, there was a drop in the effect of sociometric status (Sobel z=5.89, $p < .001$, See Model 6, Table 1). Thus, individuals higher in sociometric status had higher SWB because they felt a greater sense of power and more accepted in their groups.

Social status predicted SWB above and beyond the effect of the personality dimension of extraversion. Above and beyond who a person is, where they stand in their local hierarchy matters to their happiness.

Study 3: Experimental Manipulation of Status

The findings from our first two studies were correlational in design, and thus limited in the causal inferences we can draw about the relationship between status and well-being. In Study 3, therefore, we manipulated the subjective sense of status using a priming technique that asked participants to compare themselves with someone who had either *high* or *low sociometric* or *socioeconomic status* (Kraus, Cote, & Keltner, 2010). Thus, a participant in the high-sociometric-status condition compared themselves with someone who had little respect and admiration, whereas another set of participants was asked to compare themselves with someone who had either high or low SES.

Methods

Participants. Two-hundred twenty-eight participants were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk (38% male, 62% female; 72% White, 7% African-American, 6% Latino, 8% Asian-American, 5% Native American, 7% "other").

Experimental manipulation. Participants were shown a ladder with 10 rungs (Kraus et al., 2010). In the sociometric status conditions, participants were told: "Think of the ladder above as representing where people stand in the important groups to which they belong." Participants in the high (low) sociometric-status condition were told: (low-sociometric-status condition instructions in parentheses): "Now please compare yourself to the people at the very bottom (top) rung of the ladder. These are people who have absolutely NO (A GREAT DEAL OF) RESPECT, ADMIRATION, and INFLUENCE in ALL of their important social groups. In particular, we'd like you to COMPARE YOURSELF TO THESE PEOPLE in terms of your own respect, admiration, and influence in your important groups." In the SES conditions, participants were given similar instructions but compared themselves to someone with more or less wealth, education, and job status. Following this prompt, all participants were instructed to think of how

"the similarities and differences" between them and the comparison target would impact a getting acquainted interaction. As a manipulation check, participants were asked: "Where would you place yourself on this ladder relative to these people on the very bottom (top) rung?" and given a scale from 1 ("*bottom rung*") to 10 ("*top rung*").

Subjective well-being. We again measured SWB with the SWLS (α=.91, *M*=4.28, *SD*=1.45), PANAS PA (α=.91, *M*=2.92, *SD*=.83), and PANAS NA measures (α=.91, *M*=1.56, *SD*=.73). In this study, the PANAS asked the extent to which participants felt each emotion presently. We computed overall SWB as in the previous studies.

Results

Manipulation check. A 2 (level: high, low) X 2 (type of status) between-participants ANOVA showed that participants in the high-status conditions (*M*=6.23, *SD*=1.99) reported higher status than participants in the low-status conditions (*M*=5.19, *SD*=1.85), $F(1,224)=16.39$, $p < .001$. There was no interaction effect, $F(1,224)=1.38$, $p=.24$. This suggests the sociometric and socioeconomic manipulations were equally effective.

SWB. We next submitted SWB to a 2 (level: high, low) X 2 (type of status: sociometric, socioeconomic) between-participants ANOVA. There was a main effect for level, $F(1, 224)=5.06$, $p=.03$, but more importantly a significant interaction between level and type of status, $F(1, 224)=4.73$, $p=.03$. Individuals in the high sociometric status condition had higher SWB than those in the low sociometric condition, $t(115)=3.05$, $p=.003$. In contrast, individuals in the high SES condition did not have higher SWB than those in the low SES condition, $t(109)=.06$, $p= .96$. Therefore, these findings provide evidence for a causal effect of sociometric status on SWB that is stronger than the effect of SES.[i]

Study 4: Longitudinal Assessment of Changes in Status

Study 4 used a longitudinal design to examine whether changes in sociometric status following a major life transition would predict corresponding changes in SWB. That is, when individuals' sociometric status rises or falls after a significant life transition, does their SWB rise or fall accordingly?

To examine this question we assessed Masters of Business Administration (MBA) students a month before they graduated, and then again nine months after graduation. Graduating from the MBA program involves moving from one important sociometric status hierarchy (their cohort of MBA classmates) to another (typically their workplace). Such a move could thus involve an increase or decrease in sociometric status and, we would predict, systematic changes in SWB.

Methods

Participants. One hundred fifty-six MBA students participated at Time 1. Of those, 116 (74%) participated at Time 2 (71% male; 50% White, 1% African-American, 6% Latino, 37% Asian-American, 11% "other."). We focused on participants assessed at both times. The participants who completed both assessments did not differ on any dimension from participants who only completed the first assessment.

Sociometric status. At Time 1, participants rated their sociometric status in their MBA cohort with the same items used in Study 1 (α=.94, M=4.63, SD=1.02). At Time 2, participants indicated their agreement with the same items, but with respect to their workplace, or their most important group if they were unemployed (α=.94, M=5.16, SD=.98). Because none of the significant results changed when we included or excluded the few unemployed at Time 2, we report analyses including the full sample.

Income. As in Study 1, we focused on their total household income. At Time 1, *M*=4.89 (*SD*=2.82), indicating an average income between $35,001-$50,000. At Time 2, *M*=6.89 (*SD*=1.46), indicating an average income between $75,001-$100,000.

SWB. We combined the SWLS (Time 1: α=.91, *M*=5.07, *SD*=1.32; Time 2: α=.89, *M*=5.12, *SD*=1.20), PANAS PA (Time 1: α=.88, *M*=3.68, *SD*=.64; Time 2: α= .90, *M*=3.67, *SD*=.65), and PANAS NA measures (Time 1: α=.85, *M*=1.88, *SD*= .58; Time 2: α=.86, *M*=1.78, *SD*=.59). These measures were again standardized and combined to measure SWB at each time.

Results

As shown in Table 2, Time 2 sociometric status predicted Time 2 SWB. This relationship held up even after controlling for Time 1 sociometric status, Time 1 SWB, Time 1 SES, Time 2 SES, gender, and ethnicity (White/non-White) (see Model 4). Therefore, as MBA students' sociometric status rose or fell after they graduated, their SWB rose or fell accordingly.

We also used a difference score approach (Allison, 1990) to provide further confidence that changes in sociometric status predicted changes in SWB. We again found that changes in sociometric status from Time 1 to Time 2 predicted changes in SWB from Time 1 to Time 2 (β=.22, B=.14, SE=.06, *p*=.02).

Furthermore, similar to our previous findings, Time 2 sociometric status more strongly predicted Time 2 SWB than did Time 2 SES, as the unrestricted model had less error variance than the restricted model $F(1,154)=20.17$, $p < .001$. Together, the findings from Study 4 suggest that as MBA students' sociometric status rose or fell after they graduated, their SWB rose or fell accordingly. Moreover, with this longitudinal design, we were able to establish that changes in sociometric status predicted changes in SWB more strongly than did changes in SES.

Discussion

Four studies, triangulating on our research question using correlational, experimental, and longitudinal designs, found consistent evidence for a Local Ladder Effect: Increases in sociometric status were associated with rises in subjective well-being. These findings were robust regardless of whether we measured sociometric status with peer- or self-ratings, and held up after controlling for possible confounding variables of gender, ethnicity, and extraversion. Individuals higher in sociometric status experienced elevated SWB because they felt more powerful and more accepted in their social groups. Occupying a higher position in the local ladder thus created a sense of influence and control over one's social environment, as well as a sense of belonging and acceptance.

Our findings suggest that possessing higher status is more important than prior scholarship has suggested. However, not all forms of status affect SWB equally. Individuals' sociometric status in their local, face-to-face groups, predicted SWB more strongly than did SES.

Future studies should continue to explore why sociometric status has a stronger effect on SWB than does SES. One possibility is that although individuals adapt to their income or education (Brickman, Coates, & Janoff-Bulman, 1978), they might not adapt in the same way to their sociometric status. The joy that comes with an influx of money wanes quickly as people become accustomed to how wealth shapes their daily lives. Yet respect and admiration from one's face-to-face groups might bring sustained SWB.

It is interesting to speculate about the evolutionary origins of the sociometric status → SWB association. Elevated status is highly correlated with reproductive success and SWB in our close primate relatives, chimpanzees (Weiss, King, & Enns, 2002), a finding that parallels the Local Ladder Effect we observed. In our hominid predecessors, the capacity to enjoy elevated status in the small face-to-face groups in which we evolved was also likely associated with

greater survival rates and reproductive success (Buss, 1999). Thus, sociometric status might have become intrinsically rewarding over our evolutionary history.

Other research has shown that individuals who place more importance on attaining outcomes related to social status – such as power, control, and prominence (Emmons, 1991; Kasser & Ryan, 1993; 1996) – exhibit lower SWB than individuals who placed less importance on those outcomes. Thus, our findings suggest that while longing for status might dampen SWB, possessing status (at least, sociometric status) can bolster SWB (see Gruber, Mauss, & Tamir 2011).

In sum, the current research highlights the importance of local status hierarchies to one's happiness. Individuals' standing in their local ladders of respect – their friendship groups, workplace, or neighborhood – has a strong impact on their life-satisfaction and the degree to which they experience positive and negative emotion. The respect one commands locally shapes how one feels globally.

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Table Legends

Table 1
Study 2: Stepwise regression predicting subjective well-being (SWB)

Table 2
Study 4: Stepwise regression predicting subjective well-being (SWB) at Time 2

Figure Legends

Figure 1.
Study 3: Sociometric status had a stronger impact on SWB than did socioeconomic status.

Table 1

Study 2: Stepwise regression predicting subjective well-being (SWB)

Independent Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Sociometric Status	.43***	.30***	.15**	.09
	(.04)	(.04)	(.05)	(.05)
Socioeconomic Status	.07	.09	.12**	.12**
	(.05)	(.05)	(.04)	(.04)
Gender		-.04	-.02	-.01
		(.08)	(.07)	(.07)
Ethnicity (White / non-White)		.11	.07	.07
		(.09)	(.08)	(.08)
Extraversion		.41***	.35***	.36***
		(.05)	(.05)	(.05)
Sense of Power			.33***	
			(.06)	
Social Acceptance				.39***
				(.06)
R square	.250***	.404***	.456***	.476***
Change in R square		.153***	.052***	.073***
F test of model	50.22	40.33	41.49	45.05

Note. Coefficients are unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. For gender 1=male, 0=female; for ethnicity 1=white, 0=non-white. Change in R square in Models 3 and 4 were based on change in R square from Model 2.
**$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

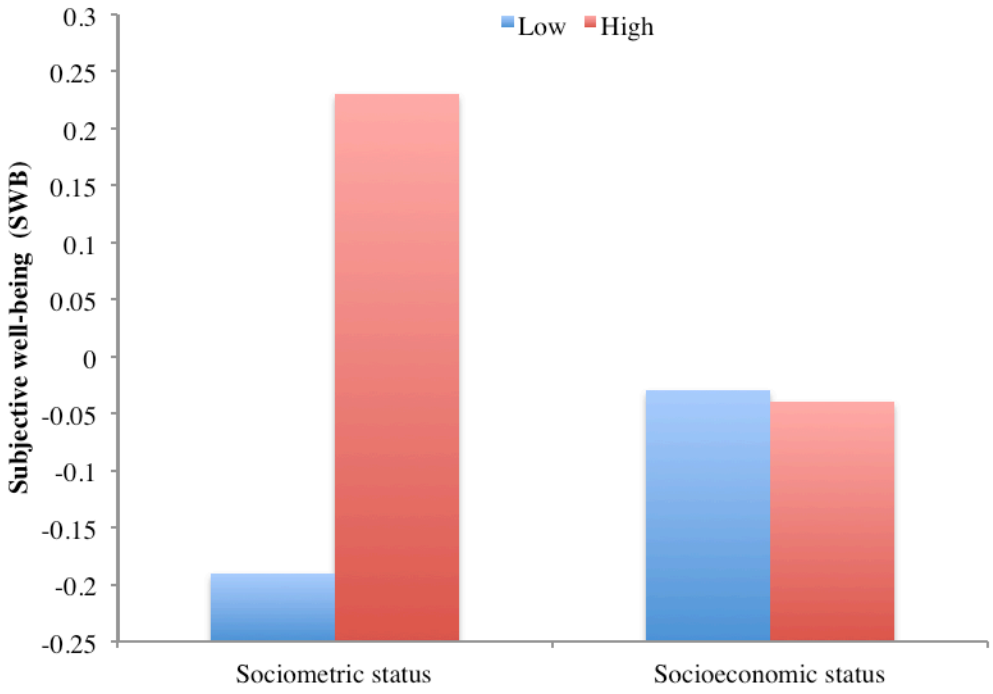
Table 2

Study 4: Stepwise regression predicting subjective well-being (SWB) at Time 2

Independent Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Sociometric Status Time 2	.55***	.37***	.38***	.35***
	(.09)	(.08)	(.09)	(.09)
Sociometric Status Time 1		-.08	-.07	-.06
		(.09)	(.10)	(.10)
SWB Time 1		.49***	.46***	.44***
		(.10)	(.10)	(.11)
Socioeconomic Status Time 1			-.03	-.03
			(.03)	(.03)
Socioeconomic Status Time 2			.05	.06
			(.08)	(.08)
Gender				-.24
				(.19)
Ethnicity				.24
				(.55)
R square	.451***	.643***	.651***	.666***
Change in R square		.192***	.008	.016
F test of model	39.39	27.60	16.39	11.98

Note. Coefficients are unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. For gender 1=male, 0=female; for ethnicity 1=white, 0=non-white.
$^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$.

Figure 1.


Low
High
0.3
0.25
0.2
0.15
0.1
0.05
0
-0.05
-0.1
-0.15
-0.2
-0.25
Subjective well-being (SWB)
Sociometric status
Socioeconomic status

Footnotes

[i] We do not believe demand effects drove the findings in Study 3 for two reasons. First, if demand characteristics were at play in Study 3, one would expect even stronger effects for the SES manipulation than for the sociometric status manipulation. People tend to believe that if they had more money they would be happier (Wilson & Gilbert, 2003), yet there are no documented lay beliefs about sociometric status and SWB. Second, we had asked all participants "What ideas or hypotheses do you think the researchers in this experiment were attempting to study?" No participants correctly guessed the study's hypotheses, that sociometric or "local" status would affect SWB and that it would have a stronger effect on SWB than would SES.