

**After the Fall: How Perceived Self-Control Protects the Legitimacy of Higher-ranking
Employees After Status Loss**

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Abstract

We investigate how higher-ranking organizational members can protect their legitimacy after status loss. We theorize that after status loss, internal stakeholders will scrutinize the behavior of higher-ranking members to determine whether they are still deserving of their high-ranking position (i.e., legitimate), and that when they are perceived to display self-control (e.g., persistence, poise, restraint), after status loss it will signal their legitimacy. In a laboratory experiment (Study 1), we found that leaders who displayed higher (versus lower) self-control after status loss were judged as more legitimate and were less likely to be challenged. This effect of higher perceived self-control on legitimacy and challenging behavior after status loss was explained by positively influencing internal stakeholders' instrumental and moral evaluations of the higher-ranking individual. In an online experiment with working adults (Study 2), we constructively replicated these results, and also found that high self-control is more important for positive legitimacy judgments after status loss than when no status loss has occurred. Finally, in a critical incident study (Study 3), we explored whether the type of perceived self-control influenced the efficacy of the self-control strategy. We found that self-presentation was the most effective "type" of self-control display after status loss on legitimacy, and displaying self-control in multiple ways (e.g., task-related and self-presentation) increased the efficacy of perceived self-control. We discuss the implications of this research for legitimacy judgments, status loss, and self-control.

Keywords: Status loss, Status, Legitimacy, Self-control

Introduction

Higher-ranking employees are individuals who hold more prominent positions in the organizational hierarchy (e.g., managers, leaders). Beyond their prominence and influence (French and Raven 1959), these individuals are also typically conferred more status: they are respected, admired, and held in high regard (Anderson et al. 2006; Djurdjevic et al. 2017). However, a burgeoning area of research (Bendersky and Hays 2012, Marr and Thau 2014, Neeley 2013) highlights that even high-ranking individuals can lose status. A leader can make a costly error, a sales executive can fail to close an important deal, a consultant can get passed over for promotion to partner, or a baseball player can lose a high-profile salary negotiation and these events may lead a prominent individual to lose status. We know that the experience of losing status is not uncommon among managers; 67% of surveyed people reported that they have seen a manager lose status at least once in their career¹. As organizations become more meritocratic and transparent (Dalio 2017), we may see increasing numbers of higher-ranking individuals experiencing status loss events.

When a prominent individual loses status in the eyes of others, it does not necessarily mean that they also lose their higher-ranking position. However, higher-ranking individuals are averse to the prospect of losing status (Pettit et al. 2010, Scheepers et al. 2009) because losing status has social and psychological costs. People are less likely to accept influence from status losers (Pettit et al. 2013) and those who lose status feel anxious (Neeley 2013) and perform poorly on work tasks (Marr and Thau 2014). Unfortunately, these immediate reactions to status loss documented by past research seem to suggest that status loss could trigger a downward spiral for higher-ranking individuals, damaging the extent to which they are viewed as deserving of their high-ranking position.

Because higher-ranking individuals are prominent (Anderson et al. 2001), their behavior after status loss is easily observed by others, and because these prominent individuals are influential, people who are invested in the organization's outcomes (i.e., "internal stakeholders"; Freeman and Reed 1983) are likely to be particularly interested in their behavior after status loss. If higher-ranking workers are seen to lack influence or perform poorly after status loss, internal stakeholders will come

¹ See Study 3 for details on these data.

to view them as less effective. Moreover, appearing anxious after status loss may diminish stakeholders' perceptions of their likeability (Forest and Wood 2012), and trustworthiness (Collins and Read 1990). This is problematic because the instrumental (e.g., effectiveness), relational (e.g., likeability) and moral (e.g., trustworthiness) concerns of internal stakeholders likely drive their judgments about whether the individual is legitimate – i.e., the belief that the individual is appropriate, suitable, or deserving of their higher-ranking position in the given organizational context (Suchman 1995, Tost 2011). Thus, after status loss, a higher-ranking individual's legitimacy could be diminished.

Understanding how higher-ranking individuals can protect their legitimacy after status loss is critical because without legitimacy, they will struggle to be effective and retain their position (Huy et al. 2014). When people believe that prominent individuals are legitimate, or deserving of their positions, they are willing to support them, and will not challenge their authority (Selznick 1969, Tyler 1997, Weber 1978). A lack of legitimacy, however, can trigger challenging behaviors such as refusing to defer to leaders and even publicly disagreeing with them (Walker et al. 1986). If a leader's subordinates engage in challenging behaviors after the leader's status loss – e.g., resisting the leader's authority, refusing to comply with the leader's directives, undermining the leader's reputation – this would make it very difficult for the leader to effectively execute his or her responsibilities. Thus, a lack of legitimacy could eventually make it untenable for a leader to retain their position.

In most organizations, individuals only 'make it' to the top if they are seen as appropriate, suitable or deserving of that position, and over time that legitimacy becomes taken-for granted (Suchman 1995). However, a status loss event that decreases their respect, admiration or regard in the eyes of others may create a turning point where internal stakeholders question the higher-ranking individual's appropriateness for their position (i.e., legitimacy). Although status loss may prompt questions about higher-ranking individuals' legitimacy, not all status losers will ultimately incur legitimacy penalties.

The idea is that even though status and legitimacy typically track with one another, the extent to which a higher-ranking individual is respected and admired can fluctuate over time (e.g., if a manager is rude to a coworker, this may decrease the respect other employees have for the manager).

After status loss, internal stakeholders may not automatically view the higher-ranking individual as undeserving of their position. Instead, internal stakeholders may scrutinize the post-loss behavior of the higher-ranking individual and reassess whether (notwithstanding the status loss) they remain suitable for their position. Accordingly, how higher-ranking individuals behave after status loss is likely critical for their legitimacy.

In this paper, we draw on theories of legitimacy (Michener and Tausig 1971, Tost 2011, Tyler 1997, Walker, et al. 1986) and self-control (see Hagger et al. 2010, for a review) to argue that after status loss, higher-ranking individuals who are perceived to display self-control (i.e., display the ability to override immediate impulses and align behavior with organizational standards; Baumeister et al. 2007) send a strong signal of their legitimacy for their prominent position. Specifically, we predict that by displaying self-control after status loss (e.g., persisting at difficult tasks, remaining calm and poised, working consistently toward important goals), higher-ranking individuals affirm internal stakeholders' instrumental, relational, and moral concerns about them, leading to more positive legitimacy judgments and mitigating challenges to their authority (see Figure 1).

Three studies test the predictions which follow from our model. Answering calls for more experimental studies of legitimacy (Suddaby et al. 2017), our first two studies include a laboratory (Study 1) and online experiment (Study 2) that examine how and why higher perceived self-control after status loss positively affects internal stakeholders' judgments about a higher-ranking individual's legitimacy and tempers their willingness to challenge the higher-ranking individual. Then, in a critical incident study (Study 3) we explore whether the type of perceived self-control (e.g., task-related, self-presentation) altered the positive effect of higher perceived self-control after status loss on legitimacy judgments about the higher-ranking individual. Across these studies, we used different methodologies and samples to ensure the robustness of our predictions. Online appendix, stimulus materials, data and syntax for all studies conducted to test our theory are available online at:

https://osf.io/gp4ey/?view_only=85aa4577814e4c8eb1b53dbb66b2384e.

By examining how being perceived to demonstrate self-control reinforces the legitimacy of higher-ranking individuals after status loss, we make several contributions. First, although past research has documented the individual costs of status loss (Bendersky and Hays 2012, Marr and

Thau 2014, Neeley 2013, Pettit, et al. 2013), what happens once these costs are incurred is poorly understood. This exclusive focus on the immediate consequences of status loss for the status loser limits external validity because it fails to consider the ongoing organizational interactions in which status losses occur. Past research also suggests uniformly negative consequences for status losers. Considering that status losses are common, yet hierarchies are relatively stable (Ridgeway and Berger 1986), this picture may be incomplete. We suggest that status loss initiates a process by which internal stakeholders try to make sense of the loss, based on the status loser's subsequent behavior. Past research's focus on the immediate costs for those who have lost status is also practically problematic as we are unable to guide them toward behaviors that could ameliorate the consequences of status loss.

Second, understanding the conditions under which status losers can maintain legitimacy for a high-ranking position is also critical for legitimacy research. Although we know that legitimacy judgments can change, and that legitimacy is often "in the eye of the beholder" (Zimmerman and Zeitz 2002, p.416), little attention (see Huy et al. 2014 for an exception) has been paid to the processes through which legitimacy judgments are changed and reestablished (Bitektine 2011, Tost 2011). We address this issue by testing a theory about how the legitimacy of higher-ranking individuals is assessed after status loss.

Finally, although a vast literature shows that people's self-control impacts their intrapersonal outcomes (e.g., healthy eating, performance; Baumeister et al. 1998, DeWall et al. 2011, Schmeichel et al. 2003), in this article, we build on an emerging area of research on perceived self-control (Righetti and Finkenauer 2011, Shea et al. 2013) to document the ways that people's self-control may actually influence their interpersonal outcomes. Specifically, we focus on how an individual's self-control may affect the legitimacy judgments and challenging behaviors of others. Moreover, we highlight that being perceived to demonstrate high self-control may be particularly impactful in influencing the judgements and behaviors of others after status loss.

Status Loss and Legitimacy of Higher-Ranking Individuals

Status loss occurs when people lose an amount of respect, admiration or regard in the eyes of others (Marr and Thau 2014). Events that trigger status loss in a given situation depend on how status is

constructed in that context. A group may confer status based predominantly on performance, loyalty, pedigree, or some combination of these (Berger et al. 1972, Ridgeway 1978, Willer 2009). For an event to trigger a status loss, it must negatively affect a dimension on which status is based. For example, in an auditing team where status is based primarily on performance, a project leader who makes a significant task-related mistake may experience a decrease in respect, admiration and regard. In a law firm where earnings are the primary determinant of a partner's status, a partner who loses a high-income-generating client may experience a decrease in status. However, internal stakeholders may not always be privy to the underlying circumstances and reasons for why a higher-ranking individual failed on a particular dimension (e.g., whether the lawyer lost the client for performance, interpersonal, or ethical reasons). Also, although a decrease in status can be small in magnitude and still constitute a status loss (e.g., making an avoidable error in front of one's team members, and experiencing a slight dip in respect and admiration), our focus is on meaningful or substantive losses in status, or status loss that reflects a significant decrease in the respect admiration or regard a higher ranking individual has in the eyes of others. Regardless of the underlying reason for the failure which resulted in status loss, we suggest that a substantive status loss of a higher-ranking organizational member will be salient and call into question whether the higher-ranking individual is legitimately occupying their higher-ranking position.

Tost's (2011) model of legitimacy proposes that events that violate expectations act as "jolts", triggering a re-evaluation of legitimacy judgments. We suggest that the status loss of higher-ranking organizational members can be conceptualized as a "jolt" because it violates default expectations (Ridgeway and Berger 1986). Higher-ranking individuals are typically respected, admired and highly regarded (i.e., high status), and because status is thought to be self-perpetuating (Magee and Galinsky 2008, Merton 1968), people expect higher-ranking individuals to maintain their status. A higher-ranking individual losing status violates this expectation, and events that violate expectations are salient, demanding attention and explanation (Fiske 1980). Therefore, status loss will prompt internal stakeholders to question whether the higher-ranking individual is still legitimate, or deserving of their position.

However, status loss should not automatically reverse people's legitimacy judgments and invite challenges to their authority. People only revise firmly held beliefs when confronted with strong evidence that disconfirms the core of their belief (Hewstone et al. 1992). We argue that internal stakeholders will scrutinize the behavior of higher-ranking individuals after status loss to determine whether they are deserving of legitimacy. Thus, *how* the prominent individual behaves after status loss will be critical to their legitimacy.

We propose that those who are seen as displaying high self-control after status loss (e.g., persisting at difficult tasks, remaining calm and poised, working consistently toward important goals) signal their legitimacy for their prominent position. Our focus on perceived self-control follows from recent studies suggesting that the experience of status loss is threatening for higher-ranking individuals (Marr and Thau 2014; Neeley 2013). We know that threatening experiences are cognitively fatiguing or depleting (Crocker and Park 2004, Sedikides 2012) and when people feel depleted, they experience a motivational and attentional shift from activities requiring the hard work of further restraint to those characterized by gratification (Inzlicht and Schmeichel 2012), such as watching TV, surfing the internet, or even attending to personal non-work tasks during the workday instead of focusing on one's job. We assume that internal stakeholders realize that status loss is depleting², and therefore, they would recognize the considerable willpower required for status losers to overcome their immediate impulses and align their behavior with organizational standards (i.e., demonstrate high self-control; Baumeister, et al. 2007, Thau and Mitchell 2010) in the aftermath of status loss. Thus, we predict that when a higher-ranking individual is perceived to demonstrate high self-control after status loss (e.g., acting professional, working consistently toward their goals, not

² Our theory assumes that internal stakeholders recognize status loss as a depleting event. We tested this assumption in two samples (see Pretest and Sample A in online appendix). Participants read about a leader's status loss (losing an interim VP title), or status maintenance (retaining an interim VP title), and reported the extent to which they expected leader to be depleted (five-item depletion scale; $\alpha = .94$) and tempted to mentally 'check out' ("Experience an impulse to withdraw from work?", "Be tempted to quit?", "Need to resist the temptation to mentally 'check out'?" ($\alpha = .93$)) afterwards. Consistent with our assumption, we found that participants expected the leader to be more depleted and more tempted to mentally 'check out' after losing status ($M = 4.91, SD = 1.35; M = 4.76, SD = 1.37$) than when the leader maintained their status ($M = 2.69, SD = 1.29; M = 1.90, SD = 1.17$), $ps < .001$. In other words, a status loser will be depleted and wrestling with the temptation to mentally 'check out' after status loss, and it will require great willpower to align his or her behavior with organizational standards.

lashing out at coworkers who treat them poorly, coming to work early) this provides internal stakeholders with a strong signal that despite the status loss, they are still deserving of their higher-ranking position.

Perceived Self-Control and Legitimacy

People can detect both trait and state-based self-control in others (Righetti and Finkenauer 2011). Self-control involves an effortful capacity to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, or impulses (Hagger et al., 2010). Accordingly, many behavioral indicators of self-control exist (e.g., regulating emotions, self-presenting, persisting and performing, sacrificing for the group). However, task-related behaviors – such as persisting on difficult tasks, working towards one's goals despite temptation to do otherwise, arriving to work on time, staying focused – are perhaps the most context-relevant and observable behaviors that higher-ranking individuals could display to increase their perceived self-control at work. Although people do not seem to have a universal preference for managers whom they perceive as having high self-control (Shea, et al. 2013), we explain below how higher-ranking individuals can use displays of higher self-control to overcome the consequences of status loss and reinforce perceptions that they legitimately occupy their prominent position.

We take a social psychological perspective on legitimacy, which has focused on understanding the stability of and behavioral reactions to leaders (Johnson et al. 2006 for a review). Early social psychological research on legitimacy used one of two models to specify the perceptions that generally drive legitimacy judgments. Instrumental models of legitimacy (Hollander 1980, Hollander and Julian 1970) predict that a stakeholder will judge leaders to be legitimate when they promote the material interests of the stakeholder. By contrast, relational models (Tyler 1997, Tyler and Lind 1992) predict that a stakeholder will judge leaders to be legitimate when they affirm the social identities and self-worth of the stakeholder.

The model we draw on in this paper is an integrative model (Tost 2011) that suggests that both instrumental and relational dimensions are relevant in developing legitimacy judgments. Further, the integrative model also incorporates more recent work highlighting a moral dimension of legitimacy (e.g., Leach et al. 2007) to predict that when people actively reassess people's legitimacy they are concerned about three dimensions of the person's appropriateness: instrumental, relational

and moral. Instrumental concerns refer to the effectiveness, efficiency or utility of the scrutinized person. Relational concerns refer to the individual's likeability, friendliness and benevolence. Moral concerns are those about the person's trustworthiness and integrity. These three dimensions are not mutually exclusive, and individuals may be evaluated on any one or all of these dimensions, depending on which characteristics are most relevant to legitimacy in that context. These evaluations culminate in a legitimacy judgment. Drawing on this integrative model of legitimacy, we suggest that the extent to which higher-ranking status losers are perceived to display self-control will reinforce their legitimacy by addressing the instrumental, relational and moral concerns that internal stakeholders have about them after status loss.

First, past work has shown that status loss can negatively impact performance (Marr and Thau 2014), which undermines perceptions of a higher-ranking individual's effectiveness. However, being perceived to display an effortful capacity to override undesirable—even if understandable—responses to the status loss in order to meet organizational standards (i.e., high perceived self-control) should affirm evaluations of the individual's effectiveness and utility. Take a sales manager who loses a key client. Instead of withdrawing and turning to social media or running personal errands, she persistently makes calls to get new business—a behavior that ameliorates concerns about her instrumentality. Because internal stakeholders care about the organization's successful operation, being evaluated as competent and effective (i.e., addressing instrumental concerns) is critical to reinforcing judgments about the higher-ranking individuals' appropriateness for their position (i.e., legitimacy) after status loss.

Second, loss can trigger anxiety in the status loser (Neeley 2013), which may compromise this individual's likeability (Forest and Wood 2012). However, being perceived to overcome emotional or impulsive reactions and instead behave professionally (i.e., high self-control) should affirm evaluations of the likeability and benevolence of the higher-ranking individual. Such relational concerns are a primary determinant of legitimacy judgments (Tyler 1997) because relational characteristics (e.g., warmth, likeability, friendliness and benevolence) have implications for the quality of social relationship an internal stakeholder can have with that higher-ranking individual (Tyler 1997), and stakeholders receive benefits to having affiliations with higher-ranking others

(Benjamin and Podolny 1999). Therefore, being seen as more likeable (i.e., addressing relational concerns) will reinforce judgments about higher-ranking individuals' appropriateness for their position (i.e., legitimacy) after status loss.

Finally, status loss may drive people to invest resources in helping themselves rather than their group (Pettit et al. 2010), which negatively affects their trustworthiness. However, self-control can restrain selfish motivations (Heatherton and Vohs 1998). Coworkers perceived to have higher self-control are viewed as making more sacrifices for the good of the team (Koval et al. 2015). Higher-ranking individuals who are perceived to resist their immediate self-interest, and instead align their behavior with the demands of their position, are behaving in a way that indirectly or directly benefits their group (Willer 2009), and this affirms their trustworthiness and integrity. Because of their interdependence, internal stakeholders rely on higher-ranking organizational members to behave in ways that will not harm them, and thus, being evaluated as trustworthy and high in integrity (i.e., addressing moral concerns) will reinforce judgments about the higher-ranking individual's appropriateness for their position (i.e., legitimacy) after status loss.

Taken together, these arguments suggest that when a higher-ranking individual is perceived to demonstrate greater self-control after status loss, it will positively influence internal stakeholders' legitimacy judgments about them. These judgments of legitimacy, in turn, promote a willingness to accept (rather than challenge) the higher-ranking individual (i.e., "feeling of obligation to comply"; Tyler 1997). When internal stakeholders view a leader to be appropriate for their position, they are less likely to challenge their leader's authority. However, a lack of legitimacy – i.e., internal stakeholders viewing the leader as inappropriate, unsuitable or undeserving of their position – can lead to challenging behavior (Walker, et al. 1986). For example, employees might exhibit challenging behavior such as explicitly disagreeing with their leader's advice, confronting the leader in front of other employees, refusing to follow their leader's directives, or trying to have their leader replaced. Understanding when internal stakeholders are more willing to engage in challenging behavior is important because previous research has shown that such challenges make it difficult for higher-ranking individuals to retain their position (Huy et al. 2014).

In sum, we predict that higher perceived self-control after status loss will positively influence internal stakeholders' legitimacy judgments about the higher-ranking individual, and consequently will temper their attempts to challenge this person in the aftermath of status loss. We further suggest that the effect of perceived self-control on legitimacy judgments and willingness to challenge will be explained by instrumental, relational and moral evaluations of the higher-ranking individual. Thus, we predict:

HYPOTHESIS 1. After a higher-ranking individual's status loss, perceptions of higher (versus lower) self-control positively affect internal stakeholders' legitimacy judgments about the higher-ranking individual.

HYPOTHESIS 2. After a higher-ranking individual's status loss, perceptions of higher (versus lower) self-control negatively affect internal stakeholders' willingness to challenge the higher-ranking individual by bolstering legitimacy judgments.

HYPOTHESIS 3. The positive indirect effect of higher perceived self-control after status loss on internal stakeholders' legitimacy judgments and then willingness to challenge the higher-ranking individual is mediated by (a) instrumental, (b) relational and (c) moral evaluations of the higher-ranking individual.

Study 1

Study 1 provided an initial test of our model. In this laboratory study, participants experienced being an internal stakeholder when a higher-ranking individual (i.e., their leader) maintained status, or lost status and subsequently displayed high or low self-control. We tested our theory that when a higher-ranking individual is perceived to demonstrate higher self-control after status loss this reinforces their legitimacy (Hypothesis 1) and subsequently lessens stakeholders' willingness to challenge their authority (Hypothesis 2). Further, we examine whether instrumental, relational and moral evaluations explain the effect of higher perceived self-control on legitimacy and challenging behavior (Hypothesis 3a, 3b and 3c).

Study 1 Method

Participants and Design. Two hundred and nineteen undergraduate college students at a university in the United States completed a study on "Project Teams in Organizations" for course credit. Twenty-

four participants were excluded for quality and English language proficiency concerns (described in detail below), leaving a final sample of 195 participants (103 females; 44.1% Sophomore, 27.2 Junior, 24.6% Senior and 4.1% Freshman students³) which was 65.1% White, 20.5% Asian, 5.6% Black / African American, and 5.1% Hispanic / Latino. Participants were assigned to one of the experimental conditions (perceived self-control after status loss: high vs. low) or a control condition where status was maintained, and no self-control information was provided.

Procedure. Participants were told that they would complete the study in the role of associates at a management consulting company where they work in project-based teams to help clients improve their performance by analyzing organizational problems and constructing plans for improvement. As an associate, on any given day they are required to complete individual analytical tasks, team member evaluations, and team decision-making tasks.

Participants learned that they had been randomly assigned to work in teams of three or four associates with a team leader, and they would complete (1) a team member evaluation, and then would go to a different room to complete (2) a decision-making task with their project team. They were told that the leader of their project team was responsible for assigning work to each member and submitting the final group decision at the end. Finally, to ensure they would feel they had a stake in the team's outcomes, they learned that the best performing team would receive a bonus at the end of the study. In reality, there was no group decision-making task. The purpose of this deception was so that participants would complete the leader evaluation believing that this higher-ranking individual was *their* leader (i.e., to ensure they would evaluate the higher-ranking individual as an internal stakeholder) and so that they would expect to interact with them.

For the team evaluation task, participants were told that they would give an initial evaluation of their leader. They read that their leader in this study had been a leader in a previous consulting study with a similar team decision-making task and an independent task for their client. Participants were told that they would see a summary report of their leader's participation in this previous study. To ensure honesty, participants were told that their evaluation would be anonymous and confidential.

³ We are not able to report age demographics. However, students at this university campus were typically 18-21 years old.

The summary report included: (a) a profile including the leader's demographic information (age, student/work status, education), scores on both a "Leadership Assessment" and "Problem Solving" test; (b) a statement that the leader had been assigned to be the leader of the group at the beginning of the first task based on their test scores; (c) a summary of the team's decision-making results from the alleged "previous study" and a statement that the team had successfully completed both tasks and would receive a bonus. This information was consistent across study conditions.

Status Loss Manipulation. The only difference in the summary report between conditions was the manipulation of status loss which was adapted from Marr and Thau (2014). Specifically, the report indicated that before and after the team decision-making task, team members were given 100 "status points" to allocate among their team members, and that the leader received a copy of his/her evaluation before completing the independent task for the client. Participants then viewed a "scanned copy of the leader's results" which included a bar graph of the leader's status points (vs. the other team members' total points) *before* the team decision-making task, and a bar graph of the leader's status points (vs. the other team members' total status points) *after* the team task. In the *status maintenance* condition, the graphs illustrated that the leader received similar number of status points before (72) and after (73⁴) the team task. However, in the *status loss* condition, the graphs illustrated that the leader had more status points before (72) than after (31) the team decision-making task (i.e., the leader lost 57.5% of his/her status points). Learning that their leader had lost such a significant amount of status after leading a decision-making task (the very same type of task the leader would be completing with the participant) would constitute a decrease in the amount of respect, admiration and regard the leader had in the eyes of the participant⁵.

⁴ The number of status points for the leader was increased by one point (and the other team members were decreased by one point) so that the leader appeared to have maintained his/her status, but at the same time the graphs would not be identical (preventing participant suspicion).

⁵ We used an independent sample (see Sample C in the online appendix) to examine the effectiveness of the status loss manipulation. After the manipulation, participants indicated the extent to which they perceived the leader to have lost status ("Lost respect in the eyes of his/her group members?", "Was admired less by his/her group members at the end of the task?", and "Was not regarded as well by his/her group members at the end of the task?"; $\alpha = .94$). Consistent with participants interpreting "status points" as an indicator of the leader's respect, admiration, and regard in the eyes of his/her group members, we found that participants who saw the leader decrease in "status points" from task 1 to task 2 (status loss condition) perceived the leader to have lost more status ($M = 5.39$, $SD = 1.33$) than those who saw the leader maintain their "status points" from task 1 to

Self-Control Manipulation. Observing a coworker persist (or not) in a difficult task is germane to organizational life, and persistence has been consistently used in the self-control literature to operationalize self-control (e.g., Baumeister, et al. 2007, Schmeichel and Zell 2007). Therefore, we used a persistence display to manipulate perceived self-control. Participants read that after receiving their team member evaluations, each member was sent to a separate room to complete the final team task independently. Participants read the task instructions below, which included specific language from past work measuring self-control as persistence on a cognitive task (Baumeister, et al. 1998) and consistent with past work they involved a competing temptation (“surfing the web”) to persisting on the analytical task (Vohs et al. 2008):

“You have up to 15 minutes to work on the following analytical problems for your client. If you either finish, or have tried as hard as you can and give up trying to solve the problems, you can surf the internet for the remaining time.”

Participants then viewed a “scanned copy of the leader’s results”, including handwritten comments from the experimenter that read either “Participant exerted a great deal of effort on task and attempted all questions” (high self-control) or “Participant exerted little effort, quit task and did not attempt all questions” (low self-control)⁶.

Measures. Participants responded to a series of questions about their leader, including the measures of depletion, instrumental, relational and moral evaluations, legitimacy judgments, willingness to challenge the leader’s authority, and manipulation checks. All measures used seven-point scales (1 = *not at all* to 7 = *a great deal/ a lot*) unless otherwise noted.

Instrumental, relational and moral evaluations: Consistent with the conceptualization of Tost (2011) and previous scales (Leach et al. 2007, Michener and Lawler 1975) *instrumentality* was evaluated by indicating the extent to which the leader was “competent”, “skillful”, “effective” and “masterful” ($\alpha = .95$); *relational* concerns were captured by assessing the extent to which the leader

task 2 (status maintenance condition; $M = 2.40$, $SD = 1.56$; $p < .001$). These data suggest the “status points” manipulation was effective in manipulating the leader’s status loss.

⁶ We used an independent sample (Sample C in online appendix) to check the effectiveness of the perceived self-control manipulation. Participants assessed the leader’s self-control using Tangney et al.’s (2004) Self-Control Scale (11 items: $\alpha = .94$). Participants in the high perceived self-control condition rated their leader as higher in self-control ($M = 4.76$, $SD = .77$), than those in the low perceived self-control condition ($M = 3.33$, $SD = .56$; $p < .001$).

was “likeable”, “friendly”, “benevolent” and “warm” ($\alpha = .94$); and *morality* evaluations were assessed by the items “sincere”, “trustworthy”, had “high integrity” and was “generous” ($\alpha = .93$). A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) verified the proposed distinction between the three dimensions of evaluations, indicating that a three-factor model fit the data well ($\chi^2 = 196.24$, $df = 51$, $CFI = .95$, $SRMR = .04$, $CD = .999$), and was better fitting than a two-factor model where relational and moral evaluations loaded on the same factor ($\chi^2 = 584.34$, $df = 53$, $CFI = .79$, $SRMR = .09$, $CD = .992$; $\chi^2_{diff} = 388.10$, $df_{diff} = 2$, $p < .0001$) or a one-factor model where instrumental, relational and moral evaluations loaded on the same factor ($\chi^2 = 846.41$, $df = 54$, $CFI = .70$, $SRMR = .11$, $CD = .954$; $\chi^2_{diff} = 650.17$, $df_{diff} = 3$, $p < .0001$)).

Legitimacy judgments: The leader’s legitimacy was measured with three items adapted from Michener and Lawler’s (1975) measure of endorsement⁷: “It is legitimate for him/her to occupy a higher-ranking position in your group today?”, “You support him/her being your group’s leader?”, and “You would be willing to have him/her be a leader of your group in the future?” ($\alpha = .93$).

Willingness to challenge: Accordingly, we examined participants’ willingness to challenge their leader’s authority. Participants were asked, “Based on what you know about your leader, would you be willing to send a request to management (the experimenter) to replace your leader for the team task?” The text indicated the request would only be seen by management (not their leader) and the requested change would only be made if two or more team members submitted a request. Participants then indicated whether they wanted to: 1 = submit request, 2 = submit request if at least one of your group members also submits a request, 3 = do not submit a request. Scores were reverse-coded so that higher scores indicate a greater willingness to challenge.

Manipulation, suspicion and quality checks: First, to verify the manipulation of *status loss*, we asked participants “To what extent did the leader lose status on their team in the previous study?”,

⁷ To provide additional support for the legitimacy measure used in our studies, we had an independent sample (Sample B in the online appendix) complete our legitimacy measure, as well as three additional legitimacy items derived from the definition of legitimacy (“He/she is appropriate as a leader”, “He/she is well-suited to be a leader?” and “He/she is deserving of being a leader?”; $\alpha = .97$). We found that the new legitimacy items loaded on the same factor as the original items (Eigenvalue = 5.20), this factor explained 86.64% of the variance, and the intercorrelations among the new and original status loss items were high ($.80 < r_s > .91$).

and “How much status did the leader lose in the previous study?” (1 = *not at all* to 7 = *a great deal/ a lot*; $\alpha = .84$). Second, to verify the manipulation of *perceived self-control*, participants indicated the extent to which the leader demonstrated self-control, self-restraint, willpower, and persistence⁸ in the independent analytical task (1 = *not at all* to 7 = *a great deal/ a lot*; $\alpha = .95$). Participants were also asked an open-ended question about whether they had any other comments that would help us understand their evaluation of the target participant, which was coded for *suspicion* (e.g., doubt that their leader was a real participant) and *English proficiency* (all materials were in English and participants needed to read and comprehend the materials to understand the study context and evaluate their leader). No participants indicated suspicion; however, because only 8% of participants provided any comments, we were not able to accurately assess English proficiency from this open-ended variable. Therefore, we excluded 24 participants (11% of sample) who did not consider English to be a first language, leaving the final sample of 195 participants. We also re-ran the analyses including these participants and the exclusion of these cases produced substantially similar results⁹.

Study 1 Results

Table 1 displays the *Ms*, *SDs*, and *rs* of the variables included in Study 1.

Manipulation Checks. We conducted ANOVAs to determine the effectiveness of the status loss and self-control manipulations. Participants in both status loss conditions rated their leader as having lost more status (status loss, low perceived self-control: $M = 5.27$, $SD = 1.19$; status loss, high perceived self-control: $M = 4.31$, $SD = 1.60$), than in the status maintenance condition ($M = 2.07$, $SD = 1.23$), $ps < .001$ ¹⁰. Next, those in the high perceived self-control condition viewed the leader as having more self-control ($M = 5.15$, $SD = .82$) than in the low perceived self-control condition ($M = 2.37$, $SD = .97$, $p < .001$) or the control (no self-control information) condition ($M = 4.84$, $SD = .82$, $p = .05$). Overall, these results suggest that the manipulations had the intended effects.

⁸ We reran the manipulation check analyses without the “persistence” item included in the measure. The measure remained reliable ($\alpha = .94$), and provided consistent support for the effectiveness of the manipulation ($p < .001$).

⁹ All significant comparisons and indirect effects presented in the results section remained significant $ps < .05$.
¹⁰ It is worth noting that perceived self-control did appear to effect perceptions of status loss, as participants in the low perceived self-control condition rated their leader as having lost more status, $t(192) = 3.48$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .06$. Importantly, however, both status loss conditions led to significantly more status loss ($ps < .001$) than the status maintenance condition.

Legitimacy Judgments. Our main prediction was that high perceived self-control after status loss would positively affect the legitimacy of the higher-ranking individual (Hypothesis 1). Therefore, we conducted an ANOVA to examine the effect of condition on legitimacy judgments, $F(2, 192) = 139.98, p < .001, \eta^2 = .59$. Further examination of this effect (see Figure 2) showed that leaders who were perceived to have higher self-control after status loss were judged to be more legitimate ($M = 4.63, SD = 1.15$) than those who were perceived to have lower self-control after status loss ($M = 2.52, SD = 1.08$), $t(192) = 10.11, p < .001, \eta^2 = .35$. However, those who were perceived to have high self-control after status loss were still judged to have lower legitimacy than leaders who did not experience status loss ($M = 5.44, SD = .88$), $t(192) = -4.55, p < .001, \eta^2 = .10$.

Willingness to Challenge. Because our dependent variable was made up of three ordered categories (i.e., submit a request to replace the leader; submit a request to replace the leader if at least one other group member does so as well; do not submit a request), we conducted ordinal probit regression in STATA (Long and Freese 2014) to examine our prediction that perceptions of high (versus low) self-control after status negatively affects internal stakeholders' willingness to challenge the higher-ranking individual by bolstering legitimacy judgments (Hypothesis 2). Figure 3 displays participants' willingness to challenge in each condition. We found that when the leader displayed higher self-control, participants were less willing to challenge ($b = -1.36, se = .23, z = -6.01, 95\% CI = -.92, -1.80$) relative to when the leader displayed lower self-control after status loss¹¹. Importantly, however, we see that when the leader displayed higher self-control, the difference between leaders who had lost status and those who did not experience status loss at all approached, but did not reach significance ($z = 1.95, b = .45, se = .23, 95\% CI = .91, -.002$). Thus, although internal stakeholders may still judge leaders who have not lost status as more appropriate than those who lose status and display high self-control, these results suggest that being perceived to have self-control after status

¹¹ Given that the linear probability model is easier to interpret, and there is debate about the net benefits of using logit and probit models over the linear probability model (Friedman 2012), we also reanalyzed our data using OLS regression. We found that participants were less willing to challenge leaders who were perceived to have higher self-control after status loss ($M = 1.43, SD = .63$) than those who were perceived to have lower self-control ($M = 2.36, SD = .67$), $t(192) = -7.18, p < .001$. However, there was no significant difference in the extent to which participants were willing to challenge leaders who were perceived to have high self-control after status loss compared to those who did not experience status loss ($M = 1.25, SD = .59$), $t(192) = 1.64, p = .10$.

loss reinforces the legitimacy of higher-ranking individuals sufficiently to prevent challenges to the leader's authority.

We then examined whether the effect of higher (versus lower) perceived self-control on challenging behaviour is explained by more positive legitimacy judgments. We followed procedures outlined by Hayes and Preacher (2014) by including the status maintenance condition as a covariate. Supporting Hypothesis 2, there was a significant and negative indirect effect (-.89) of perceived self-control on willingness to challenge the leader through legitimacy judgments (95% CI = -1.40, -.48).

Instrumental, Relational and Moral Evaluations. We next examined whether instrumental, relational, and moral evaluations explain the relationship between a leader's higher (versus lower) perceived self-control after status loss and internal stakeholder's legitimacy judgments and willingness to challenge them (Hypothesis 3a, 3b and 3c). We used the *gsem* function in STATA to conduct bootstrapped mediation analysis using the ordered probit model and including the status maintenance condition as a covariate (Hayes and Preacher 2014) to calculate the bias corrected indirect effects of high (versus low) self-control after status loss on legitimacy judgments and then willingness to challenge the leader through instrumental, relational, and moral evaluations (see Figure 4).

The results showed the hypothesized effects through instrumental and moral concerns about the leader, such that higher perceived self-control had a negative indirect effect (-.21) on the willingness to challenge through higher evaluations of the leader's instrumentality, and then legitimacy (95% CI = -.48, -.05), and higher perceived self-control had a negative indirect effect (-.26) on the willingness to challenge the leader through more positive morality, and then legitimacy judgments (95% CI = -.55, -.07). Unexpectedly, we found a positive indirect effect of higher perceived self-control on willingness to challenge (.05) through more positive relational evaluations because these evaluations had a negative (rather than the expected positive, see Figure 4) effect on legitimacy (95% CI = .003, .15).

Study 1 Discussion

These results provide initial support for our theory that being perceived to display higher self-control after status loss reinforces a higher-ranking individual's legitimacy for their position. Specifically,

higher perceived self-control positively influenced legitimacy judgments (Hypothesis 1), and subsequently prevented challenges to the leader's authority after status loss (Hypothesis 2). Moreover, the effect of high (versus low) perceived self-control after status loss on legitimacy judgments and then willingness to challenge was explained by internal stakeholders' instrumental (Hypothesis 3a) and moral evaluations (Hypothesis 3c) about the leader. In contrast to previous work showing that relational concerns positively predict legitimacy judgments (Tyler 1997), we found that being perceived to be friendlier and more likeable (i.e., higher relational evaluations) in the aftermath of status loss negatively affected legitimacy and thus, did not prevent challenges for the higher-ranking individual. Importantly, the results of this study were found in a controlled setting where participants were internal stakeholders, whose outcomes would be affected by the decision to deem legitimate and support the higher-ranking individual.

Although these findings provide initial support for our theoretical model, there are several limitations. First, this study used undergraduate students as participants, and it is possible that working adults might respond differently to the status loss of a higher-ranking individual. Second, this study used one clear demonstration of persistence (versus quitting an individual task) to manipulate perceived self-control; however, in organizations, perceived self-control is likely to be more nuanced, and internal stakeholders are likely to observe a high-ranking individual's behavior over a longer period of time. Finally, in this study we included a neutral control condition (i.e., no self-control information after status is maintained) and showed that displays of high self-control after status loss bolstered legitimacy sufficiently to prevent challenges relative to this condition where the leader did not lose status. However, to fully demonstrate the relevance of high perceived self-control in the aftermath of status loss, it is important to examine these effects in relation to the effect of high perceived self-control on legitimacy in the absence of status loss. We designed Study 2 to address these limitations.

Study 2

Study 2 aimed to constructively replicate the findings of the first study, while also addressing key limitations of Study 1. First, this study used working adults to examine the judgments of internal stakeholders rather than undergraduate students. Second, we used a more nuanced manipulation of

perceived self-control that held constant the total time that the higher-ranking individual dedicated to their tasks at work, as well as the overall quality of their work, and we included displays of self-control that were ostensibly observed over a longer (two week) period. Third, we employed a fully crossed design to compare the effect of high self-control after status loss with the effect of high self-control in the absence of status loss (i.e., status maintenance).

Study 2 Method

Participants and Design. Three-hundred working adults in the United States completed a 2 (status: loss versus maintenance) X 3 (perceived self-control: high versus low versus no information) between participant design “Leader Evaluation Study”. The study asked participants to imagine they had been chosen to be part of their department head’s reappointment committee, they read a series of documents ostensibly collected during the evaluation period and were then asked to evaluate their leader.

All participants were voluntary members of a research panel who were recruited by a market research company (ROI Rocket) through internet-based advertisements to complete occasional online surveys in return for payment and prizes (see Bianchi and Brockner 2012, Blader et al. 2013, for other recent studies using online research panels). To ensure high quality responses, 131 participants who did not meet the screening criteria (e.g., under 18 or unemployed (80)), did not agree that they would carefully read and respond to survey questions (12), or did not pass the two attention checks at the beginning of the study (39), were thanked for their interest and automatically redirected out of the survey. Because the study involved reading and understanding a number of documents in English, twenty-three participants who did not speak English as a first language were also excluded from the sample¹². Therefore, the final sample included two hundred and seventy-seven participants (90.3% working full-time, 9.7% working part-time; mean age = 50.77, SD = 11.11; 164 females), 46.9% of whom reported that they were in a management position at work, and 67.1% indicated that had previously evaluated a co-worker (peer, subordinate or supervisor) at work. The sample included

¹² The exclusion of these participants did not change the pattern or significance of the results, such that all significant interactions and indirect effects remain significant ($p < .05$).

79.8% White, 11.9% Black / African American, 3.2% Hispanic / Latino, 1.8% Asian, 1.1% American Indian / Alaska Native, and 2.2% who identified as “other”.

Reappointment context. Participants were asked to imagine that they worked at Neva Inc., where department heads are evaluated annually to determine whether or not they should be reappointed. They read that their manager, Sam, is currently the department head. A committee of peers, subordinates and supervisors has been formed to decide on Sam’s reappointment, and the participant has been asked to be part of that committee. They are told that they will be asked to review Sam’s reappointment package – which includes documents collected during a two-week evaluation period – and provide feedback to the chair of the committee who ultimately makes the decision of whether or not to reappoint Sam.

Status Loss Manipulation. Before viewing the reappointment package, participants in the status loss [maintenance] condition read that, “One thing that you know will not be in the package - because it happened just before the “evaluation period” began - was that Sam lost [retained] a major client for the company. You do not know what happened exactly, but you know that losing this big client led Sam to lose an amount of respect and esteem in the eyes of his peers [retaining this big client reinforced the respect and esteem Sam has in the eyes of his peers] in the company.

Self-Control Manipulation. After the status loss manipulation, participants viewed the reappointment package which manipulated high vs. low vs. no self-control information. All participants viewed (1) a job description for the department head (which was exactly the same across conditions). Participants in the no self-control information condition were then immediately directed to provide their evaluation of Sam, whereas, participants in the high and low self-control conditions also viewed (2) a weekly task list showing Sam’s goals and task progress during one week of the evaluation period, and (3) feedback from Sam’s project team members. Key differences in these two documents constituted the manipulation of perceived high vs. low self-control.

First, in the weekly task list, we embedded information about the extent to which the higher-ranking individual adhered to goals in the face of other distractions and temptations (Koval et al. 2015) at work, which is a clear demonstration of high self-control. Participants viewed a weekly task list which contained a list of tasks (e.g., “Prepare pitch meeting w potential new client”, “Submit

receipts for reimbursement”) categorized under different headings based on their priority “Goal 1: New Business Development”, “Goal 2: ‘Forrest’ Project”, “Goal 3: Benchmarking/Dept”, “Miscellaneous Tasks”, and “Personal (non-work) Tasks”. Each task was also labelled with the expected level of difficulty, the time required to complete the task, and there was a bar to indicate the percentage of the task that had been completed. A table at the bottom of the task list summarized the total number of hours spent on each goal/category, and the total number of hours spent at work (a pie chart illustrated this table). In the high self-control condition, the task list showed the leader investing more time completing difficult tasks associated with their top goals (e.g., under *Goal 2: “Forrest” Project*, Sam completed “Write 10 page department summary for annual 452 report”). In the low self-control condition the task list showed the leader investing more time completing lower priority, easier tasks (e.g., under *Goal 3: Benchmarking/Dept*, Sam completed “Follow-up emails from Thursday’s meeting”). Importantly, the total time participants spent working on tasks was made to total exactly the same number of hours (41.3 hours) for both the high and low self-control conditions.

Second, the document containing feedback from Sam’s project team members and had responses from four group members. Two of the responses were exactly the same across self-control conditions (Team Member 1 said, “Over the past two weeks, Sam’s finished work has been of high quality.” And Team Member 4 said, “Sam is pretty great. I like working with Sam.”). However, we also included statements from the perceived self-control manipulations used in previous research (Shea, et al. 2013) in the feedback from Team Members 2 and 3 to manipulate high vs. low perceived self-control. For example, in the high self-control condition Team Member 2 said:

Sam has been arriving early to the office every day, and has been laser-focused on the task at hand. Sam has been running a tight ship these last couple of weeks, but I appreciate the challenge of working for Sam.

By contrast, in the low self-control condition Team Member 2 said:

Sam hasn’t been arriving on time to work in the mornings; 20 minutes late seems to be just the way it is. Sam has been very chatty in the office and always knows what is going on in the lives of others, but I appreciate Sam knows that sometimes pleasure and fun can be put before work.

All documents included in the reappointment package are included in the online appendix. After reviewing the documents in the reappointment package¹³, participants were asked to evaluate Sam.

Measures. Participants responded to a series of questions about their leader, including their instrumental, relational and moral evaluations, legitimacy judgments, willingness to challenge the leader's authority, and manipulation checks. All measures used seven-point scales (1 = *not at all* to 7 = *a lot / very much*) unless otherwise noted.

Instrumental, relational and moral evaluations: Consistent with the previous study, *instrumentality* was evaluated by two items indicating the extent to which the leader was "competent", and "capable" ($\alpha = .94$); *relational* concerns were captured by assessing the extent to which the leader was "likeable", and "friendly", ($\alpha = .92$); and *morality* evaluations were assessed by the items "sincere", "trustworthy", "having high integrity" ($\alpha = .95$).

Legitimacy judgments: The legitimacy of the leader was assessed using the same items as Study 1, except that in the items "Sam" took the place of "your leader" ($\alpha = .97$).

Willingness to challenge: To assess participants' willingness to challenge their leader's authority, participants were directed to a page titled "FINAL DECISION". They were asked "Do you think Sam should be reappointed as the department head?" and indicated their response (1 = *Definitely yes* to 5 = *Definitely not*). Higher scores indicate a greater willingness to challenge the leader's authority.

Manipulation checks: To test the effectiveness of the manipulation of *status loss*, participants were asked the recall that an event occurred before the evaluation period and were asked to what

¹³ An independent sample of working adults (see Sample D in the online appendix) was used to confirm the effectiveness of the manipulations. After the status loss manipulation, participants were asked to what extent they thought it caused Sam to "Lose respect...", "Be admired less...", and "Be regarded less highly..." (3-item $\alpha = .90$) by his/her group members. Participants in the status loss condition thought Sam lost more status ($M = 5.27, SD = 1.18$) than participants in the status maintenance condition ($M = 3.09, SD = .1.92; p < .001$). After the self-control manipulation, participants assessed the leader's demonstrated self-control using Tangney et al.'s (2004) 11-item Self-Control Scale adapted to measure perceiving self-control in someone else ($\alpha = .92$). Participants in the high perceived self-control condition rated their leader as higher in self-control ($M = 5.18, SD = 1.39$), than participants in the low perceived self-control ($M = 3.67, SD = .93; p < .001$), and no self-control information ($M = 4.45, SD = 1.20; p < .001$) conditions. There was no significant interaction between status loss and self-control on participants' perceptions of the leader's self-control. After the manipulation checks, participants also completed all study variables (instrumental, relational, and moral evaluations, legitimacy judgments and willingness to challenge), and the results were entirely consistent with those presented in Study 2, which suggests that the position of the manipulation checks did not appear to impact the results. A full summary of results is included in our online appendix.

extent it caused Sam to “Lose respect in the eyes of his/her group members”, “Be admired less by his/her group members”, and “Be regarded less highly by his/her group members” ($\alpha = .88$). Next, to verify the manipulation of *perceived self-control*, we asked participants to indicate the extent to which the leader demonstrated self-control, self-restraint, willpower during the evaluation period ($\alpha = .95$).

Study 2 Results

Table 2 displays the *Ms*, *SDs*, and *rs* of the variables included in Study 2.

Manipulation Checks. We conducted an ANOVA to verify the effectiveness of the status loss manipulation. There was a significant effect of the status loss condition on perceptions of status loss, such that participants in the status loss condition thought the leader had lost more status ($M = 4.48$, $SD = 1.38$) than in the status maintenance condition ($M = 2.37$, $SD = 1.47$), $F(1, 275) = 152.67$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .36$. There was also a negative main effect of self-control condition on perceptions of status loss ($p = .03$), but there was no significant interaction between status loss and self-control conditions on perceived status loss ($p = .08$)¹⁴. Next, we conducted an ANOVA to check the effectiveness of the self-control manipulation. Participants in the high self-control condition perceived the leader as having greater self-control ($M = 5.59$, $SD = 1.12$) than did those in low self-control ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 1.48$, $p < .001$) or no self-control information ($M = 5.06$, $SD = 1.17$, $p < .005$) conditions. The status loss manipulation also had a negative main effect on perceptions of self-control ($p < .024$), but there was no interaction between status loss and self-control on perceptions of self-control ($p = .483$).

Legitimacy judgments. We conducted an ANOVA to examine whether being perceived to enact greater self-control after status loss would positively influence the legitimacy judgments of higher-ranking individuals (Hypothesis 1). There was a significant main effect of perceived self-control on legitimacy, $F(2, 271) = 69.04$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .34$, and a significant main effect of status loss on legitimacy, $F(1, 271) = 45.32$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .14$. There was also a significant interaction between perceived self-control and status loss on legitimacy, $F(2, 271) = 4.61$, $p < .011$, $\eta^2 = .03$. We probed this interaction (Figure 5) and found that consistent with our predictions in Hypothesis 1, higher

¹⁴ An exploratory examination of the pairwise comparisons revealed that all status loss conditions (regardless of self-control condition) had higher ratings of status loss ($p < .001$) than any status maintenance condition.

perceived self-control after status loss resulted in higher legitimacy judgments ($M = 5.94, SD = 1.22$) than either low self-control ($M = 3.36, SD = 1.35, p < .001, t(271) = 10.28, p < .001, \eta^2 = .28$), or no self-control information ($M = 4.86, SD = 1.22, t(271) = 4.15, p < .001, \eta^2 = .06$), after status loss.

We also explored how perceived self-control affected legitimacy after status loss relative to when status had been maintained. We found that being perceived to have low self-control was detrimental for legitimacy, regardless of whether status had previously been maintained (low self-control: $M = 4.74, SD = 1.42$ vs. no self-control information: $M = 6.08, SD = 1.01, p < .001$), or lost (low self-control: $M = 3.36, SD = 1.35$ vs. no self-control information: $M = 4.86, SD = 1.21, p < .001$). Importantly, however, we found that whereas being perceived to demonstrate high self-control after status had been maintained yielded no benefit (high self-control: $M = 6.29, SD = .99$ vs. no self-control information: $M = 6.08, SD = 1.01, p = .40$), after status loss, demonstrating higher self-control led to higher legitimacy judgments ($M = 5.94, SD = 1.22$) than no self-control information ($M = 4.86, SD = 1.22, p < .001$), and protected legitimacy such that those who lost status and displayed high self-control did not experience any negative effect from the status loss relative to those who had not lost status (no status loss, high self-control: $M = 6.29, SD = .99, p = .18$; no status loss, no self-control information: $M = 6.08, SD = 1.01, p = .56$). These results highlight the relative importance of being perceived to display high self-control after status loss for a higher-ranking individual's legitimacy, relative to situations in which status loss has not occurred and high self-control appears to yield little benefit for legitimacy.

Willingness to challenge: We next conducted an ANOVA to examine the effect of status loss and perceived self-control of the leader on participants' willingness to challenge their leader's authority (Hypothesis 2). We found a main effect for status loss, $F(2, 271) = 42.03, p < .001, \eta^2 = .13$, and for perceived self-control, $F(2, 271) = 51.47, p < .001, \eta^2 = .28$, and a significant interaction between status loss and perceived self-control, $F(2, 271) = 5.88, p < .001, \eta^2 = .04$, on willingness to challenge. Figure 5 displays the mean willingness to challenge in each condition.

Consistent with our hypotheses, we found that when the leader was perceived to demonstrate higher self-control after status loss, participants were less willing to challenge the leader's authority ($M = 1.81, SD = .92$) than when the leader demonstrated low self-control ($M = 3.50, SD = .96; p$

< .001), or when there was no self-control information after status loss ($M = 2.56$, $SD = .84$; $p < .001$). Moreover, when the leader demonstrated higher self-control after status loss, they were no more likely to receive challenges to their authority than if they had not lost status (status maintenance, high self-control: $M = 1.64$, $SD = .84$; $p = .39$; status maintenance, no self-control information: $M = 1.59$, $SD = .71$; $p = .22$).

We next examined the extent to which the interactive effect of status loss and higher perceived self-control on willingness to challenge was explained by legitimacy judgments. We tested a multicategorical moderated mediation model (model 7) using PROCESS v3.1 (Hayes 2017). The conditional indirect effects revealed that status loss (versus status maintenance) led to a greater willingness to challenge the leader through legitimacy when perceived self-control was low (Indirect effect = .79, 95% CI = .47, 1.13), or when there was no self-control information (Indirect effect = .69, 95% CI = .42, .97), but there was no effect of status loss on willingness to challenge the leader when self-control was perceived to be high (Indirect effect = .20, 95% CI = -.06, .47). These results provide support for Hypothesis 2.

Instrumental, relational and moral evaluations: Finally, we conducted a second bootstrapped multicategorical moderated mediation analyses (model 84) to examine whether the sequential effect of perceived self-control on legitimacy judgments and then willingness to challenge the higher-ranking individual could be explained by more positive evaluations of the leader's instrumental (Hypothesis 3a), relational (Hypothesis 3b) and moral (Hypothesis 3c) dimensions. The model coefficients and indirect effects are illustrated in Tables 3 and 4, respectively.

We found that when perceived self-control was high, there was no effect (.07) of status loss on willingness to challenge the leader through more positive evaluations of their instrumentality, and subsequently legitimacy (95% CI = -.09, .25). However, when there was no self-control information (.43), or low perceived self-control (.30) there was a positive effect of status loss on willingness to challenge the leader through diminished instrumental and then legitimacy judgments (95% CI = .24, .67, and 95% CI = .13, .49 respectively). These results provide support for Hypothesis 3a. We did not find the predicted significant indirect effects through relational or moral evaluations. However, we did find a significant indirect effect of status loss on willingness to challenge through

instrumental and moral evaluations (sequentially) and then legitimacy judgments. When perceived self-control was high there was no effect (.03) of status loss on challenging (95% CI = -.03, .09). However, when there was no self-control information (.15), or low perceived self-control (.11) there was a positive effect of status loss on willingness to challenge the leader through diminished instrumental and moral evaluations, and finally legitimacy judgments (95% CI = .06, .28, and 95% CI = .03, .22 respectively). Although we did not predict relationships between the dimensions of evaluations, this finding is consistent with a cognitive view of trust, where capability positively influences leader trustworthiness (Mayer et al. 1995), which we find then influences legitimacy judgements and challenging behaviour.

Study 2 Discussion

The results of Study 2 provide additional support for our theory that high perceived self-control after status loss reinforces internal stakeholder's legitimacy judgments (Hypothesis 1) and tempers their willingness to challenge the higher-ranking individual (Hypothesis 2). We found evidence that instrumental concerns explain the indirect effect of higher perceived self-control after status loss on legitimacy judgments and subsequent willingness to challenge the higher-ranking individual (Hypothesis 3a). Importantly, by experimentally controlling for performance (through group member feedback about high performance quality) we confirm that it is information about perceived self-control (i.e., adhering to goals in the face of other distractions and temptations) in particular that affects legitimacy after status loss. Notably, the findings of this study also highlight that although perceptions of low self-control appear to have a general negative impact on the leader's legitimacy for a high-ranking position, high perceived self-control is particularly important for legitimacy in the aftermath of status loss. Together with the results of Study 1, these findings provide solid support for the critical role that high perceived self-control plays in buffering legitimacy after status loss.

It is noteworthy that these first studies focused on task-related displays of self-control (e.g., persisting on difficult tasks, working towards one's goals despite temptation to do otherwise, arriving to work on time) because these are ubiquitous displays of self-control in the work context. However, the literature on intraindividual self-control (see Hagger et al. 2010; Inzlicht and Schmeichel 2012 for reviews) suggests there are other potentially observable manifestations of self-control—such as

focusing on others rather than the self (Seeley and Gardner 2003), regulating one's emotions (Baumeister, et al. 1998), or conveying a desired image of oneself (self-presentation; Vohs et al. 2005)—that may be more or less effective in mitigating the negative effect of status loss on legitimacy at work. We explore this possibility in Study 3.

Study 3

Study 3 aimed to provide a more nuanced understanding of our model with a different methodology (i.e., critical incident study) in a field setting. Thus, Study 3 extended our prior results by exploring how different “types” of self-control actually perceived by internal stakeholders might influence the effectiveness of self-control displays after status loss for judgments that the high-ranking individual is legitimate for their position. We consider this to be an exploratory test to inform future research and do not present formal hypotheses.

Study 3 Method

Participants and Design. One hundred and eighty-five working adults (from diverse occupations in research, engineering, IT, accounting and finance) were recruited via a mobile laboratory set up in the lobby of an R&D and retail complex in Singapore to complete a survey about their work experiences. Participants who walked through the building's main lobby were approached to participate in a short study in exchange for the equivalent of \$3 USD. The study was conducted on laptop computers in groups of a maximum ten people. Nineteen responses were removed for quality and English proficiency concerns (described below), leaving a final sample of 166 (90 females; 52.4% held an undergraduate degree and 32% held a graduate degree; 91% identified as Asian, 4.2% White, .6 % Hispanic / Latino, .6% Black / African American, and 3% identified as “other”¹⁵).

Participants were randomly assigned to either a high or low perceived self-control after status loss condition. Then, participants were asked to recall a critical incident that they had actually experienced where they observed a higher-ranking individual (e.g., a manager) lose status. Specifically, they were asked to recall and describe (1) a time when a higher-ranking individual in their organization lost status, and (2) a specific incident after the status loss when the higher-ranking

¹⁵ We are not able to report age demographics in this sample.

individual displayed high (versus low) self-control. Importantly, participants were recalling real experiences with leaders in their organization with whom they had worked and would have been able to observe regularly. This prior exposure to the higher-ranking individual who ultimately lost status enables more accurate inferences about the actor's demonstration of self-control (or lack thereof) in the aftermath of status loss. Participants then answered questions about their perceptions of the higher-ranking individual after the status loss.

Procedure. A screening question determined whether participants had ever observed a higher-ranking individual (e.g., managers, leaders, prominent group members) in an organization, in which they were a member, lose status (i.e., lose an amount of respect, regard, or admiration in the eyes of other organizational members). Participants who answered "No" were immediately redirected to the end of the survey. Those who answered "Yes"¹⁶ were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions and were asked to describe the status loss of the higher-ranking individual, including the reason why the individual lost status¹⁷.

Perceived self-control. Next, participants in the *high / low* self-control condition were asked to "think about and describe a situation that occurred after this status loss when this individual behaved in a way that demonstrated...*a great deal of self-control (i.e., persistence, willpower, self-restraint).* / ...*self-control failure (i.e., inability to persist, lack of willpower, no self-restraint).*"

Measures. Participants reflected on what they thought about the higher-ranking individual's reaction and answered questions about their perceptions of the individuals' self-control, and their instrumental, relational, and moral evaluations and legitimacy judgments about this individual (see below). All measures used seven-point scales (1 = *not at all* to 7 = *a lot*) unless otherwise noted.

Instrumental, relational, and moral evaluations: We used the same items as Study 2 to measure *instrumental* ($\alpha = .94$), *relational* ($\alpha = .88$), and *moral* evaluations ($\alpha = .93$).

¹⁶ Of the 293 individuals who were asked whether they had observed the status loss of a higher-ranking individual, 197 (67%) indicated "Yes", and 96 (33%) indicated "No".

¹⁷ The most common reasons for status loss were interpersonal (e.g., showing favoritism; 30.7%), task-related (e.g., decision-making error; 27.1%), unknown (25.3%), or ethical (e.g., dishonesty; 23.5%), and a smaller number were the result of organizational changes (e.g., organizational restructuring; 12.1%).

Legitimacy judgments: Legitimacy was measured with the scale from Studies 1 and 2 but referred to a “high-ranking individual in your organization” rather than “your leader” ($\alpha = .93$).

Manipulation and quality checks: We verified the effectiveness of the *perceived self-control* recall manipulation in two ways: 1) participants indicated the extent to which they thought the higher-ranking individual demonstrated self-restraint, willpower, and persistence, in the situation they described ($\alpha = .84$); 2) two independent coders rated the extent to which participants’ descriptions of the higher-ranking individuals’ self-control depicted perceived self-control on an 11-point scale ($-5 = \text{extremely low self-control}$, $0 = \text{neither high nor low self-control}$, $+5 = \text{extremely high self-control}$). The interrater agreement was high (mean $r_{wg} = .87$ and median $r_{wg} = .95$) and so these ratings were averaged. We also coded the responses for *quality* and *English proficiency*. Nineteen responses that were either unclear or did not provide sufficient detail to be coded (e.g., “I have never faced such a situation”, “lose respect”) were removed from the sample, leaving a final sample of 166 participants.

Study 3 Results

Manipulation Checks. Supporting the effectiveness of the manipulation, participants perceived the higher-ranking individual to have demonstrated greater self-control in the high self-control condition ($M = 4.61$, $SD = 1.35$) than in the low self-control condition ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.38$), $F(1, 164) = 24.93$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .13$. We also found that descriptions of self-control in the high perceived self-control condition depicted greater self-control ($M = 1.26$, $SD = 2.78$) than the descriptions from the low perceived self-control condition ($M = -2.67$, $SD = 1.95$), $F(1, 164) = 110.41$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .40$.

Coding. Participants’ responses were coded for the “type” of self-control being observed. We followed a text analysis protocol (Duriau et al. 2007, Weber 1990) that involved (1) defining coding categories based on the literature, (2) coding a subsample and revising the categories, (3) coding the full sample, and (4) having a second independent coder recode the sample to verify the reliability of the coding.

First, we identified likely categories from the literature and created definitions for each category to code the responses. Recent research on intraindividual self-control has created typologies of self-control based on the goal that the individual was trying to achieve. For example, Hofman, Vohs and Baumeister (2012) developed five categories for the goals that are most commonly

conflicted by desires or temptations, including: health-related goals (e.g., bodily fitness, healthy eating), abstinence-restraint goals (e.g., saving money, fidelity), achievement-related goals (e.g., academic and professional achievements), social goals (e.g., social appearance, socializing), and time-use goals (e.g., using time efficiently, leisure and relaxation). More recently, Veilleux and colleagues (2018) developed a similar taxonomy of commonly experienced goals and temptations including: consumption (e.g., weight management), interpersonal (e.g., help someone else accomplish something, manage relationship), intrapersonal (e.g., emotional management, prevent illness), ways to spend time (e.g., productivity), financial achievements (e.g., save money) and values (e.g., be a good person, keep faith).

We did not directly adopt either of these existing frameworks in coding our data for two reasons. First, some of these categories of goals are not directly work related (health-related/consumption goals, abstinence-restraint/financial achievement goals), and are therefore, less relevant to perceived self-control at work. Second, these *intraindividual* self-control frameworks require identifying the goals individuals have for themselves and the temptations they experience in trying to achieve these goals, therefore, the categories include similar goals that might result in very different behaviors. For example, Hofman et al.'s (2012) time-use goals include “using time efficiently” but also includes “leisure and relaxation”. Moreover, in examining perceived self-control at work, we are interested in organizational goals or standards (rather than the individual's personal goals and standards), and the how the individual's behavior is perceived by others to reflect an attempt to align their behavior to those standards despite temptations to do otherwise. Thus, we used these typologies as a guide, but also relied on behavioral indicators of self-control from past research (see Duckworth and Gross 2014, Hagger, et al. 2010, Inzlicht and Schmeichel 2012 for reviews) that would be relevant to observing displays of self-control at work in determining relevant coding categories.

Accordingly, we initially identified three categories of perceived self-control. *Task-related* self-control behaviors involve demonstrating a capacity to override immediate impulses to focus on the task or work at hand. Examples of task-related self-control include demonstrating perseverance, and persistence (see Hagger et al. 2010). These behaviors are relevant to Hofman et al.'s (2012)

“achievement-oriented”, and “time-use” goals (e.g., using time efficiently), and Veilleux et al.’s (2018) “ways to spend time” goals.

Other- (vs. self) focused self-control involves the tradeoff between focusing on others instead of one’s self-interest (e.g., apologizing, holding back to allow others to contribute) which requires self-control (Baumeister and Exline 1999). These behaviors are related to Veilleux and colleagues’ category of “interpersonal” goals (e.g., help someone else accomplish something).

Emotion-related self-control involves regulating the expression of one’s felt emotions at work (e.g., not yelling at a colleague when you feel angry) which requires self-control (Tice and Bratslavsky 2000). These behaviors are most relevant to Veilleux and colleagues’ (2018) category of intrapersonal goals (e.g., emotional management).

Second, the lead author coded a subsample of the responses and created one additional category. *Self-presentation* self-control involves behaviors designed to make an organizationally desirable impression on others (e.g., professionalism, calm) and previous research indicates that it requires self-control to avoid self-presentation blunders such as talking too much, making overly intimate self-disclosures, or demonstrating egotistical arrogance (Vohs et al. 2005). Self-presentation-related self-control is most relevant to Hofman and colleagues’ (2012) category of social goals (e.g., social appearance).

Third, the full sample was coded based on these four perceived self-control categories (task-related, other-focused, emotion-related and self-presentation self-control). Responses received a coding of either “1” or “0” for each category. Categories were not treated as mutually exclusive, so responses may have described displays of self-control that could be categorized as including multiple types of self-control, such as task-related, other-focused, and self-presentation self-control (“Tried to lead and finish a project with his team. Try to solve any internal conflicts or disharmony within the group that resulted from his situation. Deal with the rumors and suspicions from colleagues calmly and confidently.”).

Fourth, to verify that the coding was reliable, a research assistant, blind to the study’s hypotheses, independently coded the full sample using the above categories and definitions. We

calculated agreement using Cohen's κ and there was moderate to high agreement for each category; values of κ ranged from .57 to .90, $ps < .0005$. These results suggest that the coding was reliable.

Analyses. Table 5 displays the *Ms*, *SDs*, and *rs* of the variables in Study 3. An initial examination of the coded data revealed that the type of perceived self-control most commonly observed by internal stakeholders after status loss was task-related (54.8%), followed by self-presentation (33.1%), other-focused (28.9%), and emotion-related (12.65%) self-control. Example responses are in Table 6.

Before examining the potential moderating effects of the type of perceived self-control, we conducted an ANOVA to examine the effect of high (versus low) perceived self-control on legitimacy in this study. Consistent with the previous studies, we found that participants who wrote about higher-ranking individuals displaying high perceived self-control after status loss judged the individuals to be more legitimate ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.64$) than when they wrote about them displaying low self-control after status loss ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.63$), $F(1, 164) = 7.91$, $p = .006$, $\eta^2 = .05$. A bootstrapped mediation analyses revealed that both instrumental (Indirect effect = .23, 95% CI = .06, .45) and moral (Indirect effect = .28, 95% CI = .05, .57) evaluations, but not relational evaluations (Indirect effect = .03, 95% CI = -.04, .15), explained the positive relationship between higher perceived self-control and legitimacy judgments after status loss.

Type of self-control: We then explored whether the type of self-control perceived after status loss influenced its efficacy. We conducted a series of bootstrapped moderated mediations where each type of self-control (task-related, other-focused, emotion-related, self-presentation) was entered individually¹⁸ and examined as a potential moderator of the indirect effect of high (versus low) perceived self-control on legitimacy through instrumental, relational and moral evaluations.

Our findings showed a significant interaction between high (versus low) perceived self-control and self-presentation "type" self-control on instrumental and moral evaluations ($b = 1.07$, $se = .51$, $p = .04$, $b = 1.02$, $se = .52$, $p = .05$, respectively). Figure 6 illustrates this moderated mediation model and shows that when the type of self-control was self-presentation-related, higher perceived

¹⁸ We also reran our analyses by entering all the moderators into the analysis simultaneously and this produced the same results.

self-control positively affected legitimacy judgments through instrumental (Indirect effect = .50, 95% CI = .19, .91) and moral (Indirect effect = .64, 95% CI = .22, 1.18) evaluations; however, when the type of self-control was not self-presentation-related, higher perceived self-control did not affect legitimacy judgments through instrumentality or morality (95% CI = -.12, .34 and 95% CI = -.15, .45, respectively). In all other cases, self-control type did not interact with the self-control condition to influence the extent to which perceived self-control affected legitimacy judgments. This suggests that for self-control to affect legitimacy judgments positively, the individual must be seen as trying to present themselves in a desirable manner (i.e., display self-presentation self-control). However, it is worth noting that most responses (82%) that observed self-presentation related self-control also described the higher-ranking individual as displaying another type of self-control, as well. Therefore, one possible interpretation of these results is that other types of perceived self-control are more effective when coupled with self-presentation, or that self-control displayed in multiple domains is most effective.

Multiple types of self-control: Accordingly, we also examined whether being perceived to display self-control in multiple ways (e.g., displaying both task-related and self-presentation self-control after status loss) might influence the efficacy of the self-control strategy over and above the amount (or magnitude) of self-control perceived. We calculated the sum of all types of self-control perceived by the participant (“*types of self-control summed*”) from 1 = one type of self-control to 4 = four types of self-control. We then specified a moderated mediation model where the magnitude of perceived self-control (i.e., from -5 (*low self-control*) to +5 (*high self-control*) as rated by the coders) was the independent variable, instrumental, relational and moral evaluations were the mediators, legitimacy judgment was the dependent variable, and *types of self-control summed* was the moderator.

We found a significant *types of self-control summed* × *magnitude of perceived self-control* interaction on instrumental evaluations ($b = .13, se = .05, p = .01$), and the *types of self-control summed* × *magnitude of perceived self-control* interaction on morality evaluations approached, but did not reach significance ($b = .10, se = .05, p = .07$). Specifically, we found that when the individual was perceived to enact *two or more types* of self-control after status loss, self-control had a more positive effect on legitimacy judgments through instrumentality (Indirect effect = .09, 95% CI

= .05, .15) and morality (Indirect effect = .12, 95% CI = .06, .19) than when they enacted just *one type* (Indirect effect = .03, 95% CI = -.01, .08 and Indirect effect = .05, 95% CI = -.01, .11, respectively). This suggests that when the internal stakeholder perceives the higher-ranking individual to display self-control in multiple ways, high perceived self-control will be more effective in buffering their judgments of the higher-ranking individual's legitimacy.

Study 3 Discussion

The results of this critical incident study provide preliminary insight into *when* perceived self-control after status loss will be most effective in reinforcing higher-ranking individuals' legitimacy. In contrast to the current perspective of perceived self-control as a unitary construct, we examined whether different types of perceived self-control might have different effects on legitimacy. We found that when internal stakeholders perceived higher-ranking individuals to devote effort to their professionalism and demeanor (i.e., display self-presentation-related self-control) after status loss, perceived self-control was more effective in influencing the status loser's legitimacy. Moreover, being perceived to display multiple types of self-control (e.g., task-related and self-presentation-related self-control) interacted with the magnitude of self-control observed to result in more positive legitimacy judgments. These results start to suggest that there may be some situations in which perceived self-control is more or less effective in reinforcing legitimacy after status loss. However, given the exploratory nature of this study, confirmatory research into moderators is necessary to be more confident in these conclusions.

General Discussion

A growing area of research on status loss highlights the negative psychological, performance, and social consequences that higher-ranking individuals face after losing status (Marr and Thau 2014, Neeley 2013, Pettit, et al. 2013). Because the outcomes of status loss (i.e., being anxious, making mistakes, lacking influence) are inconsistent with our expectations for higher-ranking individuals legitimately occupying their positions, status loss could trigger their downfall. In this paper, we examined whether higher-ranking employees who lose status could reinforce their legitimacy and prevent challenges to their authority by displaying high self-control after status loss.

In two experiments we showed that higher (vs. lower) self-control after status loss positively affects internal stakeholders' judgments that the higher-ranking individual is legitimate for their position and inhibits stakeholders' willingness to challenge the higher-ranking individual by reinforcing evaluations of the individual's instrumentality (Studies 1 and 2) and morality (Study 1). Moreover, we demonstrated that high self-control is more important for positive legitimacy judgments after status loss than when no status loss has occurred (Study 2). Then, in an exploratory study (Study 3) we found that perceived self-control most effectively influenced legitimacy when it was related to self-presentation (e.g., being poised, appearing professional) and when internal stakeholders perceived the higher-ranking individual to display multiple types of self-control (e.g., both task-related and self-presentation at the same time).

Theoretical Implications

These findings have several implications for theory. First, the nascent literature on status loss has focused primarily on the immediate negative outcomes of loss. The theory and studies here take a more nuanced view and highlight that status loss will not always have negative consequences for higher-ranking individuals. Indeed, our results suggest that higher-ranking individuals who are perceived to override their impulses and demonstrate self-control after status loss protect themselves from losing their legitimacy. However, because enacting self-control will be challenging, not all higher-ranking individuals will be perceived as displaying self-control after loss. Consequently, status loss will trigger the downfall of some higher-ranking individuals, but likely not those who show restraint.

Second, the question of how legitimacy judgments are changed and reestablished has received little empirical attention (Bitektine 2011, Tost 2011). Drawing on Tost's (2011) theory of jolts, we contribute to the literature on legitimacy by empirically examining how legitimacy judgments are reassessed after status loss. In doing so, we provide support for the idea that the type of concerns that drive legitimacy judgments critically depend on the context (Tost 2011). In contrast to previous research citing relational concerns as a primary driver of legitimacy judgments (Tyler 1997), across three studies we found that after status loss, instrumental and moral (but not relational) evaluations were the main determinants of legitimacy. This distinction also implies that judgments of legitimacy

are not simply a reflection of trust. Although trustworthiness can be driven by relational concerns (e.g., liking, similarity) in addition to an actor's competence and integrity, when people make determinations about legitimacy, they may rely more on the prototypical criteria needed to serve that role well (ability and integrity), forgoing more idiosyncratic concerns about likeability. It is also possible that although internal stakeholders are typically concerned about the potential for a social relationship with a higher-ranking organizational member because there are benefits from being affiliated with high status others (Benjamin and Podolny 1999), when a higher-ranking individual has lost status, having a social relationship with them will be less desirable, and therefore, it will be a less salient concern in determining legitimacy.

Third, we contribute to an emerging body of work on the social consequences of self-control. Much of the work on self-control has focused on the intra-individual outcomes associated with lower self-control (see Hagger, et al. 2010), such as performing worse on cognitive tasks (Schmeichel, et al. 2003) and unethical behavior (Gino et al. 2011). However, recent research suggests that an individual's trait or state-based self-control can be perceived by others, and as a result, self-control may have interpersonal consequences (Righetti and Finkenauer 2011, Shea, et al. 2013). We build on these findings and show that being perceived to display high self-control is critical after status loss to reinforce legitimacy. Moreover, our findings suggest that the interpersonal consequences of low and high self-control may not be symmetrical. We found that displaying self-control failure negatively impacted legitimacy regardless of status maintenance or loss, but demonstrating high self-control positively impacted legitimacy only after status loss.

Finally, our results suggest a possible mechanism through which judgment and behavior in informal hierarchies could have consequences for formal hierarchies. Specifically, a status loss is an informal judgment, which, depending on how the status loser responds—with sufficient self-control or not—can incite questions about their deservingness for their formal position. If these questions intensify, the authority can be challenged, potentially toppling the person from their formal position. Thus, while there has been much discussion on how formal and informal hierarchies reinforce and remain stable (Magee and Galinsky 2008), we suggest a social psychological process whereby the mechanisms that organize people informally could cause change in the formal structure as well.

Future Directions

Our findings raise several research questions on status loss and legitimization processes in organizations. First, the status loss of higher-ranking individuals in organizations is a complex phenomenon and there are likely other factors that influence the downstream consequences of status loss. For example, in our experimental studies, status loss was manipulated in such a way that participants did not interact with the higher-ranking individual before the status loss and were not involved in the loss itself. Perhaps interacting with the leader before the status loss, or being involved in the status loss event, might influence the process through which legitimacy is reassessed. Also, the descriptions of status loss and self-control behavior in the aftermath of status loss that were uncovered in our research could be used to create contextually rich status loss materials for future work¹⁹.

Similarly, we focus on internal stakeholders' reactions because those with a 'stake' in the organization are likely to be concerned about the legitimacy of their leaders. However, some internal stakeholders might not be sufficiently concerned about a higher-ranking individual's status loss to consider reevaluating their legitimacy. For instance, individual contributors who have little interdependence with their coworkers, contract workers, or employees with low organizational identification. In this case, they would be less likely to scrutinize status losers' post-loss behavior, and as a result, displays of high self-control would have little impact on their legitimacy judgments. Second, it may be interesting to question when displays of self-control may not be sufficient to protect a higher-ranking individual's legitimacy after status loss. Our studies examined status loss as a dichotomous variable (status loss vs. maintenance), however people can lose different amounts of status. The magnitude of the status loss is likely to determine the consequences of that loss and the extent to which the behavior of the higher-ranking individual can address internal stakeholders' concerns. Indeed, there may be some status losses that are simply too great to recover from, regardless of how exemplary the subsequent behavior of the individual. Identifying what these unredeemable status losses are is both a practically and theoretically interesting avenue for future research. Relatedly, finding that perceived self-control influences legitimacy through instrumental and moral

¹⁹ https://osf.io/qp4ey/?view_only=85aa4577814e4c8eb1b53dbb66b2384e

(but not relational) evaluations provides insight into other characteristics and behaviors that would likely help (i.e., providing evidence of competence and trustworthiness) versus hurt (i.e., providing evidence of warmth and likeability) higher-ranking individuals' legitimacy after status loss.

Relatedly, internal stakeholders may be more willing to challenge some leaders than others. In our studies, people's willingness to challenge the leader was not particularly high (e.g., in Study 2, the condition with the greatest willingness to challenge was a 3.5 out of 5), and this is consistent with research on the stability of hierarchies (Ridgeway and Berger 1986), and system justification (Jost et al. 2004), which would suggest that people are generally motivated to support the status quo, and view their leaders as legitimate. However, it may also be the case that our measure of challenging behavior (i.e., going to a superior to ask that your leader be removed) is extreme and risky (e.g., what happens if your leader finds out?) and therefore may be less frequent than other forms of challenging behavior. For example, employees may be more likely to engage in more subtle challenging behaviors such as disagreeing with or confronting their leader about his or her decisions (e.g., challenging voice; Burris 2012), or even trying to harm the leader's reputation by speaking ill of him or her to others, or delaying work that the leader needs finished (e.g., undermining; Duffy, Ganster and Pagon 2002). It is also worth noting that there are some types of leaders – e.g., women, minorities – that are viewed as less prototypical, or more threatening, and internal stakeholders may be more motivated to view them as illegitimate and challenge their authority. Moreover, future research might examine how attributional processes might underpin stakeholders' evaluative judgments about leaders after status loss.

Finally, our studies raise questions about when the status loss of a higher-ranking individual might lead to hierarchical instability. Our findings suggest that status losers who do not display high self-control may be viewed as illegitimate and have their authority challenged. If a leader cannot compel their subordinates to follow their directives and has to devote their time and energy to fending off challenges, it will be difficult for them to remain effective in their position and hold it in the long-term. Further, when prominent individuals who represent the organization and are a reflection of its processes (e.g., CEO) are deemed illegitimate and fall, this not only creates opportunities for lower-ranked individuals to move up, but it potentially calls into question whether other higher-ranking

members (e.g., the executive team, middle managers) are also truly deserving of their positions. Thus, research might explore if and when a higher-ranking individual's status loss triggers broader hierarchical instability within the organization.

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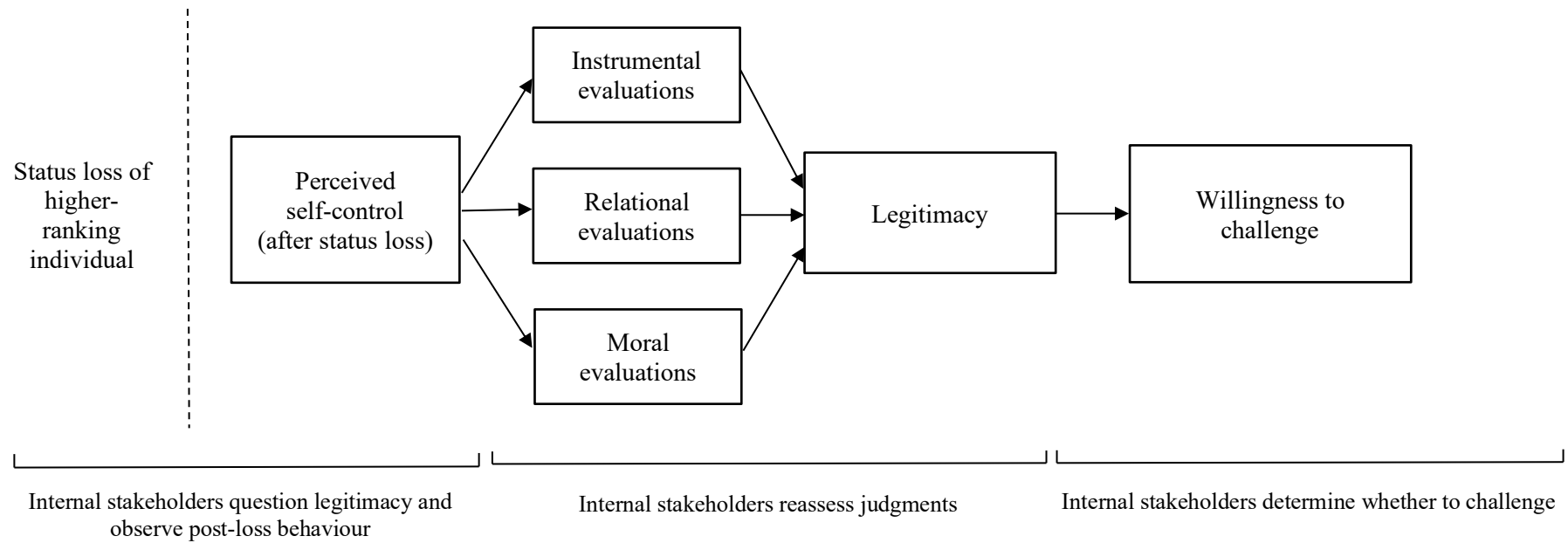
Figure 1 Conceptual Model of the Effect of Perceived Self-Control After Status Loss on Legitimacy Judgments and Challenging Behavior

Figure 2 Effect of Perceived Self-Control on Legitimacy Judgments (Study 1). Error bars are 95% confidence intervals.

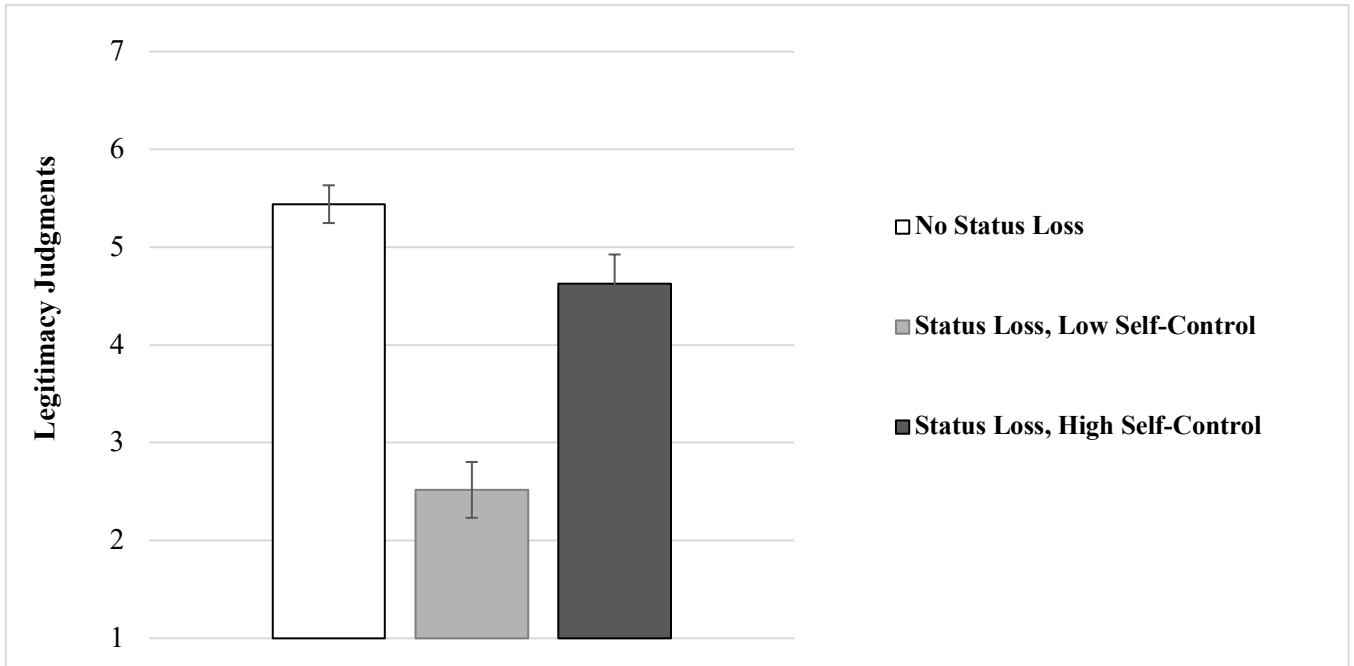


Figure 3 Effect of Perceived Self-Control on Each Willingness to Challenge Option (Study 1).

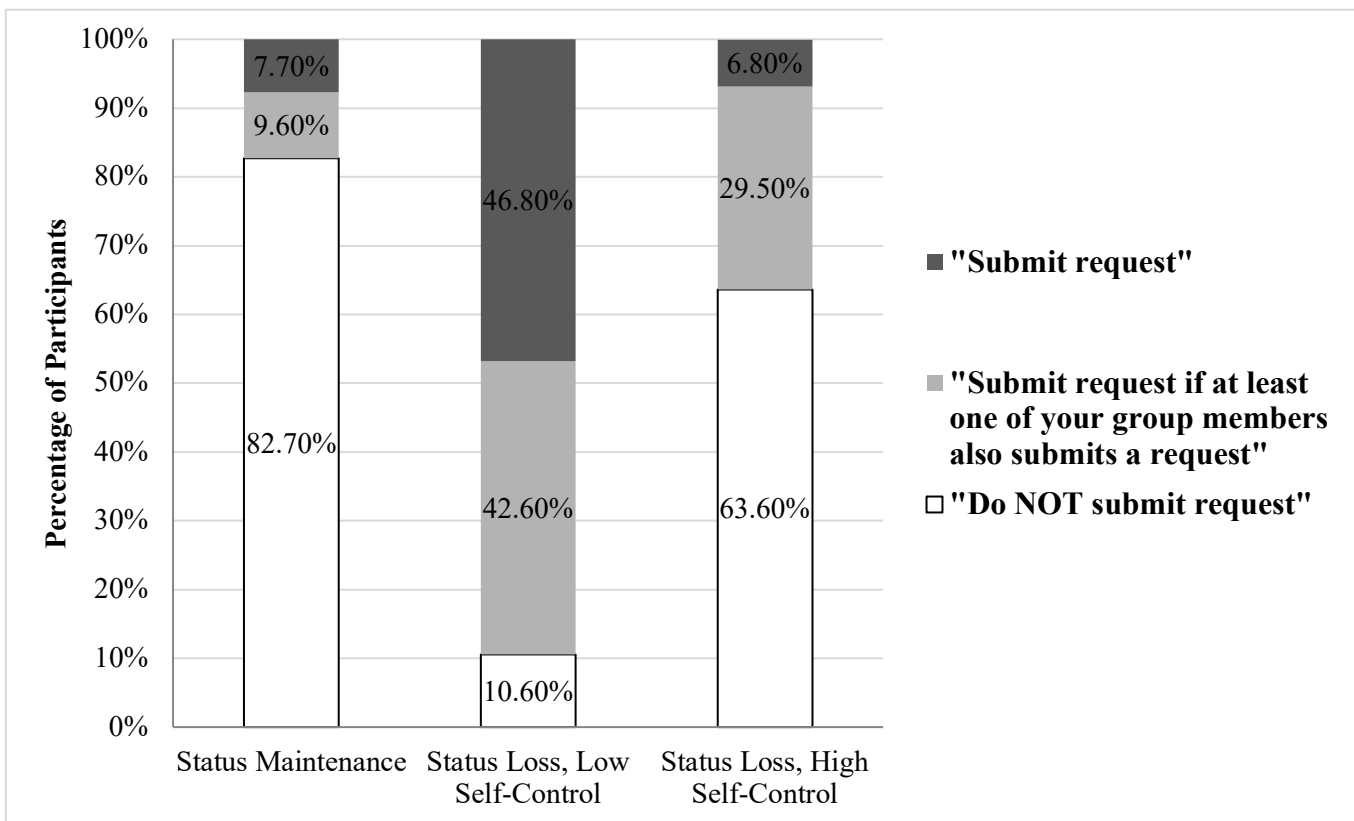
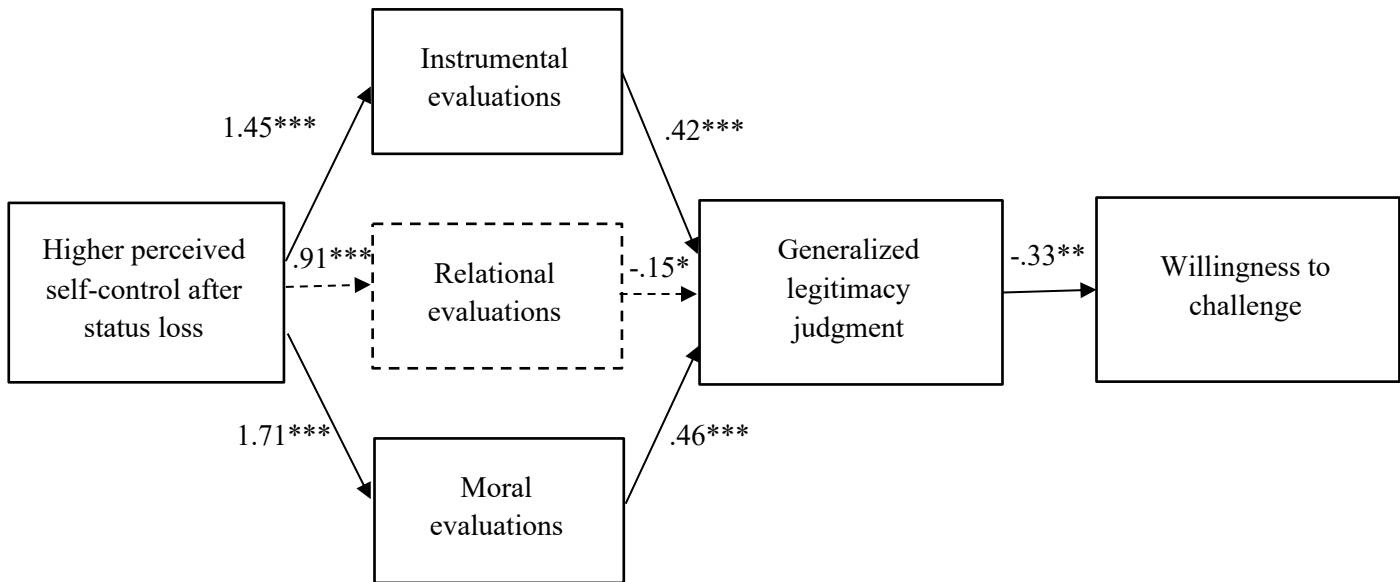


Figure 4 Indirect Effect of Perceived Self-Control on Legitimacy Judgments and Willingness to Challenge Through Instrumental, Relational and Moral Evaluations (Study 1).



Note. Status maintenance condition included as covariate. Unstandardized coefficients are reported.
 *** $p \leq .001$; ** $p \leq .01$; * $p \leq .05$; + $p \leq .10$.

Figure 5 Effect of Perceived Self-Control on Legitimacy Judgments and Willingness to Challenge (Study 2). Error bars are 95% confidence intervals.

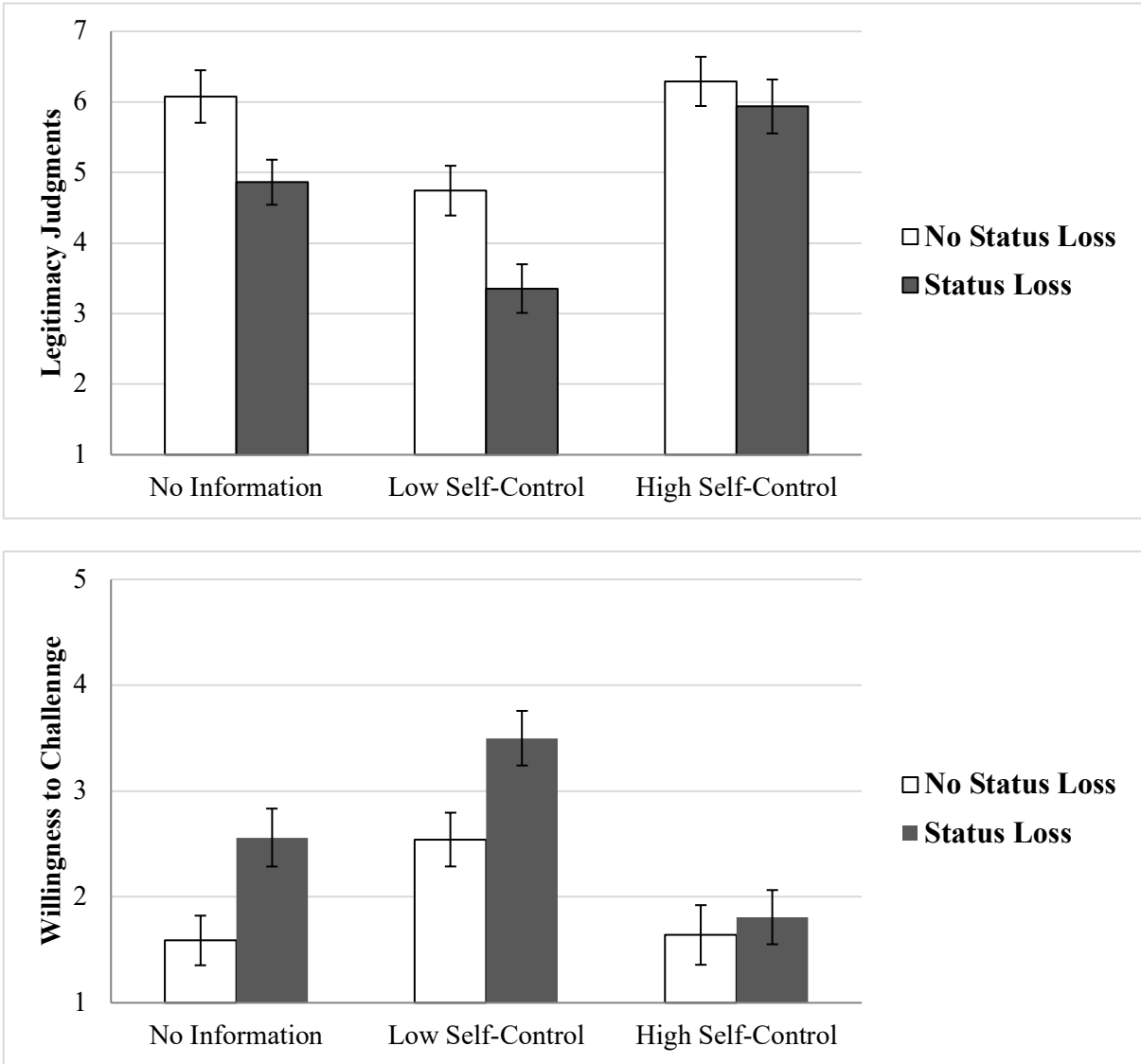
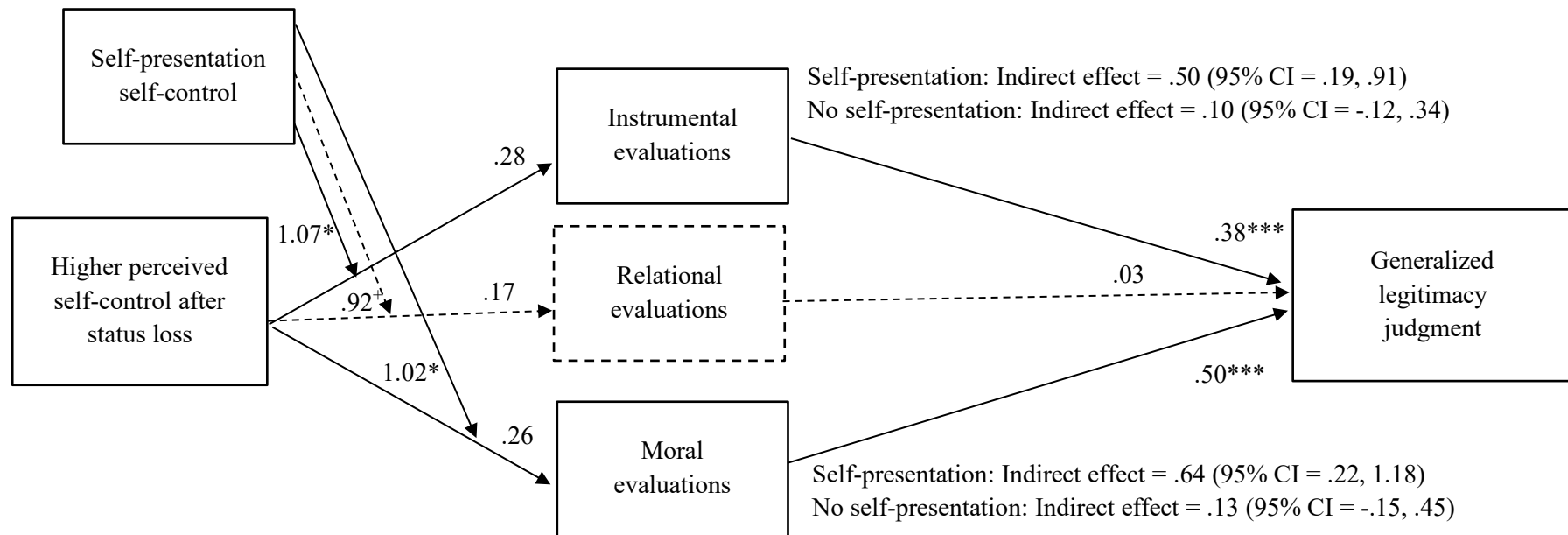


Figure 6 Conditional Indirect Effect of Perceived Self-Control on Legitimacy Judgments Through Instrumental, Relational and Moral Evaluations, Moderated by Self-Presentation Type Self-Control (Study 3).



Note. Unstandardized coefficients are reported. *** $p \leq .001$; ** $p \leq .01$; * $p \leq .05$; ⁺ $p \leq .10$.

Table 1 Study 1: Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Status loss	.47	.50	1.00						
2. High self-control	.23	.42	.58**	1.00					
3. Instrumental evaluations	4.93	1.18	-.58**	.01	1.00				
4. Relational evaluations	4.58	1.04	-.41**	.01	.56**	1.00			
5. Moral evaluations	4.50	1.18	-.40**	.17*	.73**	.65**	1.00		
6. Legitimacy judgments	4.55	1.55	-.61**	.03	.79**	.50**	.74**	1.00	
7. Willingness to challenge	1.56	.77	.48**	-.03	-.56**	-.34**	-.49**	-.64**	1.00

** $p \leq .01$; * $p \leq .05$.

Table 2 Study 2: Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Status loss	.48	.50	1.00						
2. High self-control	.31	.46	.08	1.00					
3. Instrumental evaluations	5.51	1.24	-.30**	.32**	1.00				
4. Relational evaluations	5.63	1.13	-.11	.19**	.44**	1.00			
5. Moral evaluations	5.36	1.21	-.24**	.33*	.83**	.60**	1.00		
6. Legitimacy judgments	5.22	1.57	-.31**	.38**	.84**	.33**	.79**	1.00	
7. Willingness to challenge	2.26	1.11	.31**	-.32**	-.73**	-.27**	-.70**	-.86**	1.00

** $p \leq .01$; * $p \leq .05$.

Table 3 Study 2: OLS Regression Results

Variables	Model 1 Instrumental Evaluations	Model 2 Relational Evaluations	Model 3 Moral Evaluations	Model 4 Legitimacy	Model 5 Willingness to Challenge
Constant	6.21*** (0.17)	3.09*** (0.36)	-0.02 (0.25)	0.38 (0.31)	5.28*** (0.21)
Independent variables					
<i>Status Loss</i>	-0.21 (0.23)	-0.15 (0.20)	-0.04 (0.12)	-0.14 (0.15)	0.11 (0.07)
<i>No Self-Control</i> (vs. <i>High Self-Control</i>)	-0.14 (0.22)	-0.77*** (0.19)	0.04 (0.13)	0.002 (0.15)	
<i>Low Self-Control</i> (vs. <i>High Self-Control</i>)	-0.82*** (0.23)	0.38 [†] (0.20)	-0.40*** (0.04)	-0.71*** (0.16)	
Mediators					
<i>Instrumental Evaluations</i>		0.48*** (.05)	0.59*** (0.04)	0.62*** (0.06)	-0.0001 (0.06)
<i>Relational Evaluations</i>			0.40*** (0.09)	-0.03 (0.05)	0.06 (0.04)
<i>Moral Evaluations</i>				0.37*** (0.08)	-0.09 (0.06)
<i>Status Loss X No</i> (vs. <i>High</i>) <i>Self-Control</i>	-1.03** (0.32)	0.39 (.28)	0.09 (0.17)	-0.03 (0.22)	
<i>Status Loss X Low</i> (vs. <i>High</i>) <i>Self-Control</i>	-0.66* (0.32)	0.22 (.28)	-0.05 (.17)	-0.33* (0.21)	
<i>Legitimacy Judgments</i>					-0.56*** (0.05)
R-squared	0.27***	0.35***	0.79***	0.81***	0.75***

Notes. Unstandardized regression coefficients presented with standard errors in parenthesis. [†] $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 4 Study 2: Indirect Effects of Status Loss on Willingness to Challenge

Indirect Effect	Estimate	BootSE	Bootstrapping	
			Percentile 95% CI	
			Lower	Upper
Status Loss → Instrumental → Legitimacy → Challenge				
<i>High Self-Control</i>	0.07	0.08	-0.09	0.25
<i>No Self-Control</i>	0.43	0.11	0.24	0.67
<i>Low Self-Control</i>	0.30	0.09	0.13	0.49
Status Loss → Relational → Legitimacy → Challenge				
<i>High Self-Control</i>	-0.003	0.01	-0.02	0.02
<i>No Self-Control</i>	0.004	0.01	-0.02	0.03
<i>Low Self-Control</i>	0.001	0.01	-0.02	0.02
Status Loss → Moral → Legitimacy → Challenge				
<i>High Self-Control</i>	0.01	0.02	-0.04	0.06
<i>No Self-Control</i>	-0.01	0.03	-0.07	0.04
<i>Low Self-Control</i>	0.02	0.03	-0.04	0.09

Table 5 Study 3: Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. High self-control	.51	.50	1.00								
2. Instrumental evaluations	4.20	1.58	.20*	1.00							
3. Relational evaluations	3.80	1.55	.15*	.70**	1.00						
4. Moral evaluations	3.84	1.61	.18*	.70**	.76**	1.00					
5. Legitimacy judgments	3.49	1.67	.21**	.72**	.65**	.75**	1.00				
6. Task-related	.55	.50	-.17*	-.05	.03	.09	-.05	1.00			
7. Other-focused	.29	.45	.05	-.12	-.14 ⁺	-.09	-.06	.05	1.00		
8. Self-presentation	.33	.47	.06	-.05	-.01	-.07	.09	-.13	.17*	1.00	
9. Emotion-related	.13	.33	-.13 ⁺	.06	.06	.13	.16*	-.16*	-.04	.12	1.00

** $p \leq .01$; * $p \leq .05$.

Table 6 Study 3: Examples of Participant Responses for Types of Self-Control

Type of Self-Control	Participant	Response
Task-Related		
	14	Yes, the status loss was temporary due the organizational change in the focus. Immediately he was able to embrace himself to focus on the new area and he was able to persist and demonstrated that he is capable of delivering result even in a changing ambiguous situation. [High Self-Control]
	29	they quit working on the boring project, and show a lack of willpower. [Low Self-Control]
	85	no more passion to continue with the work, skipping some meetings, demonstrate a lack of will power, [Low Self-Control]
Other vs. Self-Focus		
	16	Held back and allowed the members to contribute more during a meeting [High Self-Control]
	152	The time spend interacting with the co-workers are not there. Moreover, he or she should listen to the needs of co-worker as well other than assisting in company's development. Co-workers needs are also needed to be address. And the success of the company also plays a huge role. [Low Self-Control]
	13	disorganize and not honest and cannot manage the group well. do not conduct meeting and share experiences with the team member. [Low Self-Control]
Emotion-Related		
	131	they lost their temper and yelled at other colleagues

		[Low Self-Control]
	78	The leader continued to complete his project till the end with full effort and did not react negatively even though he knew that he was demoted [High Self-Control]
	33	Very emotional, and shocked to hear the news. Team members were in tears and shocked [Low Self-Control]
Self-Presentation		
	136	Reacted very weirdly as if nothing happened and was joking about it. [Low Self-Control]
	21	Professionalism was important to his value regardless of how many people quit the job. [High Self-Control]
	7	Confusion in response to status loss / Trying to emphasise their status in eyes of other workers. [Low Self-Control]