Conspicuous Consumption of Time: When Busyness and Lack of Leisure Time Become a Status Symbol

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While research on conspicuous consumption has typically analyzed how people spend money on products that signal status, this article investigates conspicuous consumption in relation to time. The authors argue that a busy and overworked lifestyle, rather than a leisurely lifestyle, has become an aspirational status symbol. A series of studies shows that the positive inferences of status in response to busyness and lack of leisure time are driven by the perceptions that a busy person possesses desired human capital characteristics (e.g., competence and ambition) and is scarce and in demand in the job market. This research uncovers an alternative kind of conspicuous consumption that operates by shifting the focus from the preciousness and scarcity of goods to the preciousness and scarcity of individuals. Furthermore, the authors examine cultural values (perceived social mobility) and differences among cultures (North America vs. Europe) to demonstrate moderators and boundary conditions of the positive associations derived from signals of busyness.

Keywords: conspicuous consumption, time spending, status signaling, work versus leisure, social mobility

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Conspicuous abstention from labor [. . .] becomes the conventional mark of superior pecuniary achievement.

—Thorstein Veblen,
The Theory of the Leisure Class

Other countries they work, they stroll home, they stop by the café, they take August off—off! *Why aren't you like that? Why aren't we like that?*

Because we are crazy, driven, hard-working believers, that's why!

—Cadillac, Super Bowl commercial

Movies, magazines, and popular TV shows such as Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous often highlight the abundance of money and leisure time among the wealthy. While this leisurely lifestyle was commonly featured in advertising for aspirational products, in recent years, ads featuring wealthy people relaxing by the pool or on a yacht, playing tennis and polo, or skiing and hunting

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(e.g., Cadillac's "The Only Way to Travel" campaign in the '90s) are being replaced with ads featuring busy individuals who work long hours and have very limited leisure time. For example, Cadillac's 2014 Super Bowl commercial, quoted above, features a busy and leisure-deprived businessman, and the Wall Street Journal's 2016 campaign features celebrities who complain about their busy lives with the slogan "People who don't have time make time to read the Wall Street Journal."

In the present article we argue that busyness and overwork, rather than a leisurely life, have become a status symbol. In contemporary American culture, complaining about being busy and working all the time has become an increasingly widespread phenomenon. On Twitter, celebrities publicly complain about "having no life" or "being in desperate need of a vacation" (Alford 2012). A *New York Times* social commentator suggests that a common response to the question "How are you?" is "Busy!" (Kreider 2012). An analysis of holiday letters indicates that references to "crazy schedules" have dramatically increased since the 1960s (Schulte 2014).

To explain this phenomenon, we uncover an alternative kind of conspicuous consumption that operates by shifting the focus from the preciousness and scarcity of goods to the preciousness and scarcity of individuals. Our investigation reveals that positive status inferences in response to long hours of work and lack of leisure time are mediated by the perceptions that busy individuals possess desired human capital characteristics (competence, ambition), leading them to be viewed as scarce and in demand. A series of studies tests our conceptual model and demonstrates the conditions under which a busy and overworked individual is perceived to have status in the eyes of others. As a preliminary investigation, we first explore Twitter data categorized as "humblebrags," consisting of self-deprecating boasts (Alford 2012), and find that a substantial number of these brags relate to long hours of work and lack of leisure time. Inspired by these findings, studies 1A and 1B use Facebook posts and a letter to a friend to communicate either an overworked lifestyle or a nonbusy lifestyle, and demonstrate the proposed mediating process affecting status attributions via perceived human capital characteristics and scarcity of the busy individual. In studies 2A and 2B, we examine the moderating effects of social mobility beliefs. We find that Americans, who perceive their society as particularly mobile and believe that work may lead to social affirmation, are very likely to interpret busyness as a positive signal of status. Moreover, these studies disentangle the specific dimensions of busyness at work leading to inferences of high status: quantity (the amount of working hours and leisure time), speed (pace at which work is performed), and meaning (level of meaning and enjoyment tied to work). In study 3, we examine differences among cultures (i.e., North America vs. Europe) to demonstrate the busyness effect amongst Americans, and the opposite effect, with leisure signaling higher status, amongst Europeans. Finally, studies 4A and 4B consider specific marketing implications of our work and show how the public use of timesaving services (e.g., Peapod, an online grocery delivery service) and products (e.g., Bluetooth headsets) can signal status, regardless of how busy one truly is.

CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS

Busyness as Long Hours of Work and Lack of Leisure Time

Research in economics, sociology, and consumer behavior on the consumption of time has focused on the antecedents of time allocation decisions (Becker 1965), examining how individuals divide their time between paid work time (remunerated employment), unpaid work time (household labor), and leisure time (Berry 1979; Gross 1987; Jacoby, Szybillo, and Berning 1976; Schor 1992). In this article, we examine how these time allocation decisions are perceived by others. In particular, how does signaling busyness and lack of leisure time impact perceptions of status in the eyes of others?

We define busyness as long hours of remunerated employment and lack of leisure time. This definition is consistent with dictionary definitions of "busy," which emphasize "actively working" and "not at leisure" (Dictionary.com, WordReference.com). Accordingly, we operationalize busyness in our studies by the amount of time the person allocates to work versus leisure. We also consider speed (pace at which work is performed) and meaning (level of meaning and enjoyment tied to work) as two other relevant dimensions for the conceptualization of busyness. We include these additional time consumption dimensions to capture not only the quantity of time (i.e., how much time is allocated to work vs. leisure), but also the quality of that time (is the time spent in an active and meaningful way?). Indeed, busyness has also been understood as a subjective state determined by the number of tasks individuals have to perform (Gershuny 2005). Moreover, people dread idleness and desire busyness in search of meaning and motivation in their lives (Ariely, Kamenica, and Prelec 2008; Hsee, Yang, and Wang 2010; Keinan and Kivetz 2011; Wilcox et al. 2016).

To confirm our conceptualization of busyness, we conducted a pilot study in the lab (see the web appendix) to determine which category of time expenditure is most associated with busyness—that is, if one is perceived to be busy, do people infer they are busy with paid work, household work, or with leisure? Moreover, how does the amount of working hours (i.e., quantity) relate to the other two relevant dimensions (i.e., speed and meaning)? Each participant read a description of three people: a person who was "busier than average," a person with an "average level of busyness," and a person who was "less busy than

average." We then asked participants how they thought these people spent their time, specifically whether they thought each person spent many hours at work, doing home-related chores and activities, or doing hobbies and/or leisure activities. To explore the other two dimensions of busyness (i.e., speed and meaning), we then asked participants whether they thought the people described in the study did things fast/multitasked and had a meaningful job.

Participants inferred that the busier person spent significantly more time at work ($M = 5.83$) than the average busy person ($M = 4.75$) or the less busy person ($M = 3.3$, all p-values $< .001$). Conversely, participants perceived the busier person to spend less time on leisure ($M = 3.43$) than the average busy person ($M = 4.24$) or the less busy person ($M = 5.03$, all p-values $< .001$). For time spent on chores, there was no significant difference related to level of busyness. Thus, these results confirm that busyness is primarily associated with long hours of work and having less time for leisure. Although one could conceivably find that a person is busy with leisure activities (has an active social calendar) or busy with home-related activities (has many chores to complete), these inferences are not spontaneous when one considers a busy individual. As a further precaution to avoid misinterpretation, in all the scenario studies we make it absolutely clear that the target individual is "busy" in terms of long hours of paid work time, as per our definition.

Participants in our pilot study also inferred that the busier person did things fast and engaged in more activities at once ($M = 5.18$) than the average busy person ($M = 4.53$) or the less busy person ($M = 3.75$, all p-values $< .001$). They also perceived the busier individual to have a more meaningful job ($M = 4.78$) than the average busy person ($M = 4.45$) or the less busy person ($M = 3.84$, all p-values $< .001$). Though the differences between the "busier" than average and "less busy" than average conditions were significant for all three dimensions (quantity, speed, and meaning), the effect size of the quantity dimension ($\omega^2 = .71$) was more than two times and three times bigger than the effect sizes of the other two dimensions ($\omega_{speed}^2 = .31$ and $\omega_{meaning}^2 = .24$), suggesting that quantity of work is the dimension generating the biggest effect and discriminating the most when people think about differences in busyness.

In sum, we identify and test three main dimensions of busyness: quantity, speed, and meaning. While speed and meaning may certainly be relevant components of busyness, consistent with our definition and with these results, we expect quantity of work to be the main driver of busyness leading to perceptions of higher status.

Work versus Leisure

Ancient philosophers have often portrayed paid work as the degeneration and enslavement of the human existence. The free man in ancient Greece and Rome had only contempt for work while slaves performed tasks of labor. In Cicero's words (44 BC/1913): "A citizen who gives his labor for money degrades himself to the rank of slaves." This insight continued in the thoughts of more modern thinkers. In his theory of the leisure class, Veblen (1899/2007) defined leisure as the nonproductive consumption of time and proposed that "conspicuous abstention from labor [. . .] becomes the conventional mark of superior pecuniary achievement" (30). Consistent with his view, economic theory suggests that beyond a certain wage level, more income will cause workers to supply less labor and work less (the "income effect"). Accordingly, studies of leisure and labor patterns argue that in the 19th century one could predict how poor somebody was by how long he worked (Economist 2014; Voth 2001). Furthermore, the economist John Maynard Keynes predicted a 15-hour work week by 2030 as society becomes more affluent, and more time to enjoy "the hour and the day virtuously and well" (Schulte 2014). Research on happiness similarly shows that the desire to earn more income is driven by a belief that it will allow for less work and more leisure time (Kahneman et al. 2006). Moreover, some empirical evidence demonstrates that greater income leads to supplying less work: cab-drivers quit working once they reach their daily income target (Camerer et al. 1997), lottery winners work less and consume more leisure after receiving their prize (Imbens, Rubin, and Sacerdote 2001), and the ultra-rich spend the lion's share of their yearly expenditures on vacations and leisure travels (Frank 2012). Thus, based on these premises, one may infer that those with time for leisure may be of higher wealth and social status, and that those who work more may be less well regarded.

However, it is also very plausible that those devoting more time to work, and less time to leisure, may be viewed as having more status. Beyond an income effect, economists also propose an opposing "substitution effect," where higher wages increase the supply of labor because the opportunity cost of consuming leisure becomes higher. Consistent with this view, work hours have increased steadily among highly educated and highly paid workers and have remained flat for less skilled employees (Kuhn and Lozano 2008), and a common increase in leisure time has been driven by less educated people working less than before (Aguiar and Hurst 2006).

Busy Individuals as a Scarce Resource

Beyond attributions that may be made grounded on the income or substitution effects, we propose that busyness has become a status symbol through a mechanism of possessing desired human capital characteristics and being perceived as in demand and scarce. Contrary to the prediction that observers attribute higher status and wealth to individuals who conduct idle, though enjoyable, lives

(Veblen 1899/2007), we propose that long hours of work and lack of leisure time have now become a very powerful status symbol. The shift of status attribution based on time expenditure may be linked to the development of knowledge-intensive economies, characterized by structured employment markets and demand for human capital. In advanced economies, the market for human resources is typically highly specialized both on the supply side, with individuals investing in their human capital (Nakamura 2000; Wasik 2013), and on the demand side, with a large body of companies, institutions, and head hunters competing to hire the best talent. Those possessing the human capital characteristics that employers or clients value (e.g., competence and ambition) are expected to be in high demand and short supply on the job market. According to research conducted at the Federal Reserve Bank, in the "new economy" such human capital characteristics are increasingly viewed as the scarcest economic resource (Nakamura 2000). Although working hard in economic systems that were mostly based on less-skilled agriculture and manufacturing may have been perceived as virtuous, it may not have implied an individual was in high demand. In contrast, we propose that in advanced economies, long hours of work and busyness may operate as a signal that one possesses desirable human capital capabilities and is therefore in high demand and scarce in the job market, leading to elevated status attributions.

Scarcity and Status

In the domain of luxury goods, scarcity is a central attribute to maintaining product value (Lynn 1991). Luxury researchers categorize various types of scarcity that marketers can take advantage of, including natural scarcity (diamonds), techno-scarcity (new technologies), and limited-edition scarcity, which can all be used to demand higher market prices (Catry 2003) Research has further documented a "scarce is good" heuristic suggesting that consumers learn based on their buying experiences that scarce objects tend to be more valuable than nonscarce objects (Cialdini 1993). The possession of scarce products has also been associated with feelings of status. Researchers found that consumers desired a scarce limited-edition product when they felt powerless in an attempt to regain feelings of status (Rucker and Galinsky 2008). Just as items that are scarce may be afforded more status and value, so might a person who is scarce. We surmise that the overall status benefits that busy people enjoy over nonbusy people may stem from the perception that they possess desirable human capital characteristics that make them scarce and in demand on the job market. A busy individual is scarce like a rare gemstone and thus perceived to have high status.

Our main outcome measure is inferences in terms of status. Status represents the respect one possesses in the eyes of others (Magee and Galinsky 2008). In line with previous research on status attribution, we consider status in terms of both "social status" and "financial resources" (Bourdieu 1984; Scott, Mende, and Bolton 2013; Veblen 1899/2007). A large stream of research has found that individuals display their status by publicly consuming luxury goods (Berger and Ward 2010; Fuchs et al. 2013; Han, Nunes, and Dreze 2010; Mandel, Petrova, and Cialdini 2006; Wang and Griskevicius 2014; Ward and Dahl 2014). In addition, recent research has uncovered the role of more subtle signals of status, such as larger food and drink packages, smaller logos, and nonconforming behaviors (Bellezza, Gino, and Keinan 2014; Berger and Ward 2010; Dubois, Rucker, and Galinsky 2012; Han et al. 2010). In this research, we propose another novel way to communicate status: through the conspicuous displays of one's busyness and lack of leisure time.

In sum, we argue that long hours of work and lack of leisure time impact the inferences observers make about the target individual's characteristics; in particular, observers infer that the busy individual possesses desirable human capital characteristics, such as competence and ambition. In turn, these valuable characteristics affect perceived scarcity. Individuals possessing high human capital are perceived as a "scarce resource," "in demand," and sought after in the job market. We therefore predict a two-step mediation process whereby long hours of work and lack of leisure time lead to positive attributions of human capital characteristics (competence and ambition), which impact perceived scarcity and ultimately affect inferences of status.

> **H1:** Busyness at work and lack of leisure time can lead to inferences of higher perceived status as compared to less busyness at work and abundance of leisure time.

> **H2:** Positive inferences of status in response to busyness and lack of leisure will be mediated by perceptions that a busy person possesses desired human capital characteristics (competence, ambition) and, as a consequence, is scarce and in demand.

Perceived Social Mobility

We then explore the role of values and culture as an important boundary condition for the positive associations based on busyness. Specifically, we propose that status inferences linked to busyness and lack of leisure time will be highly influenced by perceived social mobility, which suggests that hard work may bring success and social affirmation (Alesina and La Ferrara 2005; Bjørnskov et al. 2013; Corneo and Grüner 2002). Social mobility is fundamental in American culture and is reflected in the ethos of the American Dream (Adams 1931), which proposes that regardless of social class, one has the opportunity for social

affirmation based on hard work. Indeed, one who believes in a socially mobile society may view busyness at work as an effective vehicle for achieving greater status. We operationalize beliefs in social mobility in two distinct ways. First, we measure beliefs in social mobility using the perceived social mobility scale (Bjørnskov et al. 2013), measuring the degree to which individuals view society as mobile and believe that work leads to social affirmation (e.g., "Hard work brings success in the long run," "People have a chance to escape poverty"). Accordingly, we expect that status inferences toward a busy individual will be higher for individuals who strongly believe in social mobility.

Secondly, we explore varying beliefs in social mobility comparing differences among cultures (North America vs. Europe). Societies vary on whether the concept of social status can be earned through success and accomplishments (achieved status), or is passed down through family background and inherited wealth (ascribed status; Foladare 1969). While status perceptions are usually a function of both, in the United States earned status has a larger influence on overall status perceptions (Linton 1936). Americans believe that they live in a mobile society, where individual effort can move people up and down the status ladder, while Europeans believe that they live in less mobile societies, where people are "stuck" in their native social strata (Alesina, Di Tella, and MacCulloch 2004; Alesina and La Ferrara 2005). Based on these varying beliefs in social mobility, Americans view work as a priority and idealize busyness and long hours of work, whereas Europeans feel their leisure time is as important as, or even more important than, work time (Richards 1998, 1999). For example, Brislin and Kim (2003) show that in Western Europe, leisure and vacations are greatly valued and constitute the most significant events in many people's lives. Another study on time use in France versus the United States (Krueger et al. 2008) found that on average the French take 21 more vacation days a year than Americans. In a small pilot test, we also confirmed that Americans have stronger beliefs in social mobility than Italians.[1]

Popular culture also reflects and amplifies these cultural values; a recent Super Bowl commercial by Cadillac (quoted at the beginning of this article) features a wealthy businessman who glorifies the busy working American lifestyle, and lampoons Europeans for enjoying long vacations. A *New York Times* article discussing Europe's love of leisure features European businessmen and economists who argue that "the main difference with the US is that we spend more time enjoying life" and "leisure is a normal good, and as you become richer, economic theory says that you consume more of it" (Bennhold 2004). Because North Americans and Europeans have different beliefs in social mobility through work (Alesina et al. 2004), and relatedly, a different emphasis on earned or ascribed status, we surmise that these cultural differences could lead not only to attenuation, but even a reversal of the busyness effect. Accordingly, we predict that social mobility, both as an individual difference and based on culture (American vs. Italian), will moderate the busyness effect.

> **H3:** Positive inferences of status in response to busyness and lack of leisure time will be moderated by observers' perceived social mobility; when perceived social mobility is high, the effect of busyness on status inferences is positive, when perceived social mobility is low, the effect of busyness on status inferences is either attenuated or negative.

In conclusion, we propose that people will regard busy individuals who do not spend time leisurely to be higher in status than those who work less and conduct a leisurely lifestyle. In the context of a mobile society where status can be earned, busyness may be seen as an effective path to climb the social ladder. Furthermore, like a rare gemstone, a busy individual is seen as in high demand and scarce. Across studies, we manipulate busyness in a variety of ways, including explicit ways to display one's lack of leisure (e.g., use of social media posts), as well as more implicit ways (e.g., descriptions, use of timesaving products and services). In every study, results hold when we control for respondents' gender, age, occupation status, and income. In the general discussion, we conclude with two follow-up studies testing additional boundary conditions (agency and economic class) and a discussion of the theoretical and managerial implications, providing tangible prescriptions for how marketers can emphasize busyness and promote timesaving products for status-signaling purposes.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND FINDINGS

Pilot Study: Humblebragging on Social Media

To provide empirical evidence of the conspicuous display of busyness and lack of leisure time, we first collect field data and examine the content of more than 1,000 tweets posted by celebrities, a demographic of status-conscious individuals (Brim 2009). "Humblebragging" is the act of showing off about something through an ostensibly self-deprecating statement. For example, the cover of the book *Humblebrag: The Art of False Modesty* (Wittels 2012) mentions that the author "would love some free time but has been too busy writing for *Parks and Recreation*, *Eastbound & Down*, and a bunch of other stuff #vacationplease." Before publishing the *Humblebrag* book, the author asked people to email him leads on any humblebrags available online, which he then posted on the book's Twitter page (https://twitter.com/Humblebrag).

1 Thirty Italians (Qualtrics) reported significantly lower levels of perceived social mobility (Bjørnskov et al. 2013, $\alpha = .84$) than 30 Americans (Mechanical Turk) ($M_{ita} = 3.98$ vs. $M_{usa} = 4.91$, $F(1, 59) = 6.55$, $p = .013$).

We scraped from the web these self-deprecating statements, the majority of which were by famous people, and coded the most recent 1,100 of them with the help of three research assistants. The goal of this study was to examine the frequency of complaints about busyness and lack of leisure on social media, as compared to other types of self-deprecating statements, such as humblebragging about the downsides of fame and attractiveness. We found that about 12% of the coded tweets related to complaints about hard work and lack of time (e.g., Tlaloc Rivas, stage director: "Opened a show last Friday. Begin rehearsals for another next Tuesday. In-between that, meetings in DC. I HAVE NO LIFE!"; Austin Pettis, American football receiver: "Had a lot going on these past few weeks and even more these next two… this is wayyyy to much to handle!"; Arthur Kade, actor and model: "I need 2 write a blog with an update on everything!! I have been so ridic busy w meetings and calls that I have neglected my fans"; Josh Sigurdson, journalist and songwriter: "Hi, I'm 16 and I'm publishing 3 books and an album this year. Do you have any advice on how to handle it best?"). The most recurring humblebrags not related to time were about celebrity status (e.g., Lindsay Lohan, actress and model: "Oh my god, I'm so embarrassed, paparazzi just blinded me with flashes again, as I was walking into dinner. They pushed me and I tripped!"; Olivia Wilde, actress: "Watching my brother graduate from Andover today. So proud, it is silly. More important than MTV awards but thank you to all who voted for me!"). Other examples and more details on the most recurring categories are in the web appendix.

In sum, this pilot study confirms that conspicuously displaying one's busyness through social media is a practice pursued to some extent by famous, status-conscious people, and has been recognized as a kind of bragging by the *Humblebrag* community. Although these results are observational, they offer initial evidence that people use social media to publicly display how much they work and complain about lack of leisure time in an attempt to exhibit their high status. In the following studies, we focus on status inferences made by others in response to signals of busyness at work and lack of leisure time.

Study 1: Humblebragging about Busyness through Social Media

In study 1, the objective is to demonstrate an effect of busyness on inferences of status, and to establish the mediating process of human capital and scarcity. Over the last decade, the exponential growth of social networks and blogs has multiplied the chances consumers have to portray a virtual image of themselves in front of others and opened up new ways to display one's use of time to large audiences. Through social media, consumers can share their lives and interests (e.g., Facebook, Snapchat), and their professional opinions and achievements (e.g., Twitter, LinkedIn), among others things. Inspired by these trends and by the *Humblebrag* pilot study, we consider status inferences made about people posting Facebook updates (study 1A) or writing letters (study 1B) regarding their level of busyness at work. In addition, we test for mediational evidence of our proposed multiple-step mechanism affecting status attributions via perceived human capital characteristics and scarcity of the busy individual.

Method (Study 1A). We decided in advance to recruit 300 participants (about 150 per condition). We recruited 307 respondents for a paid online survey through Amazon Mechanical Turk (48% female; $M_{age} = 37$; American; 59% employed full-time, 25% employed part-time, 16% unemployed; average monthly gross income $2,000–2,999). We randomly assigned participants to one of two conditions: busy Facebook posts or leisurely Facebook posts. Participants read Facebook status updates of a hypothetical friend of theirs. To make sure there were no differences of the effect of conspicuous busyness across genders, we varied whether the Facebook updates were posted by a man (Sam Fisher) or by a woman (Sally Fisher). Thus the sample was equally split between participants who read about the female poster and participants who read about the male poster. As expected, there were no significant differences for gender in the patterns of results; thus, the data were collapsed and analyzed jointly. For ease of exposition, we report the questions and results for the rest of the study in terms of the female poster. All participants were asked to imagine they were friends on Facebook with Sally Fisher and to read three of Sally's recent posts. The status updates appeared in chronological order on a simulated Facebook screen page (see the web appendix for a synoptic representation of the visual stimuli). In the busy-Facebook-posts condition, participants read the following posts: (1) Thursday 2pm, "Oh I have been working non-stop all week!"; (2) Friday noon, "Quick 10 minute lunch"; and (3) Friday 5pm, "Still at work!" In the leisurely-Facebook-posts condition, participants read the following posts: (1) Thursday 2pm, "I haven't worked much this week, had lots of free time!"; (2) Friday noon, "Enjoying a long lunch break"; and (3) Friday 5pm, "Done with work!"

Subsequently, we measured perceived status using three distinct measures. A primary measure of status was developed based on previous status definitions (Bourdieu 1984; Scott et al. 2013; Veblen 1899/2007) to include both social status and financial resources (wealth and income). Specifically, participants answered the following three questions: (1) On a scale from 1 to 7, how would you rank the social status of the individual described? (1 = Low social status, 7 = High social status); (2) Do you think she is financially wealthy? (1 = Not wealthy, 7 = Extremely wealthy); and (3) This person has a high income level (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree). Thus, the three items (social status, financial wealth, income) were

TABLE 1

STUDY 1A: MEASUREMENT OF DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY

	Busyness level *independent variable*	**Human capital** *mediator 1*	**Scarcity** *mediator 2*	**Status** *dependent variable*
Busyness level *independent variable*	0.819	(0.703–.806)	(0.521–0.682)	(0.150–0.379)
Human capital *mediator 1*	0.573	0.817	(0.723–0.824)	(0.370–0.572)
Scarcity *mediator 2*	0.367	0.607	0.845	(0.468–0.668)
Status *dependent variable*	0.071	0.225	0.326	0.733

NOTE.—Matrix shows AVE (diagonal), squared correlation (below the diagonal), and confidence intervals (above diagonal).

collapsed into a single measure of overall status ($\alpha = .82$). Throughout all the studies in this article, this will be the primary measure of perceived status. In addition, we included two other measures of status established in the literature to confirm the construct validity of our primary measure. First, we adapted the widely used MacArthur scale of subjective socioeconomic status (Adler et al. 2000; Anderson et al. 2012) to assess the status of a third party. The measure consists of a drawing of a ladder with 10 rungs representing where people stand in society in terms of money, status, and influence (10 representing people at the top of society; 1 representing people at the bottom of society). Participants were instructed to pick the rung where they would place Sally. Second, following Dubois et al. (2012), participants were asked to judge Sally on two dimensions wedded to status (this person has high status, is respected; $\alpha = .68$) and three dimensions divorced from status (this person is honest, nice, attractive). The order of the five dimensions was randomized. Importantly, the three dimensions divorced from status allowed us to detect potential demand effect.

Participants then assessed Sally's human capital characteristics, the first mediator. Because the attributes of competence and ambition have been strongly associated with human capital (Frank and Bernanke 2007), we chose three measures that reflected these characteristics to measure human capital. Specifically, participants rated their agreement (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree) with the following statements presented in randomized order: (1) Sally is competent; (2) Sally is ambitious; and (3) Sally wants to move up in the world. We averaged the three items ($\alpha = .88$) and used the resulting measure as first mediator. Next, participants answered three questions assessing whether Sally was perceived to be in demand and scarce on the job market, the second mediator. More specifically, participants were asked: (1) To what extent is Sally in demand? (1 = In very low demand, 7 = In very high demand); (2) Do you perceive Sally as a "scarce resource"? (1 = Definitely no, 7 = Definitely yes); and (3) Do you imagine Sally is sought after in the job market? (1 = Not sought after at all, 7 = Very much sought after). We averaged the three items ($\alpha = .91$) and used the resulting measure as the second mediator.

Lastly, three manipulation checks ($\alpha = .89$) measured Sally's level of busyness at work and lack of leisure time: (1) Sally spends many hours at work (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree); (2) Sally spends many hours doing hobbies and/or leisure activities (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree; reverse coded); and (3) How busy is Sally? (1 = Not busy at all, 7 = Extremely busy).

Preliminary Analyses (Study 1A). We used two approaches to assess the discriminant validity of the key constructs (i.e., perceived busyness level, human capital characteristics, scarcity, and status). First, we compared the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each of our constructs with the squared correlation between constructs pairs (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Table 1 shows that the AVE (diagonal data) exceeds the squared correlations for all measures (below the diagonal data). Second, none of the confidence intervals at plus or minus two standard errors around the correlation between the factors (table 1; above the diagonal data) included 1.0 (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). Thus, these two tests provide evidence for the discriminant validity of our measures. The same analyses performed on the other two status measures yield similar results.

Results (Study 1A). The analysis of the manipulation check confirmed that Sally was perceived as working longer hours in the busy ($M = 5.53$, SD = 1.03) than in the leisurely posts condition ($M = 2.74$, SD = .95, $F(1, 305) = 612.56$, $p < .001$). Consistent with hypothesis 1, all three status measures were significantly higher in the busy-Facebook-posts condition. Compared to participants in the leisurely-Facebook-posts condition, participants in the busy-Facebook-posts condition perceived Sally as higher in social status ($M = 3.7$, SD = 1.02 vs. $M = 3.4$, SD = 1.23, $F(1, 305) = 5.51$, $p = .019$)[2]; they placed her on a higher rung on the socioeconomic status ladder ($M = 5.34$, SD = 1.42 vs. $M = 4.79$, SD = 1.55, $F(1, 305) = 10.28$, $p = .001$); and they saw her as higher in status and respect ($M = 4.01$, SD = 1.04 vs. $M = 3.76$, SD = 1.07, $F(1, 305) = 4.17$, $p = .042$). Indeed, the three measures of status are

2 This result replicated ($M_{busy} = 3.87$ vs. $M_{nonbusy} = 3.21$, $F(1, 242) = 20.69$, $p < .001$) with another sample of 244 participants (study 1A replication, web appendix).

highly convergent and tap into one construct. All the items across measures are highly correlated, and a principal component analysis revealed one single factor accounting for 66% of the variance (see the results table in the web appendix).

As expected, participants found Sally in the busy-Facebook-posts condition to possess higher human capital characteristics ($M = 4.88$, SD = 1.02 vs. $M = 3.24$, SD = 1.11, $F(1, 304) = 182.01$, $p < .001$) and to be more scarce and in demand ($M = 3.99$, SD = 1.16 vs. $M = 2.68$, SD = 1.17, $F(1, 304) = 95.43$, $p < .001$) than in the leisurely-Facebook-posts condition.

Importantly, there was no difference between conditions on the nonstatus dimensions (i.e., perceptions of honesty, niceness, and attractiveness; $M = 4.44$, SD = .75 vs. $M = 4.35$, SD = .83, $F(1, 305) = .83$, NS). This result contributes to ruling out concerns of demand effects.

Mediation Analyses (Study 1A). We estimated multiple-step mediation using model 6 in PROCESS (Hayes 2013). Figure and estimated path coefficients and results on all indirect effects are reported in the web appendix. As predicted, we found a significant indirect effect (.55; 95% CI from .37 to .75) for the mediation path through human capital and scarcity. To estimate the necessity of a more complex multiple-step mediation model, we also computed the R^2 change from a simpler model including only the first mediator in the regression. The analysis revealed a significant improvement in the amount of variance explained when both mediators were included (from $R^2 = .27$ to $R^2 = .38$, $F_{\text{change}}(1, 302) = 51.91$, $p < .001$). As a further check, we also ran an analysis with the mediators in reverse order (scarcity first and human capital second). The indirect effect was also significant (.16; 95% CI from .04 to .3); however, its effect size (standardized indirect effect = .07) was more than three times smaller than our hypothesized path model (standardized indirect effect = .25).

Finally, the hypothesized multiple-step mediation analysis on the other two measures of status revealed the predicted pattern of results. For the socioeconomic status ladder, the indirect effect through human capital and scarcity was significant (.51; 95% CI from .27 to .78). Likewise, for ratings of status and respect, the indirect effect through human capital and scarcity was also significant (.32; 95% CI from .18 to .49).

Method (Study 1B). We decided in advance to recruit at least 100 respondents (about 50 per condition) for a lab study at Georgetown. We recruited 112 respondents (47% female; $M_{\text{age}} = 20$) and randomly assigned them to one of two conditions: busy letter or leisurely letter. Participants read the following letter from an imaginary friend (text in parentheses refers to the busy-letter condition; text in brackets refers to the leisurely-letter condition):

> Hi John,
>
> I got your birthday card today, it made me laugh. Thank you for remembering my birthday. I can't believe we are already 40, time flies. (My life is crazy busy as usual. You probably remember how much I like watching my favorite sport teams. Unfortunately, I have an extremely busy work schedule which does not allow me to spend a lot of time watching TV and doing other hobbies.) [My life is relaxed as usual. You probably remember how much I like watching my favorite sport teams. Luckily, I don't have a busy work schedule which allows me to spend a lot of time watching TV and doing other hobbies.] Pam and my parents got me a large screen TV for my birthday. (So far I haven't had a chance to watch it.) [So far I have been watching ESPN every day.] You would probably be happy to hear I finally quit smoking, we'll see how it goes. You always told me I should quit. Pam and the kids are sending their love. I hope we can all get together soon.
>
> Daniel

Given the high convergence of the three status measures in study 1A, in this and the next studies we will focus on the three-item status measure consisting of social status, wealth, and income. Using the same measures as in study 1A, we asked participants to rate Daniel on perceived status ($\alpha = .9$), human capital ($\alpha = .83$), scarcity ($\alpha = .9$), and busyness ($\alpha = .93$).

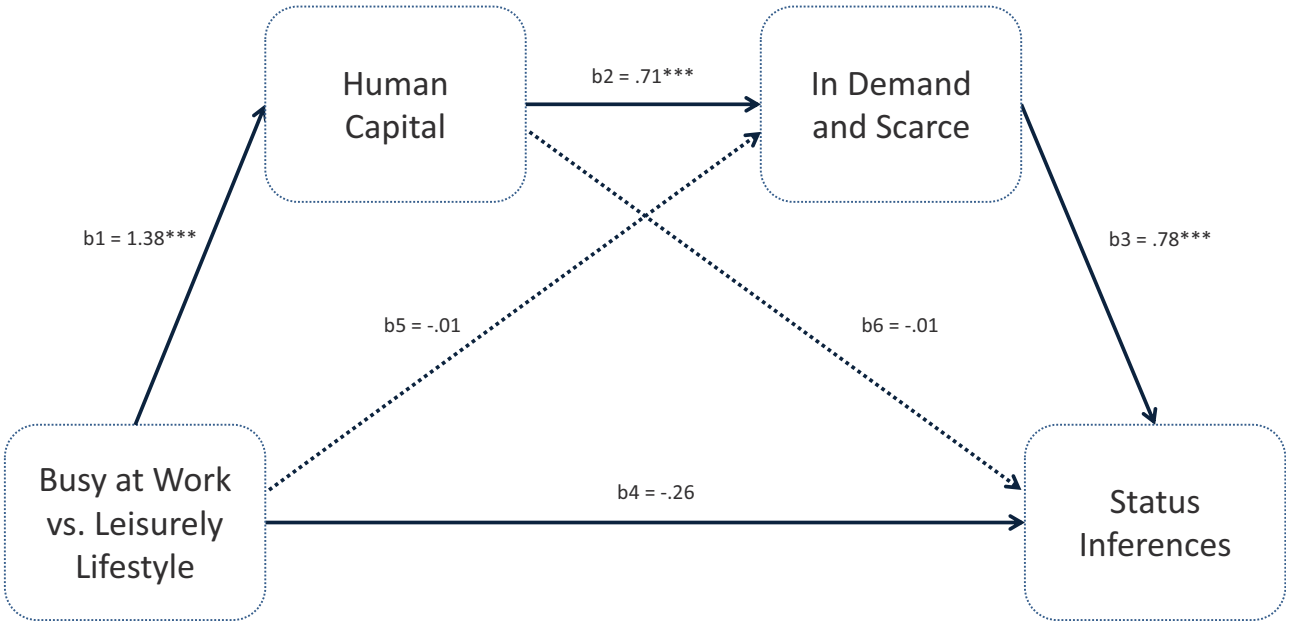
Preliminary Analyses (Study 1B). The same discriminant validity tests conducted in study 1A confirmed the distinctiveness of our main constructs (see the results table in the web appendix).

Results (Study 1B). The analysis of the manipulation check confirmed that Daniel was perceived as more busy in the busy-letter ($M = 5.44$, SD = 1.07) than in the leisurely-letter condition ($M = 2.58$, SD = 1.07, $F(1, 110) = 200.17$, $p < .001$). Compared to participants in the leisurely-letter condition, participants in the busy-letter condition perceived Daniel as higher in social status, financial wealth, and income ($M = 3.99$, SD = 1.08 vs. $M = 3.52$, SD = .99, $F(1, 110) = 5.89$, $p = .017$). Analyzing the two mediators confirmed that participants found Daniel in the busy-letter condition to have higher human capital characteristics ($M = 4.42$, SD = .99 vs. $M = 3.04$, SD = .92, $F(1, 110) = 57.43$, $p < .001$) and to be more scarce and in demand ($M = 3.8$, SD = .96 vs. $M = 2.83$, SD = .96, $F(1, 110) = 28.15$, $p < .001$) than in the leisurely-letter condition.

Mediation Analyses (Study 1B). As in study 1A, we performed a multiple-step mediation analysis (Hayes 2013). As expected, we found a significant indirect effect (.76; 95% CI from .52 to 1.11) for the mediation path through human capital and scarcity. See figure 1 for estimated path coefficients and results on all indirect effects.

FIGURE 1

STUDY 1B RESULTS: MEDIATION VIA HUMAN CAPITAL AND SCARCITY ON PERCEIVED STATUS



NOTE.—Multiple-step mediation analysis with 5,000 bootstrap samples (model 6 in PROCESS; Hayes 2013). Coefficients significantly different from zero are indicated by asterisks (*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$).
The total indirect effect was significant (.74; 95% CI from .41 to 1.09).
The indirect effect through human capital and scarcity (the effect hypothesized in hypothesis 2) was significant (.76; 95% CI from .52 to 1.11).
The indirect effect through human capital was not significant (–.02; 95% CI from –.34 to .3).
The indirect effect through scarcity was not significant (–.01; 95% CI from –.24 to .26).

We also ran the same analysis with the mediators in reverse order (scarcity first and human capital second). The indirect effect was not significant when the mediators were reversed (–.01; 95% CI from –.18 to .15).

Discussion. The results of studies 1A and 1B demonstrate that individuals posting Facebook updates or writing letters about their overworked lifestyle are perceived as higher in status than individuals whose updates reveal more leisurely lifestyles. Importantly, consistent with hypothesis 2, these studies show that long hours of work and lack of leisure time lead to higher inferences in terms of human capital characteristics of the busy individual, which in turn enhance the extent to which this individual is perceived as scarce and in demand, ultimately leading to positive status attributions. Finally, these results demonstrate the discriminant validity of our critical constructs (i.e., perceived busyness level, human capital, scarcity, and status).

To gain further insight into the specific dimensions of busyness driving the positive status attributions, the following set of studies examines the speed at which work is performed (study 2A) and the level of meaning tied to the working activity (study 2B). Moreover, these studies consider the moderating role of perceived social mobility within American respondents.

Study 2: The Dimensions of Busyness and the Moderating Role of Perceived Social Mobility

The objective of this study is to dissect the dimensions of busyness at work that may potentially lead to positive inferences of status in the eyes of others. Across two parallel experimental designs, we test and compare (between-subjects) 10 different lifestyles, reflecting three dimensions of time consumption: quantity (the amount of working hours and leisure time), speed (pace at which work is performed), and meaning (level of enjoyment and meaning tied to work). Because both speed and meaning varied with manipulations of busyness in the pilot test, in study 2 our aim is to isolate the effects of quantity (hours of work vs. leisure), while accounting for these additional dimensions of busyness. Specifically, we will look at quantity and speed in study 2A, and we will examine quantity and meaning in study 2B. In the case of speed, the quantity dimension of the busyness effect might be attenuated if

people infer the busy individual is inefficient and operates at a slower pace. In the case of meaning, one might infer that a person who works many hours also has access to an enjoyable and meaningful job; thus, controlling for meaning could attenuate the positive signals derived from busyness and lack of leisure. Moreover, in these studies we test the moderating role of perceived social mobility (Bjørnskov et al. 2013). Though we did not find an effect of respondents' employment status in any of the follow-up analyses in the previous studies, to ensure that the documented positive inferences in terms of status are not driven by participants' own desire to work and potential employment aspirations, in this study we recruit only people working full-time.

Participants (Studies 2A and 2B). We recruited American respondents for paid online surveys through Qualtrics (study 2A) and Amazon Mechanical Turk (study 2B). We decided in advance to recruit about 300 people working full-time (about 150 in each of the long-working-hours-and-no-leisure and short-working-hours-and-leisure conditions) per study, leading to a sample of 300 participants (57% female; $M_{age} = 45$; average monthly gross income $3,000–3,999) in study 2A and 302 participants (42% female; $M_{age} = 35$; average monthly gross income $2,000–2,999) in study 2B.

Method (Study 2A). We randomly assigned participants to one of six conditions in a 2 (long working hours and no leisure vs. short working hours and leisure) × 3 (control vs. fast speed vs. slow speed) between-subjects design. All participants read a description of an individual named Jim. First, we manipulated quantity of work, the first factor. Participants in the long-working-hours-and-no-leisure condition read: "Jim is 35 years old, he usually works 10 hours a day during the week, and works on weekends as well." Participants in the short-working-hours-and-leisure condition read: "Jim is 35 years old, he usually works less than 7 hours a day during the week, and does not work on weekends." We then manipulated the second factor, speed, throughout three conditions: fast speed, slow speed, and a control condition omitting this information. Specifically, participants in the fast-speed condition read: "Jim is the kind of person who likes to do things fast and multitask; he always appears hurried and rushed." In contrast, participants in the slow-speed condition read: "Jim is the kind of person who likes to do things slowly, one at a time; he never appears hurried and rushed."

As in study 1, participants were then asked to rate Jim on perceived status ($\alpha = .83$), perceived human capital characteristics ($\alpha = .86$), scarcity on the job market ($\alpha = .91$), and busyness ($\alpha = .82$). Finally, participants rated their agreement with three statements used in prior research (Bjørnskov et al. 2013) to measure perceived social mobility: (1) Hard work brings success in the long run; (2) People are poor due to laziness, not injustice; and (3) People have a chance to escape poverty (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree).

Preliminary Analyses (Study 2A). The same discriminant validity tests conducted in previous studies confirmed the distinctiveness of our main constructs (see the table in the web appendix).

Manipulation Check (Study 2A). We conducted a 2 (long working hours and no leisure vs. short working hours and leisure) × 3 (control vs. fast speed vs. slow speed) ANOVA using ratings of busyness as the dependent variable. The analysis revealed a significant main effect for long hours of work and lack of leisure ($F(1, 294) = 474.12$, $p < .001$), a significant main effect for speed ($F(2, 294) = 5.24$, $p = .006$), and a nonsignificant interaction ($F(2, 294) = 2.78$, NS). Given the statistical significance of both treatment variables, we proceeded with an analysis of the effect sizes to compare the relative impact of each factor (Perdue and Summers 1986). The effect size of quantity ($\omega^2 = .6$) was about 56 times larger than the effect size of speed ($\omega^2 = .01$), suggesting that the amount of hours worked generated a stronger main effect than the speed dimension on inferences of busyness at work and lack of leisure time, consistent with the results from the pilot study in the introduction.

Results (Study 2A). We conducted the same 2 × 3 ANOVA using perceived status as the dependent variable. The analysis revealed a significant main effect for long hours of work and lack of leisure ($F(1, 294) = 16.43$, $p < .001$), a nonsignificant main effect for speed ($F(2, 294) = 1.39$, NS), and a nonsignificant interaction ($F(2, 294) = .24$, NS). Replicating previous results, participants attributed higher status to Jim in the long-working-hours-and-no-leisure condition ($M = 4.07$, SD = 1.13) than in the short-working-hours-and-leisure condition ($M = 3.51$, SD = 1.24, $F(1, 298) = 16.47$, $p < .001$). These results suggest that busyness exerts a significant influence on inferences of status, even when the person in question may be perceived to be somewhat slow. That is, a person who spends many hours working is found to have more status than a person who spends their time more leisurely, regardless of the speed at which they work.

Moderation (Study 2A). Since there was no interaction between the manipulations of quantity and speed of work, we collapsed the three speed-of-work conditions and concentrated on the analysis of the focal independent variable of quantity of work (i.e., the long-working-hours-and no-leisure vs. short-working-hours-and-leisure conditions) when testing the moderating role of perceived social mobility ($\alpha = .59$).[3] We examined responses using a moderated regression analysis with status as the dependent

3 Owing to the low reliability of the perceived social mobility scale in this study, we also performed all analyses with the three items separately. We find significant interactions when each moderating item is considered separately.

variable and the following independent variables: a variable for quantity (coded as 1 for long working hours and no leisure, and –1 for short working hours and leisure), the perceived social mobility scale (z-scores), and their interaction. As expected, the analysis revealed a significant main effect of quantity of work ($b = .28$, SE $= .07$, $t(296) = 4.09$, $p < .001$), a significant main effect of perceived social mobility ($b = .13$, SE $= .07$, $t(296) = 1.95$, $p = .052$), and a significant interaction ($b = .19$, SE $= .07$, $t(296) = 2.72$, $p = .007$), depicted in figure 2 (A). Next, we applied the Johnson-Neyman procedure to identify regions of significance of the effect of busyness across different levels of social mobility beliefs (Spiller et al. 2013). We find a significant effect of busyness on status attributions at and above 4.42 on the social mobility scale (at 4.42 on the seven-point scale: $b = .16$, SE $= .08$, $t(296) = 1.97$, $p = .05$). Below the level of 4.42 on social mobility there are no differences in status inferences based on busyness. Thus, long hours of work and lack of leisure time led to higher inferences of status when respondents scored high in perceived social mobility (i.e., above the Johnson-Neyman point), consistent with hypothesis 3. In contrast, those respondents with lower levels of perceived social mobility did not see busyness as an effective status signal, presumably because they do not believe that status can be earned through work efforts.

Mediation Analysis (Study 2A). We performed a multiple-step mediation analysis (Hayes 2013) with status as the dependent variable. Figure and estimated path coefficients and results on all indirect effects are reported in the web appendix. As predicted, we find a significant indirect effect (.41; 95% CI from .24 to .62) for the mediation path through human capital and scarcity. We also ran the analysis with the mediators in reverse order (scarcity first and human capital second). The indirect effect was significant (.17; 95% CI from .05 to .31); however, its effect size (standardized indirect effect = .07) was more than two times smaller than our theorized model (standardized indirect effect = .17).

Method (Study 2B). We randomly assigned participants to one of six conditions in a 2 (long working hours and no leisure vs. short working hours and leisure) × 3 (control vs. high meaning vs. low meaning) between-subjects design. All participants read a description of an individual named Jim. The manipulation of quantity, the first factor, was identical to the one described in study 2A. Next, we manipulated the meaningfulness and enjoyment tied to work, throughout three conditions: high meaning, low meaning, and a control condition omitting this information. Specifically, participants in the high-meaning condition read: "Jim enjoys his job and finds it very meaningful." In contrast, participants in the low-meaning condition read: "Jim does not enjoy his job and does not find it particularly meaningful." Participants answered the same questions from study 2A.

Preliminary Analyses (Study 2B). The same discriminant validity tests conducted in previous studies confirmed the distinctiveness of our main constructs (see the table in the web appendix).

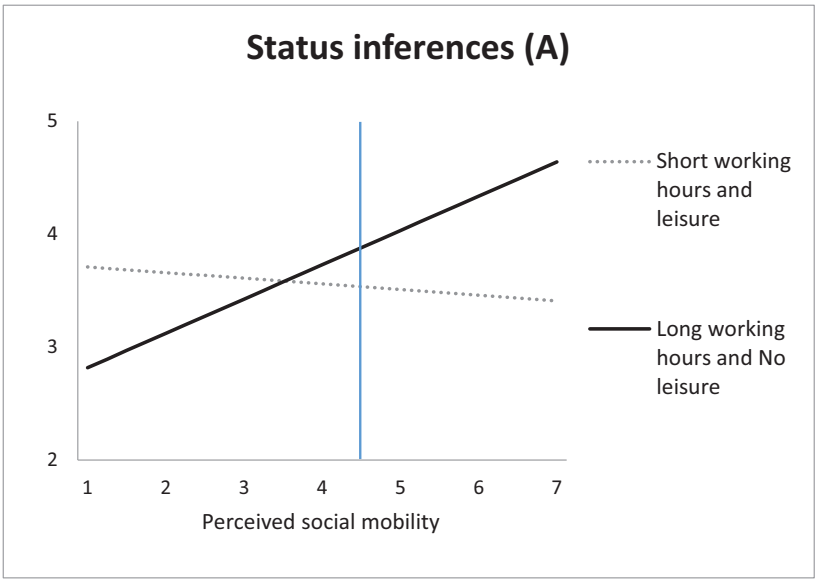
Manipulation Check (Study 2B). We conducted a 2 (long working hours and no leisure vs. short working hours and leisure) × 3 (control vs. high meaning vs. low meaning) ANOVA using ratings of busyness ($\alpha = .9$) as the dependent variable. The analysis revealed a significant main effect for long hours of work and lack of leisure ($F(1, 296) = 413.44$, $p < .001$), a nonsignificant main effect for meaning of work ($F(2, 296) = 1.43$, NS), and a nonsignificant interaction ($F(2, 296) = .42$, NS). This result suggests that the quantity dimension exerts a significant effect on inferences of busyness at work, whereas the meaning dimension does not, and that these two dimensions do not interact. While in the pilot study we found that busyness leads to inferences of having a meaningful job, these results suggest the relationship may not be bidirectional (i.e., job meaningfulness does not lead to perceptions of busyness).

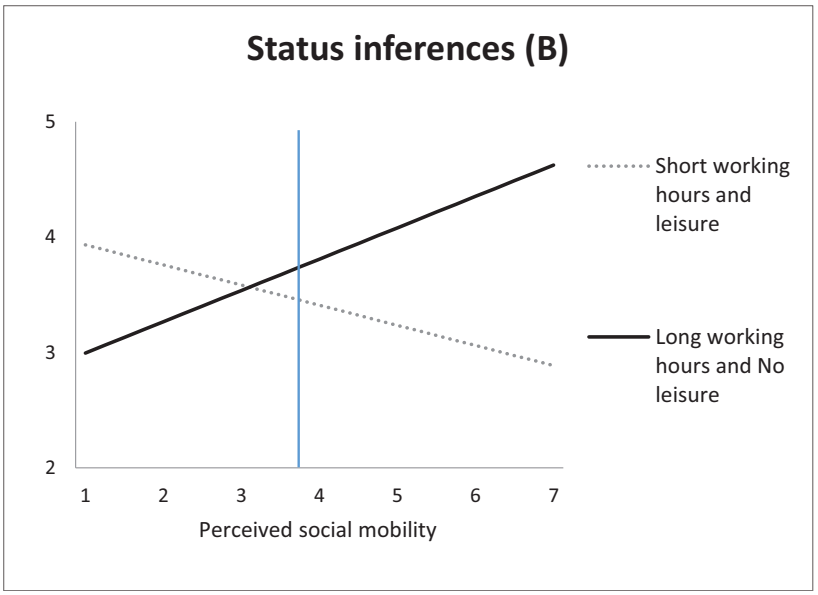
Results (Study 2B). We then conducted the same 2 × 3 ANOVA using status inferences ($\alpha = .9$) as the dependent variable. The analysis revealed a significant main effect for long hours of work and lack of leisure ($F(1, 296) = 22.23$, $p < .001$), a significant main effect for meaning ($F(2, 296) = 19.87$, $p < .001$), and a nonsignificant interaction ($F(2, 296) = 1.55$, NS). Participants granted higher status ($M = 3.92$, SD $= 1.31$) to the busy individual compared to the leisurely individual ($M = 3.29$, SD $= 1.2$, $F(1, 300) = 19.29$, $p < .001$). In addition, participants thought Jim had more status when he had a more meaningful job ($M = 4.02$, SD $= 1.26$) than when he had a less meaningful job ($M = 3.02$, SD $= 1.06$, $F(2, 299) = 33.41$, $p < .001$). The control condition was between the two values ($M = 3.78$, SD $= 1.33$) and significantly different only from the low-meaning condition ($M = 3.02$, SD $= 1.06$, $F(2, 299) = 19.47$, $p < .001$).

Moderation (Study 2B). Because there was no interaction between the manipulations of quantity and meaning, we collapsed the three meaning conditions and concentrated on the analysis of the focal independent variable of quantity of work (i.e., long working hours and no leisure vs. short working hours and leisure) to test the moderating role of perceived social mobility ($\alpha = .79$). The same moderated regression analysis conducted in study 2A revealed a significant main effect of quantity of work ($b = .32$, SE $= .07$, $t(298) = 4.58$, $p < .001$), a nonsignificant main effect of perceived social mobility ($b = .06$, SE $= .07$, $t(298) = .89$, NS), and a significant interaction ($b = .29$, SE $= .07$, $t(298) = 4.12$, $p < .001$), depicted in figure 2 (B). We

FIGURE 2

STUDY 2A (A) AND 2B (B) RESULTS: PERCEIVED STATUS AS A FUNCTION OF BUSYNESS AT WORK AND OBSERVERS' PERCEIVED SOCIAL MOBILITY





NOTE.—Blue lines fixed at Johnson-Neyman points (4.42 for 2A and 3.82 for 2B).

applied the Johnson-Neyman procedure to identify regions of significance of the effect of busyness across different levels of social mobility beliefs (Spiller et al. 2013). Consistent with hypothesis 3, we find a significant effect of social mobility at and above 3.82 on the social mobility scale (at 3.82 on the seven-point scale: $b = .16$, SE $= .08$, $t(298) = 1.97$, $p = .05$). Below the level of 3.82 on social mobility there are no differences in status inferences based on busyness. As in study 2A, long hours of work and lack of leisure predicted higher inferences of status when

respondents scored high in perceived social mobility (i.e., above the Johnson-Neyman point).

Mediation Analysis (Study 2B). Next, we performed a multiple-step mediation analysis (Hayes 2013) with status as the dependent variable. Figure and estimated path coefficients and results on all indirect effects are reported in the web appendix. As expected, we find a significant indirect effect (.79; 95% CI from .59 to 1.04) for the mediation path through human capital ($\alpha = .86$) and scarcity ($\alpha = .95$). We also ran the analysis with the mediators in reverse order (scarcity first and human capital second). The indirect effect was significant (–.08; 95% CI from –.17 to –.01); however, its effect size (standardized indirect effect = –.03) was more than 10 times smaller than our theorized model (standardized indirect effect = .31).

Discussion. Across two distinct populations of participants working full-time, this study explores three dimensions of busyness potentially leading to positive inferences of status in the eyes of others: quantity, speed, and meaning. While speed of work certainly influences perceptions of busyness (main effect of speed on the manipulation check in study 2A), and the level of meaning tied to work has an impact on inferences of status (main effect of meaning on status in study 2B), quantity of work is the only dimension systematically influencing both perceptions and exerting the strongest effect. Moreover, controlling for speed and meaning did not impact the effect of quantity. Consistent with our hypotheses, this study documents twice the moderating role of perceived social mobility on inferences of heightened status within American participants. The next study further deepens our understanding of the conditions under which long hours of work and lack of leisure operate as a signal of status by testing our propositions with an international sample of participants drawn from Italy and the United States.

Study 3: The Busyness Effect and Cross-Cultural Differences: Americans versus Italians

Study 3 explores the moderating role of culture (United States vs. Italy) where we compare the responses of Italian and American participants to an individual working long hours versus an individual who does not work at all and conducts a leisurely lifestyle. If individuals can afford to not work at all and engage in leisure, they may also be viewed as having financial resources, suggesting a stronger test of our manipulation. This operationalization of the comparison group, where someone does not work at all and also enjoys leisure, is a consistent portrayal of Veblen's conceptualization (1899/2007). In line with hypothesis 3, we predict that Americans will interpret long hours of work as a stronger signal of status than leisure time, whereas the effect will be reversed for Europeans. These predictions are consistent with the perception (not necessarily the reality) that Americans live in a mobile society, where individual effort can move people up and down the income ladder, while Europeans believe that they live in less mobile societies (Alesina et al. 2004). Relatedly, Americans value earned status more, whereas Europeans value ascribed status more (Foladare 1969).

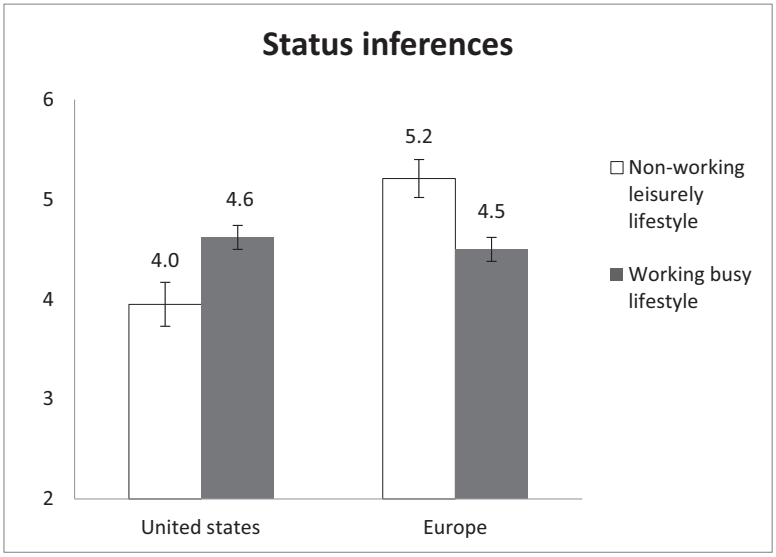
Method. We decided in advance to recruit 200 participants (about 100 in each of the working-busy-lifestyle and nonworking-leisurely-lifestyle conditions). Italian participants (98) were recruited through Qualtrics (46% female; $M_{age} = 40$; 47% employed full-time, 38% employed part-time, 15% unemployed; average monthly gross income €1,000–1,999) and US American participants (112) were recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk (48% female; $M_{age} = 38$; 62% employed full-time, 24% employed part-time, 14% unemployed; average monthly gross income $2,000–2,999). Participants responded to a paid online survey in their native language (i.e., either English or Italian) and read a short description of a 35-year-old individual named Jeff (or Giovanni for Italians). We randomly assigned participants to one of two conditions: working busy lifestyle or nonworking leisurely lifestyle. Participants in the working-busy-lifestyle condition read, "Imagine Jeff, he is 35 years old. Jeff works long hours and his calendar is always full." In contrast, participants in the nonworking-leisurely-lifestyle condition read, "Imagine Jeff, he is 35 years old. Jeff does not work and has a leisurely lifestyle." Because we were particularly concerned about demand effects in this study, we collected all the status measures used in study 1A. Precisely as in study 1A, participants rated Jeff's social status ($\alpha = .9$), located him on the socioeconomic status ladder, and rated him on two status-related dimensions ($\alpha = .71$) and three non-status-related dimensions. Moreover, participants answered the same manipulation check questions on busyness ($\alpha = .92$) from previous studies. Finally, to gain deeper insight into Italian participants' thought processes, we gave respondents the opportunity to comment on why they thought Jeff led that particular lifestyle.

Results. The analysis of the manipulation check confirmed that Jeff was seen as busier at work in the working-busy-lifestyle condition than in the nonworking-leisurely-lifestyle condition by both Italians ($M = 5.54$, SD = .93 vs. $M = 2.67$, SD = 1.2, $F(1, 96) = 176.81$, $p < .001$) and Americans ($M = 5.98$, SD = .81 vs. $M = 1.61$, SD = .64, $F(1, 109) = 1000.33$, $p < .001$).

Next, we conducted a 2 (working busy lifestyle vs. nonworking leisurely lifestyle) × 2 (United States vs. Europe) ANOVA with perceived status as the dependent variable. The analysis revealed no significant main effect for long hours of work and lack of leisure ($F(1, 206) = .01$, NS), a significant main effect of country ($F(1, 206) = 10.96$, $p = .001$), and more importantly, a significant cross-over interaction ($F(1, 206) = 14.07$, $p < .001$)

FIGURE 3

STUDY 3 RESULTS: CROSS-CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AS BOUNDARY CONDITION



NOTE.—Error bars denote standard errors.

depicted in figure 3.[4] As predicted, Americans granted greater status to the working individual conducting a busy lifestyle than to the nonworking individual conducting a leisurely lifestyle ($M = 4.62$, SD $= .89$ vs. $M = 3.95$, SD $= 1.75$, $F(1, 206) = 7.54$, $p = .007$). In contrast, we obtained the opposite pattern of results from Italian respondents, who granted less overall status to the working, busy individual than to the nonworking, leisure individual ($M = 4.54$, SD $= .85$ vs. $M = 5.21$, SD $= 1.35$, $F(1, 206) = 6.59$, $p = .011$). On average Italians gave higher ratings than Americans (as shown by the main effect of country), a result that may be linked to cross-cultural differences in interpreting and responding to scales (Heine et al. 2002; Krueger et al. 2008). We recommend refraining from directly comparing answers to the same condition between countries and drawing potentially erroneous conclusions; the analysis should rather focus on the differences between conditions within each country, as reported above. The results and graphs on the other measures, which support hypothesis 3 and address demand effects, are reported in the web appendix for space reasons.

Discussion. As hypothesized, we find that status inferences based on long hours of work and lack of leisure time are culturally dependent. While busyness at work is associated with higher status among Americans, the effect is reversed for Italians. Interestingly, Italians' open-ended explanations in the working busy condition suggest that, rather than associating long hours of work with an aspirational lifestyle, these respondents associate it with "the necessity to support his family" or "because he is forced by circumstances." In contrast, the explanations in the leisurely lifestyle condition suggest that Italians reason consistently with Veblen's theory and think that Giovanni is so wealthy that he does not have to work: "His family is rich, he does not have to worry about bringing home the bacon ["bread" in Italian, *portare il pane a casa*], so he doesn't do anything from morning to evening, 365 days a year."

In the next set of studies, we consider specific marketing implications for brands and products associated with busyness at work and lack of leisure time.

Study 4: The Signaling Power of Brands and Products Associated with Busyness at Work

In previous studies, we directly manipulated the busyness level of a hypothetical individual. In study 4, our aim is to determine whether subtler, yet visible signals of busyness would have a similar effect. While luxury products and brands have been shown to be an effective tool to communicate status, our aim in this study is to determine whether the use of busyness-signaling products or services

4 We found the same interaction in an almost identical instantiation of the study with another sample of 193 participants (94 Italians from Qualtrics; 99 Americans from Mechanical Turk; study 3 replication, web appendix).

can also effectively convey status, regardless of how busy one truly is. Specifically, study 4A examines how a timesaving grocery service associated with a busy lifestyle (i.e., Peapod, which offers online shopping and delivery) can signal status as compared to an expensive food and grocery brand associated with a more well-off lifestyle (i.e., Whole Foods) and to a control brand (i.e., Trader Joe's). In addition, study 4B examines the signaling power of timesaving products associated with busyness (i.e., a hands-free Bluetooth headset) as compared to products associated with leisure and free time (i.e., a pair of headphones for music and leisure).

Pretest for Retail Brands (Study 4A). We confirmed that the two retail brands Peapod and Whole Foods were associated with a busy-at-work lifestyle (Peapod) or a wealthy lifestyle (Whole Foods) in a pretest with an independent sample of 64 participants (50% female; M_{age} = 23; American) drawn from the same pool of lab respondents of the main study. We selected the following list of retail brands that have outlets in Massachusetts (the region where the study took place): Star Market, Costco, Peapod online grocery shopping, Trader Joe's, Walmart, Whole Foods, and Safeway. We measured the extent to which these retail brands were associated with working busy and wealthy lifestyles. For each brand, participants rated the level of association with a randomized list of four lifestyles: In your opinion, to what degree is [retail brand] associated with the following lifestyles? (a) Busy at work, (b) Working long hours, (c) Expensive, (d) Rich (1 = Not associated at all, 7 = Extremely associated). Peapod's level of association with the two items tapping into busyness at work (α = .86) was significantly higher (M = 4.71, SD = 1.79) than Whole Foods' (M = 3.82, SD = 1.39; $F(61) = 10.27$, $p = .002$), and it had the highest level of association with a busy lifestyle among all pretested brands. Whole Foods' level of association with the two items tapping into a wealthy lifestyle (α = .9) was higher (M = 5.97, SD = 1.08) than Peapod's (M = 4.05, SD = 1.58; $F(61) = 70.63$, $p < .001$), and it had the highest richness rating among all brands. Trader Joe's was picked as the control brand since its association with a working busy lifestyle (M = 3.96, SD = 1.22) was similar to Whole Foods' (M = 3.82, SD = 1.39, $F(62) = 2.03$, NS), but lower than Peapod's (M = 4.71, SD = 1.79, $F(60) = 5.91$, $p = .018$), and its association with a wealthy lifestyle (M = 4.28, SD = 1.32) was similar to Peapod's (M = 4.05, SD = 1.58, $F(60) = .95$, NS), but lower than Whole Foods' (M = 5.97, SD = 1.08, $F(62) = 67.97$, $p < .001$). Accordingly, we would expect that if busyness is an effective signal of status, then Peapod would signal as much status as Whole Foods (a brand associated with more traditional status attributes, such as wealth), and signal significantly more status than Trader Joe's (a brand found to have lower associations with both busyness and wealth).

Method (Study 4A). Aiming to collect about 150 responses per condition, we recruited 475 participants (50% female, M_{age} = 26, American, 60% monthly average household income $2,000–2,999) for a lab study at Harvard University, consisting of both students and community members. We randomly assigned participants to one of three conditions: Peapod/working busy lifestyle or Whole Foods/wealthy lifestyle or Trader Joe's/control lifestyle. Participants read a paragraph about a grocery brand and a customer, Matthew. Respondents in the working-busy-lifestyle condition read, "Peapod is an online grocery service in the United States. Peapod's home delivery service allows consumers to shop online and receive groceries delivered right to their homes." Participants in the wealthy-lifestyle condition read, "Whole Foods is a chain of supermarkets in the United States. Consumers can buy groceries at Whole Foods stores located throughout the country." Participants in the control-lifestyle condition read, "Trader Joe's is a chain of supermarkets in the United States. Consumers can buy groceries at Trader Joe's stores located throughout the country." All participants then read "Imagine Matthew; he is 35 years old. Matthew typically buys groceries at Peapod/Whole Foods/Trader Joe's." Using the same measure as in previous studies, participants assessed Matthew's social status (α = .82) and rated his level of busyness.

Results (Study 4A). The analysis of the manipulation check confirmed that Matthew was perceived as busier when shopping through Peapod. A one-way ANOVA with perceived level of busyness as the dependent measure revealed a significant effect of condition ($F(2, 472) = 31.19$, $p < .001$). Planned contrasts revealed that Matthew was perceived as busier when shopping at Peapod (M = 5.17, SD = 1.18) than at Whole Foods (M = 4.41, SD = .89, $F(1, 472) = 46.26$, $p < .001$) or at Trader Joe's (M = 4.4, SD = .9, $F(1, 472) = 46.89$, $p < .001$). The difference in terms of level of busyness between Whole Foods and Trader Joe's was not significant.

A one-way ANOVA with status inferences as the dependent measure revealed a significant effect of condition ($F(2, 472) = 15.2$, $p < .001$). Planned contrasts revealed that participants rated Matthew's status as higher in the Peapod condition (M = 4.73, SD = .97) than in the Trader Joe's condition (M = 4.35, SD = .88, $F(1, 472) = 14.75$, $p < .001$). Thus, participants inferred that a person who uses Peapod has more status than a person who shops at Trader Joe's, despite the two brands being associated with a similar lifestyle in terms of wealth. Moreover, the difference in status ratings between the Peapod condition (M = 4.73, SD = .97) and Whole Foods condition (M = 4.89, SD = .81) was not significant ($F(1, 472) = 2.39$, NS). Thus, participants inferred that a Peapod shopper has the same status as a Whole Foods shopper, despite

the Peapod brand being perceived as significantly less well-off than Whole Foods.

To control for potential confounds linked to brand specificities, in a follow-up study (web appendix) we focused on the Peapod brand and manipulated between-subjects different levels of busyness at work. We find that the Peapod shopper is seen as higher in status when he uses Peapod because he is busy at work and does not have time to shop for groceries, than when he uses Peapod because he is not particularly busy at work and has time to search online.

Method (Study 4B). We decided in advance to recruit 120 participants (about 60 per condition) for a study at Columbia University. The final sample size (122) included 64 students enrolled in an undergraduate class and 58 lab respondents participating in a lab study. Respondents (68% female; $M_{age} = 23$) were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: Bluetooth/busy lifestyle or headphones/leisurely lifestyle. Participants in both conditions read "Imagine Anne, a 35-year-old woman. She is often seen wearing the product below." Participants in the Bluetooth/busy-lifestyle condition saw a picture of a female head with a hands-free Bluetooth headset, whereas participants in the headphones/leisurely-lifestyle condition saw a picture of a female head with a pair of headphones for music and leisure (see web appendix for pictures).[5] Because we were particularly concerned about demand effects in this study, we collected all the status measures used in study 1A. Precisely as in study 1A, participants rated Anne's social status ($\alpha = .89$), located her on the socioeconomic status ladder, and rated her on two status-related dimensions ($\alpha = .77$) and three non-status-related dimensions. In addition, for the two mediators, we collected the same measures from previous studies on human capital ($\alpha = .92$) and scarcity on the job market ($\alpha = .79$). Finally, respondents were asked to estimate the price of the product ("What is the price of the product that Anne is wearing? [Insert a number]"), and to rate the extent to which they perceived the products as innovative and technological (1 = Not at all, 7 = Extremely; $\alpha = .69$) to control for the possibility that differences between conditions could be driven by perceptions of expensiveness and innovativeness, rather than perceptions of busyness and lack of leisure.

Preliminary Analyses (Study 4B). The same discriminant validity tests conducted in previous studies confirmed the distinctiveness of our main variables (see the results in the web appendix).

Results (Study 4B). Because indeed the Bluetooth was perceived as a more technological and innovative device ($M = 3.9$, SD = .89 vs. $M = 2.97$, SD = .99, $F(1, 120) = 30.04$, $p < .001$) and a more expensive device than the headphones ($M = \$73.79$, SD = 44.94 vs. $M = \$34.48$, SD = 87.93, $F(1, 120) = 9.76$, $p = .002$), we conducted a series of ANCOVAs with condition as fixed factor and innovativeness ratings and price as covariates (all the following analyses yield the same results even without covariates). Compared to participants in the headphones condition, participants in the Bluetooth condition perceived Anne as higher in social status, financial wealth, and income ($M = 5.04$, SD = .75 vs. $M = 3.8$, SD = .78, $F(1, 117) = 41.68$, $p < .001$), they placed her on a higher rung on the socioeconomic status ladder ($M = 6.82$, SD = 1.22 vs. $M = 5.47$, SD = 1.14, $F(1, 116) = 18.96$, $p < .001$), and they also saw her as higher in status and respect ($M = 4.81$, SD = .8 vs. $M = 3.89$, SD = .72, $F(1, 117) = 21.84$, $p < .001$). Importantly, participants indicated no significant difference on how nice, honest, and attractive the individual was between conditions ($M = 3.87$, SD = .5 vs. $M = 4.04$, SD = .43, $F(1, 117) = 2.15$, NS). Finally, participants perceived Anne to possess higher human capital in the Bluetooth condition ($M = 5.37$, SD = .9 vs. $M = 4.15$, SD = .78, $F(1, 117) = 33.26$, $p < .001$) and to be more in demand ($M = 4.49$, SD = .96 vs. $M = 3.55$, SD = .72, $F(1, 117) = 20.09$, $p < .001$).[6] All mediation analyses, which again support hypothesis 2, are fully reported in the web appendix.

Discussion. Findings from this study demonstrate the signaling power of brands and products associated with an overworked lifestyle, such as a timesaving grocery brand (study 4A) or a multitasking Bluetooth headset (study 4B). These findings are consistent with popular blogs and magazine articles providing suggestions on how to look busy. For example, a recent humorous blog (www.thefacultylounge.org) suggests people should "talk on one of those Bluetooth ear thingies for your cell phone at all times" to "make sure you convey to others the full extent of your busyness and importance." Our findings again provide evidence in support of our proposed mediating mechanisms and show that status inferences are driven by the belief that the busy individual has higher human capital characteristics and is scarcer and more in demand even for the subtler use of timesaving products and services.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

While research on conspicuous consumption has typically analyzed how people spend *money* on products that signal status, in this research we investigate conspicuous consumption in relation to *time*. We demonstrate the conditions under which displaying one's busyness at work and

5 The two products' images were pretested with a separate group of 140 respondents (see pretest in web appendix). The Bluetooth headset is more strongly associated with a busy lifestyle and lack of leisure than the headphones.

6 We found the same results in a similar instantiation of the study (study 4B replication, web appendix).

lack of leisure time operates as a visible signal of status in the eyes of others. A series of studies, across several distinct groups of participants, demonstrates that the positive status effect of displaying one's busyness and lack of leisure time is driven by the perception that a busy person possesses desired human capital characteristics (competence, ambition) and is scarce and in demand in the job market. We examine cultural values (perceived social mobility) and differences among cultures (i.e., North America vs. Europe) to demonstrate moderators and boundary conditions of the busyness effect. Finally, we show how social media can be strategically used to signal status by revealing information about one's level of busyness, in addition to considering how the use of timesaving services (e.g., Peapod) and products (e.g., Bluetooth) can trigger inferences of busyness and status, regardless of how busy one truly is.

Our findings deepen our understanding of how busyness and status inferences are related and contribute to several streams of literature. First, while past research on status signaling has primarily focused on how the expenditure of money has been a vehicle to signal status (Bellezza and Keinan 2014; Berger and Ward 2010; Griskevicius et al. 2007; Han et al. 2010; Keinan, Crener, and Bellezza 2016; Mandel et al. 2006; Ordabayeva and Chandon 2011; Rucker and Galinsky 2008; Wang and Griskevicius 2014; Ward and Dahl 2014), we explore how the expenditure of time can lead to the same end. Second, we expand research on the decline of leisure time (Gershuny 2005; Hamermesh and Lee 2007; Hochschild 1997; Rutherford 2001; Schor 1992; Southerton and Tomlinson 2005) by uncovering the conditions under which the absence of holidays and busyness operate as costly and visible status symbols. Third, our investigation contributes to previous research on product scarcity (Brehm 1966; Cialdini 1993; Lynn 1991; Snyder and Fromkin 1980) by demonstrating that busyness at work can be associated with scarcity of individuals. Instead of associating oneself with scarce resources (e.g., diamonds, cars, or expensive real estate), consumers can signal status by portraying themselves as a scarce resource through the conspicuous display of busyness and lack of leisure. Fourth, our novel predictions contribute to recent research analyzing more subtle and alternative signals of status, such as seemingly unbranded luxury products and nonconforming behaviors (Bellezza et al. 2014; Berger and Ward 2010; Dubois et al. 2012; Han et al. 2010). Finally, we contribute to cross-cultural research in consumer behavior (Aaker 2006; Aaker, Benet-Martínez, and Garolera 2001; Briley and Aaker 2006; Craig and Douglas 2006; Üstüner and Holt 2010) by demonstrating that status inferences based on busyness at work and lack of leisure time are culturally dependent.

Directions for Future Research

Our research could be further applied to examine other consumption phenomena and to explore additional moderators. One important boundary condition is perceived agency (i.e., the extent to which one's overworked lifestyle and lack of leisure time are perceived as a voluntary and deliberate choice). One could imagine that a person with many financial burdens has no choice but to be busy with work, working overtime or even taking more than one job, and thus may be perceived to have less status. In a follow-up study, we directly manipulated whether the decision to work long hours was framed as deliberate or not. As predicted, we find that when long hours at work and limited leisure time are not perceived to be the product of a voluntary and deliberate choice, the positive inferences associated with busyness remain significant, but are significantly weakened. Another potential boundary condition could be economic class. Though empirical evidence is mixed (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2014),[7] it may be that people infer that a busy person is from a higher socioeconomic background because there is a natural correlation between these two types of people in the world, a proposition that is also more consistent with the substitution effect in economics. To control for this possibility in another follow-up study (web appendix), participants considered more busy versus less busy individuals across varying economic classes (wealthy/upper middle/lower middle/lower class). A busyness effect was still found when we controlled for economic class, suggesting that within an economic class, which presumably consists of people with similar occupations, being busy can still serve as an effective status signal. Even amongst the lower class, busier individuals were awarded higher status attributions than less busy individuals. Both these follow-up studies suggest that even if a person has to work to make ends meet or is from a lower class, busyness can still impact perceptions of status, presumably because the busy individual may be found to be more competent and ambitious, leading them to be perceived as a scarce resource compared to those from a similar economic background who are not as busy.

The current investigation has not examined yet whether the moderator (perceived social mobility) intervenes before or after the two mediators (human capital characteristics and perceived scarcity). Thus, future research could precisely examine if people who perceive their society as particularly mobile, and believe in work as a means for social affirmation, interpret busyness at work as a stronger signal of human capital characteristics and scarcity as compared to people with weaker beliefs in social mobility (i.e., there is an interaction between moderator and mediators) or if higher status attributions through the two mediators are at play for everyone indiscriminately (i.e., there is no interaction between moderator and mediators).

7 For example, people employed in management professions earn almost twice as much as people employed in production and transportation, though both categories have the highest number of hours worked per week.

Although busy people who always work presumably have little time off, it would also be interesting to examine how the small amount of leisure time available to them is spent and whether it impacts perceptions of status in the eyes of others. Analyses of leisure time in contemporary society suggest that the consumption of free time is increasingly "harried" and characterized by an acceleration of the pace at which leisure is enjoyed (Linder 1970; Robinson and Godbey 2005). We predict that observers will attribute even higher status to those people who, besides being busy, are also able to enjoy and live their lives to the maximum (i.e., "work hard and play hard"). Since today's consumers are striving to "have it all" and aspire for achievements in multiple domains even when engaging in leisure activities (Keinan and Kivetz 2011), the "work hard and play hard" lifestyle—embodying both hard work and a propensity to enjoy life—should represent the most aspirational and highly regarded model.

Our work examines a potentially more socially acceptable and efficient way for people to signal their social status that goes beyond spending financial resources to obtain luxury products. Though past research has found an association between inferences of status for people who use expensive luxury products, such inferences may be tainted by views that those same people are extrinsically motivated and less likeable (Van Boven, Campbell, and Gilovich 2010). However, we surmise that, by using busyness to signal one's status, one can avoid these negative side effects. Future research should determine whether this is indeed the case and explore the conditions under which trying too hard to appear busy may backfire. In addition to being more socially acceptable, signaling one's status through busyness at work may also be more cost-effective. For example, rather than spending money on the expensive brands (Whole Foods), one can display status by using potentially cheaper timesaving brands (e.g., Peapod), complaining about one's level of busyness, or simply by appearing busy. Social media has also opened up a new way to communicate one's level of busyness to a large number of people through status updates and tweets. The emergence of such communication media may have even enhanced the efficacy of busyness as a more appropriate status signal. Signaling one's busyness may be a more disguised way to signal one's status on social media compared to traditional forms of luxury consumption, which may be more proper in a physical setting. Future research could further consider the relationship between social media and methods of status signaling.

Finally, it is interesting that people find the busy lifestyle so aspirational and associate it with status given that the downsides of this lifestyle are often acknowledged and discussed (e.g., the negative impact on happiness, well-being, and health). Future research could examine whether highlighting the physical and psychological costs of an overworked lifestyle would decrease or increase its association with status and make it more or less aspirational in the eyes of others.

Managerial Implications

A deeper understanding of the conspicuous consumption of time and the role of busyness as a status symbol has interesting implications for marketers of both timesaving and symbolic products. Our findings offer a different perspective on how to promote and advertise timesaving and multitasking benefits of specific products. New technologies and innovations (e.g., voice recognition and remote control technologies) often allow consumers to reduce the time it takes to perform specific tasks. Rather than focusing on time saving in an abstract sense, communication campaigns might emphasize how well such products integrate with an overworked lifestyle. For example, notable author Michael Pollan (2013) argues that marketing messages by the processed food industry flatter consumers' sense of busyness, implicitly telling them, "You don't have time to cook, you're too important; you're a loser if you have time to cook." Our findings support the notion that appealing to consumers' lack of time could be a form of flattery, making consumers feel their time is very valuable. Feeling busy and overworked may make us feel in demand and scarce, and therefore more valuable and important. Other timesaving services, like Peapod, should consider ways to make their offerings more conspicuous, allowing people to signal their status and enhance the value of their products.

Targeting busy and pressed-for-time consumers has also proven to be a rewarding strategy for products originally conceived for other segments and positioned on other benefits. For instance, coders, engineers, and venture capitalists are increasingly turning to liquid meals and powdered drinks (e.g., Soylent, Schmoylent, Schmilk, People Chow) so they can more quickly get back to their computer work. The demand in Silicon Valley for these products, originally catered to athletes and dieters, is so high that some engineers report being put on monthly waiting lists to receive their first orders (Chen 2015). As seen in the aforementioned Cadillac ad, even symbolic, luxury brands, and products that do not necessarily offer timesaving benefits, may try to associate the brand with an aspirational and glorified busy lifestyle. As another example, consider the following print ad by Rolex: "Checking his watch costs Bill Gates $300 a second. What is your time worth?" Rather than flattering consumers' purchase ability and financial wealth, brands can flatter consumers' busyness and lack of valuable time to waste.

DATA COLLECTION INFORMATION

Participants for the pilot study in the introduction and study 4B were recruited in 2016 at the Behavioral Research Lab (Columbia Business School). The dataset of

tweets analyzed in the pilot study was scraped from the web (https://twitter.com/Humblebrag) in 2013. Participants in studies 1A, 2A, and 3 (American respondents) were recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk in 2014, 2015, and 2016. Participants in study 1B were recruited in 2016 at the Behavioral Lab (McDonough School of Business at Georgetown University). Participants for studies 2B and 3 (Italian respondents) were recruited through Qualtrics in 2015. Participants in study 4A (including pretest and follow-up study) were recruited in 2014 and 2015 at the CLER lab (Harvard Business School). Lab managers with the support of research assistants managed data collection at the CLER lab (Harvard Business School), the Behavioral Research Lab (Columbia Business School), and the Behavioral Lab (McDonough School of Business at Georgetown University). The three authors jointly analyzed all the data.

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