The current review summarizes recent advances in research on personality predictors of status attainment. In line with previous research, recent studies indicate that extraverted and narcissistic individuals tend to attain status in groups. Research on mediating processes includes a wide range of underlying motivational, behavioral, and interpersonal perception processes. Most generally speaking, those high in extraversion and narcissism attain status because they are more motivated to do so and thus display assertive behavior that makes them look competent. Situational contexts, group tasks, and cultural contexts can moderate the personality-status links by shaping these processes. For example, studies inspired by evolutionary psychology suggest that dominant individuals are more likely to attain status when dominance is instrumental to address a threatening environment.

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Introduction
Social status is a hierarchical construct. This means, by definition, not all people can have high social status (i.e. not all people can be on top of a hierarchy). To understand why some people tend to rank high or low in status hierarchies, psychologists have studied the associations between status attainment and personality traits (i.e. individual differences in patterns of cognitions, feelings, and behaviors).

Traditionally, research on the personality-status link has focused on main effects of personality traits on status attainment. This research strand found that some traits (i.e. extraversion, narcissism, and trait dominance) predict (initial) status attainment across most contexts. Thus, status research moved on to study mediating processes. The assumed mediating processes link personality traits to status attainment via individual differences in (a) the target’s motivation to attain status, (b) the behavior displayed by the target, (c) others’ perception of the target’s characteristics, and (d) others’ evaluation and corresponding assignment of status (e.g. [1] see Figure 1).

Furthermore, researchers proposed situational moderators that explain why some traits are linked to status in some groups but not in others. Back et al. [1] argued that the social context (e.g. one-sided self-presentation versus intimate interaction) moderates all four steps of the mediating process: The social context evokes, emphasizes, or allows for certain motivations, behaviors, perceptions, and evaluations but not for others (Figure 1). Other researchers have mainly focused on situational moderators of the others’ evaluations. Functionalist theories state that individuals attain status when their perceived characteristics are evaluated to be instrumental for successfully dealing with group’s tasks (e.g. [2, 3, 4, 5]). Because the group tasks vary across groups and situations, an individual’s status can vary across groups and situations. Furthermore, several researchers have recently pointed out that whether the perceived characteristics of a person are positively evaluated by others depends also on the values and norms of the cultural context [3, 6, 7] see also Ref. [8].

In the following, we review status research on personality traits most frequently investigated in recent years: the Big Five personality traits (extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience), narcissism, and trait dominance. We focus on informal social status (e.g. peer-rated emerging leadership, influence, likeability) rather than on formal social status (e.g. socioeconomic status, standing in the formal hierarchy of an organization). Moreover, we focus on status attained via prestige rather than on status attained via force and intimidation [9]. Finally, the current review focuses particularly on the research since the last review on the personality-status link in 2014 [10].

Big Five personality traits
Main effects
In line with the last review by Anderson and Cowan [10], several recent studies indicate that extraversion is associated with the attainment of social status (other-rated status, influence, likeability, leadership emergence, popularity) initially and after several meetings [11–16]; but see also [17]. The associations between the other four
Big Five traits and status attainment have been less consistent and more context-dependent.

Mediating processes
In accordance with a research before 2014, Anderson and Cowan [10] suggested several mediating processes (Figure 1) for the finding that extraversion is linked to status attainment across contexts: (a) extraverts desire status more strongly and thus draw more attention to themselves and their positive attributes than introverts (b) they display social and leadership skills that are useful in most group settings (e.g. verbally expressiveness; [18]), and (c) they are perceived and (d) evaluated by others as task-competent (e.g. shyness of individuals is negatively related to others' intelligence perceptions, [19]). In line with the reasoning that extraverts desire status more strongly, several recent studies showed that extraversion is moderately to strongly positively associated with the motivation and intention to lead (e.g. [20,21,22]). The link between extraversion and intention to lead was mediated by affective motivation to lead (i.e. enjoyment of leading) and lack of avoidance of leadership but not by calculative motivation or normative motivation to lead [21]. Similarly, extraverts emerged as leaders in groups because they are less likely to forecast negative emotions regarding an upcoming group/leadership exercise [15]. The authors reasoned that these negative expectations might inhibit extraverted behaviors that are necessary to emerge as leaders in groups. Indeed, a lens-model analysis indicated that extraverts were evaluated more positively by others based on behavioral cues such as energetic and self-assured movements, strengths of voice, and friendly facial expressions [23] (see also Ref. [24], for a review on behavioral cues to extraversion and other traits). Likewise, oral fluency partially mediated the positive association between extraversion and popularity in 7–8 year old children [13].

Situational moderators
Conscientiousness has frequently been linked to status attainment in task-focused contexts but less frequently in other contexts [10,25]. Accordingly, more recent studies found that conscientiousness is positively related to peer-rated leadership emergence in business students working in small groups [17] (but see also [15]) but not to classmates-rated likeability and popularity in adolescent samples [12,16]. *Vice versa*, agreeableness was positively linked to likeability in the two adolescent samples [12,16] but not among the business students working groups [17]. Also, agreeableness positively predicted status in previously unacquainted groups of students after an affiliative group task but not after a competitive group task [14].

The most common explanation for these moderator effects seems to be that behavior displayed by people high in conscientiousness (agreeableness) is evaluated by others to be more instrumental in task-focused (affiliative) contexts than in other contexts. Yet, the context might also moderate other links of the mediation chain (Figure 1). For example, conscientious (agreeable) individuals might be more motivated to attain status and thus more frequently display behavior that signals competence in task-focused (affiliative) contexts than in other contexts. Or, individual differences in conscientiousness (agreeableness) might only be behaviorally...
expressed in task-focused (affiliative) contexts but not in other context (see, e.g. [26]).

**Narcissism**

**Main effects**
The narcissism-status link has received a lot attention because of two intriguing patterns (a) people high in narcissism are perceived positively by others initially but not after several meetings (first reported by Paulhus [27]) and (b) some aspects of narcissism are positively related to status attainment whereas other aspect are not or negatively related to status attainment (first reported by Paunonen et al. [28]). Initial status attainment and a decline in status over time have also been observed in several recent studies (e.g. [11,29,30,31]). For example, a recent meta-analysis found that the association between narcissism and leadership emergence was descriptively stronger among people acquainted less than one week (disattenuated correlation = 0.18) than among people acquainted more than one week (disattenuated correlation = 0.09; [30]).

In line with Paunonen et al. [28], it has now been established that narcissism is a multidimensional construct. Vulnerable narcissism (i.e. the neurotic aspects of narcissism) has been distinguished from grandiose narcissism, and grandiose narcissism has been further split up into narcissistic admiration (i.e. the extraverted or agentic aspects of narcissism) and narcissistic rivalry (i.e. the disagreeable or antagonistic aspects of narcissism; e.g. [32]; see also Refs. [33,34]). And recent research has shown that not all of these dimensions are equally associated with status attainment. As a case in point, narcissistic admiration was associated with an initial increase in other-rated likeability, while narcissistic rivalry was associated with a decline in likeability over time [31]; see also Refs. [1,32,35,36].

**Mediating processes**
Similar to extraversion, narcissism and especially narcissistic admiration have been positively associated with aspirations to leadership roles, status, and fame (e.g. [22,37,38,39,40]). Furthermore, the link between narcissistic admiration and being liked by others has been found to be mediated by dominant–expressive behavior (coded by uninvolved raters) and being seen as assertive by others. The link between narcissistic rivalry and being disliked by others has been found to be mediated by arrogant behavior and being seen by others as untrustworthy (31,32,36) [Figure 1; see also Ref. [9]).

**Situational moderators**
As indicated by research on length of acquaintance, narcissistic individuals do not always make a positive impression on others. To explain the rise and fall of narcissistic leaders in organizational contexts, the Energy Clash Model has been proposed recently [41]. The model asserts that narcissistic individuals are seen and elected as leaders because they display energetic, inspiring, and beneficial behavior initially—or at least their behavior is initially perceived that way. After some time, narcissistic individuals and their behavior is perceived and evaluated to be self-serving, antagonistic, risky, and financially and ethically questionable. However, some studies found no or even a negative narcissism-status link at the first meeting (e.g. [36,42]). Thus, the Dual Pathway Model has been proposed [1,31,36]. According to the model, one-sided self-presentational situations lead to a positive narcissism-status link because they (a) evoke or allow for differences in charming and self-assured behaviors, (b) make this behavior salient as an indicator of assertiveness, and (c) emphasize the value of assertiveness (Figure 1). *Vice versa*, intimate and interactive situations lead to a negative narcissism-status link because they (a) evoke or allow for differences in arrogant and combative behaviors, (b) make arrogant and combative behavior salient as an indicator of aggressiveness, and (c) emphasize the value of communion and trustworthiness.

**Trait dominance**

**Main effects**
A trait similar to extraversion and narcissism has also received considerable attention in the personality-status literature: trait dominance (i.e. assertiveness, forcefulness, self-assuredness; e.g. [43]). As pointed out in Anderson and Cowan’s [10] review, trait dominance has consistently been linked to leadership emergence and influence in groups.

**Mediating processes**
Similar to extraversion and narcissism, trait dominance has been assumed to lead to status because trait dominance is linked to (a) the pursuit of status and (b) the display of engagement and confidence and (c) being perceived by others as competent socially and technically which (d) leads to positive evaluations and the assignment of status (e.g. [10,44]).

**Situational moderators**
Inspired by evolutionary psychology, several recent studies suggests that support and preference for a dominant leader increases when groups face economic uncertainty and threat [45], intergroup conflict ([46,47]; see also Ref. [48], and criminal and free-riding in-group members [49]). Dominant leaders and their behavior seem to be evaluated more positively when bold economic changes and aggression towards outgroups or free-riding in-group members might be instrumental to the group’s success. Dominant leaders are furthermore more positively
evaluated by conservatives than by liberals (e.g. [457,50,51]), suggesting that cultural values and norms might also moderators of the dominance-status link (see also Refs. [3**,6,7,12]). Finally, a recent study suggests that dominance is positively related to initial status attainment but does not have an effect on social status after several weeks [52], paralleling a pattern observed for narcissism (see Section ‘Main effects’).

Conclusions

Taken together, recent studies corroborate and supplement traditional personality-status research by shedding more light on the mediating processes and situational moderators (Figure 1). Still, more research on mediating processes and situational moderators is needed because (a) some links have not been investigated at all (e.g. the behaviors that mediate the link between conscientiousness and status attainment in task-focused contexts), (b) other links have been investigated but the found associations need to be replicated (e.g. an affiliative context moderates the link between agreeableness and status), and (c) still other links have been found consistently, but the underlying causal mechanisms have yet to be elucidated (e.g. by experimentally manipulating the behavior of an avatar or human actor to corroborate the causal link between certain behavioral cues and initial popularity). We hope our review assists researchers in addressing these limitations and spurs further research on the personality predictors of status attainment.

Conflict of interest statement

Nothing declared.

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References and recommended reading

Papers of particular interest, published within the period of review, have been highlighted as:

● of special interest

** of outstanding interest


A review on moderators of the narcissism-popularity link that dissects the mediating processes.


A review pointing out that, next to dominance and competence, culturally grounded virtues can lead to status attainment.


22. Suessbach F, Loughnan S, Schönbrodt FD, Moore AB: The dominance, prestige, and leadership account of social power
This article developed and validated a taxonomy of social power motives that differentiates a dominance, a prestige, and a leadership motive.  


32.巢 Longitudinal study took a closer look at the displayed behaviors (coded by uninvolved raters) and others’ perceptions that mediated the narcissism-status link.


Three large questionnaire studies augmented with regional economic data found that support for dominant leaders is larger in economically uncertain and threatening situations than in economically certain situations.


This study found a stronger preference for dominant-looking candidates after participants read a horizontal exploitation scenario (i.e. threat of free-riding and criminals) than after reading a vertical exploitation scenario (i.e. threat of unresponsive, self-interested behavior from leaders themselves).

