



Higher Status Honesty Is Worth More: The Effect of Social Status on Honesty Evaluation

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Promises are crucial for maintaining trust in social hierarchies. It is well known that not all promises are kept; yet the effect of social status on responses to promises being kept or broken is far from understood, as are the neural processes underlying this effect. Here we manipulated participants' social status before measuring their investment behavior

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INTRODUCTION

Promises are crucial for creating trust in situations where trust does not yet exist (Malhotra and Murnighan, 2002; Friedrich and Southwood, 2011). As such, promises are particularly useful in social hierarchies by acting to decrease feelings of distrust between individuals of di erent social status (Fiske, 2010a; Lount and Pettit, 2012). Promises are ubiquitously used not only to signal/foster trustworthiness to the hierarchy (i.e., pledges or oaths), but are also critical in facilitating trust between individuals of di erent social ranks, from a high-ranking politician promising voters that she will increase the economy to a low-ranking employee assuring her manager that she will finish her work on time. Despite the importance of promises in facilitating trust between di erent members of a hierarchy, it is common knowledge that promises are not always kept, and broken promises can have large downstream e ects on trust at both personal (Simpson, 2007) and economic levels (Zak and Knack, 2001), making the evaluation of promise outcomes (i.e., promise kept vs. promise broken) of utmost importance to understanding trust in social hierarchies. However, the e ects of social status on the evaluation of promise outcomes is far from understood at both behavioral and neural levels.

Previous work on responses to promise outcome evaluation in social hierarchies is almost completely restricted to feedback related to high status promisors (e.g., politicians; Johnson and Ryu, 2010; status constructs, researchers often turn to prestige-based status measures and manipulations (Zink et al., 2008). Prestige-based status refers to the amount of deference, respect, or admiration an individual receives along a relevant domain (Adler et al., 2000; Henrich and Gil-White, 2001; Fiske, 2010b). This type of social status is particularly advantageous because it is distinct from power and wealth and is easily manipulated in a lab setting.

To address the above-mentioned limitations, in the current study we systematically analyze the behavioral and neural e ects of both prestige-based status (manipulated at the beginning of the experiment) and SES (measured after the experiment) on promise feedback evaluation. We do so by manipulating participants' prestige-based status before playing as Investor in a modified version of iterated Trust Game (TG) with promises (Charness and Dufwenberg, 2006, 2010). Participants' prestigebased status was manipulated via performance ranking on a math guiz in comparison with six confederate players. This is a proven and established inducer of prestige-based status (Hu et al., 2016) with the advantage that it can control for other potential confounds such as power or dominance. In line with previous research (Albrecht et al., 2013), we also control for potential emotional confounds of achieving low-status or high-status ranking (Steckler and Tracy, 2014) by endowing participants with a middle-status ranking in comparison with the six other players and pair them with partners of lower or higher status. After receiving their ranking, participants played several trials of TG as Investor with these players (whose identity was kept anonymous) acting as Trustees. At the beginning of each TG trial, the participant first viewed the social status of the Trustee (lower vs. higher) who had been drawn randomly from the pool of six confederates. To prevent reputation e ects and learning, no other personal information was given at this stage. Then, to measure the e ects of social status on responses to promise-based feedback, in TG, Trustees either promised ("promise" condition) or did not promise ("no promise" condition, filler) to return half of the multiplied sum (i.e., half of the investment amount after it has been multiplied by 4) to the participant. To create a condition where promise information was not available, in certain trials, Trustees were not given the opportunity to make a promise decision (i.e., "unknown" condition). After viewing the promise information, participants decided whether or not to invest 2 yuan, which was endowed to the investor, in the Trustee. This amount was set at 2 yuan to control for potential magnitude e ects of returning or not returning. Finally, the participant was given feedback regarding whether the Trustee had behaved in a trustworthy manner (i.e., return in the "unknown" condition) or in an honest manner (i.e., return in the "promise" condition) before beginning the next trial of TG. In this way, participants experienced both negative and positive outcome feedback. Feedback was given regardless of whether or not the participants invested in the Trustee (i.e., forced feedback). This measure was taken to ensure that all participants were made aware that lower and higher status Trustees were trustworthy and honest in half of the trials. We recorded event-related potentials (ERPs) time-locked to the TG feedback. The empirical question was whether and how social status modulates the behavioral and neural responses to honesty and trustworthiness feedback.

At the behavioral level, we focused on the investment rate in TG. Our previous work using a similar prestige-based status manipulation before measuring participants' behavior as Investor in iterated one-shot TG shows that participants tend to invest more in higher status Trustees than lower status Trustees, and that this e ect is most pronounced in the "promise" condition (Blue et al., under review). Given these findings, and considering the two diverging accounts regarding the e ects of social status on responses to norm violation, two hypotheses emerge: the "social value" hypothesis would predict that participants would be more likely to invest in higher status promises than in lower status promises, despite feedback showing that lower and higher status partners were equally honest ("social value" hypothesis). The "social value" hypothesis contrasts with an alternative "expectation violation" hypothesis, which would predict that participants would be more surprised by higher status partners' dishonesty and lack of trustworthiness in 50% of the trials than by that of lower status partners, and would thus invest less in higher status than lower status partners over time.

At the neural level, we focused on two ERP components timelocked to TG feedback which are known for their involvement in outcome evaluation: Medial-frontal negativity (i.e., MFN) and P300 (i.e., P3). The "social value" hypothesis would predict that P300 amplitudes would be more positive-going in response to higher status honesty than lower status honesty, whereas the "expectation violation" hypothesis would predict that MFN responses would be more negative-going to higher status dishonesty than lower status dishonesty. Below, we briefly introduce MFN and P300 and their role in outcome evaluation before we move on to the methodological details of the study.

MFN reflects a family of components related to negative performance feedback (i.e., feedback-related negativity, FRN) and error-related processing (i.e., error-related negativity; ERN). MFN is a negative deflection peaking between 200 and 350 ms post-onset and is found in the frontocentral electrodes. MFN is generated by activity in the anterior cingulate cortex (i.e., ACC). It is often described as reflecting whether the evaluation of events/feedback is good or bad (Gehring and Willoughby, 2002; Yeung and Sanfey, 2004; Sato et al., 2005). In particular, MFN amplitudes are more pronounced for negative feedback and unfavorable outcomes than for positive feedback and favorable outcomes. The reinforcement learning account of MFN states that the mesencephalic dopamine system sends reinforcement learning signals, which are manifest by changes in phasic dopamine (Schultz et al., 1997), via the basal ganglia to ACC, which then learns which decisions are best (Holroyd and Coles, 2002). The MFN thus reflects the reinforcement learning signals to ACC: negative prediction errors (i.e., outcome is worse than expected) elicit greater MFN amplitudes, reflecting decreases of phasic dopamine to ACC, whereas positive prediction errors (i.e., outcome is better than expected) elicit decreased MFN amplitudes, reflecting increases of phasic dopamine to ACC.

Apart from outcome valence, MFN has also been shown to be sensitive to outcome expectancy (Jia et al., 2007; Wu and Zhou, 2009), such that outcomes that are less expected elicit a more pronounced MFN response. Expectancy violation e ects on MFN are also found in social contexts (Wu et al., 2011b), such as social norm violations. MFN is sensitive to social norm violations, such as those related to fairness and generosity (Boksem and De Cremer, 2010; Wu et al.,

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

To determine the sample size, we used G*Power 3 software (Faul et al., 2007), which showed that we needed a sample size of at least 32 for this study to have adequate power $(1 - \beta > 0.95)$ to detect a medium-size e ect (f = 0.30). The power analysis (repeated-measures, within participants e ect) was performed for the interaction between partner social status (lower vs. higher) and promise (promise vs. unknown). The correlation among repeated measures was set at 0.6, which was based o of the correlation among repeated measures in a previous behavioral pilot study [r(28) = 0.594; Blue et al., under review]. Among the 42 participants we tested, two were removed because alphawave artifacts, two failed the post-experiment questionnaire for understanding the experimental setup and task requirements, four were suspicious of the experimental setup, and one was removed due to a technical malfunction. These nine participants were removed from data analysis, leaving 33 participants (20 females) in the following analysis whose age was between 18 and 23 years (mean: 19.70 years, SD = 1.40). All participants were healthy, right-handed, had normal or corrected-to-normal vision, and no participants had a history of neurological or psychiatric disorders. Before the experiment, all participants gave their informed consent and were informed that the basic payment for participation was 80 Chinese yuan (about 12.5 USD) with a bonus of 0–15 yuan, which was based on performance in TG. The experiment was in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and was approved by the Ethics Committee of the School of Psychological and Cognitive Sciences, Peking University.

Design and Procedure

The experiment had a 2 (partner social status: lower vs. higher) \times 2 (promise: promise vs. unknown) \times 2 (return: return vs. no return) within-participants factorial design. An additional filler condition, in which the partner had an opportunity to promise but did not choose to promise ("no promise" condition) was included to increase the perceived agency in the "promise" condition. As in past experiments (Hu et al., 2014, 2016), we used a star system (Zink et al., 2008) to assign social status, with one star indicating low status, two stars indicating middle status, and three stars indicating high status. The investment decision was binary (i.e., invest vs. no invest). The investment amount was set at 2 yuan, making the multiplied sum 8 yuan.

Participants arrived alone to the laboratory for each experimental session, where they were told that six same-sex participants (confederates) were ostensibly waiting in another room. Participants then gave permission to have their photo taken, which would later be used in the math quiz ranking screen, along with the photos of the six confederates. The participants were told that the six confederates would also complete the math quiz and would later act as their partner in TG (Figure 1).

The math quiz task is an established inducer of social status (Hu et al., 2016). Participants were given 10 s to select which of two arithmetic expressions had a greater value by pressing the "F" or "J" key with the left or right index finger. If the

participant had not selected a response after 7 s, he/she was given a reminder that time was running out on that particular question. Each problem was composed of either two-digit multiplication (e.g., 45*72) or complex fraction addition (e.g., $4\frac{7}{8} + 5\frac{5}{9}$). In total, there were 24 arithmetic problems (12 easy, 12 di cult). Half of the problems were solvable in the time allotted while the other half were extremely di cult to solve in the time allotted, which facilitated the participant's belief that they had achieved a two-star (middle status) ranking. Upon completion of the quiz, participants viewed their rank in comparison with the ranks of the six other confederates. All participants were assigned a middle (2-star) ranking in order to avoid the potential influences of emotion after gaining high or low status (Steckler and Tracy, 2014) and to test the e ects of others' social status on participants' responses to promise outcome feedback (Albrecht et al., 2013).

In TG, participants acted as Investor, and the six confederates from the math guiz acted as Trustees. Participants were informed that they would only be paired with Trustees who had achieved rankings that were di erent from their own, so they only faced low (one-star) and high (three-star) status Trustees. This was meant to increase the number of trials in the critical conditions. At the start of each trial (264 trials in total), participants were given 2 yuan. Then, participants viewed the ranking of their anonymous partner for that particular trial. Next, participants viewed the partner's promise decision, with "!" indicating that the partner promised to return 4 yuan (50% of the multiplied sum; "promise" condition), "- -" indicating that the partner did not promise to return 4 yuan ("no promise" condition; filler), and " | | " indicating that the partner was not given the opportunity to make a promise decision on that trial ("unknown" condition). Then the participant chose whether or not to invest the 2 yuan in the partner. The participant was given a maximum of 5 s and used the "F" and "J" keys on the keyboard to make this decision ("invest" and "keep" decision locations were counterbalanced over trials). If the participant did not make an investment decision within 5 s, the trial started again from the beginning. If the participant chose to invest the 2 yuan, then the partner received 8 yuan; if the participant chose to keep the 2 yuan, then the partner came away from that trial with nothing. Finally, the participant viewed the Trustee's feedback (i.e., decision to return or not to return) on that trial. Importantly, participants were told that Trustees made their return decisions at the same time as participants were making their decision to invest or not (i.e., before viewing the participant's investment decision). This point was emphasized to the participants because it was necessary to give feedback to the participants on each TG trial regardless of whether they invested or not. We used forced feedback for two reasons: (1) to ensure that lower and higher status partner trustworthiness and honesty levels were identical (i.e., lower status Trustees and higher status Trustees both returned on 50% of the "promise" trials and 50% of the "unknown" trials), and (2) to ensure that there were enough trials in the critical conditions for ERP data analysis. As filler trials, we also included certain trials where Trustees did not promise to return in 50% of the multiplied sum (i.e., "no promise" condition; 12 trials in total); in these trials, TG partners did not return.



FIGURE 1 | Schematic diagram of the experiment. (A) In the rank-inducing task (i.e., math quiz), participants were given 10 s to select which of two arithmetic expressions had a greater value by pressing the "F" or "J" key with the left or right index finger. (B) Upon completion of the quiz (24 problems in total), participants were shown their performance ranking in comparison with six same-sex confederate players. All participants were assigned a middle (2-star) ranking, highlighted in yellow. (C) In TG, participants acted as Investor with Trustees of lower and higher status. On each trial, participants viewed the Trustee's ranking from the math quiz along with his/her promise information before deciding whether or not to invest in the Trustee. Regardless of whether the participant invested in the Trustee, participants were shown the return feedback. Return feedback was set at 50% regardless of the condition. We focused on the ERP responses time-locked to the feedback screen (noted with the asterisk).

Each trial of TG began with a fixation sign (white cross subtended 0.3° of visual angle) for either 500, 700, 900, 1100, 1300, or 1500 ms against a black background (**Figure 1C**). On the next screen, participants viewed the words "Your partner's rank:" in Chinese (white and Song font, size 32) above the star ranking (subtended $2^{\circ} \times 0.8^{\circ}$) for 1500 ms; the star ranking was composed of either a yellow filled star with two empty yellow stars (one-star, lower status rank) or three yellow filled stars (three-star, higher status rank). After the presentation of a blank screen for a jittered time between 500 and 1500 ms, participants then viewed the partner's promise information for 1200 ms. After the presentation of a blank screen for a jittered time between 500 and 1500 ms, the participants then viewed the words "Please choose" above the choices "Invest" and "Keep" (the locations of which were counterbalanced across trials) for a maximum of 5000 ms.

After making their selection, a white box immediately highlighted the answer response for 400 ms. After the presentation of a blank screen for a jittered time between 500 and 1500 ms, the participants finally viewed the words "Partner's decision:" above the words "Return" or "No return" in Chinese in green and red, respectively, with colors counterbalanced across participants. The final screen appeared for 1500 ms.

EEG data were recorded throughout the experiment. We focused our analysis on the TG feedback screen. The participants were comfortably seated in a dimly lit and electromagnetically shielded room about 1.5 m in front of a computer screen. The experiment used Presentation software (Neurobehavioral System Inc.) to control the timing and presentation of stimuli and was displayed on a Visuosonic 22-in. CRT display. The experiment consisted of the status-inducing task (i.e., math quiz,

24 problems in total) followed by six blocks of TG (44 TG trials per block). There were 30 trials per condition (lower status "unknown" return; lower status "unknown" no return; lower status "promise" return; lower status "promise" no return; higher status "unknown" no return; higher status "unknown" return; higher status "unknown" no return; higher status "promise" return; higher status "promise" no return) and 24 "no promise" filler trials (12 lower status; 12 higher status) in which Trustees did not return on any trial.

Before beginning the experiment, participants were told that highert4(ma)]TJ -17(t3(quiz37(t4(90(in)-490(t3()-324(t4(044)(t3((per)-536(4(until4)(t3(((e)2(xy536(4(0)-5357 Td [(hig)-6(her)come)-51)-22)ni

we averaged the amplitude and/or peaks over electrodes in each regional cluster. Time windows were determined by visual inspection of the waveforms and preliminary analyses.

For ERP responses to the TG feedback, we focused our analysis on MFN (the mean amplitudes in the time window of 250–310 ms) and P300 (the peak values in the time window of 250-600 ms). For MFN, we focused our analysis on the medial anterior cluster. We selected these electrodes because the MFN e ect was largest on these electrodes. We conducted ANOVA with three within-subjects factors: partner social status (lower vs. higher), promise condition (promise vs. unknown), and return (return vs. no return). For P300, we conducted ANOVAs with five within-subjects factors: partner social status (lower vs. higher), promise condition (promise vs. unknown), return (return vs. no return), region (anterior vs. central vs. posterior), and hemisphere (left vs. medial vs. right). In order to account for multiple comparisons, Bonferroni correction was used when appropriate. In cases of non-sphericity, we applied the Greenhouse-Geisser correction.

RESULTS

Manipulation Check of Social Status

In order to ensure that the social status manipulation elicited feelings of inferiority and superiority, we conducted a one-factor (star-ranking: one vs. three) repeated-measures ANOVA, which confirmed the social status manipulation, F(1,31) = 57.923, p < 0.001, $\eta_p^2 = 0.651$. Participants reported higher feelings of superiority when facing a lower status partner (5.313 ± 0.171) than when facing a higher status partner (3.469 ± 0.149). The status manipulation also a ected feelings of Subjective SES, F(2,64) = 39.123, p < 0.001, $\eta_p^2 = 0.550$, as participants rated three-star partners as having a higher Subjective SES (6.955 ± 0.224) than their own (6.015 ± 0.250), p < 0.001, and one-star partners as having lower Subjective SES results are reported below (see *Objective SES*).

Behavioral Results

A repeated-measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed that the investment ratio varied as a function of promise, $F(1,32) = 52.019, p < 0.001, \eta_{D}^{2} = 0.619$ (Figure 2). Participants were more likely to trust (i.e., invest) in "promise" trials (mean \pm SE, 0.681 \pm 0.027) than in "unknown" trials (0.453 ± 0.027) . There was no main e ect of partner social status, p = 0.915. Importantly, consistent with our previous studies (Blue et al., under review), there was a non-significant trend or tendency of an interaction between partner social status and promise conditions, F(1,32) = 3.783, p = 0.061, $\eta_p^2 = 0.106$. Further tests revealed that when interacting with higher status partners, participants tended to be more likely to invest in "promise" trials (0.69 \pm 0.03) than in "unknown" trials $(0.44 \pm 0.03, p < 0.001, \eta_p^2 = 0.64)$, and this e ect was smaller for participants when playing with lower status partners ("promise" condition: 0.67 \pm 0.03, "unknown" condition: 0.46 \pm 0.03, p < 0.001, $\eta_p^2 = 0.54$).

To evaluate the strength of the empirical evidence in favor of (or against) the interaction between partner social status and promise conditions, we also conducted a Bayes factor analysis (Dienes, 2014). Bayes factor analysis tests the strength of evidence between two theories (a null hypothesis theory and the proposed e ect in the data), and its value ranges from 0 to infinity, with an increase in value indicating stronger support to reject the null hypothesis. The conventional cut-o s for Bayes factor sensitivity are 1/3 and 3, which means that any value outside of this range (less than 1/3 or greater than 3) provides strong evidence in support of the null hypothesis or the proposed e ect in the data, respectively. Values between 1/3 and 3 are considered weak or "anecdotal" evidence (Je reys, 1939/1961). Our analysis was conducted using the BayesFactor (Morey et al., 2015) package in the R statistical language. We found a Bayes factor of 2.508 \pm 7.65% which suggests that there is an interaction between partner social status and promise condition, but that it is a weak e ect. This result indicates that independent confirmation is needed to confirm the interaction between partner social status and promise conditions.

To examine potential di erences in learning of lower and higher status trustworthiness and honesty, after the experiment we tested participants' recall of lower and higher status trustworthiness (i.e., ratio of return in the "unknown" condition) and honesty (i.e., ratio of return in the "promise" condition). In particular, to measure recall of trustworthiness, we analyzed participants' responses to the prompts: "Please indicate what percentage of the time (lower) higher status partners returned half of the multiplied sum when they did not have an opportunity to promise to do so?"; to measure recall of honesty, we analyzed participants' responses to the prompts: "Please indicate what percentage of the time (lower) higher status partners returned half of the multiplied sum when they promised to do so?" There was no di erence in recall of lower status and higher status trustworthiness, t(32) = 0.376, p = 0.709, or honesty, t(32) = 1.491, p = 0.146. As an additional check of learning, we





entered the di erence between higher and lower status honesty investment for each block (i.e., [(higher status "promise" – higher status "unknown") – (lower status "promise" – lower status "unknown")]) into a one-factor (block: 1 vs. 2 vs. 3 vs. 4 vs. 5 vs. 6) repeated-measures ANOVA, which was not significant, F < 1; p = 0.997. We also conducted this one-factor repeatedmeasures ANOVA separately for status di erences in each block of the "unknown" condition, F = 1.571, p = 0.171, and each block of the "promise" condition, F = 1.491, p = 0.195. Regardless of the condition, our data show that participants' investment behavior showed no evidence of changing over time. Taken together, these results indicate that there is no evidence that participants learned or adjusted their behavior across the experiment.

Results regarding the post-experiment perceived trustworthiness measurements (i.e., ability, benevolence, and integrity) were as follows. Participants rated higher status partners (4.697 \pm 0.117) as having greater ability than lower status partners (4.066 \pm 0.110), t(32) = -4.937, p < 0.001. There was a non-significant trend or tendency for participants rating higher status partners (3.042 \pm 0.149) as being more benevolent than lower status partners (3.430 \pm 0.187), t(32) = 1.954, p = 0.059. There was no di erence in participants' ratings of higher status (3.859 \pm 0.147) and lower status (4.015 \pm 0.164) partner integrity, p = 0.473. We also tested for the possibility that di erences in these factors between lower and higher status may have correlated with the TG behavior interaction between partner social status and promise conditions [i.e., (Higher status "promise" - Higher status "unknown") - (Lower status "promise" - Lower status "unknown")]. No evidence was found for the role of perceived ability, benevolence, or integrity to predict the behavioral interaction between partner social status and promise conditions, perceived ability, p = 0.699; perceived benevolence, p = 0.276; perceived integrity, p = 0.569.

MFN in the 250–310 ms Time Window Following TG Feedback

For ERPs time-locked to the TG feedback (Figure 3), in the time window of 250-310 ms in the medial anterior cluster of electrodes, a 2 (partner social status: lower vs. higher) \times 2 (promise: promise vs. unknown) \times 2 (return: return vs. no return) repeated-measures ANOVA showed a significant main e ect of return F(1,32) = 6.147, p = 0.019, $\eta_p^2 = 0.161$, indicating that participants evidenced more negative-going MFN in response to "no return" feedback (10.738 \pm 0.982 μ V) than to "return" feedback (11.803 \pm 0.931 $\mu\text{V}).$ There was also a significant main e ect of promise F(1,32) = 12.747, p = 0.001, $\eta_p^2 = 0.285$, indicating that feedback in the "unknown" condition elicited more negative-going MFN (10.755 \pm 0.912 μ V) than feedback in the "promise" condition (11.787 \pm 0.974 μ V). There was no main e ect of partner social status, p = 0.289. Moreover, there was no interaction between the three conditions (interaction between promise and partner social status, p = 0.982; interaction between promise and return, p = 0.346; interaction between partner social status and return, p = 0.308; interaction between partner social status, promise, and return, p = 0.741).

Given that forced feedback was given to the participant regardless of whether or not an investment decision was m 0.289.324xJ -2



FIGURE 3 | Medial frontal negativity (MFN). ERP response time-locked to the onset of the TG return feedback at the Fz electrode in the "unknown" (A) and "promise" (B) conditions. Topographic maps for the MFN effect in the 250–310 ms time window in the "unknown" (C) and "promise" (D) conditions.

status "return" feedback (14.731 ± 0.833 µV) than to lower status "return" feedback (13.934 ± 0.798 µV), p = 0.001, while there was no di erence in P300 amplitudes in response to "no return" feedback between higher status partners (13.972 ± 0.752 µV) and lower status partners (13.955 ± 0.796 µV), p = 0.949. If we restrict our analysis to the peak values on the electrode CPz, and enter these peak values into a 2 (partner social status: lower vs. higher) × 2 (promise condition: promise vs. unknown) × 2 (return: yes vs. no) repeated-measures ANOVA, the same pattern of e ects was obtained, with the exception that there was a non-significant trend or tendency for a main e ect of status, F(1,32) = 3.763, p = 0.061, $\eta_p^2 = 0.105$.

Regarding the influence of the electrode location, there was a main e ect of hemisphere, F(2,64) = 115.938, p < 0.001, $\eta_p^2 = 0.784$, with P300 amplitudes being most positive-going in the medial hemisphere ($16.866 \pm 0.927 \mu$ V) than in the left ($12.409 \pm 0.721 \mu$ V) and right ($13.170 \pm 0.721 \mu$ V) hemispheres, ps < 0.001. P300 amplitudes were also more positive-going in the right hemisphere than in the left hemisphere, p = 0.017. There was a main e ect of region, F(2,64) = 15.891, p < 0.001, $\eta_p^2 = 0.332$, with P300 amplitudes being more positive-going in the central region ($16.006 \pm 0.896 \mu$ V) than in the anterior ($13.600 \pm 0.907 \mu$ V) and posterior ($12.839 \pm 0.722 \mu$ V) regions, ps < 0.001. Importantly, there was a significant interaction between partner social status and region, F(2,64) = 3.764, p = 0.048, $\eta_p^2 = 0.105$, such that higher status feedback elicited

a more positive-going P300 than lower status feedback in the anterior region (lower status: $13.322 \pm 0.907 \,\mu$ V; higher status: 13.878 \pm 0.919 μ V, p = 0.015) and the central region (lower status: 15.754 \pm 0.897 μ V; higher status: 16.257 \pm 0.906 μ V, p = 0.011), whereas in the posterior region, there was no di erence in P300 amplitude for lower and higher status feedback (lower status: 12.758 \pm 0.739 μ V; higher status: 12.920 \pm 0.711 μ V, p = 0.273). There was also an interaction between promise and region, F(2,64) = 7.814, p = 0.004, η_p^2 = 0.196, such that, in the anterior region, feedback in the "promise" condition elicited a more positive-going P300 amplitude (13.986 \pm 0.942 μ V) than feedback in the "unknown" condition (13.214 \pm 0.899 μ V), p = 0.022, whereas there was no di erence in P300 amplitudes for "promise" and "unknown" conditions in the central region ("unknown": 15.815 \pm 0.899 μ V; "promise": 16.196 \pm 0.922 μ V, p = 0.239) or the posterior region ("unknown": 12.787 \pm 0.732 μ V; "promise": 12.891 \pm 0.731 μ V, p = 0.665).

There was a significant interaction between promise, return, and hemisphere, F(2,64) = 4.140, p = 0.033, $\eta_p^2 = 0.115$. In the "unknown" condition, there was a significant interaction between return and hemisphere, F(2,64) = 5.314, p = 0.009, $\eta_p^2 = 0.142$, whereas in the "promise" condition this interaction was not significant, p = 0.974. Tests for simple e ects showed that, in the "unknown" condition, feedback indicating "no return" elicited more positive-going P300 amplitudes in



and "no return" feedback for lower status and higher status partners (D).

the medial hemisphere (16.399 \pm 0.902 μ V) than in the left hemisphere (11.988 \pm 0.699 μ V) and right hemisphere (12.956 \pm 0.699 μ V), ps < 0.001; moreover, feedback indicating "no return" also elicited more positive-going P300 amplitudes in the right hemisphere (12.956 \pm 0.699 μ V) than in the left hemisphere (11.988 \pm 0.699 μ V), p = 0.012. Similarly, feedback indicating "return" elicited more positive-going P300 amplitudes in the medial hemisphere (16.806 \pm 0.988 μ V) than in the left hemisphere (12.508 \pm 0.779 μ V) and right hemisphere (12.974 \pm 0.787 μ V), ps < 0.001. There was no di erence in P300 amplitudes in the left hemisphere and right hemisphere, p = 0.583.

To test whether P300 responses were modulated by investment behavior, we compared peak P300 responses from the medial posterior cluster electrodes time-locked to the TG feedback. In particular, we compared P300 peak amplitudes on only those trials in which participants invested (i.e., invest-only trials) with P300 peak amplitudes on all trials regardless of investment (i.e., all trials). Similar to the MFN analysis, we only analyzed trials from the "promise" condition. There were too few no-invest trials in both the "promise" and the "unknown"

conditions to conduct a meaningful comparison between invest-only trials and no-invest trials, thus we compared investonly trials with all trials. After removing "promise" condition trials in which the participant did not invest, 7 participants had less than 15 trials per condition. These 7 participants were removed from this supplementary analysis, leaving 26 participants in the analysis. A 2 (invest: yes vs. all trials) \times 2 (partner social status: lower vs. higher) \times 2 (return: return vs. no return) repeated-measures ANOVA revealed a main e ect of invest, F(1,25) = 10.847, p = 0.003, $\eta_p^2 = 0.303$, indicating that participants evidenced more positive-going P300 when receiving feedback on invest-only trials (14.856 \pm 0.949 μ V) than on invest and no invest trials combined (14.436 \pm 0.916 μ V). No other e ects reach significance.

Objective SES

Objective SES was measured using parents' highest attained level of education and parents' combined annual salary. Parents' highest level of education, (M = 2.758, SE = 0.200) on average ranged from high school diploma/middle trade school certificate to trade school certificate (a level slightly lower than a bachelor's



FIGURE 5 | Effects of Objective SES (i.e., parents' highest achieved level of education) on TG behavior and ERP response (P300 peak amplitudes in the medial central cluster time-locked to the TG feedback). (A) Correlation between Objective SES and the interaction between partner social status, promise, and return on P300 peak amplitudes. (B) Correlation between Objective SES and the interaction between partner social status and promise on investment behavior in TG. (C) Objective SES split-group analysis of P300 peak amplitudes plotted as a function of partner social status, promise, and return. (D) Objective SES split-group analysis of investment behavior plotted as a function of partner social status and promise on median split: Low Objective SES group (n = 17) and High Objective SES group (n = 16). "P" indicates Promise; "UK" indicates Unknown; "L" indicates Lower Status Trustee; "H" indicates Higher Status Trustee.

degree); parents' average annual salary (M = 2.533, SE = 0.115) on average ranged from 10,000 yuan to a little over 100,000 yuan per year (i.e., \sim \$1,500 – \$20,000). Note that due to concerns over privacy, three participants did not report their parents' annual income; these participants were, however, willing to report their parents' highest level of education (n = 33). Objective SES based on parents' salary was positively correlated with Objective SES based on parents' highest attained level of education, r(31) = 0.450, p = 0.012. Past research on Objective SES recommends the use of parents' highest attained level of education over parents' annual income as an index of student Objective SES (Rosenberg, 1965), given that, in comparison to salary levels, education levels tend to be better predictors of other social factors such as self-esteem (Twenge and Campbell, 2002). As a result, we used parents' highest attained level of education as our index of participants' Objective SES below.

Objective SES and TG Behavior

There was a negative correlation between Objective SES and the TG behavior interaction between partner social status and

and promise condition, F(1,31) = 3.863, p = 0.058, $\eta_p^2 = 0.111$. The pattern was the same as the pattern described above (see *Behavioral Results*). The interaction between Objective SES group and promise condition was significant, F(1,31) = 4.784, p < 0.036, $\eta_p^2 = 0.134$. Further tests showed that in the low Objective SES group, the di erence between investment in the "unknown" condition (0.487 \pm 0.042) and the "promise" condition (0.652 \pm 0.043) was smaller ($\eta_p^2 = 0.562$), than in the high Objective SES group ("unknown" = 0.416 \pm 0.031, "promise" condition = 0.711 \pm 0.032, $\eta_p^2 = 0.716$).

Importantly, and in line with the negative correlation between Objective SES and the TG behavior interaction between partner social status and promise conditions, there was a non-significant trend or tendency for an interaction between Objective SES group, partner social status, and promise condition, F(1,31) = 3.667, p = 0.065, $\eta_p^2 = 0.106$ (Figure 5D). Further tests showed that the interaction between partner social status and promise condition was only significant in the low Objective SES group, F(1,16) = 8.302, p = 0.011, $\eta_p^2 = 0.342$, such that in the "promise" condition, low Objective SES participants invested more in higher status (0.675 \pm 0.041) than lower status partners (0.629 \pm 0.048), p = 0.045; in the "unknown" condition, there was no significant di erence between investment in higher status (0.470 \pm 0.045) and lower status partners (0.505 \pm 0.045), p = 0.307. The interaction between partner social status and honesty condition was not significant in the high Objective SES group, F < 1, p = 0.973.

Objective SES and MFN in the 250–310 ms Time Window Following TG Feedback

There was no correlation between Objective SES and the interaction between partner social status, promise condition, and return on the MFN in the 250–310 ms time window following TG feedback, p = 0.208. We do not report further analysis on the e ects of Objective SES on MFN.

Objective SES and P300 Peak Amplitudes Time-Locked to the TG Feedback

There was a negative correlation between Objective SES and the interaction between partner social status, promise condition, and return on the P300 peak amplitudes in the medial central cluster time-locked to the TG feedback, r(31) = -0.345, p = 0.049(Figure 5A). We chose the medial central cluster because the P300 responses were largest on these electrodes. There is also a negative correlation if we test the correlation between Objective SES and the interaction between partner social status, promise condition, and return of the P300 peak amplitudes on the CPz electrode, r(31) = -0.358, p = 0.041. Similar to the analysis of Objective SES and TG behavior, to better understand the e ect of Objective SES on average P300 peak amplitudes in the medial central cluster, we conducted a median split of Objective SES and entered Objective SES group (low vs. high) as a between-subjects factor along with three within-subjects factors [partner social status (lower vs. higher) and promise

condition ("unknown" vs. "promise) and return (return vs. no return)] into a repeated-measures ANOVA. The pattern of results with Objective SES included as a between-participants factor are the same as those described above (see *P300 Following TG Feedback*). There was a significant main e ect of partner social status, F(1,31) = 5.621, p = 0.024, $\eta_p^2 = 0.153$, with higher P300 amplitudes for higher status partners (19.475 ± 1.095) than for lower status partners (18.882 ± 1.070). There was also a significant interaction between partner social status and return F(1,31) = 7.284, p = 0.011, $\eta_p^2 = 0.190$. The pattern was the same as the pattern described above (see *P300 Following TG Feedback*).

There was a significant interaction between partner social status, promise condition, return, and Objective SES, F(1,31) = 11.086, p = 0.002, $\eta_p^2 = 0.263$ (Figure 5C). Further tests showed that the interaction between partner social status, promise condition, and return was only significant in the low Objective SES group, F(1,16) = 9.351, p = 0.008, $\eta_p^2 = 0.369$. In the high Objective SES group, the interaction between partner social status, promise condition, and return was not significant, p = 0.104. Further tests on the interaction in the low Objective SES group showed that in the "promise" condition, the interaction between partner social status and return was significant, F(1,16) = 13.050, p = 0.002, $\eta_p^2 = 0.449$: for higher status partners in the "promise" condition, P300 peak amplitudes were more positive-going in response to "return" feedback (21.984 ± 1.643) than "no return" feedback (19.049 \pm 1.410), p = 0.001, whereas for lower status partners in the "promise" condition, there was no di erence in P300 peak amplitudes in response to "return" feedback (19.559 \pm 1.676) and "no return" feedback (20.881 \pm 1.570), p = 0.188. In the "unknown" condition, the interaction between partner social status and return was not significant, p = 0.753. The pattern of the interaction between Objective SES group, partner social status, promise condition, and return is the same if we limit our analysis to ANOVA on the P300 peak amplitudes on the CPz electrode, $F(1,31) = 11.836, p = 0.002, \eta_p^2 = 0.276.$

DISCUSSION

In the current study, we used a modified version of TG to investigate whether and how social status influences evaluation of honesty-related feedback. At the behavioral level, participants tended to be more a ected by promises given by higher status Trustees than lower status Trustees, despite receiving equal feedback about lower and higher status honesty. At the neural level, when viewing TG partner feedback, MFN in the time window of 250-310 ms was more negative-going when TG partners did not return than when they did return. P300 peak amplitudes di erentiated higher status return feedback (i.e., return vs. no return), but did not do so for lower status partner return feedback; moreover, P300 responses were more positive-going for higher status partner returns than for lower status partner returns. Finally, participants in low Objective SES evidenced a greater P300 e ect for higher status honesty than for lower status honesty and evidenced a tendency for investing more in promises given by higher status Trustees than lower status Trustees; neither of these e ects were found in participants in high Objective SES. Taken together, these findings demonstrate that social status can modulate both the behavioral responses to and the neural processing of honesty-related feedback, and suggest that higher status honesty may be perceived as more motivationally salient or rewarding than lower status honesty in individuals with low Objective SES.

Behavior

Despite the fact that participants viewed identical feedback across conditions (i.e., 50% return; 50% no return), participants invested substantially more in partners when promises were made to return at least half of the multiplied sum than when partners were not given the option to make a promise. Moreover, participants tended to be more a ected by promises given by higher status than low status partners in TG. In particular, both lower and higher status promises increased the amount the participants invested in TG, in comparison with trials where promises were not available; however, higher status promises tended to increase investment to a greater extent. These behavioral findings provide support for the "social value" hypothesis, which predicts that participants would be more a ected by promises given by higher status Trustees than by lower status Trustees. In contrast, the "expectation violation" hypothesis predicts that participants would be more surprised by higher status than lower status dishonesty and would thus invest less in higher status promises than lower status promises over time. No support was found for this hypothesis, and there was no evidence showing that participants' investment behavior changed over time.

While the behavioral pattern found above suggests that higher status increases the influence of promises on investment behavior, this e ect is relatively weak. Similar research measuring participants' investment behavior in Trustees of lower and higher status in iterated one-shot TG found that participants invest significantly more in promises given by higher status Trustees than in promises given by lower status Trustees (Blue et al., under review). We suspect that the weakness of this e ect in the current study was due to the feedback concerning the Trustee's return behavior. In Blue et al. (under review), no feedback was given concerning whether the Trustee actually kept the promise, whereas here the participants roughly knew that the Trustee broke the promise in about half of the trials. Thus, the surprising finding was that even in such harsh conditions encouraging distrust, the participants still tended to trust the high status Trustee more than the low status Trustee, a pattern replicating Blue et al. (under review).

MFN Effects on Outcome Feedback Evaluation

MFN responses were sensitive to outcome valence, as MFN responses were more negative-going for "no return" than for "return" feedback. This e ect reinforces the notion that MFN encodes social expectancy violation, as not returning part of the multiplied sum is a violation of the trustworthiness norm.

This trustworthiness norm in TG refers to the Investors' tendency to send around 50% of the possible amount of money to Trustees (Berg et al., 1995; Johnson and Mislin, 2011), despite the unique Nash equilibrium prediction that the Investor, as a rational and self-interested agent, should transfer no money to the Trustee, given that a rational Investor should assume that the Trustee would act in a completely self-interested way (i.e., return none of the multiplied sum to the Investor). Thus, a large portion of Investors in TG expect Trustees to reciprocate their trusting behavior by acting in a trustworthy manner, and not returning may be interpreted as a violation of the trustworthiness expectation.

Interestingly, partner social status and the promise condition did not interact to influence MFN responses to outcome feedback, especially given that previous research shows that promise information modulates responses to TG outcome feedback (Ma et al., 2015). This may have been due to the forced feedback nature of the current experiment, as participants in Ma et al. (2015) were given feedback only if they invested in the Trustee, whereas in the current study, participants were given forced feedback. Indeed, we did find that the investment decision modulated MFN responses: if the analysis of MFN in the "promise" condition is restricted to invest-only trials, the MFN e ect is even more pronounced than when the analysis includes all feedback, regardless of the investment decision.

There was also a main e ect of promise condition on MFN responses to TG outcome feedback, as MFN responses were more negative-going for feedback in the "unknown" condition than in the "promise" condition. This main e ect is most likely due to di erences in investment behavior in the two conditions. Participants invested less in the "unknown" condition (investment rate = 45%) than in the "promise" condition (investment rate = 68%). Given that past research shows that distrust decisions elicit greater MFN responses to outcome feedback, in comparison with trust decisions (Long et al., 2012), and that investment behavior modulated MFN responses to TG outcome feedback, it is most likely that this main e ect is driven by the participants decreased investment in the "unknown" condition than in the "promise" condition.

Finally, "return" and "no return" decisions were more directly tied to financial payo s than promise and partner social status information, which could make this information more salient in early MFN outcome evaluation processing. This is in line with past research showing that, in social contexts, MFN encodes stimuli that are most directly tied to financial payo, whereas social factors are left for later processing (e.g., P300 or LPP; Leng and Zhou, 2010; Wu et al., 2011b). This could mean that the outcome evaluation system may defer to a later, more top-down stage of processing to appraise the honestyrelated outcomes in the context of social status, which would suggest that the outcome evaluation in TG may be composed of earlier, semi-automatic processing which is coarse in nature and provides discrete evaluations of return feedback regardless of its relation to honesty or social status, and later top-down controlled processing of outcome evaluation, where factors such as honesty and social status can undergo higher level cognitive appraisal.

P300 Effects in Feedback Evaluation

In contrast to MFN, P300 responses to TG feedback were sensitive to the interaction between social status and return decisions. In particular, P300 responses di erentiated return and no return feedback only for higher status Trustees. Moreover, higher status return feedback elicited greater P300 amplitudes than lower status return feedback. Given that P300 activity reflects a ective/motivational significance (Nieuwenhuis et al., 2005; Leng and Zhou, 2010) and/or distribution of attention resources (Gray et al., 2004; Linden, 2005), the findings from the current study could suggest that higher status returns were more motivationally salient to participants than were lower status returns. Higher and lower status return likelihood and amounts were identical, which means that the increased P300 response to "return" outcomes from higher status Trustees than lower status Trustees could reflect increased perceived value or relevance of higher status "return" feedback, especially given that processing social status information is directly tied to reward-related processing in both human (Ly et al., 2011) and non-human primates (Deaner et al., 2005). Indeed, previous research using TG shows that Trustee characteristics, such as personal closeness to the Investor (i.e., "social value;" Fareri et al., 2015), modulate neural responses to Trustee feedback in brain areas related to reward processing, such as ventral striatum. Ventral striatum activity is also greater in responses to outcomes that result in reward which is shared with friends than reward which is shared with strangers (Fareri et al., 2012), suggesting that outcome evaluation is susceptible to influence of social reward. Research simultaneously measuring fMRI and EEG show that, during the anticipation of monetary gain, ventral striatum and P300 activity are positively correlated, suggesting that these two neural responses may be involved in similar motivational processing of reward-related stimuli (Pfabigan et al., 2014). Additionally, both ventral striatal and P300 activity are impaired in patients diagnosed with schizophrenia, and these impairments have both been shown to be associated with deficits in reward processing (Juckel et al., 2006; Vignapiano et al., 2016). Taken together, the P300 findings from the current study suggest that social status influences the motivational significance and/or attentional resources devoted to TG outcome feedback and that this modulation may reflect di erences in perceived value of lower and higher status "return" outcomes in TG.

It is interesting that we did not find an interaction between partner social status, return, and promise information on P300 responses to TG feedback. We suspect that this may be due to individual di erences in participant SES (Ly et al., 2011). Indeed, only participants in low Objective SES showed the expected interaction between partner social status, return, and promise information on P300 responses to TG feedback. In these participants, social status modulation of P300 responses to TG feedback was restricted to the "promise" condition, such that P300 responses were greater for higher status "return" than "no return" outcomes, whereas P300 responses were less sensitive to lower status promise feedback. These findings could suggest that, for participants in low Objective SES, higher status partner honesty feedback may be perceived as more motivationally salient and/or elicit greater attention allocation than lower status partner honesty feedback.

One potential explanation for these findings is that lower status individuals have the most to gain from high status cooperation in a social hierarchy (Cummins, 1996), and keeping promises is considered a sign of cooperation. This would be in line with the "social value" account and would suggest that one possible explanation for the increased P300 response to lower status than higher status honesty in participants with low Objective SES is that these individuals may value higher status honesty more than lower status honesty. Additionally, participants with low Objective SES evidenced a tendency for investing more in higher status than lower status promises, despite the equal reinforcement schedule. This behavioral finding provides further support for the "social value" account, as participants in low Objective SES may have believed they had more to gain by investing in higher status than lower status promises. Taken together, the behavioral and neural findings for low Objective SES participants could suggest that these individuals perceive higher status promises and honesty as being more valuable than that of their lower status counterparts. Given that we did not manipulate feelings of SES and given the nonsignificant trend or tendency of the SES behavioral interaction in the current study, future research could directly address whether changes in SES feelings (e.g., Subjective SES) could replicate the e ects found in the current study and could provide more support for a causal explanation of SES in the current study.

In contrast to participants in low Objective SES, participants in high Objective SES evidenced no e ects of partner social status on P300 responses or behavior. P300 responses were greater in the low Objective SES group than in the high Objective SES group, repromponse1(in)]TJ 80(t)-0 01 k 0 0 01 K0e current

study 0 201.4TJ -457 Ttt (P300)0 lower soc3-11.457 Td [(study.)]TJ 4(a)1(s)-2 find 0 9 3m 0 8 part (1993) to (1933) 5 5a (ta)t (tb) (5 2c1.9 5p) (to ea) (b) (5 (b) (5 (a)) 0 ut550(cu6[(Ly)-475(et)cu6[(al.)]TJ0 0 0 1 k(6)]0 1 K6tive)-204(SES)-203

study.

is tied to increased investment likelihood in higher status than lower status promises.

A few points are worth mentioning. The social status manipulation (i.e., math guiz ranking) could, in fact, have influenced the way the participant viewed the lower and higherranking players in ways other than the prestige-based social status referred to in this study. (1) For example, despite the fact that we did not manipulate SES, participants did perceive higher ranking participants as having higher Subjective SES than that of their lower ranking counterparts. While this di erence in perceived Subjective SES did not correlate with investment di erences for lower and higher status partners in TG (p = 0.969), future research should look to manipulate partner SES while controlling for prestige-based social status to more directly address the unique e ects of perceived SES on perceived trust. (2) Another possible explanation for the e ect of social status on investment behavior may have been that participants may have inferred that higher status partners were happier than lower status partners after achieving their ranking (Hu et al., 2014), which could have increased perceived warmth and trustworthiness (Fiske et al., 2007). Despite the plausibility of this possibility, in the current study, participants evidenced a non-significant trend or tendency for perceiving higher status partners as less benevolent than their lower status counterparts, which is in line with past research (Dunn et al., 2012; Lount and Pettit, 2012), but does not support this alternative account. Moreover, status di erences in perceived benevolence did not predict the TG behavior interaction between partner social status and promise conditions, and so we do not discuss it further. (3) Finally, another possible explanation is that high status partners were perceived as having put in more e ort to the experiment, which could have increased their perceived trustworthiness. While we cannot rule this possibility out, it is important to note that the design of the experiment (only permitting 10 s per math question) rules out large di erences in perceived e ort. Taken together, the current study appears to be the start of a broader inquiry regarding the e ects of social status on perceived trustworthiness.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, by manipulating prestige-based social status, this study found that participants acting as Investors in TG tended to be more a ected by higher status Trustee promises than by lower status Trustee promises, despite the equal reinforcement

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schedule across conditions. At the neural level, in an early time window (250-310 ms), MFN responses were sensitive to return outcome, as MFN amplitudes were more negative when partners did not return than when they did return. This e ect was not modulated by the Trustee's social status. In later processing, P300 responses were modulated by social status and return. P300 amplitudes were only sensitive to return feedback from higher status partners, and failed to distinguish lower status partner return feedback; moreover, P300 responses were more positive for higher status returns than lower status returns, which suggests that higher status positive feedback may have been perceived as more motivationally significant or rewarding than lower status positive feedback. The current study also found that the lower the participants' Objective SES, the greater their di erential P300 e ect for higher status over lower status honesty and the more they invested in higher status than lower status promises, suggesting that individual di erences in SES a ect the perceived motivational salience/reward e ect of social status on honesty. Taken together, we find that social status influences the e ect of promises on investment behavior in TG, and that brain responses to honesty-related feedback in social hierarchies may involve both an early MFN processing of trustworthiness outcome valence information and a later P300 cognitive appraisal process which takes into account both social status and honesty and its relation to reward.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

PB, JH, and XZ designed the experiments and wrote the manuscript. PB and JH collected the data.

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Conflict of Interest Statement: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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