Running Head: Social Capital, Social Cost, and Relational Culture in Three Societies

Social Capital, Social Cost, and Relational Culture in Three Societies*

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Abstract

Does who you know in the status hierarchy satisfy or dissatisfy your life? Does that effect vary by culture and society? To addresses these two questions, this study applies four theories and analyzes the association between accessed status (network members' status) and life satisfaction using nationally representative retrospective data from three societies (the United States, urban China, and Taiwan). Social capital theory expects absolute and relative higher accessed status (network members' higher status relative to individuals') to improve life satisfaction and relative lower accessed status to diminish life satisfaction. Social cost theory asserts the opposite. The collectivistic advantage explanation anticipates social capital theory to apply more to urban China and Taiwan than social cost theory and social cost theory to apply more to the United States than social capital theory. The collectivistic disadvantage explanation predicts the opposite. This study measures nine indicators of absolute and relative accessed status on the occupational dimension and six domain-specific satisfactions. Results support both social capital theory and social cost theory in all three societies. There is tentative evidence for the collectivistic disadvantage explanation across the three societies. Theoretical and methodological implications are discussed.

Key words: social capital, social cost, relational culture, collectivistic advantage, collectivistic disadvantage, accessed status, life satisfaction

Social Capital, Social Cost, and Relational Culture in Three Societies

Social networks represent a theoretical perspective traced back to the seminal work of Durkheim, Simmel, and Tönnies. This perspective has inspired a thirteen-decade-long research tradition on the consequences of various network properties. One upstream structural attribute of social networks is accessed status. It is the positions one's (ego's) network members (alters) occupy in the hierarchical status structure (Lin and Dumin 1986). It constitutes the meso-level hierarchical context ego dwells in daily life. Its consequences have triggered six decades of systematic research (for reviews see Lin 2001a; Song, Frazier and Pettis 2018). Some recent studies find a puzzling paradox that accessed status plays a double-edged—protective and detrimental—role for health and well-being outcomes (Song et al. 2018). Despite its substantial contributions, prior work pays little attention to the double-edged function of accessed status for life satisfaction and the variation of that function across culture and society (Acock and Hurlbert 1993; Song 2014a).

Does who you know in the status hierarchy satisfy or dissatisfy your life? Does that effect vary by culture and society? To addresses these two questions, I apply a pair of competing theories (social capital versus social cost) and examine the association between accessed status and life satisfaction using nationally representative retrospective data collected concurrently in three societies: the United States, urban China, and Taiwan (Lin 2001a; Song 2015a; Song and Pettis 2018). The unique data also provide the opportunity to apply the relational culture perspective and examine a pair of competing institutional explanations—collectivistic advantage and disadvantage—on the varying strength of the two aforementioned theories across the three societies (Song 2015a; Song and Pettis 2018). They allow us to focus on six domain-specific life

satisfactions and measure retrospectively absolute (alters' status) and relative accessed status (alters' status relative to ego's) on the occupational dimension.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Accessed status constitutes a meso-level pyramid-shaped network hierarchy where alters occupy different positions (Lin 2001a; Lin and Dumin 1986). It has two distinctive dimensions: absolute and relative (Song 2015a). Five attributes of absolute accessed status are often measured: 1) diversity as the size of different positions alters occupy within the network hierarchy; 2) upper, average and lower reachability (alters' highest, average, and lowest positions) respectively as the top, average, and bottom status of the network hierarchy; and 3) extensity (the difference between alters' highest and lowest positions) as the range of status of the network hierarchy (Campbell, Marsden, and Hurlbert 1986; Lin and Dumin 1986). In contrast, relative higher or lower accessed status is objectively calculated as the size and proportion of alters' positions ranked higher or lower than ego's and subjectively measured as ego's perceived status relative to alters (Pham-Kanter 2009; Song 2015a; Song and Pettis 2018).

Accessed status is analyzed in Lin's network-based approach to social capital (1982, 2001a). There are other theoretical approaches to social capital but they do not examine accessed status (for reviews see Burt et al. 2019; Song, Son, and Lin 2010). Lin's approach defines social capital as resources embedded in social networks and specifies it as alters' hierarchical positions. Lin and colleagues developed the position generator to map the occupational network hierarchy (Lin and Dumin 1986; Lin et al. 2001). It asks respondents to identify contacts associated with a representative sample of occupational positions salient in a society. Originally focusing only on absolute accessed status, social capital theory assumes that absolute accessed status indicates

valuable and nonredundant social resources. With that assumption, this theory argues that absolute accessed status advances instrumental (economic, political, and social) and expressive (health and life satisfaction) actions (Lin 2001a). Its assumption and argument are recently extended into relative accessed status (Song 2015a; Song and Pettis 2018). Relative higher and lower accessed status respectively indicates the abundance or lack of social resources. Empirical studies have demonstrated the protective effects of accessed status on various instrumental and expressive outcomes across societies (Acock and Hurlbert 1993; Carpiano and Hystad 2011; Christakis and Fowler 2008; Lin and Ao 2008; Moore, Daniel, Paquet, Dubé, and Gauvin, 2009; Song 2011; Song and Chang 2012; Song and Lin 2009; for reviews see Lin 2001a; Song 2013a).

Social cost theory recently emerges as a theory for the detrimental function of accessed status in the research field of health and well-being (Song and Pettis 2018; Song et al. 2018). In contrast with social capital theory emphasizing the bright side of accessed status as a resource source, social cost theory highlights the dark side of accessed status as a source of detrimental social expenses. Social cost theory integrates three arguments for the harmful role of absolute accessed status and relative higher accessed status and the protective role of relative lower accessed status. First, absolute accessed status and relative higher accessed status trigger upward or negative social comparison, and relative lower accessed status downward or positive social comparison. Contrary to social capital theory which emphasizes alters as one source of social resources, comparative reference group theory underscores alters as one origin of the frame of reference and alters' status as social comparison standards (Festinger 1954; Gartrell 2002; Merton and Kitt 1950). This theory assumes that individuals tend to evaluate themselves in comparison to others, and these comparison targets constitute reference groups (Festinger 1954; Hyman 1942). It distinguishes two opposite ways of social comparison individuals make based on their status difference from their

reference groups. One way is negative social comparison with reference groups in better off or more satisfactory situations, and the other way positive social comparison with reference groups in worse off or more dissatisfactory situations. Negative social comparison is detrimental as it damages psychological resources (e.g., self-esteem and sense of control), generates negative psychological reactions (e.g., goal-striving stress, relative deprivation, anger, and sense of failure), provokes risky behaviors, produces emotional and social isolation, and hurts health and well-being, while positive social comparison does the opposite (Andersson 2018; Eibner and Evans 2005; Merton and Kitt 1950; Moore, Daniel, Gauvin, and Dubé 2009; Parker and Kleiner 1966; Song 2014a, 2015a). Therefore, the presence of higher-status reference groups or alters is harmful through triggering negative social comparison, while that of lower-status reference groups or alters is salubrious through eliciting positive social comparison. Second, absolute accessed status and relative higher accessed status brings ego detrimental resources such as stressful unsolicited support (Lin and Ao 2008; Song 2014b, 2015b; Song and Chen 2014). Third, their generation and maintenance involve burdensome networking investment and expenses (Bian 2001; Bourdieu 1986/1983; Coleman 1990; Lin 2001a). The opposite arguments apply to relative lower accessed status. Supporting social cost theory, a few studies across different societies report the harmful impacts of perceived lower status relative to that of social contacts on physical and mental health (Jusot et al. 2008; Lee and Kawachi 2017; Mangyo and Park 2011; Pham-Kanter 2009).

Seven studies have taken both social capital theory and some parts of social cost theory into consideration and all of them focus on health-related outcomes (Lee and Kawachi 2017; Moore, Daniel, Gauvin, and Dubé 2009; Song 2014a, 2015a, 2015b; Song and Pettis 2018; Song, Pettis, and Piya 2017). Four of them are single-society studies and the other three comparative cross-society studies. Among the four single-society studies, two of them support social cost theory

(Lee and Kawachi 2017; Song 2015b), and three of them find that the explanatory power of social capital theory versus social cost theory varies by gender and education (Lee and Kawachi 2017; Moore, Daniel, Gauvin, and Dubé 2009; Song et al. 2017). The three comparative studies report that the explanatory power of social capital and social cost theories varies by culture and society (Song 2014a, 2015a; Song and Pettis 2018).

Among the existing studies on consequences of accessed status, only two of them have examined life satisfaction (Acock and Hurlbert 1993; Song 2014a). One U.S. cross-sectional study reports that accessed educational status (network members' average education) is positively associated with general life satisfaction (Acock and Hurlbert 1993). A comparative cross-sectional study examines six domain-specific life satisfactions in three societies: the United States, urban China, and Taiwan (Song 2014a). It finds that the effect of absolute accessed occupational status is positive or negative or nonsignificant, depending on the life domains and the indicators of absolute accessed occupational status. Despite their contributions, these two studies have theoretical, methodological, and data limitations. Theoretically, the U.S. study ignores the possible double-edged role of accessed status. The comparative study gives incomplete theoretical attention to that double-edged role as it considers only one of the three possible mechanisms—upward social comparison—listed in social cost theory. Its institutional arguments for the varying double-edged role across society are limited to only the upward social comparison mechanism. The aforementioned three mechanisms for the detrimental role of absolute accessed status operate jointly. Methodologically, the two prior studies measure only absolute accessed status and ignore relative accessed status. How relative accessed status is related to life satisfaction remains unknown. Additionally, the two prior studies analyze across-sectional data. Their results cannot be used to infer causality.

The purpose of this present study is to examine the institutional contingency of the two competing theories (social capital and social cost) using two institutional explanations derived from the relational culture perspective (collectivistic advantage and disadvantage). This study analyzes nationally representative retrospective data simultaneously collected in three societies (the United States, urban China and Taiwan), which give us more confidence in causal inferences. It measures retrospectively five indicators of absolute accessed status and four indicators of relative accessed status on the occupational dimension. It also measures six domain-specific satisfactions. Life satisfaction is a subjective evaluation construct. Some scholars highlight it as one aspect of well-being and some one indicator of life quality (Schuessler and Fisher 1985; Thoits and Hewitt 2001). WHO considers it as part of health (Larson 1996). Its social causes differ from those of other well-being outcomes and vary by domain, culture, and society (Diener 2003; Flap and Völker 2001; Liao, Fu, and Yi 2005; Song 2014a; Thoits and Hewitt 2001). Whether accessed status affects life satisfaction differently across society remains underexplored.

THEORIES AND HYPOTHESES

Drawing on four theoretical approaches, this study proposes four hypotheses on the effect of accessed status on life satisfaction (see Figure 1 and Table 1). First, according to social capital theory, absolute accessed status improves life satisfaction through advancing social status, providing social support, enhancing health and healthy lifestyles, facilitating help seeking, acting as social credentials, decreasing stress exposure, reinforcing psychological resources, influencing policies, improving access to health care and insurance, and boosting the immune system (Carpiano and Hystad 2011; Christakis and Fowler 2008; Erickson 2003; Lin 2001a; Lin and Ao 2008; Moore, Daniel, Paquet, Dubé, and Gauvin 2009; Song, 2011; Song and Chang 2012; Song,

Son and Lin 2011; Song et al. 2018). The higher the absolute accessed status (i.e., diversity, upper, average and lower reachability, and extensity) and relative higher accessed status, the greater the variety, quality, range, and richness of social resources from alters, and the more positive ego feels about life satisfaction. In contrast, the greater the value of relative lower accessed status, the lower the status of alters relative to ego's, the smaller the amount of social resources ego has access to through alters, and the more negative ego feels about life satisfaction. The social capital hypothesis (H1) states that absolute and relative higher accessed status exert positive effects on life satisfaction, while relative lower accessed status does the opposite.

Insert Figure 1 Here

Insert Table 1 Here

Social cost theory has the opposite expectation. Upward social comparison, receipt of unsolicited support, and networking expenses decrease life satisfaction through reducing psychological resources, violating reciprocity, provoking stressful reactions and risky behaviors, sparking emotional and social disintegration, and damaging health (Andersson 2018; Eibner and Evans 2005; Moore, Daniel, Gauvin, and Dubé 2009; Song 2014a, 2014b, 2015a, 2015b; Song and Chen 2014). The higher the absolute and relative higher accessed status, the more diverse, greater, and broader the chance for ego to encounter higher-status reference groups, make negative social comparison, receive stressful unsolicited support, and face unbearable networking expenses, and the more negative ego's evaluation about life. In contrast, the greater the value of relative lower accessed status, the greater the chance for ego to meet lower-status reference groups, engage

with positive social comparison, encounter less unsolicited assistance, and worry less about networking expenses, and the more positive ego's evaluation about life. The social cost hypothesis (H2) states that absolute and relative higher accessed status exert negative effects on life satisfaction, while relative lower accessed status does the opposite.

Furthermore, from the relational culture perspective, two institutional factors influence the explanatory power of social capital and social cost theories in opposite directions: collectivistic advantage and disadvantage (Song 2015a; Song and Pettis 2018). There are two types of relational culture: individualistic and collectivistic culture. In comparison with individualistic culture in the United States, collectivistic culture in Chinese societies has both advantage and disadvantage. In terms of its advantage, collectivistic culture legitimates individuals' dependence on and use of social ties to a higher degree than individualistic culture (Lin 2001a, 2001b; Markus and Kitayama 1991; Song 2013b). Chinese are committed to cultivating and mobilizing their *guanxi* or ties for diverse purposes (Bian 2019; Lin 2001b; Yang 1994). Therefore, when evaluating life satisfaction, people in Chinese societies may perceive absolute and relative higher accessed status more positively as protective social resources but less negatively as harmful social expenses than those in the United States (Mojaverian and Kim 2012; Song 2015a). The opposite prediction applies to relative lower accessed status. The collectivistic advantage hypothesis (H3a) states that social capital theory should have more explanatory power than social cost theory in urban China and Taiwan and the opposite should apply to the United States. In other words, the effects of absolute and relative higher accessed status on life satisfaction should be more likely to be positive in urban China and Taiwan but negative in the United States, while that of relative lower accessed status should be more likely to be negative in urban China and Taiwan but positive in the United States.

In terms of its disadvantage, collectivistic culture may generate more negative social comparison, detrimental unsolicited support and stressful network expenses than individualistic culture. As the self-evaluation motive argument states, people in collectivistic culture seek more negative social comparison because they cherish social scrutiny and public reputation and endeavor for self-critical self-evaluation (Chung and Mallery 1999; Sasaki et al. 2014). Those in individualistic culture value the unique independent self and individual success and strive for self-serving self-evaluation through avoiding such comparison (Markus and Kitayama 1991). Internalizing the highly legitimated value of relational dependence, people in collectivistic culture also receive or perceive more unsolicited social support and be burdened by more networking investment (Bian 2001; Chentsova-Dutton 2012; Song 2014b; Yang 1994). Therefore, when evaluating life satisfaction, people in the United States may interpret and experience absolute and relative higher accessed status more positively as social resources but less negatively as social expenses than those in Chinese societies. The opposite expectation applies to relative lower accessed status. The collectivistic disadvantage hypothesis (H3b) predicts that social capital theory should have more explanatory power than social cost theory in the United States and the opposite should apply to urban China and Taiwan. In other words, the effects of absolute and relative higher accessed status on life satisfaction should be more likely to be negative in urban China and Taiwan but positive in the United States, while that of relative lower accessed status should be more likely to be positive in urban China and Taiwan but negative in the United States.

DATA AND METHODS

Data

The research project, "Social Capital: Its Origins and Consequences," conducted nationally representative surveys simultaneously in three societies in 2004-2005: the United States, urban China, and Taiwan (Lin, Fu, and Chen 2014). These surveys sampled working-age adults aged twenty-one to sixty-four, currently or previously employed. A random-digit dialing telephone survey was conducted from November 2004 to April 2005 in the United States, and two personal interview surveys through multistage systematic probability sampling were conducted respectively from November 2004 to March 2005 in urban China and from September 2004 to January 2005 in Taiwan. The U.S. sample had 3,000 respondents, the urban China sample 3,500 respondents, and the Taiwan sample 3,280 respondents. During the U.S. survey process an additional sampling criterion was imposed to seek out qualified African Americans and Latinos to approximate the census distribution. A dummy variable, quota, was created to identify respondents sampled after the recruitment change (value = 1). As in prior work, this study excluded adults whose accessed status cannot be measured due to their identifying no contacts associated with listed jobs in the position generator (N=170 in the United States, 110 in urban China, and 199 in Taiwan). The sizes of the analysis samples vary by dependent variable. A multiple imputation method was employed to impute missing values in independent variables of each analysis sample based on ten imputations through one Stata program (mi impute chained). Table 2 shows the summary of sample characteristics averaged over the ten imputed data sets.

Insert Table 2 about here

Dependent Variables

Respondents evaluated their satisfaction with six domains: financial situation, current job (for the employed), relationship with boss and colleagues (for the employed), relationship with neighbors, marital life (for married or cohabiting respondents), and relationship with children (for those with children). These six items were rated on a four-point scale (1 = very dissatisfied, 2 = a little dissatisfied, 3 = moderately satisfied, and 4 = very satisfied). With the exception of financial satisfaction, the other five items had very left-skewed distributions. To avoid convergence problems, the first two lower-satisfaction responses were merged into one for these five items.

Explanatory Variables

The surveys used the position generator to capture accessed status retrospectively prior to ego's current job (or last job for the unemployed). Respondents were presented with a list of twenty-one jobs and asked, "At the time [you started your current or last job], namely in year____, did you know someone who had the following kinds of jobs?" (see Table 3). The status of listed jobs was coded through the International Socio-Economic Index (ISEI) for the purpose of cross-society comparative analysis (Ganzeboom, DeGraaf, and Treiman 1992). The ISEI score for peasants in China and Taiwan was lower than that for farmers in the United States. Peasants are at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy in China and Taiwan, whereas farmers part of the middle class in the United States (Hout, Brooks, and Manza 1995; Lu 2005; Tsai and Chiu 1991). Five indicators of absolute accessed status were constructed: diversity (the number of accessed occupations), extensity (the difference between the highest and lowest ISEI score of accessed occupations), and upper, average, and lower reachability (the highest, average, and lowest ISEI scores of accessed

occupations). Four indicators of relative accessed status were calculated: the number and proportion of accessed occupations with ISEI scores higher or lower than that of ego's previous job (or last/current job for egos without a previous job).

Insert Table 3 about here

Control Variables

All analyses controlled for ten sociodemographic factors: age, gender, marital status, parenthood status, employment status, education, occupation, occupational authority, occupational autonomy, and annual family income (see Table 1). Annual family income had over twenty ordinal ranges. Natural logarithms for the medians of all ranges were calculated for a normal distribution of income. The analysis of the U.S. sample further controlled for race/ethnicity and quota and that of the urban China sample political capital and work units. Home ownership was controlled in the analysis of these two samples but unavailable in the Taiwan survey. Residential location was controlled in the analysis of the U.S. and Taiwan samples. Duration of marriage or cohabitation was controlled in the prediction of marital satisfaction.

Analytic Strategy

The six dependent variables were ordinal. As the Wald tests suggested, the proportional odds assumption was violated in ordinal logistic regression models of life satisfaction (Long and Freese 2014). This assumption did hold for all explanatory variables in the analysis of the U.S. and Taiwan

samples. In the analysis of the urban China sample, it held for all explanatory variables in models of two satisfaction items (relationship with neighbors and children) and for some but not all explanatory variables in models of other four satisfaction items. Therefore, partial proportional odds models (i.e., generalized ordered logit models) were estimated using gologit2 in Stata (Cornwell, Laumann and Schumm 2008; Williams 2006). These models produced respectively three and two panels of results when predicting four-category financial satisfaction and the other five three-category satisfaction items. The nine explanatory variables were separately examined in each society because they can exert different or even opposite effects on well-being (Song 2015a; Song and Pettis 2018). Odds ratios for explanatory variables were calculated as the odds of respondents' belonging to higher-satisfaction categories over the odds of their belonging to lower-satisfaction categories for one unit increase in explanatory variables. Odds ratios remained the same across panels when explanatory variables met the proportional odds assumptions. Due to the limited space, tables in the following section showed only significant odds ratios for explanatory variables, and only one panel of results for explanatory variables that met the proportional odds assumption. Other results are available upon request.

RESULTS

In the analysis of the U.S. sample, significant results pertained to three life domains: financial situation, relationship with neighbors, and marital life (see Table 4). Six explanatory variables were associated with financial satisfaction (see Models 1-6). Four of them had coefficients as expected by social cost theory (H2). Net of control variables, with one unit increase in diversity, extensity, upper reachability, and the number of higher-status accessed occupations, the chance of feeling more financially satisfied decreased respectively by a factor of .969, .991, .991, and .970

(see Models 1-3, and 5). Two explanatory variables had coefficients as predicted by social capital theory (H1). With one unit increase in lower reachability, the chance of feeling more financially satisfied increased by a factor of more than 1 (see Model 4: 1.011). With one unit increase in the number of lower-status accessed occupations, the chance of feeling more financially satisfied decreased by a factor of .967 (see Model 6). Consistent with social capital theory (H1), one and two explanatory variables were respectively associated with satisfaction with the neighbor relationship and marital satisfaction. With one unit increase in diversity, the chance of feeling more satisfied with the neighbor relationship increased by a factor of 1.022 (see Model 7). With one unit increase in the number and proportion of lower-status accessed occupations, the chance of feeling more satisfied with marital life decreased respectively by a factor of .958 and .658 (see Models 8-9).

Insert Table 4 about here

Next, in the analysis of the urban China sample, significant results appeared in five life domains: financial situation, current job, relationship with boss and colleagues, relationship with neighbors, and marital life (see Table 5). In the domain of financial situation, two explanatory variables had significant coefficients only in the last panel, that is, the contrast between all three lower-satisfaction categories with the highest-satisfaction category. Consistent with social cost theory (H2), with one unit increase in extensity, the chance of feeling very financially satisfied decreased by a factor of .988 (see Model 1). Congruent with social capital theory (H1), with one unit increase in lower reachability, the chance of feeling very financially satisfied increased by a

factor of 1.019 (see Model 2). In the current job domain, three explanatory variables had significant coefficients. As expected by social cost theory (H2), with one unit increase in extensity, the chance of feeling more satisfied with current job decreased by a factor of .995 (see Model 3). As predicted by social capital theory (H1), with one unit increase in lower reachability, the chance of feeling more satisfied with current job increased by a factor of 1.008 (see Model 5). Upper reachability had a significant coefficient only in the last panel. Consistent with social cost theory (H2), with one unit increase in upper reachability, the chance of feeling very satisfied with current job decreased by a factor of .992 (see Model 4).

Insert Table 5 about here

In the domain of the relationship with boss and colleagues, three explanatory variables had significant coefficients. Extensity and upper reachability had significant coefficients only in the last panel. Congruent with social cost theory (H2), with one unit increase in extensity and upper reachability, the chance of feeling very satisfied with that relationship decreased respectively by a factor of .995 and .993 (see Models 6-7). The number of lower-status accessed occupations had a significant coefficient only in the first panel. Consistent with social cost theory (H2), with one unit increase in the number of lower-status accessed occupations, the chance of feeling moderately or very satisfied with that relationship increased by a factor of 1.090 (see Model 8).

In the domain of the relationship with neighbors, five explanatory variables had significant coefficients. As predicted by social cost theory (H2), with one unit increase in diversity, extensity, upper reachability, and the number of higher-status accessed occupations, the chance of feeling

more satisfied with the relationship with neighbors decreased respectively by a factor of .980, .993, .993, and .968 (see Models 9-11, and 13). As expected by social capital theory (H1), with one unit increase in lower reachability, the chance of feeling more satisfied with that relationship increased by a factor of 1.008 (see Model 12). In the domain of marital life, two explanatory variables had significant coefficients. Consistent with social capital theory (H1), with one with one unit increase in diversity, the chance of feeling more satisfied with marital life increased by a factor of 1.020 (see Model 14). Congruent with social cost theory (H2), with one with one unit increase in the number of lower-status accessed occupations, the chance of feeling more satisfied with marital life increased by a factor of 1.037 (see Model 15).

Furthermore, in the analysis of the Taiwan sample, significant results appeared in two life domains: financial situation and relationship with neighbors (see Table 6). Consistent with social cost theory (H2), with one unit increase in diversity and the number of higher-status accessed occupations, the chance of feeling more financially satisfied decreased respectively by a factor of .983 and .970 (see Models 1-2). As expected by social capital theory (H1), with one unit increase in diversity and extensity, the chance of feeling more satisfied with the relationship with neighbors increased respectively by a factor of 1.021 and 1.005 (see Models 3-4). Consistent with social cost theory (H2), with one unit increase in lower reachability, the chance of feeling more satisfied with that relationship decreased by a factor of .992 (see Model 5).

Insert Table 6 about here

Finally, taken together, results varied by society. There was evidence for both social capital theory and social cost theory in all three societies. Across the three societies, however, there was tentatively more evidence for the collectivistic disadvantage explanation than for the collectivistic advantage explanation. Social capital theory received relatively more confirmation than social cost theory in the United States, while the opposite applied to urban China and Taiwan. In the United States, social capital theory was supported in more life domains and in more models than social cost theory. Evidence for social capital theory and social cost theory respectively pertained to three life domains (financial situation, relationship with neighbors, and marital life) and one life domain (financial situation). Significant results from five and four models were respectively consistent with social capital theory and social cost theory (see Table 4). In the two Chinese societies, social capital theory was confirmed in fewer life domains and in fewer models than social cost theory. In urban China, evidence for social capital theory and social cost theory was respectively related to four (financial situation, current job, relationship with neighbors, and marital life) and five life domains (financial situation, current job, relationship with boss or colleagues, relationship with neighbors, and marital life). Significant results from four and eleven models were respectively supportive of social capital theory and social cost theory (see Table 5). In Taiwan, evidence for social capital theory and social cost theory respectively pertained to one (relationship with neighbors) and two life domains (financial situation and relationship with neighbors). Significant results from two and three models were respectively congruent with social capital theory and social cost theory (see Table 6).

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Does who you know in the status hierarchy satisfy or dissatisfy your life? Does that effect vary by culture and society? This study derives four hypotheses respectively from four theoretical approaches. It measures nine indicators of accessed occupational status and investigates their associations with satisfaction in six life domains using nationally representative retrospective data from three societies. This study contributes to the relevant literature in four important ways.

First, this study applies social capital theory and its recently proposed competing theory, social cost theory, to theorize the double-edged role of accessed status for life satisfaction. Varying by the measurement of accessed occupational status and life domain, results support both theories in all the three societies. Social capital theory receives overall less evidence than social cost theory (eleven versus eighteen significant odds ratios). Both theories focus on accessed status but start from different assumptions. Social capital theory is based on the social resources assumption and emphasizes the protective side of accessed status. Social cost theory makes the social expenses assumption and highlights the detrimental side of accessed status. Lin's social capital theory was originally developed to explain the positive role of absolute accessed status for objective status attainment (1982, 2001a). Its social resources assumption may apply more to instrumental and objective outcomes, while the social expenses assumption in social cost theory may apply more to expressive, subjective, and evaluative outcomes. High absolute accessed status, for example, may consistently drive and help individuals to climb the social ladder and to obtain and maintain higher status in the social hierarchy. As an objective and instrumental outcome, status attainment does not directly reflect the hidden costs individuals face and carry in reaching and mobilizing high-status contacts. In contrast, high absolute accessed status influences life satisfaction simultaneously in two opposite directions. As a subjective and expressive outcome, life

satisfaction involves individuals' own evaluation of quality of life and entails the exposure of both networking benefits and costs. Life satisfaction will be boosted when high-status network members serve or are perceived more as a source of helpful social resources but suffer when they act or are viewed more as a source of harmful social expenses. Future research should consider this pair of competing theories conjointly and investigate possible psychosocial mechanisms for a more complete understanding of the complex role of accessed status.

Second, this study theorizes and analyzes the institutional contingency of the two competing theories—social capital and social cost—using two competing institutional explanations derived from the relational culture perspective: collectivistic advantage and disadvantage. Results across the three societies are tentatively more consistent with the collectivistic disadvantage explanation. There is relatively stronger evidence for social cost theory than for social capital theory in urban China and Taiwan, and for social capital theory than for social cost theory in the United States. These findings add to similar results of some previous work on accessed status and mental health, and highlight the dark side of collectivistic culture or the bright side of individualistic culture for expressive well-being (Song 2015a). Collectivistic culture tends to generate more disadvantages than advantages in expressive well-being through diluting the protective function of accessed status and reinforcing its detrimental function. Individualistic culture does the opposite. Also, prior work shows that the positive association between accessed status and status attainment does not vary across the three societies studied here (Lin 2001a; Son 2013). Findings together imply that relational culture—collectivistic versus individualistic culture—is more likely to interfere with the impact of accessed status on expressive outcomes than on objective and instrumental outcomes. Due to its subjective and evaluative nature, life satisfaction is more directly and intensely subject to the interplay of relational culture with

accessed status than objective outcomes. The two institutional forces—collectivistic advantage and disadvantage—may co-exist but the latter has greater explanatory power. Future research needs to compare the varying network embeddedness of objective and subjective outcomes in different relational culture.

Furthermore, this study illustrates the multifacetedness of life satisfaction and its varying network embeddedness across societies. The six life domains are under different or opposite influence of accessed status in different societies. Satisfaction with two domains—financial situation and relationship with neighbors—is most strongly associated with accessed status. Their associations appear in all three societies and respectively in ten and nine models. Satisfaction with marital life is associated with accessed status in two societies (the United States and urban China) and in four models. Satisfaction with the two job-related domains (current job and relationship with boss and colleagues) is related to accessed status only in urban China. Relationship with children is not associated with accessed status in any society. Theoretically speaking, social cost theory pertains most to the financial domain and social capital theory the domains of relationship with neighbors and marital life. There is evidence for social cost theory in the estimation of financial satisfaction in all three societies and for social capital theory in the prediction of satisfaction with the relationship with neighbors and marital satisfaction respectively in three and two societies. Satisfaction with the two job-related domains is associated with accessed status mainly in the direction predicted by social cost theory in urban China. As these domain-specific findings imply, the impact of accessed status may depend on four attributes of life domains: visibility, publicity, relevance, and centrality. The more visible and public domains (e.g., financial situation) trigger mechanisms for social cost theory to a greater degree, while the more invisible and private domains (e.g., relationship with neighbors and martial life) mechanisms for social

capital theory to a greater degree. The strong explanatory power of social cost theory for the two job-related domains in urban China may reflect the highly institutionalized centrality, visibility and publicity of work and work organization in urban China (Zhou 2004). In the domain of the relationship with children, network members may be too far away to influence intergenerational relationships. In addition, the detrimental effect of accessed status on satisfaction with financial and job domains is in contrast with its protective impact on status attainment (Lin 2001a). The social dynamics of subjective outcomes are more complicated and differ from those of objective outcomes. Future research on life satisfaction should recognize its multifaceted subjective nature and simultaneously assess satisfaction with diverse domains.

Finally, this study has theoretical and methodological implications for the multidimensional and many-sided measurement of accessed status. It is the first comprehensive analysis of all nine indicators of assessed status and specifically the first effort on life satisfaction to examine both the absolute and the relative dimensions of accessed status. Consistent with some prior work (Song 2015a; Song and Pettis 2018), results here vary by dimension and indicator of accessed status. Absolute accessed status has more explanatory power (as shown in fifteen models) than relative accessed status (as shown in eight models). Among the four indicators of relative accessed status, the numbers of higher- and lower-status accessed occupations has more explanatory power (as shown in seven models) than the corresponding proportions (as shown in one model). When evaluating life satisfaction, ego considers and reacts more to the absolute hierarchical positions network members occupy than to their relative positions in comparison with ego and more to the absolute size aspect of relative accessed status than to its proportion aspect. Also, among the nine indicators of accessed status, two of them (extensity and lower reachability) are most influential (as respectively shown in five models), followed by another three indicators

(diversity, upper reachability, and the number of lower-status accessed occupations) (as respectively shown in four models), the number of higher-status accessed occupations (as shown in three models), and the proportion of lower-status accessed occupations (as shown in one model). Average reachability and the proportion of higher-status accessed occupations have no significant coefficients. Theoretically speaking, lower reachability pertains more to social capital theory (as shown in four models) than social cost theory (as shown in one model); diversity and the number of lower-status accessed occupations fit equally to the two theories (as respectively shown in four models); extensity is more related to social cost theory (as shown in five models) than social capital theory (as shown in one model); upper reachability and the number of higher-status accessed occupations apply only to social cost theory (as respectively shown in four and three models). As these findings suggest, higher-status contacts are more likely to trigger mechanisms for social cost theory. Lower reachability is less likely to involve higher-status alters than another three indicators (upper reachability, extensity, and the number of higher-status accessed occupations). Diversity is a less direct indicator of the presence of high- or low-status alters. The number of lower-accessed occupational positions equally reflects the lack of social resources and the lower level of social expenses. The lack of evidence for average reachability implies that mechanisms for social capital theory and social cost theory possibly offset each other on the average aspect of accessed status. All these speculations deserve further scrutiny in future research.

As one of the beginning efforts to examine the association between accessed status and life satisfaction across societies, this study has four data limitations. First, this study analyzes retrospective cross-sectional data. The possibility of recall errors and selection bias cannot be dismissed. The associations between accessed status and life satisfaction may be spurious due to social selection. The positive association of absolute and relative higher assessed status with life

satisfaction may be due to the possibility that more satisfied people are more capable of reaching or attracting high-status social contacts (Li and Ferraro 2006; Schaefer, Kornienko, and Fox 2011; Thoits and Hewitt 2001). The negative association may be due to the possibility that less satisfied people are more motivated to seek out better-off contacts for help (Perry and Pescosolido 2012; Small 2017; Song and Lin 2009). In supplemental analysis, I applied the propensity score weighting method to correct selection bias (Guo and Fraser 2015). I recoded nine indicators of accessed status into dichotomous treatment variables and used them as independent variables and the inverse of estimated propensity scores as sampling weights in generalized ordered logit models of life satisfaction. Results from the weighted analysis using ATE (average treatment effect) and ATT (average treatment effect for the treated) weights were similar to the aforementioned findings with a few exceptions. In the United States, the number of lower-status accessed occupations had nonsignificant coefficients in the ATT-weighted analysis of financial satisfaction and the weighted analysis of marital satisfaction. In urban China, upper reachability had nonsignificant coefficients in the ATT-weighted analysis of satisfaction with the relationship with boss and colleagues and the weighted analysis of satisfaction with neighbor relationships; the number of lower-status accessed occupations had nonsignificant coefficients in the ATT-weighted analysis of satisfaction with the relationship with boss and colleagues and the weighted analysis of marital satisfaction; the number of higher-status accessed occupations had a nonsignificant coefficient in the weighted analysis of satisfaction with neighbor relationships. In Taiwan, lower reachability had a nonsignificant coefficient in the ATE-weighted analysis of satisfaction with neighbor relationships. Despite these exceptions, the overall conclusion remained unchanged. There was evidence for both social capital theory and social cost theory in all three societies. There was tentative evidence for the collectivistic disadvantage explanation across the three societies. Future research needs to

analyze prospective longitudinal data for the purpose of stronger causal inferences. Second, this study is subject to confounding bias. The data do not contain information, for example, on psychological factors, which may affect both life satisfaction and accessed status (Markowitz 2001; Thoits and Hewitt 2001; Tulin, Lancee and Volker 2018). Future research should control for possible confounding factors. Third, the data allow the measurement of accessed status only on the occupational dimension. The explanatory power of accessed status may vary by its status dimension. Alters' income, for example, may influence ego's financial satisfaction more directly. Future research should measure accessed status on diverse dimensions and compare their consequences. Finally, the data are unique but from only three societies. Future larger-scale national-level comparative data collection and research is needed for a fuller and more direct and causal examination of institutional factors.

Despite its data limitations, this present study is the first to investigate the institutional contingency of two competing theories—social capital and social cost—on life satisfaction using two competing institutional explanations: collectivistic advantage and disadvantage. It contributes, theoretically and methodologically, to a more complete framework for the complex roles of accessed status. Who you know in the status hierarchy may satisfy or dissatisfy your life, depending on measurement, life domain, and institutional contexts. Life satisfaction is a consequence of double structural embeddedness. It is embedded in meso-level network structures which are further embedded in macro-level institutional structures.

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Table 1. Summary of Theories and Hypotheses

Explanatory Variables / Theories	Absolute Accessed Status / Relative Higher Accessed Status	Relative Lower Accessed Status
Social Capital (H1)	Positive	Negative
Social Cost (H2)	Negative	Positive
Collectivistic Advantage (H3a)		
United States	Social Capital (H1) < Social Cost (H2)	Social Capital (H1) < Social Cost (H2)
Urban China/Taiwan	Social Capital (H1) > Social Cost (H2)	Social Capital (H1) > Social Cost (H2)
Collectivistic Disadvantage (H3b)		
United States	Social Capital (H1) > Social Cost (H2)	Social Capital (H1) > Social Cost (H2)
Urban China/Taiwan	Social Capital (H1) < Social Cost (H2)	Social Capital (H1) < Social Cost (H2)

Table 2. Summary of Sample Characteristics

	United States (N=2,830)		Urban China (N=3,362)		Taiwan (N=3,053)	
	Mean/ Percent	SD	Mean/ Percent	SD	Mean/ Percent	SD
Dependent Variables (Satisfaction with)						
Financial Situation						
Very Dissatisfied	10.14		9.49		8.61	
A Little Dissatisfied	16.78		32.81		23.45	
Moderately Satisfied	45.69		48.48		59.12	
Very Satisfied	27.39		9.22		8.81	
Current Job (Employed)						
Very Dissatisfied	3.49		3.03		2.40	
A Little Dissatisfied	7.44		16.77		11.79	
Moderately Satisfied	36.12		61.63		61.63	
Very Satisfied	52.95		18.58		24.52	
Number of Observations	2,204		2,541		2,137	
Relationship with Boss or Colleagues (Employed)						
Very Dissatisfied	2.40		1.14		.56	
A Little Dissatisfied	5.44		6.41		3.42	
Moderately Satisfied	35.30		69.74		65.75	
Very Satisfied	56.85		22.71		30.28	
Number of Observations	2,204		2,541		2,137	
Relationship with Neighbors						
Very Dissatisfied	3.89		1.04		1.38	
A Little Dissatisfied	6.57		6.63		7.96	
Moderately Satisfied	41.63		69.19		66.79	
Very Satisfied	47.92		23.14		23.88	
Number of Observations	2,204		2,541		2,137	
Marital Life (Married/Cohabiting)						
Very Dissatisfied	1.41		1.59		1.49	
A Little Dissatisfied	2.52		3.80		2.70	

Moderately Satisfied	18.77		49.91		39.07	
Very Satisfied	76.31		44.70		56.74	
Number of Observations	1,849		2,839		2,145	
Relationship with Children (Number of Children≥1)						
Very Dissatisfied	.93		0.77		.27	
A Little Dissatisfied	1.56		2.42		2.17	
Moderately Satisfied	11.47		42.44		34.64	
Very Satisfied	86.04		54.37		62.91	
Number of Observations	2,049		2,726		2,211	
Control Variables						
Age	41.77	10.48	39.38	10.27	40.86	11.59
Gender (1=Female)	54.31		50.51		47.85	
Race/Ethnicity						
White	70.00		--		--	
Black	11.87		--		--	
Latino	12.44		--		--	
Other Race/Ethnicity	5.69		--		--	
Quota	42.58		--		--	
Marital Status (1=Married/Cohabiting)	65.34		84.50		70.29	
Duration of Marriage/Cohabitation (Years)	15.99	10.37	16.12	9.56	18.28	11.28
Parenthood Status (Number of Children)	1.73	1.49	1.02	.71	1.79	1.40
Residential Location (1=Urban Areas)	89.15		--		80.32	
Political Capital (1=Communist Party Member)	--		21.86		--	
Education						
Middle School or Less	4.35		29.14		28.50	
High School Diploma	34.10		25.26		31.71	
Associate Degree	20.74		26.45		18.93	
College Degree	25.44		18.52		16.34	
College Degree or Above	40.64		19.15		20.82	
Master's Degree or Above	15.19		.63		4.45	
Employment Status (1=Full-Time Employed)	77.88		77.48		74.39	
Work Units (Current/Last Job) (1=State)	--		53.42		--	

Occupational Status (ISEI) (Current/Last Job)	50.88	16.39	47.34	14.65	42.67	14.16
Occupational Authority (1=Supervising Others in Current/Last Job)	46.64		25.19		32.99	
Occupational Autonomy (Current/Last Job)						
Absolutely Not	5.51		27.33		18.21	
Hardly	4.98		16.20		9.86	
To Some Extent	20.32		17.34		12.78	
Mostly	36.68		24.19		24.19	
Absolutely	32.51		14.94		34.96	
Annual Family Income (Median Range)	50,000-		15,000-		50,000-	
(US Dollars/Chinese Yuan/New Taiwan Dollar)	59,999		19,999		59,999	
Home Ownership (1=owning/buying)	73.85		85.51		--	

Notes: ISEI=Standard International Socio-Economic Index (Ganzeboom et al. 1992).

Table 3. Distribution of Occupational Positions in the Position Generator and Accessed Occupational Status

Position (ISEI)	Respondent Accessing (Percent)		
	United States (N=2,830)	Urban China (N=3,362)	Taiwan (N=3,053)
Lawyer (85)	54.17	22.55	15.39
Professor (78)	39.43	18.86	23.68
Middle School Teacher (71)	47.21	64.93	43.30
CEO (69)	21.06	24.42	23.81
Production Manager (67)	22.12	27.04	26.83
Personnel Manager (67)	35.87	34.83	45.99
Writer (66)	20.85	7.23	5.63
Computer Programmer (64)	44.28	15.23	31.48
Administrative Assistant (58)	34.91	15.35	29.18
Bookkeeper (56)	34.52	56.99	50.90
Policeman (53)	48.13	40.01	36.10
Receptionist (51)	49.54	13.59	26.89
Nurse (42)	63.43	45.39	38.81
Security Guard (35)	28.45	30.96	37.27
Operator in A Factory (34)	31.66	37.83	52.67
Taxi Driver (33)	9.93	34.27	29.64
Hairdresser (32)	60.04	25.64	47.13
Farmers (26)	43.60		
Janitor (26)	32.83	20.94	29.32
Housemaid/Babysitter (24)	31.27	13.56	25.32
Peasants (16)		70.91	61.15
Accessed Occupational Status (Mean (S.D.))			
Absolute Accessed Occupational Status			
Diversity	7.53 (4.32)	6.21 (4.12)	6.81 (4.71)
Extensity	45.63 (17.83)	46.73 (20.13)	41.43 (21.39)
Upper Reachability	75.76 (13.64)	69.25 (15.78)	64.48 (18.64)
Average Reachability	51.72 (8.62)	47.08 (10.47)	44.44 (11.54)

Lower Reachability	30.12 (10.03)	22.52 (12.27)	23.04 (11.15)
Relative Accessed Occupational Status			
Number of Higher-Status Accessed Occupations	3.84 (3.01)	3.18 (2.79)	3.73 (3.15)
Proportion of Higher-Status Accessed Occupations	51.56 (30.15)	49.64 (29.29)	55.16 (30.71)
Number of Lower-Status Accessed Occupations	3.46 (3.01)	2.80 (2.62)	2.87 (2.81)
Proportion of Lower-Status Accessed Occupations	44.96 (29.60)	46.03 (28.99)	41.63 (30.47)

Note: ISEI=Standard International Socio-Economic Index (Ganzeboom et al., 1992).

Table 4. Odds Ratios from Generalized Ordered Logit Models of Life Satisfaction in the United States

	Financial Situation (N=2,830)						Relationship with Neighbors (N=2,830)	Marital Life (N=1,849)	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
Diversity	0.969***						1.022*		
	(0.008)						(0.009)		
Pseudo R-Squared	.092						.020		
Extensity		0.991***							
		(0.002)							
Pseudo R-Squared		.093							
Upper Reachability			0.991**						
			(0.003)						
Pseudo R-Squared			.092						
Lower Reachability				1.011**					
				(0.004)					
Pseudo R-Squared				.092					
Number of Higher-Status					0.970**				
Accessed Occupations					(0.012)				
Pseudo R-Squared					.091				
Number of Lower-Status						0.967*		0.958*	
Accessed Occupations						(0.013)		(0.019)	
Pseudo R-Squared						.091		.023	
Proportion of Lower-Status									0.658*
Accessed Occupations									(0.136)
Pseudo R-Squared									.023

Notes: Control variables adjusted; Standard errors in parentheses; * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$.

Table 5. Odds Ratios from Generalized Ordered Logit Models of Life Satisfaction in urban China

	Financial Situation (N=3,362)		Current Job (N=2,541)			Relationship with Boss/Colleagues (N=2,541)		
	Model 1[a]	Model 2[a]	Model 3	Model 4[a]	Model 5	Model 6[a]	Model 7[a]	Model 8[b]
Extensity	0.988***		0.995*			0.995*		
	(0.003)		(0.002)			(0.002)		
Pseudo R-Squared	.059		.030			.016		
Upper Reachability				0.992*			0.993*	
				(0.003)			(0.003)	
Pseudo R-Squared				.030			.016	
Lower Reachability		1.019***			1.008*			
		(0.004)			(0.003)			
Pseudo R-Squared		.059			.030			
Number of Lower-Status Accessed Occupations								1.090*
								(0.038)
Pseudo R-Squared								.016

Notes: Control variables adjusted; Standard errors in parentheses; * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$;

[a] Odds ratios are the odds of respondents' belonging to the highest-satisfaction category over the odds of their belonging to lower-satisfaction categories for one unit increase in explanatory variables.

[b] The odds ratio is the odd of respondents' belonging to higher-satisfaction categories over the odd of their belonging to the lowest-satisfaction category for one unit increase in the explanatory variable.

Table 5. (Cont.)

	Relationship with Neighbors (N=3,362)					Marital Life (N=2,839)	
	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12	Model 13	Model 14	Model 15
Diversity	0.980*					1.020*	
	(0.009)					(0.010)	
Pseudo R-Squared	.011					.012	
Extensity		0.993***					
		(0.002)					
Pseudo R-Squared		.013					
Upper Reachability			0.993**				
			(0.002)				
Pseudo R-Squared			.012				
Lower Reachability				1.008*			
				(0.003)			
Pseudo R-Squared				.011			
Number of Higher-Status Accessed Occupations					0.968*		
					(0.014)		
Pseudo R-Squared					.011		
Number of Lower-Status Accessed Occupations							1.037*
							(0.017)
Pseudo R-Squared							.012

Notes: Control variables adjusted; Standard errors in parentheses; * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$

Table 6. Odds Ratios from Generalized Ordered Logit Models of Life Satisfaction in Taiwan

	Financial Situation (N=3,053)		Relationship with Neighbors (N=3,053)		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Diversity	0.983*		1.021*		
	(0.009)		(0.009)		
Pseudo R-Squared	.070		.074		
Extensity				1.005*	
				(0.002)	
Pseudo R-Squared				.074	
Lower Reachability					0.992*
					(0.004)
Pseudo R-Squared					.074
Number of Higher-Status		0.970*			
Accessed Occupations		(0.012)			
Pseudo R-Squared		.070			

Notes: Control variables adjusted; Standard errors in parentheses; * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$

Figure 1. The Conceptual Model of Accessed Status, Relational Culture, and Life Satisfaction