

ADVANCES IN
GROUP PROCESSES

Editor: EDWARD J. LAWLER

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ADVANCES IN GROUP PROCESSES

A Research Annual

Editor: EDWARD J. LAWLER
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GROUP PROCESSES

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PREFACE

The preface will include a statement of editorial policy for the series as well as a brief description of the contents of this particular volume.

EDITORIAL POLICY

The purpose of this series is to publish theoretical, review, and empirically based papers on group phenomena. The series adopts a broad conception of “group processes” consistent with prevailing ones in the social psychological literature. In addition to topics such as status processes, group structure, and decision making the series will consider work on interpersonal behavior in dyads (i.e., the smallest group), individual–group relations, as well as intergroup relations. Contributors to the series will include not only sociologists but also scholars from other disciplines, such as psychology and organizational behavior.

The series is an outlet for papers that are longer, more theoretical, and more integrative than those published by the standard journals. For example, the editor will be particularly receptive to work falling into the following categories:

1. Conventional and unconventional theoretical work, from broad meta-theoretical and conceptual analyses to refinements of existing theories and

hypotheses. One goal of the series is to advance the field of group processes by generating theoretical work.

2. Papers that review and integrate programs of research. The current structure of the field often leads to the piecemeal publication of different parts within a program of research. This series offers those engaged in programmatic research on a given topic an opportunity to integrate their published and unpublished work into a single paper. Review articles that transcend the author's own work are also of considerable interest.

3. Papers that develop and apply social psychological theories and research to macrosociological processes. One of the premises underlying this series is that the distinction between macro- and microsociological processes is a false one. The series will encourage the development of the macrosociological implications embedded in social psychological work on groups.

CONTENTS OF VOLUME 3

Three papers in this volume develop testable theories. The paper by Joseph Berger, Murray Webster, Jr., Cecília Ridgeway, and Susan J. Rosenholtz is a theoretical analysis of status cues which extends expectation states theory. It classifies status cues (task vs. categorical by indicative vs. expressive) and proposes that (1) where people are undifferentiated, status cues create differential performance expectations and, as a result, power and prestige differences, and (2) where people are already differentiated, status cues tend to be consistent with the existing status order. The paper by E. J. Lawler explicates and develops two theories that deal with the impact of power capability on power use. One theory, termed "conflict spiral," predicts greater use of power under high, compared to low, levels of power capability and in relationships with equal, compared to unequal, power; a deterrence formulation suggests the opposite. Finally, the paper by Toshio Yamagishi develops a theory of social dilemmas that integrates the structural and goal/expectation approaches. Yamagishi's theory proposes that people will voluntarily cooperate to produce a structural change resolving the social dilemma under certain conditions: when they develop a goal of mutual cooperation; when they perceive the effectiveness of the structural change; and when they realize that this structural change will not occur "automatically."

Three papers critique an existing body of work, offer new insights, and suggest new directions. Viktor Gecas argues that symbolic interaction, by failing to develop a theory of motivation, has slipped into an oversocialized concept of people. The solution is to analyze the motivational facets of the self concept. To this end, the paper distinguishes three motives—the self-esteem motive, the self-efficacy motive, and authenticity—and shows how

these improve understanding of socialization processes, especially the development of identities. Second, the paper by Debra Friedman critiques bargaining theory for not adequately dealing with the structural position of negotiators and offers principal-agent theory from economics as an alternative. The thrust of the argument is that when the negotiators are agents (e.g., in labor-management contexts) the context and dynamics of negotiation are different than when principals are in direct negotiation with each other. From principal-agent theory, some traditional assumptions underlying bargaining theory are “mistaken.” Third, the paper by Patricia R. Barchas argues that there is a reciprocal relationship between behavior in groups and physiological mechanisms, such that neither the social nor the physiological is under the complete control of the other. The paper examines the relationship of physiological processes to group phenomena such as conformity.

Three papers contain theoretical contributions as well as original data. The paper by Gary Alan Fine uses Bales’s SYMLOG to operationalize major concepts and propositions of Kurt Lewin’s field theory. Using the concept of “force field,” Fine obtains results that support predictions regarding the locomotion of people toward a confederate who engages in dominance behavior. The overall conclusion is that Lewinian field theory is not “the light that failed” but rather a light in need of a suitable power source. The paper by Stephen G. Lyng and David A. Snow analyzes “vocabularies of motive” underlying high-risk, life-threatening activity (sky-diving, in this case). The paper suggests that sensual pleasure, a countercultural orientation, and “edgework” or “taking it to the limit” are the primary motives. The general point is that groups establish motivational categories and justifications for activities and that these maintain group activities once they are established. The paper by Martha Foschi uses a Bayesian model to treat performance evaluations and expectations as a special case of information processing. The paper illustrates the potential value of a Bayesian model.

Edward J. Lawler
Series Editor

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STATUS CUES, EXPECTATIONS, AND BEHAVIOR

Joseph Berger, Murray Webster, Jr.,
Cecilia Ridgeway, and Susan J. Rosenholtz

ABSTRACT

Status cues are verbal and nonverbal information interactants use to infer another's status. To organize research findings and provide a theoretical account, we classify these cues as indicative or expressive in the way they communicate status information and categorical or task-related in the nature of the status information conveyed. Two generalizations summarize many findings about task cues: in homogeneous situations differences in task cues lead to corresponding differences in power and prestige behavior, and in heterogeneous situations differences in status characteristics are associated with coinciding differences in task cues. These generalizations are given a theoretical explanation by extending status characteristics theory. Additional implications of the extension are discussed.

I. INTRODUCTION

Status cues are indicators, markers, or identifiers of the different social statuses people possess. They are the social information people use when they come together to interact, the salient observations each makes about

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every other in order to decide who, and what sort of person, this individual is. They can be any immediately observable aspects of a person's appearance, behavior, or surrounding possession which can be used to make inferences about his/her social status.

Many sorts of status cues are obvious and unmistakable; symbols of military rank, dark or light skin or facial features indicating ethnic status, and physical features and dress which indicate states of gender are of this sort. But such cues, important as they are, barely begin to list the variety of social classifications most people make every day. Most of the time, people look for, and find, indicators of occupational prestige, educational level, community importance, intelligence, religion, fame, skill at performing particular tasks, and many other things. Such cues can be extremely subtle, though their effects upon interaction and people's lives are widely acknowledged. In this paper we report some results of recent investigations into the nature and functioning of status cues.

As we shall show later, finding status cues and documenting their effects are not problems, for they are everywhere and the literature reporting their effects is enormous. Older studies show important effects of cues to race and sex; recent studies document the importance of "nonverbal" factors. In fact, one of the major tasks confronting us is to bring some order out of this diverse literature.

If the research literature shows unexpected effects, or stronger effects of status cues than might have been expected (and it shows both those things), everyday experience attests to the importance of many common cues. Most people know, for instance, that speakers employing a nonstandard accent suffer certain social disadvantages. We know that speaking slowly often is a disadvantage, though the great importance of this variable may surprise some who are not familiar with the work of linguists. A diploma on the wall, a Phi Beta Kappa key on the tie chain, skin color, and the visible manifestations of sex all are known to affect perceptions and behavior. Finally, when a newspaper reporter wants the opinion of the sociology department chairperson or when an expert witness is introduced to a jury with professional title preceding her/his name, it is clear that the selections have been made deliberately and for obvious reasons. Other status cues could be mentioned for other social contexts: occupying a corner office with a computer terminal, picking the head of a conference table, etc.; these are only a few among many of the four different types we shall distinguish in this chapter.

From our perspective, some status cues are important because they set the stage for status-organizing processes, which we describe in more detail below. A program of investigation into the nature and scope of status-organizing processes has yielded some understanding of conditions under which and how social statuses possessed by actors affect the ways they are

treated and act in groups (see Berger et al., 1974, 1977, 1980). After presenting a conceptualization of the different types of status cues, we link them to established theories of status-organizing processes.

The essential feature of status cues is that they give information about the status and task abilities individuals possess. Whether obvious or extremely subtle, and whether their operation is conscious or not, they communicate information which individuals use to classify each other—to categorize, often in a nonconscious manner, what types of people are in the situation. Through the operation of some types of status cues, a status-organizing process becomes activated and determines subsequent interaction patterns of individuals. Also, the particular level of other types of status cues which individuals display will be components of the subsequent interaction patterns. Thus status cues activate a status-organizing process and are in turn affected by operation of that process.

Many of the phenomena we conceptualize as status cues have been studied and their effects documented by others using different terminology. For instance, the manner of speaking, including such factors as word choice, phrasing, loudness, and tone, has been called “nonverbal communication,” and the importance of communication through nonverbal means is now well accepted. We avoid that term because many significant status cues are in fact verbal; not only the *way* people say things, but their speech content as well can signify the states of task and status characteristics they possess. For instance, a direct claim such as “I am an expert in this” is verbal, and can be a powerful status cue. While our debt to earlier investigations will be clear, we do not find current distinctions fully satisfactory for conceptualizing the variety of cues available in normal interaction, and we believe it is possible to classify cues in a way which may be theoretically more useful.

Our approach here is the following. In Section II we present our classification of status cues: what they are and what types may usefully be distinguished. While we do not attempt a literature review here, we cite some of the studies involving different types of status cues. (Not all types and combinations of cues have been studied.)

In Section III we present abstract generalizations which organize some of the research on the operation of status cues. Some of the evidence from existing literature is cited that provides a basis for each of these generalizations.

In Section IV we describe how the abstract generalizations can be explained, using existing theories of expectation states and status organizing processes, which we summarize for that purpose. We also describe some independent tests of these explanations.

Section V summarizes the theoretical work presented here, and Section VI notes its theoretical and practical significance.

II. TYPES OF STATUS CUES

As we noted above, abundant literature, both theoretical and empirical, attests to the idea that, under certain conditions, people make use of various sorts of cues to identify each others' statuses. The relevant literature appears in diverse disciplines—sociology, psychology, linguistics, anthropology, and others—and there has not yet appeared any consensus on how to integrate it, how to classify the types of cues and their effects, or how to explain those effects. There is no doubt that the cues and their effects are important, but until some organization can be imposed, understanding will be very limited and specific to particular cases.

Two independent dimensions of cues appear important in classifying them. The first is the distinction of *indicative* cues from *expressive* cues. Indicative cues are those that explicitly label a person (by self and others) as possessing some status or condition: a diploma hanging on the wall; a Phi Beta Kappa key; a statement such as "I am a lawyer" or "I don't know how to do this kind of work." Indicative cues have two defining qualities. First, they make clear, direct claims to possessing either states of particular status characteristics (such as educational attainment, professional expertise), or possessing states of specific abilities and competences. Second, they are cues which in our society are assumed to be under the volitional control of the actor who displays them. Consequently, as attribution theorists (e.g., Jones and Davis, 1965; Kelley, 1973) have pointed out, status claims made by indicative cues usually appear to others to be intentional or deliberate. The display of a diploma or a statement of one's occupation ordinarily is taken as a deliberate, explicit claim to possess a certain state of a diffuse status such as education or a specific status which may be related to the task at hand (e.g., mathematician), while a direct claim to ability in a particular situation is an attempt to indicate the necessary skills for the task at hand.

We distinguish indicative cues from those we call *expressive*. These cues are, to use Goffman's (1959) phrase, "given off" during interaction rather than directly presented, as when someone exhibits a Cambridge accent, a lawyer's or a doctor's word choices, or a firm, confident tone of voice. They are implicit rather than explicit. Expressive cues are commonly assumed (often incorrectly) to be beyond an actors' complete volitional control. Consequently, the status messages they carry do not appear to be deliberately presented (whether or not they are).

Expressive cues may provide information about the status characteristics the individual possesses—for example, dialects, body movements, word usage which may indicate educational level, the individual's occupational position, or ethnic identity. Skin color, for instance, is an expressive cue for race because it can be noticed and read by others, but is not a deliberate

claim by the actor. Expressive cues also may provide information about the abilities of the individual. The speed with which the individual speaks, the fluency of speech, the tone, and the duration of his/her gaze are all expressive cues that are relevant to identifying the task capacities of the individual.

On the basis of much research in the nonverbal behavior tradition (e.g., Ekman and Friesen, 1969; Mehrabian and Wiener, 1967; Mehrabian, 1981), we know that in cases where expressive and indicative cues conflict or give contradictory information, expressive cues generally are more powerful. Thus if a person shouts, "I am NOT angry!" while his face is red and he pounds his fist on the table, most people will give greater weight to the expressive rather than the indicative cues of his internal emotional state. The reason for this seems to be the appearance expressive cues give of being relatively involuntary or unintentional and, therefore, less easily orchestrated to deceive than are indicative cues.

Our classification of indicative and expressive cues has some overlap with an older classification into *verbal* or *nonverbal*, though the coincidence is not perfect. Many verbal cues are indicative, many nonverbal cues are expressive—not all. Saying "I'm sure I know how to solve this problem" is both a verbal cue and an indicative one, a claim that the speaker possesses the specific ability the group task requires. Too, saying that in a shaky, halting, questioning voice is both expressive and nonverbal; and it invites an inference that the speaker does not know what s/he is talking about. But hanging a diploma on the wall is an indicative cue, not a verbal one, as is wearing a Phi Beta Kappa key or wearing a business suit to serve on a jury. Similarly, in the category of expressive cues we include behaviors not usually studied as "nonverbal behavior," such as choosing the head of the table (as opposed to being assigned to sit there), which Nemeth has shown increases the individual's influence in the group (see Nemeth and Wachtler, 1974).

The second dimension, which has already been implied in our discussion, is that between *task* cues and *categorical* cues. Task cues give information about performances taking place in the immediate interaction situation; they make claims or permit inferences about how well actors are doing in this group, and the level of more general problem-solving ability they possess which becomes relevant to the immediate task problem. Categorical cues give information about "who these people are," the types or status categories of the actors. Thus dark skin and black-accented English are categorical cues to the status *black*. What goes on during interaction gives task cues, both expressive and indicative. The social selves which individuals present to others give categorical cues, again both expressive and indicative.¹

These two dimensions of cues are independent. Putting them together

	Task	Categorical
Indicative	<p>1</p> <p>“I just happen to know how to do this.”</p> <p>“I am confident of my abilities here.”</p> <p>“I have had a great deal of previous experience with this type of problem.”</p> <p>“I have the ability in general to solve problems.”</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Diploma, licenses, and certificates</p> <p>Obvious symbols of wealth, poverty, educational attainment, status position</p> <p>“I have a Harvard Ph.D.”</p> <p>“I am a mathematician.”</p> <p>“I am a Chicano.”</p>
	<p>3</p> <p>Eye contact and duration</p> <p>Speech speed</p> <p>Speech loudness</p> <p>Speech fluency or hesitancy</p> <p>Rapid, sure movements (in sports)</p> <p>Graceful posture (in sports)</p> <p>Choice of head of table</p> <p>Maintaining minority position</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Ethnic or regional dialect</p> <p>Grammar, word usage, phonology</p> <p>Speech styles which are race specific, gender specific, or ethnic specific</p> <p>Skin color or facial features which are race, gender, or ethnic specific</p>

Figure 1. Examples of various types of status cues in problem-solving groups.

yields the fourfold classification of cues presented in Figure 1 along with examples of each of the four types.

Note that it is possible—indeed it is likely—that every individual in a group will present all four types of cues. Categorical cues such as accent and skin color give information about external status characteristics the individual possesses, whereas task cues such as speech fluency and maintaining eye gaze, or overt claims a person makes, give information which others evaluate as telling how well that individual is able to do in the immediate situation. To look at this another way, verbal claims such as “I can cure your illness” and a diploma on the wall from an excellent medical school both indicate explicit claims to expertise on the task characteristic. A confident tone of voice and the use of technical medical terms both express this expertise in a different way, and they require that the patient read these behavioral expressions of this expertise.

Of the four cue types shown in Figure 1, we will concentrate in this paper on expressive cues, those in cells 3 and 4. Focusing on expressive cues here should not suggest that indicative cues are somehow less important; far from it—only a place to begin. Eventually we hope to be able to formulate generalizations and explanations of the operation of all four