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Status, Expectations, and Behavior: A Meta-Analytic Review and Test of the Theory

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Status characteristics and expectation states theory is concerned with the processes whereby status differentials activate performance expectations and with the effect of these expectations on behavior. The relative contributions of status and expectations to behavior have not been clearly established in previous primary-level studies. Moreover, researchers working within alternative perspectives on interaction inequality have argued that expectations are a superfluous epiphenomenon of behavior. A meta-analytic integration was therefore conducted on previous research that has examined the status respectations results indicate that status exerts its effects on behavior indirectly, through the effects of status on expectations and the effect of expectations on behavior.

Research, as well as casual observation, reveals that status gradients quickly emerge in initially unstructured task groups. Some group members attain a superordinate position in terms of power and prestige; they talk more, have their ideas more readily accepted by others, and receive more votes as "group leader" (e.g., Mullen, Salas, & Driskell, 1990). The theory of status characteristics and expectation states (Berger & Conner, 1969; Berger, Wagner, & Zelditch, 1985; Berger, Fisek, Norman, & Zelditch, 1977; Webster & Driskell, 1978) offers one perspective for analyzing the development of such differentiation within small, task-oriented groups. In short, the theory argues that certain members of these groups are treated unequally because unequal performance expectations are held for them. This article reports the results of a meta-analytic examination of this central assumption of the theory.

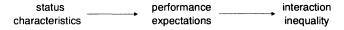
The basic assumption of the theory is that within task groups whose members are differentiated by some valued characteristic (e.g., race, sex, age, ability) individuals form stable conceptions of one another's performance capabilities which are consistent with the distribution of that valued characteristic. These performance expectations, or expectation states, determine the power and prestige structure of the group, including opportunities to perform, deference, and the exercise of influence. Status

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characteristics serve as cues to performance capability because they are culturally evaluated (e.g., it is considered preferable in our culture to be White, male, and professional) and carry performance connotations (e.g., Whites, males, and professionals are thought to do better at most tasks). The external evaluation of a status characteristic is imported into the group and forms the basis for the assignment of performance expectations.

Thus, the theory posits the following process:



External characteristics that differentiate group members lead to the formation of differential performance expectations, which, in turn, determine the observable inequalities in group interaction.

EVIDENCE FOR THE THEORY

The three bivariate relations implied by the foregoing discussion have received differing amounts of research attention. The effects of status on behavior have been well documented in a wide range of laboratory and applied settings (Cohen, 1982; Driskell, 1982; Lockheed & Hall, 1976; Meeker & Weitzel-O'Neill, 1977; Webster & Driskell, 1978; Wood & Karten, 1986). Although the effect of status on expectations is generally assumed (and, in fact, is a central tenet of the theory), it is rarely demonstrated (notable exceptions are Webster & Driskell, 1978; Wood & Karten, 1986; Zeller & Warnecke, 1973). Finally, few studies have explicitly reported the effect of expectations on behavior, although again the theory assumes that expectations determine behavior (again, notable exceptions are Driskell, 1986; Wood & Karten, 1986).

It must be recognized that there are two ways in which the fundamental assumptions of status characteristics and expectation states theory have not been fully and explicitly examined in the previous primary-level studies. First, relatively few studies have collected data on all three of the bivariate relations defined by the theory (status-behavior, status-expectations, and expectations-behavior), and not all of these studies have reported the specific tests for all three bivariate relations. Second, and perhaps even more important, the primary-level studies that have examined these bivariate relations have generally not examined whether the specific patterning of these three bivariate relations fits the requirements of the theory. Note that the theory does not merely suggest that the three variables of status, expectations, and behavior will be correlated with one another. Status characteristics and expectation states theory postulates that status will exert its effects on behavior through its effects on expectations. This postulate translates into two specific patterns of results. At the simplest level, it suggests that the effects of status on behavior will be weaker than the effects of status on expectations and the effects of expectations on behavior. At a more complex level, it suggests that partialing out the effects of expectations will reduce the magnitude of the status-behavior effect to triviality, whereas the magnitude of the expectations-behavior effect will remain considerable even after partialing out the effects of status. Although these specific patterns are assumed by status characteristics and expectation states theory and implied in the discussion sections of articles published within this domain, a narrative reading of this literature does not convey whether or to what extent these specific patterns are substantiated in the evidence collected to date.

ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES

Several alternative positions have been forwarded regarding the relations among status, expectations, and behavior described above. Despite the plausibility of the status characteristics and expectation states theory, its assumptions have not been unquestioningly accepted. For example, Molm (1985) has persuasively argued that the theory assumes that the status-expectations effect and the expectations-behavior effect should correspond, but that this correspondence is seldom substantiated. Mazur (1985; Mazur et al., 1980; Rosa & Mazur, 1979) has developed a biologically oriented dominance approach to status and behavior which suggests that expectations should not be the primary causal determinant of behavior. Nemeth (1988) has even pointed out that the fundamental link between status and behavior might be subject to exception, insofar as low-status group members might sometimes be expected to exert more influence in groups.

More forcefully, Lee and Ofshe's (1981, 1983) two-process theory has argued that behavior is determined directly by status and is followed by cognitive activity designed to understand that behavior. This is in direct contradiction to the patterns involving status, expectations, and behavior formulated by status characteristics and expectation states theory. For example,

The initial idea that occupational, or race, or gender, or age, or class status leads to guesses about intelligence and hence to placing bets about who is correct was at least simple and understandable, albeit wrong. It seems that the program has become an amorphous mass of absorbed notions capable of incorporating anything into its formlessness as it smiles and burps down the road towards the confusion from whence it came. (Lee & Ofshe, 1983, p. 65)

This clearly portrays a perspective on the relations of status, expectations, and behavior that differs from the formulations of status characteristics and expectation states theory. Mazur's dominance approach and Lee and Ofshe's two-process theory represent perspectives in which expectations are little more than a superfluous epiphenomenon of behavior. This translates into two specific patterns of results. At the simplest level, it suggests that the effects of status on behavior will be *stronger* than the effects of status on expectations and the effects of expectations on behavior. And at a more complex level, it suggests that partialing out the effects of status will reduce the magnitude of the expectations-behavior effect to triviality, whereas the magnitude of the status-behavior effect will remain considerable even after partialing out the effects of expectations.

In one of the most even-handed contributions to this debate, Sherman (1983) noted that the key issue raised by this dispute is whether expectations direct behavior (as

per status characteristics and expectation states theory) or whether behavior occurs in direct response to situational factors and is coincidental with cognitive activity designed to understand the behavior (as per the dominance approach, or the two-process theory, cited above). According to Sherman, the issue is far from settled. Thus, one purpose of this meta-analytic integration is to determine whether and to what extent the results of previous research support the formulations of status characteristics and expectation states theory.

EFFECTS OF THE STRENGTH OF THE STATUS DIFFERENTIALS

Implicit in most discussions of status characteristics and expectation states theory (e.g., Berger et al., 1977; Webster & Driskell, 1978) is the assumption that status differentials fall along a gradient or continuum (rather than a simple dichotomy of "low status/high status"). For example, the status difference between college students who perform differently on a task-relevant pretest (Driskell, 1982) may be weaker than that between military personnel who differ in rank (enlisted vs. officers; Driskell, 1986).

An intriguing derivation of the theory can be generated from the notion of a continuum of status differential strength. If the direct effect of status is on expectations (as per status characteristics and expectation states theory), then the strength of the status differential should predict the magnitude of the status-expectation effect. Alternatively, if the direct effect of status is on behavior (as per the alternative perspectives considered in the previous section), then the strength of the status differential should predict the magnitude of the status-behavior effect. Thus, a second purpose of this meta-analytic integration is to determine the extent to which the various relations among status, expectations, and behavior are moderated by the strength of the status differentials.

PROCEDURE

In accord with the procedures specified in Mullen (1990), Mullen and Rosenthal (1985), and Rosenthal (1980, 1984), studies were located using a comprehensive computer search of relevant databases, the "ancestry" approach (locating previous studies mentioned in reference lists of already-located studies), the "descendency" approach (locating subsequent studies that mentioned already-located studies, using the Social Sciences Citation Index), and the "invisible college" approach (discussion with colleagues publishing in this research domain).

Studies were selected for inclusion in this meta-analysis if they met the following criteria: (a) Each study had to manipulate some aspect of status of the group members (e.g., race, sex, ability scores, educational level, military rank), (b) Each study had to measure some facet of the group members' expectations and some type of observable task behavior, (c) Each study had to report (or allow for the retrieval of) a statistical test of the effects of status on expectations, the effects of status on behavior, and the relation between expectations and behavior. When appropriate, the authors of the

original publications were contacted and supplementary analyses were requested. Seven sets of hypothesis tests, derived from six separate publications, met these selection criteria. The simple bivariate relations among status, expectations, and behavior were used to derive the partial correlations between status and behavior (partialing out the effects of expectations) and the partial correlations between expectations and behavior (partialing out the effects of status). The articles included in this meta-analytic database and the relevant statistical information are present in Table 1.

In addition, each study was evaluated for the strength of the manipulation of the status differentials. Specifically, six judges (four graduate students in social psychology and two faculty members in social psychology) evaluated the strength of each manipulated status differential condition, with no reference to study outcome or authorship, on a 9-point scale (where 1 = no difference between the two manipulated status differential conditions and 9 = large difference between the two manipulated status differential conditions). Thus, a high-strength status manipulation would be one in which the judges perceived a considerable difference between the status represented in the high-status condition and the status represented in the low-status condition. A low-strength status manipulation would be one in which the judges perceived very little difference between the high-status condition and the low-status condition. The mean interjudge reliability was $\bar{r} = .740$, p = .0116; the Spearman-Brown effective reliability based on six judges was R = .945. Thus, judges exhibited an adequate amount of agreement in gauging the strength of the status manipulations used in these studies. The mean strength of the manipulations of the status differentials, collapsed across judges, is also presented in Table 1.

These hypothesis tests were subjected to the following meta-analytic procedures: combination of significance levels and effect sizes, diffuse comparisons of significance levels and effect sizes, and focused comparisons of significance levels and effect sizes. Formulas and computational procedures are provided elsewhere (see Mullen, 1990; Mullen & Rosenthal, 1985; Rosenthal, 1980, 1984).

RESULTS

Table 2 presents the results of the meta-analytic weighted combinations of significance levels and effect sizes (where study outcomes are weighted by sample sizes). These meta-analytic combinations reveal that status is a significant and strong predictor of expectations, status is a significant and moderate predictor of behavior, and expectations are a significant and strong predictor of behavior.

Particularly informative are the results of the meta-analytic combinations for the two partial correlations derived for each study. Partialing out the effects of status did produce a significant (Z = 2.310, p = .0105) reduction in the magnitude of the relation between expectations and behaviors (from $\bar{r} = .48$ to $\bar{r} = .37$). However, even when the effects of status are partialed out, expectations are still a moderate predictor of behavior (accounting for 14% of the variability in behavior). Alternatively, partialing out the effects of expectations produced an even more significant (Z = 3.409,

TABLE 1: Studies Included in the Meta-Analysis

Study	Effect ^a	Test	N (df)	-	a	SSM ^b	Status Dimension	Behavior Measure
Zeller & Warnecke (1973)	လ လ က က လ က ထ ထ ထဲ ထဲ လ က	r = .548 r = .222 r = .62 r = .611	160 (158) 160 (158) 160 (158) 160 (157) 160 (157)	.548 .222 .620 .611	1.0E-13 .0024 2.8E-17 1.01E-16	5.0	Educational attainment	Allocation of responsibility
Webster & Driskell (1978)	о н в в п в в в о п	U = 13.5 Z = 3.82 r = .602 r = .270	42 (20,22) 42 (20,22) 42 (40) 42 (39) 42 (39)	.780 .589 .602 .270	1.1E-7 6.6E-5 1.0E-5 .0437	8 5	Race and pretest scores	Influence
Driskell (1982)	ல் ல் நு ந நு கு கு கு ல நு	U = 81.5 p = .021 r = .417 r = .311	40 (20,20) 40 (—) 40 (38) 40 (37) 40 (37)	.507 .322 .417 .311	.00068 .021 .0037 .0271	8.	Pretest scores	Influence

Webster (1982)	о н н н н н н н о н н н н е н н е н н е н е	<i>U</i> = 28.5 <i>U</i> = 139.5 <i>r</i> = .382 <i>r</i> = .292 <i>r</i> =032	40 (20,20) 40 (20,20) 40 (38) 40 (37) 40 (37)	.733 .260 .382 .292 032	1.8E-6 .05 .0075 .0359 .5762	8.	Pretest scores	Influence
Wood & Karten (1986)	о о п п о о п п о о о о о о о о о о о о	F = 6.89 F = 14.09 r = .240 r = .010 r = .513	68 (1,32) 68 (1,32) 68 (123) 68 (31) 68 (31)	.421 .553 .240 .010	.0066 .00035 .0035 .4780	ဗ် ဗ	Gender	Proportion of task behavior
Wood & Karten (1986)	S E E E E E E E E E E E E E E E E E E E	F = 9.57 F = 4.27 r = .240 r = .091 r = .268	68 (1,32) 68 (1,32) 68 (123) 68 (31) 68 (31)	.480 .343 .240 .091	.0021 .0235 .0035 .3064 .0662	8.	Pretest scores	Proportion of task behavior
Driskell (1986)	о с н п о о н в н в н о н о	<i>U</i> = 53.5 <i>U</i> = 94 <i>r</i> = .600 <i>r</i> = .460 <i>r</i> = .138	39 (19,20) 40 (19,21) 39 (37) 39 (36) 39 (36)	.606 .452 .600 .460	6.3E-5 .0021 2.7E-5 .0018		Military rank	Influence

a. S = status; E = expectations; B = behavior. b. SSM = strength of status manipulation.

	S-E	S-B	E-B	E-B.S	S-B.E
Combinations			**************************************		
Significance					
Z	11.45	6.08	11.32	8.56	0.33
p	4.98E-25	7.77E-10	1.13E-24	9.53E-17	.3709
Effect size					
Fisher's Z	0.65	0.38	0.52	0.39	0.10
\overline{r}	.57	.36	.48	.37	.10
\bar{r}^2	.32	.13	.23	.14	.01
ď	1.39	0.78	1.10	0.79	0.21
Diffuse comparis	ons				
Significance					
$\chi^2(6)$	20.53	3.88	29.93	48.19	16.27
p	.0010	.6924	.000005	6.21E-11	.0124
Effect size					
$\chi^{2}(6)$	13.37	12.00	19.35	32.70	29.95
p	.0375	.0619	.0018	9.45E-7	.000005

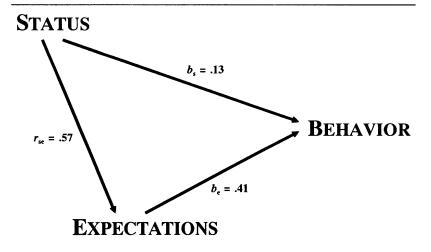
TABLE 2: Results of Meta-Analytic Combinations and Comparisons

p=.0003) reduction in the magnitude of the relation between status and behavior (from $\overline{r}=.36$ to $\overline{r}=.10$). When effects of expectations are partialed out, status becomes a trivially weak predictor of behavior (accounting for 1% of the variability in behavior). Finally, it should be noted that the magnitude of effect for the relation between expectations and behavior after partialing out the effect of status ($\overline{r}=.37$) was significantly larger (Z=1.766, p=.0387) than the magnitude of effect for the relation between status and behavior after partialing out the effect of expectations ($\overline{r}=.10$).

These data argue strongly on behalf of the formulations of status characteristics and expectation states theory: Status seems to influence expectations, expectations seem to influence behavior, and there seems to be little direct influence of status on behavior, beyond that which can be attributed to the effect of status on expectations.

One way of illustrating this pattern is with the path analysis diagram in Figure 1. This path analysis is obtained from the meta-analytically derived mean rs presented in Table 2. Figure 1 shows that the direct effect of status on behavior is considerably smaller than the direct effect of expections on behavior and that the real contribution of status in this model is to the determination of expectations.¹

Regarding the effects of the strength of the manipulation of the status differentials, Table 3 presents the correlations between Fisher's Z for effect size and the strength of status, and the corresponding meta-analytic focused comparisons, for each of the relationships considered above. These results reveal that the strong effect of status on expectations becomes even stronger with stronger manipulations of status. The moderate effect of status on behavior is not affected by the strength of the status



Direct effect of STATUS on BEHAVIOR: $b_s = .13$ Indirect effect of STATUS on BEHAVIOR: $b_e r_{se} = .23$ Direct effect of EXPECTATIONS on BEHAVIOR: $b_e = .41$

Figure 1 Path analysis based on meta-analytic combinations of effects.

TABLE 3: Effects of Strength of Status Manipulation

	S-E	S-B	E-B	E-B.S	S-B.E
Correlation	.724	.287	.420	.065	164
Focused compa Significance	arisons				
Z	2.390	0.703	0.893	0.341	0.404
p	.0084	.2409	.1858	.3667	.3432
Effect size					
Z	2.525	0.791	1.397	0.242	0.612
р	.0058	.2145	.0812	.4042	.2703

manipulation. And the strong effect of expectations on behavior becomes somewhat stronger with stronger status manipulations. Thus, the status-expectations effect, which represents the direct effect of status, is exaggerated by stronger manipulations of status; and the status-behavior effect, which represents the indirect effect of status, is not influenced by the strength of the status manipulation.

The tendency for the expectations-behavior effect to get somewhat stronger with stronger manipulations of status might be considered at least partially inconsistent with the theory: Once status has exerted its effects on expectations, one might expect the strength of the manipulation of status differentials to be unable to exert any effect on behavior. Fortunately, examination of the prediction of the partial correlations by the strength of the status manipulation clarifies this picture. The trivially small effects of status on behavior after partialing out the effects of expectations are not affected by the strength of the status manipulation. More important, the moderate effects of expectations on behavior after partialing out the effects of status are not at all affected by the strength of the status manipulation. Thus, converging on the pattern portrayed in Figure 1, the effects of status on behavior seem to be largely indirect, through the effect of status on expectations.

DISCUSSION

The results of these analyses can be summarized as follows: Status is a strong predictor of expectations; status is a moderate predictor of behavior; and expectations are a strong predictor of behavior. When the effects of expectations are partialed out, the status-behavior effect is reduced to triviality; however, when the effects of status are partialed out, the expectation-behavior effect is still of moderate magnitude. In addition, the strength of the status differential manipulation seems to predict those effects, and *only* those effects (specifically, the status-expectations effect), that should be influenced by the strength of the status manipulation if the formulations of status characteristics and expectation states theory are accurate.

These results are not apparent from a narrative reading of the literature on status characteristics and expectation states theory. Few studies have examined the three bivariate relations postulated by the theory. Few (if any) of the studies that did measure changes in expectations and behavior as a function of status have reported comparisons of the relative magnitudes of the status-behavior effects, the status-expectations effects, and the expectations-behavior effects. Similarly, few (if any) of the studies partialed the effects of status out of the expectations-behavior relations or partialed the effects of expectations out of the status-behavior relations (as required by the specifications of status characteristics and expectation states theory).

Proponents of the theory (e.g., Berger et al., 1977) generally assume that the patterns revealed by the present integration do in fact occur, whereas critics of the theory (e.g., Lee & Ofshe, 1981, 1983) generally assume that the patterns revealed by the present integration do not in fact occur. The fact remains that either assumption might have been confirmed in the present analyses. Rather than reiterating one assumption or the other, the present efforts have put these two sets of assumptions to the test, using evidence that lay hidden in several previous primary-level studies. The results do lend support to the core assumptions of status characteristics and expectation states theory. Moreover, the results contradict the position, represented by biologically oriented dominance approaches and the two-process theory, that expectations are superfluous epiphenomena.²

A few cautionary notes are in order. These analyses are based on the results of seven sets of hypothesis tests, representing the responses of approximately 450 subjects. Relatively speaking, this constitutes a relatively small meta-analytic database. By ways of comparison, Mullen, Salas, and Driskell's (1989) recent meta-analytic integration of the leadership-participation effect was based on the results of 33 hypothesis tests, representing the responses of over 3,600 subjects. It is perfectly legitimate to apply meta-analytic techniques to the integration of small research domains, provided that special care is taken to conduct an exhaustive search of the domain in order to include all relevant, retrievable hypothesis tests (see Mullen, 1990; Rosenthal, 1984, for discussion). An exhaustive search and the retrieval of all relevant hypothesis tests do indeed characterize the present efforts. Nonetheless, the relatively small size of a meta-analytic database sometimes precludes the pursuit of additional, theoretically interesting issues.

For example, alternative methods of operationalizing status differentials were used in the studies integrated in these analyses (including differences in such attributes as race, gender, military rank, educational attainment, and pretest scores). Indeed, the highly reliable discriminations that judges made among the various status differential manipulations indicated that there were noticeable differences across studies in the operationalization of the core variable of "status." Even finer-grained analyses of the effects associated with different operationalizations of status (perhaps using blocking, partitioning, casement displays, and complex model testing, as described at length in Mullen, 1990) would be illuminating. The fact that these types of analyses cannot be performed on the present, relatively small, meta-analytic database does not detract from the importance of the patterns reported above as a step toward resolving the contentious (and sometimes intemperate) debate between the proponents and the critics of status characteristics and expectation states theory.

As always, patterns revealed at the meta-analytic level should be confirmed at the primary level of analysis, where possible spurious influences can be controlled. In a practical vein, the results of these analyses may help to guide and inform future research on the relations among status, expectations, and behavior. Researchers wishing to study the effects of status on behavior should be prepared to incorporate measurements of expectations into their designs, in order to confirm, extend, and add to the literature examining the status \rightarrow expectations \rightarrow behavior effects. In addition, the present analyses revealed reliable judgments of the strength of manipulations of status differentials. These results suggest that future efforts be devoted to more precise treatments of the components of, and contributions to, the effects of the strength of status on the status \rightarrow expectations \rightarrow behavior relationship.

NOTES

¹Note that these analyses employ the common strategy of weighting study outcomes by sample sizes, so that studies based on larger samples are allowed to contribute proportionately more to the meta-analytic summaries (as described in Mullen, 1990; Mullen & Rosenthal, 1985; Rosenthal, 1980, 1984, and as illustrated in Mullen, Copper, & Driskell, 1990; Mullen & Hu, 1988, 1989; Mullen & Johnson, in press; Mullen, Salas, & Driskell, 1989). However, it should

be noted that the unweighted analyses replicate the patterns presented in Table 2 (status-expectation $\bar{r}=.60, p=1.59\text{E}-26$; status-behavior $\bar{r}=.40, p=1.10\text{E}-12$; expectation-behavior $\bar{r}=.46, p=4.80\text{E}-22$; status-behavior.expectations $\bar{r}=.16, p=.0176$; expectations-behavior. status $\bar{r}=.31, p=4.81\text{E}-11$). The path analysis derived from these unweighted combinations replicates the pattern depicted in Figure 1 ($r_{\text{SE}}=.60; b_{\text{S}}=.19; b_{\text{E}}r_{\text{SE}}=.21; b_{\text{E}}=.34$). Thus, the patterns reported above cannot be attributed to an invidious contribution of studies with larger sample sizes when using the common weighted analysis strategy.

²The two-process theory might argue that expectations might influence behavior when subjects cannot interact, whereas expectations are actually an epiphenomenon in settings where nonverbal, behavioral interaction can take place. However, this qualification cannot reconcile the two-process theory with the present results, insofar as most of the included hypothesis tests did involve subjects with some modicum of exposure to the nonverbal and behavioral cues of a real human being.

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