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Status and Influence in Small Group Interactions*

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Previous research has been quite consistent in demonstrating a status generalization phenomenon in task-oriented small group interactions. Prior status differences between individuals in such groups appear to lead to patterns of influence which are highly correlated with the initial status differentiation, even though such differentiation has no obvious or direct bearing on the task confronting the group.

An experiment was conducted to examine this phenomenon under more highly controlled conditions than those heretofore employed, and with explicit manipulation of the status differentiation variable. Results indicate that in two-person groups dealing with an ambiguous task, information regarding initial status differences leads to striking differences in the influence pattern which emerges between the two actors. Possible extensions of the research are discussed.

A number of studies dealing with the effects of status differences among members of task-oriented groups have been carried out in past years. For example, Strodbeck and his colleagues (Strodbeck and Mann, 1956; Strodbeck et al., 1957) found in their studies of mock juries that prior rankings along the status dimensions of sex and occupation were generalized to the jury setting. This was indicated by the fact that males and higher occupational status individuals (1) were more frequently chosen as foremen of these juries, (2) demonstrated behavior characteristic of the "task leader" (Bales, 1953; Bales and Slater, 1955; Heinicke and Bales, 1953) and (3) typically exerted the greatest influence over the group decision.

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Similar findings have been obtained by researchers dealing with adolescent cliques (Harvey, 1953; Sherif et al., 1955), street-corner gangs (Whyte, 1943), mental hospital personnel (Caudill, 1958), conference participants (Hurwitz et al., 1953), bomber crews (Torrance, 1954), family groupings (Strodtbeck, 1951), and bi-racial groupings (Katz and Benjamin, 1960; Katz and Cohen, 1962; Katz et al., 1958).

The results from these various research efforts have repeatedly demonstrated the existence of a *status generalization* phenomenon. In each case it appears that prior status differentiation among group members leads to patterns of influence which clearly parallel the status structure, even when such differentiation has no apparent relevance to the task confronting the group. In all of these studies, however, the major independent variable (i.e., the existence of status differentiation) has been a naturally occurring variable rather than an experimentally manipulated variable, and the interaction between group members has not been controlled in any explicit fashion. Many variables have thus been free to vary indiscriminately, and as a result it has been difficult to compare these studies in search for clear empirical regularities or to develop explicit theoretical formulations relating status to patterns of influence within the small group.¹ The present research is an attempt to study the status generalization phenomenon in a more highly controlled manner through the use of a standardized task and a standardized experimental situation. Once these are attained, further systematic addition and control of variables believed important to the status generalization process can be undertaken and their effects analyzed.

THE RESEARCH SETTING

In experimental work done to test a theory of self-other expectations, Berger (Berger and Snell, 1961) has manipulated the ability expectations of a subject for himself and for another individual by presenting an ambiguous task to the subjects and then reporting false scores. Typically, one subject is told that he has done unusually well while the other is told that he has performed poorly. From the standpoint of the former subject, it is presumed that he enters a second task (highly similar if not identical to the first) with "high" performance expectations for himself and "low" performance expectations for other. The latter subject presumably enters the second task with "low" expectations for himself and "high" expectations for other. These *expectation states* are unobservable, but by a series of explicit assumptions they are connected to observable behavior. In the second task, subjects make an initial

¹A theory of status generalization has recently been developed by Joseph Berger, Bernard P. Cohen, and Morris Zelditch, Jr. (1966:29-46).

choice between two mutually exclusive alternatives and then each receives an experimentally controlled *disagreement* from the other. This disagreement continues over twenty to forty trials, depending upon the particular experiment, and at each trial the subject is required to make a final choice after receiving this disagreement. Most frequently two or three agreement trials are added into the sequence to allay suspicion.² The basic data thus consists of a series of "S" and "O" responses; that is, a series of decisions where the disagreement is resolved in favor of *oneself* or in favor of the *other*.

The basic assumption by which the unobservable cognitive state (the self-other expectation pattern) is connected to observable behavior (the series of S and O responses) is that when a subject is faced with a disagreement which he must take into account in making his final decision, *differential evaluations* will be attached to the two acts which stand in disagreement. Once such differential evaluation is made, that act given the "positive" or "high" evaluation will be taken as the final choice by the subject. Given this particular experimental format, Berger has shown that initial expectations have a sharp impact on the probabilities of a "self" or "other" resolution. Subjects demonstrate a strong tendency to positively evaluate the actions of that person for whom they hold high performance expectations and to negatively evaluate the actions of that person for whom they hold low performance expectations.

This experimental setting is particularly well-suited for bringing evidence to bear on the present problem at hand. The "self" and "other" responses may be taken as an operationalization of the concept of *influence*; the major dependent variable in the studies cited. If we now assume that the existence of differential status between S and O activates corresponding differential performance expectations on the part of S and O, it should then be possible to observe differing probabilities of a "self" or "other" resolution simply by replacing direct ability manipulations with differentiated states of a general status characteristic.³

In order to test this prediction an important condition must be met within

² Subjects view the experimental task from individual booths and indicate their choices by pressing one of two buttons on a panel in front of them. These choices are electrically transmitted to a master control unit in an adjoining observation room. By a setting of switches on this unit prior to any given trial, a return of *no* information, *veridical* information, *agreement*, or *disagreement* may be effected independently of the actual choices made by the subjects. Typically, 20-25 percent of the subjects employed in these experiments become suspicious of the information exchange procedure.

³ A "general status characteristic" refers to a *set* of attributes designated by a generic term such as "race," "occupation," "sex," and so forth. "Differentiated states of a general status characteristic" then refers to differentially evaluated attributes *within* any given set, such as "Negro," "white," "physician," "postal clerk," "female," "male," etc.

the experimental setting. The task in which S and O are engaged must be valued in the sense that one outcome is perceived as "success" while another outcome is perceived as "failure," and S and O desire "success." It might be that in a given interaction S believes that O is more capable than himself, and yet he might well refuse to take O's choice as his own final choice. Such a situation may be referred to as a *person-oriented situation*; a situation where right or wrong, S wants his answers to be his own. On the other hand, S may desire the correct answer irrespective of where that answer comes from. This situation may be referred to as a *task-oriented situation*, and it is this task-orientation which is required in the present experiment. Instructions presented to the experimental subjects must orient them toward saying "We disagree and he is probably right, so I'll go along with him," rather than toward saying "We disagree and he is probably right, but this was my choice and I'll stay with it right or wrong." Unless this condition is met, the process which is the focus of interest will not be detectable in the experimental data. A person-orientation would destroy the assumed one-to-one relationship between the evaluation of an act and the subsequent observable response.

The required design of the experiment should thus be quite clear at this point. It is necessary that we (1) employ two experimental subjects who, with respect to each other, possess only the information that they are associated with differentiated states of a single general status characteristic (white-negro, male-female, college student-high school student, etc.); (2) motivate these subjects toward making "correct" choices on an ambiguous task requiring independent choices;⁴ and (3) control their interaction in such a manner that they perceive continuous disagreement between themselves with respect to their choices.

PROCEDURES

Subjects were drawn from a file of female volunteers attending a single Junior College in the Stanford area. All subjects were thus selected from an homogeneous population; in terms of the school attended there is no status differentiation among them. The objective is to present these subjects with information leading them to believe that they are interacting either with a Stanford female or with a female attending a local high school. This explicit *manipulation* of the independent variable will allow for the ruling out of the possibility that any observed behavioral differences between the "high status"

⁴Earlier status generalization studies have employed tasks differing widely in their degree of ambiguity. While status effects are observable to a certain degree in non-ambiguous task settings, they are most pronounced under conditions of task ambiguity.

and "low status" subjects are due to inherent personality differences among the subjects.⁵

A further concern remains, however. Employing only the experimental manipulation described thus far provides no baseline or control condition for comparison purposes. If the data were to indicate that there were no behavioral differences between the "high status" and "low status" subjects, there would be no way to determine whether prior demonstrations of the status generalization phenomenon have been artifactual or whether the present experimental situation is inadequate for observation of the status generalization process. Negative results (in the form of no differences between the status differentiated subjects) would leave us in an indeterminate position.

A control condition was thus instituted in which the subjects were assigned their respective states of the status characteristic *and then further informed that the "higher status" individuals consistently demonstrate greater ability with respect to the task at hand*. If substantial differences in influence do not occur in this *explicit relevance condition*, then the adequacy of the experimental setting will be open to serious question.⁶

Subjects were scheduled in pairs to take part in the experiment. After the subjects were seated with neither having seen the other, the experimenter requested each to complete a short information form which included a checklist of various schools in the area. Each subject checked the single Junior College from which all had been recruited, but upon return of these forms the experimenter said either "I see that today we have a young lady from Stanford and a young lady from California Junior College" or "I see that today we have a young lady from California High School and a young lady from California Junior College."⁷ This constituted the *status manipulation*. In the

⁵ It is of course being assumed that the Stanford-Junior College distinction and the Junior College-High School distinction are perceived as differentiated states of a general status characteristic by the Junior College females. This is an assumption which must be empirically investigated during post-experimental interviews, and subjects not perceiving these "labels" in the requisite manner should not be included in the data analysis. Further discussion of this problem appears below.

⁶ It is obviously the "experimental" or *implicit relevance condition* which is the central focus of the experiment. However, it is interesting to speculate on the relationship between these explicit and implicit relevance conditions. If it is true that differential status activates differential performance expectations, then it may be reasonable to assert the strong hypothesis that the influence differential in the implicit relevance condition will be as substantial as the influence differential which occurs when the subjects know explicitly that the higher status individuals perform well on the task. Thus, the hypothesis that these two conditions are empirically equivalent will be considered in the data analysis.

⁷ "California Junior College" and "California High School" are pseudonyms for the actual junior college and high school referred to in the experiment.

former case, since both of the subjects were from the mentioned Junior College, each presumed that she was with a girl from Stanford. This was the *low status* manipulation. In the latter case, each of the subjects presumed that she was with a girl from the mentioned local High School. This was the *high status* manipulation. Following this status manipulation, either *no* statement of relevance was made (thus instituting the implicit relevance condition), or the experimenter asserted "Another of the interesting things we have found is that ____ students consistently do much better than ____ students." Into the blanks the experimenter inserted the status attributes, with the high status attribute always appearing first. Thus, for low status subjects the assertion was "Stanford students consistently do much better than California Junior College students," while for the high status subjects the assertion was "California Junior College students consistently do much better than California High School students." These assertions were of course designed to institute the explicit relevance condition.⁸ Four conditions were thus instituted: High Status-Explicit Relevance; Low Status-Explicit Relevance; High Status-Implicit Relevance; and Low Status-Implicit Relevance.⁹

The task developed for this study consists of a series of binary-choice stimuli. On each stimulus presentation the subject must specify which of two colors, black or white, covers the greater area within a rectangular grid. Each stimulus is constructed as a 35mm. photographic slide, and each has been judged on the basis of pretest results to be an ambiguous perceptual stimulus.¹⁰ The subjects were informed that this sequence of stimuli constituted a test of "Spatial Judgment Ability." They were then told that our interest centered upon studying this ability in "two slightly different situations." This portion of the instructions was designed to institute a *task*-orientation rather than a *person*-orientation, and it also provided a rationale for the exchange of the independent initial choices made by the subjects. Our ostensible interests were conveyed in the following terms:

Today we want to study this ability in *two* slightly different situations. We have found that some people are capable of making correct choices after looking at a slide

⁸ These statements did not immediately follow the status manipulation statement. Readers desiring to place these manipulations in context will find a complete statement of the experimental instructions in J. Moore (1966).

⁹ Placement of subjects in terms of status and relevance was determined by assigning a two-digit random number to each subject pair. If the first number was even the subjects were presented with the high status manipulation, while if the first number was odd they were presented with the low status manipulation. If the second number was even the subjects were presented with the explicit relevance manipulation, while if the second number was odd they were presented with the implicit relevance manipulation.

¹⁰ A complete description of the task, a sample of the stimuli composing the task, and all pretest data may be found in J. Moore (1966: Appendix A).

for a short period of time. Other people are capable of greatly improving their scores if they are given a little more time and a little more information

Now what we are going to do today is the following. First, I will present a slide on the screen. You will be given five seconds to study the slide. When I ask you to, you are to indicate your choice as to which color covers the greater area by pressing either the "white" or "black" button on the Initial Choice portion of your panel. On some slides, this is all that will happen, and we will record your initial choices. On *other* slides, however, you will be given a little more time and a little more information. That is, the choice that the other individual makes will be transmitted to you. This will appear on the section of your panel marked *His Choice*.

After you receive this additional information with which to make a decision, you will be given another five seconds to study the slide. When I tell you to make your final choice, you will indicate that choice by pressing either the "white" or "black" button on the Final Choice portion of your panel.

Now notice: when you do *not* receive the other individual's choice, *your initial choice will be recorded*. When you *do* receive the other individual's choice, however, *your initial choice will not be recorded at all. Only your final choice will be recorded*. Since some people are able to see the correct answer clearly with this additional time and information, you should not hesitate to change your mind about the correct answer. It is just as important to be able to make correct decisions *with* this additional time and information as it is to be able to make correct choices *without* it. *Your only concern should be with getting the correct answer*. Our major concern in this study is to compare these two kinds of situations. In order for us to make a valid comparison it is extremely important that each of you do your best both when you have this additional time and information and when you don't.

Following this statement the experimenter's assistant explained the scoring procedure to the subjects. Mounted in the experimental room was a chart which appeared as follows:

NUMBER OF CORRECT CHOICES	YOUR SCORE	PERFORMANCE
36-40	32-40	SUPERIOR
31-35	22-30	GOOD
26-30	12-20	FAIR
20-25	0-10	POOR
BELOW 20	0	

The assistant emphasized that each incorrect choice would result in one point being *subtracted* from the subject's score, while each correct choice would *add* one point. Subjects were informed of the fact that twenty correct choices had to be made before their scores would begin to rise above zero, and they were again told that the experimenters were interested in comparing the two *situations*, and that they should therefore feel free to change their minds

about the correct answer. In the assistant's procedure this was conveyed in the following terms:

Your score of course depends upon doing well in both of the situations we have described. We have found that individuals whose performances are fair or good when they do *not* have additional time and information are frequently capable of attaining a *superior* performance when they *do* have this additional time and information. When we report your score to you, we will give you *three* scores. We will tell you how well you performed in each of these two situations, as well as how well you performed for the whole study. Since *our* primary objective is in studying these two situations, and since *your* primary objective is to get the maximum number of correct choices, you can see that when you are given additional time and information, you should feel free to use it.

Following the instructions, the equipment was demonstrated by having each subject make an initial choice as if there was a stimulus present. The master unit had been set to exchange *veridical* information at this point. If the subjects made opposing choices in this demonstration, the procedure was repeated with the experimenter telling the first subject to make a choice and then instructing the second subject to make the same choice. Subjects could thus see that the panel before them would report agreement. After this demonstration the subjects never again received an agreement. All twenty-eight critical trials consisted of an exchange of disagreement. The pattern of neutral and critical trials was predetermined and constant for all groups, with the presentation being controlled by the assistant at the master control unit in the adjoining observation room.¹¹

As the subject's responses appeared on the master unit, the assistant recorded all initial choices, the final choice when the trial was critical, and the resolution of the disagreement (either an "S" or an "O") on all critical trials.

After the experiment each subject was intensively and individually interviewed. In this interview a primary concern was in trying to elicit statements which would indicate whether the subject perceived the various school labels as states of a general status characteristic. As noted, this is a necessary condition which must be met in any study of the status generalization phenomenon. The only way to obtain this information is through a post-experimental interview, but this is not a particularly reliable procedure. Many sub-

¹¹ Rather than the forty trial sequence implied by the scoring chart, forty-four trials were actually employed to gain somewhat greater flexibility in the mixing of critical and neutral trials. From the subject's point of view this was not detectable since the number of the current trial was never announced by the experimenter. There was of course no real interest in "scoring" the subjects in any way. The entire scoring procedure was a device designed to motivate the subjects to work for "correct" answers. Within the forty-four trial sequence, each quarterly block of eleven trials contained *seven* critical trials.

jects were obviously reluctant to talk about invidious comparisons based upon the school which one was attending. The first analyses of data which follow thus include subjects who might *not* have perceived themselves in a status differentiated situation. Secondary analyses deal only with subjects who were judged to have clearly seen the school labels as states of a general status characteristic. Further specification of the criteria used to make this distinction will be presented below.¹²

RESULTS

A total of one hundred subjects took part in the experiment. In addition to the loss of eight of these subjects through suspicion, three did not show a task-orientation (i.e., they felt it would have been "cheating" to take the other subjects' answer as their own final answer); two were friends of students attending the Junior College and were not themselves in attendance; one failed to hear any reference to where the other subject was supposedly attending school; and one reported that she did not at all care how well she performed as she was working on the task. None of these fifteen subjects are included in the data analysis which follows. Initial analyses thus deal with a total of eighty-five subjects.

Table 1 presents the mean number of S resolutions for each of the four conditions, along with a computation of the standard difference of means test.¹³ It is hypothesized that the Explicit Relevance-High Status subjects

¹² At the close of the interview the interviewer explained in complete detail what had been arranged, making certain that the subject understood fully and that she was comfortable with her knowledge. After this explanation the interviewer returned to any questions which had been inadequately treated earlier. Finally, the subject's cooperation was requested in keeping the details of the experiment unknown, and she was then paid for her participation. After releasing the subject the interviewer prepared an interview abstract and classified the subject on the basis of whether or not she had given indications of perceiving the school labels as differentiated states of a general status characteristic. All interviews were recorded and transcribed for future detailed analysis. The interview format, abstract form, sample interviews, and all raw data may be found in J. Moore (1966: Appendices B, C, and D).

¹³ Bartlett's test for homogeneity of variances was applied to this data. Results indicate that the variance associated with the Implicit Relevance-Low Status condition is significantly less than the variances associated with the remaining conditions. For present purposes it is not important to discuss interpretations of this finding. However, the computational model employed in the difference of means test differs depending upon whether one assumes equality or inequality of the population standard deviations. When the inequality model is employed an approximation technique for degrees of freedom is generally recommended unless the N's are large. This accounts for the approximated d.f. in those tests entailing the Implicit Relevance-Low Status condition. See Hubert M. Blalock (1960: 170-176).

will show a significantly greater number of S resolutions than the Explicit Relevance-Low Status subjects. These are the "control" or "baseline" conditions, and should substantial differences fail to materialize here, the efficacy of the experimental situation will be called into question. This data is presented in row one of Table 1. Secondly, it is hypothesized that there will be substantial differences between the High Status subjects and the Low Status subjects in the Implicit Relevance conditions, with High Status subjects showing the greater number of S resolutions. This is the critical status generalization hypothesis which is the central focus of the study. This aspect of the data is presented in row four of Table 1. Finally, it is hypothesized that there will be no significant differences between the *relevance* conditions when *status* is held constant. That is, it is being asserted that *the differential influence exerted by high and low status subjects in the implicit relevance conditions will be as substantial as the differential influence exerted by the high and low status subjects in those conditions where the experimenter has explicitly asserted that the high status subjects consistently perform better on the task*. This aspect of the data is presented in rows two and three of Table 1. As can be seen, the data are consistent with these expectations at every point.

No test of a given theory can ever in any final sense verify that theory. The data, if consistent with predictions, increase the credibility of a theory by "failing to refute" that theory. Consequently, it must be recognized that there are many alternative theoretical formulations which could account for the particular results observed. The process of ruling out alternative formulations is not a simple process with clearly defined rules. The fact that the subjects composing the present experimental groups were all selected from a relatively homogeneous population and then randomly assigned to the

TABLE 1
Analysis of Mean Number of S Resolutions by conditions

Condition	N	Mean	Model	t	p
Explicit Relevance-High Status	22	19.409	$\sigma_1 = \sigma_2$	2.627	<.01 (1-tail; d.f.=40)
Explicit Relevance-Low Status	20	16.550			
Explicit Relevance-High Status	22	19.409	$\sigma_1 = \sigma_2$	0.146	>.80 (2-tail; d.f.=43)
Implicit Relevance-High Status	23	19.565			
Explicit Relevance-Low Status	20	16.550	$\sigma_1 \neq \sigma_2$	1.235	$\approx .25$ (2-tail; d.f. ≈ 32)
Implicit Relevance-Low Status	20	17.750			
Implicit Relevance-High Status	23	19.565	$\sigma_1 \neq \sigma_2$	1.923*	$\approx .02$ (1-tail; d.f. ≈ 37)
Implicit Relevance-Low Status	20	17.750			

* Est. $\omega^2 = .059$.

various experimental conditions makes "inherent personality differences" an improbable alternative interpretation of the results attained. Further support for the status generalization formulation set forth here can be gained if it is possible to show that the predicted results are more closely approximated by the data after the removal of those subjects who were judged as not having met the necessary antecedent condition of perceiving the various school labels as differentiated states of a general status characteristic.

It will be recalled that during the interview with each subject, the interviewer attempted to elicit some statement which would indicate a feeling of general "superiority" or "inferiority." In other words, there was an attempt to tap the existence or nonexistence of a *generalized expectation* ("halo") based upon the school attributes. For example, a low status subject might say she believed Stanford girls to be "pretty bright," "polished," or "upper class," while a high status subject might say she believed California High School girls to be "rough," "lower class," or "not very sophisticated." The interview format was specifically designed to elicit such statements through as unobtrusive a manner of probing as possible. These statements, when and if they appeared, constituted a sufficient basis for asserting that the attributes in question were seen as differentiated states of a general status characteristic. Subjects who did not make these broad evaluative statements were classified as "suspect subjects" (N=20) and removed from the secondary analysis phase.¹⁴

¹⁴The particular high school referred to in the experiment was located in an area which was to some extent regarded as "lower class". The experimenter noted that when a subject resided in an area which was generally regarded as particularly "elite," this class distinction was frequently mentioned by the subject during the interview. In a very few cases, these girls also openly entertained the hypothesis that the other girl was a member of a minority group. In cases where the class dimension was not so salient for the high status girls, the primary basis for differential evaluation appeared to center around rather vague correlates of an age difference. The fact that most of the subjects were only one or two years out of high school seemed to have the effect of greatly reducing the "distance" between the high status subjects and the position they believed their partner held. Almost all of the high status subjects presumed that the other girl was a *senior* in high school.

Low status subjects, on the other hand, most frequently based their differential evaluations on an "intellectual" dimension, although a class dimension was frequently added to this primary dimension. It was interesting to note that these girls almost always presumed that the other girl (the presumed Stanford student) was *older*, even though the subject herself may have been nineteen or twenty. This was certainly far from anything resembling an objective judgment, inasmuch as the interaction between subjects was totally limited to lights appearing on a panel before them.

The greater "distance" between the low status subjects and their partners is demonstrated by the fact that only four out of forty subjects assigned to the *low* status condi-

Table 2 presents an analysis of the mean number of S resolutions by subjects in the four conditions after removal of these suspect subjects. The predictions of course remain the same. That is, there should be no differences between the two High Status conditions and no differences between the two Low Status conditions (rows two and three), but substantial differences between the High and Low Status conditions holding relevance constant (rows one and four), with High Status subjects giving the greater number of S resolutions. If the status generalization formulation is valid, removal of the suspect subjects should result in increased differences in the number of S resolutions given by High and Low Status subjects. Again, the data are consistent with these expectations at every point.

A two-way analysis of variance is simply an extension of the difference of means test (Blalock, 1960:242), but such an analysis can give more straightforward information on possible interactions between the "status" and "relevance" variables. Accordingly, a two-way analysis of variance appropriate for unequal sample sizes was performed. This data is presented in Table 3.

As was the case in the difference of means analysis, the analysis of variance indicates that there are substantial differences in the number of S resolutions arising as a function of status (an estimated 27 per cent of the variance explained by the status variable), but no differences arising as a function of

TABLE 2
Analysis of Mean Number of S Resolutions by Conditions
(Suspect Subjects Removed)

Condition	N	Mean	Model	t	p
Explicit Relevance-High-Status	13	20.923	$\sigma_1 = \sigma_2$	3.417	< .001 (1-tail; d.f.=29)
Explicit Relevance-Low Status	18	16.388			
Explicit Relevance-High-Status	13	20.923	$\sigma_1 = \sigma_3$	0.114	> .90 (2-tail; d.f.=27)
Implicit Relevance-High Status	16	21.062			
Explicit Relevance-Low Status	18	16.388	$\sigma_1 \neq \sigma_2$	1.205	≈ .25 (2-tail; d.f.≈30)
Implicit Relevance-Low Status	18	17.666			
Implicit Relevance-High Status	16	21.062	$\sigma_1 \neq \sigma_2$	3.526*	< .001 (1-tail; d.f.≈30)
Implicit Relevance-Low Status	18	17.666			

* Est. $\omega^2 = .252$.

tions indicated no generalized expectations based upon the presumed attribute difference, whereas sixteen out of the forty-five subjects assigned to the *high* status conditions indicated no generalized expectations.

TABLE 3
Two-Way Analysis of Variance (Suspect Subjects Removed)

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F	F. _{.05}
Status	15.725	1	15.725	24.647*	7.08
Relevance	0.502	1	0.502	0.786	7.08
Interaction	0.326	1	0.326	0.510	7.08
Error	38.918	61	0.638	—	—

* Est. $\omega^2 = .269$.

relevance. The nonsignificant interaction term indicates that the status impact is the same regardless of the relevance condition.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This report began with the observation that the work of previous researchers has demonstrated the existence of a "status generalization" phenomenon. Despite the fact that this research has been quite consistent in the evidence it has produced within differing contexts, each of the studies cited has allowed many variables to remain beyond the control of the experimenter and consequently beyond his capacity to evaluate in terms of their effects. None of these studies have entailed a specific manipulation of the critical independent variable. The results of these earlier studies are thus particularly subject to several alternative explanations; one principal alternative being that any observed differential influence is a function of systematic personality differences among the subjects employed. It is quite reasonable to argue that such personality differences appear among pilots as compared with gunners, among proprietors as compared with unskilled laborers, or among psychiatrists as compared with social workers, and that these differences account for observed differences on the dependent variable. The study reported here, however, employed techniques which allowed for the random assignment of subjects from an homogeneous population to differing states of a general status characteristic.

Aggregate data emerging from the reported experiment are consistent with theoretical expectations at every point. Specifically, it is shown that there is a substantial difference in the behavior of subjects in the Explicit Relevance conditions, with the High Status subjects showing a greater mean number of "self" resolutions of the perceived disagreement between themselves and their ostensibly lower status partners. Conversely, Low Status subjects in the Explicit Relevance condition show a substantially greater tendency to defer to the choices made by their ostensibly higher status partners. This is of course

not particularly surprising, inasmuch as the subjects in these Explicit Relevance conditions were informed by the experimenter that members of the higher status groups consistently perform better at the Spatial Judgment Task. The differentiated behavior patterns which emerge do, however, lend support to the assumption that certain instances of interpersonal influence may be viewed as a resultant of differential self-other performance expectations. Further, these results permit the conclusion that the described experimental situation is adequate for the study of the status generalization phenomenon.

Of particular import is the fact that subjects in the Implicit Relevance conditions show the same differentiated behavior as a function of the perceived status differential. These subjects were simply informed of their respective status attributes, with no reference being made by the experimenter as to the relevance of these attributes to Spatial Judgment Ability. The data emerging from these conditions thus lend support to the argument that prior status differentiation activates differential self-other performance expectations, which in turn result in differential influence.

The additional analysis which was performed after removal of those subjects who were judged as not perceiving the school labels as states of a general status characteristic resulted in an improved approximation of the experimental data to theoretical expectations. The fact that this improvement results upon removal of these subjects allows for still greater confidence in the status generalization formulation.¹⁵

Finally, the fact that the data demonstrate no differences across the relevance conditions with status held constant permits the conclusion that information regarding the existence of a status differential is as potent a factor in leading to differential influence as is explicit information regarding relevant ability differences.¹⁶

¹⁵ It must be acknowledged, however, that this improvement might conceivably be spurious. We have no way of finally determining whether the subject who denied any differential evaluation of the school labels held this conception *prior* to her interaction with the other subject or whether this position was developed as a rationalization for her conduct during the interaction. If the subject behaved in a manner which she felt might be classified as "deviant" (e.g., *uncertain* in the face of choices made by a low status individual or *self-assured* in the face of choices made by a high status individual), she might then quickly deny any status differentiation when given an opportunity to do so. Considering all of the relevant data, however, it is the author's opinion that this is not a sufficient interpretation of the interview material.

¹⁶ Again, a *caveat* is warranted. This conclusion must be accepted only within the limits set by this experiment. It should be recalled that the experimenter asserted that a particular *group* of individuals consistently performed better at the Spatial Judgment Task. There was no initial "test" which resulted in explicit knowledge of the degree to

With the attainment of a standardized experimental situation and a standardized task, we are in a position to greatly extend our knowledge of status generalization and related phenomena. Efforts might well be directed toward an extension to status equal interactions, with special emphasis upon processes of role differentiation within such interactions. Extension to three-person (or perhaps more generally to n-person) interactions could also be attempted, with special attention to interactions wherein an individual first becomes aware of the choices of two or more others and is then required to make his own choice. This context would appear to be highly relevant for extending our knowledge regarding reference group phenomena (cf. Cohen, 1962). There should also now be some attempt to extend the status generalization formulation to interactions where more than one general status characteristic is activated. Within this context the "status congruence" or "status equilibration" phenomena might profitably be investigated. Finally, while the present report has been limited to analyses of *aggregate* data emerging from the reported experiment, many additional insights may be gained through a careful analysis of the *process* aspects of this data. Questions relating to the point in time at which differential influence emerges, the stability of the influence pattern through time, and characteristics of the interaction which lead to changes in influence patterns can be investigated within this more refined context. A later report will deal with some of these process aspects as observed in the experiment reported here.

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which this ability was possessed *vis-a-vis* the other subject. All the subject knew was that she was a member of a group which had consistently performed well or poorly at the task. The generality and full implications of this finding are therefore yet to be determined.

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