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STATUS CHARACTERISTICS AND EXPECTATION STATES*

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1. Introduction

The emergence of power-prestige orders and the allocation of power and prestige to group members represents a central focus in the study of task oriented groups. Two distinctive sets of findings have emerged from this concern: One line of investigation has demonstrated the development of such orders in groups whose members were initially undifferentiated in status, while the second major line has documented the relationship between prior status differences among group members and the emergent power and prestige order in the group.

It is our purpose to present a theory that explains the way in which prior status factors determine the emergent power-prestige order in the group. The phenomenon itself has been demonstrated repeatedly; the results have been remarkably consistent; but there is not yet a theory that will explain these results. There are, it is true, interpretations that have been applied to one or another particular situation. But one of these interpretations can seldom be extended to any of the other situations in which this same result has been found; no one of them appears as general as the phenomenon itself. We believe that a general formulation that is applicable in all settings where the phenomenon has been observed can be constructed from the knowledge we already have. This formulation would be used to explain the phenomenon in the strict sense that one can derive it from a set of theoretical definitions and assumptions. We believe, too, that when it is constructed, such a theory should extend our knowledge of the phenomenon in two ways: First, by showing its relation to other results, also already

well-known; and second, by suggesting still further results, as yet not investigated, that we ought to be able to discover if the theory is true.

2. Problem

Bales and his associates (Bales, et al., 1951; Bales, 1953; Bales and Slater, 1955; Heinecke and Bales, 1953) have shown that task groups whose members are the same in age, sex, color, education and occupation, (that is, are initially status equals) tend to develop a stable power and prestige order. This power-prestige order reflects itself in the ratings of group members, in the distribution of opportunities to perform, in the distribution of evaluations of member contributions, and in the relative influence of different members on the final decision of the group. These behaviors are highly correlated and become stably differentiated; we will refer to them, taken as a whole, as the observed power and prestige order of a group. The process of differentiation of power and prestige fluctuates over time and apparently generates tension and conflict (Heinecke and Bales, 1953; Bales and Slater, 1955). But once stably differentiated the resultant order generalizes to many activities of the group; so that, instead of its emerging anew in every new situation, one may speak of the activation of a prior power-prestige order. Once activated, this prior order determines in the new situation the distribution of opportunities to perform, evaluations, and influence (Harvey, 1953; Sherif², Harvey and White, 1955; Whyte, 1943).

When the members of a task group are not the same in age, or sex, or occupation, or other institutionalized status factors it is apparently these factors that determine the power and prestige order that emerges in the group.

In other words, such characteristics, which we will call diffuse status-characteristics, behave as if they symbolize prior status orders that are activated in the situation. Thus, studies of jury deliberations have found that sex and occupational status are associated with choices of jury foreman, with initiation of interaction, and with influence (Strodtbeck, James and Hawkins, 1957; Strodtbeck and Mann, 1956). Torrance (1954) demonstrates associations between Air Force rank and properties of the interaction of three-man crews, even where crews are composed of members who have no previous experience together. Hurwitz, Zander and Hymovitch (1953) observe similar relations between professional prestige and interaction in a conference. The powerful effects of race on power and prestige orders have been investigated at length by Katz (Katz and Benjamin, 1960; Katz and Cohen, 1962; Katz, Goldston, and Benjamin, 1958). Caudill has shown the effects of position in the hospital hierarchy on participation in administrative conferences in a psychiatric hospital (Caudill, 1958; see also Mishler and Tropp, 1956); and Zander and Cohen the effects of position in the university hierarchy on simulated committee discussions of students (Zander and Cohen, 1955). In these groups, the external status characteristics of group members produce the same result that prior experience interacting with one another produces in the Bales groups. (For the effects of age, see Ziller and Exline, 1958.)

A critical fact emerges from comparing the several studies of prior status factors: The external status characteristic operates not only when it is directly related to the task of the group, but often even when it has no obvious or direct bearing on the group's task. While it is not unexpected

that prestigious mental health specialists would have an impact on groups discussing mental health problems (Hurwitz et al., 1953), it is somewhat surprising that Air Force rank should determine interaction in a projective discussion task (Torrance, 1954). Indeed Torrance shows the same pattern of results for four different tasks of quite varying degrees of relationship to the role of Air Force officer.

Our point of departure, then, is the repeated finding:

When task groups are differentiated with respect to some status characteristic external to the task situation, this differentiation determines the observed power and prestige order within the group, whether or not the external characteristics are related to the group task.

Here we have an empirical regularity of considerably significance to the study of stratification, formal organization, and small groups. But the implications of this regularity have not been recognized to the degree that they deserve to be because the diverse studies we have reviewed have not been placed in a properly general theoretical context. What is required is a general theoretical formulation that, applied in the given conditions, will explain this regularity. It is our purpose, therefore, to construct such a theory.

3. Diffuse Status Characteristics

Our first task is to define a diffuse status characteristic. Every sociologist has some idea of what a status characteristic is, and we do not want to depart too much from these common ideas. Hughes (1952) may be taken as representative of some of the most persistent thought on the subject: he will not accept hair color as a status characteristic because no special

disabilities or special customs differentiate those who are one hair color from those who are another. We therefore have the obvious starting point that in some way states of a status-characteristic are differentiated for purposes of social interaction. Furthermore, he does not believe that status differences are intrinsic to the status characteristic itself; the characteristic is, as Hughes suggests, a "symbolic trait", a "brand name", significant not so much for what it is as for what it stands for. What, we must ask, does it stand for?

What it stands for, unfortunately, is rather a large number of things. Status-characteristics are associated with differences in honor, life-chances, special privileges and immunities, rights before the law, styles of life, What is usually thought of as a definition of a status-characteristic, in fact, is a fairly comprehensive theory of the subject. It will be more fruitful, in the long run, to separate out some of these elements, make only some of them part of the definition, and account theoretically for how the others come to be associated with the status-characteristic.¹ We have, of course, a certain degree of freedom in how we choose the properties that are part of the definition, and we can only say that to us those we have chosen seem the most suitable.

What a status-characteristic most obviously stands for is an evaluation; one actor, say p, is "better" or "worse" than some other actor, say o. But with respect to what are actors better or worse? There appears to be two answers: First, one is better or worse with respect to specific beliefs

¹The attachment of goal-objects to states of a status-characteristic, for example, is considered in Zelditch, Berger, and Cohen, 1965.

that are associated with the status-characteristic. Whites think Negroes lazy, rowdy, strong, musical, ... (Johnson, 1944). Having identified who you are from the state you possess of the status-characteristic, this associated system of beliefs says what you are, what valued or disvalued characteristics should be attributed to you. Second judgments of specific capacities, having become associated with states of the status-characteristic, appear to generalize very readily; so that, though we are not certain how the effect comes about, we observe that actors come to be evaluated as wholes. Instead of saying that an actor, say p, is mathematically able, or mechanically able, one says simply that he is able. Instead of saying p has a strict code of sexual conduct, or is very punctilious about social obligations, one says p is moral. Such constructions are much more indefinite, vague, and diffuse, than judgments of specific traits. That a halo develops and becomes associated with states of the status-characteristic captures the idea sufficiently well. Perhaps it is because of such a halo effect that, even though empirical evidence on the point is lacking, the belief is not uncommon that a renowned scientist is ipso facto an expert on political and social affairs.

To define a diffuse status characteristic, therefore, we require the idea of a characteristic, C, which is just any property or attribute of an actor, such as energy, hair color, skin color, mathematical ability. (In this paper we confine ourselves to characteristics with only two states; we do this to simplify development of the theory and do not intend to imply that characteristics must have only two states in order to satisfy our definitions. In the case of characteristics with more than two states, such as hair color, we combine some of them, as: black, not-black.) Characteristics are specific

if they refer to behavior in specific situations--for example, the ability to write English clearly is specific. Any characteristic may be attributed to an actor directly, as in the expression, "p writes English clearly", or indirectly, because an actor has other characteristics, as in the expression, "p is a college graduate, college graduates write English clearly, therefore p writes English clearly." If a state of a specific characteristic, say $C(x)$,--where (x) is a dummy variable referring to some particular state, say a or b--is attributed to an actor because he has some given state of a second characteristic, say $D(x)$, we will say that the first characteristic is specifically associated with the second. In the cases that interest us in this paper there will ordinarily be a set of such specifically associated states, γ_x . Coates and Pellegrin (1957), for example, report that a sample of 50 executives tended to associate with the state "executive" such characteristics as: energy, alertness, initiative, aggressiveness, ability to manipulate people, ability to assume responsibility, ability to make decisions, foresight, problem-solving ability, tact, poise, determination, and adaptability among others. Contrasting themselves with first-line supervisors, the executives thought themselves higher with respect to each of these abilities. The great majority of the first-line supervisors, Coates and Pellegrin report, tended to see much the same differences between themselves and executives. It is to a set of states of characteristics of this kind that we refer by the set γ_x ; one set, say γ_a , will be associated with the state "executive", while a second set, say γ_b , will be associated with the state "supervisor". Though in any given situation only a few elements of the set may be recalled, and though there may be variability from actor to actor in precisely the elements recognized, we will often find a core of common elements included

when actors are asked to enumerate a set (by recall) or to decide, from a specific list, whether or not each item on the list belongs to the set (recognition).

Characteristics are evaluated if one state is positively and one negatively valued. If it is better to be smart than dumb, then intelligence is valued. Because we arbitrarily limit ourselves to characteristics having just two states, we also use in this paper only two values: positive and negative. A state and its value must be kept distinct, since it is possible to negatively value the higher state of a characteristic. High aggressiveness may be negatively valued; so may high ability at manual labor.

For each state of a characteristic, actors hold expectations, beliefs about how actors with a given state of a given characteristic will behave in an appropriate situation. (An expectation, of course, is a disposition concept, showing itself only if activated in a suitable setting.) An actor who has high mathematical ability (a state of a characteristic) should perform well in a task-situation that involves formal proofs (an expectation). A belief that, whatever the situation, the actor, in general can be expected to do well is a general expectation state, GES(x). This idea is crucial to our notion of a diffuse status characteristic.

Definition 1. A characteristic D is a diffuse status characteristic in situation S if and only if:

1. the states of D are differentially evaluated, and
2. to each state, x, of D there corresponds a different set χ_x of specifically associated states of characteristics, and
3. to each state, x, of D there corresponds a different general expectation state, GES(x).

Social class, following this definition, is a diffuse status characteristic

in a community if the white-collar class is thought, ipso facto, to be more worthy, smarter, more moral, more industrious, more energetic, than the blue-collar class, and in fact altogether superior in almost every way that counts in the community.

In this paper, we might note, our concern is with status-characteristics that are external to the situation, in the sense that they are brought in from some other setting. Typically D is a status-characteristic in a larger system of which the immediate situation is some subsystem. Thus Air Force rank in Torrance's investigations is external to the experimental task situation; sex and occupation in Strodtbeck's jury studies are status-characteristics in the larger society.

4. Activation of the Diffuse Status Characteristic

That in some situation D is significant to p depends on his thinking of himself and others as more than just male and female, black and white, white collar and blue collar; for D to be significant, p must think of certain specific and generalized traits, associated with D, as belonging to the actors in that situation. In other words, his beliefs about D must come in to play. When this happens when p attributes f_x and $GES(x)$ to those in S who possess the state $D(x)$, we will say that D is activated in S. But activation of D is not an inevitable fact. There are certainly situations where D does not in this sense become significant to p, so that it is an important theoretical problem to understand when D becomes significant. Our next task, therefore, is state the conditions activating D.

Four conditions appear to be important. Three of these have to do with

the task and interaction conditions of situation S, while the fourth has to do with the initial status conditions. Hereafter we will take the four together as defining what we mean when we use the expression "the situation S." We formulate these conditions from the point of view of one individual, p, who is regarded as the actor in our theory; he has as objects of orientation both himself and one other actor, o. While our theory will account for the behavior of more than two actors, two are sufficient to develop our theoretical ideas.

First, we assume that p and o are required to perform a valued, collective task, T. In our present formulation the task has just two outcomes, T(a) and T(b). By saying the task is valued, we mean that p defines achieving one of these outcomes as "success" and the other as "failure." We suppose throughout that p is committed to succeeding. By saying that the task is collective we mean that interaction of p and o is required to solve the task. We are not speaking simply of the kind of situation in which p and o may interact more or less for social purposes, but largely in ways that are non-task-relevant; we require that they interact as part of the task itself. For in that case p must take the relative capacities of himself and o into account as part of the problem of defining the task situation.

Second, we assume that the task T requires the ability C, in the sense that one state of C increases the likelihood that p achieves outcome T(x) while the other state of C decreases the likelihood that p achieves T(x). A characteristic satisfying this condition is instrumental to T; if not instrumental, it is independent of T. We will assume throughout that the state of C that is instrumental to the positively evaluated state of T is

itself positively evaluated, while the state of C that is instrumental to the negatively evaluated state of T is negatively evaluated. For example: if proper patient care is the valued task outcome in a hospital, and high clinical competence increases the likelihood that patients are given proper care, then we assume that high clinical competence is positively evaluated while low clinical competence is negatively evaluated. To simplify our problem we assume that the task T requires only a single, uni-dimensional ability. Though the studies from which we take our point of departure mostly involve complex tasks, requiring a variety of different performance abilities, analyzing these tasks into their components is a theoretical problem in its own right, one that we do not investigate here. The single ability instrumental to T is called a specific performance characteristic in S; associated with it will be specific performance expectations (SPE), beliefs about who will do well and who poorly at task T (see page 7). In other words, an actor who possesses the high state of C will be expected to do well in a task situation in which this characteristic is instrumental; that is, a high SPE will be held for him in S. An actor who possesses the low state of C will be expected to do poorly in this task situation; that is, a low SPE will be held for him in S. Because of this correspondence between C and SPE we will speak of them interchangeably in what follows.

Third, we assume that p has not assigned specific states of C to himself or o, nor has such an assignment been provided in situation S.

Fourth, we assume that p and o possess different states of a single external status characteristic D. (Most studies deal with situations in

which several status factors operate simultaneously. For example, in the Torrance experiment both rank and crew position (pilot, navigator, gunner) appear to affect the interaction. The fact that these two status factors are not perfectly correlated, [i.e., some navigators have higher rank than the pilots in their crews] may account for some of the anomalies in Torrance's data. Rather than concern ourselves at this time with questions of congruence among many status factors, we restrict our focus to situations where only one prior status factor differentiates group members.)

Now: because p is committed to success, and success requires him to act together with o, there will be a good deal of pressure on p to discover, and fairly rapidly, their relative abilities at the task. If he cares to do well, he will want to profit by the suggestions of an "able" co-worker but not be misled by the suggestions of the "unable". Of course he has no prior experience with o. But the status characteristic D can be regarded as something like such prior experience, for embodied in its states is a set of beliefs about actors. If we assume that p believes in the association of γ_x and $GES(x)$ with $D(x)$; and if p does not know the abilities of o, but he does know, say, that o is an enlisted man, while p himself is an officer and p believes that officers are more "able"; then, we argue, he will come to believe that p himself is more able. Our first assumption, therefore is,

Assumption 1. (Activation). D is activated in task-situation S if T is a valued, collective task, and D is a basis of discrimination between p and o in S.

We would like to underline two points. On the one hand, assumption 1

describes the types of situations in which we expect to find D activated; or equivalently, it states that if D is not activated in S, then the task in S is either not valued or not collective, or D is not a basis of discrimination in S. On the other hand, assumption 1' does not preclude the possibility that D will be activated given a different set of task and status conditions in S. For example, it is not impossible that D becomes activated in Bales' laboratory situation, where all members are alike in prior status.²

As a result of the first step in our argument, then, if we recall how the term activation is used we have a situation S in which p, because he possesses, say, D(a), has attributed to himself some specific and general traits [χ_a and GES(a)]; and has attributed to o a different set of specific and general traits [χ_b and GES(b)] because he possesses D(b). These traits and general expectations are now significant to him in his interaction with o in S.

Now, if the states of C (the characteristic instrumental in S) have already been specifically associated with states of D; if, that is, C(x) is understood to be a member of χ_x ; then p should know, when D is activated,

²We believe that it may be possible, eventually, to extend our formulation to situations in which members are not differentiated on a prior status factor. If D is activated in such a setting, the condition of prior status equality would conflict with the emergence of a differentiated status order within the group. This should create tension and "status struggles." In this connection, it is interesting to note that the tension and conflict associated with the emergence of the status order in the Bales groups (Heinicke and Bales, 1953; Bales and Slater, 1955) is not found when the group members are initially differentiated (Hurwitz et al., 1953). We may speculate that this tension is a consequence of pressures to differentiate in the group conflicting with initial expectations of equality among the group members. (See the definition of balance below. We are saying that imbalance is created if members are alike in prior status and made to differ in power and prestige in the group.

which state of C to attribute to himself and which state of C to attribute to o. For example: Zander and Cohen (1955) instructed groups of students to simulate committees charged by the vice-president of their university with the task of disposing of a gift to be used for student welfare. They identified two participants to the other students as a "Dean" and a "Freshman", though the two did not themselves know that they had been described in this way. We regard it as quite reasonable to suppose that, whatever one might call the instrumental characteristic in this situation, one state of C (specifically, the high state) is already associated with "Deans" while the other state (the low state) is already associated with "Freshman." Given that D is activated in this situation, we then argue that the students, therefore, assign the high state of C to the participant identified as a "Dean" and the low state to the participant identified as "Freshman." And in fact, Zander and Cohen found, after 10 minutes of committee discussion, that the "Deans" and "Freshmen" reported they were regarded quite differently by the other students: the Dean, more than the Freshman, found the group interested in his ideas and ready to agree with them.)

It is of course possible that the relation of D to C has come to be already known, but what is known is that they are not associated. Instead of being specifically associated, we will say that they are specifically dissociated. (Dissociated states are not simply states between which actors see no particular reason to assume a connection; they are explicitly defined by social beliefs to be independent.) If a "Dean" and a "Freshman" were to play basketball with a group of students, probably the athletic ability required would be explicitly understood, on the basis of prior knowledge or

belief, to be independent of the status-characteristic. In that case we assume that, even if activated in S, p would not feel D was a basis for attributing states of C to himself and o, and no effect of D would be observed in the situation.

5. Relevance of D to C when C is not specifically associated with D

No one seems to have thought it peculiarly remarkable, or worth singling out for special emphasis, that not only will D determine the power-prestige order of ad hoc as well as organized groups; it will have this effect even when C has not been previously associated with D. It is of course sufficiently significant in itself that, even though they have never previously met, mental hygiene specialists of relatively low prestige should defer to those of relatively high prestige in discussing mental hygiene problems (Hurwitz, et al., 1953). But it is more remarkable still that gunners will defer to pilots when their task is to construct a projective story. It is difficult to see what bearing Air Force rank has on ability to weave a story about a card with an ambiguous picture on it; nevertheless the pilot will have more influence than the gunner on the crew's story (Torrance, 1954).

The theory we have developed in Sections 3 and 4 will not explain this fact. What we have so far is: γ_x is associated with D(x) (Definition 1); under certain conditions D is activated in S, so that γ_x is attributed to that actor in S who possesses D(x) (Assumption 1); in S, C is instrumental to T (given); so that if C is a member of the set γ_x p will have attributed one state of C to himself and another state of C to o on the basis of their states of D. (That this determines the power-prestige order in S has not yet

been shown; it will be shown in Section 6.) This explains how states of C are assigned only where C is a member of γ_x .

It is sometimes possible to argue that, although C is not specifically associated with D it is still similar to characteristics that are. Torrance, for example, used as one of his tasks the estimation of the number of dots scattered on a card. Though not among the skills usually required of Air Force officers, it might appear to them as like some skill (map reading, perhaps) that is part of their training. One can therefore say that C(x) becomes linked to D(x) because it is similar to a characteristic that is in γ_x .

But this argument lacks force when the task is to construct a projective story, and something much stronger is required than the similarity argument. Somehow p sees D as relevant even where C is not similar to characteristics in γ_x . By relevance here we mean that p believes two characteristics correspond in some way. He will feel that the two are in some way or for some reason related. This might be either because he anticipates a state of one, knowing the state of the other; or because he feels that there ought to be some particular state of one, given the other. Perhaps p believes that if o is articulate, he probably is intelligent; or that if o is intelligent, he ought to be (even if he is not) well off. We do not require that p believe in any particular correspondence; it is enough that he believes there ought to be one. (If p understands there to be a specific correspondence of state D(x) with state C(x) we will speak of strict relevance, as distinct from relevance in a more general sense.) But how does D become relevant to C if C has never before been specifically associated with it?

It is in cases of this kind that the general expectation state appears to be important. There is, of course, still that pressure on p to assess the relative abilities of himself and o at the task; there is still the feeling that status differences are significant. Furthermore, having activated D, p has attributed to himself and o, not only those characteristics in δ_x , but GES(x) as well. P has no reason to suppose that C is any exception to the past experience he believes to be embodied in GES, because C is not specifically dissociated from D. And there is no other basis for inferring abilities of p and o in S. Faced, in short, with pressure to predict behavior and only one basis from which to do so, we believe that the burden of proof is on p to show that GES, and therefore D, is not relevant to C.

Assumption 2. (Burden of Proof). If C has not been previously associated with or dissociated from D, and D is activated in S, and D is the only basis discriminating p and o, then D will become relevant to C.

It seems natural to suppose now that D is relevant to C, that p will attribute states of C to himself and o in such a way that the positive state of C is assigned to the actor who has the positive state of D, while the negative state of C is assigned to the actor who has the negative state of D. We will call such an assignment of states balanced.

To prepare for a more exact definition of balance, we require the idea of a relational unit. Note that the elements of our theory, so far, are the actors, p and o; various states of characteristics, C(x) and D(x); the outcomes of the task, T(x); and the expectation states, SPE(x) and GES(x). Between pairs of elements there are basically three kinds of relations: we

have talked, for example, (1) of $C(x)$ being instrumental to $T(x)$; (2) of $D(x)$ being possessed by p , or of $C(x)$ being attributed to p , which is the same thing; and (3) of $C(x)$ being associated with $D(x)$ or of $D(x)$ being relevant to $C(x)$, again similar, since strict relevance is equivalent to specific association. We will call any pair of elements between which there is any of these three relations a relational unit. Then,

Definition 2.1. (Balance). A relational unit is balanced if and only if its elements have the same evaluation.

If p possesses state $D(a)$, p and $D(a)$ are a relational unit; if $D(a)$ is relevant to $C(a)$, they form a second relational unit. If, in the latter unit, $D(a)$ and $C(a)$ are both positively or both negatively evaluated, the unit is balanced. The unit is imbalanced if, for example, $D(a)$ is positively evaluated while $C(a)$ is negatively evaluated.

We will call the whole set of relational units in S the status structure of S ; though of course it is the status structure viewed solely from p 's perspective.

Definition 2.2. A status structure in S is balanced if and only if every relational unit in it is balanced.

Why should p assign states of C that are balanced with D ? Why not imagine him assigning a negative state of C to o , even if he attributes to o a positive state of D ? Would not the enlisted man welcome the possibility that, at least in projective story telling, the officer is not more competent than he? But such an imbalanced assignment of states would pose a problem for p ; his beliefs about o based on GES would conflict with his beliefs

about o based on C. We believe that p will assign states of C to himself and o in such a way that he does not generate such conflicts.

Assumption 3. (Assignment). If D is relevant to C, p will assign states of C to himself and o that are balanced with states of D.

6. The Observable Distribution of Power and Prestige

We must now show that assignment of states of C determines the distribution of participation and influence in the group. We may think of each actor--recalling that they must act together to solve the problem they face--having certain action opportunities, as when p is asked a question by o, or is simply given a chance to talk by the fact that o stops talking. Given the opportunity to act, we may then ~~thinking of~~ each actor making some contribution to the discussion, which we will call a performance output. A performance output will be evaluated, both by one's self and by others--that is, there will be a unit evaluation³; and, finally, on the basis of such an evaluation, p might change his views or stay with his original ideas--that is, he might or might not be influenced. The distribution of all these, taken together, we have called the observable power and prestige order.

It will be recalled that certain uniformities in the distribution of observable power and prestige are regularly found. First, power and prestige are always unequally distributed; second, there is a high intercorrelation of the components of the order; third, differences in power and prestige are

³Unit, here, refers to evaluation of a single task contribution as distinct from evaluation of abilities in general, or of states of D.

highly correlated with influence over the group's final decision. (Aside from already cited work of Bales and his associates, see particularly Strodbeck, 1951; and Strodbeck, 1953.)

A parsimonious way to account for these regularities is to regard each component of the observed power-prestige order as a direct function of specific performance expectation states. In this formulation the SPE's are thought of as hypothetical entities, typically unobservable, that are used to explain various observable behaviors (Berger and Snell, 1961). For example: suppose p is an actor who holds a low performance expectation for himself and a high performance expectation for o with respect to the characteristic C which is instrumental in situation S. And suppose that p is committed to success at T, in the sense that, however obtained, he desires the correct answer.⁴ Caring to do well, and believing that o is more likely to have the good ideas than himself, p will give o more action opportunities, make fewer performance outputs himself, evaluate his own outputs less favorably and o's more favorably. will make fewer attempts to influence o and yield to more attempts of o to influence him, than will a second p who holds a high performance expectation

⁴We must distinguish a person-oriented situation, a situation in which p wants to do well himself, from a task-oriented situation, a situation in which p desires that eventually the best answer is given to a problem. Taking perhaps an extreme case, a doctor will desire that his patient get well, and will take whatever good ideas he can get from any source to accomplish this end; although on a test, however good or bad his ideas, he will want them to come only from himself. Here we are concerned with task-, not person-oriented, situations.

for self and low for other.

Assumption 4. (Basic Expectation Assumption). If C is instrumental to T, and if specific performance expectations for C are attributed by p to himself and o, the observed power-prestige order is a direct function of the specific performance expectations.

We do not mean to imply by assumption 4 that the relationship between SPE and the observed power-prestige order goes in only one direction; for the process by which specific performances are built up and broken down depends, in turn, on events in the observed interaction process (see Berger and Snell, 1961, and for an application to status-characteristics, Berger, Cohen, Conner, and Zelditch, 1965).

7. Coincidence of the Status-characteristic and the Observed Power-Prestige Order

We are to explain the often repeated finding that an external status characteristic coincides with the observed distribution of power and prestige within task groups. We regard certain initial conditions as given, namely:

- (1) P and o perform together a task, T, one outcome of which p regards as "success", the other as "failure".
- (2) The characteristic C is instrumental to T, with that state of C which is instrumental to "success" positively evaluated and that state of C which is instrumental to "failure" negatively evaluated.
- (3) P has not, initially, assigned states of C to himself or o.
- (4) P possesses one state of D while o possesses another state of D.
- (5) There is no basis other than D differentiating p from o.

We must now distinguish two cases. In one the characteristic C is among those already specifically associated with D. (We will assume for this case that it is the high state of C that is associated with the positively

evaluated state of D and the low state of C is associated with the negatively evaluated state of D,) In the other the characteristic is neither specifically associated with nor dissociated from D.

In the first case: Because p is committed to doing well (given) and must work together with o to complete task T (given), creating some pressure on p to assign states of C; and because D discriminates p from o (given), offering a basis for judging his own abilities relative to o; D is activated in S (assumption 1). If D is activated in S, p attributes γ_x and GES(x), both of which are associated with D(x) (definition 1), to himself and o according to their respective states D(x) and (definition of activation). If C(x) is a member of γ_x (given) it is among the traits attributed. If C is instrumental to T (given), and expectation states SPE, corresponding to states of C, are attributed to p and o, then the observed power-prestige order is a direct function of the SPE (assumption 4). If the observed power and prestige order is a function of SPE, and SPE has been assigned in such a way that the high state of SPE is associated with the positively evaluated state of D (given), then the observed power-prestige order coincides with D.

For example: Caudill found, in a consecutive sequence of 63 conferences on a ward of a small psychiatric hospital, that the head of the hospital talked more than the chief resident, the chief resident more than the five residents, the most passive resident more than the supervisor of nurses, the nursing supervisor more than the charge nurse, the charge nurse more than the staff nurse, and the ancillary personnel (an occupational therapist and two social workers) about the same as the nurses. By dividing the 63 sessions into three periods of 21 sessions each, and comparing the order of participation

in each period, Caudill shows that this order is quite stable over the whole sequence of sessions (Caudill, 1958, Chapter 10). If, within the group of residents, we order the five according to participation this order too is found to be very stable, and to have a high correlation with evaluations of their clinical competence by senior staff members (Caudill, 1958, p. 251). Evidently clinical competence is the characteristic instrumental in the morning rounds; we may reason too, that this characteristic is specifically associated with position in the hospital hierarchy, as it was found to be with the individual residents.

In the second case: Because p is committed to doing well (given) and must work together with o to complete the task (given), creating some pressure on p to assign states of C; and because D differentiates p from o (given), offering one basis for judging his own abilities relative to o; D is activated in S (assumption 1). If D is activated in S, p attributes χ_x and GES(x), which are both associated with D(x) (definition 1), to himself and o according to their respective states of D(x) (definition of activation). If C(x) is not a member of χ_x (given), because it is not dissociated from D (given) and because there is no other basis for assigning states of C in S (given), D is seen by p to be relevant to C (assumption 2). If D is relevant to C, p assigns the positive state of C to whoever has the positive state of D and the negative state of C to whoever has the negative state of D (definition 2 and assumption 3). If C is instrumental to T (given), and SPE, corresponding to C has been attributed to p and o, then the observed power-prestige order is a direct function of SPE (assumption 4). If the observed power-prestige order is a function of SPE and SPE is balanced with D, the observed power-prestige order coincides with D.

Torrance's observations of B-26 crews involved in a projective story task, in which pilots, navigators, and gunners influenced a group story in order of hierarchical position in the crew, is a fairly clean example of this second, burden of proof process. But consider also Strodtbeck's mock juries, in which sex (Strodtbeck and Mann, 1956) and occupation (Strodtbeck, James, and Hawkins, 1957) determine participation, influence, and election as foreman. It does not appear reasonable to argue that a specific ability instrumental to the task, which presumably required discussion of legal evidence, was associated with sex, or with any occupation except possibly the law. It is more reasonable to argue that general expectations about intellectual capacities, reasoning abilities, and thought processes were associated with the two status-characteristics.

8. Summary and Discussion

Our purpose has been to explain the repeatedly demonstrated finding that external status differences among members of a task group determine the distribution of power and prestige within the group. This phenomenon has been observed in ad hoc as well as organized groups; it has been observed even when the task situation is not related to specific behavior commonly associated with prior status differences.

We have defined the external status characteristic, D, as a characteristic with three properties: (1) its states are differentially evaluated; (2) they are associated with other, specific, traits, such as mathematical ability, or punctuality, or cleanliness; and (3) they are associated with more vague,

more unspecific, or more general traits, such as "ability", or "morality". Because of the last property we call such characteristics "diffuse".

Diffuse status characteristics are activated in situations in which:

- (1) some actors, say p and o, are required to act together to complete a task;
- (2) p, from whose viewpoint we regard the situation, values the task, in the sense that one of its outcomes is regarded by him as "success" and he cares to succeed;
- (3) p believes that a specific characteristic, C, is instrumental to success at the task, and positively evaluates that state of C which is instrumental to the "successful" outcome; but
- (4) p does not know which states of C should be assigned to himself or o; and
- (5) p sees only one basis with respect to which he and o differ, namely he and o possess different states of D. In such situations, we believe there is pressure on p to assign states of C, as part of the desire to do well at the task; but there is only one basis for inferring anything about himself relative to o, namely the characteristic D, which embodies conventional social beliefs about actors. We assert that these social beliefs embodied in D serve the same purpose in interaction that would be served if the actors had had previous experience with each other.

If C is among the characteristics already associated in p's mind with D, p will attribute the state C(x) to the actor who has the state D(x). Associated with C(x), in turn, are performance expectations, beliefs about how actors with the state C(x) will behave in specific situations; for example, that persons with mathematical ability will perform well in situations involving mathematical tasks. If what p wants is to see the group achieve the best outcome expectations associated with C(x) will become a basis on

which action opportunities, performance outputs, evaluations of performance outputs, and influence, which together make up the observable power and prestige order, are distributed between p and o.

If C is not among the characteristics already associated in p's mind with D, p nevertheless regards D as relevant to C if C has not already been dissociated from D and if he finds no other basis for assessing the relative abilities of himself and o. What this expresses is the generalizing potential of that vague and global judgment that we have claimed is also associated with D. If D is relevant to C, p assigns states of C to himself and o in such a way that they balance D--that is, in such a way that the state of C assigned to p and o has the same evaluation as the state of D possessed by p and o. Now expectations associated with C(x) become the basis on which action opportunities, performance outputs, evaluations of performance outputs, and influence are distributed between p and o.

In either case, whether or not C is specifically associated with D, unless C is specifically dissociated we will find that the observed distribution of power and prestige will, as a result of the states of C assigned to p and o, coincide with the external status characteristic.

One advantage of the formulation we have just summarized is that it provides a rigorous basis for the explanation and codification of results from quite diverse settings that all bear on essentially the same phenomenon. But it has also the advantage that it points to which lines of further investigation are likely to prove important. One, for example, would be to investigate situations in which balanced assignment, assumed in this paper, could not or did not occur. This would be the case if two status-characteristic

were activated that were imbalanced with each other. Under what conditions could this occur? If it occurs, how will p and o assign states of C? No assignment of states of C will balance the status structure. One possibility is that p assigns C in balance with D_i while o assigns C in balance with D_j , creating an expectation conflict in S. Very possibly too, action opportunities, unit evaluations, and influence would be either more equally distributed or more unstably distributed. In any case, the key place occupied in our formulation by the concept of balance suggests that further exploration of this idea should be particularly fruitful.⁵ Another particularly fruitful line of investigation, one strangely neglected so far, would be to explore further the conditions in which a status-characteristic is activated. We assume in this paper that D is activated if it discriminates between p and o. Suppose it does not? How will it be activated in status-homogeneous groups? If this question is answered we believe that our formulation can be extended to explain the "status struggle" observed in Bales' groups. If members of a group are initially undifferentiated in status, but task conditions force differentiation of the observed power and prestige order, then the actors are imbalanced. Hence they should be tense, and there should be conflict (see Zelditch, Berger, and Cohen, 1965). If, however, they are initially differentiated this

⁵We have confined ourselves in this paper to just those assumptions and definitions necessary to explain the status-interaction effect. More elaborate development of the balance idea will be found in Zelditch, Berger, and Cohen, 1965.

should not be observed. (Contrast, for example, Bales and Slater, 1955 with Hurwitz, et al., 1953.) Finally, our formulation has a third advantage; it points to apparently very different phenomena, in themselves well-enough known, that are a function of the same kind of assignment process as the distribution of influence in a small group. We believe this to be the case, for example, with the process by which an occupation is assigned to a place in the status hierarchy of a complex formal organization. Levels in the hierarchy, such as manager, supervisor, and worker, levels that are known to be differentially evaluated, can be called the status classes of the organization. A "job" can be thought of as a set of task-outcomes, and hence as a set of states of characteristics. The status classes behave like diffuse status-characteristics, as the literature of the subject clearly shows, and the assignment of a job to such a class appears to obey the balance assumption that we have used to account for assignment of states of C in small group, task settings. (This is explored in Zelditch, Berger, and Cohen, 1965, and Berger, Cohen, and Zelditch, 1965.)