Chapter 8
The Pursuit of Status: A Self-presentational Perspective on the Quest for Social Value

Mark R. Leary, Katrina P. Jongman-Sereno and Kate J. Diebels

Many theorists in psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, and other disciplines have viewed social status as a fundamental feature of social life not only among human beings but among other social species as well. In fact, several perspectives view status as one of the two basic dimensions that characterize social behavior, personality, and interpersonal relationships (Leary 1957; Wiggins 2003).

Most research on status has examined the implications of high and low status for behavior, reactions of other people, interpersonal relationships, and various outcomes, starting at the point at which a person already has or does not have status (Anderson and Kilduff 2009; Fiske 2010; Fiske and Berdahl 2007). Some work has examined social and personal factors that predict whether people have low vs. high status, but far less attention has been devoted to how people who desire to have status pursue it. The focus of this chapter is on the ways in which people who wish to increase their status seek it in their interactions with other people.

Our analysis of the pursuit of status begins with a discussion of the nature of status and its social psychological underpinnings. We then discuss the central role that self-presentation plays in the pursuit of status, the primary ways in which people enhance their status self-presentationally, and the features of social situations that moderate the ways in which people manage their status-relevant public images. We then turn to the dilemma that people sometimes face in balancing status and acceptance and discuss reactions to having low status.

M. R. Leary (✉) · K. P. Jongman-Sereno · K. J. Diebels
Department of Psychology and Neuroscience, Duke University,
Durham, USA
e-mail: leary@duke.edu

The Nature of Social Status

Conceptualizations of status are as muddled as almost any in psychology. At various times, writers have conceptualized status as having power, being esteemed or respected by other people, ranking high in a status hierarchy or pecking order, having authority over other people, being dominant, or having prestige (Anderson and Kilduff 2009; Fiske 2010; Fiske and Berdahl 2007; Henrich and Gil-White 2001; Magee and Galinsky 2008). Although one can see the connections among these concepts, they are by no means the same thing. For example, a person may have power over others by virtue of possessing the capacity to harm or destroy them, yet those individuals would not necessarily consider such a diabolically powerful person to have high status. Similarly, high-ranking people are sometimes detested and their efforts resisted, so they lack esteem, respect, and even influence.

Part of the difficulty in conceptualizing status has arisen from the fact that social and behavioral scientists have approached status in quite different ways. Sociological perspectives have generally taken a structural approach in which status is regarded as a property that is conferred on people by virtue of their position in a social structure or hierarchy. Some people—such as those who are educated, wealthy, belong to certain racial or ethnic groups, or inhabit a formal position of authority—have greater status than those who are uneducated, poor, members of marginalized groups, or have no authority. In contrast, psychological perspectives have taken an interpersonal approach, asking why certain people in any group are accorded greater status than other people. Of course, structural factors provide part of the answer, but from a social psychological standpoint, status dynamics are assumed to play out in the interpersonal relations among people. Thus, status arises from an interaction of social context, relationship variables, and the individual's personality. As a result, a particular person might be accorded high status by certain members of a group but not by other members for reasons that have nothing to do with structural considerations.

Instrumental Social Value

In our view, the essential foundation of status lies in what we will call *instrumental social value* (or, more precisely, *perceived* instrumental social value). People are accorded status to the extent that others believe that they possess resources and/or personal characteristics that are important for the attainment of collective goals. People who, for whatever reason, are seen as promoting collective outcomes—and thus benefitting both the group as a whole and its individual members—are accorded greater status than people who are not seen as promoting collective outcomes to the same degree. Thus, status is not a property of an individual but rather a consequence of being perceived as having instrumental social value. A person may be perceived to have high value—and thus high status—in one group but low value and status in another. Nor is status a property of a particular position in a group or society because people who occupy what might appear to be a "high status" position might not, in fact, be

viewed by other people as providing valuable outcomes for the group. Such people might have a high rank or high power without high status. Even so, people who hold high status positions are often accorded higher status either because they earned their position by promoting collective outcomes or because mere possession of a high status position leads others to infer that the person possesses resources or characteristics that reflect instrumental social value, whether or not that is actually the case.

The unit of analysis for ascribing status can be as large as a society (even a global society) or as small as a dyad. People who are widely recognized as playing important roles in the affairs of a society often enjoy wide-ranging status. War heroes, highly effective political leaders (particularly in times of crisis), astronauts and other explorers, great scientists and inventors, and other luminaries are often accorded status wherever they go. To a lesser extent, people in so-called high status professions—such as being a physician or judge—are likewise accorded status because they are seen as being broadly important to society. In organizations, teams, and task-oriented groups, status is directly related to the degree to which members are perceived to contribute to collective outcomes. (And, again, this is only indirectly related to members' formal positions or titles.) Even in dyadic relationships—such as friendships and romantic relationships—one person may have more status than the other by virtue of playing a more important role in the dyads' positive outcomes. Although most people may wish their closest relationships to be free of status differences, many close relationships show status effects that are due to the relative instrumental social value of the two individuals.

Conceptualizing status in terms of instrumental social value helps to clarify the relationship between status and the concepts with which it has been confused. For example, status is not the same as power, influence, or authority even though people with higher status generally do have greater social power and influence. As we describe in detail momentarily, people may be seen as important to a collective cause for many reasons—by virtue of possessing important competencies and skills, owning important resources, displaying a high degree of effort and loyalty, and so on. Such people are viewed as having greater status—and given greater influence—because of an implicit norm indicating that people whose skills, resources, and personal characteristics benefit the group should be accorded greater respect and influence. Whether the high status person is an effective leader, the most skilled member of an athletic team, or the member of the local garage band who owns the band's equipment, norms dictate that those who benefit from the person's contributions accord him or her respect and influence.

In addition, some of the same characteristics and resources that confer status are also directly related to the person's ability to exert power. The rest of the band must obviously defer to the member who owns the equipment when decisions regarding practices and performances are being made; the possession of resources can give one status and power simultaneously. Likewise, when status is based on leadership effectiveness, as it often is in business organizations and military units, the person often reached a formal position of authority by virtue of the same traits that lead followers to accord him or her status. Thus, conceptualizing status in terms of perceived instrumental social value helps to explain the myriad factors that predict the emergence of status.

Relational Value

Instrumental social value must be distinguished from another form of positive social evaluation. *Relational value* refers to the degree to which a person regards his or her relationship with another individual as personally valuable and important (Leary 2001). People regard their many interpersonal relationships—with friends, family members, co-workers, acquaintances, romantic partners, or whoever—as differentially valuable. Some of our relationships are exceptionally valuable and important to us. We put a great deal of effort into these treasured relationships, are strongly affected by the good and bad fortunes of the people whose relationships we value, and are distressed when problems arise in those relationships or, worse, they come to an end. Other relationships are less valuable. Although we may enjoy certain relationships, we do not make a special effort to sustain them and would not be particularly troubled if they ended. Some of our relationships have no relational value whatsoever; although we may have an ongoing, interdependent connection with a person, we may not regard our relationship with him or her as important or valuable.

Relational value is based on the psychological and emotional importance of a relationship almost without regard for the person's instrumental usefulness in helping us to accomplish goals. Of course, friends, romantic partners, and family members—classes of people who generally have the greatest relational value—often provide positive tangible outcomes and help us achieve various goals and, thus, they may have instrumental value. Yet, our relationships with such people are usually not predicated on their ability to help us attain those goals. In fact, many people who have very high relational value—such as one's children—do not provide any instrumental outcomes and sometimes exact considerable personal costs.

Relational value and instrumental social value differ in several ways. First, they are based on different criteria. Relational value is based on personal socio-emotional importance; instrumental social value is based on the person's value in achieving collective outcomes. Second, their affective and evaluative concomitants differ. Whereas relational value is associated with liking, instrumental social value is associated with respect. Third, in most cases, people whom we relationally value are not easily interchangeable with others who could serve their instrumental functions, whereas someone with high instrumental value may be quickly replaced by another person who has the same instrumental characteristics or resources. And, finally, high and low relational value is relevant to the degree to which people are accepted vs. rejected, whereas high and low instrumental social value is relevant to the degree to which people have high versus low status.

The Interplay of Instrumental Social Value and Relational Value

The distinction between instrumental social value and relational value maps on to the interpersonal circumplex popularized by numerous social, personality, and clinical psychologists (Kiesler 1983; Leary 1957; Moskowitz 1994; Wiggins 1982).

Circumplex models specify that two fundamental dimensions underlie a number of social and psychological phenomena, including social relationships. These dimensions have been characterized in slightly different ways by various theories, yet they share a common theme. One dimension has been characterized in terms of status, dominance, control, or power, and the other has been characterized in terms of love, affection, affiliation, or warmth (see Kiesler 1983). From our standpoint, any social encounter or interpersonal relationship can be characterized in terms of the degree to which each individual is perceived as having instrumental social value (status, respect) and relational value (acceptance, liking).

According to Blau (1960), these two dimensions are fundamentally important because they reflect the two primary routes to social integration. People are attracted to those who facilitate collective goals (i.e., have high instrumental social value) on one hand and those who are warm, likeable, and personally responsive (high relational value) on the other. Thus, having either instrumental social value (status) or relational value (acceptance) increases the likelihood that a person will be sufficiently rewarding to be included in others' activities, groups, and other affairs. But, although they are both routes to social integration, the basis of status and acceptance are different.

Of the two dimensions, acceptance is arguably the more important overall because one's relational value to another person generally spans specific contexts and provides more broadly essential resources (such as companionship, support, and care) than status, which is usually tied to particular contexts and provides less vital outcomes. A person who was widely liked and accepted but who had low status would typically fare better in life overall than a highly respected person with high status who was not relationally valued, liked, or accepted by anyone. Of course, being both liked and respected usually provides greater benefits than either one alone, so people are inclined to pursue both acceptance and status.

The Centrality of Self-Presentation in the Pursuit of Status

As noted, we do not view status as either a property of a person or a position but rather as an inference that others draw or a social designation that they confer. Based on their judgments of an individual's contributions to collective outcomes—his or her instrumental social value—people accord the person a certain amount of status.

Status sometimes accrues without the person intending to accumulate it. As people contribute to collective outcomes, they may passively accrue status because of their instrumental social value. For example, a particularly fair-minded, judicious, and loyal group member may accrue status as other members come to recognize the important role that he or she plays in the group. Similarly, a particularly skilled member of an athletic team will gain status among other team members without making any special effort to do so.

At other times, however, people actively pursue status and purposefully engage in behaviors to show others that they possess characteristics or resources that entitle

them to status. For example, a group member may volunteer to do certain tasks or participate in group discussions specifically to gain status rather than to help the group per se. Similarly, a member of an athletic team may show off his or her skills in ways that may increase his or her perceived instrumental social value. A person may inform others of (or even lie about) characteristics or resources that have implications for his or her value to the group.

Given that people attain status only to the extent that other people believe that they have instrumental social value, people who desire to increase their status attend to how their value is perceived by others and occasionally try to convey impressions of themselves that will bolster it. As Blau (1960, p. 546) observed, "a person who is motivated to attain an integrated position in a group has strong incentives not simply to wait until others discover his good qualities but to exert effort to prove himself an attractive associate" (p. 546). Thus, the pursuit and maintenance of status necessarily require attention to one's image in the eyes of other people as well as occasional efforts to manage one's impressions with respect to instrumental social value.

Self-presentation—the intentional effort to control the impressions that other people have of an individual—has often been portrayed as a deceitful and manipulative effort to convey public images of oneself that one knows are not true, and sometimes it is (Buss and Briggs 1984). Yet, although people sometimes project public images that do not reflect how they see themselves, more often, they manage their impressions in order to show others that they possess certain characteristics that they actually do possess (Schlenker 1980, 2012). Just as advertisers accurately describe the properties of a product that might not otherwise be discernible by consumers ("…has half the calories of regular beer"), people often take steps to make their characteristics known. Because other people may not have information about them that would create the desired impression, people work to ensure that relevant personal information is public knowledge. Thus, self-presentations are often tactical, but they are not necessarily deceitful (Schlenker 2012).

As noted, people who wish to increase their status often monitor and control how they are viewed with respect to attributes that qualify and disqualify them for status. To consider the role that people's public images, and thus self-presentations, play in the pursuit of status, let us consider the image-relevant dimensions that are most relevant to status. The particular images that lead others to confer status on a person differ across groups and contexts, but a few broad dimensions underlie most instances in which people are viewed as having instrumental social value and, thus, status.

Competence

First, status is often based on judgments of the person's competence in domains that are important to the observer. No matter what domain of ability one might imagine, those who value competence in that domain will accord higher status to those who are particularly skilled than to those who are not. All other things being equal, more highly skilled athletes have higher status—both among teammates and fans—than those who are less skilled. Highly accomplished, widely published scientists have

higher status than less accomplished ones. Among gang members, more skilled fighters are accorded higher status than poor fighters, and so on. Experimental research clearly shows that people's beliefs about another person's competence predict the degree to which they believe that the person has high status (Anderson et al. 2012c)

In light of the importance of competence to status in many contexts, people who desire greater status not only want to possess relevant knowledge and skills but they also want to ensure that their skills and successes are known by others and that their shortcomings and failures remain hidden. Thus, self-presentations involving knowledge, competence, and skill—what Jones and Pittman (1982) referred to as "self-promotion"—figure prominently in the pursuit of status. No one who desired status would make a point of advertising his or her ineptitude in areas that were important to the audience.

An indirect route to being viewed as competent is to convey an air of confidence. Because competent people are, on average, more confident than less competent ones, observers sometimes use confidence as a proxy for competence (Areni and Sparks 2005; Price and Stone 2004). In fact, when people are induced to be overconfident, observers infer that they have higher status (Anderson et al. 2012c). Thus, people who speak more in group discussions, use a confident tone of voice, speak first, display a calm and confident demeanor, and provide more information that is relevant to the discussion are viewed as more confident and of higher status (Anderson et al. 2012c). In general, anxious, insecure, and introverted people are probably accorded less status because they are (unfairly) perceived to be less competent than calm, secure, outspoken people (Anderson et al. 2001).

This effect may be partly responsible for the relationship between dominance and status. More dominant people may tend to have greater status because they are viewed as more competent than less dominant people (Anderson and Kilduff 2009). For example, perceptions of status are influenced by nonverbal behaviors such as eye contact, initiating touch, and facial expressions that indicate confidence and dominance (Edinger and Patterson 1983; Hall et al. 2005). Evidence suggests that this pattern arises because people ascribe greater competence to dominant people.

Obtaining and Displaying Resources

Second, instrumental social value is higher for people who possess resources that promote desired collective outcomes. These resources may be almost anything that benefits—or might potentially benefit—other people. The family with the only swimming pool in the neighborhood accrues status from allowing neighbors to take a dip. The kids with the coolest toys and videogames derive status from sharing their playthings. The teenager with a car gains status over peers without one. Having money to spend on other people or to facilitate group outcomes can buy status. One study showed that people who contributed more money to a group were perceived as having higher status than people who contributed less. Not surprisingly, they were also more influential and engendered more cooperation on the part of other group members (Willer 2009).

Because possessing certain resources can help people attain status, people sometimes seek possessions explicitly to increase their perceived instrumental social value. Many such things are directly relevant to status because they provide benefits to other people or to groups. For example, certain personal possessions can directly benefit other people in one's groups. Owning a printing shop that can produce needed material for the group, having a large house where the group can meet, or owning other possessions that facilitate the group's goals can increase status.

Other status-enhancing possessions do not benefit other people directly, but they demonstrate that the person possesses resources that might benefit others in the future. The mere possession of money or luxury possessions may not have instrumental value to others at the present time, yet people who display signs of wealth often have status because they have the potential to benefit others. People appear to be willing to accord wealthy people a certain amount of status as an investment toward the possibility of attaining desired outcomes from them in the future. As a result, people who foster the image of having instrumental social value may not actually behave in ways that provide instrumental social value.

Along these lines, Van Vugt and Hardy (2010) demonstrated that, even when people's contributions to a public good were not actually useful, people gave more when their contributions were public than private, presumably to be viewed as the kind of person who could have instrumental social value when needed. Furthermore, observers rated those who contributed more as having higher status and influence even when their contribution was not actually useful to the group. The link between being seen as having the potential for instrumental social value and being accorded status helps to explain why people sometimes display their wealth and engage in conspicuous consumption.

Promoting Collective Goals

Third, people can increase their status by directly benefitting groups and their members. For example, people increase status by serving on the boards of universities, nonprofit agencies, and community groups; organizing events; volunteering for tasks; sacrificing their time; donating money; tutoring or helping others. Directly helping a group to achieve its goals contributes to perceived instrumental social value in two ways. First, it promotes collective outcomes, thus benefitting the group and its members, which by definition is the crux of instrumental social value. In addition, performing duties on behalf of the group demonstrates that one is a loyal group member who devotes effort on behalf of the group (to be discussed below).

Not surprisingly, members who feel peripheral in a group try to demonstrate their instrumental social value in public ways rather than helping in private ways that are not known by other group members (Okimoto and Wrzesniewski 2012). People who are marginal group members are less likely to volunteer for the good of the group if their efforts will not be made known to the group than if their efforts will be known publicly. Thus, peripheral group members' self-presentational concerns manifest primarily in public contexts in which they can demonstrate their

social instrumental value to fellow group members by promoting the collective goals of the group.

Likewise, leaders who more effectively address the needs of other people foster perceptions of competence and credibility, enhance trust, and gain power (Blass and Ferris 2007). In addition to the specific knowledge and skills required to promote collective goals, people who possess "political skill" (e.g., social astuteness, behavioral flexibility, adaptability) more effectively address a variety of individual needs and promote individual and group goal accomplishment. Thus, political skill may contribute to perceptions of status both because it is valued by others in its own right and because the politically astute leader is able to discern how to facilitate the attainment of group goals and promote his or her instrumental social value.

Effort, Sacrifice, and Loyalty

Fourth, status is facilitated by indications that the person is a loyal and devoted group member who has the best interests of the group at heart and will occasionally sacrifice his or her personal interests for the benefit of the group or relationship. People who work especially hard for the group are accorded higher status than those who do not. Although a competent group member will usually have higher status than an incompetent one, the status of both more and less competent members will be augmented by indications that they are loyal and devoted members who work hard and are interested chiefly in the common good. For that reason, employees who put extra effort into their jobs are often accorded higher status (Allen and Rush 1998; Podsakoff and MacKenzie 1997).

Because perceived effort, sacrifice, and loyalty enhance status, not only do people who seek status put a great deal of effort toward group affairs, but they also work to be sure that others are aware of how much time and effort they invest. For example, employees have been known to delay leaving work until most of their co-workers have gone home. Trying to always appear busy with work, talking about working extra hours (overtime, on weekends), and volunteering to take on additional tasks increase perceived instrumental social value and status. Jones and Pittman (1982) refer to such self-presentational tactics as instances of exemplification.

Trappings and Signals of Social Status

A final way in which people pursue status self-presentationally is by displaying symbols that connote status. People who have high status often possess certain objects that are associated with high status roles (such as larger offices, membership in exclusive groups) or that are the fruits of having high social instrumental value (such as nicer houses, cars, and clothing), and may use those possessions as a means to symbolize their achievements (Richins and Dawson 1992). Because status is associated with such possessions, people can lead others to infer that they have status by displaying these status cues (Carr and Vignoles 2011; Leary 1995).

In an analysis of tactics for increasing one's power in work organizations, Korda (1975) described how employees increase their apparent status through their choices of clothing, office furniture, work-related artifacts, and workplace behaviors. For example, people are known to enhance their apparent importance at work by walking in a purposeful manner (even if they are only going to the water cooler), displaying multiple clocks that display the time in cities around the world (to imply that their work activities span the globe), always carrying a folder as they walk around their workplace (to show that they are on-task rather than wasting time), and communicating in a direct, sophisticated, confident manner (to connote authority and intelligence) (Fiske 2010; Korda 1975). In each case, the goal is to convey the impression that one has high instrumental value which, if believed by others, may enhance one's status and power within the organization.

Similarly, in personal life, people can appear to be important (i.e., to have instrumental social value) through an array of self-presentations. In addition to the use of possessions that connote status as discussed earlier, people foster images of being important through what they say about themselves. When people talk about their skills, knowledge, and accomplishments, they are often trying to increase others' judgments of their instrumental social value and status. Of course, people rarely make explicit claims that they are important, instrumentally valuable people. Rather, they do so off-handedly by mentioning their roles, responsibilities, competencies, and experiences in the course of ordinary conversations. People may even embed their instrumental value within an otherwise mundane or even deprecating self-disclosure, a tactic that has become known as "humblebragging" ("I stupidly forgot to set my alarm clock and almost missed my meeting with the Governor") (Alford 2012). Likewise, when people share gossip, they are often trying to demonstrate their instrumental social value by providing inside information about third parties (McAndrew and Milenkovic 2002).

Avoiding Status

Of course, most people do not go through life consistently trying to bolster their status, and some people may show little interest in status whatsoever. In one study, over 65 % of participants did not want the highest status rank in a group (Anderson et al. 2012b).

Despite its benefits, having high status is associated with a variety of costs. Rarely is status itself problematic, but the attainment and maintenance of status can be accompanied by undesired outcomes. As will be discussed, efforts to attain status may undermine liking and acceptance, partly because people who want status may focus on "getting ahead" rather than "getting along." Moreover, norms may preclude high status people from forming friendships with lower status people, particularly within organizations or in instances in which the higher status person has authority over the lower status one. In such cases, high status can interfere with people's desire for social inclusion. Also, higher status often brings weightier responsibilities, more work, and thus more stress. For these and other reasons, people sometimes manage their impressions in ways that attenuate their status.

Situational Moderators of Tactics for Pursuing Status

To be effective, all self-presentations must be tailored to the specific social context and the characteristics of the target individuals whose impressions one is hoping to influence. Public images that would achieve one's goals in one situation or with respect to one audience may produce disastrous results when used in other situations or with other audiences. In this section, we explore features of situations and audiences that moderate the effectiveness of self-presentational efforts to attain status.

Target Preferences

As we have seen, people who are motivated to pursue status must convey that they possess attributes that lead to desired outcomes for a group and its members. We have already noted that competence, the possession of material and financial resources that help the group, the willingness to assist others, and displays of effort and loyalty are important in increasing status. Of course, the specific competencies, resources, assistance, and efforts that benefit a group differ greatly across groups and roles. Being good in hand-to-hand fighting would probably enhance the status of a gang member or Marine but not that of a priest or premier ballerina.

Because the specific public images that promote status differ across audiences, people are sometimes caught in a multiple audience situation in which they interact simultaneously with two or more audiences that view the bases of instrumental social value differently (Leary and Allen 2011). Middle managers sometimes get caught in such situations because the instrumental behaviors that increase their status in eyes of subordinates are different from those that increase their status in the eyes of their superiors. Likewise, politicians face multiple audience problems as they try to promote their status to groups of voters who want them to pursue different actions. Presidential candidate Mitt Romney's claim that 47 % of Americans do not take personal responsibility for their lives probably increased his status in the eyes of many of those who attended the private fund-raising event at which he spoke but lowered his status among many others when it was leaked to the press.

Task Demands, Roles, and Norms

The attributes that are associated with instrumental social value depend, in part, on the demands of the current situation. Those who wish to gain or retain status must promote their instrumental social value in different ways depending on what the group values at a particular time.

In one study, participants who were assigned to be the leader of a laboratory group changed how they presented themselves to other group members depending on the nature of the task that the group faced (Leary et al. 1986). Leaders described themselves to group members as more task-oriented when they were told that a

task-oriented leader would be most effective (i.e., of greater instrumental value to the group), whereas leaders who were led to believe that a relationship-oriented leader would be most effective described themselves in more relationship-oriented terms.

The role in which a person finds him- or herself also impels certain self-pre-sentations. Most roles carry with them expectations, if not prescriptions, regarding the kinds of images that those who inhabit those roles must maintain (Leary 1995). Failure to maintain a public image that is prescribed for a role may result in loss of status, diminish one's effectiveness in the role, or compromise one's right to exercise the role altogether. Interestingly, observers may recognize that these role-based images are not a strictly accurate or authentic representation of the person's characteristics and that the images are not necessarily an essential aspect of the role. Yet, people in the role must convey the appropriate image in order to maintain or enhance their status.

For example, most people who regularly face danger in the course of their jobs—such as police officers, fire fighters, and many members of the military—are not as confident and calm in the face of danger as their visage may suggest. And everyone realizes that, as normal human beings, people in these roles are sometimes uncertain and afraid. Yet, to openly display uncertainty or fear to the public would likely re-sult in a loss of status because, from the public's standpoint, the instrumental social value of an uncertain or fearful police officer, fire fighter, or soldier is arguably lower than that a confident and fearless one. Thus, role demands require that people in such fields maintain a public image of confidence, fearlessness, and strength no matter how they may actually feel. Similarly, everyone knows that teachers some-times become fed-up with their students, but a teacher who fails to maintain an image of imperturbability by screaming at students or complaining to parents will suffer a loss of status.

However, people often forego certain role-based self-presentations when with others who also occupy the role, with no loss of status. Police officers may share their fears with other cops, teachers complain vociferously about students among themselves, and ministers are known to act up when they are alone with other mem-bers of the clergy. Employing a dramaturgical metaphor, Goffman (1959) observed that a person who is "backstage" with others who share the role can "drop his front, forego speaking his lines, and step out of character" (p. 112). Observing the role-inappropriate and often regressive behaviors that occur in backstage areas shows how much of people's role-based behaviors are maintained by self-presentational pressures to convey an image appropriate to one's role.

Informational Constraints

Norms dictate that people are who and what they claim to be, and people who mis-represent their personal characteristics lose face and are sometimes negatively sanc-tioned (Goffman 1959; Schlenker 1980). Thus, people are constrained in the images that they can present to others by what others know or might find out about them.

In established groups and relationships, people are often limited in the images that they can reasonably claim because others have information about their abilities, characteristics, resources, and personal history based on both direct observation of their actions and reputational information, including gossip. Thus, people who desire to increase their status may have more difficulty pursuing it self-presentationally—as opposed to behaving in ways that demonstrably have instrumental value—when others have information about them. People know this, of course. Research shows that people avoid presenting public images that they cannot sustain because other people have information that would discredit the image (Baumeister and Jones 1978; Schlenker 1975). For example, people avoid accepting a high status ranking if they believe that their fellow group members will be informed about their ostensible poor performance on a previous activity (Anderson et al. 2012b). In such situations, people must demonstrate their instrumental social value directly through actions that benefit the group rather than simply through self-presentational posturing.

Balancing Status and Acceptance

As noted, people gain positive outcomes both by being liked (and accepted) and by being respected (and having status). However, in their everyday lives, people sometimes conflate acceptance and status and erroneously use tactics to seek status that are actually more appropriate for seeking acceptance, and vice versa. For example, in many instances in which people attempt to impress casual acquaintances with their skills, knowledge, and accomplishments, they are using self-presentations that are relevant to status when, in fact, they are trying to be liked and accepted. Similarly, people who try to increase their relational value by being successful or working hard may become hurt or disappointed when such efforts do not automatically endear other people to them. Such actions may increase relational value (and acceptance) at times, but they are more relevant to status than to acceptance.

Conversely, people may try to increase their status by being likeable people with high relational value. In work groups, for example, people may try to increase status and respect through behaviors that are more relevant to acceptance and liking; such behaviors may win friends and affection without affecting status. The tension between status and acceptance is also seen when successful people who are widely respected for their accomplishments nonetheless question whether anyone actually likes or cares about them. Successful actors and actresses, athletes, models, musicians, and other celebrities sometimes wonder whether their fame says anything about how people feel about them as a person. Although it is certainly rewarding to be admired for one's appearance, talent, or accomplishments, the public's adoration is often based on the person's instrumental social value and says nothing about his or her relational value.

People's efforts to seek status are further complicated by the fact that some of the criteria for winning status clash with those for attaining acceptance. In an early

analysis of this issue, Blau (1960) suggested that an inverse relationship exists between obtaining respect versus affection from other people. Along these lines, one study in which people interacted in small groups over 4 weeks found that people who enhanced their status were less socially accepted by other group members than those who did not enhance their status (Anderson et al. 2006). Such effects may occur because certain self-presentational tactics for gaining status, such as touting characteristics or resources that reflect one's social instrumental value, may appear highly self-promoting (which they are), and convey that one is superior to other people in certain respects, generate competitiveness with other group members, or evoke envy. Such reactions may undermine the person's perceived relational value, along with liking and acceptance.

The classic "pratfall" study by Aronson et al. (1966) may also be an example of this effect. Aronson et al. showed that a highly competent individual was liked better if he made a mistake (spilling coffee on himself) than if he did not. The canonical explanation of the pratfall effect suggests that being seen as fallible makes highly competent people seem more human, approachable, and likeable, which is certainly true. Yet, this study also reflects the trade-off between acceptance and status. The competent person was liked less than the mediocre one unless the competent one performed a clumsy, humanizing behavior. Thus, competence, which presumably confers status, appeared to undermine liking in this instance.

Thus, people who desire both status and acceptance from the same audience sometimes face a dilemma, and people seem to know this. In fact, the more that people want to be accepted, the more they underestimate their status in their own mind (Anderson et al. 2006). This finding again suggests that people recognize a trade-off between social acceptance and social status and that people's desire for acceptance and belonging can sometimes attenuate their desire for status.

An early study by Jones et al. (1963) demonstrated one version of the status-acceptance dilemma and its resolution. Pairs of low- and high-status ROTC cadets were instructed to exchange information about themselves. Half of the participants were told to convey accurate information, and half were told to try to get the other person to like them. When instructed to get the low-status cadet to like them, high-status cadets became more modest in their self-presentations, particularly on unimportant attributes. In this way, they could appear likeable and approachable without undermining the positive image needed to maintain status. Low-status cadets, on the other hand, became more self-enhancing on unimportant attributes when they were trying to get the high-status cadet to like them. This tactic allowed them to make a positive impression without the risk of appearing self-aggrandizing or seeming to seek greater status.

Of course, people differ in the degree to which they value status versus acceptance and thus approach the status-acceptance trade-off differently. One case in point involves narcissism. The core features of narcissism involve a grandiose self-image, coupled with the belief that one is entitled to special treatment by virtue of one's specialness, and research suggests that people who score high in narcissism are also particularly motivated to seek status (Raskin et al. 1991; Vangelisti et al. 1990). In fact, much of the interpersonal behavior of people who are high in narcis-

sism seems designed to lead others to recognize their social value and importance. For example, they seek excessive recognition for their accomplishments, fantasize about fame and glory, are motivated to be dominant and powerful, have a strong desire to be recognized for their agentic characteristics, and are focused on status and power (see Campbell et al. 2006, for a review). At the same time, people high in narcissism appear far less concerned with relational value that is based on being a likeable, communal person (Campbell et al. 2002). In fact, they regularly be-have in ways that are abrasive and off-putting, if not insensitive and offensive. The self-presentations of narcissists seem specifically designed to promote their status. And, their self-presentational efforts to achieve status are not tempered by a normal concern about being liked, which helps to account for why other people are often irritated by their interpersonal style.

Whereas people high in narcissism emphasize status and deemphasize accep-tance, people who score high in approval motivation are often caught in a status-ac-ceptance dilemma when they wish to increase their status. Unlike the narcissist who single-mindedly pursues status even at the price of garnering disapproval, people who are high in approval motivation seek status in ways that are unlikely to jeop-ardize the degree to which they are liked and accepted (Grams and Rogers 1990).

One way in which people can achieve this balance is to demonstrate their in-strumental social value in terms of relational and communal outcomes. People can contribute to collective outcomes not only through their competence and provi-sion of material resources but also by fostering positive relationships among group members. Not only do people enjoy memberships in groups in which they have positive relationships but cohesive groups tend to perform better than noncohesive, conflicted ones (Anderson et al. 2006). Thus, people who foster a positive group climate often have instrumental social value. Because those who promote positive relationships are usually viewed as warm and likeable people, people who desire so-cial approval can attain both status and approval by being relational experts within a group. People who prefer relationship-oriented leadership styles (Fiedler 1978) may fall in this category. The downside of this tactic is that contributing to col-lective outcomes relationally may be both less valued and more difficult to detect than contributing directly to group performance. As a result, group members whose instrumental social value is based on relational behaviors may have lower status than those whose value is based on direct and observable contributions to group outcomes.

Although a tension sometimes exists between efforts to seek status and accep-tance, they sometimes work in concert. For instance, some qualities, such as social skill and charisma, increase perceptions of influence, innovation, credibility, re-sponsibility for success, and effectiveness (thereby contributing to perceived instru-mental value and status), while also increasing perceptions of trustworthiness and warmth, thereby enhancing relational value and acceptance (Gardner and Avolio 1998). For example, being seen as someone who donates large amounts of money to charities might convey the impression of being a nice person (with an increase in relational value and liking) as well as being a person with resources that could facilitate collective outcomes (with an increase in instrumental social value and

status). In addition, people seem to value having personal relationships with those who have high status, even if the high status person's instrumental social value is irrelevant to his or her personal relationships. All other things being equal, people seem to prefer that their friends, acquaintances, partners, and family members have high rather than low status in other people's eyes. Thus, high status can promote one's relational value even when it is irrelevant.

Reactions to Having Low Acceptance Versus Low Status

Because acceptance was vital to survival throughout human evolution, people appear to possess a designated system for monitoring the environment for signs of acceptance and rejection (Leary et al. 1995). This sociometer responds to indications of low or declining relational value by alerting people to the possibility of rejection and motivating behaviors that deal with the threat (for a review, see Leary 2006). People respond quickly and strongly to exceptionally minor indications of rejection, even when the rejection has no meaningful consequences (MacDonald and Leary 2005; Williams and Zadro 2005). The question arises of whether people also possess a comparable system for monitoring status. Although some theorists have proposed the existence of such a system (see Barkow 1980), much less attention has been devoted to how people monitor and react to status than to acceptance. Thus, our thoughts on this question are admittedly speculative.

Undoubtedly, people are sometimes attuned to status concerns and may react emotionally to indications that they do not have as much status as they desire. Having high status is associated with greater positive affect than low status, and people may react strongly when they believe that others have not accorded them the status they deserve (Anderson et al. 2012a). However, having low status does not appear to evoke strong reactions across the number and variety of situations as does being rejected. People are rarely indifferent to being relationally devalued and respond emotionally to signs of disinterest, avoidance, rejection, or ostracism even under conditions of zero-acquaintance and even when the rejector belongs to a despised outgroup (Bourgeois and Leary 2001; Gonsalkorale and Williams 2007; Leary et al. 1995; Snapp and Leary 2001; Williams and Zadro 2005). People act as if they should be relationally valued and accepted by virtually everyone they meet. In contrast, people spend much of their daily lives in contexts in which their instrumental social value (and, thus, status) is low, but they do not appear to have strong reactions to most of these situations. Rather, people generally react to having low status primarily when they believe that they are not being accorded the status they deserve by virtue of their self-perceived instrumental value.

We also speculate that acceptance can buffer the effects of low status more effectively than high status can buffer low acceptance. Compare two individuals: Person A perceives that he or she is regarded as valuable to his or her groups (i.e., instrumental social value and status are very high) but that no one values

having a relationship with him or her on a personal level (i.e., his or her relational value is near zero, and he or she is chronically rejected outside of the contexts in which he or she has instrumental value). In contrast, Person B perceives that he or she is not especially valuable to the groups to which he or she belongs (i.e., instrumental social value and status are low) but believes that many people value their personal relationships with him or her a great deal (i.e., relational value is high). Our hunch is that Person A—the one with high status but low acceptance—would likely experience stronger reactions and potentially more psychological problems than Person B, who enjoys broad acceptance despite not having high instrumental value. Although both acceptance and status confer benefits, deficits in acceptance may have stronger negative consequences than comparable deficits in status.

Conclusions

People establish most of their connections with other people through one of two routes—by having high relational value as interaction and relationship partners, and by having high instrumental social value as members of dyads and groups. Much has been written about how people pursue relational value in order to be accepted by others (Baumeister and Leary 1995; Leary 2001), but far less attention has been paid to how people seek instrumental social value in order to have status (Fiske 2010). People often accrue status in the eyes of other people automatically as they behave in ways that others regard as having instrumental value for collective concerns. However, people often make a concerted effort to maintain or enhance their status through an array of self-presentational tactics. Sometimes, status-oriented self-presentations are inaccurate or duplicitous, but more often, they are honest efforts to demonstrate that one possesses characteristics or resources that are relevant to one's ability to contribute to collective outcomes.

To understand more fully the ways in which people pursue status (and balance those efforts against their desire to be accepted), research needs to examine lay people's beliefs about the nature of their connections with other people. We get the sense that most people have a rather vague, if not mistaken, understanding of the difference between being liked and being respected, between being accepted and having status, and between being valued as a relational partner and being valued because of one's instrumental contributions to a collective goal. As a result, they do not facilitate their connections to other people as successfully as they could and, in fact, sometimes mismanage, if not jeopardize, important social relationships. Research on people's reasons for wanting acceptance and status, beliefs about the reasons that other people like and respect them, and understanding of how to behave in ways that convey relevant information to other people will lead to more fully developed theories regarding the pursuit of status.

References

Alford, H. (30 November 2012). If I do humblebrag so myself. *New York Times*. http://www.ny-times.com/2012/12/02/fashion/bah-humblebrag-the-unfortunate-rise-of-false-humility.html.

Allen, T. D., & Rush, M. C. (1998). The effects of organizational citizen ship behavior on performance judgments: A field study and a laboratory experiment. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 83,* 247–260.

Anderson, C., & Kilduff, G. J. (2009). The pursuit of status in social groups. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 18,* 295–298.

Anderson, C., John, O. P., Keltner, D., & Kring, A. M. (2001). Who attains social status? Effects of personality and physical attractiveness in social groups. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 81,* 116–132.

Anderson, C., Srivastava, S., Beer, J., Spataro, S. E., & Chatman, J. A. (2006). Knowing your place: Self-perceptions of status in social groups. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 91,* 1094–1110.

Anderson, C., Kraus, M. W., Galinsky, A. D., & Keltner, D. (2012a). The local-ladder effect: Social status and subjective well-being. *Psychological Science, 23,* 764–771.

Anderson, C., Willer, R., Kilduff, G. J., & Brown, C. E. (2012b). The origins of deference: When do people prefer lower status? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 102,* 1077–1088.

Anderson, C., Brion, S., Moore, D. A., & Kennedy, J. A. (2012c). A Status-enhancement account of overconfidence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *103,* 718–735.

Areni, C. S., & Sparks, J. R. (2005). Language power and persuasion. *Psychology & Marketing, 22,* 507–525.

Aronson, E., Willerman, B., & Floyd, J. (1966). The effect of a pratfall on increasing interpersonal attractiveness. *Psychonomic Science*, *4,* 227–228.

Barkow, J. H. (1980). Prestige and self-esteem: A biosocial interpretation. In D. R. Omark, F. Strayer, & D. G. Freedman (Eds.), *Dominance relations: An ethological view of human conflict and social interaction* (pp. 319–332). New York: Garland STPM.

Baumeister, R. F., & Jones, E. E. (1978). When self-presentation is constrained by the target's knowledge: Consistency and compensation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 36,* 608–618.

Blass, F. R., & Ferris, G. R. (2007). Leader reputation: The role of mentoring, political skill, contextual learning, and adaptation. *Human Resource Management, 46,* 5–19.

Blau, P. M. (1960). A theory of social integration. *American Journal of Sociology, 65,* 545–556.

Bourgeois, K. S., & Leary, M. R. (2001). Coping with rejection: Derogating those who choose us last. *Motivation and Emotion, 25,* 101–111.

Buss, A., & Briggs, S. (1984). Drama and the self in social interaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 47,* 1310–1324.

Campbell, W. K., Rudich, E., & Sedikides, C. (2002). Narcissism, self-esteem, and the positivity of self-views: Two portraits of self-love. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 28,* 358–368.

Campbell, W. K., Bruneill, A. B., & Finkel, E. J. (2006). Narcissism, interpersonal self-regulation, and romantic relationships. In K. D. Vohs & E. J. Finkel (Eds.), *Self and relationships* (pp. 57–83). New York: Guilford.

Carr, H., & Vignoles, V. L. (2011). Keeping up with the Joneses: Status projection as symbolic self-completion. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 41,* 518–527.

Edinger, J. A., & Patterson, M. L. (1983). Nonverbal involvement and social control. *Psychological Bulletin, 93,* 30–56.

Fiedler, F. E. (1978). Recent developments in research on the contingency model. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Group processes* (pp. 167–208). New York: Academic.

Fiske, S. T. (2010). Interpersonal stratification: Status, power, and subordination. In S. T. Fiske, G. Lindzey, & D. T. Gilbert (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (5th ed., pp. 941–982). Hoboken: Wiley.

Fiske, S. T., & Berdahl, J. (2007). *Social power*. In A. Kruglanski & E. Higgins (Eds.), *Social psychology: A handbook of basic principles* (pp. 678–692). New York: Guilford.

Gardner, W. L., & Avolio, B. J. (1998). The charismatic relationship: A dramaturgeical perspective. *Academy of Management Review, 23,* 32–58.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Doubleday.

Gonsalkorale, K., & Williams, K. D. (2007). The KKK won't let me play: Ostracism even by a despised outgroup hurts. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 37,* 1176–1186.

Grams, W. C., & Rogers, R. W. (1990). Power and personality: Effects of Machiavellianism, need for approval, and motivation on use of influence tactics. *Journal of General Psychology, 11,* 71–82.

Hall, J. A., Coats, E. J., & LeBeau, L. S. (2005). Nonverbal behavior and the vertical dimension of social relations: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin, 131,* 898–924.

Henrich, J., & Gil-White, F. J. (2001). The evolution of prestige: Freely conferred deference as a mechanism for enhancing the benefits of cultural transmission. *Evolution and Human Behavior, 22,* 165−196.

Jones, E. E., & Pittman, T. S. (1982). Toward a general theory of strategic self-presentation. In J. Suls (Ed.), *Psychological perspectives on the self* (Vol. 1, pp. 231–262). Hillsdale: Erlbaum.

Jones, E. E., Gergen, K. J., & Jones, R. G. (1963). Tactics of ingratiation among leaders and subordinates in a status hierarchy. *Psychological Monographs*, *77*(3, Whole No. 566).

Kiesler, D. J. (1983). The 1982 interpersonal circle: A taxonomy for complementarity in human transactions. *Psychological Review, 90,* 185–214.

Korda, M. (1975). *Power! How to get it, how to use it*. New York: Random House.

Leary, T. (1957). *Interpersonal diagnosis of personality*. New York: Ronald.

Leary, M. R. (1995). *Self-presentation: Impression management and interpersonal behavior*. Boulder: Westview.

Leary, M. R. (2001). Toward a conceptualization of interpersonal rejection. In M. R. Leary (Ed.), *Interpersonal rejection* (pp. 3–20). New York: Oxford University Press.

Leary, M. R. (2006). Sociometer theory and the pursuit of relational value: Getting to the root of self-esteem. *European Review of Social Psychology, 16,* 75–111.

Leary, M. R., & Allen, A. B. (2011). Self-presentational persona: Simultaneous management of multiple impressions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 101,* 1033–1059.

Leary, M. R., Robertson, R. B., Barnes, B. D., & Miller, R. S. (1986). Self-presentations of small group leaders as a function of role requirements and leadership orientation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51,* 742–748.

Leary, M. R., Tambor, E. S., Terdal, S. K., & Downs, D. L. (1995). Self-esteem as an interpersonal monitor: The sociometer hypothesis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 68,* 518–530.

MacDonald, G., & Leary, M. R. (2005). Why does social exclusion hurt? The relationship between social and physical pain. *Psychological Bulletin, 131,* 202–223.

Magee, J. C., & Galinsky, A. D. (2008). *The self-reinforcing nature of social hierarchy: Origins and consequences of power and status*. Presented at IACM 21st annual conference. Chicago, IL.

McAndrew, F. T., & Milenkovic, M. A. (2002). Of tabloids and family secrets: The evolutionary psychology of gossip. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 32,* 1064–1082.

Moskowitz, D. S. (1994). Cross-situational generality and the interpersonal circumplex. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 66,* 921–933.

Okimoto, T. G., & Wrzesniewski, A. (2012). Effort in the face of difference: Feeling like a non-prototypical group member motivates effort. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 42,* 628–639.

Podsakoff, P. M., & MacKenzie, S. B. (1997). Impact of organizational citizenship behavior on organizational performance: A review and suggestions for future research. *Human Performance, 10,* 133–152.

Price, P. C., & Stone, E. R. (2004). Intuitive evaluation of likelihood judgment producers: Evidence for a confidence heuristic. *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making, 17,* 39–57.

Raskin, R., Novacek, J., & Hogan, R. (1991). Narcissism, self-esteem, and defensive self-enhancement. *Journal of Personality, 59*, 19–38.

Richins, M. L., & Dawson, S. (1992). A consumer values orientation for materialism and its measurement: Scale development and validation. *Journal of Consumer Research, 19,* 303–316.

Schlenker, B. R. (1975). Self-presentation: Managing the impression of consistency when reality interferes with self-enhancement. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 32,* 1030–1037.

Schlenker, B. R. (1980). *Impression management: The self-concept, social identity, and interpersonal relations*. Monterey: Brooks/Cole.

Schlenker, B. R. (2012). Self-presentation. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self, andidentity* (2nd ed., pp. 542–570). New York: Guilford.

Snapp, C. M., & Leary, M. R. (2001). Hurt feelings among new acquaintances: Moderating effects of interpersonal familiarity. *Journal of Personal and Social Relationships, 18,* 315–326.

Vangelisti, A., Knapp, M. L., & Daly, J. A. (1990). Conversational narcissism. *Communication Monographs, 57,* 261–272.

Van Vugt, M., & Hardy, C. L. (2010). Cooperation for reputation; Wasteful contributions as costly signals in public goods. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations, 13,* 101–111.

Wiggins, J. S. (1982). Circumplex models of interpersonal behavior in clinical psychology. In P. C. Kendall & J. N. Butcher (Eds.), *Handbook of research methods in clinical psychology* (pp. 183–221). New York: Wiley.

Wiggins, J. S. (2003). *Paradigms of personality assessment*. New York: Guilford.

Willer, R. (2009). Groups reward individual sacrifice: The status solution to the collective action problem. *American Sociological Review, 74,* 23–43.

Williams, K. D., & Zadro, L. (2005). Ostracism: The indiscriminate early detection system. In K. D. Williams, J. P. Forgas, & W. von Hippel (Eds.), *The social outcast: Ostracism, social exclusion, rejection, and bullying* (pp. 19–34). New York: Psychology.