Gender, Legitimation, and Identity Verification in Groups*

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Abstract

Drawing upon identity theory, expectation states theory, and legitimation theory, we examine how the task leader identity is more likely to be verified for persons with high status characteristics in four-person, mix-sexed, task-oriented groups. We hypothesize that identity verification will be accomplished more readily for male group members and legitimated task leaders than female group members and those who are not legitimated. We found that there is an interaction of gender and legitimation on identity verification. Legitimated female leaders and non-legitimated males had higher levels of identity verification; the leadership performances of legitimated female leaders and non-legitimated males were close to that expected by their identity standards. Further examination revealed that legitimated male leaders were consistently over-evaluated in the amount of their leadership relative to their own identity standards, while non-legitimated female leaders' leadership behavior was consistently under-evaluated relative to their own identity standards. The latter two situations are examples of identity non-verification. The implications of our findings for the study of identity verification and social structural processes are discussed.

A central assumption in many theories of the self in social psychology is that an important goal for individuals in interaction is the verification of self-views. Individuals seek to confirm self-views and will work to maintain those relationships and situations in which they experience self-verification (Burke 1991; McCall and Simmons 1978; Stryker 1980; Swann 1983; Swann 1990);; This verification is sought even when one's self-views are negative (Robinson and Smith-Lovin 1992; Swann 1990; Swann, Pelham, and Krull 1989; Swann, Wenzlaff, and Tafarodi 1992). If, as Turner (2002) argues, self-verification is

the most powerful force driving individuals in all encounters, it is important to understand how it operates in face-to-face interaction.

Research in identity theory has focused on the positive outcomes of the verification process (Burke 2004b; Burke and Harrod 2005; Burke and Stets 1999; Stets and Burke 2005a);; the negative outcomes of non-verification (Burke 1991; 2004b; Burke and Harrod 2005; Stets and Burke 2005b);; and the relationship between identity standards and behavior (Burke and Reitzes 1981; 1991). Recently, social structural features such as one's position in the status hierarchy has been brought into the verification process (Cast 2003; Cast, Stets, and Burke 1999; Stets and Harrod 2004). Examining data from different dyadic relationships (married couples, friends, or co-workers), these identity theorists have found that higher status actors appear more likely than lower status actors to obtain verification of their identities. Since higher status actors have greater power, influence, and control over resources in the social structure than lower status actors, this greater influence is imported into relationships with the result that higher status actors are better able to construct situations that serve their interests including obtaining identity verification.

This study contributes to the growing body of research on the self-verification process in several ways. First, whereas previous research has examined status as attached to individuals through ascription, as in one's gender, race, or age, or achievement, as in one's education or occupational status, we add to this investigation by examining an experimentally assigned status. Drawing from expectation states theory on the consequences of status derived from status characteristics (Berger and Conner 1974; Berger and Webster 2006; Ridgeway 1988), and from legitimacy theory on the consequences of authorizing a person to be a leader in a group (Zelditch 2001; Zelditch 2006), we examine whether persons in advantaged positions both in terms of having ascribed status and in terms of being assigned status will be better able to verify their identities than the converse.

Second, we examine the verification process in a four-person group setting, thereby extending the dynamics of verification beyond the dyad. At issue is whether the verification process still operates in the same way when a group of others is involved compared to one other actor. In addition, as the group members are initially strangers to each other, we extend work that has been done with married couples who, because of their deeper knowledge of each other, have likely set up mutual verification contexts. Because the group participants do not know each other, procedures of mutual accommodation have not been worked out yet. Additionally, rather than identity verification being based on socioemotional concerns which is often the case among close associates such as spouses and friends, we focus on identity verification that is based on instrumental concerns. Our setting is small, task-oriented groups and we examine the verification of individual's task-leadership identity.[1]

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[1] For the task leadership identity, we want to be clear that we are referring to self-relevant meanings along the dimension of task leadership. Some individuals will have self-views that are high on this dimension while other individuals will have self-views that are low on this dimension.

Finally, we examine the resources that are "in motion" in an interaction that facilitate the accomplishment of task leader identity verification for actors (Freese and Burke 1994; Swann 1983; Swann 1990; Swann, Rentfrow, and Guinn 2003);. While it is assumed that those higher in the status structure have more resources available to accomplish verification compared to those lower in the social structure, we study the resources that group members mobilize. In particular, we investigate turn-taking and back-channel communication as resources that help group members to accomplish verification of their self-views on the dimension of task leadership.

Theory

People's desire to confirm what they already believe about themselves is a fundamental feature of social interaction (Swann 1983; Swann 1990; Swann, Rentfrow, and Guinn 2003); Self-verification strivings exist because in confirming who one is, a stable self-view is forged and this stability provides a sense of security, coherence, and predictability to one's world (Swann, Rentfrow, and Guinn 2003). Knowing who one is and having that verified allows one to move from situation to situation with relative ease because one's beliefs about oneself have been proven to be reliable and trustworthy. Self-verification provides an emotional anchor that leaves one less vulnerable when encountering life's events. To the extent that a person knows who s/he is, others also come to know, to support, and depend upon the person, and this situation helps to keep the person on an even keel.

A secure and steady self-view that is fostered through self-verification not only benefits the self but also others involved in an interaction, who also are trying to verify their own identities. One appears more predictable in the eyes of others and this predictability, in turn, stabilizes the way others respond to the self. And, the stable way that others respond to the self further stabilizes one's own self-views. Ultimately, individuals are dependent upon each other to provide a steady supply of self-verifying feedback, and in so doing, a mutual verification context emerges (Burke and Stets 1999; Swann 2005; Swann, Rentfrow, and Guinn 2003). As individuals come to know, support, and depend upon each other's identities, those interaction patterns become consistent and provide stability to the social order (Burke 2004a).

In identity theory, people act to verify their identities by behaving in ways that bring perceived self-relevant meanings in the situation into alignment with the corresponding self-defining meanings in their identity standards, at whatever level they are set (Burke 1991; Burke 2004a). There are two parts to the relationship between perceived self-relevant meanings and identity standard meanings. The first part says that people act in ways that are consistent with how they see themselves. The second part says that people will counteract any disturbance to the situationally self-relevant meanings that push them

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Verification of this identity involves confirming the self-meanings at whatever level they are held, high or low.

away from their alignment with meanings in the identity standards. For example, a person who has a strong task leader role identity will act in ways that are consistent with that identity by taking charge and by providing ideas and suggestions for the group. If there is a disturbance to these meanings in the situation, for example if these activities are prevented, or if they are interpreted as not showing much leadership, the person will counteract the disturbance by acting more strongly as a task leader in the group. On the other hand, if the disturbance to the meanings is such that people do not view the activities as showing leadership, but as showing authoritarian dominance or autocratic behavior, the person will act to counteract the disturbance by backing off somewhat from these "dominating" leadership behaviors until the disturbance is removed and the person is seen as a leader and not as an autocrat.

Inasmuch as most disturbances to situational meanings in social situations are from others in the situation, controlling meanings implies counteracting the disturbances introduced by others either through clarification, negotiation, or control. These latter two are made easier by having the power to influence or the status to expect deference of the other(s).[2] For example, if a person had a strong leadership role identity but initially perceives that she is not performing leadership functions at a level consistent with this identity, she will attempt to increase her leadership performance to be consistent with the meanings in her identity. This is made easier if others defer to her leadership attempts. Other things being equal, having high status characteristics or being legitimated as a leader in a group would be expected to help her achieve this increased leadership performance. We discuss the status process and legitimation process below.

Expectation states theory and status characteristics theory (Berger and Webster 2006) provide insight into how high status characteristics help a person achieve increased verification of their task leadership identity. Key to this insight is the concept of a status characteristic, that is, any characteristic of a person around which beliefs and expectations about relevant abilities come to be organized. A status characteristic has two or more states that are differentially evaluated. Associated with each state are a set of distinct competency expectations for the person having the status characteristic. These expectations are also differentially evaluated. Two types of status characteristics are distinguished: *diffuse* and *specific*. If the expectations in the situation call for specific competencies, then those who have the status characteristics associated with those competencies will have more power and influence; otherwise those with diffuse status characteristics (for example, race, gender, age, education, SES) which signify general competencies will have more power and influence. We expect this power and influence will facilitate one's ability to adjust their behavior in such a way as to achieve identity verification. Thus we propose

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[2] Individuals act to change meanings in the situation to bring them into alignment with the meanings in their identity standards. In the face of continued disturbances or an inability to change the meanings, the meanings in the identity standard slowly change to match the situational meanings thus reducing the discrepancy in this slower concomitant process (Burke 2006).

H1: Males will verify their task leader identity more than females.

A diffuse characteristic like gender (in which males have the high state) leads to higher expectations for males (relative to females) and leads to greater deference to males compared to females. On the other hand, when gender is relevant for a specific task, the nature of the task may alter expectations for men and women. For example, for a female task, the higher task specific characteristic may be female, and females thus would be expected to have higher abilities and given more power in the achievement of the shared goal (Berger and Webster 2006). Having more respect and power, persons with the higher status characteristic are expected to have more control over their interactive environment and therefore be better able to control meanings in the situation that result in a higher degree of identity verification. This should be especially true under the conditions where the person with the high status characteristic has both specific as well as diffuse expectations. Thus we hypothesize:

H2: Males will verify their task leadership identity even more than females when the group is working on a "male" problem.

For our next hypothesis, we turn to the legitimation process. Legitimacy theory is concerned with the authority structure and the normative regulation of power in situations. Legitimacy means that something is natural, right, proper and in accord with the way things ought to be (Zelditch 2006). When individuals see that the rules and norms of authority and power are desirable and appropriate, *propriety* is established; when they do not personally agree with the rules and norms, but feel obliged to follow them nonetheless, *validity* is present. Others' views in the situation help in validating the rules. When support for a person in a position of authority comes from people in higher positions in the situation, *authorization* is present; when support for an authority figure comes from people equal to or lower than the authority figure, *endorsement* exists. People are more likely to comply with an authority when authorization or endorsement is present.

As Zelditch and Walker (1984) point out, authorization comes about in a formally constituted multi-level hierarchy wherein a top level person can authorize a middle level person to have power over persons at the lower level. Ridgeway and Berger (1986) argue that the application of this analysis to small informal groups may be problematic as they generally do not have such hierarchical arrangements. However, if one puts a small informal group into the context of the laboratory, then it is clear that a hierarchy exists in which the experimenter is the person at the top. The experimenter can authorize one group member to have power over other group members and this can serve to form performance expectations for the person so legitimated.

In this study, authorizing a person to act as a group coordinator should reduce resistance by others to the activities of that person that serve to verify their task-leadership identity; hence the authorized person's level of task leader performance should be in accordance with their task leader identity. In other

words, when one is authorized to coordinate the group and thereby has legitimation, the person should do the things that coordinators do. And, others are expected to comply with the person within the scope of the authority granted by the legitimation. Having more power and influence, persons who are legitimated as coordinators are expected to have more control over their interactive environment and therefore be better able to control meanings in the situation to obtain and maintain verification of their task leader identity. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

> *H3: Persons legitimated through authorization as group coordinators will verify their task identity more than persons not so legitimated.*

There is a complicating factor when dealing with the effects of status and legitimation on the verification of a task leader identity. Not only do persons who have high status characteristics and who are legitimated have more power to control meanings in the situation thus making identity verification easier to achieve, but they are also expected to engage in more task-oriented leadership behavior. As expectation states theory makes clear, in addition to having more power and control of resources, those with high status characteristics are given more action opportunities in the group and are expected to have higher performance outputs toward solving the group task (Ridgeway and Berger 1986). We thus have a situation where two separate forces are at work: the effect of structural position and theeffect of identity. The expectations for task performance on the basis of status characteristics or legitimation are overlaid on the performance desires that individuals have on the basis of their identity standards. These heightened expectancies based on structural position may lead people to perform at a level beyond what they personally desire on the basis of their identity, and this may lead ultimately to less verification.

To examine the relationship between these expectations and the perceptions of leadership, we look at two active resources that are "in motion" in an interaction, that is, they are currently in use and they facilitate the accomplishment of identity verification. These include turn-taking and back-channel communication. Since having a turn at talk represents both a task performance and the resource of controlling the floor during a discussion (Burke 1994; Duncan 1972; Duncan and Fiske 1979; Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974), the number of turns one has represents an important task resource in a problem-solving group both for contributing a solution to the group task and for being able through participation to express one's task leadership identity. Persons who are high on a status characteristic such as gender or who are legitimated as a coordinator in such a group would therefore be expected to have more turns (Perdue, Dovidio, Gurtman, and Tyler 1990; Shelly 1995; Shelly and Webster 1997), and because of this the relative frequency of turn-taking comes to reflect the status and prestige order in the group.

Back-channel communication is speech that is expressed when one does not have the floor or a turn at talk (and is not attempting to take the floor) (Duncan and Fiske 1977). It is usually feedback to the current turn-taker such as, "yeah,"

"uh-huh," "I see," or "really?" Back-channel communication can both reinforce the current turn holder and act to guide the discussion in indirect ways (Duncan 1974). It also contributes to socioemotional leadership in the group (Burke 2003). Again, such utterances can be used to express the self and thus verify one's leader identity in the group, but back-channeling also provides an important structuring device to control the flow of the problem-solving conversation. In American culture, because of their contribution to socioemotional and integrative aspects of the group, back-channel communications are more likely to be associated with the skills of women (Ridgeway 1988; Ridgeway and Berger 1988).

From this, we hypothesize that on the basis of status considerations

> *H4: Persons legitimated through authorization as the group coordinator will have more turns at talk than persons not so authorized.*

> *H5: Males will have more turns at talk than females.*

> *H6: Persons legitimated through authorization as the group coordinator will have more back-channel communications than persons not so legitimated.*

However, because of its association with socio-emotional leadership, which, in American culture, is associated with being female, we hypothesize

> *H7: Females will have more back-channel communications than males.*

Further, to the extent that having more turns constitutes having more power and influence in the group and thus getting what one wants, and reinforcing one's turn at talk through back-channeling facilitates expressing who one is, both should also facilitate persons being able to verify their identities. Thus, we also hypothesize that:

> *H8: The greater the number of turns at talk, the greater will be the degree to which group members are able to verify their task leader identities.*

> *H9: The greater the number of back-channel communications, the greater will be the degree to which group members are able to verify their task leader identities.*

Overall, these hypotheses suggest that what influences the task leadership performances of group members are the status-based expectations for performance differences, the differential use of resources, and the process of task leader identity verification.

Procedures

Sample and Design

This study took place in a laboratory in which a random sample of undergraduate students at a large Midwestern university was invited to participate in a

study of communication in small groups. Forty-eight four-person groups were formed, each composed of two males and two females. The students arrived at one of several general meetings of 50-60 people at a time. At these meetings, the students were told that the study would be examining communication in groups and the factors that influence communication. At the meetings, the students filled out a schedule of times they were available to meet. They then filled out the background questionnaire, which took about 20 minutes to complete. While respondents were filling out the background questionnaire, the investigator constructed groups randomly from the persons who were available at the specific times groups were to be scheduled, with the added constraint that there be two males and two females in each group. After the questionnaire was completed, group assignment times were given to each person along with a reminder slip. All subjects were called the day prior to their scheduled meeting to remind them of the meeting.

Procedures

Each group session had two males and two females participating in four different discussions. Each discussion used group polarization or choice dilemma protocols (see the Appendix) in order to provide the groups with a common task in which the group members had to reach a consensus decision.[3] The dilemmas represent hypothetical situations. Respondents first individually chose a resolution to the problem (for example, taking an attractive job at a high-risk company that may fail or taking an average job with a very stable company). The participants then entered the group to discuss the problem and reach a group consensus on how to resolve the dilemma. They were seated alternately male and female in four chairs with desk arms arranged in a semi-circle with a male at one end and a female at the other end. The four different situations contained two dilemmas that concerned instrumental or "male" issues (that is, specifically deciding on a job and deciding on a graduate school) and two dilemmas that were about relationship or "female" issues (making a decision about getting married and making a decision about having a child). The order in which the problems were discussed was randomized in a balanced fashion.

The four discussions (each about one of the four problems) were contained in the one session that each group met. The session lasted about an hour and a half, with each discussion lasting from ten to twenty minutes. Each of the discussions followed the same format. Prior to the discussion, the individual members read the choice dilemma and wrote down their personal recommendation. Following this, the members were instructed to discuss the problem and come to a consensus as to what the group recommends. After each discussion was completed, subjects filled out a questionnaire evaluating the discussion and rating themselves and each other on a series of items measuring the degree to which they performed various activities during the discussion.

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[3] These conditions also fulfill some of the scope conditions for expectation states theory.

After each group was seated, the experimenter chose one of the end-persons in the semi-circle and designated that person to be the coordinator. End-persons were chosen because they were better able to maintain eye-contact with all others without having to look back and forth as the inside-members did. For each group the choice of coordinator was in fact random, but with equal numbers of males and females. This person was told to moderate the discussion and was given a sheet on which to record the group's consensus as to how to resolve each dilemma.

Measures

The measure of *task leadership identity* was taken from the background questionnaire that was filled out at the initial general meeting (see Table 1). This measure consists of five items that operationalize self-meanings about task leadership in groups such as "when I work on committees, I like to take charge of things." These items form a single factor with an omega reliability of .74.[4] The items were standardized and averaged to create a scale. This is a measure of the task leadership identity standard held by each person representing who they are on this dimension. It is normally distributed with a mean of zero and a standard deviation of .66 as indicated below in Table 2.

tab1.pdf
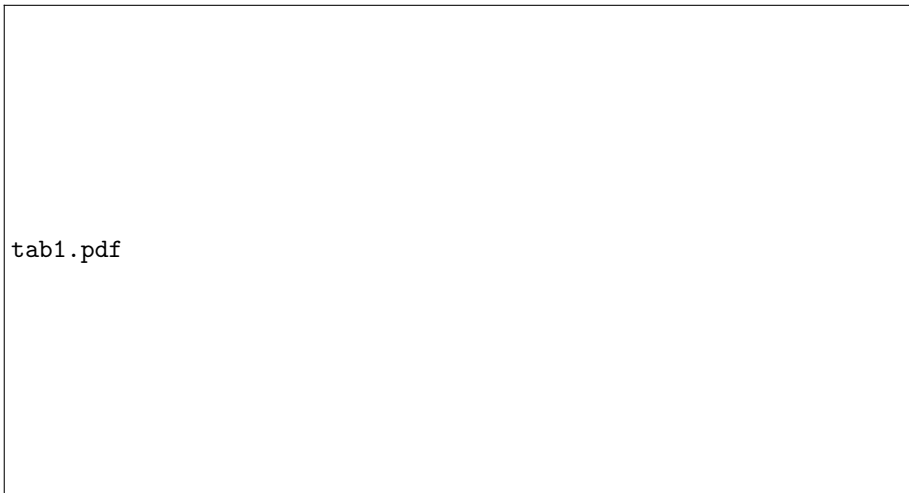
The post discussion questionnaires included ratings of each member by all members (including one's own self-ratings) on four items designed to indicate how members perceived the task leadership contributions of themselves and others. These are the *task leadership performance* items, which are also given in Table 1. They include, for example, "providing fuel for the discussion by introducing ideas and opinions for the rest of the group to discuss" and "guiding

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[4] This measure was also used in Burke (2003).

the discussion and keeping it moving effectively." The four items form a single factor with an omega reliability of .94. To create a scale of *perceived leadership appraisals* the self-ratings on each item (self-appraisals) were standardized and averaged together, the average ratings of others on each item (others' appraisals) were standardized and averaged together, and then the self-appraisals were averaged with others' appraisals of the self. Given identity theory, while we would have preferred to have both self-appraisals and reflected appraisals, the latter were not available. As a proxy for the reflected appraisals, we used the actual appraisals of others. This assumes that the actual appraisals of others about one's performance are conveyed in their behavior in the situation and are perceived by the self (Kinch 1963).

The level of *legitimation* was experimentally manipulated by the experimenter randomly choosing one member of each group and authorizing him or her to be the discussion coordinator. Half of the coordinators were men and half were women. Being the coordinator was coded 1; not being the coordinator was coded 0. The variable *male* was a binary variable with males coded 1 and females coded 0. The *type of problem* was coded as 1 for an instrumental problem and 0 for a relationship problem.

Task leadership *identity verification* was measured inversely as the discrepancy or squared difference between the actual perceived leadership appraisals (given above) and leadership appraisals that were predicted from the measured task leadership identity (given above). The predicted leadership appraisal score is derived from the regression of the leadership appraisals on the task leader identity measures. From this regression, predicted appraisals are calculated. The predicted scores amount to a rescaling of the task leadership identity measure into expected units of perceived task leadership performance based on the identity. The difference between the actual appraisals and the predicted appraisals (residuals) represents the degree to which the appraisal was *not* predicted by the task leader identity. By squaring the residual, deviations either above or below the expected value constitute discrepancies between the identity standard meanings and the perceived task leadership performance meanings in the situation. In this way a discrepancy can exist if persons are perceived as doing more leadership than expected from their identity standard or if they are perceived as doing less leadership than expected from their identity standard, while verification can occur if persons have a low task leadership identity and are perceived as not doing much leadership or if they have a high task leadership ideneity and are perceived as doing a great deal of leadership. More discrepancy between perceptions and identity standard is equivalent to less identity verification. The discrepancy scale varied from a minimum of zero (perfect identity verification) to a maximum discrepancy of about five (high identity non-verification). Subtracting this discrepancy score from five reverses the scale so that high values indicate more identity verification (with a maximum of about 5.0) and low values represent less identity verification. Finally, in order to know the direction of the deviation or difference, we also used the *unsquared* difference between perceptions and the standard (perceptions – standard).

To operationalize resources actors used in the group, the number of turns and the number of back-channel communications that each participant had in the discussion were counted. Turns at talk and back-channels are two of the primary resources in problem-solving discussion groups.[5] Each discussion was transcribed and coded noting the number of turns (having the floor to speak) and the number of back-channel communications (legitimate speech that does not take the floor) for each individual (Duncan 1972; Duncan 1974; Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974); Because each discussion varied in length, the number of turns and back-channels taken by each person were standardized by dividing the number of turns or back-channels by the length of the discussion in minutes. Means and standard deviations of all the measures are presented in Table 2.

tab2.pdf

Analysis

The analyses use OLS regression, but because of the lack of independence between members of the same group (both within and across discussions), more robust procedures are used that do not assume independence among all the cases. Using these procedures, the assumption is made of correlated errors among members of a group, but independence between errors of members of different groups.

Results

Before proceeding with tests of the main hypotheses, it is important to be sure that our task identity leadership meanings are measured the same way for males and females as well as for coordinators and non-coordinators. If what it means to be a leader is not the same for males and females as well as for coordinators and non-coordinators, differences between these groups may be due to differences in meaning (measurement) rather than differences in what is empirically occurring. In a similar way, it is important to see whether the perceived task leadership performance meanings are the same across these groups. To

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[5] A third category of talk, noise, consists mostly of truncated and incomplete attempts at taking the floor. Noise is seldom attended to by group members who are generally focused on the person who has the turn at talk.

carry out these tests, several two-group structural equation measurement models were run. For each model, two runs were made, one in which the measurement loadings on the underlying factor were constrained to be equal and one in which no constraints were made. If there is no significant difference in the fit of the two models, then it is clear that the factor loading parameters are not significantly different between the comparison groups. If that is the case, we can thus conclude that the meanings measured are identical for the two groups, that is, that we are measuring the same meanings for each group.

Considering the measurement of the task leader identity standard first, we find that the difference between the models for males and females is not significant ($X_4^2 = 7.25, p =$ n.s.) nor is the difference between legitimated coordinators and non-legitimated persons ($X_4^2 = 4.96, p =$ n.s.). Considering the measurement of perceived meanings of leadership behavior, we find that the differences between males and females is not significant ($X_3^2 = 1.30, p =$ n.s.) nor are the differences between legitimated coordinators and non-legitimated persons ($X_3^2 = 4.93, p =$ n.s.). What is important about these results is that as we consider males and females and legitimated and non-legitimated coordinators, we can be assured that the meanings underlying the measured concepts are the same for the different groups. The meanings of the task leadership held in the identities and perceived in the interaction are the same for all participants independent of their diffuse status characteristics or level of legitimation.

One of the basic tenets of identity theory is that the lack of verification has negative consequences for an individual: the less the verification, the greater will be the distress felt by a person (Burke 1991; Burke 2004b; Burke and Harrod 2005); To help validate our measure of identity discrepancy, we regressed a measure of the degree to which group members felt satisfied with their role in the group on the measure of their identity verification The results indicate, consistent with identity theory, that the greater the identity verification, the more satisfied are participants with their role in the group ($b = .25, \ p \le .01$).[6]

In order to test our hypotheses about the effects of status characteristics and legitimation, we conducted a regression of the level of identity verification on sex, legitimation, and the interaction between the two. Table 3 provides the results of this analysis and Table 4 shows the mean levels of identity verification by sex and level of legitimation.

The results in Table 3 show that both males and legitimated coordinators have a higher level of identity verification than females and non-legitimated coordinators. However, the results also show that there is a strong and significant interaction between sex and legitimation. The means in Table 4 indicate that the effects of being male (Hypothesis 1) and the effects of legitimation (Hypothesis 3) are only conditionally true. Being male results in greater identity verification only for persons who are not legitimated as a coordinator, and being a coordinator results in greater identity verification only for females. We expected that

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[6] Combining both the difference between the identity standard and perceptions as well as the squared difference (discrepancy) as predictors of satisfaction with the role showed that the squared component was significant, thus validating the tenet of identity theory that perceptions that are too high or too low relative to the identity standard are distressful.

tab3.pdf

tab4.pdf

legitimated males would have the greatest task leader identity verification, but they have no more verification than females who are not legitimated.

Turning to hypothesis two, Table 5 presents the results of the effect of gender on task leadership identity verification given the type of problem discussed in the group (instrumental problem or relationship problem). According to our hypothesis, there should be greater identity verification for men when there is an instrumental/male problem than when there is a relationship/female problem. Since the original hypothesis was true only for persons who were not the coordinator, we restrict this test to this condition. Though the means are in the expected direction, the interaction effect is not significant. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is not supported.

tab5.pdf

Hypotheses 4 and 5 concern the effects of status characteristics and legitimation on resources in motion across the group discussions. We regressed the

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number of turns (per minute) and the number of back-channel communications (per minute) on sex, legitimation, and the interaction between the two. The results of these regressions are given in Table 6, while Tables 7 shows the mean levels of these variables by group. We see that being male significantly increases the rate of participation in taking turns, while being female significantly increases the rate of providing back-channel communications, thus confirming Hypotheses 4 and 6. Consistent with Hypotheses 5 and 7, legitimation significantly increases both the rate of turn-taking and providing back-channel communications, but there is a weak interaction effect for turn-taking. The interaction effect indicates that being assigned the coordinator role (legitimation) increases the turn-taking for females more than for males. Because of the interaction, the results for turn-taking are only conditionally consistent with the hypotheses. Being male increases turn-taking compared to females, but only for those not legitimated to be the coordinator. Being coordinator (legitimation) increases participation for both males and females, with females doing somewhat more turn-taking than males. This is not to say that males are not increasing their turn-taking in the coordinator role; only that females are increasing their turn-taking at a somewhat higher rate than males. There is no such interaction with respect to providing back-channel communications.

Finally, we test the effects of turn-taking and providing back-channel communication on the degree to which the task leader identity is verified to show these resources are acting as expected (Hypotheses 8 and 9). These results are presented in Table 8. The findings show that there are very significant effects of both turn-taking and back-channel communications on increasing identity verification. Those who use these resources are better able to verify their task leader identities. Thus, it would appear that, in part, the increased ability of non-legitimated males and legitimated females to verify their task leader identity is due to the increase in turn-taking and providing back-channel communication that is afforded or taken by these persons.

An anomalous result remains, however. As shown in Table 4, males in the legitimated coordinator role experience less task leader identity verification than non-legitimated males. To better understand the dynamics behind this anomaly, we examined the actual signed difference between self-relevant perceptions and the task leader identity. In other words, we examined whether the identity non-verification was in a negative direction (that is, underrating one's task leadership performance) or positive direction (overrating one's task leadership performance). This analysis and the means are presented in Tables 9 and 10. In Table 10, we see that the large discrepancies for non-legitimated females (which was expected) and for legitimated males (which was not expected) are in part, the result of how people saw the level of task leadership performance of females and males. In particular, for males, the combination of being male (having a high status characteristic) and being legitimated as the coordinator boosted the perceptions of leadership performance of men beyond any basis in their identities or their performance with respect to turn-taking or providing back-channels communications.

tab6.pdf

tab7.pdf

tab8.pdf

tab9.pdf

tab10.pdf

From these results, it is clear that the lack of task leader identity verification for females who were not legitimated as coordinator is due generally to people under-evaluating their task leadership performances. Being male or being legitimated brought task leadership performance evaluations up to the level that was consistent with their task leadership identities thus allowing a greater degree of identity verification through participation as hypothesized. However, being high on both the gender status characteristic and legitimation increased the task leadership performance evaluations of males to a level significantly higher than a level that was consistent either with their level of performance (turns and back-channels) or with their task leader identity scores. It is this latter fact that resulted in reducing their amount of task leader identity verification. As we saw, the changes in perceived performance are generally consistent with changes in the actual performance (as measured, for example, in turn-taking and back-channel communication). But as mentioned, there seems to be an added effect for perceptions of the task leadership performance of participants who had the combination of being male and being legitimated as coordinator for the group. This condition of having the perceptions of their task leadership meanings much higher than their task leadership identity standard is the condition identity theory indicates will lead to people reducing their task leadership (meanings) in order to counteract the disturbance and adjust their perceptions to be in line with their identity standards. This reduction in task performance in terms of turn-taking and back-channel communication is what we see in Table 7.

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Discussion

We began this study with an attempt to bring to bear theoretical knowledge claims from expectation states theory and from legitimacy theory to help explain variations in the ability of individuals in small task-oriented problem-solving groups to verify the level of their task leadership identities. While identity theory tells us that people desire to confirm what they already believe about themselves (good or bad, high or low), the process of identity-verification often depends upon the behavior of others (Burke and Stets 1999). Having status and power should facilitate identity verification either because others defer to the self or because the self has access to resources to help provide that verification. Identity verification requires resources to accomplish. Status and legitimation hellp supply these resources.

Being high on some status characteristic will lead to expectations of competence to which others who are low on those characteristics will defer. In the present research we expected that males who hold high positions on the diffuse status characteristic of gender, will find it easier to verify their task leadership identities than females.We also drew on legitimacy theory to suggest that legitimate power is gained through the process of authorization. When one is authorized to coordinate the group, the person is expected to do the things that coordinators do, and others are expected to comply. Persons who are so legitimated are expected to have more control over resources in their interactive environment and through that be better able to verify their task leadership identity, whether it is high, medium, or low.

The results show that having status on the basis of gender appears to increase the level of verification of one's identity. Expectation states theory has discussed how lower status individuals such as women are not viewed as competent compared to men and are not given the resources that men are. When we examine women in the non-coordinator role, we indeed find that not only are the women's task identities not as well verified as the men, but the direction of the non-verification is negative in the sense that they are under-evaluated on their task leadership performance. Thus, others are giving women feedback that falls short of how the women see themselves while perceptions of men in the non-coordinator role are closer to what is expected for them on the basis of their task leadership identities.

When we turn to the effects of legitimation, we see that women benefit from this more than men and are better able to verify their task leadership identities as perceptions of their task leadership are much more in accord with their identities. As Ridgeway and Berger (1986) suggest, legitimacy is vital for atypical group leaders such as women. To gain this perception, two factors are occurring. The first is their legitimation, and the second is the tendency for them, with legitimation, to increase their use of the resources of turn-taking and back-channel communications. With legitimation, the women are expected to do more and in fact increase their use of resources with the result of increasing task leadership identity verification.

The perception that women are not as competent as men may influence women's tendency to use the resources of turn-taking and back-channel communication much more than men when placed in the authorized role of coordinator. Given their high rates of turn-taking and back-channels as coordinator, it is as if women are trying harder than men, perhaps compensating for the perception of incompetence. More generally, these findings suggest a pattern of greater reliance on resources by lower status actors when they are put in positions in which they are legitimated to wield greater resources. The greater use of resources by lower status actors when legitimated has the effect of aiding in the verification process for them. In other words, as lower status actors demonstrate to others that they are competent, the feedback that they receive from others becomes consistent with the way that they see themselves. Indeed, this is what we found for the women in this study.

On the other hand, men who already are perceived as competent do not increase their use of the resources of turn-taking and back-channel communications when they are in the legitimated role of coordinator as women do. With their higher status they use the resources of turn-taking and back-channel communication to the extent that allows them to verify their leadership role identity when they are not in the coordinator role. Men's higher status, when it is coupled with the legitimated status of being coordinator in the group, leads to perceptions that over-evaluate their task leadership performance relative to their task leader identity. Indeed, their task leadership performance is evaluated at a level that is significantly higher than expected on the basis of their task leader identity. While at first glance this feedback may be seen as a benefit to men because they are receiving an over-evaluation, they are nevertheless experiencing non-verification. And, according to identity theory, non-verification is distressful and generates negative affect. Such a discrepancy is expected to be counteracted in their performance, according to identity theory, and this is what we see. The level of use of the resources of turn-taking and back-channel communication fall short compared to women, as they attempt to reduce perceptions to be in line with their identities.

We underscore the fact that how men and women are perceived and responded to in a group not only confirms social structural arrangements in the larger society, but it also leads to discrimination in the identity verification process. The task performance of women is immediately under-rated by group members' while men's task performance is rated in a manner that is similar to their own self-views. When women are put in the coordinator role, their increased use of the resources of turn-taking and back-channel communication leads to women's task performance being evaluated in a manner that corresponds to their own self-views. Thus, the legitimation process helps women accomplish identity verification. When men are put in the coordinator role, they are over-evaluated, thus they experience identity non-verification. In this way, legitimation hurts the verification process for men. Men already have high status and any further authority that is given to them is disadvantageous, at least in terms of verifying their identity standard. Indeed, the lack of much increase in their turn-taking may represent their attempt to counteract this overly

high performance evaluation. By not increasing their turn-taking to the extent that the women did they may have avoided even further discrepancy between perceptions and their identity standard.

Overall, we see that high status, at least with respect to identity verification, is a two-edged sword. Without status, the expectations and perceptions of self-relevant meanings pertaining to leadership are depressed to a level that is below the level set by persons' identity standard. Conversely, when status is high, those same meaningful perceptions and expectations may become higher than the level set by persons' task leadership identity standards. The first leads to a failure to expect and allow people to perform at a level at which they are capable and we lose the talents and capabilities of those people. The latter leads to unrealistic expectations, which people find difficulty meeting. They may, in fact, refuse to even try. Such a result is similar to the suggestion of Steele and Aronson (1995) that many black adolescents choose to score lower on aptitude tests in order not to have unrealistic expectations (from the point of view of their own identities) placed upon them. One's position in the social structure with respect to status and the availability of resources also comes with expectations. Identity verification must somehow deal with both as people do what they can with what they have to verify their identities.

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APPENDIX – CHOICE DILEMMAS

In each of the following, you are asked to advise the person on the decision they need to make. Listed below are several probabilities or odds of success. Choose the *lowest* probability that you would consider acceptable to make it worthwhile for the persons to choose the action:

   1. the odds of success were at least 1 out of 10
   2. the odds of success were at least 3 out of 10
   3. the odds of success were at least 5 out of 10
   4. the odds of success were at least 7 out of 10
   5. the odds of success were at least 9 out of 10

   1. Mr. A, an electrical engineer, who is married and has one child, has been working for a large electronics corporation since graduating from college five years ago. He is assured of a lifetime job with a modest, though adequate, salary and liberal pension benefits upon retirement. On the other hand, it is very unlikely that his salary will increase much before he retires. While attending a convention, Mr. A is offered a job with a small, newly founded company, which has a highly uncertain future. The new job would pay more to start and would offer the possibility of a share in the ownership if the company survived the competitions of the larger firms.

   Advise Mr. A to accept the new position if the odds of success are at least ___.

   2. Mrs. C, a newlywed, has been informed by her physician that a heart ailment makes it inadvisable for her to have children. Having been an only child, Mrs. C has always hoped to raise a large family herself. The physician suggests that a delicate medical operation could be attempted which, if successful, would completely relieve the heart condition. But its success could not be assured and, in fact, the operation might prove fatal.

   Advise Mrs. C to have the operation if the odds of success are at least ___.

   3. Miss E is currently a college senior who is very eager to pursue graduate study in psychology leading to the PhD degree. She has been accepted by both University X and University Y. University X has a world-wide reputation for excellence in psychology. While a degree from University X would signify outstanding training in this field, the standards are so very rigorous that only a fraction of the degree candidates actually receive the degree. University Y, on the other hand, has much less of a reputation in psychology, but almost everyone admitted is awarded the PhD degree, though the degree has much less prestige than the corresponding degree from University X.

   Advise Miss E to go to University X if the odds of success are at least ___.

   4. Mr. F is contemplating marriage to Miss G, a girl whom he has known for a little more than a year. Recently, however, a number of arguments have occurred between them, suggesting some sharp differences of opinion in the way each views certain matters. Indeed, they decide to seek professional advice from a marriage counselor as to whether it would be wise for them to marry. On the basis of these meetings with a marriage counselor, they realize that a happy marriage, while possible, would not be assured.

   Advise Mr. F and Miss G to get married if the odds of success are at least ___.