

The Behaviour of People at Work

Lecture Title: Status, rank and dominance



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Course Outline



Module 6. Life outside work: parental care and relationship with kin



Module 7. Solutions for the individual in the team: self-esteem



Module 8. Solutions for the team: status, rank and dominance



Module 9. Solutions for the team: cooperation, alliances, and friendships



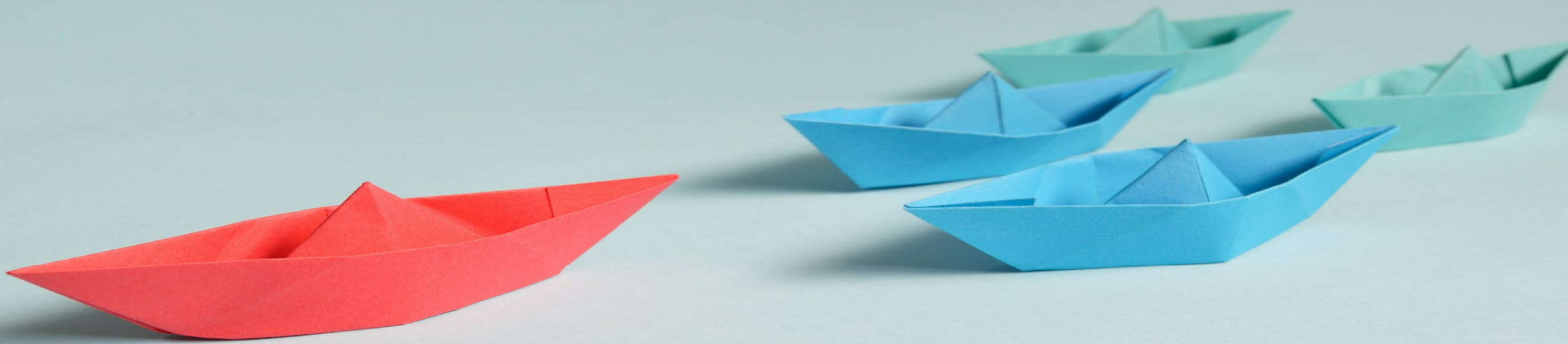
Module 10. The modern organic workplace: built around your people



Module 7: Solutions for the team: status, rank and dominance

- The meaning of leadership
- Understanding the biological basis of leadership
- Routes to status: dominance, prestige, and competence
- Prestige signalling
- Leading and following
- Tactics to progress in status hierarchies
- Sex differences in status striving and expression of dominance
- Differences in rank
- Effect on emotions





Solutions for the team: status, rank and dominance

Understanding the mechanics behind leadership



The meaning of leadership

- Leadership is a difficult concept to examine, because we all have our own definition of leadership.
- A useful one which we might all agree to is that which looks at leadership as the ability to inspire confidence and support among the people who are needed to achieve organisational goals.
- Put simply, it is one person's power to support another person's growth. In fact, when you hear it like that, it sounds like a super power.



Understanding the biological basis

To use evolutionary psychology, we need a good theory that can provide explanations for a number of questions, such as:

1. Which are the adaptive problems that are solved by status hierarchies?
2. Why do individuals accept subordinate positions?
3. Which tactics do people use to negotiate hierarchies?
4. Why does status striving seems to be much more prevalent among males than females?
5. How do we account for the behaviour of those consigned to subordinate status?
6. Why do people strive for equality among members of the group?
7. How do we identify the different paths to elevated rank or status?



The routes to status

- There are distinct routes to status (elevated rank) of a leader:
 1. **Dominance:** involving force or the threat of force, think about the school bully, the Mafia “made man”, and the aggressive boss who always gets his way. Individuals (subordinates) will give up resources to avoid incurring costs of violence.
 2. **Prestige**
 3. **Competence**



Prestige

- Prestige is different. Whereas dominant individuals instill fear in subordinates, prestigious individuals evoke admiration.
- Prestige is considered to be freely conferred submission and respect, in other words, esteem that is granted and given freely, without obligation.
- Individuals attain high prestige because they have special skills, knowledge, or social connections.
- Prestige hierarchies are specific to a domain, and the skills that award you prestige in one area are not the same as others. Think hunting skills, medicinal healing, fighting, and food preparation, and how different people are respected for different abilities.



Competence

- A more modern framework suggests competence as a unitary model of status.
- To start with, competence breaks down the distinction between dominance and prestige because both require competence.
- What's more, competence comes in many forms: fighting ability, skill at making and handling weapons, ability to recruit allies and form coalitions, leadership skills, ability to inflict costs on others, and so on.
- The concept of competence is used widely in organisational behaviour, business strategy, and audit systems. It is seen as the combination of knowledge and experience that are relevant to the discipline or sector.



Costly signaling

- Costly signaling plays a role in the acquisition of prestige.
- The logic behind costly signaling is that individuals display acts of altruism – giving substantial gifts, donating to charity, throwing lavish dinners – to signal that they are excellent potential allies. The key to costly signaling is that its cost ensures that it is an honest signal, because only those in excellent condition or with ample resources can afford to display the costly signal of an altruistic action.
- In the path to prestige (and to status), it is better to give than to receive.



In modern social groups, individuals acquire prestige by displaying high levels of competence on task that groups value, displaying generosity by giving more than taking, and making personal sacrifices that signal commitment to the group.

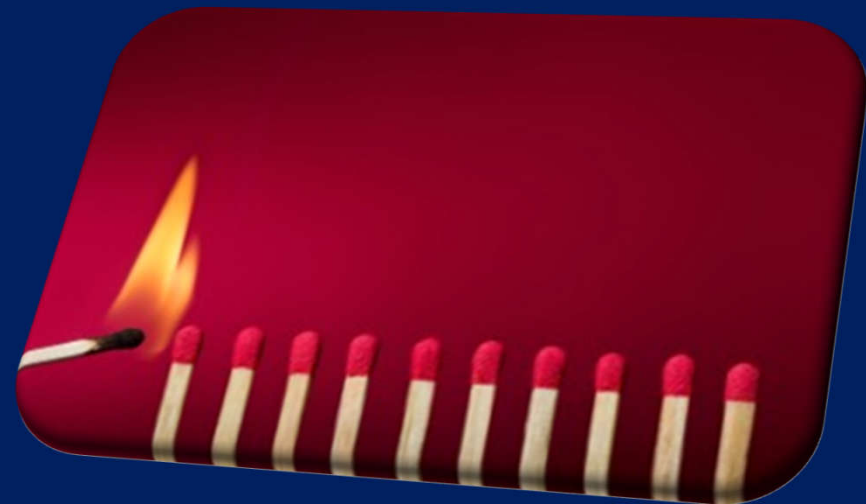
Prestige signaling

- Prestige signaling assumes that others are aware of your deeds and your signals. This is the reason why, for example, those who contribute to charity experience a dramatic boost of prestige, but only if the donations are made in public.
- It's all about building a good reputation. Reputation is so important, in fact, that people would choose "death before dishonour", meaning they are ready to suffer great costs to avoid a bad reputation.
- Faced with the dilemma of choosing whether to live to the age of 90 but being remembered (falsely) as a pedophile after your death as opposed to dying right now and being fondly remembered by the community, 53% of respondents chose to die right now.



Leading and following

- Leading and following can be seen as evolved strategies for solving adaptive problems that involve group coordination, such as coalitional hunting and coalitional defense, as well as for resolving conflicts that arise within the group.
- Leaders usually emerge from consensus among group members about who possesses the qualities that are effective at solving these problems of coordination and conflict – those who possess knowledge and competence relevant to the task, are high in intelligence, and signal high levels of generosity by making costly sacrifices for the group.
- Followers have adaptations for granting prestige to some individuals as leaders, and leaders have adaptations for providing services to followers in exchange for the benefits of that prestige. It is a form of reciprocal exchange.



Tactics to progress in status hierarchies

- Research has shown that people use three major tactics to progress in status hierarchies:
 1. **Deception/manipulation:** derogate others; boast; exclude others; use sex; use deceptive self-promotion (claim credit for the work of others).
 2. **Social display/networking:** cultivate friendships; display positive social characteristics; participate in social events; enhance appearance.
 3. **Industriousness/knowledge:** display knowledge; work hard; obtain education; organise and strategise; assume leadership; hold one's own.



Sex differences in status striving

Elevated status and dominance can give males greater sexual access, firstly because high-status males are preferred as mates by women, and secondly, through intrasexual dominance, which is when dominant men take the mates of subordinate men, leaving them helpless to retaliate.



Two of the most robust sex differences come from preschool children: The first is the rough-and-tumble play style characteristic of boys and their orientation toward the issues of competition and dominance...A second factor of importance is that girls find it difficult to influence boys...Among boys, speech serves largely egoistic functions and is used to establish and protect an individual's turf. Among girls, conversation is a more socially binding process.

Men and women express dominance differently

How men report dominance actions:

- “I told others to perform menial tasks rather than performing them myself”;
- “I managed to get my own way”;
- “I told him which of the two jobs he should take”;
- “I managed to control the outcome of the meeting without the others being aware of it”;
- “I demanded that someone else run the errand”.
- These are examples of egoistic dominant acts, in which others are influenced for the direct, personal benefit of the dominant individual.

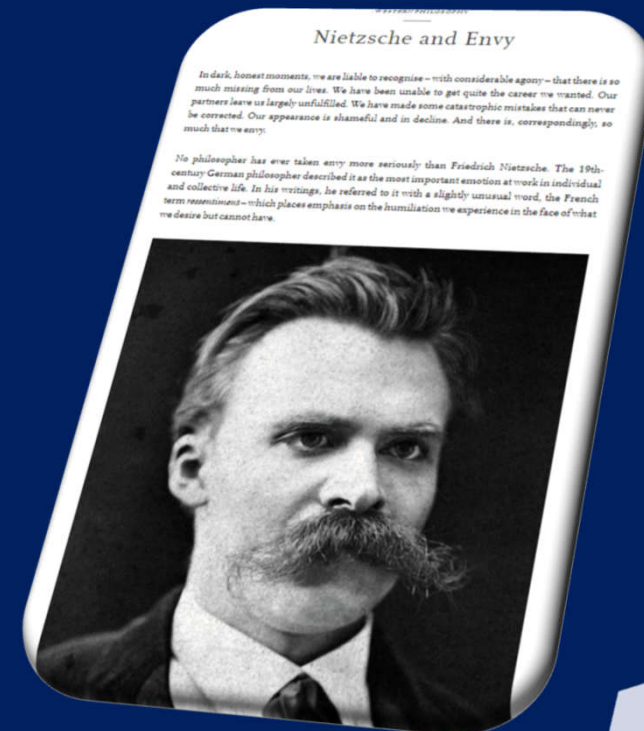
How women report dominance actions:

- “I settled a dispute among the members of the group”;
- “I introduced a speaker at the meeting”;
- These reflect more pro-social dominant acts that facilitate the functioning and well-being of the group.



Reactions to the loss of status

- Rage: may function to motivate an individual to seek revenge on the person who caused the status loss. The remark “no one makes me look stupid and gets away with it” represents an example of the rage and consequent revenge that follow the loss of status and might be used to justify retaliatory aggression.
- Envy, one of the least studied emotions in psychology, is linked with rank in that people experience envy when someone else has resources, houses, mates, or prestige that they want but fail to possess. Envy may function to motivate us to imitate those who have what we want. Hero worship and the idealisation of others may reflect manifestations of the emotion of envy. On the negative side, envy might prompt actions designed to tear down those who have more than we do.



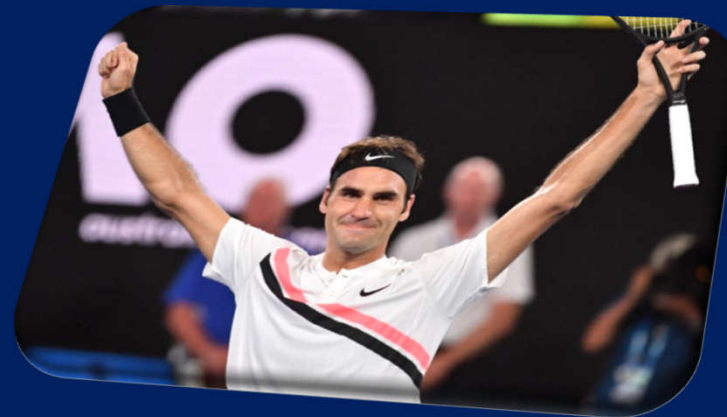
Status and pride

- Another emotion that is related to status is pride.
- Pride appears to motivate people to perform actions that are highly valued by others, to advertise those actions publicly, and to thereby increase a person's status and respect in the eyes of others.
- Pride emerges early in life, is present in all known cultures, and is activated when a person's accomplishments and achievements are publicly recognised.
- Pride can motivate people to strive to achieve the socially visible accomplishments and also to advertise those accomplishments.



Status and triumph

- Humans even appear to have a non-verbal expression of triumph when they have won a contest, particularly an athletic competition.
- Winners thrust both their arms in the air, forming a V, perhaps symbolic for victory.
- Again, triumph seems to be recognised across cultures.





Thank You!



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