

## Research Article

## Signs of Socioeconomic Status

## A Thin-Slicing Approach

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**ABSTRACT**—*Socioeconomic status (SES) is a primary determinant of health vulnerabilities and social affiliations. To ascertain if SES is signaled in brief patterns of nonverbal behavior, we had participants of varying SES backgrounds engage in a brief interaction with a stranger. Videos of 60-s slices of these interactions were coded for nonverbal cues of disengagement and engagement, and estimates of participants' SES were provided by naive observers who viewed these videos. As predicted by analyses of resource dependence and power, upper-SES participants displayed more disengagement cues (e.g., doodling) and fewer engagement cues (e.g., head nods, laughs) than did lower-SES participants. Results were also consistent with the thin-slicing literature, in that observers' estimates of SES were reliable with each other and accurately predicted targets' family income, maternal education, and subjective SES. Finally, nonverbal displays of disengagement and engagement predicted observers' estimates of SES, which suggests that these cues are systematic signs of SES. These results have implications for understanding the effect of SES on social interactions and patterns of disengagement and engagement in other realms.*

Socioeconomic status (SES) is defined by material wealth, occupation, and participation in educational and social institutions (Oakes & Rossi, 2003). SES determines the substance of material life, from the foods and arts people enjoy (e.g., Bourdieu, 1985; Snibbe & Markus, 2005), to the schools people attend and the social clubs and activities they engage in (Domhoff, 1998), to the likelihood of health- and mood-related vulnerabilities (Adler et al., 1994; Link, Lennon, & Dohrenwend, 1993).

In the study reported here, we examined how individuals signal their SES to other people. Drawing on methodological

advances in person-perception research (Funder, 1999) and theoretical claims concerning resource dependence, we show that SES is signaled by reliable patterns of disengagement- and engagement-related nonverbal behaviors, that observers reach impressive consensus and accuracy in judging other individuals' SES, and that observers make these judgments on the basis of these SES-related nonverbal displays.

## RESOURCES AND STATUS-RELATED SIGNALING

The notion that individuals reliably signal their capacity to provide resources to other people and are accurate judges of these resource-based displays is supported by research from several literatures (Anderson, Srivastava, Beer, Spataro, & Chatman, 2006; Keltner, Van Kleef, Chen, & Kraus, 2008). In nonhuman species, the ability to assess resource displays accurately leads to preferred mating opportunities and the avoidance of costly, aggressive encounters in negotiations of status (e.g., Krebs, Davies, & Parr, 1993). In humans, nonverbal displays of the capacity to provide resources are likely to be important in mate selection (see Buss, 1987), as well as in group members' attempts to identify individuals suitable for positions of leadership (e.g., Anderson et al., 2006).

In the present research, we asked whether this reasoning applies to the signaling of SES. We expected that SES would be associated with distinct patterns of nonverbal behavior, that outside observers would reliably and accurately judge another person's SES after minimal exposure to that individual, and that observers would make inferences about a target's SES on the basis of that person's SES-related nonverbal behavior. Our more specific predictions derived from recent theorizing about resource dependence and social disengagement.

## SES, RESOURCE DEPENDENCE, AND SOCIAL DISENGAGEMENT

With increasing resources, the individual is less dependent on other people (e.g., Johnson & Krueger, 2006; Lachman & Weaver, 1998; Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, & Lipkus, 1991). In comparison with lower-SES individuals, who often

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lack even basic resources, upper-SES individuals have resources to accomplish many tasks of social adaptation (Argyle, 1994), and, by implication, upper-SES individuals should tend to be less dependent on others. Two lines of research suggest that upper-SES individuals will signal their relative independence in nonverbal signs of social disengagement, whereas lower-SES individuals will signal their relative dependence with displays of social engagement.

The first line of research concerns the interdependence model of close relationships (Finkel et al., 2006; Rusbult et al., 1991), which has demonstrated that relationship-dependent individuals are more likely than less dependent individuals to show engagement-related behaviors toward their relationship partners. These behaviors include reaching consensus decisions in moral dilemmas, avoiding making verbally destructive comments during an interaction, and making self-sacrifices for the partner's benefit (Rusbult et al., 1991; Wieselquist, Rusbult, Foster, & Agnew, 1999). More independent romantic partners, by contrast, show patterns of relationship disengagement—less willingness to reach consensus, more destructive comments, and fewer sacrifices.

Studies of social power and nonverbal display serve as a second basis for our prediction concerning SES and social disengagement. In general, powerful individuals are less dependent on other people, and tend to show more nonverbal disengagement, than less powerful people do. Studies find, for example, that high-power individuals, compared with low-power individuals, focus their gaze less on other people (particularly people of high status; Ellyson, Dovidio, & Fehr, 1981; Hall, Coats, & Smith LeBeau, 2005), are more likely to interrupt, and tend to speak at greater length—behaviors that reflect a relative lack of attention to others (DePaulo & Friedman, 1998).

Given these two literatures, we predicted that upper SES would be associated with a disengaged style of nonverbal behavior (e.g., self-grooming and doodling) in an interaction with a stranger. We expected lower SES, in contrast, to be associated with increased engaged behaviors (e.g., head nods, eyebrow raises). Research relevant to this hypothesis is limited, but suggestive. For example, a meta-analytic review of status and nonverbal behavior found that, in comparison with lower-SES individuals, upper-SES individuals speak in ways that are less attentive to the audience, for example, making fewer turn-inviting pauses (Hall et al., 2005).

### THE THIN SLICING OF SES

Thus far, we have predicted that upper and lower SES will be associated with patterns of nonverbal disengagement and engagement, respectively. Our analysis suggests that these behaviors, in turn, will serve as reliable cues, allowing observers to make accurate inferences about targets' SES.

The thin-slicing literature shows that when observers are exposed to brief patterns of nonverbal behavior, they reach

consensus and make accurate judgments about a variety of different characteristics, including the target's personality traits, teaching ability, sexual orientation, and marital satisfaction (e.g., Albright, Kenny, & Malloy, 1988; Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992; Borkenau & Liebler, 1992). Observers are also capable of judging other group members' social status. For example, dormitory residents rated the social status (influence, prominence, and respect) of their peers 2 weeks into their year together, and then 4 and 9 months later (Anderson, John, Keltner, & Kring, 2001). Residents showed impressive consensus in their judgments of status at 2 weeks, and these judgments predicted their peers' status in later assessments. Studies have also found that observers detect other individuals' social status accurately; that is, group members' assessments of an individual's social status correspond to that individual's own self-assessment (Anderson et al., 2001, 2006).

In the present research, we extended these thin-slicing studies of social status to the domain of SES. We predicted that observers who watched relative strangers engage in brief interactions would reach consensus in their SES ratings of these target people, and that these ratings would be accurate. Moreover, we expected the targets' SES-related patterns of nonverbal disengagement (vs. engagement) to account for observers' judgments of SES (cf. Brunswik, 1956).

### THE PRESENT STUDY

To test our hypotheses, we asked participants to engage in a short interaction with a complete stranger. SES was measured objectively using self-reports of family income and education (e.g., Lachman & Weaver, 1998). Trained coders identified specific disengagement- and engagement-related behaviors in the interactions. An independent sample of naive observers then rated the SES of participants after viewing videotapes of the interactions. With these data, we tested three hypotheses: (a) SES will be reflected in patterns of nonverbal behavior such that upper SES will be associated with disengagement-related behavior, whereas lower SES will be associated with engagement-related behavior; (b) SES will be reliably and accurately judged by naive observers of social interactions; and (c) targets' nonverbal displays of social engagement and disengagement will predict observers' estimates of targets' SES.

### METHOD

#### Overview

Participants were 106 undergraduates enrolled in psychology classes at a public university (see Table 1 for a summary of demographic characteristics of the sample). The percentage of participants whose parents had graduated from college was comparable to the percentage (67.8%) observed in other studies of SES (Adler, Epel, Castellazzo, & Ickovics, 2000). The 27% of our sample falling below state median income ( $Mdn = \$51,312$ ;

DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Lee, 2006) was comparable to that in other national samples (30.9%; Johnson & Krueger, 2006).

In each session, 2 participants who were complete strangers to one another were led to a 10- × 14-ft laboratory room and seated in chairs facing one another, approximately 3 ft apart. The experimenter explained that they would participate in a hypothetical job interview and that the aim of the study was to determine effective interview strategies. The participants then engaged in a videotaped get-acquainted interaction for 5 min.

After the get-acquainted interaction, participants took part in a joint job interview in which they were asked several interview questions by the experimenter. Next, as part of a separate study also related to SES, participants were brought to separate tables, where they independently decided how to split a signing bonus of \$5,000 on the basis of their perceptions of their performance during the interview. Participants then wrote explanations of their allocation decisions. (Analyses indicated that SES was unrelated to these decisions.) Finally, participants completed brief demographic and personality measures.

### Get-Acquainted Interaction

For the present study, we concentrated on the get-acquainted interaction, because it produced the most unscripted, spontaneous nonverbal behavior. Participants were instructed to describe themselves to their partner, and then to converse for the remainder of the 5-min interaction. They were given a set of nine discussion questions (e.g., “How would you describe yourself?”) meant to help facilitate conversation. During the interaction, the experimenter sat in an adjacent room. Each participant was recorded by a partially concealed video camera positioned in bookshelves directly facing the participant. The entire body of the participant was visible to the camera.

### Coding of Nonverbal Behavior

A standard 60-s slice of nonverbal behavior from the get-acquainted interaction of each dyad was coded following the method developed by Ellyson and Dovidio (1985). The 60-s slice of coding is consistent with the approach in other research coding similar nonverbal behaviors (e.g., Gonzaga, Keltner, Londahl, & Smith, 2001), and 60 s is within the time frame typically considered to provide a thin slice of behavior (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992). The occurrence and duration of three disengagement and four engagement cues were coded by two judges, whose coding overlapped on 30 of the slices (15 dyads). The disengagement cues reflected a turning of attention away from the other person, and are impolite or improper behaviors (e.g., Brown & Levinson, 1987; Ekman, 1977; Ekman & Freisen, 1969). These cues were self-grooming, object manipulation (i.e., fidgeting with objects during the interaction), and doodling. The engagement cues were head nods, eyebrow raises, laughter, and gazes at the partner. These cues express an interest in the other

person and affiliative intent (Gonzaga et al., 2001; Reeve, 1993). We decided to focus on these seven cues after inspecting the videotapes and determining which disengagement- and engagement-related behaviors occurred with some regularity. Obvious cues of disengagement (e.g., yawning) and engagement (e.g., affiliative touching) that did not occur more than 5 times were not included in the analysis. Yawning occurred a total of 4 times (3 times among upper-SES participants). Affiliative touch occurred once and was instigated by a lower-SES participant.

Judges were considered to agree in their coding if they coded the occurrence of the same behavior at overlapping time points. Overall, the judges agreed on 69.3% of all coded behaviors. Table 2 displays the total frequency, mean duration, and reliability estimates for each cue.

### Observers' Ratings of SES

Seven undergraduates (three males, four females) rated the SES of participants after watching the videotape of each get-acquainted interaction. Observers were instructed to make their best estimates of participants' SES using the MacArthur Scale of Subjective SES (Adler et al., 2000). For each participant, observers placed an “X” on a 10-rung ladder representing the SES

**TABLE 1**  
*Demographics of the Sample: Family Income, Parental Education, Ethnicity, and Gender*

Measure	Frequency
Family income	
Below \$15,000	2
\$15,001–\$25,000	5
\$25,001–\$35,000	9
\$35,001–\$50,000	11
\$50,001–\$75,000	12
\$75,001–\$100,000	13
Above \$100,000	48
Maternal education	
Less than high school diploma	6
High school diploma	34
College degree	60
Paternal education	
Less than high school diploma	7
High school diploma	22
College degree	71
Ethnicity	
Asian American	42
European American	46
Latino, African American, or Native American	8
Other	4
Gender	
Male	46
Female	54

**Note.** Only demographic information from participants used in the data analysis ( $n = 100$ ) is included in this table.

**TABLE 2**  
*Duration and Frequency of the Disengagement and Engagement Cues and Interjudge Reliability in Coding the Cues*

Cue type	Duration (seconds)		Total frequency	Reliability	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		$\alpha$	<i>R</i>
Disengagement					
Self-grooming	0.49	1.60	20	.83	.70
Object manipulation	1.11	3.00	30	.89	.80
Doodling	0.10	0.71	7	.96	.93
Engagement					
Head nods	4.83	3.47	411	.90	.81
Eyebrow raises	1.98	1.84	263	.82	.71
Laughter	0.59	1.25	47	.92	.86
Gazes at the partner	34.94	10.53	267	.82	.71

of students at the university campus. The mean of the observers' ratings for each participant ( $M = 6.30, SD = 0.87$ ) was used as an estimate of that participant's SES ( $\alpha = .71$ ).

**SES Self-Report Measures**

Parental education and family income were assessed as in prior work (see Table 1; Adler et al., 2000; Lachman & Weaver, 1998). These variables were assigned values of 1 to 3 and 1 to 7, respectively, with higher numbers indicating greater education and greater income. The scores for each measure were standardized, and the standardized scores were then summed to create a composite measure of overall SES ( $M = 0.00, SD = 2.49; \alpha = .78$ ). Participants also self-reported their subjective SES, using the same scale as observers ( $M = 5.90, SD = 2.36$ ).

**RESULTS**

Two dyads (4 participants) were excluded because, as a result of experimenter error, we did not have video data for them. One participant who revealed awareness of the hypotheses was also excluded. To ensure that both members of each dyad were included in the analyses, we also excluded the partner of this excluded participant. The final analyses were conducted with the remaining 50 dyads (100 participants). Dyads were indistinguishable in that gender, ethnicity, and SES were allowed to vary freely within each dyad. Sixteen dyads were all female, 12 were all male, and 22 were of mixed gender; 12 dyads were all European American, 11 were all non-European American, and 27 were of mixed ethnicity.

Because one might expect certain personality dimensions (e.g., agreeableness, neuroticism) to be associated with engagement and disengagement behavior, we initially examined correlations between SES and the Big Five (e.g., Vazire & Gosling, 2004). Only extraversion was correlated with SES,  $r(99) = .17, p = .08$ . The analyses we report here did not control for personality.

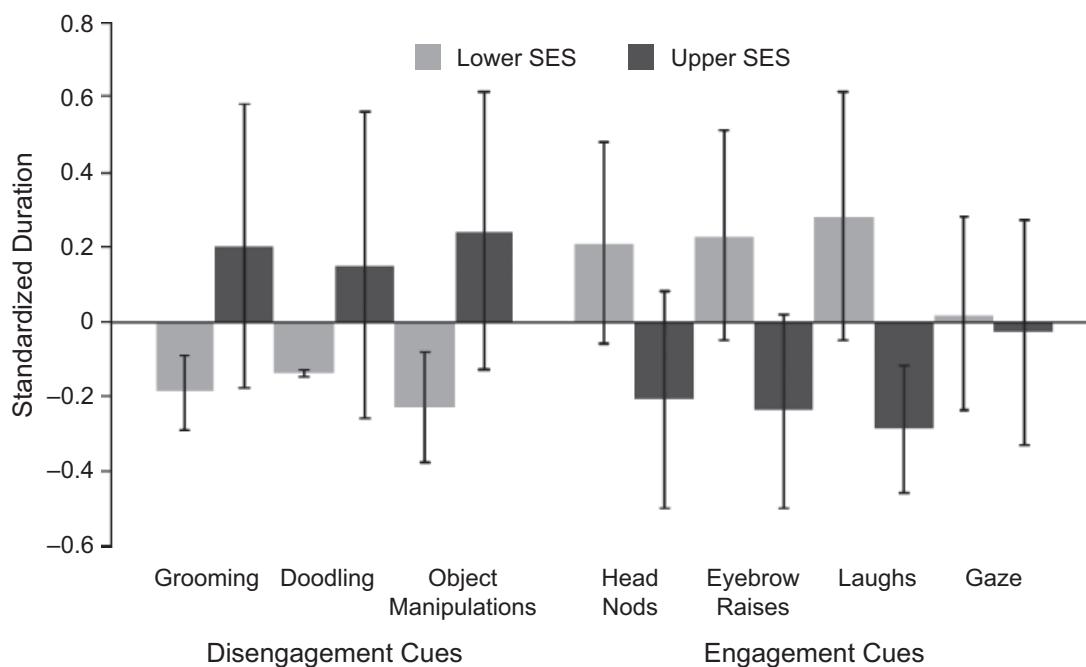
**Nonverbal Signs of SES**

Our first hypothesis was that upper SES would be associated with a pattern of nonverbal social disengagement, whereas lower SES would be associated with nonverbal signs of engagement.<sup>1</sup> To test these two predictions, we standardized the duration of each cue and then separately computed the means for disengagement- and engagement-related cues. We then entered cue usage as an outcome variable, and actor and partner SES, gender, and ethnicity as predictor variables. Gender was added because previous research suggests that women tend to show more engagement in social interactions than men do (e.g., Hall, Carter, & Horgan, 2001; Hecht & Lafrance, 1998). We accounted for ethnicity to determine if SES relates to cue usage independently of ethnic differences. In addition, the interactions of actor and partner SES, gender, and ethnicity were used as predictors to determine dyad-level effects (e.g., same-gender vs. mixed-gender dyads).

As predicted, actor SES was significantly and positively associated with disengagement cues,  $t(84.45) = 2.63, p = .01, \beta = .26, d = 0.58$ . Upper-SES individuals were more likely than lower-SES individuals to self-groom, fidget with nearby objects, and doodle during the 60-s slice of their conversation with their interaction partners. Interestingly, partner SES was also significantly positively associated with disengagement cues,  $t(84.45) = 2.01, p < .05, \beta = .20, d = 0.44$ . Finally, a marginally significant interaction between actor and partner gender also emerged,  $t(43) = 1.81, p = .08, \beta = .19, d = .40$ ; same-gender male ( $M = 0.16, SD = 0.78$ ) and female ( $M = 0.06, SD = 0.63$ ) dyads displayed more disengagement-related nonverbal behavior than did mixed-gender dyads ( $M = -0.15, SD = 0.34$ ). No other effects were significant.

Results for engagement cues were also in line with our first hypothesis. Actor SES was significantly and negatively associated with engagement cues,  $t(88.40) = -2.16, p < .05, \beta = -.21, d = 0.45$ . Upper-SES individuals were less likely than lower-SES individuals to look at their partners, laugh, nod their heads, and raise their eyebrows. Actor gender was also significantly and positively associated with engagement cues,  $t(90.00) = -2.87, p < .01, \beta = -.27, d = 0.60$ ; women were more frequent practitioners of socially engaged behavior than were men, as in previous research (e.g., Hecht & Lafrance, 1998). In addition, a partner effect emerged for ethnicity,  $t(89.30) = -2.12, p < .05, \beta = -.21, d = 0.44$ , but this effect was qualified by an Actor Ethnicity  $\times$  Partner Ethnicity interaction,  $t(43) = -2.10, p < .05, \beta = -.21, d = 0.44$ , suggesting that dyads with only European American participants ( $M = -0.27, SD = 0.35$ ) displayed less engagement-related nonverbal behavior than did non-European American dyads ( $M = 0.10, SD = 0.57$ ) and mixed-ethnicity dyads ( $M = 0.10, SD = 0.68$ ).

<sup>1</sup>To account for significant dyad-level variance in disengagement cues (intraclass correlation  $r = .38, F(50, 51) = 2.22, p < .20$ , and engagement cues (intraclass correlation  $r = .14, F(50, 51) = 1.32, p < .20$ , we used the actor-partner interdependence model (Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006).



**Fig. 1.** Standardized duration of specific disengagement and engagement cues for participants above and below the median overall socioeconomic status (SES). Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals based on standard errors of the means.

Overall, the results support our hypothesis that upper-SES individuals display their SES through a nonverbal style of social disengagement, whereas lower SES is associated with a pattern of social engagement (see Fig. 1).<sup>2</sup>

#### Reliability and Accuracy of Observers' Estimates of SES

Our second prediction held that naive observers would be able to make reliable and accurate estimates of participants' SES despite having no information other than the participants' behaviors during the get-acquainted interactions. Such results would suggest that observers perceive SES on the basis of thin slices of behavior.<sup>3</sup>

We computed consensus for observers' estimates of SES using two indices: an intraclass correlation, which assessed reliability by comparing the variability of different ratings of the same participant with the total variation across all ratings and all participants (e.g., Vazire & Gosling, 2004), and an average of pair-wise correlations between observers. Both the average pair-wise correlation,  $r(99) = .31, p < .01$ , and the intraclass correlation,  $r = .34, F(99, 594) = 3.47, p < .01$ , were significant. Observers readily reached agreement in their judgments of targets' SES on the basis of viewing the get-acquainted interactions.

<sup>2</sup>Participants above the median SES differed significantly from those below the median for all nonverbal behaviors ( $ps < .05$ ) except doodling and gaze ( $ps > .10$ ), though the patterns of the means were in line with our predictions even in those two cases.

<sup>3</sup>The analyses of consensus, accuracy, and observers' cue usage were conducted at the individual level because the observers' SES did not vary significantly by dyad (intraclass correlation  $r = .00$ ),  $F < 1$ .

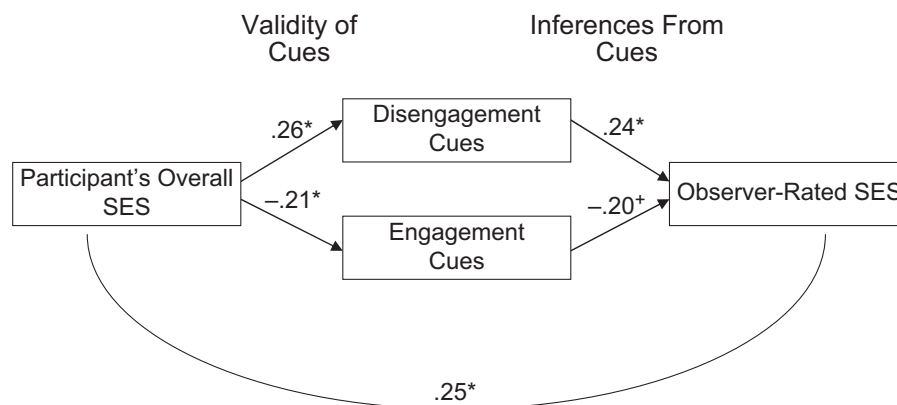
For accuracy, we correlated participants' SES ratings with the average of the naive observers' estimates of participants' SES. As we predicted, naive observers' estimates of participants' SES, using a ladder ranking, correlated positively with the participants' self-reports of overall SES,  $r(99) = .25, p < .05$ ; family income,  $r(99) = .27, p < .01$ ; maternal education,  $r(99) = .24, p < .05$ ; and subjective SES,  $r(99) = .23, p < .05$ . Observers' estimates were unrelated to targets' paternal education,  $r(99) = .12, n.s.$

Overall, the results support our second hypothesis and show that observers who viewed only the get-acquainted interactions were able to estimate objective and subjective SES with greater-than-chance accuracy.

#### Observers' Inferences of SES Using Disengagement and Engagement Cues

Our third, and final, hypothesis was that observers would use participants' disengagement and engagement cues when estimating participants' SES. This prediction implied that observers would make accurate judgments of SES on the basis of their perception of disengagement- and engagement-related displays during the get-acquainted interactions.

We conducted a hierarchical linear regression analysis with participant gender and ethnicity entered at Step 1 and disengagement cues entered at Step 2. The model entered at Step 1 was not significant,  $F(2, 97) = 2.38, p = .10$ , as only ethnicity predicted observers' estimates of SES,  $t(99) = 2.05, p < .05$ ,  $\beta = .21$ : European Americans were judged as higher in SES than other participants. The model entered at Step 2 was



**Fig. 2.** Model of the relationships among participant's overall socioeconomic status (SES), duration of disengagement and engagement cues, and observer ratings of participant's SES. Significance of the coefficients is indicated, <sup>+</sup> $p < .10$ ,  $*p < .05$ .

significant,  $F(3, 96) = 3.96, p < .05$ , and explained 6.3% of the additional variance in observers' ratings of SES,  $F(1, 96) = 6.84, p < .05$ . As expected, an examination of the coefficients revealed that displays of disengagement cues predicted observers' estimates of SES,  $t(99) = 2.62, p < .05, \beta = .28$ . No other effects were significant.

In a parallel analysis for engagement cues, the second model was significant,  $F(3, 96) = 2.89, p < .05$ , and explained 3.6% additional variance in observers' ratings of SES,  $F(1, 96) = 3.76, p = .06$ . As expected, an examination of the coefficients revealed that displays of engagement cues predicted observers' estimates of SES,  $t(99) = -1.94, p = .06, \beta = -.20$ , though the effect was marginal. Ethnicity was again related to observers' estimates of SES,  $t(99) = 1.96, p = .05, \beta = .19$ .

Figure 2 displays a Brunswik model of our analysis. The correlation between participant's overall SES and observer-rated SES indicates that observers made accurate estimates of participants' SES from viewing the get-acquainted interactions. Participants' SES was also reliably associated with a set of nonverbal disengagement and engagement cues during the interactions. Finally, observers made their accurate inferences about the SES of participants using these same disengagement and engagement cues.

## DISCUSSION

Informed by recent advances in person-perception research, and theoretical analyses of resource dependence and power, we examined how SES is signaled in a face-to-face interaction. Our first prediction was supported. SES was reliably associated with a set of nonverbal cues: Upper-SES individuals exhibited more disengagement and less engagement during a get-acquainted interaction than did lower-SES individuals. Our second prediction was also supported. Naive observers reached consensus and identified participants' family income, maternal education, and subjective SES with greater-than-chance accuracy, despite

being exposed only to participants' behavior during the get-acquainted interactions. Finally, these naive observers based their judgments of targets' SES—and rightly so—on targets' disengagement- and engagement-related nonverbal behavior. This study is the first to reveal relations between SES and social engagement, and it is the first to show that SES can be readily “thin sliced” by naive observers.

Before we turn to the conceptual limitations and implications of our main findings, a few other findings warrant discussion. Gender was also related to engagement displays, independently of SES. This finding dovetails with the well-documented tendency for women to show more engagement than men during social interactions (e.g., Hall et al., 2001; Hecht & Lafrance, 1998). Moreover, same-gender pairs displayed more social disengagement than mixed-gender pairs. It is possible that disengagement displays are more likely during same-gender interactions because attraction cues are less salient in same-gender than in mixed-gender interactions. Future research in this area is warranted.

The relationship between the interaction of actor and partner ethnicity and engagement cues is also noteworthy: Having a non-European American partner led participants to display increased social engagement during the interaction. It is possible that the more interdependent orientation of the non-European partners evoked more engaged social behaviors. This possibility merits further empirical attention.

Notwithstanding the promise of our findings, it is important to bear in mind certain limitations of the data. One limitation is that we focused on interactions between strangers. This context, in which the individuals had no history of interdependence, may have amplified SES-related patterns of engagement and disengagement. Future research is needed to determine whether SES predicts similar patterns of social behavior across different contexts, for example, among friends or romantic partners.

A second limitation pertains to the sample of this study—students at a university. Notably, our SES measures referred to participants' parents. This raises questions about whether this

study's findings would generalize to samples with an established class identity.

A separate concern related to the present sample is that students are similar in age and educational achievement, and share a social identity. Although these similarities could make SES-based differences in social behavior less pronounced—particularly for disengagement displays, as the in-group similarities of students might even increase the likelihood of engagement-related behaviors—it will be essential for future work to test our hypotheses with more representative samples. In particular, ethnically diverse samples are needed to better examine how nonverbal displays are affected by the interaction between SES and ethnicity.

Finally, there are likely to be other reliable cues of SES. Obvious candidates include style of dress, clothing quality, accent, and telling accessories. Less obvious candidates might include tone of voice, the acoustics of laughter, or particular kinds of smiles.

This research has documented a clear signal of upper SES—nonverbal disengagement—and a clear signal of lower SES—nonverbal engagement. These findings follow from recent analyses of social status and nonverbal behavior (e.g., Hall et al., 2005), and they point to interesting research questions. For example, it is known that people tend to marry people from similar class backgrounds (Sweeney & Cancian, 2004). Perhaps initial patterns of attraction are driven by these SES-related displays. It will also be important to examine whether SES-related patterns of disengagement and engagement are related to SES-related differences in other realms, for example, health- and mood-related vulnerabilities associated with SES (e.g., Adler et al., 1994).

Recent empirical studies suggest that it is difficult to find a facet of social behavior or life outcome that is not colored by SES. The present research adds to this literature, suggesting that SES imbues the briefest interactions, influencing both what people signal nonverbally and how they are perceived.

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