

## THE IMPACT OF STATUS INCONSISTENCY ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS INFORMATION HOLDING

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### ABSTRACT

The present paper examines the impact of status inconsistency on public affairs information holding. Since this relationship has never been explored before, the findings can contribute significantly to the knowledge gap tradition of mass communication research. Defined as an orthogonal dimension to the vertical status, status inconsistency significantly affected the dependent variable after the effects for the vertical dimension were controlled for. It was also found that various types of status inconsistency related differently to the criterion variable. The findings suggest that status inconsistency need to be posited, among others, as a contingent variable in the gap hypothesis. The gap researchers by ignoring status inconsistency have inadequately specified the impact of the stratification variable on the distribution of information within a social structure. The paper, in particular, concludes that generalizations about the widening or closing of the gap over-time need to be examined afresh.

### INTRODUCTION

The knowledge gap tradition of mass communication research uses the construct "status" or its indicators as a contingent condition explaining the differences in information holding by the audience members within a society. Audience-centric deficit and/or difference interpretations are variously posited as explaining the presence or lack of presence of phenomenon of public affairs information differentials within a social structure (Gaziano, 1983; Cook, Appleton, Conner, Shafer, Tankin, and Weber, 1975; Ettema, and Kline, 1977; and Tichenor, Donohue and Olien, 1970). However, the knowledge gap research has