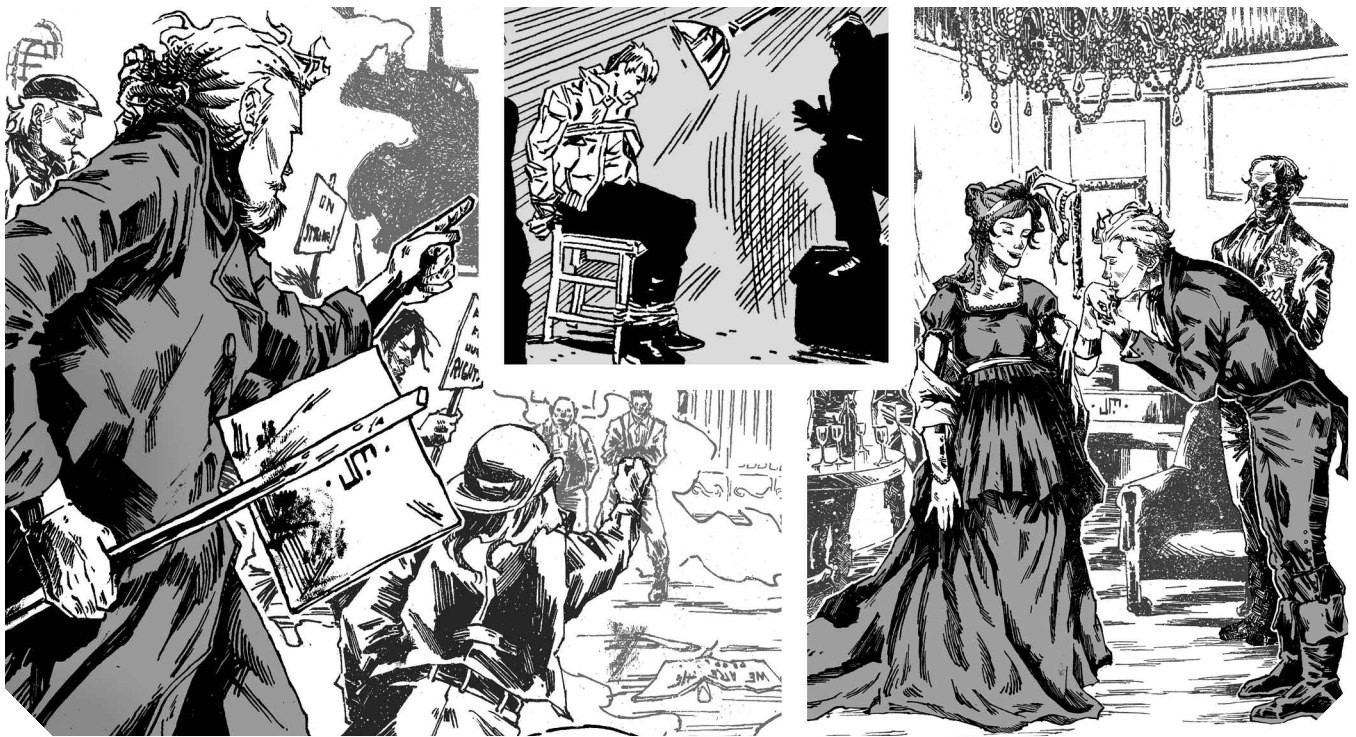# Social Engineering™

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# CONTENTS

# About *GURPS*

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of *GURPS* players. Our address is SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! We can also be reached by e-mail: **info@sjgames.com**. Resources include:

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*Errata.* Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata pages for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are available on our website – see above.

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition.* Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

# INTRODUCTION

We call them *roleplaying* games for a reason . . .

Combat and other physical feats are a big part of most roleplaying games. Rules for action and conflict take up many pages, not just because their consequences are often a matter of life and death, but because players are *interested* in scenes of action and fighting. While a roleplaying game could be created for almost any fictional genre, the most popular genres and source material focus on physical action and danger.

But the best adventure series are also about the characters and their relationships: D'Artagnan and Milady, Holmes and Watson, Kirk and Spock, and many other pairs of friends or foes. Social situations, characterization, and dialogue can add flavor to a story, or provide the heroes with a reason to have adventures. For some heroes – detectives and spies, for example – social skills can be their most useful tools. It's even possible to run an entire campaign that's primarily romance, comedy, or some other genre where social interaction matters more than physical action.

*GURPS* provides rules and game mechanics for social interaction: reaction rolls, Influence rolls, and the character traits that affect them. And for many campaigns, those are enough. However, the same could be said about the rules for fighting in the **Basic Set** . . . and yet players looking for more detailed rules can turn to *GURPS Martial Arts* to explore the nuances of combat and make fight scenes more vivid. In the same way, *GURPS Social Engineering* expands the **Basic Set's** rules for social situations and behavior. All these expansions are optional, to be used at the GM's discretion; see *Throw Away This Book!* (p. 73) for further advice. Except as noted, they supplement the **Basic Set** rather than replacing it.

The opening chapter examines the different ways social interaction can fit into a campaign and explains the key idea of a *reference society*. The rest of the supplement brings the PCs to center stage. An expanded treatment of social traits in character creation is followed by detailed rules for influencing and building relationships with individuals, with formal organizations, and with crowds and entire societies. Last, *Social Engineering* explores the treacherous border that separates talking from fighting.

All these new rules provide standard ways for adventurers to carry out social transactions – but not the *only* ways. No one supplement could exhaust the possibilities. The GM should reward creative roleplaying! If it makes sense to apply a skill or modifier to a task in a way that *Social Engineering* doesn't point out, let the PCs have a try.

Whether your goal is to spend an entire campaign on soap opera or family saga, or simply to add an occasional scene of bribery, flirtation, or taunting to an action campaign, *Social Engineering* will give you new tools *and* new ways to use the tools that *GURPS* already provides.

## PUBLICATION HISTORY

*Social Engineering* is not based on any previous *GURPS* sourcebook. Primarily, it expands the material on social encounters, interactions, and skills from the **Basic Set,** *Fourth Edition*. It also draws on social mechanics from other supplements, restating or modifying many of their rules, and unifying and extending them to a general-purpose treatment. Important sources of ideas include **GURPS Action 1** and **2, GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2, GURPS Horror, GURPS Mysteries, GURPS Power-Ups 2: Perks, GURPS Transhuman Space: Changing Times,** and **GURPS Traveller: Interstellar Wars.** This expanded treatment of social interaction stands on its own, and can be used with any *GURPS* supplement.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

William H. Stoddard is a professional copy editor, specializing in scientific and scholarly books in fields ranging from aerospace technology to archaeology. Fortunately, he likes reading nonfiction; his research library is threatening to take over his apartment, and he regularly visits the nearest university library for supplemental reading. His other pleasures include cooking, reading science fiction and alternate history, and running and playing in roleplaying games; he has been doing the latter since 1975, when he first encountered **Dungeons & Dragons**. His previous work for Steve Jackson Games includes writing the latest editions of **GURPS Supers** and **GURPS Low-Tech**, as well as composing *Pyramid* articles on such subjects as formal dances and sexual situations in roleplaying games. He lives in San Diego with his cohabitant Carol, two cats, two computers, and far too many books!

*It seems the minds of these people are so taken up with intense speculations, that they neither can speak, nor attend to the discourses of others, without being roused by some external taction upon the organs of speech and hearing; for which reason, those persons who are able to afford it always keep a flapper (the original is climenole) in their family . . . . the business of this officer is, when two, three, or more persons are in company, gently to strike . . . the mouth of him who is to speak, and the right ear of him or them to whom the speaker addresses himself.*

*– Jonathan Swift,* **Gulliver's Travels**

# CHAPTER ONE
# SOCIAL RELATIONS IN CAMPAIGNS

*"What right hast thou here?"*

*Brenda Price stepped back from the weathered carvings on the massive stone, looking for where the deep voice came from. After the brightness of her torch on the rock, the twilight was almost impenetrable. Was that him standing by that clump of shrubs? Good God, he looked huge. This was supposed to be a peaceful country; she hoped he knew that.*

*Speaking slowly, she said, "I did not know this was your land."*

*"Our land it was, ere yet the burarq came and laid the stones that set it under law."*

*It wasn't just her incomplete knowledge of Ragnlendish that was making this hard; she'd had lots of practice over the past few weeks – even though the local students all wanted to practice their English with her. He spoke with an older vocabulary, like the sagas she and her tutor Mr. Ransom had worked through. And "burarq" sounded like one of those weird words that didn't have cognates in other Germanic languages.*

*"I wished to see what was written," she said. "I am a historical linguist."*

*"I know these words not," he said.*

*"I learn the lore of words. There are old words here whose lore no one knows; I came to this land to learn more of them."*

*He stepped forward and loomed over her, seeming unbelievably large. Even now, he was mostly a blur in the growing dark.*

*"Those are the words of my folk, of the luurg," he said. "The burarq learned them from us. They wrote them on the stones, beside their own words. But few remember them now." He gestured at the weathered surface, with its remnants of runes, Ragnlendish and something else. "Even the stones forget."*

*What **was** this? Even the people who speculated about a non-Indo-European substrate didn't claim that there were any records, let alone a distinct ethnicity. These might be entirely new data! Even the thought of fear faded in her as she said, with absolute truth, "Learning the lore of this tongue would be a treasure to me."*

Most of this supplement is rules: interpretations of existing rules, new applications of the rules, or suggestions for alternate rules. But games don't have rules for rules' sake. The point of a rule is to make the game enjoyable. Rules for social interaction in **GURPS** need to suit the campaign the players have signed up for, and the place of social issues in that campaign.

Supers and other powerful beings may be able to bypass social skills entirely, taking direct control of another being's actions. Mages may do the same with spells. But overriding the will in that way isn't a *social* ability. For Dominance, Mind Control, Possession, and similar traits, see **GURPS Powers** and other supplements such as **GURPS Horror;** for spells, see **GURPS Magic.** Social interaction is about getting others to cooperate, enthusiastically or reluctantly, without needing to override their wills and their self-control.

> *"I'll reason with him,"* Vito Corleone said. It was to become a famous phrase in the years to come.
> – Mario Puzo, ***The Godfather***

## THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

No matter how much or how little social interaction takes place in the game world, *playing* a roleplaying game is social interaction: the GM and the players are trying to have fun together. If that interaction goes well, the game is a success.

Every campaign needs a "social contract": a mutual understanding between the GM and the players about how the game will be played. If it's not mutual – if different people have different expectations – it's likely to produce conflict and make the campaign less fun. It's a worthwhile investment to get everyone on the same page at the outset.

What kinds of activity is the campaign going to include? Most players are looking for a focus on physical action and risk, with social interaction used as a tool for getting things done and for the occasional "downtime" scene. But some will happily spend hours roleplaying contract negotiations or a visit to a bathhouse, while others begrudge even a moment not spent in action scenes. Everyone needs to agree on how much social roleplaying a campaign will have – and it has to be an amount that everyone will enjoy.

If the campaign includes social encounters (and for anyone who bought this supplement, it probably does!), what kind of roleplaying will be appropriate? Can an endearing rogue get away with sarcastic comments to the princess? (See *Speaking Freely,* p. 6.) Or does he face big reaction penalties for the slightest protocol slip? Either style is fun for some players, but ruins the game for others. Everyone must know what's acceptable in the campaign, and be willing to play in that style. This doesn't apply just to the social aspects; similar misunderstandings can arise over how lethal combat will be, or whether realistic difficulties can be handwaved or must be coped with.

Problems can arise if characters' actions express real-world emotions or conflicts; e.g., if a romantic scene becomes a vehicle for a player's actual feelings. It's an especially dangerous temptation for players to turn a social contract dispute into a struggle between characters; this can ruin the fun of the game, especially for the loser of said struggle. Resolving the real issue means addressing the players' conflicting expectations.

A social contract doesn't have to be a long, legalistic document. It doesn't have to be written down at all! A contract is a *meeting of minds;* it simply requires time spent talking *and listening.* Taking the time to address these issues ahead of time will help everyone create a better game.

# Cinematic Social Interaction

Just as **GURPS** has special rules for cinematic combat (p. B417), a game can feature cinematic social interaction, using a few special rules and character traits.

### Easy Marks

Many forms of social interaction involve Quick Contests of skill. In a cinematic campaign, minor NPCs are neither smart enough to recognize they're being lied to or manipulated, nor focused enough on their own goals to resist being influenced. Instead of a Quick Contest, the hero need only succeed at an unopposed skill roll.

This doesn't affect reaction rolls. If approached by someone without social skills, minor NPCs still react as the dice dictate. (Otherwise the course of events would be too predictable, and social skills would be useless.) The GM may also dictate that certain NPCs will always react in a predetermined way – for example, prison guards will never just hand over the keys.

### Speaking Freely

Realistically, people with high Rank or Status expect to be spoken to deferentially. But in a cinematic campaign, a common soldier, servant, or court jester can speak his mind to a king without fear.

To represent this, there are no reaction penalties for a hero dealing with with someone of higher Status or Rank (see *Status as a Reaction Modifier,* p. B29). A hero with *negative* Status still faces a penalty equal to his Status, however. In addition, the GM should not assign penalties for speaking plainly or failing to display elevated manners, however courtly the company.

As an extension of this, adventurers from radically different backgrounds can associate without social awkwardness. The heir to a great empire, a sergeant, and a petty street thief can become companions in adventure and even close friends; their fraternization will not make waves in society.

### Cinematic Traits

Adventurers in cinematic campaigns tend to have broadly defined ranges of social skills. These can be represented as new *wildcard skills* (pp. 80-81): Fake!, Negotiator!, and Psychologist! Similarly, the GM may allow characters to take Contacts!, the new "wildcard" version of the Contacts advantage; see p. 77.

The various Influence Shticks (p. 78 and *Influence Without Words,* p. 30) are a natural fit to cinematic campaigns. The GM may wish to disallow them in a realistic game.

# SCENES AND SUBPLOTS

Roleplaying games originally focused on physical action and danger, and many still do. Social relationships and mechanics can best fit into an action campaign by motivating, supporting, or intensifying the action.

## INCIDENTS

Some social encounters merely provide a change of pace. The meeting or conversation isn't part of the main plot; it's a small break in the action, letting the players relax before the next confrontation. It can also give the GM a few minutes to think, but a GM who does this too long or too often may have unhappy players! Invite the players to talk in character from time to time, but grab the reins again before they run out of things to say.

## Meeting at the Adventurers' Club

One common place for change-of-pace encounters is the start or end of a dramatic episode. Out-and-out *frame stories,* such as Scheherazade telling tales to Sultan Shahryar to distract him from beheading her, or explorers recounting their African or Tibetan journeys back at the club, would be tricky to make work in roleplaying. But a television-style "bookend" approach, where the main characters start and end each episode talking in the squad room or the captain's cabin, can be a way to mark the start and end of each scenario. For more drama, let whoever best sums up the adventure lead the team on the next job (*Finding a Mission,* p. 7).

Mysteries sometimes use a variant on this device: the story is presented as the detective's summary of a case for the client. Inviting the players to pick one of their number to sum up "who, what, when, where, why, and how" could produce a similar effect.

## Chance Encounters

Incidental conversations can also take place in the middle of a session. People on the street or in a tavern may taunt adventurers, or even try to start a fight with them; flirt with them; or try to sell them something or beg from them. The heroes instead may witness people interacting with each other – a man pressing his attentions on a woman, or a crowd throwing stones at a beggar – and have to decide whether to get involved.

One common reason for adventurers to talk with people is to get information (*Requests for Information*, p. 28). But it's a little contrived if every passerby's story is the key to the current scenario. A steady string of storytellers can help avoid this, by hiding meaningful rumors in with those that relate to some long-term plot, hint at some challenge not yet revealed, or are irrelevant or completely made up. Preparing a list of suitable rumors in advance – or news stories or reports from spies – can make this easier on the GM.

> *A chance meeting,*
> *as we say in*
> *Middle-earth.*
> *– J.R.R. Tolkien,*
> ***The Return***
> ***of the King***

## BACKGROUNDS

On a continuing basis, social elements can help define the background of a character or setting – and emerge, from time to time, into the foreground.

### The Supporting Cast

Players pay character points for Allies, Contacts, and Patrons for their PCs, while gaining points for Dependents and Enemies (*Relationship Advantages*, pp. 41-43). Not giving these characters speaking parts is wasteful.

For some relationships, the chance of getting aid is part of how the advantage is defined (see p. B44 for Contact reliability, and p. B73 for Patrons with Minimal Intervention). Influence or reaction rolls are needed to gain unusual forms of help from Allies, Contacts, or Patrons, or *any* aid from Dependents or Enemies. With Enemies, reaction rolls for potential combat (p. 68) may be called for, and Intimidation-based Influence rolls may be appropriate.

Interaction with these supporting characters can be acted out with improvised dialogue. At the GM's discretion, good dialogue can make dice-rolling unnecessary (*Throw Away This Book!*, p. 73).

### Customs of the Country

Social skills face penalties for cultural unfamiliarity (p. B23). If visitors to a distant land get in trouble, an Anthropology roll (or the IQ-6 default) may tell them what they did wrong – for example, bowing too deeply or not deeply enough in Japan. The GM can benefit from reading about such customs in real cultures. Even if the visitor never figures it out, knowing what caused the problem can help the GM decide what the reaction is. See *Exotic Worlds* (pp. 10-11) for more on this.

An interesting twist is for *players* to create characters with exotic backgrounds. To these characters, the everyday customs of the campaign setting – the *reference society* (p. 11) – can be foreign and baffling.

## PLOT SUPPORT

Social interaction can become part of the plot, even a thriller plot. This can happen in several ways.

### Finding a Mission

Adventurers who work for an organization may be assigned missions, in which case the briefing session can be a framing scene (*Meeting at the Adventurers' Club*, pp. 6-7).

Freelancers have to find their own work. For a background job that provides income but doesn't have dramatic incidents, this is part of the monthly job roll; a bad roll means the freelancer didn't find much work or didn't earn much from it.

Job rolls don't apply to finding *interesting* jobs that lead to adventures. Treat this as searching for a short-term job (pp. 22-23). Jobs can also come from a Contact or Contact Group whose effective skill is suitable for finding appropriate clients.

### Supplying Motives

*Why* are these people risking their lives again? Fantasizing about adventures is fun (obviously!), but not many people have adventures, and even fewer seek them out. A good story starts out with a *hook* – a reason to get involved in a difficult situation. Social relationships can supply a hook. See *Relationship Advantages* (pp. 41-43) for a detailed discussion of this.

### Carrying Out a Mission

Social skills, interactions, and relationships can also provide ways to complete a mission. Much of this supplement is about game mechanics for doing this! To encourage the use of social engineering, adventuring groups should include "face" characters, who specialize in actively interacting with people, or watchers, who know what's happening in the social milieu but don't attract attention. Making Acting an "everyman" skill (one every character spends at least 1 point on) lets a team of heroes assume cover identities without one member easily giving the others away (*Deception*, pp. 36-39).

# SOCIAL THEMES

Some readers and viewers focus more on the characters in a story than on the action. **GURPS** can serve such interests, too, in a campaign that emphasizes characterization, relationships, and dialogue. Such a campaign doesn't have to be devoid of physical action! Young aristocrats with quick swords and clever tongues, or vampire slayers in an American suburb, can have personal ties as fully developed, and feelings as strong, as Japanese court ladies seeking the Empress' favor or tuberculosis patients in an Alpine sanatorium. There's a place for physical action in many social dramas. But the primary drama comes from the relationships themselves.

## SCHOOL DAYS

Students have been the heroes of much popular fiction and drama. They may be aspiring martial artists, young supers, wizards and witches, mecha operators, or cadets at space academies. They may be ordinary high school students confronted with anything from monsters to bullies to sarcastic teachers. The school itself may become a "character," the way a spacecraft can become a character in space opera.

A series focused on a school can emphasize either external or internal conflicts. An external focus has the students meeting at the school, but dealing with situations in the surrounding world. With an internal focus, the students' goals, challenges, and rivals are within the school itself. Internal approaches are particularly suited to boarding schools, which can turn into minisocieties (*Great and Little Societies,* p. 11) with their own hierarchies and customs.

A very small school may be one teacher and a handful of students; the PCs may be an important clique, or even the entire student body. A medium-sized school may have few enough masters for each to be portrayed as an individual, with classes numbering dozens or scores of students. In a large school, the masters might become more of a crowd, but with a few vivid, standout personalities. A very large school might be effectively a small town, big enough to dominate the nonscholastic community around it – especially likely for universities, which traditionally have "town and gown" conflicts.

One source of internal conflict is rivalry between houses (in a boarding school) or cliques (in any school). Boarding students and day students, in schools that have both, are natural cliques. If a PC has another student as a rival, that student's friends can become recurring minor characters. A school can have a rivalry with another school, which focuses the campaign outside the school but still inside the scholastic world.

To run such a school campaign, use the organizational rules in Chapter 4. A school is rich in information sources (*Requests for Information,* p. 28). The rules for *Finding a Master* (p. 41) are also helpful.

## MY DAY AT WORK

As the focus of a campaign, work is akin to schooling, with employees doing assigned tasks under supervision. Like schools, organizations have varied sizes, from a small firm with a handful of workers to a multinational corporation or a national government. The GM should be familiar with the rules under *Continuing Relationships and Careers* (pp. 49-53).

Some employers are natural sponsors in action campaigns: mercenary forces, privateers, police departments, detective agencies, or organized crime groups. But other organizations might sometimes send employees into danger: search and rescue teams, emergency medical teams, couriers, intrepid journalists, "vacuum cleaners" who remove defunct satellites from orbit, planetary survey teams, and similar groups.

It's also possible to focus on economic and social aspects of work: the struggles to make an organization a success, or to rise in the ranks of an established organization. One example could be a reversed scholastic campaign, where the protagonists aren't students, but instructors. Seeking promotion within an organization or industry can be highly competitive; a campaign could focus on the ambitions of juniors in Medici Florence or on Madison Avenue. For a less formal setting, consider a touring theatrical company, or the staff of an isolated caravanserai, truck stop, or asteroid miners' resort.

In many work-focused campaigns, Code of Honor (Professional) is expected; those who lack it may instead have Secret . . . or Enemy (Watcher) if someone is hoping to catch them breaking the rules (*Internal Enemies,* p. 53). Enemy (Rival) is as relevant in a business or bureaucracy as in a school (above).

A different sort of work campaign can emphasize conflict between employers and employees and the struggle to unionize, especially in a historical era when organizing and striking are dangerous. This doesn't have to have an industrial setting; a mages' guild or a mercenary company could have disputes with employers as well. The guidelines under *Unions* (p. 67), and possibly *Revolutionary Politics* (pp. 64-65), will be useful.
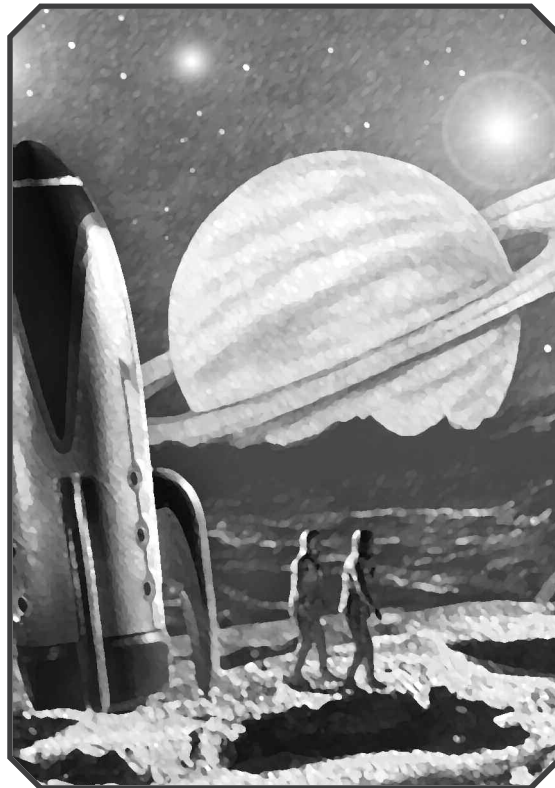
Leadership of work teams can be a source of conflicting player expectations (*The Social Contract*, pp. 5-6). An NPC leader risks destroying the players' sense of controlling their own destinies. But having a player take the role of leader has its own risks. The team leader may try to control everything the team does, or even harshly suppress dissent; or the team members may act independently, paying no attention to orders or the needs of a mission. The GM may need to step in to resolve these issues.

# BUYING AND SELLING

Mercantile activities are a classic excuse for going into harm's way; see the free, introductory *GURPS* adventure *Caravan to Ein Arris* (at **e23.sjgames.com**) for a classic example. For a more managerial focus, the PCs could be ambitious young traders, rather than hired guards, servants, or entertainers. Long-range trade appeared with the earliest civilizations; the theme remains viable even in future settings, where free traders are a traditional character type.

Successful long-distance trade requires picking suitable goods to export, buying them at a relatively low price, and selling them for a higher price at the other end of the journey; see *GURPS Low-Tech Companion 3* for much more on this topic. In between, the merchant has to keep his caravan together, find his destination, and possibly fight off bandits or pirates. Aside from Merchant, useful skills include Diplomacy, Leadership, and Savoir-Faire; smugglers will want Smuggling (obviously), but also Acting, Fast-Talk, and Streetwise. Code of Honor (Professional) is worth cultivating; in the long run it may earn a priceless Reputation. *Commercial Transactions* (pp. 26-28), *Commercial Rivalry* (p. 34), and *Economic Rivalry* (pp. 66-67) will all be helpful.

# POLITICS

A more ambitious campaign can focus on politics, at levels from a village up to a galactic empire. Political campaigns frequently involve career advancement; e.g., from tribune in a legion to consul, or from a city council to the White House. But the real point of politics is changing the laws, institutions, or collective goals of a government or society.

Politics comes in three basic flavors (*The Three Kinds of Politics*, pp. 63-65): administrative, electoral, and revolutionary. Which is prevalent depends on the society type (*Status, Rank, and Society/Government Type*, p. 17). Additional rules for political campaigns are in *Indirect Influence* (pp. 61-62) and *Alliances and Diplomacy* (pp. 65-66).

In most political campaigns, the heroes will all be members of the same faction. It's possible to focus instead on alliances and conflicts between the adventurers; this works best in an oligarchy where there are only a few leaders, so that the PCs can make up a substantial fraction of them.

# LOVE AND MARRIAGE

Romantic relationships are often a subplot of a campaign with a non-romantic theme; for example, an action hero may have a love interest to protect or rescue. These relationships become more important in a campaign focused on social interaction – for example, a school campaign where students are exploring romantic options, or a political campaign where marriages help secure alliances (*Family Alliances*, p. 65).

Making courtship the primary focus of a game is trickier. All of the characters need to be concerned with finding the right person, and the game must eventually conclude with everyone being paired off in a way that will satisfy the players.

In a present-day campaign, or in some future campaigns, this is likely to be an expression of the characters' personal desires; their courtships will involve looking for their ideal partners. But in a historical or historical fantasy campaign – or in a genetics-obsessed future society – people may not have this freedom of choice. Their marriage decisions may shape their careers, the destiny of their families, and even the fate of their society. An important theme in such settings is the tension between duty and desire. Campaigns that emphasize personal choice tend toward comedy, while campaigns that emphasize duty tend toward tragedy – but either option can inspire intense roleplaying.

To develop a relationship, see *Companionship* (p. 23), *Approachability* (p. 25), *Romance* (pp. 28-29), *Building Trust* (pp. 40-41), and possibly *Households and Communities as Organizations* (pp. 58-59).

## Below Stairs

Campaigns in aristocratic milieus don't have to focus on the aristocrats. The servants in an aristocratic household can have their own little society, with a chain of command and distinctive customs. Knowing how to function in this society is part of Savoir-Faire (Servant). Servants of great families don't have to be domestics; they could be armed guards or military leaders, business agents or diplomats, or wizards or alchemists.

A campaign about servants of a great family can address many classic social themes, including initiation, apprenticeship, promotion, politics, and even romance. It can be comedic, especially if the servants are smarter than their masters. It can be tragic or horrific if the masters are harsh, cruel, or seductive – or under an ancient family curse.

With the right players, a campaign could have two characters per player: a family member, and the personal servant of a different family member. This kind of double perspective reveals a household or community in more detail.

# IDLENESS

Finally, a socially focused campaign can look at people whose only purpose is entertaining themselves. Most such campaigns will be humorous, with bad dice rolls leading to mishaps, minor injuries, or embarrassment, but more serious fates are possible; the starving young artists of *La Bohème*, which ends with the heroine dying of tuberculosis, have no steady jobs and spend most of their time flirting and gossiping.

Idleness doesn't require wealth! A campaign about the idle could focus on any social class: Status -2 beggars, Status -1 starving students, Status 0-2 retirees, up to Status 6-8 sons and daughters of the high nobility (see *Choosing Faces*, p. 20).

### Hanging Out

Campaigns of this sort rarely have long-term goals; they string together single episodes or short story arcs. Episodes commonly start when a problem descends on one of the PCs: a visit from disapproving family; being roped into the schemes of an uncle or aunt or a boyfriend or girlfriend; or, in grimmer campaigns, illness or legal troubles. Sometimes PCs create their own problems, perhaps by falling in love or coming up with some ingenious scheme to make money. A charismatic PC may involve the entire cast of characters in putting on a play or taking a trip.

A typical theme of this sort of campaign is *roleplaying:* characters trying to appear to be something they are not. Poor people pretend to be well off, the ignorant pretend to know more than they do, people in same-sex relationships put on a show of respectable heterosexuality, and so on. The dispelling of illusions in recognition scenes and unmasking is the classic end for a comedy, but this approach can find a place in other kinds of story: in philosophical explorations of appearance and reality, in psychological studies of self-deception, or even in cosmic horror where all human values would be shattered by knowledge of the real world. Dilettantes with independent incomes are classic investigators for cosmic horror!

### Tourists

Travel can be more than an incident; it can define an entire campaign – for example, the Grand Tour of the continent that completed an English gentleman's education. A travel campaign can be a lot like a mercantile campaign, but with no moneymaking.

Travelers may be religious pilgrims – who may or may not be devout (Chaucer's Canterbury pilgrims were a rowdy lot). They may be missionaries or Peace Corps workers hoping to see some of the world while improving it. They may be students whose journey is meant to educate them, in a variant scholastic campaign. They may be normal folks who are just curious or bored. They may be short of cash, or have more money than they know what to do with.

The incidents of a tourist campaign are encounters with new people, places, and customs – which may turn into misadventures. The continuity comes from the travelers getting to know each other, often by getting each other out of trouble. Ideally, the travelers come home as different people, changed by the journey – true to the old saying, they've "seen the elephant." Journeys for more serious purposes, such as traditional fantasy quests, can have the same outcome.

> *Mendoza: I am a brigand. I live by robbing the rich. Tanner: I am a gentleman. I live by robbing the poor. Shake hands!*
>
> *– Bernard Shaw,*
> ***Man and Superman***

For a variant tourist campaign, the heroes could be tour guides, shepherding travelers through strange places and customs; this is also a work-focused campaign (pp. 8-9). This can end up an action game if the journey is hazardous enough – for example, the Knights Templar were originally chartered to guide Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land.

# EXOTIC WORLDS

Some campaigns go beyond tourism (above), requiring the adventurers to live in a foreign culture, without guides or money. They may be there for some specific purpose: diplomacy, trade, war, or the pursuit of knowledge. Or they may be castaways or exiles trying to survive.

The foreign country, alien planet, or extradimensional realm is the focus of this kind of campaign. The visitors' encounter with it has a bigger impact on them than their encounters with each other or with individual NPCs. Any physical action plot grows out of that impact. The idea of a reference society (p. 11) is vital.

The GM's most important trick in this kind of campaign is *distancing mechanisms:* situations, customs, or objects that are alien and perplexing, both to the PCs and to the players. It's best if they aren't just random weirdness. Not only is it "playing fair" to come up with logical reasons, working out the implications of a premise can suggest additional weird elements, deepening the effect. A campaign of this sort is a riddle for the players; when they start anticipating the consequences of their characters' actions, they've answered the riddle. At that point – and not before – it's appropriate for them to buy Cultural Familiarity, freeing their characters of skill penalties for not knowing how things work.

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### Wainscot Worlds

A different sort of exotic world can hide behind the commonplace surface of a modern society. Literary critics call such stories *wainscot fantasy,* from one of their classic forms: stories about animal societies hidden behind the paneling in human houses. But the label fits any parallel society, whether made up of angels, wizards, or cats – and any hiding place, from department stores to parallel dimensions. Even cyberspace might count as a wainscot realm! Wainscot realms are also worlds to be explored, but their proximity to the mundane world lets explorers go back and forth repeatedly. See the rules for parallel social traits (*The Reference Society,* p. 11) for more.

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The GM may want to vary the mechanics to represent unfamiliar customs. For example, courtship (pp. 40-41) in a society ruled by women might have a young woman actively pursuing a man, or sending a go-between to his mother to arrange a marriage; in a polygamous society, adding a new spouse could require a Good reaction from the previous spouses. In some worlds, *Exotic Social Traits* (pp. 43-44) will be useful.

# THE REFERENCE SOCIETY

*GURPS* assumes that an adventurer's traits are *stable*. A trait may be added, modified, or lost by a character's effort (for example, training) or by the impact of outside forces (for example, crippling injuries) – but it doesn't vary from moment to moment, or location to location. This is convenient for running games; character sheets don't have to be rewritten with every new encounter, scene, or setting.

But some traits reflect, not a person's inherent qualities, but how he stands in a society. Mark Twain's Connecticut Yankee had High TL 2 when he was at Camelot; if he had woken up in 2010 instead, he might have had Low TL 3! High TL and Low TL both define how an adventurer's access to skills and equipment compares to what's normal in the setting of his adventures. The same is true for various other traits.

So what happens when a time traveler visits the past or the future, or an explorer visits the tribes of a remote jungle or the civilization of an alien planet? The local inhabitants may view him as technologically advanced or retarded, or perhaps a barbaric outlander or a horrifying monster. To avoid having to create a new character sheet – and compute a new point total! – *GURPS* defines his traits in relation to one specific society, the *reference society* of the campaign.

A campaign should have only one reference society for all the PCs. That way, the same entries mean the same thing on all the character sheets. It would be awkward if a Maori warrior had Low TL 5 (relative to the English colonists) while his friend the Scots explorer had High TL 5 (relative to the local Maori village)!

If a campaign takes place entirely in one society, that's its reference society; visitors from other societies – an Iroquois in monarchic France, or a spaceman on a primitive planet – have traits that reflect their unusual backgrounds. If the outsiders are a large community, or in contact with their home society, or expect to go back there, their native society may be the reference society. If adventurers travel between two realms, the reference society is the realm where the main dramatic conflicts are resolved. For explorers who visit many societies – such as Infinity agents in a *GURPS Infinite Worlds* game – the reference society will be their home society, and they'll visit worlds where *everyone* has distinctive social traits. The only visible form of the reference society may be the explorers themselves.

If another society interacts regularly with the reference society, each society's social roles will usually be accepted in the other, even if the societies are hostile. An English and a German colonel in World War II might be fanatical enemies – but if one offers a ceasefire, the other will take it seriously, which he wouldn't do if it came from a corporal. Both are "gentlemen" and they recognize each other as equal in rank.

When societies interact less closely, or don't interact, it's simplest to treat social traits defined in the nonreference society as 0-point features. Or, to incorporate more detail and complexity, such traits can be treated as *parallel social traits*.

These are traits defined in relation to a society that is not the reference society. In the reference society, few people recognize them. But they come into effect in the other society, or among other people from it. Such traits may be acquired at one-fifth cost, analogous to alternative attacks (p. B61) or abilities (*GURPS Powers*). See *Groups Affected and Other Social Traits* (p. 16) for another option.

> ### Great and Little Societies
>
> In most *GURPS* campaigns, a "society" falls into a certain size range: a large independent city, a kingdom or small nation, or a large nation or empire. But every campaign includes smaller groups, such as a household, neighborhood, village, or town; in a tribal setting, one of these *mini-societies* may be the reference society. And a science-fiction setting may have *macrosocieties*, from a planetary federation to a galactic empire; either the macrosociety *or* a smaller society may be its reference society.

## CHANGING THE REFERENCE SOCIETY

It's not usually a good idea to change the reference society of a campaign; the GM should decide where the main action will be at the outset, and the PCs should be built accordingly. But a prolonged campaign may swerve unexpectedly, making it necessary to choose a new reference society and revise all the character sheets. This affects social traits in two different ways.

New arrivals in a society may take on roles there, and acquire traits that they didn't previously have. Such traits cost points; their acquisition takes effort. These traits should be paid for.

On the other hand, traits they already had may be redefined and given new point costs. A TL5 European might be carried away by Martians and gain Low TL 4 [-20] – while still being TL5! He might also gain Social Stigma (Minority Group) [-10], a new trait that he didn't choose. A positive change does not cost the character any points, and a negative change does not reimburse him any – the GM simply alters the character and adjusts his point value accordingly.

A good way to handle this is to have a *liminal period* in the campaign. At the start, the characters enter the new setting and are invited to acquire parallel social traits. After a number of sessions, the new society becomes the reference society, the secondary traits become primary, and the former primary traits become secondary traits or 0-point features. If the points don't exactly balance, the GM need not worry about it.

# Chapter Two
# A Place to Stand

*Great King, as your emissary in Babylon, I attended the descent of Nabu from heaven to the city. By their mighty tower he descended, the tower of fired brick that reaches to the sky. As your emissary I approached the mighty god, and asked the boon of waiting upon him in his house, the house of the god, and it was not denied me. And so upon the day Nabu claims, on the fourteenth day of his presence on Earth, I went to his house, with my servants bearing your gifts, and was admitted.*

*I presented your greetings to Nabu, the greetings of Elam, and he did our city honor by sending back greetings in return. I spoke with him for an hour, and we drank date wine together, the wine you had sent to him.*

*As I spoke with him, Great King, the wine that I drank made my heart bold within me, and I asked him of what I wondered at. "Mighty Nabu," I said to him, "I am a man of years as we reckon them on Earth, and I have seen many things. And when I was a young man, I saw your descent to my city, to Elam. But in that descent, my lord, your form was not the same, nor the sound of your voice. And so I wonder for what cause you wear these different forms."*

*He pulled at his beard, with the fingers of his right hand. "Bashi-ili," he said to me, "you are the ambassador of your city, and you speak with the voice of its king. And even so, I am an emissary of the star Nabu, and I speak with the voice of its king, whose name is also Nabu. We who serve Nabu travel to your cities, in the name of Nabu, while we gain wisdom and rank, until we grow great enough to be sent to the lesser stars of heaven, or to the seven great stars that travel across the heavens. And Nabu travels with us and in us. Here among you I stand above your kings, and they do me honor, but in the heavens I am a servant of one greater."*

*Great King, this may already be known to you, but your former emissaries, those who taught me to serve you, did not tell me of it. And as with all knowledge, there may be profit in it to our city, and to the King I serve, so I would have the knowledge preserved, and so I write of it.*

Social interactions are interactions between *people*. Different people have different kinds of relationships. So the starting point for describing a person's encounter with another individual, an organization, or a crowd is describing that person.

*GURPS* can portray a person in varying levels of detail, depending on how important a role he's going to play. But whether someone is represented with a full character sheet or just a few hastily scribbled notes, he is defined by his traits – including his *social* traits. In a campaign where personal encounters and relationships will play a major role, these social traits may need to be clarified, extended, or modified.

# Social Position

Some traits reflect a person's standing in society. Being an ordained priest, a lieutenant colonel, or an expensive slave is a persistent condition. It enables some actions, and limits others, just like most physical and mental traits. For the society's purposes, this is part of *who he is*. The ability to define social position *unambiguously* is one of the main reasons for having a reference society (p. 11).

## Rank, Status, and Wealth

Social standing is defined primarily by Rank, Status, and Wealth. These are not completely separate; there are complex trade-offs between them. In different societies, they can affect each other in different ways. The differences need to be carefully defined.

*Wealth* (pp. B25-26) is the simplest: It's the extent to which one is trusted by would-be investors, lenders, and borrowers, as well as control of physical resources, money, or the labor of other people (as free employees or as slaves). Wealth ranges from Dead Broke to one or more levels of Multimillionaire. Each Wealth level grants a specific $ value of starting wealth, depending on TL – whether or not the society actually uses currency.

*Rank* (pp. B29-30) is position within an organization that has significant social influence, or access to useful resources. This often means that the group is a branch of government. Rank takes varied forms depending on the agency that grants it; common forms include Administrative Rank (civil servants, diplomats, and judges), Military Rank (military and naval personnel, including those in military intelligence and security services), Police Rank (police, sheriffs, marshals, and also nonmilitary security services), and Religious Rank (clergy of a generally recognized faith). Rank typically ranges from 0 through 8. Normally, individuals gain Rank by being appointed to it by their organizational superiors.

Rank grants access to organizational resources and command of those with lower Rank (see also *The Benefits of Rank,* pp. 51-52).

*Status* (pp. B28-29) is standing in society as a whole, not simply within a single organization. Status typically ranges from -2 to 8. Instead of granting direct command, Status gives more diffuse benefits: prestige, influence, and deferential treatment (*The Benefits of Status*, p. 59). If it includes real power, it is over people who don't necessarily have a duty of obedience. People who have Wealth or Rank are often sufficiently respected to gain *imputed Status* (which doesn't cost character points); see *Wealth and Status* (p. B26) and *Rank* (p. B29) for rules. *Purchased Status* (acquired directly, with character points) can come from a variety of sources, including hereditary titles or family background, education and professional standing, and cultural achievements (from "film star" to "poet laureate"). Status usually has to be *maintained* by paying a suitable cost of living (*Visible Status and Cost of Living,* pp. 18-20).

The usual versions of Rank and Status both cost 5 points/level. This is balanced: Status affects everyone, whereas Rank has its full impact only in one organization – but Rank grants actual control, whereas Status grants influence. There are variations on both, however.

An organization that grants Rank may dominate an entire society, as in theocracies (based on Religious Rank) or military dictatorships (based on Military Rank). In such societies, this one type of Rank *replaces* Status; its cost becomes 10 points/level, it grants both its normal benefits and the benefits of an equivalent level of Status, and Status independent of Rank *does not exist.* The *other* organizations in the setting may grant other forms of Rank, at the usual 5 points/level; this Rank may confer benefits equivalent to imputed Status (determined normally), but Status may not be purchased directly. Wealth in such a society never grants imputed Status.

Rank that doesn't grant actual authority is represented as Courtesy Rank (p. B29). This is commonly held by retired military officers who still use their titles socially and are treated with respect by currently serving military personnel. It costs 1 point/level. Courtesy Rank never provides imputed Status, *except* for the purpose of avoiding or reducing reaction penalties for Status differences. For example, a retiree with Courtesy Rank 5 and Status 1 suffers no penalty when dealing with an angry Status 3 individual.

Status always grants respect, or at least cautious treatment; but some people's Status includes actual, direct, political power – for example, the ruling class in an aristocracy. Such power is treated as Rank in the state itself as an organization. Purchase Feudal Rank equal to Status, at 5 points/level; be sure to take imputed Status from Feudal Rank into account in figuring the total cost of Status. In a democracy, *elected* officials may be defined the same way, with a combination of Political Rank and Status; see the examples below.

When aristocratic titles cease to grant actual power, but are still regulated by strict formal rules, as in a peerage, this can be treated as Courtesy Rank equal to Status.

Either Rank that replaces Status, or Status that's accompanied by Political Rank, can grant the right to control subordinate organizations that have their own forms of Rank (*Converging Rank,* below).

*Example:* Franklin Delano Roosevelt, President of the United States, had Filthy Rich [50], Political Rank 7 [35], and Status 7 [20] (including +3 imputed Status from Wealth and Rank). As president, he was commander in chief of the armed forces and gave orders to generals and admirals with Military Rank 8.

*Example:* Joseph Stalin, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, had Administrative Rank 8 [80] and Multimillionaire 3 [125]. In his Soviet Union, Administrative Rank *replaced* Status, and there was no imputed Status from Wealth. He directly controlled the NKVD (the Soviet Union's internal security force), whose directors had Police Rank 8.

*Example:* Henry VIII, King of England, had Feudal Rank 7 [35], Multimillionaire 1 [75], and Status 7 [15] (including +4 imputed Status from Wealth and Rank). Late in life, he made himself the head of the Church of England, placing him above the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, both Religious Rank 7.

*Example:* Victoria, Queen of England, had Courtesy Rank 8 [8], Multimillionaire 4 [150], and Status 8 [25] (including +3 imputed Status from Wealth). As queen, she reigned but did not rule; her direct control was limited to the palace staff, while the Prime Minister was the true head of government.

# Balancing Status and Rank

In societies where Rank coexists with Status, every third level of Rank confers a free level of Status. This can have peculiar effects! Compare three designs for naval officers:

- Rank 4 [20] and Status 1 [0]: total 20 points
- Rank 5 [25] and Status 2 [0]: total 25 points
- Rank 5 [25] and Status 1 [-5]: total 20 points

The third officer has the same point cost as the first – but one more level of Rank. So why would anyone choose the first option over the third?

As far as character points are concerned, it's an obvious decision, but characterization and storytelling may favor other choices. Typical Rank 5 officers *will* be Status 2; the officer who's only Status 1 will look a little shabby in comparison, which may hinder his getting good assignments. The GM should treat this kind of mismatch as a source of plots – and point out the risk during character creation, so that players can decide whether they want that particular storyline for their characters.

## *Converging Rank*

Some organizations have personnel with different sorts of Rank. For example, in a democracy, military and law enforcement officers often report to civil servants. At a low level, there are separate systems of Rank; at the top, they merge. In this kind of setup, each person can only count one Rank as granting imputed Status (see above).

The situation is different when one person holds Rank in two unrelated organizations. For example, the city manager of an important city (Administrative Rank 5) might also be a lieutenant in the Army Reserve (Military Rank 4); he gains +2 to Status from the first position and +1 from the second.

## Variant Numbers of Ranks

For societies in most historical settings, and for imaginary future societies on the same scale, a single organization that operates everywhere can plausibly have eight ranks. But a smaller or bigger society needs a different number.

For an organization in a minisociety, Rank 4 is a good limit. For example, apprentices in a mages' guild could be Rank 0, journeymen Rank 1, and masters Rank 2-4 (for +1 imputed Status, p. 13); the syndics of a large guild would be Rank 3, and the guildmaster Rank 3 or 4. Don't use this limit with large, powerful city-states, especially if they have their own empires, like Rome or Baghdad; their organizations are big enough to justify Rank 8.

A macrosociety may support much larger organizations, allowing up to Rank 12; if so, Rank 11-12 gives +4 to Status. See *The Arithmetic of Rank* (below) for a more detailed approach.

Another option is finer divisions of Rank. The U.S. military, for example, has nine enlisted levels, five warrant officer levels, and 10 commissioned officer levels – a lot more than nine **GURPS** Ranks! The GM can define Ranks with in-between point costs; a Navy ensign might be Rank 3 for 15 points, a lieutenant junior grade Rank 3.4 for 17 points, and a lieutenant Rank 3.6 for 18 points. A very detailed system might have as many fractional ranks as there are distinct point costs!

## Variant Costs of Rank

As an optional rule, the GM may define less respected forms of Rank with in-between level costs. Add up as many of the following as apply; if the sum is 0 or less, it's too trivial to count as Rank:

*Nominal Hierarchical Position With Title:* 1/level. This amounts to Courtesy Rank. *Every form of Rank must include it.*

*Chain of Command:* 1/level. This means having subordinates who take orders, and/or superiors who give them.

*Large or Small Resources:* 2/level for large resources, 1/level for typical resources (most organizations), 0/level for small resources (volunteer organization with little or no budget). See *The Benefits of Rank* (pp. 51-52).

*Special Assets:* 1/level. The organization can provide information using supernatural talents, obtain magical or high-TL gear, command spirit servitors, or the like.

*Dominance or Uniqueness:* 0/level for having it; -1/level for *not* having it. The organization is the only one of its type in its society or is much larger than its competitors.

*Legitimacy:* 2/level. The organization is regarded as serving society, the state, or the ruler or embodying ethical ideals, granting enhanced respect to those who work for it. Its members may have a Code of Honor, Sense of Duty, or Vow. *Prerequisite:* Dominance or Uniqueness; this prerequisite may be waived at the GM's discretion.

*Total Control:* 4/level. The organization is dominant or unique in all institutional domains – it *is*, or it controls, the government. *Prerequisite:* Dominance or Uniqueness.

Which of these options a form of Rank includes determines its relationship to Status:

● If an organization has total control, the Rank it grants *replaces* Status; each level of Rank has the same effects as a level of Status.

● If an organization lacks total control but has dominance or uniqueness, *or* has legitimacy without dominance or uniqueness, the Rank it grants provides imputed Status (p. 13), based on the point cost of the total Rank: no bonus for 0-9 points, +1 for 10-24 points, +2 for 25-39 points, +3 for 40-54 points, +4 for 55 or more points.

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# The Arithmetic of Rank

A more systematic treatment can be based on *span of control:* a leader or manager can keep track of about four or five subordinates, so each Rank should have that many subordinates at the next lower Rank. The GM can calculate Rank for the head of each unit suited to the number of men each named rank typically commands. For example, the U.S. Army's V Corps, planned to have 24,000 men in 2011, would have a commander of Rank 7, regardless of what the Army called him.

| Rank | Command | Example |
|------|---------|---------|
| 1 | Up to 5 | Fireteam |
| 2 | Up to 20 | Squad or Section |
| 3 | Up to 100 | Platoon or Small Company |
| 4 | Up to 500 | Company or Small Battalion |
| 5 | Up to 2,000 | Battalion |
| 6 | Up to 10,000 | Regiment, Brigade, or Small Division |
| 7 | Up to 50,000 | Division or Corps |
| 8 | Up to 200,000 | Army |
| +3 | ×100 | – |

In this treatment, officers outside the line of command may have fewer subordinates than their nominal rank implies. If so, give them actual Rank based on the size of their command, and additional Courtesy Rank to make them nominally equal to line officers.

In principle, Rank could extend upward without limit; an interstellar empire's trillion-soldier army could have a Rank 18 commanding officer! But if any such society were a military dictatorship, with Military Rank replacing Status, the head of state would be six levels above the normal maximum Status 12 (see *Variant Status Ranges,* pp. 15-16). To avoid such incongruities, Rank should be limited to 12 levels. If the organization is bigger than the 100,000,000 personnel that normally go with Rank 12, there are two different ways to address it:

● Increase the average span of control. Ultra-tech societies may have enhanced management techniques that can support huge organizations. An average span of 10 would let a Rank 12 superior command a trillion Rank 0 subordinates.

● Subdivide rank into narrower gradations, and apply the span of control ratio between each two gradations. If Rank goes from 0 to 12 in steps of 0.2 (a total of 60 steps), a span of 4-5 for each *step* can accommodate 10 duodecillion subordinates at Rank 12 – equivalent to several million densely populated universes.

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# Behind the Curtain: Status as Rank

With the rules for creating modified-cost versions of Rank (*Variant Costs of Rank,* pp. 14-15), it may seem possible to obtain effective Status much too cheaply. Starting at 10/points per level, and removing the usual features of Rank, can substantially lower its cost, while leaving the Status benefits intact.

But there's a limit to how cheap it can be. To take the place of Status, it has to include total control: 4 points/level. This has dominance or uniqueness as a prerequisite: 0 points/level. And *every* form of Rank must include titles: 1 point/level. That adds up to 5 points/level.

(For a formalized peerage, add chain of command: 1 point/level.) Rank that grants the benefits of Status never costs less than Status.

In effect, this minimal-cost version *is* Status. Total control and dominance or uniqueness grant it recognition throughout a society, and in every sphere of activity. Titles and hierarchical positions mean that some people are placed above others, and treated with more deference. The other elements of Rank – chain of command, resources, and legitimacy – make an organization effective and make Rank in it worth more than Status alone.

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● Rank granted by any other organization neither replaces nor contributes to Status. It may still confer Reputation (see *Organizational Reputation,* p. 52).

Standard Rank [5/level] encompasses position and title, chain of command, typical resources, dominance or uniqueness, and legitimacy. Rank that replaces Status [10/level] adds total control and grants large rather than typical resources. See *New Kinds of Rank* for other examples.

## New Kinds of Rank

The GM may define new Rank advantages to fit a campaign setting. Here are some examples.

*Guild Rank:* Position within an organization that holds exclusive license to practice a profession in a city, and to enforce standards for it. This costs 2 points/level (1 for titles, 1 for typical resources, and 0 for dominance) and, as noted above, is typically limited to four levels. A nationwide guild can have a full eight levels.

*Magical Rank:* Position within a hierarchical professional association of mages. Similar to Guild Rank but also grants special resources, raising the cost to 3/level. The GM may choose to limit access to some magical abilities based on Magical Rank:

● An apprentice mage (Rank 0) can only learn spells without other spells as prerequisites; each rank is allowed to learn spells with two more prerequisites, until Rank 8 gives unlimited access. *Advantage prerequisites don't count;* an apprentice with Magery 1 or Empathy will almost always be taught Lend Energy.

● Mages all start out with Magery 0; promotion includes special rituals that grant one level of Magery per Rank. Mages must pay both the point cost of Rank and the point cost of leveled Magery. For nationwide guilds, the GM needs to be willing to cope with Magery 8; alternatively, local mages' guilds may only go up to Rank 3 and Magery 3.

*Organized Crime Rank:* Position within the mafia, yakuza, or a similar criminal syndicate with an official command hierarchy. Costs 2 points/level if the group is one of several competing organizations (1 for titles, 1 for chain of command, 1 for typical resources, and -1 for lacking dominance) or 3 points/level for a unified organization (as above, but 0 for dominance). The range of levels varies greatly, but should be consistent with the scale of operations.

*Servant Rank:* Position within the staff of a large household with many servants. Typically, 1 point/level (1 for titles, 1 for chain of command, and -1 for lacking dominance) up to no more than four levels. For the household of an emperor or powerful king, 2 points/level (1 for titles, 1 for chain of command, 0 for dominance) and up to eight levels.

## How Status Is Gained

Societies define Status in two basic ways: ascription and achievement. *Ascription* is typical of class societies, such as feudal societies and aristocracies. In ascription, people take Status at a level that reflects family standing, caste, or the like. Those who have Wealth or Rank can use imputed Status (p. 13) to lower the cost of their overall standing, but not to change it.

*Example:* The Duke of Northmarch has Status 6, one less than the king, and Political Rank 6 with it. In addition, he has vast estates that make him a Multimillionaire 1. He gets +2 Status from Wealth and another +2 from Feudal Rank. This imputed Status doesn't raise him to Status 10; it lowers the total cost of Status 6 from 30 points to 10 points.

*Achievement* is most important in classless meritocracies (p. B28). Status in such societies comes primarily from Wealth and Rank. Purchased Status (p. 13) can shift total Status up or down to a limited extent, normally plus or minus two levels, reflecting intangibles such as family background, education, lifestyle, and personal achievements or failures. An egalitarian society may limit purchased Status to plus or minus one level or not have it at all; see *Status, Rank, and Society/Government Type* (p. 17) for details.

Most societies mix the two approaches. Even classless meritocracies normally ascribe high Status at least to the head of state.

## Variant Status Ranges

The normal range of Status is from -2 to 8. In modern and most future societies, the commonest Status is 0, as in many tribal societies. But in ancient, medieval, and some later societies, the typical person is Status -1: a peasant, bound to the land, and slightly looked down on by his "betters." City folk average Status 0, but at TL1-4 they're a minority, with a higher cost of living (*Visible Status and Cost of Living,* pp. 18-20) and a wider range of opportunities. As these qualities also describe the typical adventurer, PCs start out at Status 0.

At the top of the ladder, Status 8 represents a god-king, a powerful emperor, or a totalitarian ruler. Less grandiose monarchs and strong elected heads of state such as consuls of the Roman Republic can be treated as Status 7. Heads of state or government who are more answerable to elected bodies, such as many prime ministers or early Icelandic lawspeakers, are Status 6. Societies with higher CRs tend to have higher Status ladders, but there are exceptions; the President of the United States, which has CR 2-3, is Status 7.

Within a minisociety, Status has an upper limit no higher than 4. Conversely, a macrosociety might have Status extending as high as 12; e.g., a Galactic Emperor of Status 12, with the lowest great noble of Status 8 or 9 ruling a single planet. The same approach might work for a polytheistic pantheon, with the king of the gods being Status 12, and very minor gods Status 9. See *Great and Little Societies* (p. 11) for more.

# REPUTATION

Reputation (pp. B26-28) is the most individualized sort of social position, and the most easily changed. A Reputation that affects everyone in a game world, attached to a person who's always recognized, on sight or by name, costs 5 points/level, just like Status; if only some people care about the Reputation, or if the person isn't always recognized on sight, the cost is lower. What the Reputation is *for* is up to the player; it can be anything that makes a good story and fits the setting.

The effect of Reputation is to modify reaction rolls, for better or for worse. This comes from knowledge of who the person is, not the impression he makes. One person can have several Reputations, but the total reaction modifier in any situation can't be better than +4 or worse than -4.

Reputation can change in the course of play. Most such changes are temporary and don't affect a character's point value; but after several similar events, or an event of great import, the GM may add a permanent Reputation to a character sheet, or modify an existing one. It's also possible to lose a Reputation by traveling somewhere new; the GM can let a player buy off a bad Reputation in such cases.

Reputation normally attaches to an individual, but it doesn't have to. An organization can affect the Reputation of people who belong to it (*Organizational Reputation*, p. 52), or a Reputation (p. 16) can be included as part of a racial template. The reason for defining either as a Reputation – not as Social Regard, Social Stigma, or Status – is that it affects the reactions of specific groups, not of an entire society.

## Groups Affected and Other Social Traits

In some campaigns, the GM may want to be more specific about which groups reaction modifiers affect, rather than assuming that social traits affect everybody. As an optional rule, *People Affected* (p. B27) can be extended from Reputation to *other* social position traits – or even "official" traits such as Clerical Investment or Legal Enforcement Powers. This can be used to model the way a non-reference society treats the character; parallel social traits (*The Reference Society*, p. 11) are another possible approach.

For example, in a religiously divided society, a given faith's Religious Rank might be respected by groups of different sizes:

● A nearly universally respected faith (Roman Catholicism in medieval Western Europe): *×1*.

● A faith rejected by one large group (worship of the Roman gods when Christianity was becoming widespread): *×2/3*.

● A faith with a substantial number of adherents (Sikhism in present-day India): *×1/2*.

● A little-known faith (Neo-Druidism in present-day California): *×1/3*.

As with Reputation, drop all fractions after multiplying. Don't apply *Frequency of Recognition* (p. B27) to other social position traits; if a trait isn't obvious to everyone in the affected population, treat it as a Reputation.

If some restriction on people affected is part of the definition of an existing trait, don't modify its cost in this way. For example, Social Stigma (Minority Group) (p. B155) is already defined as giving -2 on reaction rolls by "anyone except your own kind." Its value is the full -10 points; don't apply the ×2/3!

# SOCIAL REGARD AND SOCIAL STIGMA

Social Regard (p. 77 and pp. B86-87) isn't the same as Status. People with Status are treated with respect because they have wealth, prestige, and/or power – or their families do. They can demand such treatment, and the customs and institutions of their societies will support the demand. Social Regard is independent of a person's wealth or political power. A Feared person is *personally* dangerous, independent of armies, police, security guards, or gangs. A Venerated person is esteemed for some *inherent* trait, such as age or personal holiness, and not for social position; it's possible for an elderly laborer to have Status -1 *and* Social Regard 1 (Venerated). Reaction modifiers often don't apply to other members of the same group; e.g., a Venerated elder may not defer to other elders (or be expected to!).

Social Stigma (pp. B155-156), similarly, isn't the same as negative Status. There are three categories of Social Stigma:

● You as an individual have been set apart from your family or social position: Criminal Record, Disowned, Excommunicated, Minor, Second-Class Citizen (if based on sex), and certain instances of Ignorant and Valuable Property.

● Your family or community is not fully part of your society and cannot fully benefit from its wealth or position, because of who or what they are: Minority Group, Second-Class Citizen, Subjugated, Uneducated, and certain instances of Ignorant.

● You aren't seen as part of society at all, but as a creature or an object: Dead (see *GURPS Fantasy*), Monster, Vermin (see *GURPS Fantasy*), and certain instances of Valuable Property.

It's possible to have both Social Regard and Social Stigma, if they derive from different sources. For example, old women in the Chinese Empire were Valuable Property for their sex, yet also Venerated for their age.

# OTHER SOCIAL POSITION ADVANTAGES AND PERKS

A number of other advantages define social position in more specific ways. Many are granted by specific organizations, often as prerequisites of Rank or as side effects of having it. These include Claim to Hospitality (pp. B41-42), Clerical Investment (p. B43), Legal Enforcement Powers (p. B65), Legal Immunity (p. B65), Security Clearance (pp. B82-83), and Tenure (p. B93).

Social relationships with specific individuals or organizations confer some of the same benefits as Rank (see *Relationship Advantages*, pp. 41-43). Such relationships can be defined as Patrons (pp. B72-74), Allies (pp. B36-38), or Contacts (pp. B44-45). It's also possible to treat Rank or Status as providing benefits comparable to those of a Patron, Allies, or Contacts; see *The Benefits of Rank* (pp. 51-52) and *The Benefits of Status* (p. 59).

Some perks grant social position on a small scale; see p. 77-79 for new ones.

## STATUS, RANK, AND SOCIETY/GOVERNMENT TYPE

The various society and government types (pp. B509-510) have distinctive patterns of Rank and Status. As a rule, societies with higher CR tend to rely more on formal organization and Rank. Heads of state have either Status plus Political Rank, or some form of Rank that replaces Status (see *Rank, Status, and Wealth*, pp. 12-16).

*Anarchy:* There is no head of state – by definition! Most anarchies are classless meritocracies (p. B28); some have no private property and no Wealth or Wealth-based Status, or are strongly egalitarian, without purchased Status. No organization is unique or dominant (*Variant Costs of Rank*, pp. 14-15); Rank may be nonexistent or limited to Courtesy Rank or specially defined forms.

*Athenian Democracy:* Low-tech Athenian democracies are often minisocieties (*Great and Little Societies*, p. 11), with the head of state at Status 3; otherwise Status 6 is typical. Rank is usually temporary and does not grant imputed Status (p. 13), but successful service may grant permanent Courtesy Rank.

*Caste:* The head of state is Status 7 or 8. Rank grants imputed Status, but Status is mainly hereditary, and each caste has a maximum allowed Status. Caste societies *cannot* be classless meritocracies.

*Clan/Tribal:* Normally a minisociety. Sometimes socially "flat" (no Status!), but leaders of sophisticated chiefdoms may be as high as Status 2-4, or elders and minor chiefs may rise to only Status 1 or 2. Rank usually does not exist. Wealth rarely exceeds Filthy Rich, and custom often requires sharing it or giving it away. Status is often hereditary, but within a narrow range, comparable to a classless meritocracy. See **GURPS Low-Tech Companion 1** for more information on such societies. More complex tribal systems can be modeled as caste, feudal, or dictatorship societies.

*Colony:* Often a minisociety.

*Corporate State, Military Government, Technocracy, or Theocracy:* Rank replaces Status; the head of state has Corporate, Military, Administrative, or Religious Rank 7 or 8.

*Dictatorship:* Several different forms exist! In many dictatorships, Status is nonexistent and the head of state is Military or Police Rank 8. In others, the head of state is Status 7 or 8. In hereditary dictatorships (monarchies) Status is mainly inherited.

*Feudal:* Similar to a monarchy (see *Dictatorship*, above), but with an additional class of subsidiary local rulers with Status 3-6. The smaller local domains may be comparable to minisocieties.

*Representative Democracy:* The head of state is Status 6 or 7; representatives also have higher-than-usual Status. Apart from elected officials, however, these societies are usually classless meritocracies.

*Socialist:* Socialism endeavors to limit variation in Wealth; imputed Status from Wealth may be either nonexistent or limited to +1. On the other hand, people with high Status or Rank sometimes enjoy a very high standard of living at the state's expense. Socialist societies tend to either replace Status with Rank *or* be classless meritocracies.

> ## Social Traits as Rewards
>
> The GM has the option of rewarding adventurers directly with new advantages or perks, rather than (or in addition to) character points that can be spent on advantages of the players' choice. Minor social traits are particularly suited to this, because it's easy to come up with a story that includes them; e.g., a detective who rescues a wealthy man's kidnapped child could earn Reputation +1 with potential clients and a Favor (p. B55). Favor makes a particularly good choice for a GM-granted benefit, because some players may be reluctant to spend earned points on this one-shot advantage.
>
> At the GM's option, advantages other than Allies, Contact Group, Contacts, or Patrons may be turned into Favors. Don't do this for Wealth, though – use *Trading Points for Money* (p. B26).
>
> *Example:* Fredric Lambert salvages a venture that was on the brink of costly failure. His employers send him on an all-expenses-paid vacation. He is normally Status 2, but the resort treats him like Status 4: putting him in a small mansion with servants, loaning him a yacht and wardrobe of designer clothing, and so on (see p. B266 for more). The Status bump is a 10-point advantage, which makes this a 2-point Favor. (The extra cost of living is covered as part of the Favor.) For the duration of his time off, Fredric eats meals that cost 20× what he could normally afford, hobnobs with senators and VIPs, and receives an extra +2 to reactions from "the common folk." If he wants to buy anything to take home with him, however, he'll have to use his own funds to do so.

# MAKING AN IMPRESSION

Another set of social traits define how a person *comes across* to other people. This is especially important for first encounters, when people react to what they see and hear. Such encounters can leave a lingering impression, even after a person's real social position, character, and abilities are known.

These traits also play a big part in how a newly introduced character is described, and in how he is roleplayed in all his appearances. They're the GM's first tool for bringing a setting's inhabitants to life.

# CHARISMA

Charisma (p. B41) is the most nearly universal impression modifier: Each level gives +1 to several types of social interaction. It costs the same as a Reputation that is recognized *all the time* by *everyone in the game world* – and is roughly as helpful, though not in quite the same ways. Its scope (and cost) can be reduced via Aspected (p. 77).

Charisma adds to all reaction rolls made by sapient NPCs, and all Influence rolls used on them. Its use is not limited to a single game world; it works on intelligent beings from *any* world. An obvious monster with high enough Charisma might be liked and trusted by its normal human neighbors.

The bonus to reaction and Influence rolls only applies to those who can both *see* and *hear* you, and only if you can see and hear them also; if not, see *Indirect Interaction* (pp. 32-33). It doesn't represent having a beautiful face or voice, but adjusting your personal presence to get the best reactions; you need to know how the audience is responding, moment to moment.

The GM should interpret "two-way interaction" with some flexibility (see *Exotic Social Traits*, pp. 43-44). "See" doesn't have to mean normal vision; it could be any sense that includes details of form and movement, such as vision in other frequency ranges, most kinds of Scanning Sense, or possibly a suitable Detect with Analyzing (see **GURPS Powers**). It could even work by touch for a totally blind character. "Hear" can be any form of communication comparable to spoken language; e.g., sign languages. However, both the charismatic person and the audience have to be using *the same* senses. Using unusual sensory modes is a 0-point feature.

In addition to the benefits above, Charisma adds directly to Fortune-Telling, Leadership, Panhandling, and Public Speaking skills, in a manner similar to a Talent. These skills don't require two-way interaction to get this bonus; a charismatic orator can be just as compelling in a television broadcast.

In settings with powers (see **GURPS Powers**), Charisma can make an appropriate power Talent. The *Influence power* that uses it might comprise advantages like Allies (recruited passersby), with Environmental, Minion, and Summonable; Cultural Adaptability; Elastic Skin with Glamour; Empathy; Fashion Sense; Gizmos (borrowed from passersby), with Environmental; Illusion, with Mental; Indomitable; Legal Immunity; Mind Control, with Conditioning Only and Sense-Based; Mind Probe, with Sense-Based; Mind Reading, with Sense-Based; Modular Abilities, with Social Only; Rapier Wit; Security Clearance; Social Chameleon; and Terror. Physical attacks are inappropriate, but Afflictions (with Based on Will and either Malediction or Sense-Based) can cause incapacitation, irritation, mental disadvantages, or DX, IQ, Per, or Will penalties.

# APPEARANCE

Appearance (p. B21) affects reaction rolls much like Charisma, but is visual rather than behavioral. As a result, it doesn't require two-way interaction. It can take effect through one-way live video, recorded video or film, or still photography. It can even apply through representational art, like sketches or paintings – however, the artist may choose to portray the model as more or less attractive than he actually is. If the artwork is *more* attractive, people meeting the model may react badly in disappointment; take the difference in reaction roll bonuses as a *penalty* to the reaction to the living person.

Because it's essentially passive, Appearance doesn't affect most Influence skills. Sex Appeal is an exception; favorable Appearance gives bonuses, and unfavorable Appearance gives *doubled* penalties. Handsome/Beautiful or better Appearance normally gives higher bonuses with people attracted to your sex. The Androgynous option gives equal bonuses with both sexes. The Impressive option gives bonuses to Intimidation *instead of* Sex Appeal.

An extraordinarily unattractive person may gain bonuses to Intimidation: +2 for Hideous, +3 for Monstrous, or +4 for Horrific.

See *Racial Appearance* (p. 43) for rules for nonhumans.

# VOCAL QUALITY

Voice gives +2 to reaction rolls; Disturbing Voice or Stuttering gives -2. Like modifiers for Appearance, these don't require two-way communication or behavioral feedback; they affect anyone who can hear the person speak or sing. Analogs may exist for nonhuman races (*Perception and Communication,* p. 44).

Vocal quality modifies a number of skills that involve those actions: Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, Mimicry, Performance, Politics, Public Speaking, Sex Appeal, and Singing. (Mimicry and Politics should be added to the list for Stuttering, p. B157.) This affects Influence rolls based on these skills.

Vocal quality doesn't affect Savoir-Faire or Streetwise, or any *nonverbal* Influence roll; see *Influence Shticks* (p. 78) for examples of the latter. Voice doesn't give bonuses to Intimidation, but Stuttering gives -2, and some forms of Disturbing Voice may do the same (such as a squeaky "cartoon character" voice). Penetrating Voice (p. B101) can give +1 to Intimidation.

*All you need are looks and a whole lot of money.*

*– Billy Joel,*
*"Still Rock and Roll to Me"*

# VISIBLE STATUS AND COST OF LIVING

Reaction modifiers from Status come from knowledge of a person's social standing. It's often possible to recognize high or low Status on sight. How someone dresses gives obvious signals; others come from jewelry and accessories, grooming, possessions such as vehicles and luggage, and in some cases, from his being accompanied by servants or bodyguards. All these things cost money (*Cost of Living,* pp. B265-266).

The required expenditure is normally based on purchased Status plus any imputed Status (p. 13) from Wealth; to make an impression by being rich, you have to be *visibly* rich. Imputed Status from Rank doesn't normally require spending more. Some organizations help pay for their representatives to make a good impression; in other cases, an identifiable representative of the organization – a naval officer in uniform, or a priest in vestments – gets credit for higher Status *without* conspicuous consumption.

A minimal level of Status may be a *prerequisite* for certain Ranks; e.g., a naval ensign is supposed to keep up appearances as "an officer and a gentleman" (prerequisite Status 1).

What if you don't pay the cost of living for your Status? In many worlds, your Status falls to match what you actually spend. But in more traditional societies, you're born to high or low Status and can't do much to change it. Instead, you get a bad Reputation, such as "Poor relation" or "Distressed gentlewoman," with a reaction penalty equal to the difference between the Status you were born to and that you can afford. Or you have a Secret, which you have to protect by pretending to wealth you don't have. In many aristocratic societies, most nobles live beyond their means; their Code of Honor may even *require* this.

It's possible to try to pass for lower Status, or even for negative Status. This is a form of social pretension, discussed under *False Identities* (pp. 37-39). The same applies to passing for higher Status, but you *must* be able to afford a suitable standard of living. If you maintain a higher standard of living than your Status requires, but don't have the skill to sustain your pretensions consistently, you will gain a bad Reputation. If you don't try, but just spend your money freely, you have an Odious Personal Habit (p. 80). In either case, people who are on to you will base their reactions to you on your *true* Status, with added penalties for your pretensions.

*Example:* Jean Richard, a *bourgeois* under Louis XIV, spends a substantial part of his wealth to buy a seat on the Privy Council, a fairly large body with few actual duties, after which he is treated as a minor noble: He has Courtesy Administrative Rank 6 [6], Filthy Rich [50], and Status 4 [15], which includes +1 imputed Status from Wealth. Wanting to make an impression, he buys a substantial house in Paris and incurs $60,000 a month of living expenses. This is Odious Personal Habit (Social Climber) [-5], which undermines the reaction bonus his Status would normally grant him, reducing his net bonus from +4 to +3.

Some societies follow a different rule: People with imputed Status from Wealth are *not* expected to spend more. The normal standard of living is based purely on *purchased* Status (p. 13); anything more can earn a bad Reputation or count as a Odious Personal Habit. This attitude is most common where people with ascribed and achieved Status (see *How Status Is Gained*, p. 15) are in competition; e.g., the late Roman Republic or Victorian England. Whether it applies in a specific setting is the GM's decision. For added complexity, a society may follow this rule *most of the time*, but demand much higher expenditures on certain special occasions – presentation at court, or attendance at the Academy Awards, for example. Knowing which rule applies requires a roll vs. Savoir-Faire (High Society).

# Styling

One way to signal Status visibly is to wear clothes and carry equipment with fine materials or sophisticated design, such as presentation weapons. Such *styling* is represented as an overall *cost factor* (CF) that is applied to the base price of the garment or possession; see the table below. To find actual cost, multiply the list cost for an item by (1 + CF). If CF is below -0.8, treat it as -0.8; final cost will never be below 20% of list cost. The GM may define specific CFs for design elements such as inlaid jewels, hand-tooled leather, embroidery, brocade work, silver or gold plate, or precision engineering; the sum of all these CFs is the overall CF for the item.

The Status effects of clothing and accoutrements depend on the *entire outfit's* price. The table below includes prices for formal wear ("best clothes") for various Status levels. ("M" is shorthand for "million.")

| Status | CF | Price of Formal Wear | Status | CF | Price of Formal Wear |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| -2 | -0.8 | $48 | 4 | +99 | $24,000 |
| -1 | -0.5 | $120 | 5 | +999 | $240,000 |
| 0 | 0 | $240 | 6 | +9,999 | $2.4M |
| 1 | +1 | $480 | 7 | +99,999 | $24M |
| 2 | +4 | $1,200 | 8 | +999,999 | $240M |
| 3 | +19 | $4,800 | | | |

The price of a single formal outfit *can* run to millions for Status 6-8 regalia (crown jewels, ermine robes, imperial purple, etc.). However, most of the outfits worn by people of Status 4+ are not this expensive! For everyday wear, treat Status greater than 3 as Status 3 (as discussed on p. B266). People with very high Status have many sets of clothes, and may wear an entirely new formal outfit for each special occasion.

Men's clothing on Earth became more conservative at TL5; most men can treat Status greater than 2 as Status 2 in buying clothing (p. B266).

A single expensively styled item (as opposed to an entire outfit) doesn't raise visible Status; the visible expense calls attention to the owner's comparatively low Status. The GM may apply an extra -1 reaction from people who would notice the contrast.

Fashion Sense (p. B21) has two different effects on this process:

● It grants immunity to reaction penalties based on Status differences (similarly to Social Chameleon, p. B86, but only for penalties based on *visible Status*). This includes the penalty for wearing one expensive accoutrement with a low-cost outfit.

● In situations where there would be no such penalty, it grants +1 to reaction rolls, comparable to a styling bonus, but at no added cost. In societies where Status 3+ men can get away with Status 2 clothing, such men must pay the full Status 3 cost for their outfits (p. B266) before they can benefit from Fashion Sense.

Fashion Sense can grant the latter benefit for another person, but the consultant may charge for the service! Spending money for a consultant *does* count toward visible Status. For an individual item, it can be one source of the added cost of styling.

Styling also grants a bonus to reaction rolls from collectors and potential buyers, and to Merchant-based Influence rolls made on such people. Getting +1 requires CF +1, +2 requires CF +4, and +3 requires CF +9. More expensive items don't grant higher bonuses.

## Family and Cost of Living

In many historical societies, it was assumed that men worked full time as small self-sufficient farmers, business owners, or employees, while women did full-time housework. An unmarried man supported one person, himself, at the full cost of living. If he married, his wife's domestic work in effect paid her cost of living in kind, but earned no surplus. Excess income after cost of living was the same either way. A married man who could support a wife who *didn't* spend all day on menial tasks had an income good enough to pay the cost of living for them both, in effect paying for servants to do a wife's work – a visible sign of higher Status.

In many contemporary societies, technology supports another approach. Electrical appliances, frozen and other packaged foods, wrinkle-free fabric, easily cleaned surfaces, and other technologies substitute for domestic labor, freeing both halves of a couple to hold down jobs. In that case, two full-time jobs pay two instances of cost of living, and may well generate a large surplus. In effect, a collection of domestic conveniences replaces the need for a full-time housewife or servants, but two people have to find and keep jobs to pay for it all.

## GIVING OFFENSE

Many forms of behavior can provoke bad reactions, either in general (Bully, Delusions, Killjoy, No Sense of Humor, Stubbornness) or from specific classes of people (for example, Intolerance provokes negative reactions from those it's directed at). Normally, such reactions develop over time, as people become aware of the behavior. Behavior that provokes *immediate* bad reactions is defined with Odious Personal Habits (p. B22). This includes both voluntary and involuntary behavior; some Neurological Disorders (p. B144) have Odious Personal Habits as a side effect (compulsive use of unacceptable language, for example).

Bad Smell (p. B124) can give offense for purely physical reasons: -2 to reaction rolls. Like unattractive Appearance (p. 18), it's effectively passive and shouldn't affect skill rolls. Sex Appeal is an exception; any such roll made close up takes -2 to skill.

## IMPRESSION PERKS

Honest Face and Penetrating Voice (p. B101) both add to certain kinds of impressions. For additional perks that help make an impression, see pp. 77-79.

## FEATURES

Some traits have no point cost, but still affect a person's social presence and other people's reactions to it. The GM may ask players to define them at character creation, or players may choose to do so at the start or during play.

### Height and Weight

*GURPS* recommends a height range for each ST, and a weight range for each ST and build; see *Build* (pp. B18-19). These guidelines are not mandatory; characters may be any height and weight that's plausible for their race. There's no point cost for height or weight – though extreme weight-to-height ratios can justify any of Skinny, Overweight, Fat, or Very Fat. Differences in height can influence the success of Intimidation (p. 69).

### Coloration

Skin, hair, and eye color are free choices, subject to what makes sense for the setting, and have no point cost (but see *Classic Features,* p. 78). However, some people like or dislike specific features as quirks. A nearly universal bad reaction to a certain appearance may amount to a Social Stigma for those who have it.

### Speaking Voice

Having a high- or low-pitched voice, or a loud or soft one (short of Penetrating Voice, p. B101), is a free choice. Voice also sometimes affects Intimidation; see *Voice to Voice* (p. 33) and *Soft-Spoken* (p. 79). These qualities don't have the aesthetic or social effects discussed under *Vocal Quality* (p. 18).

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# Choosing Faces

The remaining chapters of this supplement are all about role-playing social encounters. Adventurers with different social positions will have different kinds of encounters, and will get through them in different ways.

*Status -2 or -1: Have-Nots.* Street criminals, lackeys, runaway slaves or serfs, and just desperately poor people. They may have a Social Stigma as well as low Status. Adventurers almost always have Streetwise, and Fast-Talk, Intimidation, and Sex Appeal are common. Savoir-Faire of any kind is unusual. These are the people who carry out realistically portrayed capers, or get hired for rough, high-risk jobs.

*Status -1 to 1: Common People.* People with steady jobs or small businesses. They're generally least likely to have adventures – they have bills to pay and work to do. But they're the classic heroes of horror and apocalyptic fiction. Some subgroups have more exciting duties: enlisted men, police, criminals with organized crime ties, servants of wealthy households, etc. Such groups have their own forms of Savoir-Faire. Ordinary citizens use neither Savoir-Faire nor Streetwise among themselves, but may have Administration to deal with governmental and corporate bureaucracies, Merchant for sales jobs, or Savoir-Faire (Servant) if they work for the upper classes.

*Status 1 to 3: The Well-to-Do.* Professionals, business owners, minor officials, people of means, and staff and retainers of the powerful. Common skills include Administration, Diplomacy, Merchant, Politics, Public Speaking, and Savoir-Faire (High Society or Military). They may encounter adventure at work or as tourists or dilettantes, or be sent into it as troubleshooters. Military command and official espionage suit people at this level; cinematic capers often feature people who can imitate such things convincingly.

*Status 3 to 8: The Upper Crust.* Wealthy and powerful people. Savoir-Faire (most often High Society) is obligatory. Skill in controlling large organizations is highly advantageous; e.g., Administration, Finance, or Politics. Cinematic or romantic treatments may send them on quests. A realistic take may range from comedy of manners through soap opera to political drama – the social environment itself is the main source of opportunities and threats!

# FACE TO FACE

*In the outer room, there was the sound of voices – a man's and a woman's. The gentleman with hawthorn blossoms pinned to his lapel paused in pouring wine for his three guests, turning his head toward the door of the inner room.*

*The young lady who came in, followed by the remonstrating valet, was worthy of any man's closer regard. Her dress, though not new, had clearly been made in France, and showed off her youthful figure to admiration. As she curtseyed, her fine eyes swept over the four men, seeming to make each of them for an instant the sun around which the cosmos revolved.*

*"Monsieur," she said, "pray forgive me; I see I have intruded."*

*The host bowed, in a manner of deep respect. "Mademoiselle, I am sure my companions will not begrudge a moment of our time. How may I serve you?"*

*"It is only – I was wondering, have you made any advance toward my brother's rescue?"*

*"I say, sir, is this young lady connected with the gentleman you are engaged to rescue?" It was the youngest of the three guests who asked, blushing as the visitor's eyes fixed on him once more.*

*"She is, milord." He turned to the young lady. "May I present – I make bold to say, my friend – Rupert, Lord Greystoke, and his friends Mr. Dalrymple and Dr. Steele? Gentlemen, Monsieur de Quatremere is indeed Mademoiselle's beloved elder brother. You must forgive me, Mademoiselle, but it is better that you not learn the details of our transactions."*

*"I comprehend," she said, casting down her eyes. "But surely it will do no harm if I remember the gentlemen in my prayers." She held out her hand for them to kiss.*

*"I trust my work gave satisfaction?"*

*Hollis laughed as he handed Delphine a glass of wine. "I see, mademoiselle, why you were such a success on the Paris stage. You have them persuaded, and eager to prove their worth by paying me to save your imaginary brother's head." He took out a heavy purse. "It'll take some time before we have all their fortunes to share out, but here's a little on account."*

*He said, "Son, I've made my life out of reading people's faces . . ."*
*– Kenny Rogers, "The Gambler"*

The simplest of all forms of social interaction is one on one: encounters, transactions, and relationships between two people. The game mechanics for this are the basis for all other social interaction rules. Many rules in this chapter also apply to encounters with small, unorganized groups.

Each member of a party will have his own methods of dealing with people, supported by his chosen skills and advantages. The following rules facilitate those methods; think of them as tactical options, but for skills and situations related to social interaction rather than combat.

One particularly important use of these rules is to enable social roleplaying by players who aren't intensely social in real life! See *Throw Away This Book!* (p. 73) for a fuller discussion of this.

## Complementary Skills

At the GM's option, one skill may be used to aid another. For example, a politician who has to make a speech might sit down ahead of time and write out what he wants to say; this would be using the *complementary skill* of Writing to aid the *master skill* of Public Speaking. A successful roll against the complementary skill gives +1 to the next roll against the master skill, or +2 on a critical success; a failed roll gives -1, or -2 on a critical failure.

Under special circumstances, complementary skills for supporters of different sides may be *opposed:* aid to the master skill for either side depends on being *more* successful at the complementary skill. Roll a Quick Contest between the complementary skills. If the winner's roll was a success, the primary skill for that side is at +1 (+2 for a critical success); there is no modifier if it was a failure. If the loser's roll was a failure, the primary skill for that side is at -1 (-2 for a critical failure); there is no modifier if it was a success.

The GM should encourage players to be inventive; if they have a convincing explanation for why one skill complements another, let them roll. To encourage teamwork, one person's complementary skill can aid another person's primary skill. At the GM's discretion, several complementary skill rolls may apply to the same primary skill. No helper can provide more than one complementary skill, and each helper must use a different skill. A complementary skill *can* be the same as the primary skill, but only if it's used in a meaningfully different way.

Complementary skills are meant largely to give other PCs a chance to do something interesting during a critical scene, so skill rolls will normally be limited to one per PC, but the GM may permit such rolls by appropriately skilled NPCs, especially Allies or Contacts. See also *Team Efforts* (pp. 33-34).

# SEARCHING FOR PEOPLE

The first step in social interaction is finding someone to interact *with*. **GURPS** already has rules for finding employees and jobs (pp. B517-518). The same rules work for many other potential relationships.

Locating a person of the right kind takes a roll against IQ, with various modifiers; this is called a *search roll*. The GM may allow the use of a relevant skill in place of IQ, or even *require* it; e.g., Merchant to locate a business or Streetwise to meet criminals. Area Knowledge can be used as a complementary skill (p. 21) for any search roll, even one against IQ. Each type of search has a perk that boosts its chances of success (*Networked*, p. 79).

The GM, not the player, makes search rolls. Success finds a suitable person, willing to deal with the PCs on standard terms; failure finds no one. This could be *any* person who fits the general description; if the GM hasn't prepared an appropriate candidate in advance, he can make up someone. (To seek a specific, named person, see *Known Individuals*, p. 24.) The GM may always ignore the search roll result if he's decided in advance that no one is available *or* that a certain candidate will show up, regardless of rolls.

Search rolls are modified by city size:

| Population | Modifier |
|---|---|
| Less than 100 | -3 |
| 100-999 | -2 |
| 1,000-4,999 | -1 |
| 5,000-9,999 | 0 |
| 10,000-49,999 | +1 |
| 50,000-99,999 | +2 |
| 100,000 or more | +3 |

For campaigns in present-day or future settings, where cities may have millions of residents, the GM may wish to extend this series: +1 for each additional ×10 population.

Each type of search roll has a standard interval, such as "once a day" or "once a week." If a search roll fails, the searchers can try again after that much time passes. The GM may allow multiple searches within an interval if the searchers try a different approach, at a cumulative -2 per previous failed search – they've already checked the obvious places.

Searches are normally active, but it's possible to take a basically passive approach (posting a handbill or online listing, scanning the want ads, etc.). This takes much less time and effort, but the search roll is at -5 (equivalent to the job-search penalty for Laziness, p. B518), and only one passive search can be made within the standard interval.

## HIRELINGS

Searches for hirelings are discussed on pp. B517-518. One roll is allowed per week for each position to be filled. A successful search will find someone who has the required skills and wants the job; to determine his attitude, see *Personal Loyalty* (pp. 39-40). The GM may allow a suitable skill to substitute for IQ:

- Administration for formal, corporate-style hiring.
- Connoisseur to search for a skilled artist or craftsman.
- Current Affairs to locate prominent "world experts."
- Group Performance to recruit performers.
- Leadership to find new recruits for an expedition or a military force.
- Propaganda for a widely publicized opportunity.

Special modifiers are as follows:

*Advertising:* +1 for a budget of 50% of the job's monthly pay, +2 for 500%, and another +1 for each additional ×10 expenditure. This includes town criers, handbills, want ads, headhunters, Internet listings, and more.

*Danger:* -2 if the job includes a serious risk of combat or other physical danger.

*Pay Level:* +1 if the job pays 20% higher than normal, +2 for 50%, or +3 for 100% or more.

It's possible to look for recruits for several positions with the same qualifications and duties – for example, a caravan might try to hire half a dozen guards. Multiply the advertising budget (if any) by the desired number of hirelings. A successful roll finds one potential hireling plus additional candidates equal to the margin of success – to a maximum of the number sought.

## JOBS

Job search rolls are as defined on p. B518. One job search roll is allowed per week. It's possible to look for multiple jobs at the same time, at a cumulative -1 to *all* rolls per job after the first. Special modifiers are as follows:

*Advertising:* +1 for a budget of 5% of the desired job's monthly pay, +2 for 50%, +3 for 500%, and so on. Money can go for actual advertisements, placement fees, good clothing for interviews, or even bribery (pp. 48-49).

*Attitude:* -5 for Laziness; you simply aren't looking very hard. +1 for Workaholic; you spend long hours looking, and you present yourself as a hard worker. +3 for Single-Minded, but you may only look for *one* job at a time.

## Covert Searches

Sometimes adventurers may want to search for a type of person without making their interest obvious. Any type of search roll defined in this supplement may be made covertly; one involving concealed activities (pp. 23-24) *must be* covert. Covert searches cannot use advertising, nor can they benefit from skills like Administration and Propaganda.

Most people will not notice such a search; anyone consciously monitoring the scene will realize what's happening on a successful roll against the better of Per or Observation. The searchers may *actively* put on an innocent or uninterested facade; if so, the observers must win or tie a Quick Contest against the searchers' worst Acting skill to realize the truth.

A middleman may also conduct a discreet search (*Middlemen and Go-Betweens*, p. 24).

*Pay level:* Subtract *twice* the typical Status level of the desired job (p. B517) from the roll. Negative Status gives a bonus! For example, roll at +4 to get a part-time job in the fast food industry (a Status -2 job).

*Qualifications:* For skill above the minimum to get the job, +1 if one level higher; +2 if more than one level higher. Skills *far* above what's required can work against an applicant, at the GM's option. The GM may allow an additional +1 if the applicant has other, useful, related skills.

# BUYERS

Adventurers may seek buyers for treasure or loot, or for things they've made themselves – enchanted items or new inventions, for example. One roll may be attempted per week for each item or lot. (*Ongoing* sale of items of the same kind is a job, often freelance, with a monthly success roll.) If one adventurer or group of adventurers seeks buyers for multiple items or lots at the same time, the search roll is at a cumulative -1 per item after the first; there is no penalty if they split up, taking one item each. The GM may allow a suitable skill to substitute for IQ:

- Merchant to sell anything.
- Propaganda to design a publicity campaign.
- Streetwise for stolen, smuggled, or black-market goods.

Special modifiers are as follows:

*Advertising:* +1 for a budget of 0.5% of the item's cost, +2 for 5%, +3 for 50%, or +4 for 500%. This includes not only direct advertising, but also advertised discounts, kickbacks (*Bribery,* pp. 48-49), and taking losses on other items to lure in customers.

*Poor Quality:* -1 for used or ill-made goods, such as cheap-quality weapons.

*Styling:* +1 for CF +1, +2 for CF +4, or +3 for CF +9.

*Total Cost* (for a single item or a lot): Based on typical monthly pay (p. B517) for the given TL:

| Percentage of Monthly Pay | Modifier |
|---|---|
| Up to 1% (1-2 hours' pay) | +1 |
| Up to 5% (1 day's pay) | 0 |
| Up to 25% (1 week's pay) | -1 |
| Up to 100% (1 month's pay) | -2 |
| Up to 600% (6 months' pay) | -3 |
| Up to 2,400% (2 years' pay) | -4 |
| Up to 12,000% (10 years' pay) | -5 |

# INFORMANTS

Informants are people who can answer questions; over time, they may be turned into Contacts. One roll may be attempted per day, by a party or by an individual member who has split off to conduct a solo search. The special modifier depends on the difficulty of the questions being asked; use *one* of the following:

*"Everyman" Knowledge:* +5 for something that anyone from the local culture and area can answer with a mere IQ roll. (In their own "home base" area, the adventurers can use *their own* IQ to answer such questions, without an informant.)

*Uncommon Knowledge:* No modifier for questions that require information sources and a skill to access them; e.g., one's own memory and Expert Skill (Bardic Lore), or a personal library or the Internet and Research.

*Restricted Knowledge:* -5 for questions about secret knowledge; e.g., any form of Hidden Lore, or anything that requires Rank or a Security Clearance to access.

# COMPANIONSHIP

Some people are looking for a more personal relationship: a temporary companion for a day's or evening's pleasure. Usually this means one searcher looking for one companion, but the GM can allow searches by small groups if they seem reasonable. One search is possible per day (or evening). The GM may allow a suitable skill to substitute for IQ:

- IQ-based Carousing to find companions for a night's drinking and revelry.
- IQ-based Sex Appeal to find a short-term romantic prospect.
- Games, Savoir-Faire (Dojo), or IQ-based Sports to find someone to play with.
- Savoir-Faire (High Society or Mafia) or Streetwise to find gambling opponents.

Special modifiers are as follows:

*Appearance*: For romantic searches, use the reaction modifier for those attracted to your sex (p. B21). For general searches, use the one for those *not* attracted to it.

*Fashion Sense:* +1 in romantic searches, no modifier otherwise.

*Styling* (p. 19): Exceptionally well-made clothing either raises your apparent Status (see *False Identities,* pp. 37-39) or adds its reaction bonus to your search roll – but not both!

Charisma and Voice don't grant bonuses; the search is a *precondition* for actual social interaction where they can be applied.

A loyalty roll (*Personal Loyalty,* pp. 39-40) is often appropriate for a newly found companion. In general or romantic companionship it can be used to find out if a PC has acquired a lasting friend or lover – or someone who will rob him or report him to the police. In gambling, poor loyalty leads to unpaid IOUs or even cheating.

Note that prostitutes are not considered "romantic companionship"; search for them as you would any other service (p. 46).

# CONCEALED ACTIVITIES

Any general search can focus on people outside the law and transactions that have to be concealed. Hirelings (p. 22) and jobs (pp. 22-23) can be for illegal activity, buyers (above) can be fences for stolen goods, informants (above) can be snitches for underworld rumors, and companionship (above) can include opponents in prohibited sports (such as bare-knuckles boxing, drag racing, or dogfighting, in various eras). Streetwise can substitute for IQ for any such "low-class" search.

*Modifiers:* All of the standard modifiers for the underlying type of search. An additional -5 *unless* using Streetwise for the search roll.

The upper classes often have their own secret illegalities. On one hand, they may indulge in expensive but illegal or socially discreditable vices; on the other, they may trade in political influence or undercover business ventures. Savoir-Faire (High Society) can substitute for IQ in this search.

*Modifiers:* All of the standard modifiers for the underlying type of search. If the searcher's Status is lower than the average Status in the social milieu where the search is conducted, a penalty equal to the difference. An additional -5 *unless* using Savoir-Faire (High Society) for the search roll.

## Middlemen and Go-Betweens

Not everyone is good at finding people, knows his way around, or has time to spend looking. Every society bigger than a tribe of hunter-gatherers has people who help other people make connections: big men, traders, brokers, lobbyists, agents, yentas, bounty hunters, and innumerable others. Some middlemen treat arranging a deal as a favor to be returned; some expect payment (use the rules for bribes on p. B562); some take a "finder's fee," commonly 10%. Middlemen who engage in covert searches expect double the usual compensation. Dealing with a middleman is a *substitute* for making a search roll.

A middleman can be a Contact with a skill that's suited to making searches in a particular setting. Those who lack such a Contact can search for a middleman as an informant (p. 22) who rolls against a specific skill. If so, use the modifier below for the search roll.

*Modifiers*: +5 for a public informant (wants to be found, may advertise). No modifier for a private informant (not seeking to be found). -5 for a secretive informant (willing to search for things that require Hidden Lore or Security Clearance, or that concern illegalities).

## KNOWN INDIVIDUALS

Sometimes the goal of a search isn't a person of a given *type*, but a *specific* person known by name and/or Reputation. If they have homes or businesses with publicly known addresses, or addresses listed in directories, finding them requires a roll against Area Knowledge, directions from an informant (this is an "everyman" question; see p. 23), or acquiring a street map.

Others keep such things quiet, or move around a lot. One search is possible per day; repeated searches on the same day automatically fail.

The bigger the city, the more easily people can get lost in the crowd. Because of this, the population modifiers on p. 22 are *inverted* for this type of search roll. Other modifiers also apply:

*Authority:* +(CR-3) if the searchers are the legal authorities, or have access to official data. However, if the target of the search has the right connections, use the local community's Corruption (defined in **GURPS City Stats**) to modify the effective CR.

*Target's Traits:* A modifier equal to his Status. A bonus equal to the *size* of his Reputation (whether positive or negative). +1 for Distinctive Features. +1/level for Unnatural Features. +3 for Hunchback.

# SOCIAL PERCEPTION

Whether searching a community, or just passing through, adventurers need to check out the new milieus they enter and the people they meet. Continued monitoring of the social environment is also prudent.

Many of these rolls are straight Per rolls to take in the visible and audible social environment. Others are Per-based rolls against various skills, though awareness of social and psychological traits that lack outward and visible signs is usually IQ-based. Some social perception rolls may be based on IQ *or* Per, depending on circumstances. As with all tests of awareness, the GM makes these rolls.

## BACKGROUND

The easiest thing to learn about a person is usually his place in society. This commonly comes before learning about his motives, personality, or immediate goals.

### Status

In most societies, the primary trait that defines somebody's place is Status (p. B29). In a setting where dress, bearing, and speech communicate Status (*Visible Status and Cost of Living,* pp. 18-20), a successful Per roll allows one to recognize high or low Status. Status may also be ascertained indirectly from subtle differences of dress or manner; this requires a successful IQ

roll. In a setting with specific tests for Status, such as signet rings, ID cards, or retinal scans, the skills used to administer those tests (and thus *verify* Status) replace the Per or IQ roll.

If the roll fails, the observer cannot deduce the subject's Status level – though a visible difference of three levels or more between the observer and the subject will still be noticed as "high" or "low." Critical failure produces a confident misjudgment.

Various skills can substitute for Per or IQ:

● Anthropology or Sociology to recognize nonobvious markers for a society you're familiar with.
● Heraldry (p. 80) to identify coats of arms or similar formally codified Status markers.
● Observation to size people up without giving yourself away.
● Savoir-Faire (High Society or Servant) or Streetwise in suitable company.

Connoisseur (Fashion) (p. 80) can be used as a complementary skill (p. 21) when rolling against Per, IQ, or Observation.

### Rank

Rank, like Status, may be marked by uniforms, insignia, robes, and the like, or dependent on verification. If it's obvious, anyone in the organization can recognize it without a roll.

If Rank substitutes for Status directly, any adult member of the society can do so. Outsiders who deal regularly with the organization can recognize its insignia on an IQ roll or a Heraldry (p. 80) roll with a suitable specialty; for the appropriate type of Rank, substitute Savoir-Faire (Military or Police) or Religious Ritual if better.

Rank without obvious markers is proved by credentials or personal identification, or by being introduced by a superior. Some organizations issue concealable marks of Rank, such as a plainclothes police officer's badge. A member of the organization can verify Rank with a roll against Administration (or, for organized crime, Savoir-Faire (Mafia)).

### Social Regard and Social Stigma

By definition, Social Regard and Social Stigma are known to everyone in the reference society. This may be the result of their being publicly proclaimed by a ruler or media figure, easily learned by anyone who inquires (e.g., in societies with easily accessed databases – see *Augmented Reality,* p. 33), or obvious from appearance, dress, manner, or speech.

## Foreign Rank and Status

If a person from the reference society (p. 11) encounters someone from another society, both may be unfamiliar with each other's Status and Rank indicators; e.g., a British police officer dealing with an Italian one. In such cases, use the rules for identifying Status (p. 24) and Rank (pp. 24-25), adding unfamiliarity (p. B169) penalties as appropriate. Apply penalties for unfamiliar cultures (p. B23) as well when the hierarchy isn't just foreign, but from an entirely different cultural tradition. Be flexible about this; an American in Japan would have trouble reading Status from traditional clothing, but not from business suits! A roll against Anthropology can cancel cultural familiarity penalties; it's an anthropologist's job to figure out unfamiliar cultures.

At TL0-7, verifying unfamiliar credentials requires literacy in the bearer's language, and often a Research roll to verify the correct format. At TL8-12, Electronics Operation (Security) or Computer Operation can substitute.

## APPROACHABILITY

Rather than searching (pp. 22-24) a city for someone with the right qualities, it's possible to look for the best candidate at hand. A key ability of effective social engineers is picking the right person to interact with. The con artist knows how to size up a mark; the salesman can spot a customer who's ready to buy; the waitress knows which tables will leave good tips, and gives them extra attention. The essence of the process is judging someone's inner emotional state, not outward appearance.

This only works in a target-rich environment. If there's only one person present, or a small group that will all have the same reaction – or if only one person or group can do anything helpful – you can't choose the one that's likely to react well, as the choice has been forced on you. A person with good social skills can overcome the natural cohesion of a small group via Cutting Out (p. 81).

The base time to scan a crowd is 10 minutes; taking more or less time gives bonuses or penalties (see p. B346).

An attempt to pick a mark *instantly*, at -10, is possible even in a noncinematic game.

To judge approachability, make a Per-based roll against a relevant skill. This doesn't have to be an Influence skill; other possibilities include Carousing to find someone who's in a mood to party, Merchant to spot a prospective buyer, Panhandling to find a mark for begging, and Performance to focus on a receptive member of an audience. The GM should be open to suggestions. Empathy allows an IQ roll for this purpose in place of any skill.

Any success gives a slight edge: +1 to a subsequent reaction roll (*Reaction Rolls and Modifiers,* pp. 26-29) or use of an Influence skill. A critical success gives +3! An ordinary failure means that no one stands out as a good target. A critical failure means picking exactly the wrong person – giving -3 to the subsequent roll.

Most people judge approachability while watching a crowd quietly. But a skilled showman can use patter to keep a crowd diverted while he sizes it up. Roll against Performance or Public Speaking, at -2 because your attention is divided. A failed roll leaves the audience mildly bored, giving -1 to the next reaction roll or skill roll; a success avoids this problem. Other skills can be used: Fast-Talk to run a con, Merchant in a sales presentation, Panhandling to beg, or Sex Appeal to show off your personal charms, for example. In all cases, the roll to judge approachability is also at -2.

It's possible to look a crowd over covertly, while seeming interested in something else. Concealing such an inspection takes a roll against Acting; Savoir-Faire or Streetwise can substitute for suitable types of crowds.

## MOTIVES

Body Language can be used to judge a person's emotional state; an observer with Empathy can do the same with an IQ roll. Ordinarily this is his general mood, but after the initial "read," it can be used to monitor one person or a small group, picking up emotional reactions to new stimuli. An observer who actively interacts with another person can judge what reaction he's produced, even if the other person isn't overtly displaying it.

This kind of ongoing monitoring can enhance the use of Influence skills; Body Language (or IQ, for an observer with Empathy) can be used as a complementary skill for any Influence roll made *by the same person* (*Influence*, pp. 29-32).

Longer-term assessment of motives and personality requires a Psychology (Applied) roll. Empathy gives an automatic +3 to this assessment; Sensitive gives +1. Both Body Language and Detect Lies can be complementary skills for Psychology (Applied). After assessing a person, the psychologist has +1 to Body Language *for that specific person*. Empathy, which is an innate ability to read people, doesn't get this bonus.

The basic "read" on a person takes one minute with Body Language or is instant with Empathy. Full psychological assessment is possible after an hour. The Body Language and Psychology (Applied) rolls are affected by time spent (p. B346).

In a cinematic campaign, the wildcard skill Psychologist! (p. 81) can provide either sort of reading.

## RELATIONSHIPS

In a social situation, it's also important to know which people are working together. If they're acting as a couple or a group, this may be obvious! But a trained observer can also see subtle relationships.

After an hour of watching a larger social group, make a Per-based roll against Anthropology, Criminology, Psychology (Applied or Experimental), or Sociology – or against practical skills such as Leadership or Politics, in suitable situations. Longer observation grants a bonus (p. B346). Retrospective analysis of reports (gathered using Observation) or video (gathered using Electronics Operation (Media) or Motion-Picture Camera, p. B233) can identify relationships with a roll against Intelligence Analysis or Sociometry (p. 81).

Success on this roll will spot who is whose Patron, Ally, Contact, Dependent, or Enemy; who owes who a Duty; and any feelings between group members that would qualify as a disadvantage, such as Intolerance or Sense of Duty. If there are multiple relationships on the scene, every two full points of success reveals an additional relationship, starting with the strongest; critical success reveals *all* of them. Failure reveals nothing; critical failure misreads the strongest relationship, or creates the illusion of a relationship where none exists.

# REACTION ROLLS AND MODIFIERS

Active social interaction often begins with a reaction roll. Reaction rolls have different effects in different situations; see Appendix A for examples.

In many scenes, a reaction roll takes place *when the observer (usually a PC) becomes aware of the reaction*. Usually, this happens when the reacting character expresses a reaction overtly, but an observer can use Body Language, Empathy, or Sensitive to see unexpressed reactions (see *Motives,* p. 28). After a successful roll for one of these traits, make the reaction roll as soon as the reaction occurs.

The GM may also make a reaction roll for anyone who is likely to do something affecting the observer, even if the observer wouldn't spot the reaction – for example, for a concealed guard.

Reaction rolls generally aren't needed after a successful search roll (p. 22). Treat the outcome as a Neutral or Good reaction.

## GENERAL REACTIONS

Make a reaction roll and refer to *General Reaction Results* (p. 74) to strike up a conversation or start a casually friendly encounter, with no more specific purpose. This is the reaction an observer first picks up with Body Language or Empathy (see *Motives*, p. 28). A general reaction roll can be used whenever no other specific roll clearly applies.

The following circumstances modify general reactions. They also affect special purpose reaction rolls, though the GM may overrule this if there's some reason that a trait shouldn't apply.

*Appropriate Roleplaying:* Players who come up with good dialogue or a well-judged approach get +1 or more to reactions. A seriously inappropriate approach gives *the entire party* -1 or -2. Good or bad dialogue may even determine an NPC's reaction without a roll (*Throw Away This Book!,* p. 73).

*Biases:* Members of identifiable social groups may face penalties from other people's Intolerance, or bonuses from other people's Xenophilia. Having a Social Stigma or Social Regard gets such reactions from nearly everyone. People who are Chummy or Gregarious almost always react well to other people, while Loners react badly.

*Personal Appearance and Behavior:* Above-average Appearance, Charisma, Pitiable, and Voice give bonuses (*Making an Impression,* pp. 17-20). Below-average Appearance, Bad Smell, Disturbing Voice, Stuttering, and many disadvantages that affect behavior give penalties.

*Reputation:* A Reputation can affect *any* reaction roll for which it is relevant.

*Skills:* Diplomacy or Fast-Talk at level 20+ gives an *automatic* +2. These do not stack; the maximum bonus is +2. In addition, there are several skills for which a successful roll gives +2 to reactions under *specific* conditions:

- Administration when dealing with bureaucrats.
- Carousing when at parties or social gatherings.
- Finance when dealing with lenders or investors.
- Politics when dealing with elected officials or their staffs.
- Religious Ritual when dealing with the faithful – or the supernatural beings your faith believes in!

*Visible Social Position:* People with higher Status usually get bonuses for any difference in Status. Negative Status often imposes a penalty, and lower Status *may* do so (p. B29). Within an organization, Rank has the same effects as Status. Social Chameleon (p. B86) avoids a penalty for low Status or Rank, or grants +1 to reactions of higher-Status or Rank people when no penalty applies. Fashion Sense has similar effects for *visible* Status (*Styling,* p. 19).

## COMMERCIAL TRANSACTIONS

Commercial transactions include buying and selling goods, hiring services, and other exchanges for economic gain. Many transactions have well-established prices that both sides know, or that are shown on price tags or listed in catalogs. Such prices aren't affected by reaction rolls; roll only if there's a chance the merchant won't deal with the PCs at all (a Disastrous reaction). Make reaction rolls only when the price is subject to bargaining.

Reaction rolls are based on the "fair price" of a product or service. For transactions with individual consumers or users, this is the price listed on pp. B264-289 or in sourcebooks such as **GURPS Low-Tech, GURPS High-Tech,** or **GURPS Ultra-Tech.** But a merchant is a middleman, buying things not to use them but to resell them; if he pays the full price, he won't make a profit! As a rule of thumb, a merchant will pay half the listed price to acquire high-priced, unusual, or one-of-a-kind goods for resale, or 80% of it for inexpensive goods likely to turn over quickly. In either case, the "fair price" is this discounted price.

The simple way to roleplay a commercial transaction uses a single roll for each sale or purchase. Use the following rules for a sale by the merchant. (The rules are similar when the PCs are selling *to* the merchant, but the merchant is buying, not selling.)

The PCs can either *ask* the seller's price, or *offer* a price.

If they ask, roll the seller's reaction, and refer to *Commercial Transaction Results* (p. 75) for the multiple or percentage of fair price he *asks for*. The PCs can accept the price, refuse and walk out, or make a counteroffer. If they make a counteroffer, refer to *Commercial Transaction Results* to find out if it's acceptable to the seller, based on *the same reaction roll*.

If the PCs offer a price, roll for the seller's reaction, and refer to *Commercial Transaction Results* to see if he's willing to accept the offer. In this case, the PCs' offer affects the seller's reaction: +1 for every 10% over the fair price, or -1 for every 10% under the fair price.

If the seller refuses an offer or counteroffer from the PCs, the transaction doesn't take place.

All reaction rolls for commercial transactions are at +1 if the PC speaking for the group has Merchant skill, or +2 if he has it at 20+.

*Example:* Short of money, Friedrich the mercenary soldier goes to an arms merchant with a pair of wheellock pistols he took off a Swedish cavalry officer in the last campaign: very fine quality (Acc 3, Malf 15, +4 CF) and elaborately decorated with inlaid silver, small gems, and enamel (an additional +10 CF). Their fair *sales* price is $6,000 for both; because these are unique, high-priced items, in perfect condition, the merchant's fair *buying* price is $3,000 for the pair. Friedrich has Merchant-11 from previous haggles over loot, for +1, and he does a competent job of pointing out the maker's marks and other selling points. Unfortunately the reaction is a 6, modified to 7 (Poor)! The merchant offers only 75% of the fair buying price, or $2,250 total – but would be willing to pay up to 100%, or $3,000 total. Friedrich knows he could get more, but he doesn't want to risk not making the sale; as a compromise, he suggests $2,500, which the merchant agrees to.

## Haggling

In some cultures, people in general treat nearly every sale or purchase as an occasion for haggling; this often includes buyers or sellers found through a search roll (p. 23). Merchants dealing with other merchants are likely to haggle in *any* culture. For these situations, or for adventurers who simply like to bargain, use a more elaborate procedure.

Bargaining starts with the initial prices proposed by the buyer and seller. If the merchant spoke first, the PCs will have made a counterproposal already; if the PCs spoke first, use the roll for the merchant's initial reaction to determine the merchant's counterproposal. From this point on, haggling goes as follows:

1. If the PCs made the original proposal, they have the first move; go directly to step 2. If the PCs made the counterproposal, the merchant will make the first move, by lowering his asking price or raising his offer by 10% of the difference between the two initial prices, *or* by 20% of his initial price, whichever is less drastic.

2. The PCs may respond by increasing what they'll pay, or lowering what they'll sell for, by any amount they choose.

3. Roll a Quick Contest of Merchant skill (or its IQ-5 default) between the PCs and the merchant, subject to the modifiers below. If the merchant wins by 10 or more, he won't change his price any further. If the PCs win by 10 or more, the merchant agrees to their proposed price, unless it's outside his limits; if so, he'll go right to his best asking price or offer. Either way, haggling ends. Otherwise, continue to step 4.

4. The merchant will lower his price or raise his offer in response. If the Quick Contest was a tie, the amount of his adjustment will be identical to the PCs'. If the PCs won, increase the adjustment by 10% times the margin of victory. If the merchant won, reduce it by 10% times the margin. The merchant will never go above his initially determined best offer, or below his initially determined best price; at that point his position is, "Take it or leave it."

5. Repeat steps 2-4. When the merchant accepts the PCs' latest proposal, or the PCs accept the merchant's latest proposal, a sale is made. If the PCs reject the merchant's final offer, the haggle ends without a sale.

*Modifiers:* -1 to -4 for Compulsive Spending (p. B129). Complementary skill use (p. 21) for perceiving the other party's emotional state (*Motives,* p. 28).

In addition to the above, which modify *every* haggling roll, either side may use other complementary skills; e.g., Diplomacy to couch an offer attractively, or a Connoisseur or Hobby skill to point out the desirability of the merchandise. Alternatively, the riskier rules under *Manipulation* (p. 37) may be used. Either way, each complementary skill only modifies a *single* Quick Contest; a bonus for further haggling will require a new approach.

A different form of haggling takes place between two merchants with an established relationship, trading in a familiar commodity. In a culture where haggling is widespread, use it for any two people dealing in any commodity whose fair price they both know. Roll a Quick Contest of Merchant skill (p. B209), applying the modifiers above. The winner adds or subtracts 10% of the fair price, depending if he was trying to sell or buy.

### Goods of Unknown Value

What if an item doesn't *have* a "fair price," because there's not an established market for it (for example, the first time coffee was imported to Italy)? In that case, use the price that's asked or offered as the starting point, but with two modifications:

- Because the merchant doesn't have good information on the prospective market, he'll be unusually cautious: -3 to reaction rolls, or +2 to Will to resist Influence rolls (pp. 29-32).
- The merchant can always flatly refuse to buy or sell, if *in the GM's opinion* the proposed price is unreasonable.

## REQUESTS FOR AID

A request for aid is a *non*-commercial transaction: The NPC is being asked to do something beneficial and get nothing in return. This can include borderline cases where the recipient says, "I owe you one" or the donor says, "Pay it forward." It doesn't include promises to do a specific thing at a specific time, or open-ended but *enforceable* promises. See *Request for Aid Results* (p. 75) for specifics.

Several specialized modifiers apply:

*Complexity:* +1 for a simple request; -1 to -3 for a complex one.
*Cost:* -1 if the request would inconvenience the NPC or cost him money; -2 if it would put his job or social standing at risk.
*Physical Danger:* -3 for most ordinary people; -1 for adventurers who face danger regularly.

> *From the selfish and the philanthropic alike, we are bombarded with requests to do, donate, attend, volunteer, eat, drink and buy.*
>
> *– Judith Martin,*
> ***Miss Manners' Guide to Excruciatingly Correct Behavior, Freshly Updated***

## REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

Answering questions is really a specialized form of aid, but usually involves less commitment and less risk, so the decision-making is slightly different. If the information requires a security clearance, is proprietary, or is traceable to a unique source, treat the situation as a request for aid. See *Request for Information Results* (pp. 75-76) for specifics.

Several specialized modifiers apply:

*Complexity:* -1 for a complex question, or -2 for a very complex one.
*Danger:* -3 if answering would endanger the NPC.
*Nosiness:* -3 if the NPC doesn't think it's the questioner's business.

*Professional Inclination:* +2 to +4 if the NPC's profession or hobby involves giving information (e.g., a historian, librarian, scribe, or teacher). -2 to -4 if it involves keeping secrets (e.g., confidential business information, official secrets, or privileged communications), even though the request is not for secret information.
*Bribery:* See pp. 48-49 for detailed rules.

## GIVING INFORMATION

*Giving* information is the other side of *asking for* it. Reaction rolls determine whether the intended recipient will even listen to the story or read the message, and whether he believes it, or dismisses it as a mistake, a delusion, or a lie. The **Basic Set** treats this as one form of request for aid (p. B562); but not all PCs with stories to tell are looking for help – entirely different reactions may take place, and different modifiers often apply. Use *Response to Information Results* (pp. 75-76) if the giver is not asking for aid.

If the PCs are lying – intentionally telling a story they know is false – see *Lies* (pp. 36-37).

Certain specialized modifiers apply:

*Beliefs of Listener:* +1 to +3 if the information supports a worldview, political agenda, or Delusion that the listener adheres to. -1 to -3 if it clashes with or undermines such a worldview.
*Delusion:* -1 to -3 (see p. B130) if the information given reflects a Delusion – unless the listener has the same Delusion!
*Well-Presented Testimony or Evidence:* +2 *if* the presenter makes a successful roll against Forensics, Intelligence Analysis, Photography, Public Speaking, Writing, etc.

## RECREATION

Sometimes a group of adventurers want to spend time relaxing; this can make a good "change of pace" scenario in an action-focused campaign. The reactions of the people they pick to have fun *with* are determined in much the same way as in general reaction rolls, but the consequences are more specific and normally shorter-term, so they have their own table (*Recreation Results,* p. 76) and the following special modifiers:

*Carousing:* +2 for a successful roll.
*Spending Money Freely:* Treat this as offering a bribe (see *Bribery,* pp. 48-49). If this bonus is claimed, don't also allow a bonus to Carousing for buying drinks!

## ROMANCE

The pursuit of romance can be a recreation or a source of lasting relationships. Confusing the two can lead to interesting situations! This section discusses short-term encounters; for lasting relationships, see *Building Trust* (pp. 40-41).

It's possible to pursue someone in public, but doing so often risks embarrassment or social stigma. Suitors often start out by asking discreetly for a private meeting, at which they plead their case more openly (*Fade to Black,* p. 29). On the other hand, in some places (e.g., pick-up bars or temples of erotic cults) or at some times (e.g., private orgies or public festivals), social penalties are waived. Anonymity can have the same effect, whether real (e.g., through physical or magical disguise or shapeshifting) or conventional (e.g., at a masquerade ball).

The GM may always determine the target's reaction in advance, *instead* of using a reaction roll. The subject may already be interested in the person courting him, in which case he'll respond to any approach . . . or he may have *no* interest and simply won't respond to courtship. The latter is especially likely if the target is not attracted to the suitor's sex (or species), has an ethical commitment (e.g., a Code of Honor, or a Vow of celibacy or marital fidelity), or is physically incapable of romance (e.g., Killjoy, Neutered, or Sexless). Reaction rolls should only be used for a subject who is potentially interested but undecided, or whose attitude the GM hasn't decided in advance. Less intense favorable or unfavorable attitudes can be treated as bonuses or penalties to the reaction roll, typically from +3 to -3 (though an extreme case of "theoretically willing but extremely reluctant" may go as low as -8).

A person who's not romantically interested may accept another person's advances for reasons that don't involve reaction rolls: as a duty to a spouse, as a way to gain influence over another person, or in exchange for a Favor. (If it's to make money, see *Commercial Transactions,* pp. 26-27.) This is not a matter of reaction rolls; the GM should decide whether such motives exist.

Apply the following modifiers and consult *Seduction Results* (p. 76):

*Complying Is Risky:* -1 if the courtship might embarrass the target, -3 for risking a Social Stigma or endangering a marriage, or -5 for potential physical danger.

*Gifts:* As for offering a bribe (see *Bribery,* pp. 48-49), but it must be *presented* as a gift, not as payment.

*Minor Courtship:* +1 if what the suitor wants is limited (e.g., a kiss).

*Relative Appearance:* Add or subtract the difference in reaction modifiers for Appearance and Fashion Sense (if applicable). If the person being courted is not attracted to the suitor's sex, use the *lower* reaction modifier for the suitor's Appearance, but the *higher* modifier for that of the person being courted (if there's a difference). With an Androgynous (p. 18) character, use the same modifier in either case.

*Relevant Skills:* +2 for successful use of Carousing *or* Sex Appeal (choose only one), if appropriate for the situation. If not appropriate, *or* the skill roll fails, -2 for making the attempt!

*Target Has Lecherousness:* +1 for self-control number 15, +2 for 12, +3 for 9, +4 for 6. This only applies if he is attracted to your sex, species, etc.

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## Fade to Black?

What happens when a romantic approach produces a favorable reaction?

The obvious answer is, "Roll vs. Erotic Art." And that's certainly one place courtship can lead. But it doesn't get there right away; and some campaigns may not get there at all.

The usual first step in courtship is agreeing to go somewhere more private; unless it's *that kind* of party, people won't be making rolls for sexual performance with an audience! (Or, if they do, there will be skill penalties for distraction, from -2 to -5.) In many campaigns, going somewhere private takes a PC off camera; he comes back when the private events are over.

A private conversation doesn't *necessarily* lead to sexual intimacy. Often it calls for further reaction or Influence rolls to find out, until a Very Good reaction is achieved (see *Seduction Results,* p. 76). This can be dramatically interesting, and a reason to play out a private meeting – but it's possible to "fade to black" as the first kiss begins, or the first garment comes off.

Some players will want to know "how did it go?" This can be answered with a roll against DX (or Erotic Art+5) for basic sexual techniques, or Erotic Art for advanced techniques.

Some players may want more detail: exact descriptions of who's doing what, with multiple rolls against DX or Erotic Art, and perhaps HT for duration or repetition. Precise game effects are left to the GM's discretion (p. B192). Physical consequences can be important, especially in action-oriented campaigns: being unarmored or undressed at the wrong time, losing FP, infection with a social disease (*Contagion,* p. B443), or pregnancy for a female character (see *Low-Tech Companion 1* for details).

Dramatic appropriateness is the big issue. Explicitness tends to produce bawdy humor (especially after critical failures!) or cold, clinical horror; for romantic emotion, soft focus works better. If the campaign keeps romantic relationships in the background, a quick "fade to black" is best.

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# INFLUENCE

Instead of relying on reaction rolls, PCs can attempt *Influence rolls* (p. B359). These represent the use of a trained skill in gaining people's cooperation, rather than the benefit of a good initial impression. Being skill-based, influence takes time and usually the ability to talk with the NPC.

Normally, it's one or the other: you don't get to elicit a reaction, observe it, and then decide to make an Influence roll if the reaction isn't good enough. The exception is Diplomacy; see *Influence Skills* (p. 30) for the details.

The basic mechanic for Influence rolls is a Quick Contest of an Influence skill vs. the subject's Will. An *inappropriate* Influence skill has a penalty of -1 to -10, at the GM's discretion.

Winning gets a Good reaction from the subject; losing gets a Bad reaction – with some exceptions.

In general, reaction roll modifiers also affect Influence rolls – but not necessarily other rolls vs. Influence skills. However, if an advantage modifies reaction rolls *and* a specified list of skills, don't transfer the reaction modifiers to Influence rolls. Listed Influence skills get the skill modifier; Influence skills that aren't listed are unmodified.

*Example:* The faerie princess Plurabelle gains +2 from her Voice on reactions by anyone who hears her speak; it also raises her Sex Appeal from 12 to 14 and her Singing from 15 to 17.

But her reaction roll bonus doesn't give her an extra +2 on Influence rolls based on Sex Appeal; nor does she get a bonus to Intimidation.

## That's Not What It Means

An Influence roll is a Quick Contest and "contest" suggests competition, struggle, or conflict. The person being influenced rolls vs. Will to resist, and p. B16 defines Will as the "ability to withstand psychological stress (brainwashing, fear, hypnotism, interrogation, seduction, torture, etc.)"! All of this sounds as if Influence is overwhelming another person through sudden shock tactics or continuing pressure.

For Intimidation, that's mostly accurate. But it gives the wrong impression of other Influence skills. Diplomacy (p. B187), in particular, is "negotiating, compromising, and getting along with others," as well as choosing the best way to approach someone; these methods can be used without creating psychological stress at all!

In many social situations, the *other* aspects of Will come into play: decisiveness, clearly identified values, and general self-knowledge and mental clarity. Persuading people with these qualities requires finding just the right presentation, or catching them in just the right mood. There may be no "struggle" at all. Intimidation might be compared to using a battering ram against another person's Will, but other skills are more like finding the key – or picking the lock!

## INFLUENCE SKILLS

There are six standard Influence skills: Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, Intimidation, Savoir-Faire, Sex Appeal, and Streetwise. The important differences are not in *what they are used for* but *how they accomplish it*.

For example, it's tempting to think of Sex Appeal as "the skill you use to seduce someone." But sexual goals can be pursued with *any* Influence skill: Diplomacy to propose and negotiate a long-term relationship; Fast-Talk for pick-up lines and flattery; Intimidation for coercion and duress; Savoir-Faire to assume privilege; or Streetwise for "bad boy" allure. And Sex Appeal isn't so limited in scope; it can be used to get a job, get out of a parking ticket, or impress the audience at a play or concert!

Here's how each of the Influence skills is used:

*Diplomacy:* The art of reaching agreements in general. Diplomacy can be used in place of any reaction roll outside combat. Its emphasis is figuring out offers that address another person's actual priorities, leading to agreements that are likely to endure – rather than temporary ones based on confusing him or pushing his emotional buttons. Losing the Influence roll means you haven't given the other person a reason to change his mind, but he'll still hold his original opinion, rather than being offended by clumsy attempts at persuasion; use the *better* of a rolled reaction roll and the Bad reaction from the Influence roll.

*Fast-Talk:* Short-term persuasion, based on confusing people or putting them "off balance." Successful use of Fast-Talk gets people to believe something that's not true, or agree to something that's not in their interest – but only until they have time to think things over. On a failure, the subject catches on right away and is indignant.

*Intimidation:* Getting people to cooperate by threatening them or displaying toughness and ruthlessness. Often this involves looming over people, shouting, or visibly becoming angry, but some people achieve it by quiet menace. A critical success, or a critically failed Will roll by the subject, produces outright terror, requiring a Fright Check (pp. B360-361). On a failure, the attempt is treated with contempt as empty bragging.

*Savoir-Faire:* The knowledge of how to get along with and fit into a particular subculture with specialized standards of proper conduct, such as the aristocracy. Savoir-Faire can be used in place of *any* reaction roll toward a member of the appropriate subculture. It includes knowing how to ask for benefits in a way that appeals to established custom. Savoir-Faire can also impress your special standing on outsiders as a reason for doing what you ask. A failed Savoir-Faire roll can indicate either offensive bluntness or overdone "good manners."

Savoir-Faire (Servant) is an occupational skill not only for domestics, but for hotel staff, servers in good restaurants, and similar occupations. It includes the ability to guide people of higher standing in proper or expected behavior discreetly – as does Savoir-Faire (Military), especially for senior noncoms.

*Sex Appeal:* Gaining cooperation by suggesting sexual availability, or making people find you alluring. The resulting emotions produce a Very Good reaction on a success . . . so other Influence skills may get a courtship started, but Sex Appeal is usually needed to reach actual intimacy. Sex Appeal doesn't require delivering what it seems to offer, and it isn't limited to inciting lascivious thoughts – provoking sexual feelings can also be a way of teasing others or making them nervous. Failed Sex Appeal rolls look ridiculous or creepy.

*Streetwise:* The skill of getting along with criminals and fitting into rough neighborhoods. It includes knowing how to ask for illegal services without creating mistrust. Streetwise isn't the same as Intimidation; the latter makes you seem dangerous and hostile, while the former conveys that you know your way around. A failed roll makes it all too obvious that you *don't*.

## INFLUENCE WITHOUT WORDS

Normal Influence rolls require an appreciable time – at least a few seconds – and often conversation. But some people use Influence skills without conversation, contact, or appreciable time, especially in cinematic campaigns. This must be done in person, and limits them to simple results (you can convey "I'd like a drink" nonverbally, but not "A dry vodka martini, please – shaken, not stirred"), but it enables them to act quickly and silently. Voice modifiers never apply.

Influencing people in this way is a Shtick: a perk costing one point. Each Influence skill has its own Shtick (see p. 78 for a full list). Or more than one – the GM is free to invent or allow alternative Shticks. Each Shtick has a single, stereotyped effect. An Influence roll is still required.

At the GM's option, an adventurer with the relevant Shtick can learn most of these skills with the optional specialty (Nonverbal). This doesn't work for Savoir-Faire, which is already Easy!

# SUBSTITUTES FOR INFLUENCE SKILLS

Many other skills can be *used as* Influence skills, with the same mechanic: a Quick Contest against Will. This is appropriate where the *main purpose* for using the other skill is to get a favorable reaction or decision, and where the skill doesn't just *accompany* an attempt at persuasion, but is itself the means of persuasion.

Here are examples of substitute Influence skills:

- Carousing can directly produce a Good general reaction from a group of drinking or party companions, rather than providing a bonus to a reaction roll. This doesn't work for direct requests for aid or information.
- Dancing – especially classic couples dancing, from the scandalous waltzes of 1800 to slow dancing – can be used in romantic pursuits.
- Games in the rules of a sport can get a favorable decision from a referee or umpire, at -3 to effective skill.
- Leadership can secure the loyalty of a military squad or other small team (see *Personal Loyalty,* pp. 39-40) or get them to carry out assigned duties efficiently.
- Merchant can make a sale to an interested but undecided buyer.
- Panhandling can induce a chosen mark to provide favors or modest amounts of cash ($1 × the margin of victory in a Quick Contest), at -3 to effective skill.
- Public Speaking can gain a hearing for a story, or provide a Good general reaction by telling people stories or jokes, or even preaching to them.
- Writing can be used to request aid or information (see *Text,* p. 33).

In a cinematic campaign, the wildcard skill Negotiator! (p. 81) can be used for most Influence rolls.

# COMPLEMENTARY SKILLS IN SOCIAL INTERACTION

Instead of *substituting* for an Influence skill, another skill can *complement* (p. 21) it. Carousing is an obvious example; the results of Carousing can modify Sex Appeal rolls to charm someone at a party, or Fast-Talk rolls to get your companions to do something silly or reckless. Connoisseur can complement Savoir-Faire (High Society), Fast-Draw can complement Intimidation, and Writing can complement Diplomacy, Savoir-Faire (High Society), or even Sex Appeal.

Influence skills can also complement various other skills – as uncontested skill rolls, *not* as Influence rolls. An anthropologist can use Diplomacy to gain the trust of native informants, adding to his Anthropology roll to learn their cultural patterns. A performer can use Sex Appeal to get a better audience reaction to Dancing, Performance, or Singing. See *Distraction* (p. 36) for some other examples.

# CAN'T BE INFLUENCED

Influence rolls don't always work! Machines with IQ 0 can't be influenced at all. Animals, plants, and spirits can only be influenced by those with the respective Empathy advantages (pp. B40, B75, and B88). To count as an animal, a species must have IQ 5 or less. Plants and spirits are more alien, and remain immune even if sapient.

Animal *behavior* can be influenced by physical stimuli such as gestures or offers of food. This requires an Animal Handling roll; it is not an Influence skill and no Quick Contest is involved. An IQ roll is sufficient for immediate, very simple results, but not for sustained training. Also, because Intimidation can convey a threat without language, it should be considered an exception to the rule against using Influence skills on animals.

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# Expanded Influence Rolls

A reaction roll produces a wide range of outcomes, from Very Bad to Very Good if unmodified, whereas the result of an Influence roll is binary – normally either a Bad or a Good reaction. As an *optional rule,* an Influence roll may generate a wider range of reactions, based on the margin of success in the Quick Contest. These rules are adapted from **GURPS Mysteries,** which presented a similar table, though one designed specifically for hard-boiled mysteries and police procedurals, with a different distribution of outcomes and an elaborate system of modifiers. The GM is free to devise other customized tables for specific genres!

This rule alters one of the trade-offs between reaction modifiers and Influence skills. Under the standard rules, Influence skills give predictable, moderately useful results; reaction rolls can give more dramatic results, but the outcomes are less consistent. With these alternate rules, the big difference is that a strong-willed person can resist Influence skills better, but remains susceptible to reaction modifiers.

Use the following table to interpret the outcome of the Quick Contest:

| Margin of Success | Reaction |
|---|---|
| +8 or more* | Excellent |
| +5 to +7 | Very Good |
| +1 to +4 | Good |
| 0 | Neutral |
| -1 or -2 | Poor |
| -3 or -4 | Bad |
| -5 to -7 | Very Bad |
| -8 or worse† | Disastrous |

\* Or, at the GM's option, if the influencer rolls a critical success and the subject does not.

† Or, at the GM's option, if the influencer rolls a critical failure and the subject does not.

Don't use this table if some other skill roll dictates *automatic* failure of the Influence roll, as with the automatic Very Bad reaction to a failed attempt at specious intimidation (see *Manipulation,* p. 37).

However, it is at -5 to skill unless the user also has Animal Empathy. Plants and spirits can't be affected in any of these ways.

Any Indomitable (p. B60) being is immune to influence; this trait is common in sapient machines and highly rational "super-races." An influencer with Empathy (or an appropriate type of more specialized Empathy, as above) ignores this immunity. The GM may allow a character to be Resistant (p. 77) to Influence.

Specific Influence skills may not work on certain races or individuals:

*Intimidation* does not work on an Unfazeable character or species (p. B95).

*Sex Appeal* does not work on a Neutered or Sexless character or species (p. B165) or one with Killjoy (pp. B140-141). It also doesn't work on someone who lacks even a *potential* interest in the seducer; see *Romance* (pp. 28-29) for more.

Trying to influence someone who can't be influenced doesn't automatically produce a Bad reaction, as a failed Influence roll does. The target may find the behavior irritating, funny, or simply baffling; make a general reaction roll.

## Influencing PCs

Can a PC with good social skills use them on other PCs? On one hand, it seems hard to explain why teammates, and only teammates, can resist a diplomat's silver tongue or a heavy's threats. On the other, few things wreck a campaign as quickly as telling players what their characters have to do because someone else has won a dice roll.

But the contradiction is less real than it seems. Influence isn't mind control! An NPC target of Influence could impose a -5 to the PC's skill, or be limited to a Neutral reaction, or even have a predetermined Very Bad reaction no matter *how* the Influence roll turned out, at the GM's discretion. Players have the same discretion for their own characters: A player has the right to say, "Thongor has already decided he's not going to let the prisoners go," and not be forced to change the decision by an Influence roll.

If an NPC, or another PC, *does* influence a PC, p. B359 recommends a way to handle it: Treat the margin of victory as a bonus or penalty to the PC's die rolls. Be creative! Some suitable types of rolls:

- Bonuses or penalties to self-control rolls.
- Penalties to skill or attribute rolls to act in opposition to the other character.
- Penalties to Perception rolls to notice the concealed actions of the person who made the Influence roll or those of his associates.
- Bonuses to enemies' use of Body Language, Detect Lies, or Empathy to "read" you.

# INDIRECT INTERACTION

Social interaction normally takes place face to face, where all the modifiers for reactions and Influence rolls apply, and all social skills can be used freely. If the PCs have to rely on more indirect forms of communication, their options are more restricted. However, Talents such as Smooth Operator *always* add to any skill that it's possible to use in a particular medium.

> But I was thinking of a plan
> To dye one's whiskers green,
> And always use so large a fan
> That they could not be seen.
>
> – Lewis Carroll,
> "The White Knight's Song,"
> ***Through the Looking-Glass***

## VIRTUAL PRESENCE

In a technologically advanced society, people may interact over two-way electronic channels that carry both voice and live images – perhaps even three-dimensional images. An image may be projected into another person's physical environment, or shown on a screen; or both people may project images into a virtual environment. The same rules apply to nontechnological virtual presence, such as magically projected images.

Charisma isn't looking and sounding good (that's covered by Appearance and Voice), but knowing how to act to capture people's attention; it requires seeing and hearing audience reactions. Real-time two-way audio and video communication allows Charisma to modify reaction and Influence rolls; one-way communication doesn't.

Public Speaking is a special case: Charisma directly raises the skill itself, much like a Talent, and this increase isn't lost in one-way or voice-only communication. Using technological media *does* take practice; each new medium, such as film, radio, or virtuality, is a new familiarity (p. B169) for Public Speaking.

Two-dimensional images halve the reaction/Influence bonus from Charisma (round down). Low-definition video or audio signals (such as analog television or 1950s telephones) completely eliminate it, and *also* halve the effects of Voice (for audio) or Appearance (for video), rounding toward 0. This can benefit the unattractive or those with Disturbing Voice, whose bad qualities come through less strongly!

A virtual avatar can have Charisma if its animated motions are based on sophisticated motion-capture technology, translated into animation in real time. Appearance modifiers don't apply with nonrealistic avatars (*anyone* could have a beautiful avatar), but see *Fashion Sense* (p. 77).

All social skills can be applied through virtual presence, though Carousing can't usually benefit from buying other people drinks!

strength or bloodthirstiness (supernatural powers may still work). A loud or low-pitched voice (including Penetrating Voice) gives +1 to audio-based Intimidation; a soft or high-pitched one gives -1 (but see *Soft-Spoken,* p. 79). Sex Appeal has similar limitations. Streetwise doesn't work; it's too dependent on how you carry yourself and react to the street environment.

Electronic voice amplification can produce an artificially loud voice, giving +1 to Intimidation, as above. Static or distortion creates the same effects as Disturbing Voice (p. B132) and negates the benefits of Voice; a cheap audio system may suffer from this all the time.

# VOICE TO VOICE

Social interaction can take place through electronically transmitted two-way speech, either low-definition (old-style analog telephones, low-bandwidth radio) or high-definition (channels good enough to carry music). Magical voice projection can have similar effects.

Appearance and Charisma don't work via even high-definition voice, except that Charisma still adds to Public Speaking skill. Neither does Status conveyed by clothing or possessions. Visible signs of Social Stigma also have no effect, but accented speech linked to a poorly regarded ethnic group, or uneducated speech, still cause reaction penalties. Voice gives full benefit over high-definition channels, and half benefit over low-definition; the penalties from Disturbing Voice are affected the same way.

Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, and Savoir-Faire are fully effective over voice channels. Intimidation is *possible,* but size and Appearance don't affect it, and it's very difficult to display

# TEXT

Text communication ranges from handwritten notes to texting on a phone, or more futuristic options such as brain-controlled texting. The response to written messages isn't affected by Appearance, Charisma, Voice, or the usual visible signs of Social Status. For *handwritten* text, Artist (Calligraphy) skill can give +2 to reactions on a successful roll, or complement a skill roll. Social Stigma (Uneducated) will come through in the language and organization of a message. The use of expensive text media such as high-quality stationery can provide bonuses (see *Styling,* p. 19).

Diplomacy, Politics, and Savoir-Faire are fully effective via text. Intimidation and Sex Appeal are possible, but as with voice to voice (above), most of the usual modifiers don't apply! Deception (pp. 36-39) through Acting is fully effective; Fast-Talk is at -2 for fast two-way channels such as texting, but at -5 for one-way messages such as spam or physical letters, which don't compel quick response. Streetwise doesn't work at all via text.

# TEAM EFFORTS

A small group may engage in expressive or persuasive activities together. In contrast to the use of complementary skills (p. 21), where each member of a team contributes a different skill, this kind of group activity has everyone using the same skill. This applies, for example, to the performing arts, where everyone might be using Dancing, Musical Instrument, Performance, Singing, or Stage Combat. There are several ways to organize such a group activity.

## *Leaderless Groups*

A very small group can coordinate its efforts spontaneously, without a leader.

1. Compute the average skill of all the members (round down). If the performers are all NPCs, the GM may assign them a rating of Novice (effective skill 10), Trained (effective skill 12), Good (effective skill 14), or Elite (effective skill 16).

2. Apply a penalty to effective skill based on the number of members, as follows: In the *Size and Speed/Range Table* (p. B550), look up the size up the team in the "Linear Measurement" column; the modifier is the corresponding number in the "Speed/Range" column. (For example, five jazz musicians sit down to jam together; the penalty for "5 yards" is -2, so they are all at -2 to Musical Instrument skill.) If the group's members have the Teamwork perk (p. 79) *and* there are 12 members or less, this penalty does not apply. Larger groups cannot benefit from Teamwork without a focal performer or leader.

3. Apply a -2 unfamiliarity (p. B169) penalty for any work they have not performed before (as a team), until they have rehearsed it together eight times – how long this takes will depend on how long the work is! For an unusually simple or complex work the GM may vary the required number.

### Groups With a Focal Performer

In larger groups, one performer is likely to be the focus of the audience's attention. Following his lead allows more effective group performance.

1. Compute the average skill of all the members *except the focal performer*.

2. Apply a penalty for group size, as above, but based on the *half* the number of members (round down). This is waived for a group with the Teamwork perk, regardless of size.

3. Use the average skill of the nonfocal performers as a complementary skill (p. 21) – but if there are at least two nonfocal performers, *double* the complementary skill modifier.

4. Use the skill of the focal performer (which may be the same skill that the other performers are using) as the master skill, applying the bonus or penalty from step 3.

5. Apply any unfamiliarity penalties to the master skill, as above.

### Formal Leadership

Some performing groups have a formal leader or supervisor, whose primary function is to coordinate the group. This requires a *directive skill:* some form of Group Performance for a group of actors, dancers, or musicians; Leadership for long cons and other real-world deceptions (see p. 36); and so on. The group may or may not have a focal performer as well. This situation uses the rules above, except as follows:

● The performance skill of the group has no penalty for group size. They don't need the Teamwork perk.

● Roll vs. the directive skill as a complementary skill to the master skill (if there is a focal performer) or the average skill (if not).

● The usual unfamiliarity penalties apply to a new work. If a group and a leader have not previously worked together, both the directive skill and the performance skill have unfamiliarity penalties until they have worked together for two weeks.

# COMPETITIVE INFLUENCE

Rather than a single person trying to influence another person or a group, and succeeding or failing, two people may oppose each other in trying to influence an audience. This is a *competitive Influence roll* (see *That's Not What It Means,* p. 30). The basic mechanics are as follows:

1. You and your *rival* are trying to gain a favorable response from a *subject*. Both of you roll against the Influence skill you are using; the subject rolls against Will.

2. Your roll is compared to your rival's as a Quick Contest. The subject will consider the offer or argument made by the winner. If this contest is a tie, the subject can't decide in favor of either, and has a Neutral reaction to both.

3. The winner's roll is matched against the subject's Will, as in a standard Influence roll. If the influencer wins, the subject has a Good reaction (Very Good for Sex Appeal) to the winner and a Neutral reaction to the rival; otherwise, the subject has a Bad reaction to both.

Some types of competitive Influence rolls have modified mechanics, or allow more complex strategies, as discussed below.

If one of the rivals is a PC, good roleplaying by the player is worth +1 to +3 to effective skill in any contest, at the GM's discretion; see *Throw Away This Book!* (p. 73) for more.

## COMMERCIAL RIVALRY

Two merchants can compete to sell to the same buyer. They roll against Merchant skill; the buyer rolls against Will.

*Modifiers:* The merchants have +1 per 10% below fair sale price, or -1 per 10% above. They may use complementary skills or manipulation; see *Haggling* (pp. 27-28) for details. The subject takes -1 to -4 for Compulsive Spending (p. B129).

The winner of the contest makes the sale at the offered price. If there is no winner, the merchants have the option of making new offers, which must be at prices more favorable to the customer. This can lead to a new competitive Influence roll, or to one merchant dropping out and the other trying to make the sale.

If the prospective buyer isn't interested or isn't able to pay, sales attempts automatically fail.

## DEBATE

A formal debate is a contest conducted before an audience (see also *Trials,* p. 54). The debaters roll vs. Public Speaking – or vs. Writing, to debate in print or online text (*Text,* p. 33). The GM rolls vs. the average Will of the audience. The following modifiers apply:

*Audience Predisposition:* +1 to +5 for the debater favoring a position the audience prefers; -1 to -5 for one opposing it.

*Complementary Skills* (p. 21): A knowledge skill for the debate's subject may be used; e.g., someone debating economics could use Current Affairs (Business), Economics, or Finance as a complementary skill. If the subject is known ahead of time, Research may always complement the roll.

*Reputation of the Debater:* If it relates to how knowledgeable or trustworthy he is, and the audience recognizes him as such.

The debater with the larger margin of success "wins" the debate, in the sense of making a better case. However, he may leave the audience unconvinced, if he gets a Bad reaction.

### Disputation

If the debaters are having a serious exchange of views, as in a scholarly colloquium, or the medieval practice of *disputation* – not just a contest to win over an audience – a really good argument may change one of their minds. To see if this happens, roll a second Quick Contest, this time of the debate winner's skill vs. the loser's Will, but with the following changes:

● The winner's score is his margin of victory over the loser, *or* his margin of success on his own roll, whichever is smaller.

● The loser's score is his margin of success against his own Will (at +3 if he has Extreme Fanaticism).

Compare these two scores to see who wins. If the loser of the debate wins or the two tie, there is no special effect. If the winner of the debate wins, however, the loser is in doubt about his position and will be at -2 to argue for it for a number of days equal to the winner's margin of victory. If the loser is a PC, the GM may waive the penalty if the player can come up with an interesting new argument against the winner's position.

If the winner of the debate wins the Quick Contest by 5 or more, or if the loser suffered a critical failure, the loser is deeply shaken and *cannot* argue for his position. This continues until the player or the GM comes up with an argument against the winner's position, or until the loser adopts the winner's position.

### Dialectic

Debaters may focus not on proving their own positions, but on undermining the positions of their opponents. This is the technique of Irony (p. 81), made famous by Socrates (and also known as the Socratic method). The debater uses *negative arguments* to cast doubt on the possibility of resolving the issue. This lowers his own effective skill (-1 to -5, as he chooses, but not lower than effective skill 10), but *also* raises the effective Will of the audience by the same margin, making them less likely to find his opponent convincing.

In disputation, a debater who uses Irony raises *his own* effective Will as well, making it less likely that his opponent will convince him.

# WIT, MOCKERY, AND INSULTS

An alternative to reasoned argument is the exchange of insults, such as "doing the dozens" (or "the dirty dozens") in American black culture, or a duel of epigrams and literary allusions in an aristocratic French salon. The contenders show off both their quickness of wit and their immunity to mockery. These aren't serious insults intended to start a fight (for that, see *Provoking and Taunting,* pp. 69-70); a contender who becomes violent or seriously angry has lost the contest, but so has one whose insults go over the line.

Insult contests work like debates (pp. 34-35), with the following changes:

● The rivals can use either Public Speaking (to come up with imaginative responses) or Fast-Talk (to pressure one's opponent with quick responses). Contests in print or online can also substitute Writing.

● Many contests allow Poetry as a complementary skill – a rhymed insult stings more and sticks longer.

● Knowledge skills and Research have no effect. However, with a suitable audience, Literature can be used as a complementary skill to come up with apt quotations.

● Whether Reputation affects the roll depends on the audience's biases.

● If the more successful contender wins his Quick Contest against audience Will, he gains a temporary +2 Reputation.

● Whatever the audience reaction, the less successful contender must back down.

● If a contender achieves a critical success, his opponent loses his self-control and shames himself in some way – physical violence, inarticulate shouts of anger, or stunned silence. If a contender suffers a critical failure, he says something that

crosses the line, giving his opponent fair cause for violence, threats, a challenge to a duel, or walking out. Either causes a lasting -1 Reputation among the witnesses and their friends. Matching critical successes, or matching critical failures, cancel out.

● Anyone with Bad Temper or Bully must make a self-control roll when engaging in an insult contest. If he fails, his opponent's first normal success is treated as a critical success (for Bad Temper) or his own first normal failure is treated as a critical failure (for Bully).

● If the winner has Rapier Wit (p. B79), the loser suffers its usual effects.

# ROMANTIC RIVALRY

A classic plot of fiction and drama is two lovers pursuing the same beloved. Two forms are possible: *courtship* (pp. 40-41) aims at attaining a lasting relationship; *seduction,* discussed here, aims at immediate gratification.

Skills available to the rival seducers include Fast-Talk (for clever lines), Sex Appeal (for overt physical attraction), and Savoir-Faire (High Society) or Streetwise (in the appropriate social milieus). Dancing can serve as an Influence skill for this purpose, if the situation allows for it. Apply the following modifiers:

*Complementary Skills* (p. 21): A rival can use Carousing, Dancing, Poetry, or Singing, or other skills with a good story to justify them. This can easily lead to *opposed* complementary skills – for example, to see who's the better dancer or can write the more eloquent sonnet. In addition, the ability to monitor a person's emotional state (*Motives,* p. 25) can be used as a complementary skill *at the same time.*

*Gifts:* Use the rules for *Bribery* (pp. 48-49), though presenting them as payments will be taken as an insult.

*He don't love you like I love you*
*If he did, he wouldn't break your heart*
*He don't love you like I love you*
*He's tryin' to tear us apart*
*– Jerry Butler,*
*"He Will Break Your Heart"*

The subject rolls against Will. If the more appealing rival wins the Quick Contest, his approach succeeds. If he loses, he is coldly rejected: -2 on further reactions, though a sincere apology can remove this penalty. In such a case, roll against the subject's Will *again,* to see if the other rival does any better.

If the successful rival used Sex Appeal, the result is a Very Good reaction: things get physical, usually in private (*Fade to Black,* p. 29). Otherwise, the result is a Good reaction: an agreement to meet in private. In a "fade to black" campaign, this counts as success; in other campaigns, it gives an opportunity to make further advances (see *Influence Skills,* p. 30).

# DECEPTION

A special category of social interaction is *deception:* inducing another person to believe things that aren't true, or to misjudge what's in his own interest. Most of the rules in this section assume one-on-one deception. But it's also possible to apply complementary skills (p. 21) to deception, or to engage in it as a team effort (pp. 33-34). Many classic confidence games (p. 38) involve one or the other. The "group performance" skill for serious attempts to deceive or mislead is Leadership.

In a cinematic campaign, the wildcard skill Fake! (p. 81) can be used for most forms of deceptive behavior.

## Subtlety

Sometimes you want to influence a person without other people noticing; e.g., to get a favor from a guard. You may take a subtle approach – using hints, exchanges of glances, etc. – by penalizing your Influence skill.

For every -1 you accept to the Influence skill, bystanders' Perception or Observation rolls to notice the attempt are at -1. You may offset these penalties with the Hinting (p. 81) technique. You may not reduce your final roll to less than 10.

If the Influence roll fails *because of the penalty,* it results in a Neutral reaction – the subject *didn't notice* the hints.

*Example:* Lillian is attending a dance in Annapolis. As a well-brought-up young lady of the 1920s, she's careful of her reputation. However, she finds one of the cadets, Robert, quite attractive. When he's introduced, she offers him her hand, and her fingers linger in his. She rolls against Hinting (Sex Appeal)-14 at -4, at +1 for her Fashion Sense and +3 as Robert is actively looking for companionship, for a net 14 or less. The chaperones are at -4 to Perception to notice.

## DISTRACTIONS

For a person engaged in concealed or covert action, it can be helpful to have other people's attention directed elsewhere. Influence skills and other social skills can create distractions. Treat them as complementary (p. 21) to Filch, Holdout, Pickpocket, Shadowing, Sleight of Hand, Smuggling, or Stealth. Distraction can also complement Counterfeiting or Forgery to keep forged documents or false currency from being examined too closely. For distractions in combat situations, see *Creating a Distraction* (p. 70.)

Ordinarily one person does the distracting, while a different person benefits. But it's possible for the same person to do both!

*Acting* and *Fast-Talk* are the primary distraction skills. Fast-Talk covers using conversation to keep *your own* physical actions from being noticed. It also works for quick, improvised distractions that benefit other people. Staged or preplanned distractions, such as a woman with a distressed child or an angry customer with a complaint, use Acting.

*Intimidation* uses anger and threats; even if a guard isn't afraid of the threatener, he needs to evaluate how much of a danger he is. The threatener usually doesn't intend to carry out the threat; if he's not *capable* of doing so, treat it as specious intimidation (*Manipulation,* p. 37). While one person is shouting and waving his fists, another person can sneak past a guard.

*Performance* or *Public Speaking* provides distraction in stage acts; for example, a stage magician can use Public Speaking to complement Sleight of Hand.

*Savoir-Faire (High Society)* complements Counterfeiting or Forgery to pass fake currency or forged papers, or Holdout or Smuggling to discourage thorough searches of possessions.

*Sex Appeal* is a very effective distraction . . . against a person who's potentially interested! Someone with the Sexy Pose Shtick (p. 78) can use it to make a searcher careless without overt provocation.

*Stage Combat* goes a step beyond Intimidation: Two allies get into a simulated fight, which has to be broken up. To make the act more effective, use Group Performance (Fight Choreography) to plan the fight in advance (see *Team Efforts,* pp. 33-34). Pseudo-combatants with High Pain Threshold can get an extra +3 to Stage Combat if they strike harder blows against each other – but they each end the fight with 1d-3 (minimum 1) points of injury.

## LIES

The basic skills for telling lies are Acting and Fast-Talk. Acting is needed to sustain a falsehood over time, rather than affecting a single decision. This requires keeping a series of falsehoods consistent. Fast-Talk is not limited to plausible claims; it confuses the target, making him unable to judge how plausible a claim is, or unsure what's being claimed.

It's also possible simply to make a false statement, without a skill roll; whether it's believed depends on a simple reaction roll (*Giving Information,* p. 28). To pass muster without a skill roll, a lie must be a simple, clear, and plausible claim that affects a single decision.

The victim of a *plausible* lie will go on believing it until given reason for doubt. The confusion caused by Fast-Talk will eventually clear up, allowing the victim to realize that something's not right – but only after it's too late to do any good!

Various complementary skills can make a lie more convincing:

- Electronics Operation (Media) or Photography to fake photographs.
- Filch, Pickpocket, or Sleight of Hand to plant physical evidence.
- Forgery to fake documents.
- Makeup to simulate injuries.
- Tracking to lay a false trail.

### Spotting Lies

To tell if another person is lying, use one of the following traits:

*Empathy* allows a roll vs. IQ (or IQ-3, with Sensitive) to perceive whether someone is lying. This is a direct read of the liar's emotional state; no Contest of skills is involved. The subject must be physically present, but need not be visible.

*Body Language* grants the same benefits as Empathy, but only with a visible subject. Since it depends on visual signs, it can be resisted with a Quick Contest of Body Language vs. Acting.

*Detect Lies* can be used with any form of spoken (or signed) communication; roll at -3 for text. Depending on the type of lie, it can be resisted as a Quick Contest vs. IQ, Acting, or Fast-Talk.

*Modifiers:* +4 if the subject is Easy to Read. +3 to Detect Lies if Body Language is successfully used first. +3 to Body Language or Detect Lies for having Empathy (or +1 for Sensitive), but not if Empathy was used actively to detect the same lie; empaths may make an active roll *or* claim this passive bonus, not both.

# MANIPULATION

Manipulation puts a person into a state of mind that encourages him to act as the manipulator wishes. In **GURPS** terms, this involves using a *manipulation skill* to obtain a bonus to an Influence roll or other skill roll. The mechanics are as follows:

1. Roll a Quick Contest of the manipulation skill against the IQ of the target.

2. If the manipulator wins, the Influence roll (or other skill roll) that follows receives a bonus: +3 unless otherwise specified. If he ties or loses, he *automatically* loses the Influence roll also, and the target's reaction is Very Bad, not just Bad!

3. Winning or losing the modified Influence roll has the normal effect.

The **Basic Set** describes one form of manipulation: specious intimidation (p. B202). There, the manipulation skill is Fast-Talk and the Influence skill is Intimidation. The same mechanic can be applied to other Influence skills as well; e.g., to Diplomacy to misrepresent the goals of a negotiation, or to Sex Appeal to feign passion.

Several different skills can be used to manipulate people:

*Acting* is used to give false impressions of the actor's emotions, character, or goals over a span of time; e.g., a seducer pretending emotional as well as physical interest.

*Fast-Talk* allows short-term pretense that doesn't need to be sustained; e.g., specious intimidation.

*Propaganda* covers selective presentation of evidence; e.g., a political debater who picks hardship cases to support his argument against a policy.

*Psychology (Applied)* is knowing how to use people's emotions or ways of thinking against them; e.g., spotting a rival's sore point in an insult contest. The goal is to spot a character flaw, typically the target's most obvious mental disadvantage (see below). If this disadvantage causes a reaction modifier, it's easy to spot; the Psychology roll takes a bonus equal to the *size* of the modifier.

When using Psychology this way, the manipulation bonus depends on the target's "worst" mental disadvantage, as determined below. In all cases, only use the best applicable bonus.

● A mental disadvantage that requires self-control rolls (pp. B120-121): +1 for 15 or less, +2 for 12 or less, +3 for 9 or less, or +4 for 6 or less.

● A mental disadvantage that has varying severity in some other form than self-control rolls, but is *not* open-ended: +2 for the first "level" of the disadvantage, and another +1 for each additional level. For example, Shyness (Mild) gives +2; Shyness (Severe), +3; and Shyness (Crippling), +4.

● Any other mental disadvantage (not quirks) or the Single-Minded advantage (because it imposes penalties to notice interruptions): +2.

● Quirks only or no mental disadvantages at all: +1.

# FALSE IDENTITIES

Impersonating another person can involve several different skills. The same skills apply to several other ways of playing a role: *assumed identity,* or pretending to be someone who doesn't really exist (like a spy in deep cover); *social pretension,* or pretending to higher or lower Status, but in your own name; and *cultivating a persona* (discussed on p. 61). A new roll is required with each change of scene that introduces a new group, or one important new person. The GM may also require a new roll when the stakes of success or failure are high.

*Acting* is the master skill for imitating the personality, mannerisms, conversation, and body language of another person, or of a different social class.

*Disguise* is required when you have to look right. It's sufficient when all you have to do is look right (for example, being photographed, or sitting still in public view).

*Mimicry* is required when your voice has to sound right. It's sufficient for reading or reciting a prepared speech via phone, radio, or audio recording.

If more than one of these skills is required, roll vs. the lowest (at default, if necessary). This is resolved as a Quick Contest; see below for the details of each skill.

In addition to the above, *Forgery* allows the manufacture of false credentials (p. 39), which may be helpful or even *required* for the role.

## Walk the Walk

If Acting is the decisive skill, roll a Quick Contest vs. the highest IQ in the group you're trying to deceive. For compatibility with Disguise and Mimicry, this Quick Contest *replaces* the "±1 per point of IQ difference" rule (p. B174); don't apply that modifier. The GM may adopt this approach as an alternative rule, or continue to use the standard rule, when only Acting skill is involved. Modifiers to Acting are as follows:

*Cultural Obfuscation:* +3 if you are pretending to the Status of someone from a background the people you're trying to fool aren't familiar with.

*Their Knowledge of Subject:* -5 to fool people who know the subject, or -10 if they know him *well* (e.g., immediate family or close friends).

*Your Knowledge of Subject:* -5 to impersonate a specific person you don't know well, or -3 to assume an persona you haven't practiced previously. Rehearsed Role (p. 79) removes this penalty completely.

If the Status of the role you're playing is different from your own, your skill in Savoir-Faire (High Society) is often relevant. This defaults to Savoir-Faire (Servant)-2; those who serve the upper classes may be able to imitate them! Streetwise can take the place of Savoir-Faire to fit in with negative-Status people in a rough urban neighborhood. The GM may allow such variants as using Savoir-Faire (Police) to pretend to Police Rank rather than Status.

Savoir-Faire interacts with Acting in the following ways:

*If you are **not** assuming a specific identity:* When pretending to Status up to three levels higher or lower than your own, you *may* substitute Savoir-Faire (High Society) for Acting. For more than three levels of Status difference, you *must* use Savoir-Faire (High Society) in place of Acting.

*If you **are** assuming a specific identity:* If you are pretending to Status more than three levels higher or lower than your own, you must make a successful Acting roll *and* win a Quick Contest of Savoir-Faire (High Society) vs. the IQ of those you're trying to fool!

If you are playing a person of negative Status when you have positive Status, or vice versa, your Savoir-Faire (High Society) roll is at -2.

## Talk the Talk

If Mimicry (Speech) is the decisive skill, roll a Quick Contest vs. the highest IQ in the group you are trying to fool. Modifiers to Mimicry are as follows:

*Imitating a Specific Person:* -3
*Imitating an Accent:* +2 if you're familiar with it, and you may substitute an unmodified Acting or Linguistics roll for Mimicry. -2 if you are unfamiliar with it (p. B169); familiarity takes 8 hours of study.

You *must* have Native comprehension of a language to fake an accent. To impersonate a subject, you *must* speak the language he uses at least as well as he does (usually Native). If not, the Mimicry roll fails automatically.

If you claim to belong to a high- or low-Status group from somewhere else, you don't need Mimicry; no one will expect you to sound like the locals. But watch out for people who really come from your supposed home!

## Look the Part

If Disguise is the decisive skill, roll a Quick Contest vs. the highest Per in the group you are trying to fool. Another person can disguise you, if his skill is better than yours, but he has to restore the disguise daily (magical or ultra-tech disguises may not require this). Modifiers to Disguise are as follows:

*Distinctive Appearance:* -1 to -5 if you're trying to look like a person with a very different appearance. This can include penalties from traits that create a distinctive appearance, such as build-related disadvantages (pp. B18-19), Distinctive Features (p. B165), or Unnatural Features (p. B22). The GM may assign further penalties for age, race, or sex, or for unusual looks in general. Passing Appearance (p. 78) can avoid some penalties of this type.
*Equipment:* +1 for a disguise kit (p. B289). Superior or specialized equipment may give higher bonuses.
*Familiarity:* -2 if unfamiliar with the subculture and social class you're dressing for. This it can be removed with a week's study of the target group, with no point cost.

# Classic Confidence Games

The principles of deception have been applied for centuries by confidence men. The GM may want to consider allowing the purchase of these routines as techniques; if so, they start at the base skill(s) and have a maximum of skill+4. For a con involving several distinct roles, the techniques are Average and are specialized by skill; one-person cons are Hard techniques. Here's a sample of some widely used cons:

*Badger Game:* Involves a romantically appealing supplicant (Sex Appeal) and an apparent spouse or partner able to threaten violence, legal action, or embarrassment (Intimidation). Acting can complement (p. 21) either primary skill; in most badger games the threat can't really be carried out, so the "spouse" needs Fast-Talk for specious intimidation (see *Manipulation,* p. 37). The supplicant pleads with the mark for help, asks him to meet with her privately, and invites sexual advances; when he responds, the "spouse" shows up and makes threats – but is willing to be bought off. See *Blackmail and Espionage* (p. 49).

*Good Samaritan:* Involves a thief or robber (Stealth) and an apparent rescuer (Acting, sometimes Stage Combat). The thief sneaks up on the mark, takes his wallet (or her purse) with a Quick Contest of DX or ST, and runs. (Don't use Pickpocket skill; in this con the thief is *trying* to be noticed!) The rescuer pursues the thief, and comes back a few minutes later with the wallet, making an Acting roll. On a success, the victim presses a reward on the "reluctant" rescuer; on success by 5 or more, the victim writes a check for more than the cash in the wallet.

*Shell Game:* Involves a dealer/operator (Fast-Talk; Sleight of Hand) and a crowd of shills (Acting). Sleight of Hand is not part of the deceptive technique, but a prerequisite for it; it can be improved as a separate, Hard technique. In the classical form (shown in early Renaissance paintings), the operator hides a pea under one of three shells, moves the shells around quickly on a flat surface, and invites the mark to bet on which shell hides the pea – but actually palms the pea during the shuffle, so that it's not under any of the shells. The shills encourage the mark to bet; with a reluctant mark, one may "bet" and "win" (roll vs. Acting+5 to make this look convincing; treat as a complementary skill to Fast-Talk). A similar game with cards is known as *Find the Lady* or *Three-Card Monte*.

*Spanish Prisoner:* Invented in the 19th century, this has been adapted to the Internet as the Nigerian *419 Fraud*. Can be carried out by a single person, the apparent agent (Acting). The agent claims to be acting for an imprisoned nobleman with a vast fortune that he can't get to until he's freed; freeing him requires paying ransom, bribes to officials, or other expenses – but as an honorable man, he'll reward his ally generously! (With a romantic mark, the story can be embellished with a beautiful and grateful daughter.) Secrecy, of course, is essential. Once the mark buys in, "difficulties" come up, and continue until the mark catches on or is cleaned out. The 419 fraud typically involves the bank account of a deposed foreign official whose family need help in getting access to it, and ask for the mark's electronic funds transfer codes.

*Nonspecific Identity:* +4 if you don't have to look like a specific individual, but only like a person from the right social class and background.

*Traits:* +1 for Fashion Sense, but only if you have the chance to observe the style of dress and grooming for the person or group you're imitating. +4 for Elastic Skin.

If you want to play a high-Status role, you have to have suitable clothes and accessories. This can get expensive! There are several ways to limit the cost:

● Invest in *one* higher-Status outfit. If the same person sees you wearing it more than once, make a Fast-Talk-based Influence roll to keep them from thinking about it, at a cumulative -2 for each incident after the first.

● Rent the clothes you need. A Per-based roll against Area Knowledge, or by someone local against Connoisseur (Fashion), Disguise, Merchant, or Savoir-Faire (High Society or Servant), will identify where you rented them.

● Find a cheap source. This takes a Scrounging roll. Ordinary success allows a substantial discount, or gives you an opportunity to beg, borrow, or steal them, as the GM thinks amusing; on a critical success you get them for nothing.

● Tailor inexpensive clothes to look better. This requires a Sewing roll at -1 per level of added apparent Status.

● Make new clothes, from fine fabrics, with an unmodified Sewing roll. Materials cost 20% of the list price, or less if you make a Scrounging roll.

● Get what you need from a Contact or Patron.

If you have Fashion Sense, you can disregard issues of cost. Anything you buy, scrounge, or make will look classy or trendy. But you still need to make the Disguise+4 roll to carry it off!

## Faked Credentials

Playing a part can sometimes be aided by fraudulent documents. Normally you won't present such documents; bringing out a patent of nobility or a diploma with each new person you meet is more likely to cause suspicion than relieve it. But in some circumstances, a Forgery roll can complement (p. 21) the skill you're using to pretend to higher (or *sometimes* lower) Status or Rank.

If documents proving your Status or Rank are *required,* roll vs. Forgery to see if they pass inspection, in addition to rolling vs. one of the three previously discussed skills. If you don't have them, roll vs. Forgery to create them – but the GM may impose a penalty for a rush job (pp. B196, B346). You may substitute Computer Hacking or its realistic equivalents to create electronic documents. A Contact or Patron may be able to supply false (or even real!) documents. As a last resort, to talk your way around not having them, see *Lies* (pp. 36-37) – but a successful lie often means only that your lack of documentation doesn't cause suspicion, not that you gain acceptance. Adventurers with Zeroed are likely to face such situations.

# CONTINUING RELATIONSHIPS

Good reaction rolls, or successful Influence rolls, can lead to a lasting relationship, as an NPC becomes an employee, friend, mentor, or even spouse. *GURPS* provides rules defining such continuing relationships. There are three basic types:

● A close relationship of personal trust: spouses in a loving marriage, mentor and student, business partners. See *Building Trust* (pp. 40-41).

● A voluntary relationship formed without long acquaintance: spouses in an arranged marriage, employer and employee, traveling companions. Based on a loyalty roll.

● An involuntary relationship: master and slave, spouses in a forced marriage. Based on a loyalty roll with special modifiers.

## PERSONAL LOYALTY

*Loyalty* is determined when a continuing relationship is established, ordinarily by making a reaction roll (*Loyalty Results,* p. 76). Record the numerical loyalty score for later reference (see *Loyalty in Play,* p. 43). Modifiers include the following:

*Circumstances:* The GM may apply any bonus or penalty that's relevant to the proposed relationship.

*Especially Attractive Positions/Relationships:* +2 to +6. This applies if the PC works for a cause or follows a code of conduct the NPC personally believes in; if the NPC respects the PC greatly (for example, as a leader, priest, or teacher); or if the NPC has actively sought out the relationship.

*Ethical Conflict:* -2 or worse if the NPC's personal ethics are opposed to the relationship. The GM may even rule that an NPC is totally opposed to a relationship and would never enter it willingly.

*Jobs:* +1 per 10% by which pay exceeds the going rate, or -1 per 10% by which it falls short.

*Judging Motives:* +3 if the PC can judge the NPC's attitude or emotional state (*Motives,* p. 25) and pick an applicant with a good attitude.

In involuntary relationships, loyalty is both less predictable and usually less favorable. This imposes a further modifier on the loyalty roll, based on rolling 2d on the following table (based on the table on pp. B518-519):

| Roll | Result |
|---|---|
| 2-7 | No modifier. |
| 8 | He resents being forced into the relationship (enslaved for a crime, conscripted for a war he opposes, forced to marry, etc.): -1 to loyalty. |
| 9 | As above, but -2 to loyalty. |
| 10 | His previous situation was one of cruel treatment or desperate hardship. If he is treated with kindness during the first week, apply +2 to loyalty; otherwise, no change. |
| 11 | He has a fanatic hatred of this particular involuntary relationship or of coercion generally. If treated well, he may like the PCs as people, but will still escape as soon as possible. If treated badly (or even "average" for his roll), his loyalty drops to 6. |

| Roll | Result |
|---|---|
| 12 | He considers himself ethically bound to his duties, or otherwise is unwilling to resist their imposition. This is represented as a mental disadvantage such as Code of Honor, Cowardice (for a prisoner terrified of his cellmates), Selfless, Sense of Duty, or Slave Mentality. His loyalty is automatically 20. You need never check loyalty; he will not demur, even if given orders that condemn him to death. |

The GM may allow an Influence roll, made after a week of interaction, to replace the reaction roll for loyalty. This should be made against the primary skill used to interact with the NPC: Administration or Leadership for an employer, Psychology (Applied) for a therapist, Religious Ritual for a priest, Teaching for a teacher, and so on. Diplomacy is always an alternative, and can be used in roles that aren't defined by a skill, such as spouse. Savoir-Faire or Streetwise can also be used in appropriate settings. All reaction modifiers apply. Success achieves a Good (loyalty score 15) reaction while failure creates a Bad (loyalty score 6) one – for a wider range of reactions, see *Expanded Influence Rolls* (p. 31).

Involuntary relationships can also be managed professionally. Influence rolls can be based on Intimidation – but it's not necessarily the best option! The special loyalty modifiers for involuntary relationships apply to these Influence rolls as well as to reaction rolls. A roll of 12 on the special loyalty modifier makes the Influence roll unnecessary: loyalty is automatically 20. After a roll of 11 on the special loyalty modifier, any attempt at Intimidation automatically results in loyalty 6.

> *His laptop's encrypted. Drug him and hit him with this $5 wrench until he tells us the password.*
>
> *– Randall Munroe, XKCD*

# BUILDING TRUST

There are several ways to find a suitable candidate for a relationship of personal trust:

- Personally searching (pp. 22-24) for someone suitable.
- Consulting a go-between (p. 24).
- Looking in your current social circle for someone likely to be interested (*Approachability*, p. 25).
- Strengthening an existing, less-committed relationship.

An immediate or hasty offer is likely to be poorly received! To avoid this, wait at least a month before making the offer, either after the initial meeting, or after the last offer was turned down. Acceptance can depend either on a reaction roll or on the use of an Influence skill (see below). As always, the GM may dictate an appropriate result regardless of the rolled result.

If making a *reaction roll,* use the same kind of roll as for a single encounter or short-term transaction. Apply any of the standard modifiers for that type of roll, plus the following:

*After a Successful Approachability Roll:* +1; +3 on a critical success.

*Diplomacy:* +1 if you know it, or +2 for a skill of 20+.

*Previous Transactions:* +2 if one or more short-term transactions between you have gone well.

*Rushing Things:* -2 if the offer is made less than a month since the initial meeting, or since a previous offer was rejected.

*Suitability:* From -4 to +4 if you are especially well- or ill-suited as a long-term partner or associate. This may be measured by a relevant Reputation, or by observed behavior in past encounters.

- On a Very Good or Excellent reaction, the subject accepts the offer. Note the reaction roll result as the loyalty score.
- On a Good, Neutral, or Poor reaction, subject declines the proposed relationship, but without prejudice. You may try again next month . . . or sooner, though you'll take the -2 for rushing things!
- On a Bad, Very Bad, or Disastrous reaction, the offer is rejected with prejudice: -5 to reaction rolls or Influence skills for later offers (not cumulative!)

If using an *Influence skill,* treat this as a Regular Contest (not a Quick Contest!) of your Influence skill against the subject's will, with an interval of one month. The points made in *That's Not What It Means,* p. 30, also apply to such Regular Contests. In a cinematic campaign, the wildcard skill Negotiator! (p. 81) can be used for this purpose.

Apply all modifiers for the Influence skill being used. In addition, apply all of the modifiers (for reaction rolls) above with the *exception* of the +1 or +2 for knowing Diplomacy.

- If the skill roll succeeds and the Will roll fails, the subject accepts the proposed relationship, with a loyalty score of 1d+15.
- If both rolls succeed, or both fail, the subject declines the offer, but without prejudice. You may try again next month without penalty.
- If the skill roll fails and the Will roll succeeds, the subject rejects the proposed relationship with prejudice. Further attempts are at -5 to effective skill or to reaction rolls (not cumulative!).

It's possible for two or more people to seek a lasting relationship with the same person. If only one person can have that relationship (as in courtship, in many societies), resolve the conflict as follows:

1. All those seeking the relationship roll against Influence skills.

2. The margins of success are ranked from best to worst. A critical success ranks above any normal success; a critical failure ranks below any normal failure.

3. Beginning with the highest ranked roll, resolve each offer as one stage of a Regular Contest of Influence skill against Will, as described above. Make a separate Will roll for each offer.

4. If an offer is accepted, stop rolling; no further offers will be considered, so whether they are rejected with prejudice is irrelevant.

5. If no offer is accepted, continue rolling vs. all the rivals whose Influence skill rolls failed; this determines which of them were rejected with prejudice (-5 to future attempts).

## Courtship

One obvious application of these rules is to the pursuit of a marriage or other lasting romantic relationship. In fact, other negotiations are often compared to courtship! For many cultures on Earth, it's assumed that the man courts the woman.

But even under such traditional customs, these rules can be used for a woman pursuing a man; if she wins the Regular Contest, she has induced him to declare himself. In addition to the modifiers discussed above, see *Romance* (pp. 28-29) for other factors that affect courtship.

In societies that accept premarital liaisons, such a liaison may lead to a permanent relationship; treat each liaison as a successful short-term transaction. In societies that place a high value on chastity, there's a sharp line between the two types of relationship, and a woman who's seeking marriage may have no interest in short-term relationships. In such a society, a suitor's false pretense of lasting love and a desire for marriage can be treated as manipulation (p. 37), using Fast-Talk (or sometimes Acting) to grant a bonus to Sex Appeal.

In societies that emphasize family authority, the consent of a woman's parents (especially her father) may be needed for marriage – or at least to get her dowry! This requires the man to seek her parents' blessing. Suitable skills for this include Diplomacy, Savoir-Faire, or (in some cases) Intimidation. The woman can help persuade her father with complementary skill rolls. At higher social levels, a marriage is as much a political alliance (pp. 65-66) as a personal relationship.

Some societies have arranged marriages where the woman is not consulted, and only her parents need to be persuaded. In this case, her loyalty (pp. 39-40) is rolled randomly. If the marriage isn't just arranged, but forced on her, use the special modifiers for involuntary relationships. A husband who wants a happy marriage may find it helpful to court his wife *after* the ceremony. In this case, her randomly rolled loyalty remains in effect until the courtship succeeds, at which point, it's replaced with the new score reflecting the outcome of the courtship. The same applies to the loyalty of a man who has a wife chosen for him by his family.

Some people may agree to marry, but without real commitment – whether to escape from a desperate situation, for personal gain, or on sudden impulse. This may be the result of a Good, Neutral, or Poor reaction; if so, treat the rolled reaction as a loyalty score. Or it may reflect mutual success or mutual failure in a Regular Contest; if so, roll loyalty randomly.

# RELATIONSHIP ADVANTAGES

Some lasting relationships are already established at the start of a campaign; the people involved are defined as Patrons, Allies, Contacts, Dependents, or Enemies. The points invested in it guarantee that the GM won't write it out of the story casually; the other person has become part of the PC's personal legend.

It's not always necessary to keep track of these points. For example, in a campaign based in a dojo or salle d'armes, the master might function like a Patron for all the PCs – but that relationship is a campaign premise, and doesn't distinguish one PC from another, any more than a required Duty would distinguish one soldier from another in a military campaign. Its point value can be ignored. On the other hand, if one PC has a wealthy friend who can pay for expeditions, or a network of informants to answer questions, that can distort the narrative of a campaign, giving that player more "camera time" than other players. The point cost of a Patron or Contact, and the NPC's frequency of appearance, help to keep this under control.

Points alone aren't enough to acquire a new Patron, Ally, or Contact! A *willing* Ally or Patron normally has Very Good or Excellent loyalty – so for a new one, this has to be first established in play, whether by a loyalty roll (pp. 39-40), building trust (p. 40), or other loyalty changes. In addition, *any* voluntary relationship must be roleplayed for at least a session or two before points can be spent on it. If a player has met these requirements, the GM has the option of simply awarding the new relationship without requiring that bonus character points be spent to acquire it (*Social Traits as Rewards,* p. 17).

## Finding a Master

"Loyalty" normally refers to a subordinate's attitude to a superior, or sometimes to a bond between equals. But a superior can be devoted to a subordinate: a teacher to his student, a parent to his child, even a god to his worshiper. For example, when an adventurer asks to study swordplay or spells under a master of those skills, a loyalty roll can determine the master's attitude toward the student. Some masters take on only a few students, after long examination; see *Building Trust* (pp. 40-41). This is a classic theme in martial arts novels and films!

If the student shows real dedication to the art, or earns the master's respect for his character, it's worth +2 to the reaction roll or Influence skill.

### Patrons

*Patrons* (pp. B72-74) don't join in adventures; rather, they're called on for help and support. A Patron can usually provide funds or resources for a mission. Normally, getting help requires going to the Patron, but a Highly Accessible Patron can be called upon from anywhere.

Patrons provide generalized rather than specialized support (comparable to *The Benefits of Rank,* pp. 51-52), so they normally have multiple skills and advantages. A Patron *can* be written up as a character, but this isn't required; the GM can make up suitable capabilities as needed. An organizational Patron is always treated this way; the extent of its support is defined by its wealth level.

Patrons usually can take care of themselves. But adventurers with a Patron often have a Duty to the Patron; unless the Duty is nonhazardous, it will require taking risks. In some campaigns, everyone with a given Patron is *required* to take a Duty to it.

Individual Patrons are normally trustworthy (Good loyalty) and expect loyalty in return. Unwilling Patrons are an exception; they roll loyalty randomly, using the modifiers for involuntary relationships (pp. 39-40).

Patrons with character sheets are built on high point totals, starting at 150% of PC starting points. The base cost for this, 10 points, is the same as that for Allies built on 10 points. In some campaigns, a lower-cost "Patron" is appropriate: 5 points for 100% of PC starting points or 100× starting wealth. This could be, for example, a spirit with Special Abilities who's bound to a fixed location; a highly skilled professional who can't leave his job to have adventures; or a private business, neighborhood church, or small school. Rarely, even lower base costs might be used: 3 points for 75% of PC points or 20× starting wealth, 2 points for 50% or 5×, 1 point for 25% or 2×.

## Contacts

*Contacts,* like Patrons, do not go on adventures. A standard Contact provides one skill or one specialized type of favor. Favors from Contacts must be small (any two of "quick," "non-hazardous," and "inexpensive").

A Contact is never written up as a character and has no defined character point cost. His single skill is actually an *effective* skill based on the Contact's own relationships, access to organizational resources, and knowledge of complementary skills.

Unlike Patrons, Contacts are not necessarily loyal. A Contact's loyalty reflects his reliability: Good for Completely Reliable, Neutral for Usually Reliable, Poor for Somewhat Reliable, or Bad for Unreliable. An *unwilling* Contact should be treated as Unreliable.

In some campaigns, a Contact might have effective skill higher than 21; this could apply to a specialized god or the world's greatest master of some esoteric art. For every +3 to effective skill, increase the base cost of the Contact by 1.

A cinematic campaign may allow the Contacts! (p. 77) advantage.

## Allies and Adventuring Companions

*Allies* do go along on adventures, and have continuing interaction with PCs. Their abilities and personalities need to be fully defined, so they have character sheets that include a variety of skills. The point value for Allies is limited to 150% of PC starting points. A higher point value would risk having the Allies take over the campaign, sidelining the PCs – which wouldn't be any fun! (Nonsentient Allies don't have this limit, but they aren't really "relationships.")

Allies normally have Very Good loyalty and expect loyalty in return. An Ally is primarily there to provide help, but if he gets into trouble, he has to be gotten out. This doesn't apply to a Minion or an Unwilling Ally. An Unwilling Ally has Very Bad or Disastrous loyalty. A Minion with Slave Mentality automatically has loyalty 20; roll loyalty for other Minions randomly, applying the modifiers for involuntary relationships (pp. 39-40). The concept of loyalty doesn't apply to a nonsentient Minion.

An Ally built on 25% of the starting points of an extremely powerful PC (such as a demigod or super) may be inconveniently powerful. Campaigns with high starting points can permit lower limits with fractional base costs, which are multiplied for frequency of appearance and size of group, then rounded up:

| Ally Point Total | Cost |
|---|---|
| 5% | 0.2 point |
| 10% | 0.4 point |
| 15% | 0.6 point |
| 20% | 0.8 point |

Player characters who are adventuring companions can't be Allies. However, if they have Sense of Duty (Adventuring Companions), they're required to behave like loyal Allies toward each other. In some campaigns, the GM may require all PCs to take this trait, to ensure party unity.

## Employees

*Employees* are acquired with cash, not points; the PC pays their salaries. Finding a new employee requires a search (*Hirelings,* p. 22). Like Allies, employees may take part in adventures; like Contacts, they provide one skill, or a small range of skills, or perform small services. It's not necessary to provide a full character sheet for an employee.

Roll loyalty (pp. 39-40) for an employee randomly. Employers don't have to take special care of employees. Most employers are not Patrons, and most jobs aren't worth points as a Duty. On the other hand, looking out for employees' welfare can enhance their loyalty (*Loyalty in Play,* p. 43).

An involuntary "employee" is a slave. Loyalty rolls for slaves have special modifiers (pp. 39-40).

> *There's a lot of people asking for my time.*
>
> *– Joni Mitchell,*
> *"Free Man in Paris"*

## Dependents

Like Allies, *Dependents* come along on adventures, and if they get into trouble, they have to be gotten out of it. Being rescued is the main function of a Dependent! That's why a Dependent counts as a disadvantage. In effect, the PC must show loyalty to the Dependent, at a level that corresponds to the Dependent's importance: Good for an employer or acquaintance, Very Good for a friend, Excellent for a loved one. The Dependent's loyalty to the PC is secondary, and may not be equal – it's possible to have a disloyal Dependent. The GM may wish to allow a Dependent to be Unwilling (see p. 80).

A Dependent should have a full character sheet. But his point value is limited; Dependents have to be in need of protection. A character whose point value is more than 100% of a PC's isn't worth points as a Dependent.

A Dependent built on 25% of the points of a very powerful PC, such as a super or demigod, may be too capable to need much care. The GM may allow smaller point totals (but greater than 0) for intermediate costs:

| Dependent Point Total | Cost |
|---|---|
| No more than 20% | -11 |
| No more than 15% | -12 |
| No more than 10% | -13 |
| No more than 5% | -14 |

## Sense of Duty

A *Sense of Duty* doesn't lead to rescue missions; characters who go along on adventures, or will be carried off or threatened, should be written up as Dependents. A Sense of Duty requires you to help against a more general threat, such as a large-scale invasion or natural disaster, or against sickness, poverty, or curses. Often this means interrupting an adventure or mission to go where help is needed. Sense of Duty (Adventuring Companions) is an exception (see above).

Characters who are the focus of a Sense of Duty don't need character sheets. There are no specific restrictions on their point value; a Sense of Duty to a large group could include some extremely powerful people (for example, a head of state would be included in a Sense of Duty to the nation). Sense of Duty is equivalent to Excellent loyalty, but doesn't imply return loyalty. However, it does give +2 to reactions to see if others trust you.

Be cautious about multiple Senses of Duty! They can result in unreasonably high point values; for example, an adventurer with Sense of Duty (Adventuring Companions), Sense of Duty (Family), and Sense of Duty (Country) would get as many points for them as one with Sense of Duty (Every Living Being). It's often better to treat the people involved as a single group with a point value based on its combined size (especially if the smaller group *is* part of the larger, as "my family" could be part of "my country"). On the other hand, if the loyalties are truly distinct – particularly if one is to a single person or a small group – allowing multiple Senses of Duty may make sense. Sense of Duty (Adventuring Companions) nearly always makes sense as a separate disadvantage. A character with conflicting Senses of Duty should *not* be penalized if forced to put one ahead of the other, so long as the player roleplays the struggle to choose.

## Combined Relationships

The same character can be both an Ally and a Dependent; see p. B131 for rules. With the new rules for lower-cost Patrons (p. 41), a character might also be both a Patron and a Dependent; he would be threatened not in the course of adventures, but by having the danger come to his location. It's even possible to be both an Enemy and a (usually Unwilling) Dependent.

In any of these cases, the point value of the character is the same for both relationships. The frequency of appearance need not be. Roll for appearance separately for the two different relationships. If they both come up, the character plays *both* roles in the same adventure.

# LOYALTY IN PLAY

Once the loyalty score has been determined, it's used to decide how an NPC behaves when breaking faith seems advantageous, or when keeping it puts him in mortal danger. This can be done in two different ways:

● A *loyalty check* is a roll of 3d against the NPC's loyalty score (see *Personal Loyalty,* pp. 39-40). If the roll is less than or equal to loyalty, the NPC proves worthy of trust. If it's greater, he puts his own interests or desires first. An NPC with loyalty 20+ never fails a loyalty check.

● In an *Influence roll* by someone who's trying to induce the NPC to betray a trust, loyalty can take the place of Will, if better (see *Influencing Organizations,* p. 47).

## Continued Relationships

In an ongoing relationship, loyalty can rise or fall for various reasons:

*Duration of Relationships:* After each full year, make a loyalty check. A success gives a permanent +1 to loyalty.

*Competence:* If an NPC's employers achieve a major success or a disastrous failure on an adventure, this can give +1 or -1 to loyalty.

*Increased Pay:* Starting pay rates are already taken into account in the initial reaction roll that determines the NPC's loyalty score. A subsequent bonus gives +1 per 10% of the base amount over the following month. A continuing salary increase or decrease gives +1 or -1 per 10% of the base amount. This applies to slaves as well as employees, if they're allowed their own possessions.

*Rescue:* If the PCs take great risks to rescue the NPC, make a reaction roll at +3 or better. A Good or better reaction means the NPC is grateful. If it's higher than his previous loyalty score, it becomes his new loyalty score. If one of the PCs was killed or seriously hurt, the GM may add a further loyalty bonus.

*Danger:* If a noncombatant NPC is exposed to a combat situation, make a loyalty check. Failure gives -1 to loyalty for a week. Repeated exposure may make this permanent.

## Abandoned Relationships

For most relationships, if the PC ceases to be present in the NPC's life, the relationship ends. If they separated on good terms, the NPC may react at +1 when they meet again; if on bad terms, or if the separation was sudden and inconvenient, at -1.

If points have been invested in a relationship, separation doesn't necessarily end it. A Patron, Contact, Ally, Dependent, or Enemy remains one even if he's "off camera" for many sessions. Adventurers who go on long quests, missions, or expeditions will come back to find these relationships still in place. Even a PC who suddenly vanished will get the chance to explain what happened to him. The same is true for any relationship with Very Good or Excellent loyalty. Disastrous loyalty may also have this effect; an NPC who hates a PC sufficiently may remain obsessed with him for a long time.

Continuing preoccupation with a relationship with someone who's not on the scene can be defined as a Vow, whether of love, loyalty, or revenge.

# EXOTIC SOCIAL TRAITS

The preceding rules, and those in the next three chapters, are for normal humans. What about aliens? Artificial intelligences? Magical races? Supers with amazing powers? They may have traits that modify the rules, or require variant rules.

## RACIAL APPEARANCE

For nonhumans, there are two types of Appearance. *Individual* Appearance is a personal advantage which modifies reactions from your species, specifically; under certain circumstances, it may affect other *similar* species. *Racial* Appearance is found on a racial template; it modifies reactions from the dominant or most common species in a setting, and may affect other species similar to it. Appearance with the Universal enhancement (p. B21) affects all species equally, and all individuals belonging to them. The same character can have both a racial and an individual Appearance, and they do not necessarily have to match. The bonuses or penalties don't add, unless either Appearance is bought as Universal.

*Example:* Medusa is a gorgon, a member of a race whose monstrous visage turns mortals to stone in sheer horror. Her racial Appearance is Horrific [-24]. But to other gorgons, she's not terrifying at all; in fact, they find her Attractive [4] and react favorably to her. The former point cost is included in the cost of her gorgon racial template; the latter in her personal character-point cost.

# PERCEPTION AND COMMUNICATION

Nonhuman sensory abilities sometimes grant benefits to social perception.

*Detect Brain Electrical Activity*, a Rare condition (p. B48), grants +2 to Psychology (Applied *and* Experimental) on a successful IQ roll for *analysis,* or +5 on a critical success.

*Discriminatory Hearing* (p. B49), at the GM's option, can grant +4 to Detect Lies skill, but only for spoken lies.

*Discriminatory Smell*, with the Emotion Sense enhancement (p. B49), gives the same benefits as Empathy, but only when within 2 yards of the subject.

*Hyperspectral Vision* (p. B60) or *Infravision* (p. B60) grants +2 to Body Language, but only when used on a warm-blooded race.

*Penetrating Vision* (p. B74) negates penalties to Body Language from clothing (p. B181).

*Sensitive Touch* (p. B83) grants +4 to Body Language, but only in whole-body contact, skin to skin. Sheer, skintight fabric reduces the bonus to +2; any heavier material eliminates it.

*Subsonic Speech* (p. B89) gives +2 to Intimidation when used in *addition* to normal speech frequencies.

*Telescopic Vision* (p. B92) can zoom in to reveal pupil dilation or microexpressions at ordinary conversational distance (1-2 yards); *Microscopic Vision* (p. B68) does the same at very close range (1 foot or less). Either grants +1 to Detect Lies.

Different races may use ultrasonic or subsonic vocal ranges, or communicate by different means than voice: color changes, light flashes, pheromones, electric fields, etc. The GM may define a variant of Voice (p. B97) or Disturbing Voice (p. B132) that works with others who use that same channel. For example, a sapient cephalopod might have unusually symmetrical and sharply defined skin color patterns; this would give +2 to Artist (Body Art), in the same way that the usual version gives +2 to Singing.

> *If a lion could talk, we could*
> *not understand him.*
>
> *– Ludwig Wittgenstein,*
> ***Philosophical Investigations***

# ALIEN REACTIONS

Many nonhuman races have social traits that cause them to react differently than humans do; ***GURPS Space*** offers an extensive list of such traits. Social traits often give rise to reaction modifiers. For example, members of a race with low gregariousness would have Loner (12) or (9) and react at -2 or -3 to anyone entering their personal space. Other traits prevent reactions entirely; for example, a race that reproduced asexually would have the Sexless quirk and would never respond to courtship or seduction.

These traits also affect Will rolls to resist influence. An attempt to influence a member of the race in a way his reaction modifiers *favor* decreases his Will to resist the influence; if his reaction modifiers *oppose* the action, they increase his Will to resist. For example, a member of a race with Loner (9) would resist being talked into a solo mission at Will-3, but would resist an invitation to join his allies in a night out at Will+3.

Races may also have mental disadvantages that automatically produce some specific form of behavior on a failed self-control roll, such as Berserk, Compulsive Behavior, or Phobias – or always, such as Callous or Paranoia. These may dictate their responses to some social encounters. Some of them also modify other races' reactions to them.

Nonhuman societies will be shaped by these traits! They'll avoid ways of doing things that go against their natural behavior pattern. Getting them to overcome this reluctance takes Influence rolls, or rolls against Leadership or other social skills. Societies with high CR may demand "unnatural" behavior more often than societies with low CR.

# BRIDGING THE GAP

Things get interesting when members of different races have to interact socially. The standard modifiers for human beings with different backgrounds also apply between different species: penalties for limited mastery of a language (p. B24) or for unfamiliarity with a culture (p. B23). But physical and mental traits also have effects!

Physiology modifiers based on body structure (p. B181) affect Body Language. The same modifiers apply to Gesture, when used between individuals who have no common language.

Use of different communication channels limits social interaction. If one race can perceive another's channel, but doesn't use it, this limits the use of social skills over that channel in the same ways as for text communication (p. 33). Voice (or its analogs; see above) still grants benefits for purely aesthetic skills that don't require comprehension. For a race whose senses resolve the channel poorly, apply the modifiers for low-definition communication (*Voice to Voice,* p. 33). If one race can't even perceive the other's channel, they're limited to gestures or sign languages (possibly modified by physiology). Technology may create devices for text communication. Sufficiently advanced technology, psionics, or magic may allow communication in virtual reality (*Virtual Presence,* p. 32) or augmented reality (p. 33).

Psychological differences give modifiers comparable to physiology modifiers (p. B181), which apply when using Anthropology, Detect Lies, Linguistics, Psychology, and Sociology on members of dissimilar races. A successful roll against the relevant racial specialty of Psychology lets you avoid these penalties for the other affected skills. Modifiers are as follows:

*Similar Mentality:* -2 (human vs. another primate) to -4 (human vs. any sapient vertebrate species).

*Very Different Mentality:* -5 (human vs. sapient invertebrates).

*Utterly Alien:* -6.

# RACIAL REPUTATIONS

It's possible for an entire *race* to have a Reputation, for good or bad, included on its racial template; e.g., for being highly rational or unpredictably violent. This normally means "how the race is regarded by other races in general" or "in the reference society" (p. 11); a Reputation that affects only *some* other races has a reduced point value. Such a Reputation may or may not be justified! An individual member of the race has the option of buying the Reputation off via his own personal accomplishments or failures.

# CHAPTER FOUR
# THE ORGANIZATION MAN

*"Miss Trulove, this is Miss Haines."*
*The nameplate on the metal desk read:*

*JANE TRULOVE*
*CHIEF COMPUTER*

*The woman behind the desk rose to her feet and looked up at Bernice. Steel-rimmed spectacles hung from a chain about her neck, but she had let them fall. A quick glance at her suit – not cheaply made, but durable rather than modish – made Bernice glad she had worn her own most grown-up outfit.*

*"Thank you, Gladys. How do you do, Miss Haines?" She offered her hand. "I'm told you have a letter of recommendation?"*

*"Yes, ma'am, from Miss Latimer, my mathematics teacher." Bernice held it out without being asked.*

*Miss Trulove put on her spectacles and quickly scanned the neatly written page. Only then did she ask Bernice to sit down.*

*"Daphne Latimer speaks highly of your abilities. I take it you're one of her current students?"*

*The question Bernice had dreaded. "Yes, Miss Trulove, in Algebra II. I'm a junior. Miss Latimer has been privately tutoring me in analytical geometry."*

*The eyes behind the metal frames grew intent, and Bernice spent the next several minutes reviewing her studies . . . conic sections, cubic equations, determinants. She confessed to not having studied physics yet. Sounds like fireworks came in from the window behind the desk, forcing her to raise her voice slightly. Only afterward did the interview turn to practical matters.*

*"We do war work here, Miss Haines, and our problems are chosen not for their mathematical interest but for their utility. Can you do repetitive, even tedious work without losing your concentration?"*

*"It's the work I hoped to do after college; Miss Latimer told me about your organization when we were discussing it. I'm sure it will be more interesting than needlework!"*

*That might almost have been a smile. "Will your parents object to your employment, and the unavoidable interruption in your schooling?"*

*"My brother Ronald enlisted on his eighteenth birthday, a week after the Pearl Harbor attack, without finishing his senior year. Mother told me I might try."*

*"Well, then, let's measure your abilities."*

*Miss Trulove led Bernice down the hall. She knocked at a door, looked inside, and asked, "Rose, can you proctor for me?"*

*Following her in, Bernice saw a young Oriental woman looking up from a desk. Only her mother's rigorous training kept her surprise hidden as Miss Trulove said, "Miss Hashimoto will be your test monitor. You have ninety minutes; please let her know when you finish."*

Social interaction with organizations uses the same basic mechanics as interaction with individuals and small groups. The differences are in the details: the modifiers, the specific skills used, and the consequences.

# SEARCHING FOR ORGANIZATIONS

Finding an organization works like finding a person, and involves a similar search roll (p. 22). However, organizational searches don't have standard intervals; if you don't find one the first time, a new one's not likely to move in. You can search as many times as you wish, but at a cumulative -2 per previous failure. Eventually you'll run out of places to look.

Being larger, organizations are easier to spot! The GM should decide the typical size of the kind of organization you're looking for, and apply an additional modifier based on it. For a single person with no fixed location, use *Searching for People* (pp. 22-24) instead.

| Size | Modifier | Size | Modifier |
|------|----------|------|----------|
| One-man shop | -1 | 21-100 staff | +2 |
| 2-5 staff | 0 | 100-1,000 staff | +3 |
| 6-20 staff | +1 | More than 1,000 staff | +4 |

# SERVICES

Finding a service is much like finding a hireling (p. 22). Suitable skills to substitute for IQ include the following:

- Merchant for businesses that sell "to the trade."
- Propaganda to publicize the search (for example, publicly inviting bids).
- Savoir-Faire (High Society) for establishments that serve the upper classes or other in-groups.
- Savoir-Faire (Mafia) to locate a criminal organization or a corrupt law enforcement organization.
- Streetwise to locate a small-scale criminal enterprise.
- Any professional or occupational skill to locate services through professional connections; e.g., Carpentry to locate a lumberyard, Physician to locate a hospital, or Writer to locate a publisher.

In general, the modifiers for finding services are the same as for finding hirelings. "Advertising" can be interpreted as spending money on networking and obtaining referrals.

These rules assume that the service has a specialized clientele; e.g., the upper classes, merchants buying wholesale, or devotees of brothels or opium dens. If the service actively seeks clientele through advertising or public visibility, the GM should apply +5, or even say that such services are automatically available without a search roll.

Unlike a hireling, a service is commonly hired for a single job. Even for long-term contracts, services don't make loyalty rolls; how they treat customers reflects organizational policy and culture, not individual attitudes (but see *A Private Understanding*, p. 49).

## *Gain the favor of rulers . . .*

# INVESTORS

In a sense, investors are a specialized service. They provide *funding* – from grants for nonprofit projects to capital for businesses. An unmodified IQ roll is sufficient for small grants or loans (no more than a month's pay). Other funding sources almost always require a skill roll:

- Administration to obtain grants for nonprofit ventures.
- Finance for any business venture.
- Politics to gain the support of rulers, senior church officials, or similar people for a *big* project.
- Savoir-Faire (High Society) to find a wealthy "angel."
- Streetwise for someone desperate enough to go to a loan shark or usurer.

Search modifiers are as for other services. "Advertising" often means making a good impression with suitable dress, entertainment, and personal tours. Additional modifiers are as follows:

*Collateral:* +3 to obtain a fully secured loan.
*Large Loan:* -1 to find a loan worth up to two months of income, -2 for up to five months, -3 for up to ten months, and an additional -3 for each additional 10× the amount.
*Reputation:* Any that would apply for financial solvency, business judgment, a worthy or unworthy cause, etc.

*Venture Capital:* -3 to find a loan for a high-tech startup, treasure hunt, etc.

# INFORMATION SOURCES

Information can be gained from organizations as well as individuals (*Informants*, p. 23). Such organizations normally maintain archives of documents, either handwritten, printed, or electronic. An organization also has a staff that can answer questions; but except in low-tech settings with oral traditions, the staff depend on the archive for most of their own information.

Archives of different sorts require different search rolls:

- An open archive, such as a public library or a property title registry: IQ at +5. The GM may waive the search roll, deciding either that there is no archive or that finding one is trivial.
- A private archive, such as a newspaper morgue: IQ.
- A special purpose archive: A suitable skill, at default if necessary – Administration for government documents, Heraldry for aristocratic genealogies, Law for court decisions and precedents, Research or a knowledge skill for a scholarly library, and so on.
- A secretive archive: May require a skill with no IQ default such as Hidden Lore, or an attribute such as Security Clearance and an IQ roll.

After finding the archive, you need to search it for the proper document. If you make your own search, use Administration or Research; see ***Low-Tech*** for detailed modifiers. At TL8 or higher, Computer Operation is a complementary skill (p. 21). To ask for help, use *Requests for Information* (p. 28).

# GOVERNMENT OFFICES

Archives are only one function of government. Adventurers might have reason to look for other government offices: to give information, to report a crime or emergency, to register legal documents, to apply for permission to do something, to get funding, to influence officials, or even to pay their taxes!

Most communities of any size have a main government office, from the castle of a village lord to the city hall of a big city. This is a symbol of community pride and highly visible: search rolls are at +5. There's only one per community, so use the *Known Individuals* rule (p. 24): Search modifiers are negative for large communities and positive for small ones. Don't apply penalties for repeated searches; the searchers can keep looking till they find it. If there isn't one to find, that should be the result of the GM's decision, not of random dice rolls.

*Specialized* government offices require different search rolls to find:

- Offices that deal with the public directly (such as landfills, police stations, and tax offices): IQ.
- Offices that serve specialized clienteles or perform internal governmental functions: An appropriate skill, at default if necessary – typically Administration, Law, Politics, or Savoir-Faire (Military or Police). Professional Skill (Journalism) also covers this.
- Branches of government that aren't publicly known: Learning they exist requires high Rank, a Security Clearance, or an Intelligence Analysis roll. Tracking them down without help requires another Intelligence Analysis roll, sometimes at a penalty equal to CR.

# GATEKEEPERS

Finding an organization isn't always enough. Sometimes getting in is a separate problem! Many public organizations, and nearly all private or secret ones, have a gatekeeper to screen people. In general, this depends on a reaction roll (*Gaining Admission Results,* p. 47), with the following modifiers:

*Bribery:* See pp. 48-49.
*Referral:* +2 for special individual standing (e.g., the gangster who can say "Big Eddie sent me," or the traveler with a letter of introduction). A Claim to Hospitality can grant this.
*Threat Level:* -2 for openly carrying weapons beyond what's customary, whether an AK-47 or a wizard's staff; or -4 if they're ready for use, or for a stance that suggests combat readiness. A separate -4 for perceived hostile intent (see *Motives,* p. 25).

*Visibly "Like Us":* +1 for being of the same ethnic, religious, or other minority; wearing the same uniform; etc. -1 for visibly belonging to a *different* group – or worse, if the two groups are opposed in any way.

If the PCs can't get in, they can rely on less direct communication; see *Indirect Interaction* (pp. 32-33).
Some organizations provide standard forms for people who want to deal with them: job applications, order forms, and so on. Forms submitted for routinely granted requests may be processed without further interaction; treat such responses as automatic Neutral reactions. Forms asking for more substantial benefits, such as job applications, require a reaction roll (see *Jobs,* pp. 22-23, for example).

# ASKING FOR BENEFITS

Getting past the gatekeeper makes it possible to meet someone who makes decisions. In a small organization, this may be the person in charge; in a larger one, it will be an employee, servant, or volunteer.

*You need to get past the gatekeeper before you can influence the organization.*

## ORGANIZATIONAL REACTION ROLLS

Individuals making decisions on behalf of an organization use *slightly* different guidelines for reaction rolls. In addition to the more specific rules below, a successful Administration roll by the PC gives +2 on *any* reaction roll from such a person.

● Commercial transactions (pp. 26-28) take place when someone wants to buy from or sell to an organization, or pay for its services. This only applies to the organization's line of business; offers involving things it doesn't deal in will be turned down, and noncommercial organizations react poorly to offers of payment (make a general reaction roll at -3). Some organizations have fixed prices; on a Good or better reaction, a request for a discount may be referred to a supervisor.
● Requests for aid (p. 28) use the normal rules, modified for the following types of organizations:

*Public Service Organization:* +3.
*Mutual Aid Organization (e.g., a Labor Union):* +3 when approached by members. -3 when approached by nonmembers – or no modifier if they will benefit indirectly (such as getting good publicity or installing a sympathetic political candidate).

● Requests for information (p. 28) may be reacted to favorably or unfavorably for various reasons:

*Professional Inclination:* +2 to +4 if the organization's main function is providing information (as with a library) or if it wishes to publicize itself. -2 to -4 for questions about private goals or potentially embarrassing issues.
*Questioner Has Legitimate Press Credentials:* +2.

● Provided information (p. 28) takes the standard modifiers, along with an extra -3 if the information could embarrass the organization or force it to change its plans.
● General reactions (p. 26) should be used to cover any other situation.

## INFLUENCING ORGANIZATIONS

Influence skills can gain the cooperation of organizations by getting a person within the organization to make a favorable decision. Some skills attempt to persuade the decision-maker that the request serves the organization's purposes. These are resisted by Will:

● Diplomacy can be used to make a case that doing something really does serve the organization's interests or goals.
● Fast-Talk can temporarily confuse an NPC about what the organization's goals are, and how they can be served.
● In commercial transactions, Merchant can be used for an Influence roll. Adjust effective skill by +1 or -1 per 10% by which the proposed deal favors the organization or PC, respectively.

Other skills try to induce the decision-maker to act on his personal interests or desires instead of his duty to the organization. These are resisted by the higher of the decision-maker's Will (at +3 if he faces severe punishment for breaches of trust) and his loyalty (pp. 39-40) to the organization:

● Sex Appeal is used to flirt with an NPC, or charm him.
● Intimidation can be used to frighten him.
● Savoir-Faire or Streetwise can obtain a favor for someone with the same background.

# COMPLEMENTARY ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

Skills that focus on dealing with organizations can complement (p. 21) Influence rolls toward their representatives. This represents using knowledge of the organization to frame the request in a way that's easy for it to respond to, so that the representative doesn't have to go out on a limb in granting it. If the roll succeeds, give a hint about what to say, as well as granting the bonus.

- Administration works for nearly any request to a large organization.
- Finance can be used to make a good presentation on a request for funding, whether as a buy-in, a loan, or a grant.
- Hidden Lore (Conspiracies) helps in dealing with vast society-wide conspiracies, in settings where such conspiracies exist.
- Intelligence Analysis makes it possible to figure out an organization's concealed plans.
- Law can frame an action as legally proper or even mandatory.
- Philosophy can predict how a representative of an *ideological* organization will think about a question, and suggest ways of presenting the desired action in the proper ethical or political terms.
- Politics is specifically useful with people who *set* policy, rather than carry it out, especially those who hold elected positions.
- Strategy helps figure out what a military organization is planning, or what its options are, before a battle starts.
- Theology acts as Philosophy, above, but for a *religious* organization.
- Any knowledge or work-related skill relevant to the organization's function can help find a justification in terms of what that function requires.

## Going Through Channels

Instead of using the skills above to complement an Influence roll, adventurers can use them *directly* to gain the organization's cooperation. This represents gaining benefits not through a specific representative, but through standard forms and procedures.

A request that's clearly part of the organization's mission requires only an uncontested skill roll, at +5 for routine requests, or unmodified for unusual ones. The GM may even waive the roll for a routine request if the applicants have the skill at better than default.

For a questionable request – one that's off mission, requires large resources, or risks bad publicity (*any* publicity, for a secretive organization) – the outcome is determined by a series of Regular Contests of skill. As a rule of thumb, the organization's effective skill is equal to 12, plus the Rank of its head. The organization and the applicant use the same skill. Roll once per day for simple requests, or once per week for complex ones, until a decision is reached.

## BRIBERY

A bribe is a cash payment or favor given to induce someone in a position of trust to fail in its duties. The rules presented here can also be used for other situations, such as bribery of people who owe duties to individuals (for example, of a personal servant). They don't usually apply in commercial transactions, where money is part of the main deal, not an extra incentive. However, bribery *can* get a more favorable price from a buyer's or seller's employee by paying a kickback.

Offering a bribe grants a bonus on a reaction roll. The size of the bribe depends on the recipient's monthly pay; this can be estimated from his wealth level and TL, if necessary (p. B517). A bribe for someone who's Dead Broke should be based on typical pay for someone who's Poor, but it then gives an extra +2 reaction bonus. A social perception roll to judge Status (p. 24) can help in choosing a suitable amount. Bonuses are commensurate with the reliability increases from a bribe offered to a Contact (*Money Talks*, pp. B44-45):

| Bribery Amount | Percentage of Monthly Pay | Bonus* |
|---|---|---|
| One day's income | 5% | +1 |
| One week's income | 25% | +2 |
| One month's income | 100% | +3 |
| One year's income† | 1200% | +4 |

\* Add +2 for a Dead Broke recipient (see text above).

† For a more consistent progression, the GM may wish to change this to six months' income (600%).

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# Social Engineering

The phrase "social engineering" is used in the computer hacking community to describe gaining access to a computer or network by manipulating people, rather than by physical searches for passwords (in Dumpsters, in Post-It notes under a desk pad, and so on) or technical methods of cracking a secure system. The computer security consultant Kevin Mitnick popularized the phrase. He claimed that it was usually easier to trick people than to defeat software.

The direct approach is to get a user to reveal a password. This can be done with Fast-Talk or Acting; see *Deception* (pp. 36-39) for details. For example, a series of calls claiming to be from a technical support worker will sooner or later find someone with an actual problem, who can be coached to type commands that grant an intruder access to his computer or network. Skills such as Administration, Intimidation, or Sex Appeal can complement the primary skill. Bribery (p. 48-49) is also possible; a British study in 2003 claimed that 90% of people approached would reveal their passwords when offered a pen worth a few dollars!

The indirect approach is to get an actual technical support worker to set up a fake account. This can be done with Acting skill, but not Fast-Talk, as it's a long-term project. Complementary use of Forgery skill can create fake credentials. Alternatively, the target can be influenced to *knowingly* create an account for a would-be intruder, by bribes or blackmail (p. 49).

Potential victims may substitute Expert Skill (Computer Security) for IQ, if better. Computer security personnel, or highly security-conscious employees, resist social engineering at +3. Common Sense can provide protection against obvious deceptions.

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How people *react* to bribes depends on more than the amount offered.

In many situations, coming out and offering cash, or asking, "How much?" is an insult. Make a general reaction roll at -4 after such an inappropriate offer. An unopposed roll vs. Administration, Politics, Savoir-Faire, or Streetwise can identify a discreet approach, involving a gift or favor rather than cash. The bribery modifiers also apply to situations where a gift or favor encourages a favorable reaction, even if the recipient doesn't regard it as a payment; see *Requests for Information* (p. 28), *Recreation* (p. 28), and *Romance* (pp. 28-29), for examples.

Too small a bribe (less than a day's pay) is likely to be taken as a sign of contempt: make a general reaction roll at -2. However, in some situations, small bribes are accepted and even customary. They don't produce a reaction bonus; rather, they're normal behavior in the situation, and knowing how and when to offer them is included in various Influence skills. For example, if the police take bribes, Streetwise would include knowing what to pay to get out of a traffic ticket. Anyone unable or unwilling to pay can't use the Influence skill, and faces -2 to reaction rolls, typically expressed as petty harassment that doesn't actually break the rules: a bad table in a restaurant, long delays in getting an application processed, or strict enforcement of traffic laws, for example.

Code of Honor (Professional or Soldier's) or Honesty may prevent someone from taking a bribe, and Honesty may prevent offering one. Greed requires a self-control roll to turn down a bribe (see p. B137 for modifiers). Miserliness requires a self-control roll to pay one!

With randomly encountered government officials, the Corruption value defined in **GURPS City Stats** can be used to gauge roughly how much a bribe will buy. In a city with Corruption 0, officials react at -4 to *any* offer of a bribe; finding one who can be bought takes careful investigation. The GM may find it convenient to define an internal Corruption value for a private organization's employees.

# BLACKMAIL AND ESPIONAGE

*Blackmail* is gaining another person's compliance by threatening to reveal something he wants to conceal: in **GURPS** terms, a Secret. The threat is usually to make the information public, but revealing it to a loved one, an employer, or the legal authorities can be equally compelling. This is a Diplomacy-based Influence roll, with several special features:

● Effective skill is at a bonus based on the consequences of the secret being revealed: +1 for serious embarrassment, +2 for utter rejection, +4 for imprisonment or exile, +6 for possible death.

● Demands for larger amounts of money are more likely to be rejected. Use the same modifiers as for bribes (*Bribery*, pp. 48-49), but as penalties, not bonuses.

● Propaganda can be used as a complementary skill (p. 21), by mapping out a proposed campaign of public denunciation.

● No one reacts well to blackmail attempts! Losing the Contest produces a Very Bad Reaction, and without the option of substituting a normal reaction roll.

Learning the Secret has to be roleplayed. Sometimes the blackmailer finds out by good fortune. Sometimes it takes investigation; after observing or collecting evidence, roll vs. Criminology, Intelligence Analysis, or Psychology (Applied). Because people go to more trouble to cover up a dangerous secret, this roll takes a penalty based on the size of the Secret: -1 for serious embarrassment, -2 for utter rejection, -4 for imprisonment or exile, or -6 for possible death. The GM may assign further modifiers based on the nature of the Secret and how well-hidden he considers it to be.

Some blackmailers *create* a Secret, by getting the target to do something illegal or discreditable. This is the basis of the badger game (p. 38), for example. A blackmailer who tempts the target can use Fast-Talk or Propaganda as a complementary skill to Diplomacy to make the offense look worse than it is.

Espionage agencies often carry the process a step further: Once they pressure a target into betraying his employer, they can use the threat of exposure to motivate further betrayals. With good Influence skills, a target can be edged up from a minor misstep to high treason. The skill penalty depends on the magnitude of the betrayal; treat the betrayal as a new Secret, and subtract the modifier for the level of Secret, instead of adding it.

A variation on this approach is creating fake evidence of wrongdoing – for example, planting drugs on someone, or in his home or car, and then "discovering" them. Any attempt to do this should be roleplayed, with rolls against skills such as Filch, Pickpocket, Sleight of Hand, and Smuggling. If the target is on guard, treat this as a Quick Contest against Observation or Per-based Streetwise.

# CONTINUING RELATIONSHIPS AND CAREERS

People often deal with organizations more than once, and develop continuing relationships with them. Forming such a continuing relationship is often the reason for approaching an organization.

## A PRIVATE UNDERSTANDING

A person outside an organization may know someone inside it who can keep him informed, do him favors, or get him in to see someone higher up. Such a preexisting relationship can be defined as a Contact (*Relationship Advantages in Organizations*, pp. 52-53). If the relationship is newly formed during play, and hasn't yet been acquired as a Contact, continuing approaches to the same person give +1 to Influence rolls or +2 to reaction rolls, starting after two successful approaches.

"I happen to know someone at the agency" is a suitable application for Serendipity (p. B83). The GM should approve such coincidences if players suggest them, and grant appropriate bonuses.

# GETTING A JOB

The easy way to get a job is to search for one, as defined in the standard rules (p. B518) and in *Jobs* (pp. 22-23). This results in finding a job that uses the searcher's skills, with a random organization that needs that kind of employee. The GM is at liberty to decide that the job is for a specific employer, if that will further the plot.

If a PC has become familiar with an organization in the course of his adventures, he may want to work for *that specific organization*. The simple way to do this is just to ask for a job. This calls for a reaction roll (*Hiring Results*, p. 75). Use the same approach for cold contact with a potential employer – for example, a thief or spy seeking access to assets or information. The following modifiers apply:

*Administration Skill:* +1 if you know it, or +2 if you know it at 20+.

*Money Spent:* See *Bribery* (pp. 48-49). This need not represent actual bribes; with an organization that's not corrupt, offering an actual bribe produces a *worse* reaction. It can instead represent nice clothes and good grooming, travel expenses, researching the job, and the like.

*Pay Desired:* -1 for every 10% over the standard salary you want, or +1 for every 10% under (to a maximum of +10 for an unpaid volunteer or apprentice).

*Recruitment:* -3 for a cold contact (e.g., walking in off the street). +3 if the job is publicly advertised or you know they are hiring. +6 if the organization headhunted or recruited you – or the GM may treat this as an automatic success if you're willing to accept the standard terms.

*Reputation:* If relevant to the job.

*Skill Set:* -3 if the organization cannot use your skills; no reaction better than Neutral is possible.

Instead of depending on reaction rolls, it's possible to use an Influence skill to get hired. This is not an Influence roll, but a Regular Contest of an Influence skill against Will (see *Building Trust*, pp. 40-41); the applicant is "courting" the employer. Use the rules for building trust, modified as follows:

- If the skill roll succeeds and the Will roll fails, treat it as a Very Good reaction.
- If both succeed, or both fail, treat it as a Neutral reaction.
- If the skill roll fails and the Will roll succeeds, treat it as a Bad reaction: -5 to further attempts.
- Apply the modifiers listed for a hiring reaction roll to the Influence skill, except for the modifiers for Administration skill. Instead, Administration can be used as a complementary skill (p. 21) for job seeking. The GM may allow a different complementary skill, such as Propaganda to present a good resume or vita, Public Speaking to interview well, or Research to find out about the hiring organization.
- In this specific case, a second complementary roll is normally allowable: the applicant's best skill among the job's prerequisites.
- An applicant can try to boost his chances via manipulation (p. 37), but at a risk: getting caught leads to a Very Bad reaction! Suitable manipulative skills include Acting, Forgery, and Psychology (Applied).

Sometimes two people want the same job. Treat this as a competitive Influence roll (p. 34). They don't have to use the same skill; choice of different skills can reflect different strategies.

# KEEPING A JOB

Holding a job requires performing its duties (which may or may not be a Duty). The word "job" shouldn't be taken too narrowly. Volunteer work can be treated like a job, even if completely unpaid, as long as the volunteer has a place in a formal organization and has regular duties to perform.

Most jobs are simply part of a character's background, explaining how he earns a living. A background job requires a monthly job roll (p. B516). Ordinary failure has no important consequences; critical failure results in loss of income or other substantial harm. Most critical failures reflect accidents that aren't subject to punishment, but at the GM's option, a critical failure on a character's watch can be investigated as a minor offense (see below).

Simply failing to show up or to do any work brings the job to an end, normally within a month. Jobs whose duties are involuntary (see p. B134) are an exception. A slave doesn't get "fired" and can't walk off the job; he faces punishment, resale to a worse master, or even death, especially if he resists his slavery. If there's a good reason for the dereliction, you can avoid the penalty by winning a Diplomacy-based Influence roll.

Minor offenses, such as slacking on the job, being late, or having a bad attitude, bring administrative reprimands – or for slaves or conscripts, minor punishments. Diplomacy can be used to explain a good reason, or Fast-Talk to *make up* a good reason. Other Influence skills may also apply, such as Savoir-Faire (Military) or (Servant); Sex Appeal can actually earn minor *rewards* for slacking off.

For an "adventuring" job, playing out the adventure replaces the job roll. This type of job can be the focus of a campaign (*My Day at Work,* pp. 8-9).

# PROMOTION

Promotion is upward movement in an organization, to a position of greater trust and greater responsibilities. Promotion's effects may include increased Rank; more frequent Duty; and higher monthly pay, which may support higher Status. It may also grant perks such as Courtesy Title (p. 79), Office (p. 79), or Permit (p. 79).

If your job is part of your background, seldom coming into actual play, promotion is included in the monthly job success roll (p. B516). On a critical success, you gain a promotion. On a natural 3, the promotion is backdated 1d months, and you get that many months of the pay difference as a lump sum.

In a campaign focused on work, promotion is attained through a Regular Contest of Diplomacy or Administration against the Will of the person who has to approve. For a suitable organization, substitute Savoir-Faire (Mafia, Military, or Police). One promotion attempt may be made each year, at the annual performance review. An extraordinary adventure or accomplishment may grant an extra chance at promotion, or even an automatic success. The promotion roll has the following modifiers:

*Charisma:* If the person making the decision interacts with you face to face.

*Good Roleplaying of the Application:* +1 to +3.

*High Job Skill:* A bonus equal to the amount by which your skill exceeds the minimum required for your current position.

*Notable Recent Success or Failure:* Any temporary (or permanent) Reputation gained.

To add tension, a PC may have a rival competing for the same promotion. Use the competitive mechanics for *Building Trust* (pp. 40-41).

Another option is to try to get a promotion you haven't earned, through political intrigue (*Administrative Politics,* p. 63), personal favor (*Influencing Organizations,* p. 47), bribery (pp. 48-49), or blackmail (p. 49). Such an approach bypasses fair competition for promotion.

# BEING IN CHARGE

Promotion within an organization can lead either to doing its primary work at a more challenging level, or to being responsible for other people doing that work. Only the second path leads to the top. Skilled workers are valuable resources for an organization, but they're usually better at doing a job themselves than enabling other workers to do it better – which is what organizations are for.

Managers and supervisors have one of Administration, Leadership, or Teaching as their primary job skill. Normally the job also calls for skill in the basic work of the organization. Those with Teaching skill act mainly as trainers; they enable other employees to improve their job skills or learn new skills. Those with Administration or Leadership skill can improve the work output of a production team; this works like a complementary skill (p. 21), but there is no penalty for a failure (see *Long Tasks*, p. B346). In emergencies, a supervisor can use an Influence skill to persuade workers to put in extra hours (p. B346).

The head of an organization may get there by internal promotion, or come in from outside. He needs at least one of the supervisory skills, but that's not his main job skill. His most important task is steering the organization as a whole. Typical skills for doing this are Finance for a business that has to make a profit; Politics for a government whose leaders want to stay in power; Propaganda for an organization that wants to promote an ideology, philosophy, or religion; or Strategy for a military force seeking victory in war. Internal management is the job of staff members; motivating them to work well calls for Leadership skill.

The head of an organization also has to deal with loyalty and morale (see *Personal Loyalty,* pp. 39-40). For anything larger than a small team, don't keep track of individual loyalty scores; instead, determine an average loyalty rating by making three reaction rolls for loyalty and discarding the highest and the lowest. A Leadership-based Influence roll against the average Will of subordinates can boost their loyalty to Good, if it's lower, but only temporarily; a new roll is needed the next month, or in a crisis. Administration isn't effective for this purpose! Scenes of good Leadership overcoming fear or rebellion in subordinates are good drama.

The head of an organization, or anyone in a decision-making position, can seek to direct loyalty to a work group, the organization as a whole, a cause or ideal, or some person other than himself. For example, a military officer might want his command to be loyal to their unit, their entire service, or their country's laws – while a priest might want his congregation to be devoted to God. This is more difficult than inspiring personal loyalty: -2 to effective skill.

# THE BENEFITS OF RANK

A position in an organization gives access to the organization's resources. This is comparable to having a Contact or Patron, but doesn't directly cost points; it's a fringe benefit of having Rank (pp. 16-17). The person asking for aid has to be in good standing – he has to have a Duty at the "9 or less" level or above, and be *performing* that Duty in good faith.

The basic chance of aid is shown by the *Assistance Table* (p. 52). Roll 3d; if the roll is equal to or less than the Assistance Number shown, the organization helps. Several modifiers may apply:

*Charisma:* Only for requests made face to face.
*Complementary skill rolls* (p. 21): Administration for written requests; Leadership to request help for one's team.
*Especially appropriate or inappropriate request:* Up to +5, or down to -10; failure by 10+ or critical failure leads to disciplinary action.
*Previous requests during current scenario/session:* -1 per previous request.
*Smooth Operator:* Aids any request being made directly to the person who can grant it.

Possible forms of assistance vary; see *Pulling Rank* in **GURPS Action 1** for a long list of suggestions.

● The *Assistance Table* lists possible cash grants (collected in person or sent by courier with one day delay); multiply by 10 if it's for show and will be returned. Amounts are given as percentages of starting wealth for the TL of the reference society; for example, a Roman centurion (Military Rank 3) might talk his general into 15% of TL2 starting wealth of $750, or $112.50. This amount also determines the limit for requisitioned gear and supplies.

● Treat a request for information as if the organization were a Contact Group with effective skill 18 and "Somewhat Reliable"; on a failure, the answer is unknown, and on a natural 18, Internal Affairs shows up to find out why the applicant was asking questions!

● For substantial aid, treat the organization as a powerful organization (assets at least 10,000× starting wealth) acting as a Patron in this one case.

● Organizations can offer support, by assigning teams of specialists to help behind the scenes. This works like group performance with a focal performer or a formal leader (*Team Efforts*, pp. 33-34). Each team provides a complementary skill to the PC, with doubled bonuses or penalties. If the team has a formal leader, his Administration or Leadership complements *their* skill. This is an exception to the general rule that only one level of complementary skills is allowed.

## Assistance Table

| Rank | Assistance Roll | Cash |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | 3 | 0.5% |
| 1 | 5 | 1.5% |
| 2 | 7 | 5% |
| 3 | 9 | 15% |
| 4 | 10 | 50% |
| 5 | 11 | 150% |
| 6 | 12 | 500% |
| 7 | 13 | 1,500% |
| 8 | 14 | 5,000% |

Not all organizations have enough standing in society to grant Rank! The GM has the option of assigning anyone with a suitable Duty a "virtual Rank" for this roll, based on how many subordinates he has (*The Arithmetic of Rank,* p. 14). A less powerful organization could grant less respected Rank (*Variant Rank and Its Benefits,* below). With either option, the range of help that's available is limited by the organization's social role and capabilities. Courtesy Rank never grants real benefits.

## Organizational Reputation

Rank in a major social institution either grants imputed Status (p. 13) or takes the place of Status (p. 15; pp. B29-30). Less universally recognized organizations can't provide this. Belonging to any respectable organization – such as a university, a professional association, or a guild – can contribute to acquiring a level of two of Status (*Classless Meritocracies,* p. B28). But titles, promotions, and internal chains of command don't count toward Status.

In a campaign that uses less respected forms of Rank (*Variant Costs of Rank,* p. 14-15), the GM may treat some forms as granting an imputed Reputation analogous to imputed Status. This reflects not the distinctive qualities of the individual, but his ability to speak for the organization and his position of trust within it; anyone in that position has the same organizational Reputation. Rank 2-4 grants Reputation +1, Rank 5-7 grants +2, and Rank 8 grants +3. People affected are those within the organization's sphere of action or influence. *Example:* In a medieval city, the masters in a guild (Guild Rank 2-4) have Reputation +1 (master merchant/craftsman) within the city and with members of similar guilds in other cities.

An entire organization may have a good or bad Reputation, which affects everyone who belongs to it. Usually this will be limited to +1 or -1. This is *not* an imputed Reputation; its point cost must be paid.

## Variant Rank and Its Benefits

For an organization with more than eight levels of Rank (*Variant Numbers of Ranks,* p. 14), multiply cash assistance ×10 for each +2 levels. The basic chance of aid is 14 for Rank 9; 15 for Rank 10 or 11; and 16 for Rank 12 or above. Round fractional Rank down to the next lower Rank.

Rank with variant point costs alters the benefits an organization can grant:

*Not Dominant or Unique:* 1/10 cash; substantial aid as from an organization with 1,000× starting wealth in assets; -4 to assistance rolls for normal cash amounts or substantial aid.

*Small Resources:* -4 to all assistance rolls that involve cash or physical or economic resources.

*Large Resources:* 10× cash; substantial aid as from an organization with 100,000× starting wealth in assets; +4 to assistance rolls for normal cash amounts or substantial aid.

*Special Resources:* Substantial aid includes magical or other unusual benefits, such as information obtained using supernatural talents (per *Contacts,* p. B44).

*Total Control:* Substantial aid as from an organization with basically incalculable net worth; +4 to assistance rolls for normal cash amounts or substantial aid.

# RELATIONSHIP ADVANTAGES IN ORGANIZATIONS

People in an organization may have traits that simply *define* a lasting relationship with it, costing (or granting) points. The following options are suitable:

*Contact Group:* One standard way of defining a Contact Group (p. B44) is as a network of informants throughout an organization. Ordinarily such a network serves someone *outside* the organization, but that's not mandatory; e.g., an experienced police officer might have Contacts all through the department to go to for favors.

*Patron:* An organizational employer doesn't have to be a Patron, but it certainly *can* be, with the GM's approval. Use the organizational size definitions on p. B72; see also the rules for smaller Patrons (p. 41).

For the head of an organization, or for a well-established partnership or team with accumulated assets, there's another option: the organization or the team itself may be the Patron of the head or the team members. This represents the organization being an entity in itself, with a measure of independence from its head or heads. It can provide organizational assets and aid, which don't have to be spelled out in advance, and fringe benefits such as the ability to flash a team ID card.

A relationship advantage can be a source of funding. A Patron can provide up to 1% of its assets for a project that supports its goals. A financial Contact can provide small loans or grants (up to one month's income). For a financial Contact, "bribes" usually equate to kickbacks; a "lie" result indicates that the Contact asks snoopy questions.

# HOSTILE ORGANIZATIONS

Whether or not an organization is an Enemy, it may appear in a hostile role in a scenario. This is especially likely for military, intelligence, police, or criminal organizations – much like those many adventurers work for, but on the other side. Good social skills can help survive such an encounter. Of course, the organization's agents have their own special social skills.

## CAPTURE

A group of adventurers may have to deal with palace guards, police, or other legal authorities. Such encounters don't start out as potential combat (p. 68) situations; if the adventurers recognize that the odds are against them, and cooperate, they face questioning or arrest rather than attack. If they try to resist, the situation changes. Make a reaction roll with the following modifiers, then consult *Confrontation With Authority Results* (p. 74):

*Respectability:* -1 for being rough company (or being associated with it). -1 if anyone has Social Stigma (Criminal Record). (-2 if both apply.)
*Threat Level:* -2 for openly carrying weapons beyond what's customary, whether an AK-47 or a wizard's staff; or -4 if they're ready for use, or for a stance that suggests combat readiness. A separate -4 for perceived hostile intent (see *Motives,* p. 25).

If they are visibly committing a crime, do not roll; the authorities automatically have a Bad or Very Bad reaction, depending on the severity of the crime.

Use the same rules to deal with one or two enforcers out on the streets. If the situation calls for a potential combat roll, an outnumbered enforcer may call for backup before taking action.

Similar situations can arise with military patrols, or even groups of organized criminals. The specific behavior that triggers automatic Bad reactions may be different. If the organization involved doesn't have Legal Enforcement Powers, its agents are likely to back off, rather than call for reinforcements, if the odds are against them.

## QUESTIONING

A person who has been taken into custody can be interrogated. Interrogation is specifically the skill of questioning prisoners! Questioning people in social situations relies on other methods – reaction, Influence, and social perception rolls. All of these methods are limited; the NPC won't reveal information that would expose him to harm, incriminate him, or betray a Secret of his or of a friend or loved one (*Dependents,* p. B131) or anyone to whom he has Very Good or Excellent loyalty or a Sense of Duty.

A person under duress is less able to withstand questioning. Any use of Intimidation to get answers counts as duress, but simple threats are a psychological blunt instrument. (In game terms, this is why Interrogation defaults to Intimidation at -3.) Interrogation skill allows focused questioning. Psychology (Applied) also allows focused questioning, but applying it without obvious duress gives -4 to effective skill.

For each 5 minutes of questioning, roll a Quick Contest of Interrogation vs. the prisoner's Will. If you win, you get a truthful answer to one question. If you don't win, he remains silent or lies. If you lose by more than 5 points, he tells a *good, believable lie.* If you ask the same question again, under the same conditions, you get the same result, automatically.

What if the prisoner really doesn't know anything? If questioning lasts more than two hours, or includes torture or the equivalent, a subject who loses the Quick Contest by more than 5 points says what he believes the interrogator wants to hear. If the interrogator mistrusts this, he can try to judge if the subject is lying (*Spotting Lies,* pp. 36-37); if interrogation has lasted more than two hours, the subject's roll is at +2 because of what *he's* learned from the questions he's being asked. If the subject critically failed his Will roll in the Quick Contest, he actually *believes* his story; Body Language, Detect Lies, or Empathy will indicate that he's telling the truth!

Several modifiers apply to Interrogation:

*Interrogator Has Low Empathy:* -3.
*Over Two Hours of Questioning:* +2.
*Severe Threats:* +3, or +4 if you are Callous.
*Torture:* +6, or +7 if you are Callous; not cumulative with *Severe Threats.* This includes physical torture, serious threats to anyone to whom the prisoner has a special bond, or exposure to a Phobia.

Various other skills can complement (p. 21) Interrogation:

● Body Language or Detect Lies to push for hidden truths. An investigator with Empathy can substitute IQ (or IQ-3 for Sensitive).
● Criminology or Psychology (Applied) to come up with questions that fit the subject's personality type.
● Fortune-Telling to convince a credulous subject of psychic insight.

- Intimidation used by a partner in interrogation in a good cop/bad cop routine; having the threats come from another person encourages the prisoner to open up to the questioner. This doesn't work if the "good cop" is relying on his Interrogation default from Intimidation!

If the truth would expose a Secret of the prisoner, a friend or loved one, or a person or cause to whom he has Very Good or Excellent Loyalty or a Sense of Duty, he has a bonus to Will to resist questioning: +1 for Serious Embarrassment, +2 for Utter Rejection, +4 for Imprisonment or Exile, +6 for Possible Death. The same modifiers can apply for similar consequences even if the information isn't formally defined as a Secret.
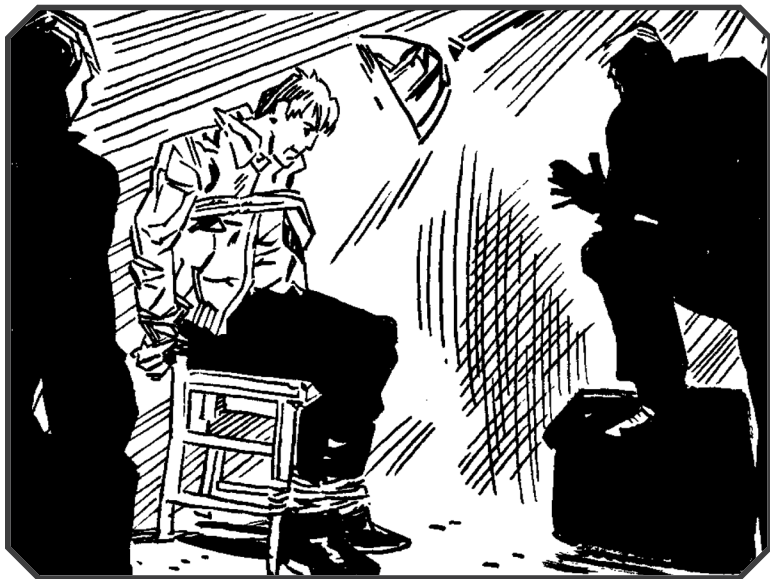


# TRIALS

Arrest often leads to trial on criminal charges. Different societies have different forms of trial; see pp. B507-508 for details and full rules. Two of these are socially based:

*Inquisitorial Trial:* Also known as trial by judge. The judge presents the charges, investigates them, and decides on the accused person's innocence or guilt. This is a European approach, going back to Roman law.

*Adversarial Trial:* The decision is made by a judge (or a judge and jury), but the charges are presented by a separate prosecutor, who is responsible for the investigation, and the judge acts as a neutral mediator. This is the traditional Anglo-American approach; it dates back to ancient Athens.

Even in inquisitorial systems, lawsuits (trials that seek damages or injunctions rather than criminal penalties) are commonly handled in an adversarial style, with a lawyer representing each side.

If the defendant has confessed to the crime, perhaps as a result of questioning (pp. 53-54), treat this as -5 for evidence or testimony against the accused. Law skill can still affect the decision, but a favorable reaction means, not that the defendant is acquitted, but that the court opts for a lesser punishment. In some cultures, proof that a confession was obtained by torture will discredit it, or even result in the charges being dismissed; in others, that's the normal way to get a confession!

Public Speaking can serve as a complementary skill to Law. If the defendant has confessed, Public Speaking can *take the place* of Law – not to disprove the charges, but to win sympathy for the criminal.

# IMPRISONMENT

In TL5-8 societies, a common penalty for convicted criminals is imprisonment. It's rarer in lower-tech societies, which can't support common criminals in idleness or spare the manpower to guard them; punishments are quick (fines or whipping), permanently deprive the criminal of rights (outlawry, transportation, or, for nondangerous offenders, enslavement), or incapacitate him (mutilation or death). People being held for trial may be locked up temporarily, however. In higher-tech societies, criminals may face mind control, continuous surveillance, or other technologies that make walls and bars obsolete.

Prisons tend to be mildly hostile environments; staff reaction rolls are at -3. This includes reactions to prisoners' requests for aid or information. Even very small benefits – an extra cup of coffee after dinner, or time or materials for a personal hobby – may be available only by favor of the staff. Prisoners can also attempt Influence rolls vs. the Will of staff members. If a request breaks the prison's rules, the staff member resists with the *higher* of loyalty or Will. In a prison, search rolls (p. 22) must be made against a skill, not IQ; the staff are the only aboveground source for benefits.

## *Informal Economies*

Prisoners often find a way around these official restrictions by creating an underground economy. They aren't usually allowed to have money; for one thing, it's harder to bribe a guard without money. Some prison economies work by straight barter. Larger or longer established populations often have a substitute currency, a trade good that nearly everyone wants; many 20th-century prisons were on the cigarette standard, for example, as were prisoner of war camps during World War II. These informal economies often supply things prisoners aren't officially supposed to have, from trivial comforts to addictive drugs or weapons.

Tracking down prisoners who can provide goods, favors, or information requires a search roll based on a suitable skill:

- Politics among political prisoners.
- Savoir-Faire (Mafia) in a prison where criminal gangs have a strong presence.
- Savoir-Faire (Military) for prisoners of war.
- Streetwise in a prison for common criminals, or as the default skill in a prison environment.

Hidden Lore (Prison Lore) (p. 80) can often bypass the need for a search roll altogether. If the GM still requires one, it can always be used as a complementary skill (p. 21).

A prisoner with connections in the prison's informal economy can be a Contact for other prisoners, with one of the skills listed. Alternatively, he may have Merchant, usually with the optional specialty Informal Economy; though, as prisons economies lack large organizations, his effective skill won't be higher than 15.

## Dealing With the Staff

Prison guards and employees can be another source of goods and favors. An employee who's willing to do this is a Contact, usually skilled at Administration (to divert prison supplies) or Holdout (to smuggle in a package). Such Contacts are never better than Usually Reliable; even if Usually Reliable, they will expect at least a moderate bribe. In addition, the "fair price" of any goods purchased will be at least double the usual retail price, or more for seriously restricted goods such as weapons.

A prisoner without such a Contact can't find a cooperative staff member with a search roll, not even vs. Streetwise; prison staff are risking their jobs, if not worse, by doing favors. Getting favors often requires bribery (pp. 48-49) or blackmail (p. 49). If the prison is defined in *City Stats* terms, apply the inverse of its Corruption to any rolls to bribe its staff. Extended observation (base time one week) allows a Per-based Streetwise roll to find a guard who's a likely prospect (similarly to *Approachability*, p. 25). Such a guard needs to be approached discreetly to avoid reaction penalties.

The most dangerous way for a prisoner to gain benefits is selling information to the guards; a snitch has a Secret, with consequences ranging from utter rejection to possible death. But the information can be really useful, so smart guards will try to cultivate informants. In such transactions, it's often the *guards* who engage in bribery or blackmail, and seek out cooperative prisoners. On the other hand, if a prisoner voluntarily talks to a guard, see *Giving Information* (p. 28).

Many encounters with guards are confrontations with authority (p. 74) or potential combat (p. 68) situations. Well-run prisons make sure the odds in combat favor the guards; the modifier ranges from -1 in a minimum-security prison to -5 in a prison for hardened criminals. The same modifier can represent general suspicion in other confrontations with authority.

## Prison Society

Prisoners have varied methods of passing on information: secret messages in prison yard whispers, veiled hints, conversations in prison slang, or signals such as tapping on bars or whistling (treat these as trivial codes or ciphers, as defined on p. B186). For the effects of this information, see *Dame Rumor* (pp. 57-58). Knowing what's really going on in a prison isn't covered by Area Knowledge or Current Affairs; it requires Hidden Lore (Prison Lore) (p. 80). This is a suitable skill for a prison Contact, and *can* be higher than 15.

Part of prison rumor is the Reputations of various prisoners. For a prisoner serving a long sentence, treat Reputation as an advantage or disadvantage, as usual. Other prisoners count as a large class of people (they're nearly everyone he'll meet during his stay!) and frequency is "all the time"; prison staff are a small class, and any frequency is possible. A short-term prisoner probably won't have time to gain a Reputation, but if he does, it's temporary and has no point cost. People in most prisons usually have negative Status (rich people with high Status often end up in "country club" prisons) – but their Reputation gives them the same benefits in prison society that Status would give in the larger society.

A Code of Honor can contribute to a Reputation. Imprisoned criminals often have their own distinctive Code of Honor (p. 80).

# BRAINWASHING

Like interrogation, brainwashing is done only under duress. Its goal isn't getting information, but changing behavior or personality. This is a much slower process; a brainwasher gets one roll per day. For full effectiveness, the pressure should be kept up 16 hours a day, like intensive training, but briefer sessions are possible, with the usual modifiers for haste (p. B346). *Instant* brainwashing is never possible. The person in charge doesn't have to be constantly present, but he can't take more than short breaks, and he needs subordinates with Brainwashing skill to keep the pressure up.

Brainwashing is a Regular Contest (*not* a Quick Contest!) of Brainwashing vs. Will. Psychology (Applied) can be used as a complementary skill. One victory is enough to create a new quirk. Refocusing an existing mental disadvantage (for example, giving a fanatic a new set of beliefs as the object of his Fanaticism) requires one success per -5 points the disadvantage is worth. If the new focus is not just different, but actively opposed to the old one, the subject has +3 to Will. Actual personality change requires one success per -1 point of added or removed traits.

Some organizations use similar techniques on new recruits – a religious cult, a revolutionary cabal, or an intelligence agency may do so. The recruit is kept under pressure to cooperate "voluntarily." An organization that works this way often distinguishes between an outer circle who have undergone quirk-level superficial indoctrination (almost always using the haste modifiers), and an inner circle who have experienced massive personality change. Only the inner circle are fully trusted. Many organizations have a standard set of traits that all recruits take on.

Undoing brainwashing often uses similar methods . . . but the subject's Will doesn't affect the outcome; the will of a brainwashed person has been broken! Instead, the GM should decide the effective skill of the original brainwasher and have the deprogrammer engage in Regular Contests of Brainwashing. Success *removes* a point of personality change.

If there's less time pressure, psychotherapy is an alternative: it allows one Regular roll once a month against Psychology (Applied). The subject sees the therapist or a helper one hour per day, five days a week; for more or less frequent visits use the reduced time modifiers (p. B346). For example, one session a week would count as 20% of standard time, or -8; eight hours a day would give +3. Each success allows the subject one Regular Contest of his Will against the brainwasher's effective skill. If the *subject* succeeds in this roll, one point of personality change is reversed.

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# Drugs and the Will

Psychoactive drugs can make Interrogation or Brainwashing more effective. Such drugs lower the effective Will of the subject. "Truth serum" drugs such as Sodium Pentothal or amobarbital give -2 to Will to resist questioning; their effects last (20-HT)/2 minutes. Alcohol (swallowed or injected) can provide similar effects, based on the degree of intoxication: -1 to Will if the subject is tipsy, -2 if he is drunk (p. B428).

Flunitrazepam (also known as Rohypnol) has much longer lasting effects, (30-HT) hours, and gives -2 to Will to resist brainwashing.

# MOVING THE MASSES

*Sometimes it seems like every other person who comes down the beanstalk heads straight for Mariner. With all the new immigrants, my partner and I had been talking about expanding Bottle City. Now someone had gotten the jump on us by opening a second tavern. The Labyrinth was a long way west of us, but they were cutting into our business. So I decided to take a little trip and check out the competition.*

*They had at least one thing we didn't: a performance space. A modest tip got me seated at a table with line of sight – I didn't need to be front row. I didn't think frontiers attracted a lot of artistic talent, but people were tipping pretty heavily to get good seating. I wondered what the attraction was.*

*Twenty minutes later I found out: The attraction was Zinaida. I could feel the crowd focusing when the barkeep walked out, and they cheered when she announced her name.*

***Okay,** I said to myself, **sex sells. We can find dancers if we need to.***

*But it wasn't really sex that she was selling. She moved like a seriously trained dancer – and one who'd figured out how to work in one-third gee, which allowed some truly spectacular acrobatic moves. She had Russian looks to match her name – striking features and half a meter of dark straight hair – but the tracks she was dancing to sounded more Middle Eastern.*

*She had presence, not just looks; she was deliberately working the crowd, picking out people to focus on.*

*The staff were careful not to block the view while they moved around delivering drink orders. I could see a lot of hands holding out phones in Pay mode . . . a lot of **women's** hands among them. Our crowd was mostly male – of course, so was Mars, generally. The Labyrinth must have been pulling in women from a big radius; that would be a draw for a lot of men, too. No wonder we'd seen less of our steady customers!*

*How was Bottle City going to beat that kind of competition? I wondered if we could make her a better offer . . .*

*She smiled, but at least she didn't laugh at me.*

*"I am sorry," she said. "I think is not good idea for me to perform for my competition . . . You don't know? I own forty-two percent of Labyrinth."*

Social traits and skills also apply to large numbers of people in *unorganized* groups. These applications have two distinct aspects: The *tactical* aspects involve observing and interacting with crowds of people – for example, at a mass meeting, or in the streets of a city. The *strategic* aspects focus on people who aren't all gathered in one place – communities, market economies, and the populations of societies.

# THE MOOD OF THE CROWD

Knowing what people think and feel in *groups* is different from understanding them individually. Reading each person accurately, one by one, in depth, takes too much time to be practical. The depths of people's minds aren't even the best place to look; hidden thoughts and feelings don't influence other people's thoughts and feelings. The mood of a crowd is embodied in visible behavior. Moods and actions spread by a kind of contagion; being alert to this process can spot the influences that affect people.

The GM can determine the initial mood of a crowd by making a general reaction roll (p. 26), or simply decide what it is. Note the rolled score for later reference.

## DIRECT OBSERVATION

Accurate reading of a crowd's mood can be achieved with an Observation roll. This normally requires one minute; time spent affects the outcome (p. B346). It *is* possible to get a feel for a crowd's attitude instantly, at -10 to effective skill.

The observer misreads the mood by ±3 on a failure; by ±6 on a failure by more than 5; and on a critical failure, the GM makes an entirely new roll for what the observer *thinks* the mood is.

Perception can replace Observation, but people in the crowd will notice the watcher, and may react. Make a second general reaction roll and average it with the crowd's initial mood, rounding *toward 10* (low numbers round up, high numbers round down); this is what the observer sees.

An experienced performer can judge the mood of an audience *for his type of performance* with a Per-based roll against Public Speaking, Performance, or even Sports.

An observer with Empathy can make a complementary (p. 21) IQ roll (IQ-3 for Sensitive) to enhance his reading of a crowd – as opposed to rolling directly for Empathy or Sensitive, which picks up both the public and private feelings of *individuals* in the crowd. Body Language doesn't work for this; it requires watching one person at a time closely.

For spotting a crowd that's about to turn dangerous, see *The Mind of the Mob* (pp. 71-72).

# OPINION POLLS

Polls measure the attitudes of communities or large populations toward people or issues. They use a variety of methods for asking questions: face-to-face interviews, mailed questionnaires, and telephone calls. The GM can make a reaction roll to decide the public attitude on something, or *assign* a certain result.

The first large-scale opinion poll, conducted in 1916 by the *Literary Digest,* correctly predicted the election of Woodrow Wilson. Survey methods grew more sophisticated over the next few decades, often by finding pitfalls the hard way. For example, in the 1948 American election, the polls predicted that Dewey would defeat Truman – because they questioned people over the telephone, and less well-off households, which more often voted Democratic, were less likely to have telephones.

Polling involves the following three steps. Sum the times for these steps to determine the total time needed to conduct the survey. Taking more or less time affects the quality of the results (*Time Spent,* p. B346).

1. *Survey Design:* A quick opinion survey with a standardized design and a tested question format can be designed in a day. Planning a survey of a familiar type takes a week. Designing an entirely new type of survey takes three months.

2. *Data Collection:* A large, professional polling firm can carry out a survey in a day. A social-science research project, which normally has a much smaller work force, takes a month to collect data.

3. *Poll Analysis:* For a basic opinion poll, it takes one week to turn survey results into a detailed analysis of the populace. For surveys designed to discover significantly more complex relationships, the GM may assign a skill penalty (to be overcome with a bonus from *Time Spent*) or simply increase the base time requirement.

The accuracy of the poll is determined by a roll against Mathematics (Statistics) or an appropriate social science, such as Economics, Expert Skill (Political Science), Psychology (Applied), or Sociology – all of which include knowledge of standard statistical methods and measures. This represents the design *and* analysis of the poll – the collection aspect is factored in below. This skill roll can be modified via any or all of the following complementary skills (p. 21):

● Administration is a *mandatory* complementary skill, to ensure that the data are collected properly.
● Area Knowledge can provide insight into the target population when designing a poll.
● If a social science is the primary skill, Mathematics (Statistics) can complement it. Or, if Mathematics (Statistics) is the primary skill, an appropriate social science can complement it. Using the two together allows the creation of more sophisticated and controlled questions *and* produces a more thorough analysis.

The effects of success and failure are the same as for direct observation (p. 56).

## *Existing Research*

Instead of producing and carrying out a new survey, a polling group can rely on data collected by another researcher or a statistical agency. Roll vs. Research to find such data.

On a critical success, the data are a perfect fit; roll vs. the primary skill at no penalty. On a normal success, they're only partially relevant; roll at -2. Either way, this reduces the *total* time for the survey to one week (as only analysis is needed). When using existing research, neither Administration nor Area Knowledge can be complementary skills.

On a failure, no useful data are available; the pollsters *must* create their own survey. On a critical failure. the data *appear* relevant, but they really measure something entirely different – make a random reaction roll for the "measured" opinion!

# DAME RUMOR

*Rumor* is what people in a crowd or community are talking about (or otherwise sending each other messages about). Any Current Affairs skill can be used to keep track of rumors on the subject it relates to. People can find out about rumors among their immediate family and friends with an IQ roll. Streetwise can pick up the "word on the street." More arcane subjects of rumor may be included in Hidden Lore skills.

Success identifies a current rumor. Failure reveals only random gossip on scattered topics. Critical success spots a rumor that's just about to take off. Critical failure picks up a Delusion of one person or a small group, or mistakes a whispering campaign (*Psy Ops,* p. 62) for a spontaneous rumor.

A Contact can provide access to rumors in a particular field. In particular, taking a news organization as a Contact Group grants access to a range of Current Affairs skills. For those who lack these traits, there are other options:

● Finding an informant, or a place where information is available, requires a search roll (*Informants,* p. 23).
● Getting information from a single person (*Requests for Information,* p. 28) takes a reaction roll or Influence roll.
● Out of a crowd of people, picking out a specific person who can be induced to talk at more length takes a Per-based Diplomacy roll (*Approachability,* p. 25).

• An entire crowd can be steered onto a topic. An open inquiry can be handled as a reaction roll, or Diplomacy can steer the conversation tactfully to the subject of interest. Fast-Talk can disguise the topic of the inquiry, but a *failed* skill roll means the topic was hidden *too* well, and the respondents never answered the real question.

• A Carousing roll, which can be aided by paying for drinks or entertainment (p. B183), may get people in a cooperative mood, or simply inspire them to talk freely.

## SAMPLING THE MEDIA

Instead of polling *people*, investigators may get an idea of public opinion by examining its expression in the media. This idea is old; Chinese texts on poetry from the first millennium B.C. recommend that officials collect folk songs and inform the ruler of the sentiments they express. But it only became systematic at TL7, as an outgrowth of the large-scale propaganda of World War II.

Choosing a suitable body of material requires a Research roll. Success produces a usable sample. Failure produces a sample without consistent focus. Critical failure produces data compromised by the assumptions or biases of the collectors.

The base time for collection is a month for print media; a week for broadcast; a day for online media.

Once the sample is collected, identifying common themes calls for an Intelligence Analysis roll. The consequences of the roll are the same as for collecting rumors (p. 57). The information gained can help attain short-term goals by identifying behind-the-scenes interests and biases ("providing context"); treat the skill as complementing Propaganda or Psychology (Applied). To identify *larger* cultural patterns and assumptions, use Expert Skill (Political Science) or Sociology instead. These skills can complement the use of Propaganda or Politics to change public opinion. Either way, the base time for analysis is one week.

Samplers may use Mathematics (Statistics), to come up with good statistical methods, as a complementary skill (p. 21) for *any* of the skills above.

The same methods can be used to analyze the content of a single work, looking for the cultural assumptions needed for it to make sense. This can be complemented by an appropriate Connoisseur or Current Events skill to produce a more insightful analysis. The results don't help with action on the political or organizational scale, but instead complement Influence skills with individual admirers of the work.

*He jerked up his chin. "People have some very odd illusions about power. Mostly it consists of finding a parade and nipping over to place yourself at the head of the band."*

*– Lois McMaster Bujold,* ***Komarr***

# HOUSEHOLDS AND COMMUNITIES AS ORGANIZATIONS

Some households or communities set themselves apart, informally, from the larger community or society around them.

## SEARCHING FOR HOUSEHOLDS AND COMMUNITIES

Searching for a type of community, or any household belonging to a certain community, works like searching for an organization (pp. 45-46). In particular, use the search bonuses for organizational size, based on the number of people in the community, or the average number of people in a household. The chance of a successful search improves in larger settlements.

Searching for a *specific* household uses the rules for finding known individuals (p. 24). The chance of a successful search is better in a smaller settlement.

The usual search roll is made vs. IQ. Various skills can substitute:

• Current Affairs (People or Travel) may locate places where the quality or the beautiful people are publicly known to spend time, but won't identify their private spaces.

• Savoir-Faire (High Society) finds the homes or neighborhoods of the upper classes.

• Savoir-Faire (Mafia) locates houses where the local criminal elite live, or neighborhoods that they dominate.

• Streetwise locates the urban underclasses.

## INNER CIRCLES

Gaining admission to a household or community may require a reaction or Influence roll, just like getting in the doors of an organization (*Gatekeepers,* p. 47). Diplomacy works as an Influence skill with any group. Some other skills work for specific groups:

- Politics for political inner circles.
- Savoir-Faire (High Society) for the upper classes.
- Savoir-Faire (Mafia) for organized crime.
- Streetwise for *dis*organized crime.

In a community, it may not be obvious who the gatekeeper is! If you have a letter of introduction, it will usually be addressed to someone suitable; if not, keep trying to make a good impression until the right person decides you're acceptable. A successful social perception roll (see pp. 24-26) can identify the key person. This requires eight hours of observing the social scene; you may take more or less time as per p. B346. After this, you may make a Per-based roll against the appropriate social skill for this particular group (see above), or against Sociology or Sociometry (p. 81). *Being* the right person is a perk: Social Arbiter (p. 79).

# THE BENEFITS OF STATUS

Holding a general "position" in society (via Status) makes it easier to gain cooperation and assistance. This is akin to the benefits of Rank (pp. 51-52), but the effects are more diffuse. Many are covered by the use of Status as a reaction modifier (p. 26). In addition, the following are available:

- In an emergency, a person with high Status can try to take charge with a Leadership roll. Status acts as a bonus to the roll! This doesn't grant the ability to lead *well* – for that, make Leadership rolls without the Status modifier – but it turns a group or crowd into an organized body with a common purpose.
- In a publicity campaign, a high-Status advocate helps legitimize a position (see *Advertising and Propaganda,* pp. 61-62).
- In the pursuit of appointed or elected office, higher-Status candidates have an advantage. This includes Status granted by holding office already – incumbents have an advantage over challengers!
- A high-Status individual may approach others as if they were members of a Contact Group (pp. B44-45). This isn't limited to information; it includes things like gaining admission or good seating at a club or event, or having the police

or courts overlook a minor offense. The GM should determine the effective skill level of each one-time "Contact," and consult the chart below.

| Status | Effective Skill |
|--------|-----------------|
| 1-2 | 12 |
| 3-4 | 15 |
| 5-6 | 18 |
| 7-8 | 21 |

If the "Contact's" effective skill is equal to or less than the value shown for the asker's Status, treat him as Usually Reliable. For each step by which his effective skill exceeds this, drop his reliability one step: to Somewhat Reliable, then Unreliable, and then to completely unapproachable.

*Example:* A Status 3 doctor could ask a beat cop (effective skill 12) or detective (effective skill 15) for small favors, as though either were a Usually Reliable Contact. If she had to ask for information from the Chief of Police (effective skill 18), he would act as Somewhat Reliable, while the City Commissioner (effective skill 21) would be Unreliable.

# DIRECT INFLUENCE

Direct influence encompasses ways of influencing crowds of people face-to-face. It can include some uses of media, especially audiovisual media, to convey an impression of personality. The key skill in direct influence is always that of the person delivering the information or advocating the action.

In some cases, influence can be enhanced by largesse – typically in such forms as food and drink, entertainment, and souvenirs. This isn't the same as bribing all its members, one at a time. Largesse can succeed with much smaller expenditures. The cost of largesse is based on the typical monthly pay for the people in the crowd (p. B517); multiply that by the number of people in the crowd, then by the percentage shown (on the table below) for the bonus you want.

| Minimum Percentage | Bonus |
|--------------------|-------|
| 1% | +1 |
| 2% | +2 |
| 5% | +3 |
| 20% | +4 |

## MAKING SPEECHES

Delivering a speech is a way to reach a whole crowd at once. The crowd has to be willing to listen! This depends on its initial reaction (p. 26).

*Excellent:* The crowd hangs on your words. You aren't *required* to roll for the success of your speech; you automatically win the Influence roll, getting a Good reaction, regardless of your skill.

*Very Good, Good, or Neutral:* The crowd listens, willingly or conscientiously.

*Poor:* You can speak, but you get a few hecklers (p. 60).

*Bad or Very Bad:* The entire crowd is hostile and difficult to persuade. You cannot speak without being shouted down (*Hecklers,* p. 60).

*Disastrous:* As *Bad or Very Bad,* above, but also make a "potential combat" roll at -2. There's a risk of mob violence (*The Mind of the Mob,* pp. 71-72).

Making an effective speech normally requires a Public-Speaking-based Influence roll. If you win, the audience's reaction is Good; if you lose, it's Bad. Alternatively, if you aren't confident in your Public Speaking skill, you can just talk to the crowd. The GM will make a *second* reaction roll and average it with the initial reaction roll (rounding toward 10).

If two speakers take opposing positions, see *Debate* (pp. 34-35) or *Wit, Mockery, and Insults* (p. 35).

The effectiveness of the speech depends on its being heard. The loudspeaker was invented in 1898 (TL6); before then, and for some time after, training in Public Speaking and Leadership includes making one's voice carry, often by using acoustics well. Apply the modifiers from p. B216 and from *one* of the following categories, depending on whether you're using electronic amplification or natural acoustics:

*Acoustics:* -2 if you aren't free to stand where the acoustics are good (e.g., hemmed in by a crowd or physically restrained); Penetrating Voice cancels this penalty. If you are free, superior acoustic design gives the equivalent of an equipment quality bonus (p. B345) in a *specific* location.

*Amplification:* Cheap equipment gives you the equivalent of Disturbing Voice. High-end equipment gives quality bonuses (p. B345), but requires an Electronics Operation (Media) roll for this benefit. Low-definition sound amplification (*Voice to Voice,* p. 33) halves bonuses from Voice *and* penalties from Disturbing Voice – but not from Stuttering or cheap equipment.

## Hecklers

Hecklers make a speech harder. Occasional heckling from the crowd gives -2 to effective skill. Being *shouted down* gives -5. Penetrating Voice (if using acoustics) or a successful roll against Electronics Operation (Media) (if using amplification) cancels the penalty for heckling, but not for being shouted down.

To silence hecklers, engage them with debate (pp. 34-35) or with wit, mockery, or insults (p. 35). Alternatively, you may have them removed. If the crowd's initial reaction was Neutral or better, they'll support the removal of hecklers or disruptors. If it was Poor, they'll react to this at -2. If it was Bad or worse, the entire crowd is hostile; you can't pick out individuals to remove!

## Preparation

A suitable complementary skill (p. 21) can affect the content of a speech: Writing to plan the speech in advance, Research or a knowledge skill to find supporting evidence, Current Affairs to make topical allusions, etc.

You can gain a manipulation bonus (p. 37) with Propaganda (to present slanted evidence). Alternatively, you can use Politics or Sociology to predict how a particular crowd thinks or feels; this works similarly to Psychology (Applied), but the bonus is limited to +1 unless an attitude such as Intolerance is widely held in the audience.

## ENTERTAINMENT

Performing artists can also influence the mood of a crowd. This isn't a matter of the *technical* skill of the performance.

A brilliant pianist might achieve a critical success on Musical Instrument (Keyboard) without acknowledging the audience's presence beyond an opening bow; the audience's response would be to his music, not his personality. But some performers play to the crowd.

This works like making speeches (p. 59). Public Speaking remains applicable in most situations, whether as the main focus of the act (e.g., for a comedian or storyteller) or for patter (e.g., between tricks for a magician or between songs for a singer). However, some singers, dancers, or instrumentalists can substitute Sex Appeal instead.
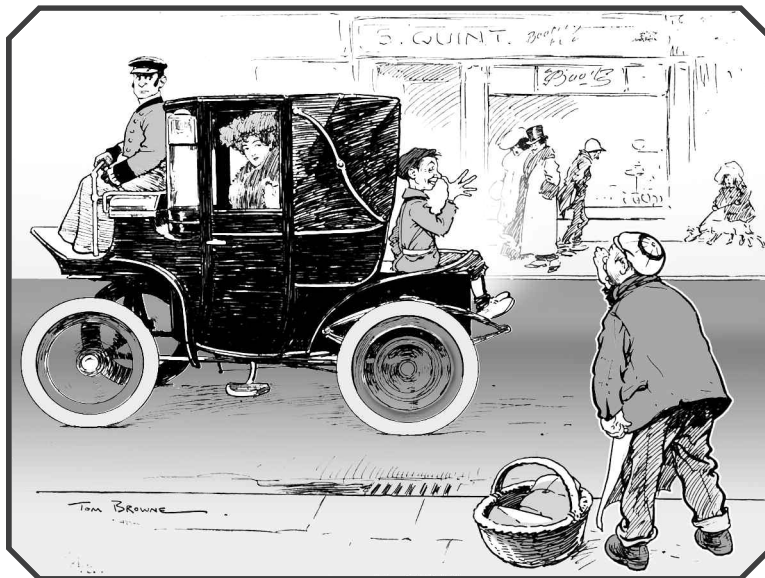


## WORKING THE CROWD

Working crowds is an application of Politics. The GM may allow other skills to apply, such as Carousing at a rock concert, Savoir-Faire (High Society) at a charity ball, or Streetwise at a gang summit. Rather than making a speech, the person working the crowd circulates, having brief conversations with individuals or small groups – a few minutes per person. A "crowd" here is a gathering of from 30 to 300 people; a larger group is too big to work as a whole, and working a smaller one is obvious.

Any success on the skill roll results in learning names, faces, and one or two interesting facts for a sample of people at the event. Spending an hour or two afterward to take notes provides a permanent record. Eidetic Memory still requires spending the time, but eliminates the need for written notes; Photographic Memory eliminates the time requirement as well. A critical success represents a meeting with someone notable; a critical failure is a serious social error that leaves a bad impression.

Critical failures aside, the impression left on the crowd depends on an Influence roll against the average Will for the crowd. Winning the Contest produces a Good average reaction; losing it produces a Bad one. In later meetings with individual people from the event, apply a +1 or -2 general reaction modifier. Working a crowd can be a step toward building up a new Contact or other lasting relationship (p. 40).

## CULTIVATING A PERSONA

People who make public appearances as a career often develop a public face for such appearances, from a politician meeting constituents and giving a speech to a movie star appearing on a talk show. These are not actively deceptive, as discussed under *False Identities* (pp. 37-39), but improved versions of the public figure's real self, with stylizations, exaggerations, or editing out of flaws. The effects of a persona aren't limited to face-to-face encounters; the actual benefits require high-definition two-way audio (with or without video), but the persona can be maintained in any video or audio medium, for the sake of consistency.

Assuming a persona on one occasion requires a single roll for the entire event, made at the start and affecting its whole duration. A public figure who maintains an ongoing persona need only make one roll per month, much like a job success roll.

This kind of persona is relatively easy to maintain: roll a Quick Contest of Acting at +5, Performance at +3, or IQ vs. the highest IQ of the group you're appearing before (this is a variant of *Walk the Walk*, pp. 37-38). Winning gives +1 to reaction or Influence rolls; losing gives -1.

*Modifiers:* +1 for Honest Face. +1 for Fashion Sense if the persona is stylish or trendy; this can be supplied by someone else, such as a Contact. In addition, Influence skills can complement (p. 21) the roll; e.g., Diplomacy for the leader of a political party, or Sex Appeal for a rock star.

Other skills can take the place of Performance to wear personae of specific types:

- Leadership at +3 for a military officer.
- Politics at +3 for a political candidate.
- Psychology (Applied) at +3 for a therapist.
- Religious Ritual at +3 for a clergyman.
- Teaching at +3 for an instructor.

# INDIRECT INFLUENCE

A community or society can also be influenced *indirectly*, by methods such as public relations campaigns. The key skill for these isn't the performing ability of the person who presents the message, but the strategic judgment of the person who plans and directs the campaign.

## ADVERTISING AND PROPAGANDA

The Propaganda skill is used for public relations campaigns of all kinds. The name comes from *Sacra congregatio de propaganda fide*, a Catholic body founded in 1622 to "propagate the faith" in non-Catholic countries. The basic strategic skill is the same, whether the message is delivered by live preaching, newspaper advertisements, broadcasting, or Internet messages.

The base time for planning a campaign is a month. During this stage, the marketer must determine the *target audience* (e.g., all American males between 30 and 40 years old). The cost of the campaign is 0.1% of the typical monthly pay for the target audience, multiplied by the size of the audience.

Optionally, the advertiser can attempt to enhance the campaign by identifying which parts of the audience are most likely to respond. This "targeted marketing" may involve anything from customer surveys to focus groups; regardless of the details, use the rules for conducting an opinion poll (p. 57). The results are interpreted like the results of an approachability roll (p. 25): critical success gives +3, success gives +1, failure gives no bonus, and critical failure gives -3. (If this step is skipped, apply no modifier.)

The campaign itself is implemented as a Quick Contest of Propaganda vs. the average Will of the audience. Modifiers include:

*Complementary Skills* (p. 21): Use the skill that covers the medium of the campaign – Public Speaking for political speeches, Writing for printed material, Group Performance (Directing) for video, Artist (Drawing) or Photography for posters, Musical Composition for songs, and so on.

*High-Status Spokesman:* A bonus equal to half the difference between the spokesman's Status and the target audience's average Status, rounded down. (If Rank replaces Status in this society, use Rank instead.) If the Propaganda roll critically fails, however, the spokesman is discredited and gains a negative Reputation equal to the inverse of the bonus he provided!

*Money Spent:* +1 if you spend 2× as much on the campaign, +2 for 5×, +3 for 20×, or +4 for 100×.

### Advertising and Search Rolls

Many kinds of search rolls (pp. 22-24 and 45-46) gain bonuses from money spent on "advertising." Getting these bonuses doesn't require Propaganda rolls, much less Propaganda-based Influence rolls. There are two different reasons for this:

Propaganda is primarily the skill of influencing mass behavior by a carefully designed campaign. It can get large numbers of people to buy a new product, vote for a candidate, or convert to a religion. But influencing one person, or a handful of people – recruiting one employee, or selling one item – doesn't require such elaborate methods. At most, placing a classified ad or handing out business cards requires an IQ roll, and search rolls are already made against IQ or IQ-based skills.

Even if a search does use elaborate advertising, the Propaganda skill doesn't have to be that of the searchers. An advertising budget can represent hiring an advertising, marketing, or public relations agency. The actual Propaganda roll takes place behind the scenes; its effects are incorporated into the search roll. Of course, several searches do allow Propaganda skill to be substituted for IQ, if the searchers have it.

*Time Spent:* See p. B346. Planning time *cannot* be reduced to zero.

Winning the Quick Contest leaves the audience favorably inclined to the thing being sold: +1 to reaction rolls if they encounter it in person, or to Influence rolls if someone makes a personal appeal to them. Losing it gives -2. In a society with electronic mass media, this result will normally be evident within a week; in a society with printing, within a month; in a lower-tech society, within six months. The duration of this effect is up to the GM, but should generally last long enough to influence the initial wave of sales (or the equivalent).

> *Supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting.*
>
> – Sun Tzu, **The Art of War**

## Rival Campaigns

Rival campaigns require competitive Influence rolls (p. 34) against Propaganda. However, *each* campaign's margin of success should be compared to the public's Will roll; this will determine not only who won the competition between advertisers, but how each campaign fared in the public's eye:

● If both campaigns overcame the public's Will: The winner receives +1 to reaction and Influence rolls; the loser receives no modifier.
● If only the winning campaign overcame the public's Will: The winner receives +1 to reaction and Influence rolls; the loser receives -2.
● If neither campaign overcame the public's Will: The winner receives -2 to reaction and Influence rolls; the loser receives -3.

Advertisers have the option of undermining a rival's campaign rather than advancing their own; this works as for *Dialectic* (p. 35).

## Viral Marketing

Standard advertising and propaganda rely on mass communications to get the word out. But some messages inspire the audience to tell other people about them, link to them on their blogs, or otherwise pass them on. Viral marketing strategies seek to exploit this effect.

Designing a viral campaign works as for normal advertising, with the following changes:

● You may choose to use Sociometry (p. 81), or its default to Sociology, in place of an opinion poll during the "targeted marketing" step. This represents understanding social connectedness well enough to identify the *alpha users* – those who have a high capacity to influence other audience members.
● If you have raised the Going Viral (p. 81) technique, you may use its bonus *instead of* spending additional money. In effect, you've gained volunteer help in spreading the word.

● Double the reaction or Influence modifier when the audience encounters the product: +2 on a success or -4 on a failure.

The GM may also allow an advertising campaign to go viral *spontaneously.* Critical success on Propaganda (vs. anything but critical success on average Will), or critical failure on the audience's average Will (vs. anything but critical failure on Propaganda), establishes a successful viral campaign. However, critical failure on Propaganda creates the effect of a *failed* viral ad; the campaign delivers such a completely wrong message, or is so memorably bad, that the audience can't resist passing it along!

# PSY OPS

Other forms of indirect influence use Quick Contests of Psychology (Applied) against the average Will of the target population. This alters the target population's reaction rolls: typically winning (a Good reaction) gives +1 to subsequent rolls, but losing (a Bad reaction) gives -2. Some examples are as follows:

● Making enemy soldiers fear the consequences of not surrendering, or making them perceive surrender as honorable: Apply the bonus/penalty to the reaction roll for potential combat (p. 68).
● Undermining the trust of enemy soldiers in their leaders, or of the civilian population in their government: Apply the *reverse* of the modifier to a loyalty check (see pp. 39-40).
● Starting a whispering campaign to spread a rumor or popularize a product without overt use of the mass media or explicit identification of the source of the campaign: Use the rules for advertising (pp. 61-62), but based on Psychology (Applied). At the tactical level, this involves the same skills as working a crowd (p. 60); rolls against average skill for field operatives can complement (p. 21) Psychology (Applied).
● Inducing the other side to accept information as credible: Apply the bonus/penalty to the responses to information (see p. 28). Critical failure on their Will roll to resist may create a Delusion.

Psychological warfare can also affect the skill rolls of enemy leaders. See the rules on using Psychology (Applied) for manipulation (p. 37). For example, appeals to an enemy field officer's Megalomania might give him penalties to Tactics by encouraging unjustified contempt for his adversaries.

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# Applied Memetics

The geneticist Richard Dawkins proposed that the transmission of human culture involved units called *memes,* analogous to *genes* for biological traits. In some science-fictional settings, such as **Transhuman Space,** an actual science of memetics studies both the mechanisms by which human beings acquire new memes, and the spread of memes through societies. If such a science existed, it might enhance human communication, learning, and persuasion.

Full rules for memetics are beyond the scope of this supplement; see the **Transhuman Space** series for one treatment. But a GM wanting to incorporate memetics into his campaigns can allow Expert Skill (Memetics) (p. 80) and possibly Memetics Talent (p. 77).

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# POWER STRUGGLES

The top end of mass social engineering is the pursuit of political or economic power. An in-depth study of sources and forms of power is beyond the scope of this supplement, but it can look at power as the subject of social interactions.

## THE THREE KINDS OF POLITICS

Government is an organization, but one with a peculiar standing. It claims to act on behalf of an entire society, and is generally accepted as doing so by most people – if not, it ceases to function as a government. Political theorists call this acceptance *legitimacy*. Governments can make Rank available to their employees or servants (*Status, Rank, and Society/Government Type,* p. 17); other organizations usually can do so only if they have special relationships with governments, such as established churches able to grant Religious Rank. Changes in government affect everybody and often are the focus of mass movements. Different sorts of politics create change on different scales.

### *Administrative Politics*

All but the smallest governments act through bureaucracies with chains of command. People in a chain of command often try to influence higher-level decisions, both to advance their own careers (see *Promotion,* pp. 50-51) and to support policies they favor. This kind of politics doesn't change the people at the top, but tries to change their minds.

For minor issues, this calls for a reaction roll for a response to information (p. 28). If there are multiple senior staff members, a Per-based Administration roll can identify one who's likely to be receptive (*Approachability,* p. 25). At the GM's discretion, a modifier of -1 to -3 may be applied for a proposal that goes against current policies, or +1 to +3 for one that expands their scope (heads of bureaucracies tend to be empire-builders). An Influence roll can be substituted; Diplomacy is a good choice, as it lessens the risk of an unfavorable reaction. Failures tend to be dismissed as incompetent rather than dishonest, but a second roll is required after a Bad reaction, at -2. On a Poor reaction, the staff member faces an investigation; on a Bad or worse one, he faces continuing suspicion (*Internal Enemies,* p. 53).

Disputes between advocates of different policies are resolved as a debate (pp. 34-35), often based on Writing. Administration or Law can serve as a complementary skill (p. 21); so can knowledge of the subject of the policy. The rules for opposed complementary skills can apply.

A major policy change requires building trust (p. 40); this requires a series of Regular Contests of Diplomacy against the effective skill of the organization, as defined under *Going Through Channels* (p. 48). One attempt may be made per month.

All political systems have administrative politics, except for anarchies, some clan/tribal systems, and certain Athenian democracies. Political systems with CR5 or CR6 typically have *only* administrative politics.

### *Electoral Politics*

Representative democracies elect the people who head their governments. Societies of other types make more limited use of elections; for example, Athens elected its generals, but chose most of its officials by lot!

An election extends over time, but ends with a single vote. This is treated as a Quick Contest of Politics, either between single candidates or between political parties or factions. The drama is in the build-up, especially the complementary skill rolls and other sources of bonuses or penalties – and, in an extended campaign, the skill rolls that enhance *those* skill rolls. The possibilities are endless, but here are some common methods:

● The candidate with the highest Status gets a bonus to Politics equal to the difference from the next highest Status.
● A public persona (p. 61) can give +1 to Politics.
● Propaganda often involves rival campaigns (*Advertising and Propaganda,* pp. 61-62) by the different candidates. A high-Status spokesman who is not the candidate provides the usual bonus to Propaganda.
● Making speeches (p. 59) allows Public Speaking to act as a complementary skill (p. 21). For a debate (pp. 34-35) between candidates, treat their skills as opposed.
● A campaign can better focus on public concerns if it's guided by evidence of what those concerns are. Use Expert Skill (Political Science) to conduct a poll (p. 57); use Sociology to sample the mass media (p. 58); or use Research to find applicable published results from either source. Treat any of these as complementary skills.
● "Dirty tricks" approaches can swing an election, especially a close one: paying off voters, hiring people to cast fraudulent votes, preventing likely unfavorable voters from getting ballots, handing out ballots already marked for one party's candidates, "mislaying" ballots, or forging ballots favorable to one party, for example. Treat any skill used to pull off such tricks as a manipulative skill (p. 37).

The mechanics of the actual election depend on how the vote is organized.

#### Candidate vs. Candidate

Some electoral systems give voters a choice between candidates for a single office. If there are two serious candidates, when the final Quick Contest of Politics takes place, the candidate who wins is elected.

If the candidates are tied, it's an unusually close election; the votes have to be recounted, and there may be legal disputes or other complications. Time for a recount depends on the TL and the culture; in present-day settings, a week is a reasonable delay. The recount calls for another Quick Contest of Politics; the winner is elected, but by a very narrow margin (1% of total votes cast or less). Further ties are unlikely and will probably be resolved in court.

If there are three or more candidates, all of them roll against Politics. What happens next depends on the results:

● If one candidate's margin of success (or failure) is at least 5 points better than any other's, he has a majority and is elected.

● Otherwise, the two candidates with the best margins of success (or failure) face each other in a runoff. This is resolved as usual for a two-candidate election.

## Party vs. Party

Other electoral systems give voters a choice between slates of candidates submitted by parties. When the final Quick Contest of Politics takes place, the total positions – for example, seats in the legislature – are divided up between the parties according to how well they did.

If there are two significant parties, the party that wins has a majority. If the parties are tied, it's an unusually close election; roll again to see which has marginally more votes. If this is also a tie, they have exactly equal power; neither can govern without the other's consent.

If there are three or more significant parties, all of them roll against Politics. What happens next depends on the results:

● If one party's margin of success/failure is better than any other's by at least 5 points, it has a clear majority and can form a government by itself.

● Otherwise, it needs to form a coalition with at least one other significant party. See *Alliances and Diplomacy* (pp. 65-66).

## Legislation

Voting can also be used to pass laws and make other decisions, either by elected representatives or by the citizenry as a whole.

If the decision is taking place in the background, its outcome can be based on a reaction roll, representing the balance of opinion in the voting body. The GM may adjust this roll by -3 to +3, if the public has a strong opinion *or* if those proposing the law are particular favored or unfavored at the moment. If the voting body's membership was determined by a recent party vs. party election, use the dominant party's margin of victory as a bonus for reactions to decisions it favors, or a penalty for reactions to decisions it opposes.

If a group outside the voting body (such as the PCs!) seeks to influence public opinion, treat this as a Propaganda-based Influence roll (see *Advertising and Propaganda,* pp. 61-62). Winning alters the public opinion modifier by +1 or -1.

If the PCs are members of the voting body, and either proposed the decision or are leading the opposition, the outcome is resolved as competing Politics-based Influence rolls – but using the following rules rather than the ones on p. 34:

● Roll two separate Quick Contests of Politics vs. the average Will of the voting body, and compare the two margins of victory or defeat. If the supporters' margin is wider, the measure passes. If not, it fails.

● If the voting body's membership was determined by a party vs. party election, use the dominant party's margin of victory as a bonus or penalty to average Will, depending on whether the dominant party is opposed or in favor.

● One key speaker for each side may take part in a debate (pp. 34-35); the winning side gets +1 to its Politics roll (+2 if it won with a critical success).

● A wealthy outside interest can try to bribe the members of the body; the bribery bonus adds to the effective skill or Will of the side it supports.

## *Revolutionary Politics*

Revolutionary politics changes government policy not by electing new people to head the government, but by creating an entire new government. This isn't part of the normal politics of any society type – except possibly anarchy. Revolutions often involve violence of various sorts: mob action (pp. 71-72) against the police, the armed forces, and the bureaucracy; civil war between opposed armies; or the new government's violent repression of the old government and its supports, which can lead to general totalitarianism (below). But violence alone doesn't make a revolution successful. A functioning government will fight back against violent attack; violent revolution amounts to fighting a war on the enemy's home ground, with no external base to retreat to. For revolution to succeed, the general population has to stop supporting the established government. The armed struggle is best dealt with by the rules of **GURPS Mass Combat,** but the change of public attitude is social engineering on a huge scale.

A government's legitimacy can be represented as the average loyalty of its people (pp. 39-40). A government imposed by force, without any sort of legal basis, uses the special modifiers for involuntary relationships (pp. 39-40). This applies to governments of Subjugated societies, to any government with CR6 (see *Totalitarianism,* below), and to many governments with CR5 and some with CR4. See also *Status, Rank, and Society/Government Type* (p. 17). Other special modifiers also affect loyalty to a government:

*External Threats:* +1 to +5, depending on the severity of the threat.
*Repressiveness:* +(3-CR).
*Reputation:* The average of the Reputation of the head of state (*Reputation,* p. 16) and the Reputation of the government as an organization (*Organizational Reputation,* p. 52), rounded toward 10.
*Utopian Society* (p. B510): +2 (*everybody* believes in the society's ideals).

Loyalty to a government can rise or fall over time. Sufficiently low loyalty makes governments unstable:

# Totalitarianism

Totalitarian political systems include the governments of Hitler, Stalin, and Pol Pot. They are political regimes that seek to compel complete subjection of a society to an ideology. The specific ideology isn't the issue; it's the manner in which it's enforced. In **GURPS** terms, totalitarianism amounts to CR6: total control.

Hannah Arendt, who wrote the classic analysis of totalitarianism, said that totalitarian societies had three characteristic institutions: massive propaganda efforts directed at their own populations, secret police forces, and concentration camps that caused mass deaths. The classic fictional portrayal of this kind of society is George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four.* In **GURPS** terms, such systems routinely use Propaganda, Psychology (Applied), Intelligence Analysis, and Brainwashing against their own citizens. A substantial part of the citizenry may have Enemy (The Secret Police; Watcher). A *really* paranoid leader may have several secret police agencies that watch each other!

*Bad:* Most of the population is indifferent to the government and won't come to its defense.

*Very Bad:* The population will rise up in protest, go on strike, etc., if the chances of success look reasonable. There may be episodes of mob violence.

*Disastrous:* The population actively opposes the government, with little regard for its own safety. There may be widespread mob violence, or military units and other branches of government may change sides.

Revolution can occur spontaneously as a result of such conditions. But a revolutionary movement can also try to bring it about by various means. Cautious leaders watch for the right moment (see *The Mood of the Crowd,* pp. 56-58), make public statements calling for revolution, and hope for public support. Activist leaders attempt to change public attitudes through Influence rolls based on Politics, and resisted by public loyalty to the government; if the leaders win, public loyalty decreases by 1. Propaganda and Psychology (Applied) serve as complementary skills to Politics (*Indirect Influence,* pp. 32-33).

# ALLIANCES AND DIPLOMACY

Politics isn't limited to situations where one organization has all the power. It also includes relationships between independent power centers: governments of different societies, political parties, or even rival factions in a revolution. Sometimes two power centers will find a compromise more prudent than a contest that only one can win.

The simplest case is an effort to reach agreement on a single issue. Both sides want to find common ground, but on the best terms for themselves; this is a Quick Contest of Diplomacy between their representatives. (PCs may represent their side, or hire a professional negotiator.) If both negotiators fail their rolls, no common ground is found, and no agreement is reached. If at least one roll is a success, the PCs get to *ask* for concessions if their side won the Quick Contest, but must *offer* them if their side lost; a tie indicates that neither side has the advantage.

Various skills can help with such a Contest:

● Intelligence Analysis complements (p. 21) Diplomacy by providing information – or *mis*information – on the other side's true needs and priorities.

● Psychology (Applied) provides a bonus to Diplomacy by psyching out the other side's negotiator; see *Manipulation* (p. 37).

● Fast-Talk can gain concessions by confusing the issues – also discussed in *Manipulation* – but the side that makes the concessions is likely to eventually decide that the other side wasn't acting in good faith; such agreements are short-lived.

## Multiple Factions

In some situations, more than two parties may be negotiating. Ordinarily this works the same as for two parties, with the party that gets the best roll receiving concessions from the others. If more than one party fails its roll, the failing parties can't find common ground with each other; they may form separate bargains with the successful parties, or the one that failed by more may be shut out.

Different rules apply when two parties compete for an alliance with a third.

1. The rivals engage in a Quick Contest of Diplomacy.

2. The winner gets to make the first offer, which is treated as a second Quick Contest of Diplomacy with the party that's being courted.

3. If it doesn't work out, the other rival gets to make its offer.

In step 1, either or both rivals can claim a bonus to their Diplomacy roll by offering to make concessions. But then, in step 2, the party being courted gets to apply *that same bonus* to its own Diplomacy skill, as it takes advantage of the promised concessions.

*Example:* The Reds and the Greens both have large factions in the new Assembly, but neither has a majority; the swing votes are in the radical capitalist Blues. The Reds' offer of major concessions gives them +4 to Diplomacy in step 1; they win the Quick Contest against the Greens, and are the first to offer a coalition with the Blues. But now, in step 2, the Blues have +4 to Diplomacy in *their* Quick Contest with the Reds. Their margin of victory is 3; their alliance with the Reds secures them the Ministry of Finance, a flat tax, and restrictions on nationalization of farms and businesses.

## Lasting Alliances

Some negotiations seek lasting alliances or treaties. The initial agreement is a simple negotiation, as described above, but if it succeeds, the parties commit to working out a long-term relationship. This normally requires one or more years. The relationships created are analogous to Patron, Ally, Contact, or Dependent, but between factions or governments rather than individuals.

Reaching such agreement is a process of building trust (p. 40), with some differences. The basic mechanic is a Regular Contest of Law (for the party putting forth a proposal) vs. Will (for the other party's representative), with each attempt taking one year. Other skills can substitute for Law in nonpolitical negotiations; for example, Finance for a corporate merger, or Games to agree on rules for a sports league. Apply the following modifiers:

*Complementary Skills:* Diplomacy can complement Law.

*Crash Negotiations:* Apply penalties for taking less time (p. B346), though instant negotiations are not possible. This *only* applies to the first attempt; subsequent attempts must wait the full year between rolls!

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### Family Alliances

In aristocratic societies, political authority is treated as private property that can be inherited; this may be true, for example, in a dictatorship (called a monarchy in this case). Political alliances are often solidified by marriages between children of the different families. If the children get a say, this requires both political diplomacy (above) and courtship (pp. 40-41) to set things up; in a culture with arranged marriages, the children may not get a say – unless they object strongly enough to run away or otherwise make the marriage impossible.

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*Proposal Made by PCs:* +3 to -3, depending on the GM's assessment of the proposal.

*Specious Truce:* -3 if Fast-Talk was the skill used to reach the initial short-term agreement.

If Law succeeds, and Will fails, the proposed agreement goes through. If both succeed, or both fail, the outcome is an impasse. If Law fails, and Will succeeds, the proposal is rejected with prejudice: -5 to effective Law skill on further proposals *from that party*.

If both parties make proposals to each other, the one with the greater margin of success is considered first. If this one is rejected, the other party's offer is considered. If there are multiple parties, roll against the *highest* Will among those considering each proposal.

*Cui bono?*
*[For whose benefit?]*
*– Roman legal maxim*
*attributed to Lucius*
*Cassius Longinus Ravilla*

# ECONOMIC RIVALRY

Struggles over power apply to economics as well as to politics. Whether an economy is run by risk-taking entrepreneurs or massive bureaucracies, its economic actors seek their own advantage, though the methods are different.

The basic skill for buying and selling, whether to the general public or wholesale to the trade, is Merchant. Entrepreneurs who regularly start up new businesses have generalized Merchant skill, as do village storekeepers who sell a little of everything. Owners of specialized stores, and many independent professionals, artists, craftsmen, and contractors, have Merchant skill with an optional specialty. Self-employed people in small communities may get by with the IQ-5 default, but freelancers in big cities need the actual skill.

## Competition

Economists talk about "perfect competition," where there are so many businesses that none of them can influence the market, or affect its own market position – a kind of frictionless motion. Real competition uses other methods and produces a lot more turbulence.

Most businesses in competitive industries get by with a monthly job roll by the owner or general manager. The competition they face is a background condition; it's not focused specifically on them. Their earnings will fluctuate with better or worse job rolls, but the changes aren't traceable directly to a single rival firm. But dramas about business competition usually focus on a rivalry between two firms.

Targeted competition from a specific rival requires a Quick Contest of Merchant each month. The business with the losing roll suffers a decrease in its earnings by (10% × the margin of

defeat); its rival gains the same dollar amount. Losing by 10 or more, or any critical failure, results in a failing business; only desperate measures will save it from closing its doors. Such measures may be played out as an adventure scenario. This should be focused on action (such as a treasure-hunting expedition) or social intrigue (such as cultivating an elite clientele). This can lead to adventure seeds:

● The PCs have the chance to come up with a plan for saving a business they work for, gaining promotions and Reputation if they succeed.

● The PCs are chosen to carry out a plan devised by someone higher up – who may be a Patron, or may become one if they succeed.

● A rival firm resorts to desperate, or even criminal, measures against the firm the PCs work for.

Several modifiers can influence the outcome of competition:

*Advertising:* Propaganda complements (p. 21) the manager's Merchant skill. Sophisticated and expensive campaigns can raise effective Propaganda; see *Advertising and Propaganda* (pp. 61-62). This can be an opposed complementary skill.

*Cost Control:* Accounting skill can track costs more closely, enabling a business to sell for less and still make a profit; treat Accounting as a complementary skill as well.

*Price-Cutting:* A business can seek to cut into its rival's earnings by sacrificing its own profit margin. For each 10% reduction in its *own* monthly earnings, it gains +1 to Merchant skill for the Contest.

*Product Quality:* The average level of skill used to make a product or perform a service complements the manager's Merchant skill; this can be an opposed complementary skill.

*Word of Mouth:* A business that has acquired a good or bad name with its customers uses its Reputation as a modifier to Merchant skill.

## Monopoly

Monopoly can exist on any scale: The only general store in a village, or the only bank in a small town, is technically a monopoly, and may take advantage of it! But the monopolies that get into the news are huge firms that control an entire industry. This exclusive control can translate into high prices and profits – at least temporarily. The trick is to avoid having those high profits attract new competition. Several different strategies are possible.

*Cartels* are agreements among all the big firms in an industry to maintain a price level, and often to limit production so that supply and demand will force the price up. Setting up a cartel works like forming a political alliance (see *Alliances and Diplomacy,* pp. 65-66). Cartel members are chronically tempted to cheat; a new agreement is needed every year.

*Unfair competition* includes cornering the market in a commodity, price-cutting, and hiring criminal gangs to wreck a rival's plant. These methods aren't based on social influence and won't be discussed here in detail. For a quick and dirty treatment, make a standard competition roll, but adding +2 for a skill used to manipulate the market – or -4 if the attempt fails!

● Finance to survive selling at a loss.
● Intimidation for violence or threats.
● Market Analysis to corner the market.

*Monopoly grants* from a government shut down competition by having it made illegal. This takes political influence over either bureaucrats (see p. 63) or legislators (see p. 64). A business that carries this off gets guaranteed high profits – until the government figures out how much the monopoly is worth and starts asking for a cut. A government may sell monopolies to favored wealthy men, at a high price, as in France in the 17th and 18th centuries. Such an arrangement works like a Contact – but an Unreliable one that has to be paid off again every year, at a high price.

## Unions

Private sector labor unions often behave like monopolies, especially if closed shop contracts are legal. A union may be literally the only seller of labor, if it can keep out nonunion workers. A unionized work force is paid at a rate determined by bargaining between the union and its employer (*Haggling,* pp. 27-28). This is in addition to its role as a mutual aid association for its members (*Organizational Reaction Rolls,* p. 47). How this is achieved, and what its effects are, depend on the union's legal situation.

A union can be a Patron for its members. Its patronage includes its mutual aid functions and its ability to help with grievances, through union advocacy, legal representation, or protest strikes. Its financial assets determine how long it can support a strike. The base cost of striking is 1% of total monthly earnings *per day* of the strike; loyalty checks of union members are at +1 per additional 1% spent, to a maximum of +3. Once funds run out, a weekly loyalty check is required to continue the strike, based on average loyalty.

### Illegal Unions

Early in their history, unions were sometimes illegal and often unpopular; private employers could take repressive measures against them. Under these conditions, a union functions like a revolutionary (pp. 64-65) organization. Getting workers to unionize demands a process of building trust (p. 40) into results of Very Good or Excellent average loyalty. To gain an exclusive bargaining position, the union has to keep strikebreakers ("scabs") from taking union jobs. This calls for a Quick Contest of an average union member's Intimidation (pp. 68-69) vs. an average strikebreaker's Will. If this fails, the union can't force the employer to negotiate.

Picket lines function as a means of intimidation; the union representative's Leadership complements Intimidation in maintaining a picket line. However, the picket line is also a target for police, company security, or hired thugs. Treat an attempt to break up a picket line as a Quick Contest of the enforcers' Intimidation against the workers' loyalty to the union. Some employers may resort to specious intimidation (*Manipulation,* p. 37).

These clashes may lead to actual violence, whether through a failed attempt at intimidation, a simple bad reaction (*Potential Combat and Reaction Rolls,* p. 68), or mob behavior (*Collective Action,* pp. 71-72).

Some unions in this era became involved in larger-scale revolutionary politics aimed at the transformation of society as a whole, for causes ranging from "one man, one vote" to collective ownership.

### Legal Unions

Partly as a result of union political activity, unions became legal in many countries. The workers at a plant or in an industry could gain an exclusive bargaining position by voting to unionize; this vote depends on Politics, in a process comparable to legislation (p. 64). The employer can try to influence the vote with largesse (*Direct Influence,* pp. 59-61). Members of a union have Poor or better average loyalty; if union pay scale is above the general wage level, treat this as a bonus to the loyalty roll once the union is established (*Personal Loyalty,* pp. 39-40).

Strikes and picket lines may play a role in bargaining over wages. Various skills can modify the union negotiators' Merchant skill:

- If the union goes on strike for higher wages, treat this as the use of Propaganda as a manipulative skill (p. 37). Picketing allows a union representative's Leadership to complement this Propaganda roll.
- A union can call on politicians for support with a Politics roll, treated as a complementary skill to Merchant.
- Union negotiators can use statistical evidence on wage rates and cost of living to support their demands, for +1 to effective skill. Roll vs. Research to obtain such evidence.

Union negotiations with employees may become a routine. Treat this like bargaining between two merchants with an established relationship (*Haggling,* pp. 27-28).

Societies where unions are regarded as legitimate organizations often provide arbitration by government agencies or other third parties. This works like an adversarial trial (*Trials,* p. 54), but based on a Quick Contest of Merchant skill rather than Law skill. Law (Labor Relations) can serve as a complementary skill, along with those listed above.

Many countries have labor or social democratic parties that give unions a direct voice in national government. Such parties can propose legislation (p. 64) to resolve labor disputes in favor of unionized workers. Treat such a party as a Contact Group for heads of important labor unions. Lacking such a party, a union can function as an outside group trying to influence legislation.

# CHAPTER SIX
# FROM PERSUASION TO FORCE

*Lieutenant Ng didn't like the look of the crowd outside the bank. Your average civilian would stand down when the police told him to. But these people felt they had a grievance, and they were angry about it. Ng wasn't sure they were wrong. Arguments about the economy made his head hurt, but a lot of his neighbors were out of work or worried about keeping their houses. Still, fixing the economy wasn't his job.*

*So far the crowd was staying within its own boundaries. But the signs and the shouts made him edgy.*

*He swept his gaze over his half dozen officers, all in riot gear. "Let's do it," he said, and led them into a line in front of the entrance. Standing in the middle, he raised his bullhorn, reminding himself about last year's training on crowd control.*

At a certain point, the time for talking is past. Action-focused stories and campaigns reach that point regularly. But social interaction doesn't completely stop during the fight scenes. Communication can prevent fights, provoke them, influence their progress, or end them.

## POTENTIAL COMBAT AND REACTION ROLLS

Combat can start because of an unfavorable reaction roll. Some NPCs go about looking for a fight; any encounter could be "potential combat." Others may start thinking about fighting because some other reaction goes badly. Potential combat situations can emerge out of confrontations with authority, seeking admission to a restricted area, commercial transactions, requests for aid, requests for information, responses to information, recreation, and courtship; see Appendix A for details. The GM has the option of predetermining NPC reactions – but even hostile NPCs will take the odds into account.

Those odds also affect the outcome of a random reaction roll, as do other factors. Apply these modifiers to any potential combat reaction roll, then consult *Potential Combat Results* (p. 74):

*Language:* -2 if the PCs and NPCs share no common tongue.

*Leadership\*:* +1 if the PCs are a disciplined force with a leader (*Between Organized Forces,* p. 69) and the NPCs are not.

*Outnumbered\*:* If the PCs' numbers are greater, +1 for 1.5:1, +2 for 3:1, +3 for 5:1 or more.

*Ranged Weapons\*:* +1 if the PCs have them and the NPCs do not.

*Size\*:* +1 if the highest SM for the PCs exceeds the highest SM for the NPCs. Optionally – especially in a realistic, all-human campaign where nearly all adults have the same SM – the GM may grant this bonus for a lesser but substantial size difference (e.g., a height difference of 20% or more).

*Supernatural or Exotic Abilities\*:* +1 or +2 (GM's call) if the PCs have them and the NPCs do not.

*Territoriality:* -2 if the PCs are intruders on the NPCs' home turf.

\* If the NPCs have the advantage over the PCs in this respect, apply the same modifier, but as a penalty instead of a bonus.

# INTIMIDATION

Intimidation is the Influence skill that's most closely tied to force. On one hand, attempts at intimidation often involve threats to resort to force. On the other, successful intimidation can *prevent* a fight in a potential combat situation, by convincing the other side that the intimidator is too formidable to attack.

If both sides want to intimidate each other, they can normally attempt to do so simultaneously. Under total or partial surprise, though, the side with initiative (p. B393) makes the first attempt at intimidation. In the absence of surprise, an organized force confronting an unorganized group makes the first attempt at intimidation.

Treat simultaneous intimidation attempts as a Quick Contest of Intimidation skill. The loser is intimidated.

If an NPC attempts to intimidate a PC, and wins the Influence roll, but the PC doesn't submit or retreat, the NPC may feel that he has to carry through to save face.

Make a reaction roll for potential combat (p. 68), with an added penalty equal to the NPC's margin of victory. Apply the same penalty to the PC's initial roll to attack, reflecting lack of confidence. An NPC who engaged in *specious* intimidation (p. 37) won't initiate combat.

## BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS

One-on-one intimidation is an Influence roll: Intimidation vs. Will. A variety of modifiers affect it. Most of the general reaction modifiers (p. 26) also apply, such as Reputation and appropriate roleplaying.

*Complementary Skills* (p. 21): Streetwise can complement Intimidation in a suitable environment. Fast-Talk may be used for specious intimidation (*Manipulation,* p. 37).

*Displays of Strength, Bloodthirstiness, or Supernatural Powers:* +1 to +4 (GM's discretion), with an extra +1 if the intimidator is Callous. In supers campaigns, the GM may allow greater bonuses for powers far beyond human limits.

*Making a Request for Aid:* -3. Any aid obtained will be grudging.

*Size:* Add the SM of the person making the threat, and subtract the SM of the target. It's easier to intimidate someone smaller, and hard to intimidate someone bigger. As an optional rule, the GM may give the same bonus or penalty for a lesser but substantial size difference, as for *Potential Combat and Reaction Rolls* (p. 68)

*Traits of Intimidator:* +2 for Hideous Appearance, +3 for Monstrous, or +4 for Horrific. +1 for Penetrating Voice *if* you surprise the subject with it. -2 for Stuttering or certain forms of Disturbing Voice (e.g., "squeaky"). -1 for Oblivious. -1 to -4 for Shyness.

*Traits of Victim:* Subtract the target's level of Fearlessness, or add his level of Fearfulness.

A target who is Unfazeable (p. B95) is *immune* to Intimidation. This doesn't mean an attempt to intimidate him

> *Diplomacy is the art of saying "nice doggie" until you can find a rock.*
> – Will Rogers

automatically fails, leading to a Bad reaction; it means that the attempt has *no effect*. His reaction is determined by a standard reaction roll.

## BETWEEN GANGS

Unorganized groups can attempt to intimidate each other. To determine the outcome, compare the *highest* effective Intimidation skill with the *highest* Will in the target group.

Relative numbers affect the result. A larger group can attempt to intimidate a smaller one with no skill modifier. If a smaller group attempts to intimidate a larger one, divide the size of the larger group by the size of the smaller; Intimidation is at -1 for up to a 5:1 ratio, -2 for up to 10:1, -3 for up to 15:1, -4 for up to 20:1, and -5 for up to 25:1, the highest allowable ratio. (A single person trying to intimidate a crowd counts as a "group" of 1.)

Giants or supers can intimidate larger crowds. An individual or smaller group can accept an extra -1 for relative numbers for each +1 to their Intimidation for SM difference or superhuman powers. This reflects an extra 5:1 added to the ratio of group sizes.

*Example:* Ulfgar the frost giant stands 30' tall, for SM +4. When he discovers a warband of forty mortal men (SM 0) approaching his mountain home, he's at +4 to Intimidation for the size difference, and -8 for relative numbers, a net -4; this is within the limit of -5, so his attempt at intimidating them has a chance of success.

## BETWEEN ORGANIZED FORCES

For an organized force, such as a military unit or a police riot squad, use the Intimidation skill of its leader. If an enemy tries to intimidate such a force, use the Will of its leader to resist. If he loses by 5 or less, he retains effective command; if he loses by a greater margin, or his Intimidation or Will roll is a critical failure, he's no longer in control, and his unit reacts as an unorganized group for the rest of the encounter.

When an organized force confronts an unorganized group, it often benefits from its members' discipline. Treat the force leader's Leadership as a complementary skill to Intimidation.

When two organized forces confront each other, treat the Leadership rolls as opposed complementary skills. The bonus or penalty applies to the Intimidation roll of the same force's leader.

# PROVOKING AND TAUNTING

Various forms of deception and manipulation can affect the outcome of a fight.

## STARTING A FIGHT

Sometimes it's advantageous to get the other side to make the first move, for any of several reasons:

- The combatant who was attacked by the other may hope to claim self-defense in a trial.
- A Code of Honor may require giving a foe a chance to attack, rather than striking him down without warning.

- A combatant may favor a move that depends on being attacked, such as Counterattack, Stop Hit, or Riposte (see *Martial Arts*).

Getting another person to start a fight is normally a Fast-Talk-based Influence roll. In a social milieu that accepts fighting as normal behavior, Fast-Talk can be complemented by a suitable social skill: Savoir-Faire (High Society) for aristocrats, Savoir-Faire (Military) for enlisted men, or Streetwise for gang members, for example. A perceptive challenger may be able to push another person's buttons with a roll against Psychology (Applied), as defined under *Manipulation* (p. 37).

Anyone with Berserk or Bad Temper must make a self-control roll when taunted like this, at a penalty equal to his margin of defeat (if any). At the GM's option, a critical success on Fast-Talk or a critical failure on the Will roll to resist may result in an NPC (but not a PC) fighting as if Berserk, even if he doesn't have that disadvantage!

## DRAWING AGGRESSION

When two groups are fighting against each other, a combatant on one side may want to provoke a combatant on the other side to attack him – for example, to keep him from finishing off a fallen companion, or because the provoker can better stand up to his attacks. This works the same way as getting another person to start a fight (p. 69). Complementary social skills apply in settings where striking a helpless foe is considered dishonorable or weak, but not if it's considered simple prudence.

## CREATING A DISTRACTION

Social skills can also be used to get a foe's mind off his immediate situation, so that he's more open to attack. This doesn't apply when the same person provides the attack and the distraction; use the rules for Deceptive Attacks, Feints, and Ruses (see *Martial Arts* for ruses). Rather, distraction can open a foe up to *someone else's* attack.

Distraction *in combat* calls for a Quick Contest of the distracting skill against the better of the target's IQ or Tactics. Use unmodified skill for a distraction offered before the fight starts; after the first turn of combat, the target resists at +5 – physical danger concentrates the mind amazingly! Suitable skills are Acting (for a staged distraction), Fast-Talk (for an improvised distraction), Intimidation (for threats), or Sex Appeal.

The effect of a distraction is to get the target to look at the distractor instead of the attacker. If it succeeds, the target defends at -2. On a critical success by the distractor, or a critical failure by the target, no defense is possible. Losing the Quick Contest provides no benefit. A critical failure by the distractor or a critical success by the target telegraphs the attack, letting the target try an active defense vs. a surprise attack, or defend at +2 vs. one he would have seen coming.

### Distraction and Tactics

It's also possible to create distraction on a larger scale. Apply the penalty or bonus to the Tactics skill of a rival organized force's leader. The distracting skill depends on the source of the distraction:

- Intimidation for a crowd that is threatening violence, based on the highest skill of the people in the crowd.
- Public Speaking for a rabble-rousing orator, if he has the attention of an audience. If the crowd has already turned into a mob (*Collective Action,* pp. 71-72), use the higher of this skill and the highest Intimidation skill in the mob.
- Tactics for an organized combat force that's creating a diversion, based on the skill of its commander.

Any of these skills must be adjusted for relative sizes and numbers, as discussed in *Between Gangs* (p. 69).

# TALKING YOUR WAY OUT

Not all confrontations have to end in fights, and not all fights have to end in one side being slaughtered, incapacitated, or driven to flee in panic. Sometimes, even heroes are better off relying on their clever tongues than their strong right arms.

## AVOIDING A FIGHT

A fight occurs when a potential combat roll produces an unfavorable result. It's possible to substitute an Influence roll for the reaction roll. If the reaction roll would have a penalty, apply the same penalty to the Influence skill. If the NPCs have previously attempted intimidation, and succeeded, apply the margin of success as a penalty to the PCs' Influence skill.

The Influence skill should be appropriate to the situation: Diplomacy to make a reasoned case that conflict is unnecessary; Fast-Talk to confuse the issue; Sex Appeal with people who can be seduced; Savoir-Faire or Streetwise with the appropriate social group. Fast-Talk can also hint at superior resources or allies, but a failed Fast-Talk roll of this kind leads to a Very Bad reaction: The NPCs have to attack or lose face.

Intimidation *can't* be used for this kind of Influence roll – the NPCs are already prepared to face violence from the PCs. But a successful Intimidation roll gives +2 to a potential combat reaction roll. The leader of an organized force can gain the same bonus with a successful Leadership roll.

## NEGOTIATED SURRENDER

Getting out of a fight can be trickier than getting into one. If one side is clearly winning, its members can take Wait maneuvers and give the losing side the chance to stand down or back away. But it's harder for the losing side to get the winning side to stop fighting. They can try to break off and run away – but the winners may not let them go.

Armies and navies have formal rules for surrendering, exemplified by a defeated ship captain striking his colors in the Age of Sail. In a fight between two disciplined military forces, a commander can surrender for his side with a roll against Savoir-Faire (Military) – this is *not* an Influence roll, but a simple skill roll. Formal duels between single combatants may be fought to negotiated terms: to first blood in a sword duel, to one shot each with pistols, or till the foe cries off in a fist fight.

Fights between individuals or less organized forces are usually governed by reaction rolls for potential combat. Modifiers for relative strength (*Potential Combat and Reaction Rolls,* p. 68) are based on strength actually demonstrated in the fight.

If the PCs *offer* to let the NPCs retreat, a Neutral or better reaction indicates that the offer is accepted: the NPCs back off, run away, or surrender. If the PCs fight as an organized group, a successful Leadership roll gives +2 to the reaction, as the NPCs will place more trust in the offer. If psychological warfare (*Psy Ops,* p. 62) to encourage surrender has been conducted ahead of time, it gives +1 to the reaction if the campaign succeeded, -2 if it failed.

If the PCs *ask* to be allowed to surrender, treat any NPC reaction better than Neutral as Neutral. On a Neutral reaction, the NPCs accept; on a Poor or worse reaction, they continue fighting. Again, a Leadership roll from an organized group gives +2 to the reaction. An individual NPC who has been wounded, or a group who have suffered losses, react at -2. Negotiating surrender normally requires ceasing combat! If the PCs throw down their weapons and come out from defended positions, the reaction is unmodified; a more reversible cessation, such as lowering weapons, or sending out negotiators under a white flag, gives -2 to reactions. Any attempt to surrender while remaining ready to attack is at -6 (or fails automatically, at the GM's discretion).

If the PCs aren't seeking an end to the violence, a reaction roll for the NPCs can serve as a "morale check" if the fight is turning against them. On a Good or better reaction, an NPC or group will flee or surrender; they will not offer friendship, and their further reactions have no bonuses. The NPCs' leader may make a Leadership roll to keep them in the fight – success gives -1 to the reaction roll, or -2 on a critical success.

Some mental disadvantages interfere with a combatant's willingness to accept a surrender. A failed self-control roll for Berserk makes it impossible to stop fighting till a foe falls and stays down. In a serious fight, Bloodlust means that failed self-control results in a lethal attack against even a downed foe! Some military forces weed out recruits who reveal either disadvantage – teaching the enemy that it's never safe to surrender can be a liability.

# THE MIND OF THE MOB

One of the most dangerous forms of unorganized human behavior is mob violence. When the monster meets the crowd with torches and pitchforks, it's the *monster* who runs away. But forming mobs is also a type of social behavior, and one that can be influenced by social skills.

## COLLECTIVE ACTION

A mob is different from a simple crowd. People in a crowd influence each other, and many people find crowds exciting because of the undercurrent of shared feeling – though they still think and act as individuals. But in a mob, the shared feeling takes over, almost like a trance state. People in a mob act less like individuals and more like limbs of a single organism. This emotional state can be recognized through Empathy or Body Language (*Motives,* p. 25), or by a Per-based Tactics roll. An incipient mob will also trigger Danger Sense.

The mob impulse spreads by a process akin to contagion (p. B443), but resisted by Will rather than HT. Too small a crowd can't sustain the mob spirit effectively. Mob action ordinarily occurs in a potential combat situation, with the mob contagion roll replacing the usual reaction roll, but people can become mobs in other emotionally tense circumstances (*Panic,* p. 72). For the crowd to resist the contagion of mob feeling, roll against the average Will of its members, with the following modifiers:

*Attitude Toward Target:* Traits that give the target a reaction penalty or bonus may affect Will:

● Appearance: -2 for Hideous, -3 for Monstrous, -4 for Horrific.
● Behavior*:* Apply penalties for Odious Personal Habits.
● Intolerance*:* -3, if most of the crowd have Intolerance toward the target.
● Social Regard*:* Apply bonuses for Feared, Respected, or Venerated.
● Social Stigma: Apply penalties for Criminal Record, Minority Group, Monster, Second-Class Citizen, or Vermin.

Apply Excommunicated only if most of the crowd are of the relevant faith.

*Crowd Density:* +2 if there is at least one yard between members, on average.

*Crowd Size:* +6 for 2-6; +4 for 7-18; +2 for 19-36; no modifier for larger crowd.

*Disciplined Forces:* +2 for a military or police force operating under orders. +2 for any group with a recognized leader who makes a successful Leadership roll. *Both* bonuses may apply. An organized military force may also resist mob feeling with average Will-based Soldier skill, if this is better than average Will.

*Potential Combat Situation:* +4 if this is *not* a potential combat situation. Otherwise, if the "potential combat situation" reaction roll would be at a penalty, apply that penalty.

*Psychological traits:* Some groups, and some entire races, may have emotional or behavioral traits that make them more or less likely to turn to mob action (this applies only when nearly all members of a crowd have the trait):

● Affinity for Groups: -2 for Chummy, -4 for Gregarious, +1 for Loner (15), +2 for Loner (12), +3 for Loner (9), +4 for Loner (6).
● Attitude to Personal Risk: -1 per level of Fearlessness, +1 per level of Fearfulness.
● Indoctrination: -3 for Fanaticism (relevant to the potential target or action).
● Nonviolence: +1 per -5 points in any form of Pacifism.
● Respect for Law: +1 for Honesty (15), +2 for Honesty (12), +3 for Honesty (9), +4 for Honesty (6).
● Violent Tendencies: -1 for Bad Temper, Berserk, or Bully (15), -2 for Bad Temper, Berserk, or Bully (12), -3 for Bad Temper, Berserk, or Bully (9), -4 for Bad Temper, Berserk, or Bully (6).

A mob entering combat behaves somewhat like a multihex swarm (p. B461) of SM 0 opponents. It has three functionally identical members per hex on a battle map. Move and DR are as given for the members. The same goes for damage – but unlike swarms of smaller monsters, mobs deliver discrete attacks, not aggregate damage.

Melee attacks use hands, feet, or improvised weapons. A mob with access to objects such as rocks, bricks, or bottles can throw them; roll vs. average DX-3 to hit an individual target, or vs. DX to attack a general area. Use *Rapid Fire* (p. B373) to resolve how many blows or thrown objects hit. A mob's melee or ranged attacks have Rcl 1 for this purpose.

Mobs can also grapple. Treat ST as 40% higher than the members' individual ST score for pins, takedowns, etc. This yields results identical to *Multiple Close Combat* (p. B392). Only one mob can grapple a man-sized target at a time.

Whatever the form of the attack, people caught up in mob passion will All-Out Attack, with no active defenses. Mobs are attacked normally. Treat a mob as a single creature for this purpose.

A mob isn't automatically Diffuse; use the usual wounding rules for the racial template of those in crowd. The mob's HP equal 60% of its constituents' *total* HP. After suffering this much injury or more, the mob dissipates. At this point, some of them have gone down with major wounds – or are stunned, confused, tangled in each other's bodies, or otherwise unable to fight effectively as a mob. If the PCs continue to attack a dissipated mob, its members may fight back as individual combatants!

At the GM's option, a mob may take actions other than striking blows and throwing things. These can include bullying, taunting, demanding that a victim fight the mob's champion, torture, or even lynching.

# INCITING TO RIOT

Mobs don't always start spontaneously. Some mob violence is provoked. Encouraging people to act as a mob is a variant Influence roll: a Quick Contest of Public Speaking against the average Will of the crowd, with the same modifiers to Will as for spontaneous mob formation.

It's possible to carry on a campaign of hate propaganda against an identifiable group. A successful Propaganda-based Influence roll gives -2 to the Will of any potential mob – it both makes them more vulnerable to agitators and makes spontaneous mob violence more likely.

# PEACEMAKING

It's possible to talk a hostile crowd out of turning into a violent mob, with the right skills. Most of the standard Influence skills don't work; people in a mob are too caught up in mob passions to respond fully. For Intimidation, see *Enforcing Order*, below. Other useful skills include the following:

● Fast-Talk can distract the mob; it has the advantage of being designed for use in haste.

● Leadership can halt mob behavior in a group with a recognized leader. In a force that belongs to a Rank-granting organization such as the military or police, this will be the person with highest Rank.

● Public Speaking can calm an angry mob with rhetorical appeals – or by telling jokes.

● Religious Ritual, if the religion is one the mob respects, may persuade them that their victims are sacrosanct.

Apply the same total modifier as obtained for *Collective Action* (pp. 71-72) to the average Will of the crowd, but in the reverse direction: a total bonus becomes a penalty and a total penalty becomes a bonus. If the peacemaker wins the Quick Contest, the moment of danger has passed. If not, he becomes another target for mob hatred.

If someone is deliberately stirring up the mob, another speaker can try to counter his influence with a competitive Influence roll. See *Wit, Mockery, and Insults* (p. 35) for appropriate skills. The methods under *Debate* (pp. 34-35) don't usually work; mobs aren't known for responding to reasoned discussion.

If the crowd has already become violent, it's too late for peacemaking.

# ENFORCING ORDER

Getting a mob to back down works like intimidating a group (p. 69), but the process is touchier. A mob is at +3 to Will to resist intimidation. A failed intimidation attempt makes the intimidators a new target for mob violence. A *successful* intimidation attempt may change the mob's rage into panic; see *Panic* (above).

Intimidating a mob requires a focused effort by a group acting in concert:

● An individual or a small group (*Leaderless Groups*, p. 33) can attempt to intimidate a mob, subject to penalties for difference in numbers.

● An organized force with a leader can attempt to intimidate a mob (*Between Organized Forces*, p. 69).

● A large unorganized group isn't cohesive enough to intimidate a mob.

● A mob can't deliberately intimidate another mob. If two hostile mobs converge, both of them make potential combat rolls (p. 68) and act as the results indicate.

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# Panic

Mobs can be driven by emotions other than hatred or anger. Fear can turn people into a mob as well; e.g., in a burning theater or on a sinking ship. Mass panic doesn't usually lead to singling out an enemy for attack; rather, people in a panicked mob attack whatever stops them from running away, whether physical barriers or each other.

Roll a Fright Check (pp. B360-361) using the average Will of the crowd; a failed roll turns the crowd into a terrified mob. Modifiers for crowd size, crowd density, and disciplined forces apply as for other mob situations. Fearlessness makes mob behavior *less* likely, and Fearfulness makes it *more* likely.

Specific occasions that can cause mass panic include the following:

*Immediate Threats to Physical Survival:* Unmodified Fright Check.

*Dreaded Attackers:* A dangerous foe with Social Stigma (Criminal or Monster) requires a Fright Check at a penalty equal to the reaction penalty. A truly repulsive Appearance has the same effect: -2 for Hideous, -3 for Monstrous, -4 for Horrific.

*Phobias:* If all but a few members of the crowd share a phobia, the Fright Check when they are faced with its object has a penalty based on their average self-control number (p. B149).

*Terror:* If the panic is caused by Terror, any extra penalties apply to the Fright Check.

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# THROW AWAY THIS BOOK!

Are all these game mechanics really necessary?

Social interaction is mainly people talking to each other. But everyone who plays **GURPS** can talk to other people; that's how the game is played. Why have game mechanics to represent what people are doing anyway?

To answer this, consider a similar question: Why have game mechanics for combat? The **Basic Set** has over 60 pages of combat rules, and **Martial Arts** has even more. But everyone has seen fight scenes, and many **GURPS** players have studied a martial art. Why not just act out a fight scene in slow motion?

Some players haven't studied any fighting skill. Few, if any, have studied the full historical range of fighting skills. No **GURPS** player is as good as Cyrano de Bergerac or Wong Fei-hung – and they, or their equals, could be PCs. Any **GURPS** player might want to play someone above his weight class, and the players with the best real skills don't necessarily want to play the most skilled characters. And that's okay! It's called *roleplaying* for a reason.

All the same things apply to social skills. Roleplaying games are a social medium – playing them is mainly conversation. But they're a forgiving medium. The player who's shy or awkward can have extra time to think of something to say. Or he can choose a general type of approach – "I offer him a bribe," "I tell jokes to the crowd till they calm down" – and roll the dice to find out how well he does, just as a player who's never used a sword can say, "I feint and then thrust for his sword arm." **GURPS** players may not be as alluring as Cleopatra, as inspiring as St. Francis, or as witty as Oscar Wilde – but with the right advantages and skills, and good dice rolls, they can play characters who *are*.

Of course, it's more entertaining if the players think of good things to say. The GM should reward this, with small bonuses if the suggested general approach makes sense, or big ones if the player's actual lines are really good – or even waive the dice roll and simply rule that the reaction is favorable. A GM blessed with players skilled at improvisation could simply let them come up with lines and decide how the NPCs react, without ever rolling dice.

However, the height of improv skill can be playing *below* the player's weight class. A player who comes up with memorably tongue-tied, clueless, or offensive dialogue should get the appropriate bad reactions – and lots of bonus character points for good roleplaying.

What about players who regularly come up with *bad* things for their socially adept characters to say? The Common Sense advantage can apply to social errors as well as physical; the GM can allow or even *require* a player to take it (possibly with Aspected, p. 77). On the other hand, a "face man" with really good skills or modifiers may be able to soak up large penalties for inappropriate roleplaying; some players may even want to do this deliberately, for amusement. This works best in a cinematic campaign (p. 6) and especially a comedic one. The GM should make it clear at the outset whether the campaign is that sort (*The Social Contract,* pp. 5-6).

The dice are there to help players who can't come up with good lines, and to hold in check players who can't restrain their wit. Use them as much or as little as is helpful. Beyond that, treat **Social Engineering** as a compendium of social situations and challenges for any campaign.

*Acta est fabula, plaudite!*
*[The play is over; applaud!]*
*        – Augustus Caesar,*
*traditionally reported last words*

# EXPANDED REACTION TABLES

This supplement defines a number of new reaction rolls with new special modifiers. This appendix brings together guidelines for *all* reaction rolls in one location, including those previously defined on pp. B560-561. The resulting list is much longer; to minimize flipping between pages, results are grouped by the *type* of reaction, rather than by the numerical result of the roll. Numerical results still have the same labels as on pp. B560-561:

| Roll | Reaction |
|---|---|
| 0 or less | Disastrous |
| 1 to 3 | Very Bad |
| 4 to 6 | Bad |
| 7 to 9 | Poor |
| 10 to 12 | Neutral |
| 13 to 15 | Good |
| 16 to 18 | Very Good |
| 19 or more | Excellent |

## General Reaction Results

*Disastrous:* The NPC hates the PCs and acts in their worst interest.

*Very Bad:* The NPC dislikes the PCs and acts against them if it's convenient.

*Bad:* The NPC cares nothing for the PCs and acts against them if he can profit by doing so.

*Poor:* The NPC is unimpressed. He may act against the PCs if there is much profit in it, or little danger.

*Neutral:* The NPC ignores the PCs as much as possible.

*Good:* The NPC likes the PCs and is helpful within reasonable, everyday limits.

*Very Good:* The NPC thinks highly of the PCs and is quite helpful and friendly.

*Excellent:* The NPC is extremely impressed by the PCs, and acts in their best interests at all times, within the limits of his own abilities.

## Potential Combat Results

*Disastrous:* The NPCs attack viciously, asking no quarter and giving none.

*Very Bad:* The NPCs attack, and flee only if they see they have no chance. A fight in progress continues.

*Bad:* The NPCs attack unless outnumbered; if outnumbered they flee, possibly attempting an ambush later. A fight in progress continues.

*Poor:* The NPCs shout threats or insults. They demand that the PCs leave the area. If the PCs stay, the NPC attack unless outnumbered; if outnumbered they flee. A fight in progress continues.

*Neutral:* The NPCs go their own way and let the PCs go theirs. If a fight is in progress, the NPCs try to back off.

*Good:* The NPCs find the PCs likable, or too formidable to attack. The PCs may request aid or information or give information; roll again at +1. If a fight is in progress, the NPCs flee if they can.

*Very Good:* The NPCs are friendly. The PCs may request aid or information or give information; roll again at +3. Even sworn foes find an excuse to let the PCs go . . . for now. If a fight is in progress, the NPCs flee if they can, or surrender.

*Excellent:* The NPCs are extremely friendly, and may even join the party temporarily. The PCs may request aid or information or give information; roll again at +5. If a fight is in progress, the NPCs surrender.

## Confrontation With Authority Results

*Disastrous:* The PCs are arrested and charged with a crime. In the course of being arrested, they are physically mistreated.

*Very Bad:* The PCs are arrested and charged with a crime. If they are uncooperative, make a "potential combat" roll at -2; on a Bad or worse result, they will be slammed into a wall, beaten, hit with an electric stun weapon, or otherwise forcibly subdued.

*Bad:* The PCs are detained and questioned for at least several hours. If they are uncooperative, make a "potential combat" roll at -2, as above.

*Poor:* The PCs are detained and questioned for an hour. If they are uncooperative, make a "potential combat" roll, as above.

*Neutral:* The PCs are questioned for a few minutes and then allowed to go about their business. The questioners will have consciously noticed them and may remember them.

*Good:* The PCs are accepted as legitimate.

*Very Good:* The PCs are accepted as legitimate, and make a good impression: +2 on further reaction rolls.

*Excellent:* The PCs are treated deferentially and offered assistance.

## Gaining Admission Results

*Disastrous:* No chance of getting in; make a "potential combat" roll at -2.

*Very Bad:* No chance of getting in; after any further attempt, make a "potential combat" roll at -2.

*Bad:* No chance of getting in; further attempts will be ignored.

*Poor:* Request for entry denied, but bribes, pleas, or threats might work. The PCs may roll again at -2.

*Neutral:* Request for entry granted after a delay to get approval from someone in authority.

*Good:* Request for entry granted with mild restrictions, such as leaving weapons at the door.

*Very Good:* Request for entry granted.

*Excellent:* Request for entry granted enthusiastically; +2 on subsequent reaction rolls during this visit.

## Commercial Transaction Results

*Disastrous:* The merchant wants nothing to do with the PCs. Make a "potential combat" roll at -2.

*Very Bad:* When selling: The merchant asks three times the fair price, accepts 150%. When buying: he offers 1/3 the fair price, agrees to pay 2/3 the fair price.

*Bad:* When selling: The merchant asks twice the fair price, accepts the fair price. When buying: he offers half the fair price, agrees to pay the fair price.

*Poor:* When selling: The merchant asks 120% of the fair price, accepts the fair price. When buying: He offers 75% of the fair price, agrees to pay the fair price.

*Neutral:* The merchant buys and sells at fair prices.*

*Good:* The merchant buys and sells at fair prices, and volunteers useful information or small bits of help if possible.*

*Very Good:* When selling: The merchant asks the fair price, accepts any offer of at least 80% of the fair price. When buying: He offers the fair price, agrees to pay up to 150% of the fair price. He also offers help and advice.

*Excellent:* When selling: The merchant asks the fair price, accepts any offer of at least 50% of the fair price. When buying: He offers the fair price, agrees to pay up to 200% of the fair price. For an offer outside these limits, he proposes the limit prices. He also offers help and advice.

* In a society where haggling is routine, a merchant will ask 110% of the fair price, accept 90%, offer 90%, or agree to pay 110%.

## Hiring Results

*Disastrous:* The organization is hostile to the PC and will act against him if it can: calling the police, reporting him to the authorities, blacklisting him, etc. This often leads to a "confrontation with authority" roll at -2.

*Very Bad:* The organization rejects the PC and is not open to future inquiries. If he persists or returns, make a "confrontation with authority" roll at -2.

*Bad:* The organization finds the PC's qualifications unsuitable; future applications are at a cumulative -2.

*Poor:* The organization doesn't hire the PC.

*Neutral:* The organization will hire the PC for unskilled labor, but not if he's asking for a skilled job.

*Good:* The organization will hire the PC for an entry-level job in his field.

*Very Good:* The organization will hire the PC at his established salary range and equivalent Rank (if applicable).

*Excellent:* The organization values the PC highly and will design a new job around his qualifications, if necessary. If he takes the job, he gains higher Rank (if applicable) and salary. He can spend earned points to acquire the organization as a Patron.



## Request for Aid Results

*Disastrous:* The request is denied totally. Make a "potential combat" roll at -4; no reaction better than Neutral is possible. If combat is called for but not possible, the NPC opposes the PCs in any way possible.

*Very Bad:* The request is denied. Make a "potential combat" roll; no reaction better than Neutral is possible. If combat is called for but not possible, the NPC opposes the PCs in some other way.

*Bad:* The request is denied. The NPC goes about his business, ignoring the PCs.

*Poor:* The request is denied, but the PCs can try again, at -2; bribes, pleas, or threats may work.

*Neutral:* Simple requests for aid are granted. Complex requests are denied, but the PCs can try again, at -2.

*Good:* Reasonable requests for aid are granted. Even if the request is silly and must be denied, the NPCs offer helpful advice.

*Very Good:* Requests for aid are granted unless they are totally unreasonable. The NPCs volunteer any relevant information they have freely.

*Excellent:* Requests for aid are granted, and extra aid is offered; the NPCs do everything they can to help.

## Request for Information Results

*Disastrous:* Questions are met with anger; make a "potential combat" roll at -2.

*Very Bad:* Questions are answered with malicious lies.

*Bad:* The NPCs lie maliciously or demand payment for information. If paid, the NPC gives true, but incomplete, information.

*Poor:* The NPCs claim not to know, or give incomplete answers. A bribe may improve their memory; roll again if a bribe is offered.

*Neutral:* The NPC answers a simple question fully, or gives a sketchy answer to a complex question.

*Good:* The question is answered accurately.

*Very Good:* The NPC answers in detail and volunteers any related information known to him.

*Excellent:* The question is answered completely. If the NPC doesn't know the full answer, he makes further inquiries on the PCs' behalf. He may volunteer to help; make a "request for aid" roll at +2, treating any result of 6 or less as Poor.

## Response to Information Results

*Disastrous:* The PC's testimony is rejected angrily; make a "potential combat" roll at -2.

*Very Bad:* The PC's testimony is rejected as an obvious Delusion; those who hear of it react at -1.

*Bad:* The PC's testimony is treated as a lie, and dismissed. If he is testifying in court, make another reaction roll; on a Poor or worse reaction, he faces charges of perjury, and needs a lawyer.

*Poor:* The PC's testimony is not believed.

*Neutral:* The PC's testimony is doubted, but may get a further hearing if he can produce a second witness, supporting evidence, or a clear explanation of his claims, or if he can appeal to human or religious proof of his honesty; roll again at -2.

*Good:* The PC's testimony is accepted.

*Very Good:* The PC's testimony is accepted, and he makes a good impression overall: +2 on further reaction rolls.

*Excellent:* The PC's testimony is taken as totally convincing, even if his claims would ordinarily been treated as Delusions.

> *This chart deals only with living, legally registered, bona-fide voters. Now if we can come that close to winning an absolutely honest election, how do you figure we can possibly lose the kind this one is going to be?*
> — E.E. Smith,
> **First Lensman**

## Recreation Results

*Disastrous:* The PCs are met with hostility. Make a "potential combat" roll at -2.

*Very Bad:* The PCs are unwelcome. If they don't leave quickly, make a "potential combat" roll at -2.

*Bad:* The PCs are met with insults and threats, but not with actual combat, unless they start a fight.

*Poor:* The PCs' company is flatly rejected.

*Neutral:* The PCs' company is unwelcome, but they are put off with excuses or evasions, rather than decisively rejected. They can approach the same people another time and roll again.

*Good:* The PCs' company is accepted, without lasting commitment.

*Very Good:* The PCs' company is accepted, and they make a good impression: +2 on further reaction rolls.

*Excellent:* The PCs are accepted as lasting friends; roll for loyalty at +2.

## Seduction Results

*Disastrous:* Angry or outraged rejection. Make a "potential combat" roll at -4; failure leads to physical retribution, by the person approached or by a protector.

*Very Bad:* Openly disgusted rejection; any further reaction rolls are at -2.

*Bad:* Cold rejection; any further reaction rolls are at -2, but a sincere apology can remove the penalty.

*Poor:* Rejection, but with no offense taken; a further approach may be made later at no penalty, if the relationship has developed or the suitor's position has improved. (*Exception:* If suitor's approach violated cultural norms, treat as cold rejection, above.)

*Neutral:* Indifference, but no offense is taken; a further approach may be made at no penalty.

*Good:* Agreement to meet privately; a further approach may be made at no penalty.

*Very Good:* Agreement to actual physical contact.

*Excellent:* Strong desire for actual physical contact, giving +2 to rolls for sexual activity. Lasting feelings of attraction or attachment; roll for loyalty at +2.

## Loyalty Results

*Disastrous:* The NPC hates the PCs or is in the pay of their enemies, and takes the first good chance to betray them.

*Very Bad:* The NPC dislikes the PCs, and will abandon them if possible (usually taking everything he can carry off) or sell them out if not, at the first good opportunity.

*Bad:* The NPC has no respect for the PCs. He will leave or betray them with even moderate temptation, and doesn't work hard for them.

*Poor:* The NPC is unimpressed by the PCs or dislikes his position with them, thinking he could have done better. He'll betray them if offered enough, and will take a better position if he's offered one and allowed to leave.

*Neutral:* The NPC doesn't think the PCs or the position is anything special. He works just hard enough to keep complaints to a minimum. He won't betray the PCs without very strong temptation, or leave except for a clearly better position.

*Good:* The NPC likes the PCs and the position. He is loyal, works hard, and accepts any reasonable hazard that the PCs share.

*Very Good:* The NPC makes the PCs' interests his top priority; he works very hard and will risk his life if necessary.

*Excellent:* The NPC is devoted to the PCs or their cause, puts their interests first at all times, works extremely hard for them, and would gladly die in their service.

# APPENDIX B
# NEW TRAITS

*Social Engineering* defines several new traits for use in character creation. For ease of reference, here they are all in one place.

## ADVANTAGES

Several advantages have new variants in a campaign that emphasizes social interaction. See also *Relationship Advantages* (pp. 41-43).

### Contacts

see p. B44

In a cinematic campaign, the GM may allow a new version of this advantage.

*Contacts!:* This is essentially a wildcard (p. B175) version of Contacts. It differs from the standard version in that the point cost is tripled, and the Contact provides a wildcard skill instead of a normal one. The Contact can provide *any* sort of help that has a plausible relationship to his area of expertise.

### Fashion Sense

see p. B21

Fashion Sense has a special form in virtual reality.

*Fashion Sense (Digital):* In defining an online avatar for yourself, you have a sure sense for what's distinctive, ahead of the trend, and just cool. Any avatar you build, assemble, or select by shopping around gives +1 to reaction rolls in real-time online social interaction. You can give *someone else* the same advantage if you can work on his avatar. Staying ahead of the curve takes constant tweaking; you have to make time to rebuild each avatar for each set of social encounters. *5 points.*

### Resistant

see pp. B80-81

The GM may allow a character to have increased resistance to Influence rolls. This is a "Common" effect, with base cost 15 points – the same as Indomitable (p. B60), which is effectively Immunity to Influence rolls. A +8 to all Will rolls to resist is worth 7 points; +3 is worth 5 points.

### Social Regard

see pp. B86-87

A new version of this exists in some societies.

*Amusing:* You're naturally funny, or people are predisposed to consider you funny. This lets you get away with things that would get other people in trouble, precisely because you're *not* taken seriously. A king's fool or a class clown has this advantage.

Many societies grant their children levels of this advantage (often decreasing as they get older); if so, it can coexist with Social Stigma (Minor).

### Talents

see pp. B89-91

A campaign in a futuristic setting may add a new Talent.

*Memetics:* Brainwashing, Diplomacy, Expert Skill (Memetics), Fast-Talk, Interrogation, Leadership, Merchant, Politics, Propaganda, Psychology (all specialties), Sociology, and Teaching. *Reaction bonus:* anyone else trained in memetics who can observe you using it – but note that some uses of these skills will be too subtle to observe! Memetics Talent may be learnable; if so, prerequisites are one point each in Expert Skill (Memetics), Propaganda, and Psychology (Applied). *10 points/level.*

## MODIFIERS

The following new limitation is appropriate for a socially focused game.

### Aspected

-20%

Your ability works only when pursuing a specific class of *related* tasks or activities. An ability with wide-ranging applications, like Common Sense or Serendipity, can be given Aspected, Social Interaction. For example, Common Sense (Aspected, Social Interaction, -20%) [8] gives you an IQ roll to catch yourself if you say something horribly inappropriate.

An advantage *already* confined to social interaction, like Charisma, can be further narrowed so that its benefits apply to only one range of activities (e.g., athletics, combat, or management) or one facet of daily life (e.g., romance or work). For example, Charisma 1 (Aspected, Management, -20%) [4] gives +1 on reaction rolls from people you hire or supervise, including loyalty rolls. You also have +1 to Leadership to coordinate a work team, and to Influence rolls against your subordinates.

## PERKS

The following perks grant position, privilege, or similar benefits on a small scale. Adventurers may acquire these as rewards for successful adventures or suitable roleplaying (*Social Traits as Rewards,* p. 17).

Any perk with a † requires specialization; see the description for details. A ‡ means that the perk comes in levels; each level is effectively its own perk and costs 1 point, but for compactness' sake, write it on your character sheet as (e.g.) Hidden Status 3 [3].

*I'm not dumb but I can't understand
How she walked like a woman but talked like a man*
*– The Kinks, "Lola"*

## Appearance Perks

The following perks affect the impression you make.

### Classic Features†

You have some well-defined set of features in spades. You might be markedly pale or tan, the epitome of blondes or red-heads, or a muscleman – or perhaps you have idealized Chinese or Irish or Orcish looks. Whenever you interact with an NPC who fancies those looks – due to a quirk, GM fiat, or a note in a published adventure – you function as one Appearance level higher, cumulative with any specified reaction bonus. For instance, if you're a Classic Redhead with Average looks, an NPC with the quirk "Prefers redheads (+2 reactions)" would react to you at +2 for his quirk and another +1 because you count as Attractive.

### Forgettable Face

You blend in. Your face is hard to pick out or remember. You get +1 to Shadowing in crowds, while others have -1 to rolls made to recognize you from a lineup or mug shots – or even to recall meeting you!

You can't have both Forgettable Face and Distinctive Features (p. B165). Unnatural Features (p. B22), and Appearance above Attractive or below Unattractive, are likewise off-limits, except when this perk is actually an exotic ability.

### Looks Good in Uniform

This is a highly specialized version of Fashion Sense (p. B21). When wearing your legitimate service uniform (military, police, etc.) for official purposes, others react to you at +1. You can't dress others or claim a bonus under any other circumstances.

### Passing Appearance†

Regardless of your true ethnicity, race, or sex, your looks never trigger bigoted NPCs' biases or Intolerance disadvantages (although your words might!). Moreover, if someone like you would normally have a Social Stigma in your setting, you lack that Stigma – and if the Stigma is racial, this perk acts as a small Unusual Background that lets you buy it off at the usual cost. You may also turn a Stigma based on race or sex into a Secret. At the GM's discretion, this perk is cinematic or even exotic if there's no believable way to explain others mis-taking your appearance.

You must specialize by type of looks. Two common examples:

*Androgynous:* With minimal effort, you can ensure that you're mistaken for whatever sex is convenient. If you have above-average Appearance with the Androgynous modifier (p. B21), you don't *need* this perk.

*Passing Complexion:* Your ethnicity isn't readily apparent to onlookers.

### Photogenic

You look great in posed, still photographs. Anyone looking at your picture reacts as if your Appearance were one level higher (if you already have Transcendent looks, you get another +1 to reactions). To look good in moving pictures, buy full-fledged Appearance.

## Influence Shticks

The following variants of Shtick (p. B101) allow you to make Influence rolls instantly and nonverbally. See *Influence Without Words* (p. 30) for more.

### Convincing Nod

Whenever you need to get into a place where you don't belong, you can nod as though you recognize those watching (e.g., security guards) to fake your way past. This is treated as a form of Fast-Talk.

### Disarming Smile

In any sticky situation where Diplomacy is a possible solu-tion, you can just smile and shrug.

### Fearsome Stare

You can use Intimidation without saying a word: simply cross your arms and glower. This conveniently leaves no evi-dence of a weapon, recorded threats, bruises . . .

### Gangster Swagger

Your manner of walking is a full-time use of Streetwise. The GM will make a secret Influence roll whenever this might impress low-life enough that they don't randomly pick you to hassle.

### Haughty Sneer

You can use Savoir-Faire (High Society) to make doormen at exclusive hotels, salesmen at expensive shops, bank man-agers, and so on back off merely by peering down your nose.

### Sexy Pose

You can use Sex Appeal simply by thrusting your chest out, cocking your hips, licking your lips, etc. This is useful when you can see but not safely approach your mark; success can convince him to approach you.

## Position Perks

Each of these is an inexpensive way to establish your place within society.

## Citizenship†

In settings where nations defend borders and restrict such things as voting rights and property ownership to citizens, each PC is assumed to be a citizen of one particular state or nation, with passport, Social Security Number, etc. Each citizenship beyond the first is a perk. This isn't Cultural Familiarity (p. B23) – you might "inherit" citizenship through a parent without ever encountering the associated culture!

## Courtesy Title†‡

You have an honorary social advantage: Courtesy Rank (p. B29) for Rank, Emeritus Professor for Tenure, Ex-Cop for Legal Enforcement Powers, Honorary Title for Status, and so on. This costs 1 point per 5 points for the full advantage. It most often represents a symbolic reward (e.g., "the key to the city"), a purchased title, or credentials deactivated after retirement.

If you also have a full-fledged advantage, you can "stack" this perk with it to get your title on paper. For instance, Rank 4 [20] plus Courtesy Rank 2 [2] entitles you to present yourself as having Rank 6, although you only have the authority of Rank 4.

In addition to the legal right to use a fancy title, any form of courtesy title exempts you from reaction penalties when you associate with those who have the full advantage, and from skill penalties the GM imposes for impersonating the real McCoy. If the advantage grants reaction bonuses, the perk grants one level of a comparable bonus per full 5 points spent on it.

## Hidden Status†‡

You have, or used to have, a form of Status that isn't recognized in the reference society. You must specialize in a specific group; when you're among them, they react as if your Status were equal to your (Status + Hidden Status). This could apply to an aristocratic captive sold into slavery in an alien culture, whose fellow slaves still give him special treatment; or to a crime boss who is disdained by the larger society but treated with respect among criminals.

## Office†

You hold a minor civil office, like dogcatcher or reeve; you must specialize by office. This isn't merely Courtesy Title (above) – you possess *real* authority equivalent to 5 points of Legal Enforcement Powers, Security Clearance, Administrative Rank, or similar. However, this has such limited scope (e.g., "Authority over dogs in the town of Castle Rock") that it's only a perk. A more expensive social advantage or lack of social disadvantages is often a prerequisite, and you may have a Duty.

## Trivial Reputation†

Rather than do the detailed calculation under Reputation (pp. B26-28), just treat +1 to reactions from a specialized group of people (e.g., "Women of the Tokugawa Clan") as a perk.

## *Social Perks*

Other perks may be important in various social situations.

## Networked†

You're good at searching for a particular type of person. You get +2 to search rolls in *one* of the categories under *Searching for People* (pp. 22-24), *Searching for Organizations* (pp. 45-46), or *Searching for Households and Communities* (p. 58). This is only *useful* in campaigns where the PCs regularly need to conduct searches. Examples:

*Headhunter:* You're good at finding potential employees (*Hirelings,* p. 22).

*In the Know:* You have unusually good connections for finding illegal favors or relationships (*Concealed Activities,* pp. 23-24).

*Party Animal:* You can easily find companions when you want to have a good time (*Companionship,* p. 23).

*Political Hack:* You know your way around a government bureaucracy and can easily identify the office that deals with any particular problem (*Government Offices,* p. 46).

*Tracer:* You're good at finding individual people who don't want to be found (*Known Individuals,* p. 24).

## Permit†

If a piece of gear has a Legality Class (LC) equal to or greater than your setting's Control Rating (CR), anybody without Social Stigma (Criminal Record) may own it. But if its LC is lower, it requires a permit. A permit is a perk – one per equipment class. For weapons, concealment lowers LC by one; e.g., handguns are LC3 but treated as LC2 for concealed carry, so Concealed Carry Permit is a perk in most modern states, which are CR3+.

Individuals with suitable social advantages – typically Legal Enforcement Powers or Military Rank – don't need this perk for equipment used "on the job."

See also *Control Rating* (p. B506) and *Legality* (p. B507).

## Rehearsed Role†

You've spent many hours practicing a specific secondary persona, and thinking about it, if it's a fictitious role, or studying video and other records of the original subject, if it's a real person. This cancels the -3 for an unrehearsed persona or the -5 for not knowing the subject well (*Walk the Walk,* pp. 37-38). If you actually *know* the original subject well, you don't need the perk. If you start out with this perk, you already have such a role; if not, you can buy the perk for a specific person after the end of a session in which you have studied that role closely.

## Social Arbiter

The other people in your social circle trust your judgment, or defer to you. You don't hold formal Rank, or have the highest Status; but if you decide that someone is "our sort," he's in. See *Inner Circles* (p. 59) for more. This can easily be a *villainous* trait!

## Soft-Spoken

You don't *need* to shout. You can speak quietly and people will feel compelled to listen. You get +1 to Intimidation, as if you were shouting loudly, without actually having to do so. This perk *may* be considered cinematic, and disallowed in realistic campaigns, at the GM's discretion.

## Teamwork†

You've practiced working together in a team. This exempts you from penalties for group performance (*Team Efforts,* pp. 33-34). You must specialize in working with a particular small group (e.g., a band, a gang of con artists). Only those with the same performance skill can enjoy these benefits.

Other versions are available for other sorts of skills; see *Martial Arts* for an example.

# DISADVANTAGES

Several disadvantages have new variants in a campaign that emphasizes social interaction.

## Code of Honor

Imprisoned criminals often have their own idea of honor.

*Code of Honor (Prisoner's):* Always avenge an insult, regardless of the danger; defend what's yours; stand up for yourself and your gang. Tell the man what he wants to hear, but never snitch. Anything else goes. *-5 points.*

## Dependents

See p. 42 for more on Dependents. At the GM's option, a Dependent's point value may be subject to a new enhancement.

*Unwilling:* You feel obligated to take care of someone who doesn't want your help or protection. This *increases* his nuisance value. You can't take less care of him than of a willing Dependent, but he resists being taken care of, and may flee if he gets the chance. If he does, you can't just let him go; your continuing sense of obligation requires you to find him and possibly regain custody of him. +50%.

## Odious Personal Habit

Spending money on a standard of living above your actual Status gives you -1 to reaction rolls, worth -5 points, for each level of Status you emulate, to a maximum of three levels. Different societies have a variety of names for this behavior: big spender, nouveau riche, parvenu, social climber, or the Victorian idiom "the sort of people who buy their silver." See p. 19 for more.

# SKILLS

Several skills have new variants or specialties in a campaign that emphasizes social interaction.

## Connoisseur

Connoisseur (Fashion) is often useful in social situations. This defaults to Sewing at -3, and receives +1 if you have Fashion Sense.

## Expert Skill

A campaign in a futuristic setting may add a new Expert Skill.

*Memetics:* Can stand in for Brainwashing, Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, Interrogation, Leadership, Merchant, Politics, Propaganda, Psychology (all specialties), Sociology, and Teaching to answer questions about the use of memetic jargon or identify memes widespread in a familiar culture. Complements any of the associated skills if it's being used to analyze or get people to adopt new memes.

## Heraldry

This is the ability to recognize formal insignia of Rank, organizational affiliation, or kinship or community – or Status, if it's marked by outward signs. Any detailed treatment of social relationships requires specialization, with each specialty having its own default:

*Athletic Uniforms:* Defaults to Current Affairs (Sports)-3.
*Coats of Arms/Mon:* Defaults to Savoir-Faire (High Society)-3; at the GM's option, may default to Savoir-Faire (Servant)-4.
*Corporate Logos:* Defaults to Current Affairs (Business)-3.
*Graffiti Tags:* Defaults to Streetwise-3
*Hallmarks:* Defaults to Connoisseur (Jewelry)-3.
*Insignia and Uniforms:* Defaults to Savoir-Faire (Military or Police)-3.
*Religious Iconography:* Defaults to Religious Ritual-3.

## Hidden Lore

Prisoners can learn a new specialty of Hidden Lore:

*Prison Lore:* You know what's really going on in a particular prison: who the powerful prisoners are, who has useful connections, which staff members are soft touches and which are abusive. Each new prison is a new familiarity – you're at -2 to effective skill for your first month. Familiarity includes knowing the local slang, gestures, whistling or tapping codes, and so on.

## Psychology

This supplement assumes that Psychology is split into two specialties: Applied and Experimental. The Applied specialty can be used as a complementary skill (p. 21) for most other skill rolls connected with social interaction. If the GM does not wish to use this optional rule, simply ignore the these specialties and read both "Psychology (Applied)" and "Psychology (Experimental)" as simply "Psychology."

> *They started with advertising and propaganda and things like that, and they perfected it to the point where what used to be simple, honest swindling such as any salesman might use became a mathematical science that left the ordinary man helpless.*
>
> *– Robert A. Heinlein,*
> *"If This Goes On –"*

# WILDCARD SKILLS

Several new wildcard skills (p. B175) can take the place of standard social skills in cinematic campaigns.

## Fake!

### IQ

Replaces Acting, Disguise, Fast-Talk, Forgery, Fortune-Telling, Mimicry (Speech), Savoir-Faire, and Streetwise. Replaces Leadership for group efforts to deceive or manipulate others. In addition, at the GM's discretion, any skill that has a default based on any attribute or secondary characteristic, and that is not restricted by prerequisite skills, can instead have a default based on Fake! if this would be higher. This default cannot exceed the relevant attribute -1 for Easy skills, -2 for Average, -3 for Hard, or -4 for Very Hard; that is, Fake! cannot be as good as actually spending a character point to learn a skill.

## Negotiator!

### IQ

Replaces Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, Interrogation, Merchant, Politics, Public Speaking, Savoir-Faire, or Streetwise. Make a HT-based roll to use it for Carousing or Sex Appeal; make a Per-based roll to use it for Detect Lies.

## Psychologist!

### IQ

Replaces Brainwashing, Criminology, Hypnotism, Interrogation, Propaganda, and Psychology. Make a Per-based roll to use it for Body Language or Detect Lies; make a Will-based roll to use it for Mind Block.

# TECHNIQUES

A campaign that emphasizes social interaction can benefit from some new techniques.

## Cutting Out

### Hard

*Default:* prerequisite skill-4.
*Prerequisite:* Any Per-based social interaction skill; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

Normally, all the members of a small cohesive group will react to you as indicated by a single reaction roll or Influence skill roll (see *Approachability,* p. 25). This technique lets you spot one member of the group who is susceptible to being approached as an individual. You receive +1 to his reaction roll (+3 on a critical success); the reaction roll for the rest is unaffected. If you prefer, you can apply the bonus to an Influence roll against your specific target.

## Going Viral

### Hard

*Default:* Propaganda.
*Prerequisites:* Propaganda and Psychology (Applied); cannot exceed Propaganda+3.

Viral marketing (p. 62) involves crafting a message to make members of the audience want to repeat it or pass it along. The bonus from improving this technique takes the place of the bonus from spending more on a campaign, *without* requiring a higher budget; you can't claim both benefits.

## Hinting

### Hard

*Default:* prerequisite skill.
*Prerequisite:* Any Influence skill; cannot exceed prerequisite skill+6.

Hinting makes you skilled at influencing others without being obvious to bystanders. Each Influence skill has its own associated Hinting technique. You can use your technique to offset skill penalties from subtlety (p. 36), while leaving Perception and Observation penalties in place. Apply all penalties for subtlety to this technique, then roll against the *lower* of your modified technique *or* unmodified Influence skill. Thus, skill bonuses from this technique are limited to offsetting penalties for subtlety, but never give a net bonus.

## Irony

### Hard

*Default:* prerequisite skill.
*Prerequisite:* Public Speaking or Writing; cannot exceed prerequisite skill+5.

You are skilled at negative arguments that undermine an opponent's position (see *Dialectic,* p. 35) and give a bonus to the effective Will of the audience to resist adopting his point of view. This technique lets you offset the resultant penalties to your own effective skill, increasing your ability to make your own points indirectly. Apply all penalties for irony to this technique, then roll against the *lower* of your modified technique *or* unmodified presentation skill. Thus, skill bonuses from this technique are limited to offsetting penalties for irony, but never give a net bonus.

## Sociometry

### Average

*Default:* Sociology.
*Prerequisites:* Sociology and Mathematics (Statistics); cannot exceed Sociology+5.

You have mastered a collection of mathematical techniques for describing social networks and identifying key members of such networks. You can identify nonobvious relationships in a social situation (*Relationships,* p. 26), social arbiters of exclusive communities (*Inner Circles,* p. 59), or alpha users for viral marketing (p. 62) campaigns.

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> *But to enable a prince to form an opinion of his servant there is one test which never fails; when you see the servant thinking more of his own interests than of yours, and seeking inwardly his own profit in everything, such a man will never make a good servant, nor will you ever be able to trust him.*
>
> *– Niccolò Machiavelli,* **The Prince**

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> *Every well-bred petty crook knows – the small concealable weapons always go to the far left of the place setting.*
> *– Inara, in* **Firefly** *#1.12*

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# INDEX

*You don't dress with the best of taste,*
*And nature didn't give you such a beautiful face,*
*But baby, you got what it takes.*
*– Marv Johnson, "You Got What It Takes"*

**Mind your manners, son!** *I've got a tall pointy hat!* **Status,** *boy! You can argue with me, but you can't argue with status!*

*– Elrod, in* **Cerebus the Aardvark** *#4*