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## What are Group Speech Acts?

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**Biography.** Kirk Ludwig is Professor of Philosophy at Indiana University. He works in the philosophy of language, philosophy of mind and action, epistemology and metaphysics. His most recent books are *From Individual to Plural Agency: Collective Action 1* (OUP 2016), *From Plural to Institutional Agency: Collective Action 2* (OUP 2017), and *The Routledge Handbook of Collective Intentionality* (2018) ed. with Marija Jankovic.

**Abstract.** The paper provides a taxonomy of group speech acts whose main division is that between collective speech acts (singing Happy Birthday, agreeing to meet) and group proxy speech acts in which a group, such as a corporation, employs a proxy, such as a spokesperson, to convey its official position. The paper provides an analysis of group proxy speech acts using tools developed more generally for analyzing institutional agency, particularly the concepts of shared intention, proxy agent, status role, status function, convention and constitutive rule.

**Keywords:** Collective Speech Acts, Group Speech Acts, Proxy Agent, Spokesperson, Shared Intention, Status Function

**Declarations of interest:** none.

## 1. Introduction

If we conceptualize groups which act intentionally as agents in their own right, then when they speak, whatever the mechanism, they do so with the sorts of intentions, beliefs, and desires characteristic of individual agents. There is nothing special or distinctive about group speech acts in this sense. They are individual speech acts. There is nothing special to investigate, no additional territory in speech act theory to be explored. The topic of group speech acts becomes interesting when we reject the individual agent model of the group agent and conceptualize the group's acting as a matter of the individual agents who are members of it acting in concert with each other to do something that is analogous to, but not the same as, what individuals do when they speak. I am interested in group speech acts in the latter sense. What kinds of group speech act are there? What is their structure and point? How do they express the agency of their members?

In section 2, I give a brief taxonomy of Group Speech Acts, distinguishing Collective Speech Acts (e.g., singing "Happy Birthday", or two people agreeing to meet for lunch) from Group Proxy Speech Acts (e.g., Volkswagen announcing through a spokesperson a recall of its 2018 Polo model). In section 3, I give a brief overview of Collective Speech Acts. In section 4, I provide an extended analysis of Group Proxy Speech Acts. The key concept is that of a proxy agent who represents a group. I explain this in terms of the concept of a status role, which is explained as a special type of status function which attaches to an agent and requires the possessor to exercise her agency to fulfill the function so assigned. Status functions are explained in terms of constitutive rules and a species of convention that involves a group jointly intentionally solving a coordination problem. Section 5 reviews complications and objections. Section 6 is a brief summary.

## 2. A Taxonomy of Group Speech Acts

Group speech acts divide into (a) collective speech acts in which all members participate at the time of the speech act and (b) group speech acts performed through proxies, such as a spokesperson, or a similar mechanism, e.g., a press release, or posting a notice on a board or web site. (a) Collective speech acts can be divided further into (i) those that are irreducibly collective, such as agreements and (ii) those that collectivize individual speech acts, for example, collective applause. The basic divisions are represented in Figure 1.

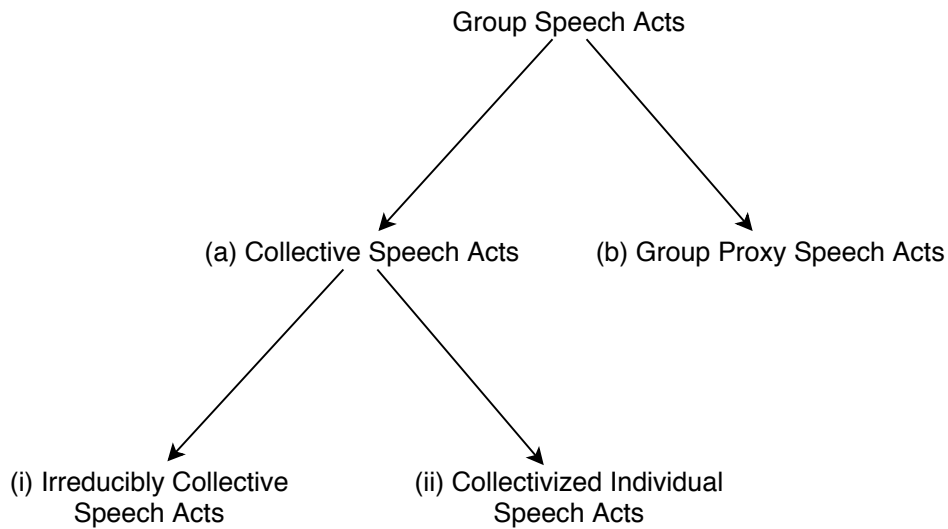


Figure 1: Types of Group Speech Act. The main division of Group Speech Acts is between collective speech acts in which all participate and group proxy speech acts in which a proxy performs the utterance act for the group. Collective speech acts divide into collectivized versions of individual speech acts like a welcome song or singing Happy Birthday and irreducibly collective speech acts like agreeing to meet for lunch or shaking hands as a form of greeting in which the group level is the primary level at which the speech act occurs.

### 3. Collective Speech Acts

#### 3.1 Irreducibly Collective Speech Acts<sup>1</sup>

I discuss briefly agreements, voting, and mutual greetings as paradigmatic examples, and suggest that some familiar speech acts may usefully be reconceptualized as contributions to joint speech acts.

##### *Agreements*

Speech acts are contributions, in the conceptually central case, to communicative exchanges. A well-studied category of speech act verb identifies a contribution by a speaker to a communicative exchange. These includes: *assert, command, order, suggest, report, explain, inquire, ask, demand, insist, christen, exclaim, congratulate, apologize, thank* and so on.

<sup>1</sup> (Hancher, 1979) seems to have been the first to draw explicit attention to irreducibly collective speech acts—*cooperative illocutionary acts* in his terminology—though there are hints in Austin (1962), as Hancher notes. Hancher reserves *collective speech act* for what I am calling collectivized individual speech acts, and multiple speech acts for aggregations of speech acts that are not performed by the individuals with the intention of doing anything with others. The trouble with reserving ‘cooperative’ for irreducibly collective speech acts is that collectivized individual speech acts are constitutively cooperative as well.

Another, less often noticed, class of speech act verbs, however, pick out actions accomplishing something in distinctively linguistic in communicative exchanges which go beyond the contribution of a single participant. A paradigmatic example is the speech act verb *agree*, which signals a public act by two or more agents, rather than accordance in belief or feeling.<sup>2</sup> The latter sense is at issue when I agree with what you think about Jackson Pollock but never mention it to you or otherwise speak about it. In contrast, if we agree to meet for lunch tomorrow, a public transaction occurs between us to which we each contribute, but which is not a matter of agreement of belief or sentiment—not even the belief that we will meet for lunch, for I may agree insincerely. An agreement in this sense picks out a kind of speech act to which at least two people must make contributions for it to occur.<sup>3</sup> Thus, it is a group speech act. There is nothing like it that an individual speaker can do. It takes two to tango: It takes two or more to agree. *Agreement* is the generic term. We have many terms for more specific sorts of agreements: *contracts, compacts, bets, treaties, blood oaths, pacts, conventions, covenants, truces*, and so on.

Why call an agreement in this sense itself a speech act? Why isn't *agreement*, like *conversation*, just a term for two or more individual speech acts of a certain sort? I propose: Let's meet for lunch tomorrow. You respond: Sounds good. Each of us performs an individual speech act: agreeing to meet for lunch. But that is not all that has happened. And we miss even what each has done if we don't see what we are aiming to do together. We have not only each agreed to something. We have together made an agreement. I am agreeing *with* you to do something. It is like, though not exactly like, a mutual promise, for neither of us is committed to anything unless *we both agree*.<sup>4</sup> It has an illocutionary point, which is to bind *us* together to meeting for lunch tomorrow, not just each independently. It has a direction of fit, world to mind. It has satisfaction conditions: *we* must meet *jointly intentionally* tomorrow for lunch in virtue of having agreed to do so. Its upshot, if sincere, is that we share an intention to realize our

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<sup>2</sup> Justin Hughes drew my attention to this as an important and distinctive category of group speech acts in a paper on multilateral treaties delivered at a workshop on Group Speech Acts at the University of Vienna in August 2016.

<sup>3</sup> That agreements are joint actions is urged in (Sheinman, 2011); (Gilbert, 1993) characterizes them as joint decisions.

<sup>4</sup> As (Gilbert, 1993) notes, a mutual promise involves each party independently binding himself to do something, but in an agreement, neither is bound independently of the other's contribution to the agreement, and when one breaks the agreement (without an excuse) the other is relieved of any obligation under it. Neither of these is true of mutual promising. Could agreements be construed as mutual conditional promises: I promise to do my part, if you do (or promise conditionally to do) yours? No, because when the condition is the doing, no obligation is present before the performance but in agreement there is obligation from the outset; and if the condition is the promising, still each has an obligation if both conditionally promise, regardless of whether the other carries through (see Gilbert 1993 pp. 237-241 for further discussion). (Sheinman, 2011), contra Gilbert, argues that agreements can be constructed out of promises, but does not argue that it meets all of Gilbert's desiderata. In particular, he denies that one is no longer obligated to do one's part if the other defaults. But surely if we agree that you will deliver goods and I will pay you, but you default, I am no longer under any obligation to pay you, and I am not guilty of violating the agreement if I do not; similarly, if you deliver and I don't pay, you are not obligated to leave the goods with me, as Sheinman's account entails. Agreements are their own kind of thing: by a pair of public acts, we place ourselves under a mutual obligation to carry out a joint action plan, where the nature of the obligation is such that it binds either only if each at least strives to carry out his or her part. As I suggest below that even if agreements are not made out of promises, promising may itself be conceptualized as a joint speech act.

agreement. It is not enough that each intends himself to go to the meeting place expecting the other to be there. It requires we-intentions, not I-intentions. We-intentions are the sort of intentions individuals have when participating in joint intentional action (walking with someone, or playing tennis) as opposed to doing something by oneself (brushing your teeth or playing solitaire).<sup>5</sup> Thus, it is a speech act. But it is not an individual speech act.

### *Joint Decision Procedures*

Once we see the potential, it is easy to recognize other irreducibly collective speech acts performed by multiple agents acting in concert. Joint decision procedures provide a rich vein. When a roll call vote is performed in a committee, each member votes 'yes' or 'no'. In so doing, they are jointly deciding, and at the same time declaring, what their joint position is. Insofar as it issues in a joint commitment, it is also a kind of agreement, except that in pure cases everyone signals acceptance as his or her part. In a decision procedure that allows dissent, the contributions need not all be signals of acceptance. But all parties accept the procedure and so are conditionally committed to abiding by its outcome. The particular kind of speech act involved has two dimensions. One is given by its being a decision procedure which aggregates individual votes and yields a result that the voters are committed to accepting. The other is given by the content of the decision. A group may by a majority vote make a promise to do something. A panel of judges by a majority vote may make a ruling. A country's voters by a majority of vote may appoint a new chief executive.<sup>6</sup> In this we can see a theoretical basis for the U.S. Supreme Court's judgment that voting is a form of speech protected under the First Amendment.

Agreements and group decision procedures that poll opinion or judgment are constitutively expressions of collective agency and are intended to be public in the relevant group. They meet the requirement of overtness of communicative intention (Jankovic, 2014).<sup>7</sup> The first consumers of the speech act are the members of the group that produces it. In many cases there are others toward whom communicative intent is directed. The vote by a panel of judges results in a ruling which is directed primarily at the parties to the case and secondarily to the encompassing legal system. Joint decision procedures are often directed at determining policies, rules, goals, and so on for institutions, and their announcements often count as announcements by the institution itself. In this joint decisions procedures are combined with

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<sup>5</sup> The term 'we-intention' was introduced by (Tuomela and Miller, 1988). A variety of analyses have been offered (Bratman, 1992, 1999, 2014; Gilbert, 2013; Ludwig, 2007, 2016; Miller, 2001; Tuomela, 2005, 2013). The differences in detail won't matter for present purposes.

<sup>6</sup> Not all joint decision procedures are group speech acts. For example, deciding by drawing straws or flipping a coin, playing rock-paper-scissors, or ritual combat, are not speech acts. The first two make the decision depend on chance from the point of view of the group, so it is not something they do. The second two make it depend on a competition. But winning is something only one of them does.

<sup>7</sup> For secret ballots, vote count is still made public or the procedure fails its function. Each person's voting is an act of the same character except for it not being associable with an individual. Each vote is communicated to someone who counts them. Similarly, a message found in a bottle on the beach is still an act of communication even if the person reading it does not know (in any interesting sense) who sent it. Even in this case, there is nothing hidden about the content of the communicative intention, only whose intention it is.

group proxy speech acts and often involve declarative speech acts (Hancher, 1979; Searle, 1979).

### *Greetings*

When we shift to the collective perspective on speech acts, we find many familiar phenomena looking like collective speech acts. For example, greetings (and leave takings) look very much like agreements in being joint actions. There is something that each individual does, as in agreements, but they contribute by design to something that they do together. This is clear in patterns like shaking hands (which can also be the consummation of an agreement), fist bumps, hugs, kissing each other's cheek, or saluting in which one party is to salute first and the other to return the salute. The right level of description of the activity is at the group level. This is something they are doing together intentionally. It is a kind of mutual acknowledgement of their each recognizing the other as having a certain standing, the exact character of which can vary with the style of greeting (saying 'Hi' as opposed to saluting) and context. It is intended to be public among them. It is consumed by the participants, like an agreement. The participants are conceptualized as making similar contributions to what they do together.

The case of verbal greeting or saluting is an instance of a call and response pattern. A call and response pattern is a joint intentional action in which one agent initiates a linguistic exchange (understood to include any public acts intended to contribute to the exchange, not just verbalizations) and the other, in virtue of the form of the first, is to respond in a particular way or select a response from a determinate range of sorts of responses. The call and response pattern is by its nature a collective intentional action. When it has a distinctive communicative point, it constitutes an irreducibly collective speech act.

### *Reconceptualizing familiar cases*

Many familiar interchanges can be seen as instances of the call and response pattern. Marriage ceremonies are frequently call and response patterns, with a judge or religious figure calling for each of the parties to the marriage to repeat vows, and to accept the marriage, and then completing the pattern by proclaiming them married.<sup>8</sup> This should be reconceptualized as a joint speech act. It is both a call and response pattern and a kind of supervised contracting with one another and the community. Even an individual promising to do something takes on a different look when viewed from this perspective, because while the promisee is not called on to respond, the promisee has the option of declining to accept that the promiser is under an obligation to him. Since this is understood by both parties, the promisee's not explicitly declining to accept the promisor's binding himself to her constitutes accepting the promisor's

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<sup>8</sup> (Hancher, 1979) rightly characterizes it as a bilateral contract and notes that the official administering the marriage contract to the couple merely announces ex post facto their having entered into the state of marriage by their exchange of vows. In fact, "I now pronounce you man and wife" in the traditional ceremony is not a declarative in Searle's sense because what it expresses has already been achieved.

offer to be bound to her to do what is promised.<sup>9</sup> Thus, even what has long been seen as a paradigmatic individual speech act on a closer look appears to be a component of a collective speech act.<sup>10</sup>

### 3.2 Collectivized Individual Speech Acts

Collectivized individual speech acts are individual speech acts types that groups perform *as a group*. A simple example is a group singing a welcome song. Often the lyrics make clear that it is expressing the group sentiment in the use of the first person *plural* pronoun. Some welcoming songs have a call and response pattern, for example, the African song and dance Funga Alafia—often sung as a call, ‘Funga Alafia’ (Welcome, blessings), and response ‘Ashay, Ashay’ (Let it be so)). Call and response is a common form for group expressive acts. Call and response chants or songs have an expressive role in laments, protests (e.g. ‘Hell You Talmbout’), cheer leading (‘Give me an “M”’, ‘M’, ‘Give me an “I”’, ‘I’, etc.), prayer (in the liturgy of the Catholic Mass, in the eucharist), and so on. The importance of the call and response pattern, and a plausible reason it is found so often in group expressive speech acts, is that it makes fully explicit in the coordinated roles that it is a group expressive speech act rather than just the aggregate of its members individual speech acts.

The type of speech act is similar to that in the individual case. The subject differs in being the group and the utterance act is the sum of the utterance acts of the individuals involved. That the group is its subject doesn’t mean that the group is an agent in its own right. Rather, the members of the group *share an intention* to represent themselves as all together being committed as members of the group to (for example) welcoming someone. Sharing an intention is a matter of each member of the group having a we-intention, an intention to do her part in their shared plan, and perhaps having certain beliefs about the conditions for success.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, an individual or a group can sing “Happy Birthday”, sign a get well soon or thank you card, congratulate someone, etc. When the group does it as a group what makes it a group speech act is their doing it with the intention to do it as a group, that is, their doing it with a shared intention in the sense just indicated. A group of people individually singing “Happy Birthday” to someone at the same time, though the product is indistinguishable, are not *jointly* wishing the recipient Happy Birthday but only *individually*.

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<sup>9</sup> Hancher (1979) classifies offers as pre-cooperative illocutionary acts, in part because offers can occur whether or not accepted. A promise is akin to an offer to put oneself under an obligation to the promisee. But promising, in contrast to offering, requires that the promisee accept one’s offer. Thus, ‘promise’ picks out a joint act rather than an individual one. I here assume that if one promised, one did succeed in placing oneself under an obligation, that is, that the intent was successful. If this is right, then the intent is directed toward implementing a joint action plan in which one offers and the other accepts.

<sup>10</sup> In fact, Gilbert (1993, pp. 648-9) makes the suggestion that promises are like agreements except that they result in only one person being bound by it rather than two.

<sup>11</sup> See note 5 for a list of accounts of shared intention and we-intentions. For present purposes what matters is that shared intention resolves into a network of interlocking attitudes of individual agents, a feature shared by most accounts.

The illocutionary profile of group expressive speech acts is similar to the individual case, but not the same. The differences have to do with the translation to the group context. As for the individual case, there is no direction of fit. But the point is to express a shared group emotion or attitude as opposed to just an individual one. The sincerity condition is the possession of the shared emotion or attitude. As in the individual case, they often have a target in the sense of a propositional content which is the focus of the emotion or attitude, e.g., someone's joining a group, having a birthday, or winning a race. So the collectivized individual speech act and the individual speech act it is modeled on are distinct species of the same genus.

The precise nature of shared group emotion is a matter for further analysis. It is not merely a matter of each member having the relevant attitude. The group that sings "Happy Birthday" not together but in parallel all have the attitude, but they are not sharing it. Plausibly, it is sufficient for their sharing it that they each have it *and intend to express it in concert* with the other members of the group. However, in general sharing an emotion will not require the intention to express it because sharing the emotion typically plays a role in the group coming to intend to express it. Sharing an emotion (or an attitude) among a group in the relevant sense in general will plausibly involve it being public among them that all (or most of them) have it, and their identifying as a group member.<sup>12</sup>

Virtually any individual speech act may be collectivized. Examples are applause after a lecture or a performance as expressions of thanks or appreciation, campaign staffers cheering their candidate when she wins an election as an expression of congratulations, parents assuring their children they will see them through college as a joint promise, protesters chanting "Protect Kids, Not Guns," as a joint directive, or singing "We will overcome" to jointly state what they will do to express their determination and commitment, or the UN Declaration on Human Rights as a joint declarative. In all of these cases, the illocutionary point is the same genus as for individual speech acts. It is adjusted for the subject and the sincerity condition is the sharing of the attitude that is the sincerity condition in the individual case (except the institutional cases which introduce complications taken up in the next section).

It is a hallmark of collectivized individual speech acts that all members of the group participate directly in producing the speech act. I am not a member of the group that sings "Happy Birthday" if I am not singing it. I am not a member of the group that expresses appreciation by applauding after a performance if I am not applauding. I am not a member of the group that urges us to "Protect Kids, Not Guns" if I am silent while they chant (though I may be among the protesters on the street that day).

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<sup>12</sup> Do all members of a group need to have the relevant attitude or emotion? Suppose one person singing 'Happy Birthday' with others in fact wishes its recipient would drop dead, but dare not say so. Is the group then insincere in wishing her happy birthday? This would certainly be misleading! What if half are not sincere? Is the group insincere? This might also be misleading, though it would be equally misleading to say that they were sincere. Rather than insist on a 'yes' or 'no' answer it would be better to allow degrees of sincerity (and insincerity), with highest degree requiring that everyone in the group performing the collective speech act share the relevant attitude. At the other end is not merely everyone lacking the relevant attitude but it being common knowledge among them that they do. My thanks to an anonymous referee for the prompt for this footnote.



For larger groups, collectivizing speech acts in this way is often unwieldy or impractical. One way to make provision for speech acts by groups in these cases is to appeal to a group representative or proxy who serves as a mouthpiece for the group, namely, a spokesperson. Once the device is available, it turns out to be an effective method for institutional speech acts. Its use by institutions introduces additional complications into our understanding of the type of group speech act performed, however. We take this up in detail in the next section.

#### 4. Group Proxy Speech Acts

The paradigmatic mechanism for this type of group speech act is the spokesperson.<sup>13</sup> The spokesperson is a proxy agent who is authorized to speak on the group's behalf and in its name. The spokesperson's individual speech acts in her role as spokesperson express her principal's position. The spokesperson is a device that can also be used by an individual, and so it is not peculiar to group speech acts. But it provides a convenient mechanism by which a group can represent itself as doing something analogous to an individual speech act. It is particularly prominent in institutional speech. Related mechanisms for group speech acts are press releases, web site postings, social media, posting policies on a bulletin board in a hallway, etc. These cases also involve authorized agents directing or making the postings or announcements with authorization, though they typically remain behind the scenes. Though the spokesperson role can in principle be fulfilled by a group, I will concentrate on the case of the individual spokesperson. This is a kind of group speech act which aims to fulfill a function for the group similar to the function of an individual speech act. In this category we find many of the usual speech act verbs applied to groups: *assert, order, thank, apologize, congratulate, announce, explain*, and so on.

I concentrate on the case of the spokesperson. Other mechanisms are similar enough to see how the account can be extended. The device of the spokesperson raises a number of questions for speech act theory. How can what one person says count as a group's announcing, or reporting, or asking something? What exactly is nature of the speech act performed that we subsume under the same speech act verbs as individual speech acts? Is it the same or different despite the use of the same word in reporting it? What are the sincerity conditions for proxy group speech acts? Does the spokesperson perform a speech act in her own right, and if so, what is its relation to what the group does through her agency?

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<sup>13</sup> An important pioneering paper is (Hughes, 1984), who appeals to a group illocutionary intention in the light of which a member speaks. In contrast to my account below, he does not require the member be authorized to speak on the group's behalf, but only that the group not object. However, this fails to respect the distinction between speaking in the interests of a group, on the one hand, and as a representative of a it, on the other. Other related discussions are (Tollefsen, 2007) and (Fricker, 2012) on learning from group testimony, and Lackey (2017), which contains a criticism of my account, to which I respond below, as well as criticisms of Tollefsen and Fricker.

## 4.1 Overview

I give my general, somewhat idealized, picture at the outset, then work through the details, and consider complications. I take the case of group announcement as my example. The main elements of the view are the following, with key ideas expressed in boldface.

1. The spokesperson is a **proxy agent** of the group (which is a certain kind of **status role**),
2. **authorized** to act in the group's name (chosen for the role by an intragroup decision procedure),
3. so that when the spokesperson acts in her role as spokesperson, conveying a message authorized by the group,
4. her utterance act (in turn) has a **status function** in a social transaction with the group's audience (that is, in a collective intentional action in which the group and its audience have their roles to play and which requires them to coordinate on the same thing as playing the role of group announcement in the transaction, and so to adopt a **convention** between them)
5. which is to serve as the expression of a content to which the group which thereby acts is **committed** (to its audience and sometimes others) to acting in accord with (as realized in their **conditional we-intentions** if sincere) insofar as they act as the group that appointed the spokesperson (in their roles as members of that group organized for action in relation to which the spokesperson was appointed).

I begin by explaining how I am understanding the notion of proxy agent (Ludwig, 2014, 2017). To do this I must explain the concept of a status role since a proxy agent is a someone with a particular sort of status role. A status role is in turn a special type status function, but to explain a status function I must first discuss constitutive rules because constitutive rules for collective intentional action types define the status functions which are attached to particular things or types of things for use in social transactions by a form of collective acceptance.

## 4.2 Constitutive Rules

Rules in a community are regulative when they govern a type of behavior that can exist independently of the rules being followed. Rules governing traffic, such as the rule that one is to drive on the right side of the road in Austria, or Robert's Rules of Order (RRO), are regulative rules in this sense. You can drive on the left in Austria and still be driving, and you can hold a meeting without following RRO. Constitutive rules, as Searle put it in a classic discussion, "do not merely regulate, they create or define new forms of behavior"; rules for games such as football or chess "create the very possibility of playing such games" (Searle 1969, p. 33). They are activities that "are constituted by acting in accordance with (at least a large subset of) the appropriate rules" and they "constitute (and also regulate) an activity the existence of which is logically dependent on the rules" (p. 34). When contrasted with regulative rules, constitutive rules can seem mysterious. What kind of rule is it the following of which brings into existence the type of behavior it governs? If it governs a behavior, doesn't there have to be an independent characterization of the behavior it governs?

In following a constitutive rule, we represent an action type to which we intend to conform our behavior. For the rule to be constitutive of the action type, the action type must incorporate in its concept that it comes about as a result of the rule being followed. But there has to be an independent target. So the action type can be analyzed into at least two components. First, there is an activity pattern type that can be instantiated without being instantiated intentionally. Second, there is (at least) the additional requirement that it be instantiated intentionally. For example, there is a neutral description of the pattern of activity involving in playing chess or tic tac toe. When we add to that concept that it is instantiated intentionally with the goal of each to achieve a winning position, we have described the game of chess or tic-tac-toe. The set of rules of chess or tic-tac-toe, specified in terms of player and piece roles (the player of the white pieces moves first, then players alternate moves, the pawn when first moved may be moved one or two places forward or diagonally forward on a square if an opposing piece occupies it, provided the player's king is not in check, and so on), jointly specify an action type (by placing constraints on a pattern of activity involving any two agents for it to count as in accordance with them). The pattern could be instantiated unintentionally or intentionally. The rules are constitutive of an action type though only insofar as it includes in its concept that it is the chess pattern and that it (or something near enough) is instantiated intentionally. Constitutive rules are then constitutive relative to an action type, and every regulative rule is constitutive relative to action types that require them to be followed intentionally. If we define a parliamentary meeting as one carried out in accordance with RRO, then RRO are constitutive rules for parliamentary meetings. Constitutive rules may be for individual or joint action. Our interest lies in the latter. In this case, the intentions of the participants are we-intentions directed toward their doing something together in accordance with a common plan.

#### 4.3 Status Functions and Status Roles

Constitutive rules very often specify an action type in terms of the use of something in a certain role (not just the agent) without specifying what is to play that role. The concepts of pawn, bishop, knight, rook, king and queen in chess, for example, are role concepts: they are defined in terms of their initial positions, and then how they can be moved. A consequence is that if two people are to play chess, they are faced with a coordination problem. If they do not coordinate on the same objects for the same roles, then cannot succeed in their intention to play chess. Solving the coordination problem has to be something that they do together intentionally, since it is a precondition for their carrying out their intention to play chess. Their intentionally coordinating on the same objects amounts to their assigning status functions in Searle's sense (1995) to certain objects. They can serve their functions in the social transaction only by the players *collectively accepting* them as having those roles. It is necessary and sufficient for this that their we-intentions directed toward their play have the same objects in the same roles.<sup>14</sup> No doubt they also believe or accept that they have those roles, but this would not be enough by itself if their we-intentions did not follow suit and it is not necessary.

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<sup>14</sup> This cashes out collective acceptance differently from Searle; see (Ludwig, 2017).

Things can have also status functions when they are not being used, provided that an appropriate community of agents intends to use particular items or types of items in their roles when engaging in the relevant sorts of social transactions. In this case, they have generalized conditional we-intentions to engage with others in those sorts of transactions using those items or types of items. This constitutes a *convention* amongst them about what to use in the relevant roles to solve a recurring coordination problem (Jankovic and Ludwig, 2018). There may be a convention to use one or another of some *set* of items in the roles, which ones being negotiated on the fly with those with whom one intends to engage in the relevant transactions.

Status roles are a particular type of status function assigned to an agent. An agent might be assigned the role of the white king in chess. This is a status function, not a status role. In a status role an agent is expected to exercise her agency self-consciously and intentionally in the role as part of its function. I distinguish between patient status roles and agent status roles. The difference is that patient status roles are assigned without requiring the assignee's buy-in, whereas agent status roles presuppose it. Being assigned the status of a defendant in a court case does not require the person so designated to accept the role, but it does conceive of the role as one in which the occupant has a role to play, with provision for what to do if the defendant does not play along. In contrast, the roles of goalie or judge or professor or student and so on are agent status roles that presuppose that their occupier has accepted the role, that is, that the occupier is a part of the group that collectively accepts that she has that role.<sup>15</sup> Henceforth, I'll use *status role* as short of *agent status role*.

#### 4.4 Spokesperson as Proxy Agent

A proxy agent generally is someone who has been authorized to act for someone or some group officially. An example of a proxy agent is someone who has been assigned a power of attorney, e.g., to sign closing papers on the sale of my house when I am out of the country. The proxy is assigned a status role, a function in a social transaction between seller and buyer, in this case, which requires her to exercise her agency, specifically, by signing certain papers, producing the power of attorney as required, and handling any issues that come up within her purview in the role. My proxy signing, with her authority, counts as my selling the house (given appropriate corresponding actions by the buyer). Thus, her signing is invested with the same significance as my signing. My signing is making my contribution to the legal contract. It has a status function in the transaction (the function is to signal formal consent to legal transfer of property). The signature of my proxy in virtue of her authority has the same status function when she acts under the authority of the power of attorney. The idea of acting officially for someone is the idea of acting under authority so that what one does has status functions in a

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<sup>15</sup> This is not to say that the people who occupy these roles always intend to fulfill the associated functions. They may accept roles insincerely or change their minds. Many roles attach by convention or law to their occupiers once they have accepted them regardless of whether they intend to fulfill the role functions. This gives us a standard by which to judge their behavior in relation to the assigned role.

transaction involving not the proxy but the agent for whom she is a proxy. It is in this sense that she acts as a representative.

My main thesis is that the spokesperson is an instance of this kind of representative. The spokesperson is a proxy agent also. The spokesperson has been authorized to act for another officially. The spokesperson in the same sense represents the person for whom she is a spokesperson. Her utterances acts in her role have a certain status function, a representative function, in relation to the group. How does this work?

What is the function of group announcement? First, it has a point in relation to an audience. It is not an individual speech act, but it is to play a role analogous to that.<sup>16</sup> In thinking about the point of group announcement, we can put aside the case of insincerity, because that is an infelicity that undermines its function. Since we are thinking of groups organized for action, the point of an announcement relates to the group's action potential. Given this, the most general point is to commit the group to act in accordance with the content of the announcement. This need not involve any particular action (unless the announcement is that the group will do something), but it implies that in any matter on which it bears, the decision making of the group and the actions that it undertakes as a result will take what was announced as if it is true.

This is not the same thing as saying that the group members *believe* what was announced. In the cases closest to collectivized individual speech acts, this may be what it comes to. But in general a group can be committed to constraints on action through a decision procedure that doesn't require that everyone in the group believe individually what the group represents as its official position. In this respect group speech acts that employ the device of a spokesperson,

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<sup>16</sup> A referee suggested that we might make a further division within the category of group proxy speech acts between those that are proxies for collectivizing speech acts and those that are intended to represent a group as a group. The idea is that, for example, when someone says "Everyone says 'hello'," speaking to someone on the phone for others in the room on his end, it is to be taken as having the force of each of them saying 'hello'. The suggestion is that this may be the model for class action lawsuits as well. I think this is not quite right in the latter case. In class action lawsuits members of a group are represented by a representative member or group (represented in turn by their attorneys). But the class being thus represented will typically extend to similarly situation individuals whether or not they are even aware of the suit, at least in jurisdictions (like the United States) in which you have to actively opt-out not to be represented. Thus, there is no question of the group authorizing a representative. The sense in which the representative speaks in their behalf is that the representative speaks in the interests of members of the class. It is rather like a court appointing a legal guardian for someone. That legal guardian represents her principal's interests, but was not appointed by him. This legal device enables the representative trial to have legal significance for all members of the class, the defendant being required if the suit is successful to compensate every member of the class. The case of "Everyone says 'hello'" is interesting. This seems to differ from a case in which someone says: "Hello on behalf of all of us." If I say on the phone to someone, "Jim says 'hello'," after Jim asks me to say 'hello' for him, I am proxying for Jim, representing him as saying 'hello'. The role is occupied on an ad hoc basis. If Jim and Jill both ask me to say hello, I can say "Jim and Jill say 'hello'," and this is the same as saying "Jim says 'hello' and Jill says 'hello'." But then this is not representing them as saying 'hello' together but only each individually. And then if I say "Everyone (here) says 'hello'," in the same spirit, I am saying, "for each x (here), x says 'hello'," and this represents each as individually saying hello. So this case turns out not to be a case of a group speech act at all, though it is an interesting case of someone acting as an individual proxy for every member of a group through a single speech act.

when a group can be said to have an official position, diverge from collectivized speech acts, in which all the members share the attitude that is the sincerity condition for the act. For example, a book club may determine an official position about where it is best to meet by a majority vote and announce it. Those in the minority do not believe that that is the best course for the group but accept it as the official position. Moreover, the discursive dilemma (List and Pettit, 2011; Pettit, 2001) shows that judgment aggregation can lead to an official position which is not accepted individually by any member of a group. Suppose that members of the book club decide that they want to meet at a central location that is quiet and comfortable. A proposal is made to meet at a café on South Main Street. The members of the club vote independently on each of the criteria. It emerges that there are three voting blocks of one third of the members each. Block 1 think the café is central and comfortable but not quiet. Block 2 thinks the café is comfortable and quiet but not central. Block 3 thinks the café is quiet and central but not comfortable. The voting is displayed in table 1.

|           | Central | Comfortable | Quiet | Suitable Site? |
|-----------|---------|-------------|-------|----------------|
| Block 1   | Yes     | Yes         | No    | No             |
| Block 2   | No      | Yes         | Yes   | No             |
| Block 3   | Yes     | No          | Yes   | No             |
| Book Club | Yes     | Yes         | Yes   | <b>Yes</b>     |

*Table 1: Discursive Dilemma. Each block of voters thinks one of the criteria for meeting at the café fails to be met, but a majority holds that each criterion has been met. As a result, the club accepts that the café is a good meeting place though none of its members think it is.*

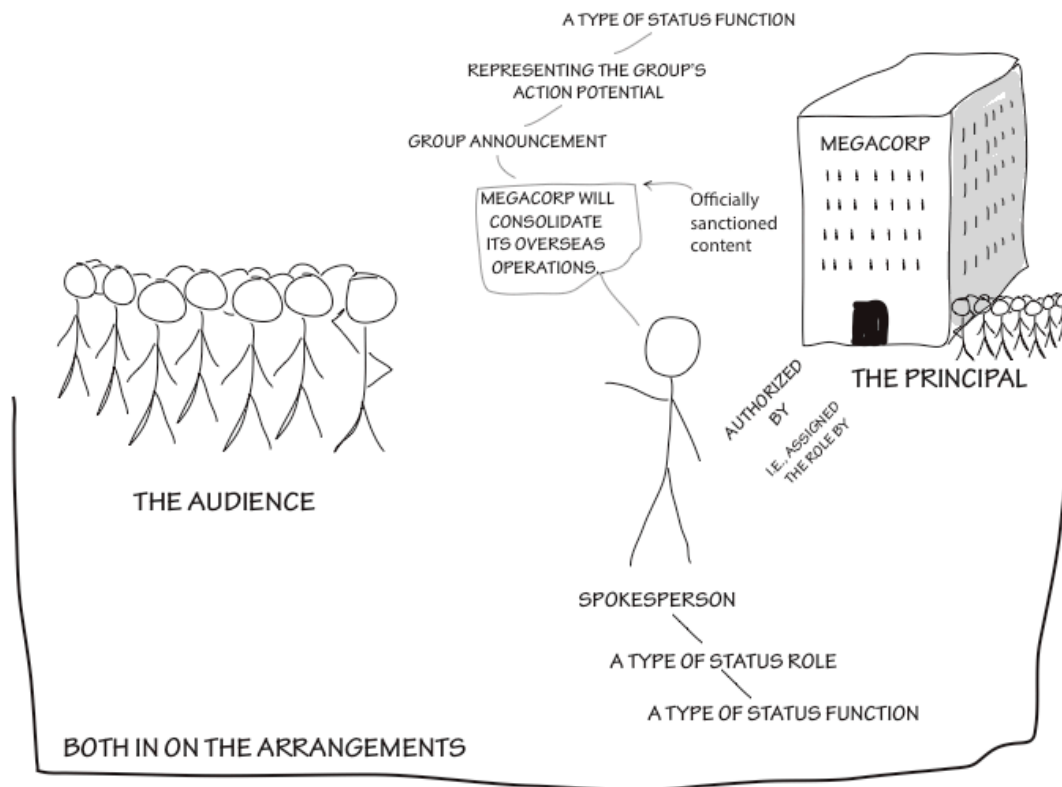
This shows that there is a two-thirds majority in favor of the café meeting the club’s requirements on each of the relevant criteria. If the club has agreed to their decision being determined by a majority vote on each of the criteria, then the club’s official position is that the café meets its desiderata for a meeting place. But there is no one in the club who thinks that it does. Thus, the function of group proxy announcement is not in general to indicate that the members of the group believe what is announced. It is to indicate that the group will act in accord with it. As an official position, it will figure in official decisions about what to do, that is, decisions by the group acting as the group that makes the announcement.<sup>17</sup>

This gives the point. The spokesperson is a mechanism for achieving it. The group’s goal is to express to an appropriate audience an official position. It has to be a public act that makes a content available to the audience. It presupposes an audience interested in what it wants to express. The means of expressing the content must be recognized by the audience interested in what the group wants to express as having that purpose for it to succeed. The announcing

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<sup>17</sup> Not too much weight should be put on ‘official’. Even mobs may have a spokesperson. The Paris Mob appointed a spokesperson to negotiate with the Bastille’s governor Bernard de Launay. Still, in so appointing a spokesperson, the members of the Paris Mob were intending to commit themselves to acting in accordance with what they thereby announced as their official position.

group and its audience have a coordination problem. It makes sense to use the preexisting institution of language as a means of formulating the content. How does the group signify a particular verbal expression of the relevant content as the right one? While a group could arrange with its target community to have each member of the communicating group take turns reading a message one word at a time, this is obviously inefficient. This is where the device of the spokesperson come in. We can make use of one person (often, though not necessarily, a member of the group) who has the capacity of speech, to produce an utterance in a language, already meaningful given its conventions, which encodes the message that the group intends to convey. All that is required is that the announcing group and its audience coordinate on the same mechanism. They do so by adopting an intergroup convention about how to carry out the relevant social transaction. The intergroup convention is that the announcing group choose, that is, authorize, someone to convey the message in appropriate circumstances in a way that marks her utterance of a sentence expressing the message as her acting in her authorized role in the transaction. The utterance act itself then plays the role of making public the message in accord with which the group is committing itself to acting. It thus has a status function as a representation of the announcing group's official position. In the product sense, the spokesperson's utterance is the group announcement, though it is in fact the culmination of what the group does, which includes appointing a spokesperson and formulating a message. In this respect, it is like having someone with a power of attorney sign in my place in closing on the sale of a house. I count as closing on the date on which my proxy acts. It is my agency that is expressed in virtue of my authorizing someone to sign for me. It is I who close on the sale of the house. The idea is simple and brilliant, efficient and flexible, for all that it involves a lot of conceptual complexity beneath the surface. Figure 2 summarizes the picture.



*Figure 2: The Mechanism of Group Proxy Speech Acts. The spokesperson occupies a status role, a special type of status function. The function of the spokesperson is to make public a message formulated by her principal for an audience in on the arrangement. Appointment to the role is what constitutes authorization. The spokesperson's utterance acts in that role count as group announcements, that is, have the status function of representing the group's official positions.*

The picture then is this: there is a type of social interaction between a group and an audience which involves the group's making known to the audience its commitment to conform its actions in accordance with a certain content. This is the general concept of a group announcement. This specifies a function for something the group brings about without specifying what is to serve the function beyond that it has a certain content. There are many different things that could serve. Thus the audience and group face a coordination problem. The device of the spokesperson is one of the possible solutions to the coordination problem. It relies on an independent device, that of a proxy agent, someone who, acting under authorization and in virtue of that, does something that is to count as having a certain function in a social transaction, and thereby represents the group. In this case, the thing done is the performance of an utterance act (or series of utterance acts) by the spokesperson acting in her



role with appropriate contents. The audience has its role to play as well, both in the intergroup convention, and in the relevant transactions, for it has to attend to who has been assigned the relevant role and to her acts in her capacity as spokesperson.

## 5. Complications, Objections, further Issues

### 5.1 Whose agency in the group is involved?

One complication is the question of whose agency is involved in the case of a group proxy announcement. This is an issue that comes up more generally for proxy agents. In the simplest case the group implements a decision procedure for the assignment of the spokesperson and the content of the message that draws on contributions from everyone in the group. In this case, transparently, they are all agents of the group speech act, with the spokesperson playing at least two roles if she is a member of the group. However, there are at least two complications that come up. First, once the device of proxy agency is in play, we can assign proxy agents the power to assign other proxy agents. A group can be a proxy agent as well, and so we can assign to a group the power to decide on proxy agents for various purposes. Thus, it may not be the whole group that actually authorizes someone as spokesperson.<sup>18</sup> The same thing goes for the message, for that may be delegated as well, as decision making in general may be, to proxy agents who develop official policy for a group. The second complication arises from the fact that institutions in particular are designed for perpetual existence by allowing successive individuals to fill the roles in them. Thus, those joining later after the structure of roles is set up do not look as if they play any role in the authorization of any proxy agents.

The first of these does not present a problem for seeing all members of the group as agents of the acts it carries out through its proxy agents. For insofar as one is an agent of the authorization of another or a group to authorize others, one is also an agent of what they do that requires they act under their authorization. In this way agency is spread through chains of authorizations.

The second of the issues shows that not everyone in a group which acts through proxy agents needs to participate in the official procedures for authorization even at a remove. But interestingly, it does not show that those joining an on-going institution are not still agents of what the group does through its proxy agents or that they are not, *in a sense*, authorizers of them. What do I mean? Joining an institution is something you do. You accept, e.g., a job, or a position, even if it is a lowly one. There is an institution at all only in virtue of the acceptance by its members of their roles in it. When you accept a role in an institution, you sign onto being a member with its various role assignments, whether you know what they all are or not. This is a tacit acceptance of the role of various proxy agents in the group as representatives of the

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<sup>18</sup> In some cases, role assignment may fall to another group. For example, the power of assigning the role of US Supreme Court Justice does not reside with the Supreme Court but with the President who nominates and Senate which confirms. A similar arrangement could be made with any role including a spokesperson for an organization. The agency of the group is still involved in formulating the message that is to be conveyed, and even, though indirectly, in the authorization, by endorsing the mechanism which gives the choice to some other agency.

group, which includes you. Thus, it constitutes your authorization or at least acceptance of them as representing you as a member of the group. You thus participate in a sense in the co-authorization of the various proxy agents in the group with all other members of the group, even if you don't participate directly in either the original assignments and design of roles or in the official procedures within the institution for assignments. Thus, you are still, though more remotely, a constitutive agent of what proxies do in the name of their organizations.<sup>19</sup>

## 5.2 An Objection to Collective Acceptance

Lackey (2017) has objected to an earlier sketch of mine of the role of the spokesperson (Ludwig, 2014) on two grounds. First, a sexist audience might simply ignore the duly appointed spokesperson for a police department because she is a woman. But it doesn't follow that she is not a spokesperson. But on my account, for someone to have the status role of being a spokesperson, the announcing group and their target audience must collectively accept the arrangements. Second, the sexist members of a police department might not accept someone as the department's spokesperson either. Thus, neither group nor audience need accept the spokesperson as spokesperson for the person to have the role.

A police department is an institution embedded in a network of legal institutions sustained by large scale collective activity. The institutional structure is defined by an interlocking set of status roles. One of these is assigned the power of appointing the spokesperson for the police department. Let us say that it is the Chief of Police. The Chief of Police is in turn appointed typically by an agency other than the officers serving under her. The Chief of Police derives her authority from the institutional structures in which the police department is embedded. Thus, the collective acceptance that sustains the police department includes more than those who

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<sup>19</sup> A referee asks whether this attenuated sense in which members of an organization are agents of what its proxy agents do is of any significance, particularly with respect to issues of responsibility. Issues of responsibility are complicated anyway. When there are chains of proxy agents between the initial authorizers and what a proxy agent does down the line, the question whether the authorizers of the original proxy agent are responsible in part for what one does at the end of the chain will depend largely on whether they were responsible in executing due diligence in the original appointment, in specifying policy (to the extent they are responsible for it), and in carry out their oversight responsibilities. Nothing follows directly about what they are responsible for from their being formal authorizing agents of what proxies at the end of a long chain do. Nor does not being a formal authorizer, directly or indirectly, of what proxy agents do entail that you do not bear responsibility for what they do. Even if you does not have the role of appointing proxies, you may have oversight responsibilities for them in your role in an organization and fail to exercise them. Apart from specific role responsibilities, what is the significance of your being a constitutive agent of what the group does through proxies in accepting a role in an institution? It lies in its being what sanctions saying that the proxy acts for a group that includes you and that the proxy in acting represents you also. Given that, it does have some implications for the responsibilities of members of organizations, for the proxy acts in your name too. What those responsibilities are will be conditioned by a lot of other factors, your knowledge of the structure of the organization and what proxies are doing, whether they are acting within their role responsibilities or outside them, your role in the organization, your ability to detach yourself from it without undue cost, and your ability to work for effective change within the organization. But, morally, what you cannot be is indifferent to having signed onto the proxies of the organization acting in your name as a member of the group. Even if you played no role in appointing them to their roles, you have authorized them as representing you qua member of the group.

are members of it. Now, what of the attitude of the members of a particular audience and of the members of the police department (aside from the Chief)? Take the members of the department first. Do they believe that the Chief of Police does not have the authority to appoint a spokesperson? Presumably this is not correct. They may resent the appointment, but since it is legally binding, they would have to be seriously confused not to recognize that. Thus, their resentment is likely to be expressed in a lack of cooperation with the spokesperson while recognizing that she has that role. In this, they fail to fulfill their role responsibilities, and so fail to have conditional we-intentions appropriate for their own roles. But the group that sustains the arrangement by its collective acceptance of them includes many more than those members of the police department who fail their role responsibilities. And this is what they recognize in recognizing that she has the role of spokesperson while they refuse to cooperate with her. The same thing goes for the sexist audience. They can't very well fail to recognize who has the role. But they may fail to cooperate with the police department through the spokesperson out of prejudice and resentment. They too, as citizens, are failing to fulfill their role responsibilities. But this doesn't undermine the status of the person as spokesperson because the community that sustains it is much larger than any particular local audience, and includes as potential consumers the rest of the legal system. What is required is that enough people in the relevant community in which the device is supposed to function have appropriate conditional we-intentions with respect to the role to sustain its functioning. And in complex multi-level institutions the role of other institutional structures which are geared toward acceptance of institutional assignments in accordance with powers accorded roles in them is a powerful mechanism for sustaining the role assignment.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> A referee asked whether we might still acknowledge her as spokesperson even if an overwhelming majority of the relevant groups extending to the whole legal system failed in their role responsibilities. This would need to be fleshed out a bit more. If everyone stops acting in their legally defined roles, police, judges, senators, employers, city workers, payroll clerks, citizens, etc., then there would not be a legal system anymore. Government at all levels would dissolve. Suppose instead that they all just refuse to acknowledge the police station's spokesperson but that's the only lapse. But this is a little hard to imagine. So let's take a simpler case. Suppose we have village sized community. Then we can imagine that they have a rule that allows a woman to be appointed spokesperson for the village police and it happens, as it were, accidentally, and they are appalled. Then everyone except the spokesperson including the Chief of Police just refuse to go along. Then is she their spokesperson? By rule yes, but *de facto* no, and this then becomes an instance in which the practice is not aligned with the previous adopted rules. They adopt another spokesperson by common consent and he then speaks for the police. In these circumstances she is not their spokesperson. He is. You could say she is spokesperson "by rule," but that only means that if they were following their rule she would be. Is there pressure from a different direction? Suppose an illegal union adopts a spokesperson that is not recognized by the legal system. Isn't she still their spokesperson? Yes: not all appointments of spokespersons for group have to be legally recognized positions. Suppose, however, the authorities refuse to meet with the group's spokesperson. Isn't she still their spokesperson? This is like someone offering to play chess and suggesting certain pieces as pawns, bishops, etc., (not a standard set that get so called because of their design function) and no one taking them up. You can insist that these are chess pieces, but while they could be so used, in order to function in the intended roles someone has to be willing to play the game with you.

### 5.3 Spokesperson Autonomy

In the simplest case of group speech by way of a spokesperson, the message is fully formulated and there is a sense in which the spokesperson serves simply as a mouthpiece for the group. But this underutilizes the powers of the spokesperson, who can be assigned to proxy for the group in explaining policies and proposals and in answering questions. In this case, the spokesperson's words are not chosen by the group. Two distinct things go on. First, the spokesperson explains in her own words what the message to be conveyed is and answers questions based on her knowledge of the matters officially decided. In this case, what she says represents the group's view, and we count the group speaking through the spokesperson. Second, the spokesperson may speak on her own behalf in her role as spokesperson. This occurs when she is interacting with her audience as a spokesperson but not representing the views of the group for which she is a spokesperson. Speaking in her role, she may respond to a question by saying that she doesn't know the answer. But this is not to say that it is not settled by group policy. She may also call on reporters to ask questions. In this she acts for herself, in her role. It is not the institution that is calling on reporters. She may engage in personal banter with the audience, still in her role, but without what she says representing the official positions of the group. She may also speak in her own voice even in an official context (the press room) on personal matters, lifting the mantle of spokesperson for a brief moment. Thus, among the things she says, we will need to distinguish between those that represent the group's official positions, things she say in her own voice pursuant to her role, and things she says independently of her role.

When she speaks representing the group's view, but choosing her own words, the question arises whether the group says exactly what she says. And here we should distinguish the questions whether it says those things and whether it says them intentionally. With respect to the latter, focus on a small group without much structure first, who settled by consensus on policy and a spokesperson but give the spokesperson autonomy in explaining policy. Then it seems clear that they intend to convey their policies through the spokesperson, but don't intend the specific words she uses. So if they count as saying the specific things her utterances mean, they do not say them intentionally. Do they say them at all? While they are agents of them, the word 'say' may be inappropriate, insofar as we are thinking of saying that  $p$  as involving an intention to say that  $p$ , and extend this rule saying in group speech acts. What does the group say then? The practice is to use glosses on the content that capture what the group intends to convey. This then should extend to the case of larger organizations with more elaborate institutional structures.

### 5.4 Does the Spokesperson Perform a Speech Act in Her Own Right?

We say that a group announced a policy *through* a spokesperson, but also that a spokesperson announced something *on behalf of* the group. The first foregrounds what the group does, the second what the spokesperson does. But the qualifier 'on behalf of the group' is crucial. The prepositional phrase modifies the significance of the verb. She is not making an announcement in her own voice. She is not representing herself as believing what she says (it is not part of the

job) but rather representing herself as representing her principal's position. If what is said is false, she is not blamed but rather the group. When we she say announced something *on behalf of the group*, we intend to pick out her performance in her role as spokesperson. Does she perform a speech act in her own right, then? Yes. It is precisely expressed by 'announced that ... on behalf of \_\_\_\_'. It is the performance of a locutionary act intentionally in her role as spokesperson for the group for the purpose of conveying the group's commitment to its content, imposing on it thereby the status function of being a group announcement (in the product rather than process sense). This gives the sense in which she performs a speech act. But does she perform an *illocutionary* act as well? Yes. For she does not merely perform a locutionary act. It is not like singing in the shower or practicing a speech. It has a specifically linguistic point in a communicative exchange. Insofar, she performs an illocutionary action as well, the point of which has just been described. This is what we pick out when we say that she *announced/ordered/promised/etc. something on behalf of the group*.

### 5.5 Delegating Policy Making and Message Formation

A group can assign a subgroup (or a member) the role of formulating policy for the group—the policy maker, for short. What the policy maker decides determines the content of what the spokesperson conveys when it is to be made public. But other members of the group did not participate in formulating the policy, and they might not learn what it is until it is announced (internally or externally). We say that the group announces something in this case, but does it do so intentionally? The *prima facie* difficulty is that, in contrast to the case of a small group that formulates the message by a public procedure that everyone endorses, not everyone in the group intends that the group adopt the specific policy it does—though they may intend they adopt appropriate policies through the policy maker's decisions. So there is a sense in which the group *did not* intend to announce that particular policy. On the other hand, in these cases the standard practice is to say that the group intentionally announced the policy. But how can that be?

When we say that the group intentionally announced the policy, we are focusing on the intentions of those who formulate policy and the terms of it being made public. So when we say the group intentionally announced the policy, we are saying that it was the deliberate result of a sanctioned procedure for the organization done intentionally by those empowered to do so. So here we use 'intend' and 'intentionally' not the sense of a shared intention but more in what we might call the organizational sense (see (Ludwig, 2017)). As long as we are clear about the distinction, we can say that in the shared intention sense the group did not announce what it did intentionally, while in the organizational sense it did. Though even in the shared intention sense there is some description under which what was done was done intentionally, such as announce appropriate and appropriately formulated policies.

### 5.6 Insincerity

A group proxy speech act is insincere when the group is not committed (at the time of the announcement) to acting in accordance with the constraints on behavior conveyed by the

content and form of the speech act. The failure to act in accordance with it need not be manifested only in how it interacts with others. It can also be manifested in how decision making is carried out internally. Thus, in the case of tobacco companies publicly claiming that there are no causal links between smoking and cancer, while they behaved in the market place as if that were true, relevant decision making bodies in the companies did not act in accordance with that, because their believing the opposite played a role in their official decision making about how to act, how to obfuscate public debate, undermine studies showing a link, and to avoid being caught in a lie.

Doesn't this raise a puzzle? If an announcement is a status function imposed on an utterance act whose point is to commit the group to act in accordance with it, then if the group is not committed, it is not using the spokesperson with the relevant function. Yet, isn't it still an announcement, although insincere? As in the case of individual speech acts, once the core idea is in place, it can be exploited to deceive people. In this case, one isn't playing the game, but pretending to do so. We extend the term 'announcement' to acts which make as if to contribute to realizing the canonical act type because the divergence is by its nature is not directly observable. Then we distinguish between sincere and insincere announcements (etc.). We have an interest in holding individuals and groups to account for how they represent themselves. Therefore, the status function assigned to the utterance act is representing the group as committed, and to represent it as committed does not entail that it is. We then also introduce a notion of being committed in a speech act sense to doing something, which merely means representing oneself as being committed in the psychological sense through performance of a speech act whose sincerity condition requires that. Thus, it is consistent with the status function account that a group can make an insincere announcement. In doing so, it commits itself to abiding by what it says in one sense, while in another sense it may not be committed to doing so.

## **6. Conclusion**

Group speech acts divide into collective speech acts on the one hand and group proxy speech acts on the other. Collective speech acts include irreducibly collective speech acts like agreements as well as collectivized individual speech acts like applause. Collective speech acts involve direct contributions from all members of the group. Group proxy speech acts paradigmatically involve the device of a spokesperson whose utterance acts express the official position of a group or organization. While this may also be a position that its members accept, it need not be, as the official position may be determined by a procedure that all at least tacitly accept as binding though it does not reflect the views of any members of the group. The spokesperson is a proxy agent, which is a particular kind of status role which involves representing a group in social transactions governed by constitutive rules. The specific role of the spokesperson is to represent groups in a way that is analogous to how individuals represent themselves in speech acts. The device requires the group using it and its consumers be in on the arrangements. The spokesperson announces not in her own voice but on behalf of the group, as the group at the same time announces things through the spokesperson. The result is

a distinctive category of group speech acts expressed using ordinary speech act verbs used in a group-organizational sense.

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