Status Conditions of Self-Evaluation

by

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1. Introduction.

To Cooley's looking-glass self it made no real difference in whose mirror the self was reflected. The "mirror" had somehow to be accepted by the actor as a source of evaluations, but neither in Cooley nor in subsequent research and theory based on Cooley has there been much concern for the sociological character of the source in relationship to the self. While it is fair to object that Cooley very often was talking about the reflection of the parent in the child, in formulating his hypothesis he did not incorporate any specific idea of who the source might be:

> "There is no sense of 'I', as in pride or shame, without its
> correlative sense of you, or he, or they . . . . In a very
> large and interesting class of cases the social reference takes
> the form of a somewhat definite imagination of how one's
> self . . . appears in a particular mind, and the kind of self-
> feeling one has is determined by the attitude towards this
> attributed to that other mind. A social self of this sort might
> be called the reflected or looking-glass self: . . . . A self-
> idea of this sort seems to have three principal elements: the
> imagination of our appearance, to the other person; the
> imagination of his judgment of that appearance; and some sort
> of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification. (1902; quoted from
> 1964, pp 183-184).

The sociological character of the "other" in this hypothesis is left vague, and it has typically remained so in efforts to verify the hypothesis. (For example: see Couch, 1958; Manis, 1955; Miyamoto and Dornbusch, 1956; Moore, 1963; Reeder, Donohue, and Biblarz, 1960; Rosengren, 1961; or Sherwook, 1965.)[*]

*There are three exceptions: Backman, Secord, and Peirce, 1963; Helper, 1955; and Videbeck, 1960. In Backman, Secord, and Peirce, and in Videbeck, the status of the source is mentioned as an important variable, and "experts" are used as sources. In Helper no particular point is made of the fact, but parents are used as sources. In all three, however, the status of source is constant across all conditions, and plays no part in the actual results.

Because the other is so vaguely characterized, it is possible to suppose from Cooley's Hypothesis that professors are as much influenced by what students think of them as by what their colleagues think. In fact, in Zetterberg's theory of compliance, a theory in which Cooley's hypothesis plays a central role, it is even possible to suppose that professors are more influenced by what students think than students are influenced by what professors think. For Zetterberg derives the result that the higher the self-evaluation, the greater the conformity to the opinions of others (Zetterberg, 1957, theorem 8), a result possible only because the status of the "others" who are sources of evaluation is neglected. Not only is the result implausible on its face, it is contrary to fact. If experimental subjects are made to believe they are very competent at some task, they are more resistant to influence from others than if they are made to believe they are incompetent; and how much influence others exert on them is a function of how competent they believe the other is (Berger, Snell, and Conner, 1968).

That it is important to know the social status of the "others" in whom the self is reflected is not a new idea. Status was a prominent condition both in Speier's analysis of the conferral of honor (1935) and Garfinkle's analysis of the conferral of dishonor (1956). But neither paper has had the impact on subsequent theory and research that it deserves. Both papers made a fundamental contribution, in both papers the contribution was the same, and in both papers the contribution was of two sorts:. First, both insisted that evaluation had not only a source but also a public. Neither honor nor dishonor could be successfully

conferred if not conferred before witnesses. But second, Speier and
Garfinkle did more than complicate the cast of characters and thicken
the plot. They defined the source as a person having a special kind of
social status. In Speier status conferral was illustrated by the way
in which a soverign confers honor on a subject. His emphasis was
placed on the fact that the sovereign's power to bestow honor is a
capacity vested in the status of sovereign, as distinct from the
individual who for the moment plays the sovereign's part. In Garfinkle
status conditions had an even more central place in the theory.
Virtually the whole analysis concentrated on the kind of status that
characterizes a figure who has a legitimate right to confer dishonor on
others.

Though by now quite old, the contributions made by Speier and
Garfinkle have not been assimilated into theory or research on self-
evaluation, and it is our purpose to bring about this assimilation here.
The two ideas to be assimilated are, first, that a public as well as a
source is somehow important in self-evaluation; and second, that the
part played by "others" in the process depends on their status. The
first step in assimilating these two ideas will be to explicate the
original theoretical notions of Cooley, Speier, and Garfinkle, including
the role of the public witness. Once rendered sufficiently precisely,
it will be possible to study the way in which status conditions determine
roles in the process of self-evaluation as Cooley, Speier, and Garfinkle
understand it. Finally, having studied the status conditions of the
process, it becomes possible to derive some interesting implications
for those social situations in which evaluations take place but the
necessary status conditions are not satisfied.

2. <u>Explication of the process of self-evaluation.</u>

As a foundation for the study of the role of status conditions in
self-evaluation, it is useful first to explicate the ideas of Cooley,
Speier, and Garfinkle about the self, source, and public witness.
Like most explications, the result will not be a full and complete
rendering of the original ideas of all three men. (Cf chapter 2 of
Berger, et al, 1959). In three important respects our formulation is
more limited than either Cooley or much later research.

First, we do not propose to encompass all aspects of self-conception.
Much research in the Cooley tradition has been concerned with self-image
(e.g., Huntington, 1957), with questions such as: How is it that a
"scholar" comes to see himself in terms of such characteristics as his
knowledge of the field, his ability to attract and train students, or
his standing in the scientific community? How, for that matter, does
one come to think of oneself as a "scholar"? Neither question is dealt
with in the present paper. What we are concerned with is <u>evaluation</u> of
the characteristics one believes oneself to possess. If one is a
scholar, and believes research is important to sustain the image of
scholar, how <u>good</u> is that research? This is the only question we ask.

But evaluations may range from the global to the specific. For
example, Rosenberg's well-known self-esteem scale uses items such as
"On the whole, I am satisfied with myself" or "All in all, I am
inclined to feel that I am a failure." (Rosenberg, 1965). But a man
may be a success or failure "in general," or only in specific ways in
specific contexts. Jones may be a great sociologist who is a failure
at cocktail conversation, or a poor sociologist superb at cocktail

conversation. It may be an important problem to decide which ability will determine his answer to questions like "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself" but this is the kind of question we do not ask in the present paper. Rather, we are concerned with specific evaluations in specific social contexts; we ask how a man who is a scholar knows that his research is good, not how he knows that "on the whole" he is good.

Finally, evaluations may be regarded objectively or subjectively. Where evaluations made by others are clear and unambiguous there may be little difference, but often there is a difference between actual and perceived evaluations and when this occurs it is apparently the latter that has the higher correlation with self-evaluation (e.g., see Miyamoto and Dornbusch, 1956). In any case, it is with perceived evaluation that we are concerned in the present paper. It is a fundamental problem of the theory of self-evaluation to determine how objective evaluation determines subjective evaluation. We do not want to creat a solipsistic theory about selves whose evaluations bear no relation to how others actually regard them. But for the present, we regard evaluations made by others from the perspective of the person who is being evaluated, whatever they may prove to be objectively.

Thus, we are concerned in this paper with evaluations, emotions such as pride, shame, respect, admiration, or deprecation. These evaluations are made only of specific characteristics, such as mechanical aptitude, musical taste, or mathematical ability. And, if the actor from whose point of view the situation is regarded is called p, the formulation we give here is p-centric; that is, evaluations are regarded from p's perspective.

For the sake of simplifying the expression of our theory, we will treat characteristics as if they were dichotomous. Thus, if C is some characteristic, say intelligence, we treat C as if it had only two states, C_a or C_b. Of course, if intelligence were measured by IQ scores, it might in fact range from 0 to over 200. We make no claim that all characteristics are "really" dichotomous, but for the sake of convenience we would divide this range at some suitable cutting point into "high" or "low" states.

Now consider just those actors who have a legitimate right to evaluate p with respect to the characteristic C. This notion will define for us the social context within which evaluation takes place. Unfortunately, it is not at all as simple a notion as it sounds. Consider p a learned scholar. The number of people who have a right to evaluate his scholarship is fairly large: graduate students, peers, the famous names of his field, all count. But not everyone counts, not even everyone about whose opinion he cares. His family, his neighbors, his nonprofessional friends, may all hold the opinion that he is a famous scholar, but he does not give them the right to evaluate his ability: he does not say to them, except in exceptional circumstances, "Read what I have written and form an opinion of it." What they know is his reputation; what they evaluate are the symbols of his success, his style of life, the ambience they sense as they observe his colleagues response to him. Thus, they evaluate indirectly rather than directly his state of C.

But the difficulty lies deeper. For one might reasonably object that students of p are no more able to evaluate than some of his friends, yet they are included among those who have a right to evaluate him. Yet

in two ways p's students differ from his family, friends, and neighbors.
First, by virtue of their status they must eventually form opinions
with respect to C, for they themselves possess *some* state of that same
characteristic. One may say that they are part of the same professional
community, and the same community of evaluators, simply because they
are evaluating and being evaluated with respect to the same character-
istics as p. Second, belonging to the same professional community as
p, they know on whose judgment p's reputation was based, and how much
that judgment is supposed to be worth. Family, friends, and neighbors
may know p has a reputation, even what that reputation is, but they do
not know how it was formed or by whom. They are altogether outside the
community in which the evaluations were made. They cannot assess the
reputation directly, and p would be most upset if they tried.

Among those who have a right to evaluate, there may be great
differences in their actual capacity to evaluate. A *source* of evalua-
tions is an actor, say o, who p believes is *more* capable of evaluating
states of C than is p himself.

> Definition 1. O is a *source* for p with respect to C if and
> only if p believes o is more capable than p of
> evaluating with respect to C.

The bases of o's superior ability might be either that o is a
better judge or that o has greater access to objective standards of
evaluation. Some men are better judges of intelligence, art, or wit
than others; or at least there are people who believe them to be better.
Some differ simply in possessing an objective standard that p himself
does not. For example in Sherif's expectation experiments, adolescent
boys are made to throw a ball at a target that is covered by denim;
only the experimenter knows where the ball actually hit, because the

experimenter can see an electric-sensing device that the boy cannot. The experimenter obviously has the greater capacity to evaluate. (See Sherif, Harvey, White, 19 ; or Harvey, 19 .)

While sources have a greater capacity to evaluate than p, p's peers have the same capacity as p himself at evaluating states of C.

> Definition 2. Q is a peer of p with respect to C if and only if p believes q is as capable as but not more capable than p himself at evaluating with respect to C.

Obviously the emphasis in this definition is somewhat different from the emphasis on the public witness in Speier and Garfinkle, but we intend the peers of p to play much the same sort of role. What that role is we will want to explore in detail below, but for the present note that if q is no more competent to evaluate than p, then like p's own evaluations, q's evaluations must reflect those of some source. If p is a student in 1st year college math he may construct a proof, show it to a fellow student, but be in doubt that the fellow student is better than himself at deciding its validity or elegance. Both will defer to the opinion of their tutor or professor. Nevertheless, the opinions of peers are important, as we will very shortly see.[*]

Without formal definition, we may note that in the present formulation we use the term self in its traditional sense to mean p as an object to himself. The label p' will distinguish p the object from p the actor.

Thus we have three entities, the self, p', the source, o, and the peer, q, all seen from the point of view of the actor p. Between these entities there will exist just two kinds of relations, evaluation and

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[*] Probably the opinions of those even less capable of evaluating than p are important also, but in this paper we neglect them. All we note here is that they exist. They play no part in our present formulation.

acceptance. Of evaluations we have already said something, and need only add that we think of evaluations as either positive or negative. Acceptance will be used in such contexts as "p accepts o as a source," or "p believes q accepts o as a source," or "p accepts q as a peer." In other words, acceptance is a synonym for saying that p believes some "other" satisfies definition 1 or definition 2. Unlike evaluation, its values are not positive or negative, only present or absent; the opposite of acceptance is not rejection, but only non-acceptance. Hence negative reference groups play no part in our formulation. As a matter of notation, we will refer to relations by using ordered pairs of letters, such as po or qo. The pair po means the relation of p to o, the pair qo means the relation of q to o. These relations are of course as seen from p's point of view, so that qo in fact means how p sees the relation of q to o.

In Cooley, the relation of p to o is always assumed to be positive, in the sense that p is assumed to accept o as a source. Given this acceptance relation, Cooley's hypothesis is that the evaluation of p' by o determines the evaluation of p' by p. By "determines" we mean that the sign of the pp' relation will be the same as that of the op' relation. If op' is positive, pp' will be positive, and if op' is negative, pp' will be negative.

Assumption 1. (Cooley Hypothesis) If and only if p accepts
o as a source, op' determines pp'.

(Since the theory is p-centric, op' of course means the evaluation o makes of p' as seen by p.) Two Cooley situations are shown in figure 1.
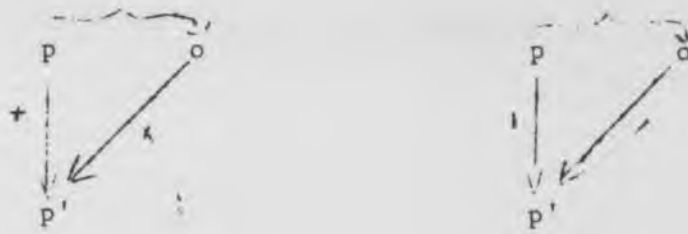
Figure 1. The Cooley Hypothesis. Given that p accepts o as a source, then the sign of p to p' is determined by (will have the same sign as) the sign of o to p'. A directed brace represents acceptance relations, while signed-directed line segments represent evaluations.

In Speier and Garfinkle, the relation of q to the source is also always assumed to be positive, and when this is true the sign of op' also determines the sign of qp'. That is, q is treated in much the same way as Cooley treats p; his evaluations of p are reflections of the evaluations made by the source.

Assumption 2. (Speier-Garfinkle Hypothesis) If and only if q
            accepts o as a source, the sign of op' determines
            the sign of qp'.

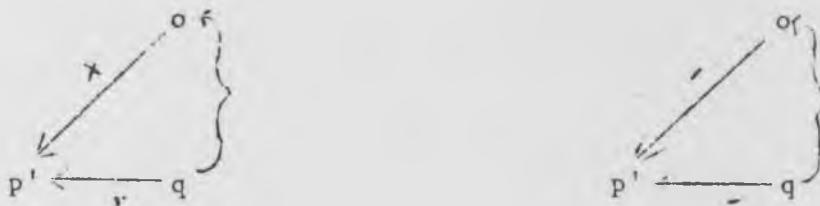Two Speier-Garfinkle effects are shown in figure 2.

Figure 2. The Speier-Garfinkle Effect. The peer witnesses the evaluation of the self made by the source, and his own evaluation is determined by the source.

What exactly is the function of this witness? Of course, we may think of the peer as playing a part in determining the sign of pp',

though with less effect than the source. But this seems unreasonable, in view of the fact that q is no more able than p to evaluate states of C. The information that q believes p to possess the more highly-valued state of C may reassure p a little, but he can hardly be reassured very much; if he was in doubt before, he should be equally in doubt after q's evaluation.

In any case Speier and Garfinkle do not argue that q _determines_ p's evaluation; what they really argue is that q makes this evaluation _valid_ by witnessing it. And the essence of validity in this sense appears to be that the source's action determines a continuing reputation that all those who have witnessed the honor or dishonor come to share, and to reaffirm in their own dealings with p.

The importance of this continual reaffirmation of the source's evaluation is not so much its effect on the _sign_ of pp' as on the _stability_ of that sign. It is as if self-evaluation were a fragile state, subject to continual pressure to change or fluctuate unless repetition preserves it. And certainly it is known that if others are not in agreement about their evaluation of p', then the self is less resistant to experimentally induced change (Backman, Secord, and Pierce, 1963).

If the stability of self-evaluation is going to depend on repetition of the source's evaluation, it does not seem likely that the source himself will be the stabilizing agent. For one thing, in both Speier and Garfinkle, the source is someone socially distant from p. He is not typically in frequent interaction with p. And, it is the _associates_ of p, the people with whom p frequently interacts, who keep the source's evaluation alive. In every act of his peers, p sees over again what

*Although stability of self-evaluation is probably a common enough sub-
ject in clinical theories and investigations, it is only seldom studied
in investigations bearing on the Cooley-Mead hypothesis. Exceptions
include: Backman, Secord, and Peirce, 1963; Brownfain, 1952; Helper,
1955; and Rosenberg, 1965, pp. 151-154. Note that, though few in num-
ber, the first of them predates the large bulk of studies testing the
Cooley hypothesis, which begin in 1955.

the source thought; and so long as the peers have absorbed and continue to carry the reputation that originated in the source, the sign of pp' should remain stable. Thus, even though peers do not determine how p evaluates himself, stable self-evaluation depends fully as much on evaluation by peers as by sources.

From the view just expressed, what is most important for stable self-evaluation is that p accept some q as a peer, and that the peer evaluates p' in the same manner as the source evaluates it. Hence,

> Assumption 3. (Stability Hypothesis) Pp' is stable if and
> only if op' and qp' have the same sign and
> p accepts q as a peer.

Note that we have not used the expression "witness" in the assumption, despite the debt the assumption owes to Speier and Garfinkle, because the term "witness" should not be taken too literally. It is probably not sufficient for q to witness o's evaluation for p to accept q as a peer, and it is certainly not necessary--for it would be enough for q simply to know that the evaluation took place, without having literally seen o evaluate p'. Since literally witnessing evaluation is neither necessary nor sufficient for the Speier-Garfinkle effect, there is little point in continuing to preserve the more concrete senses of the term.

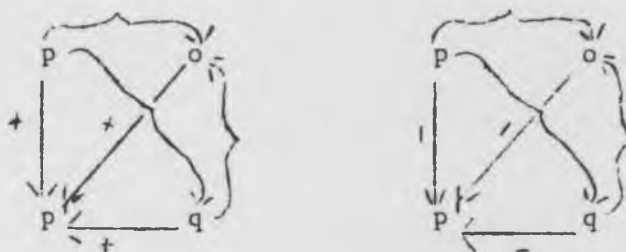Two illustrations of stable self-evaluation are shown in figure 3.

Figure 3. Stable Self-evaluations. An associate who p accepts as a peer is crucial to the evaluation process. When q's evaluation of p' has been determined by the same source as p's, the consistency of the two has the effect of maintaining self-evaluations.

3. Status Conditions and Stable Self-Evaluation.

In the present state of the theory of self-evaluation, its applications are limited to situations in which one has already identified who p has accepted as a source, who p has accepted as a peer, and who q has accepted as a source. For if p does not accept o as a source, or p does not accept q as a peer, or q does not accept o as a source, no exact and definite predictions are possible from the theory so far formulated. But we have no theoretical grounds for saying when p or q will accept o as a source or p accept q as a peer. These conditions were simply taken as given. Hence our purpose in this section must be to provide some grounds for stating who will be a source and who a peer. If we can accomplish this purpose it will markedly strengthen the predictive power of the theory.

In approaching this problem we continue to build on the suggestions made by Speier and Garfinkle. Both located the relevant conditions in the status relationships of p, o, and q. In Speier it was because o is always a status superior of p and q that the bearer of honor, p, feels so honored and the public, q, feels so compelled to pay that honor. In Garfinkle, the degrading of p was "successful" because o is always a public representative of the moral community, one who more than others represents the positive moral force of the social structure, one who in effect is a moral superior of both p and q. If we are correctly interpreting the role of the public in the process, the status of q is also important. For to be so constant an associate of p, and for its evaluations to mean anything to p, the relevant public must be the public accepted by p as status equals. Therefore the conditions that

*One can argue, of course, that what the theory predicts is that self-evaluation is independent of the source and peer if they are not accepted by p. "Acceptance of other" as a variable relevant to the Cooley hypothesis is investigated in Couch, 1958; Manis, 1955; and Sherwood, 1965, though it is not always possible to say whether the "other" involved is a source or a peer.

predict the roles people will play in the evaluation process are status conditions. Hence in the present section we will define such terms as status-characteristic, and status class, and formulate in terms of them the conditions that will determine who is accepted as a source or a peer.

In this section, we will be largely concerned with the kind of characteristics, such as sex, race, or occupation, the states of which are: (1) evaluated; (2) associated with specific abilities of various kinds; and (3) associated with general expectations (Berger, et al).

In this context, the sort of evaluation we mean is the sort usually connoted by status honor, or status value. That is, it carries the meaning of worth, esteem, prestige, or some synonym of these terms. Thus, it is better to be white than blue collar, in the sense that the former has more prestige.

Specific abilities may of course be attributed to actors, like p, but they may also be attributed to the states of other characteristics: That is, because p possesses state D_a of characteristic D people may expect him to possess also state C_a of characteristic C. Because he is Negro, he may be expected to be musical. Two such states (Negro, musical) are said to be associated.

Not only specific abilities (such as the ability to solve mathematical puzzles, cure automobiles of their ills, etc.) but also general abilities may be associated with the states of some characteristic. Thus, some people may expect that people in white collar occupations are competent, intelligent, well-mannered, etc. These more diffuse states we will call general expectation states, (GES).

A characteristic that has all three of these properties we call a diffuse status characteristic, D.

Definition 3. A characteristic $\underline{D}$ is a <u>diffuse status characteristic</u> if and only if

(1) the states of D are differentially status-valued, and

(2) to each state, $\underline{x}$, of D there is associated a distinct set γ_x of evaluated states of specific characteristics, <u>and</u>

(3) to each state, $\underline{x}$, of D there is associated a distinct general expectation state, GES_x, having the same evaluation as the state of D_x.

Thus, race is a status-characteristic if in fact people believe that it is better to be white, whites are more clean, and whites are more intelligent than Negroes. Of course, a given characteristic might be a status characteristic in one social context and not in another. This is not only a matter of some people just not believing in the expectations associated with states of D, which of course is possible; there is also the fact that characteristics are in some contexts specific and in others diffuse or general. Thus, the epithet "dirty" sometimes means quite specifically that one is not clean, but in expressions like "dirty Mexican" it means rather more than that.

A set of actors who possess a given state of D form a <u>status class</u>. Professors are a status class; students are another. A set of status classes defined by a single status characteristic are in this paper called a <u>status structure</u>, $\underline{S}$. As it is possible to have <u>no</u> state of some characteristic D, it is possible to be outside a status structure altogether. Hence a professor's parents may be regarded as not having <u>any</u> position in the status structure of a university.

Of course, p possesses many status characteristics and many different status structures could, in some context or other, be relevant to him. But here we are concerned with just those status structures that define

abilities with respect to C. Hence, what concerns us are those
characteristics D the γ-sets of which contain states of C. If p is a
medical intern, concerned with his ability at differential diagnosis,
he will believe that his senior resident or staff attending are more
competent to evaluate his ability than the nursing staff on his ward.
It is the medical status hierarchy that is brought into play. We will
speak of this structure as <u>activated</u>, meaning that p attributes to the
particular persons in some specific situation the expectations associated
with their states of D.

> Definition 4. D is said to be <u>activated</u> if and only if p
> attributes to self and others the specific and
> general expectations that are associated with
> their states of D.

Thus, if p possesses the state D_a and o the state D_b, and if p associates
the state C_a with D_a, C_b with D_b, the status characteristic D is
activated if p believes that p' has the state C_a and o the state C_b.
In other words, having classified p', o, or q as members of a given class,
D_x, p believes the members possess the properties of their class. For
example, if p believes his senior resident knows more than he about
differential diagnosis simply because o is senior resident and p only
an intern, then the medical status structure is activated. And we
believe that a given D becomes activated, and therefore relevant to
defining abilities, if it is associated with the state of C that p is
concerned with evaluating.

> Assumption 4. Let C be a characteristic the evaluation of which
> is of concern to p. D is activated for p if C
> is associated with D.

Now we reason as follows: if p believes that D is a status
characteristic, so that in his eyes certain specific and general

expectations are associated with states of D; and if D is activated in some setting in which such specific and general expectations come to be attributed to p, o, and q; then the roles of o and q as source and peer should not be in doubt. For given D, the p,o,q structure is so defined that the relative capacities of each to evaluate the other are well understood. For o to be a source for p all we require is that there be a positive status differential in o's favor. That is, o must be the status superior of p. Given that D is activated,

> Assumption 5. If o is a status superior of p in the status structure S, p accepts o as a source in S.

Thus, if o is a professor and p a student, and p believes in the superior competence of professors, p should accept o as a source. If p is a professor and o a student, on the other hand, p should not accept o as a source.

We desire of q also that he accept evaluations made of p by o, which we can reasonably suppose occurs if q is also a status inferior of o. Given D activated,

> Assumption 6. If o is a status superior of q in the status structure S, then q accepts o as a source in S.

Finally, we want q's evaluations to be significant to p, and we want them constantly repeated in interaction. We anticipate that this will occur if p and q are peers, and as peers are frequent associates. There seems reasonable evidence for believing that p and q are more constant associates when they are status equals than unequals, and that they will be regarded as having similar capacities to evaluate if they are status equals. Given D activated,

> Assumption 7. If q is a status equal of p in the status structure S, p accepts q as a peer in S.

The three status conditions given in assumptions 5-7 will be
sufficient to determine the sign of the p to o, q to o, and p to q
relations, and therefore will determine the process through which the
sign and stability of self-evaluation are determined. For if all three
are satisfied, the po, pq, and qo relations are all positive, the
antecedent conditions in assumptions 1-3 are all satisfied, and the
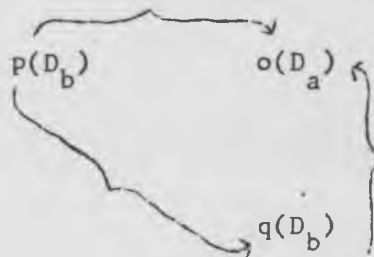self-evaluation of p obeys the Cooley-Speier-Garfinkle laws (see figure 4).

$$p(D_b) \qquad o(D_a)$$

$$q(D_b)$$

Figure 4. Status Conditions determine source and peer. If
D_a is the higher state of D and D_b the lower state, o is a
status superior and q a status equal of p. Therefore the
acceptance of o as source and q as peer is determined. If
these relations are determined, the evaluation o makes of
p will be accepted by p and q, and will determine the
sign and stability of pp'.

What assumptions 5-7 say, in essence, is that status characteristics
define social situations in such a way that beliefs about who is
competent to evaluate whom are established by them. They therefore pro-
vide p with some basis for believing that certain actors are sources
and others are peers. Where p in fact believes in D as a status
characteristic, and D is activated, predicting the self-evaluation of p
should prove no problem for the theory of self-evaluation.

4. Evaluations within status classes.

But what if the status conditions in 5-7 are not satisfied?

Not possible? But certainly we can think of situations where the required status conditions are not present. For example, professors evaluate not only students, but their colleagues. When evaluation occurs within status classes there is the possibility that p is unclear about who is a peer and who a superior.

We do not say there is always a problem within status classes, because status classes may themselves be well-structured. For example, imagine that the class of physicists contains p, a young man of some promise, o an elder statesman known for several fundamental and brilliant contributions, and q, another young man of some promise. Suppose that because of o's reputation p accepts o as a source, as does q; and because of their similar promise p accepts q as a peer. Now p writes a paper which, if judged sound, would be a brilliant contribution; the paper is given to o to judge; and o pronounces it brilliant. P is assured of his ability, and his associate q will play his part in maintaining the reputation p has acquired.

But the whole structure is based on personal reputations, on recognized "names," and therefore depends more than does a status characteristic on consensus and communication within the status class. The structure is more fluid, knowledge of it more uncertain, and dis-agreement about it more probable.

For example, suppose that p accepts o as a source, but q regards o as too old, virtually senile, certainly past his prime. In that case, the conditions required for assumption 2 are not satisfied, and the

possibility arises that op' and qp' do not coincide. (See figure 5.)
It follows (from assumption 3) that p's evaluation of himself may be
positive, but it is not stable.

(4.1)   If q does not accept o as a source, q's evaluations
of p' are not determined by o's evaluations. If
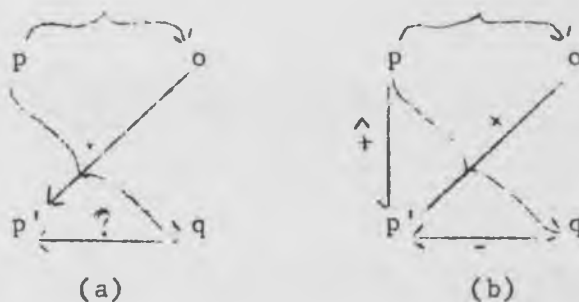q's evaluations differ from o's, pp' is unstable.

(a)   (b)

Figure 5. Dissensus and instability of self-evaluation. If q
does not accept o as a source, then q's evaluations of p' are
not determined by o's (5a). If q does not hold o's opinion,
qp' may not agree with op', hence pp' will be unstable. An
unstable self-evaluation is shown in the figure by a cap over
the sign of the evaluation (5b).

But p appears to have an obvious recourse if q does not accept o as
a source. For p can refuse to accept q as a peer. There is presumably
some pressure on p to do this, because unstable self-evaluation
probably creates anxiety, due to self-doubt. But the possibility that
p succeeds in this depends on the structure of the status-community to
which he belongs. First, suppose all the alternatives to q are like q
in refusing to accept o as a source. That is, S is a well-defined
structure in which p is simply a deviant in accepting as a source some-
one who is accepted by no one else. In this case, p's self-evaluation
remains unstable. For honor and dishonor are public matters, and p's
private evaluation of himself depends on finding someone who accepts the
same source as he. Furthermore, others are not wholly manipulable:

It is at least as much q as p who determines who is a source. And if p is alone in defining o as a source, wholly lacking social support, he may not accept q, but this will not stabilize his self-evaluation.

(4.2)   If p accepts no peer, pp' is unstable.

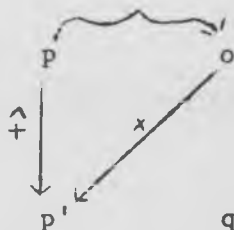Figure 6 shows the situation of an isolate such as 4.2 describes.

Figure 6. Instability of an isolate's self-evaluation. If p
does not accept q as a peer, q's evaluations no longer
influence p's self-evaluation, but if no alternative to q is
found, pp' remains unstable.

Second, suppose there _are_ alternatives to q. If p does not accept q, but does accept another peer, say r, the effect is to creat two subgroups, or "schools," in one of which o is a source, in the other of which there is a different source. Of course, if it was only q who failed to accept o, we would only have the obverse of the situation described in 4.2. But more widespread dissensus in S has a different effect than we find in 4.2: In the absence of subgroups, widespread dissensus would produce widespread instability of self-evaluation; if instability of self-evaluation is painful, there would be pressure to solidify subgroups, within which there would be consensus but between which there would be little communication and no common standards.

Results 4.1 and 4.2 may not be so startling. One might say that it is nice that they belong to the same theory, that the theory succeeds in

integrating diverse laws, but the implications are not novel. More

novel, though, is what the theory has to say about the source himself.

For who is the source's source? Who determines for o how good $\underline{o}$ is?

Of course, there is probably a hierarchy of sources, and for some sources

there are others they regard as superior to them in ability. But the

hierarchy must at some point have a pinnacle, and at the pinnacle there

is a man who may have peers, but has no source. Assumption 1 claims

that the man at this pinnacle is uncertain about his self-evaluation.

Instead of being delighted at his own eminence, as might be supposed

from theories which contain assumptions about maximizing self-esteem,

he is plagued by self-doubt. Indeed, in a well-structured field, where

others are in no doubt about who is the source, the source himself may

prove to be the most self-doubting of all men. At most p will have

peers. Probably there is pressure on p to try to make one of these

into some sort of source, but if he has any doubt that these peers are

more competent than he, he will always doubt that he is "really" as

good as others say he is.

(4.3)   If p has no source, he is uncertain about the
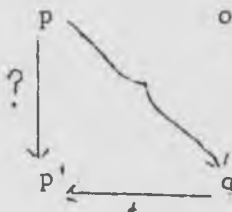   sign of pp'.

Figure 7. The Uncertainty of the Source's self-evaluation. If
p accepts no one else as superior to himself in competence, his
self-evaluation is uncertain, since q's evaluation does not
determine pp'. This would be the case, for example, if p himself
were a source.

Hence it is among the greatest of men that one should look for the most
uncertain self-evaluations.

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