

Status Conditions of Self-Evaluation\*

by

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## Status Conditions of Self-Evaluation

### 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.<sup>1</sup>

The sociological character of the "other" in this hypothesis is left vague, and it has typically remained so in efforts to verify the hypothesis.<sup>2</sup>

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,<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> and Garfinkle's analysis of the conferral of dishonor<sup>6</sup>. 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 sovereign 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. Explication of the Process of Self-Evaluation.

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.<sup>7</sup> 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,<sup>8</sup> 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 evaluation 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 good 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."<sup>9</sup> 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 have the higher correlation with self-evaluation.<sup>10</sup> 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 create 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 the characteristics of actors 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 typically say to them, "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 ambiance 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. 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 characteristics 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.

Thus, we distinguish between those who have some right to evaluate p with respect to C and those who do not. Among those who have a right to evaluate, there may be great differences in their actual capacity to evaluate. A source of evaluations 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 C.

The basis 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 hits, because the experimenter can see an electric-sensing device that the boys cannot. The experimenter obviously has a greater capacity to evaluate. But his greater capacity lies not so much in any ability he possesses as in his privileged access to an objective criterion of performance.<sup>11</sup>

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

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  $o$ . Observe that  $pq$  is a different relation than  $qp$ .

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  $p$  accepts  $o$  as a source,  $op'$  determines  $pp'$ .

Two Cooley situations are shown in Figure 1.

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Insert Figure 1 here

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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 by Speier and Garfinkle in much the same way as Cooley treats  $p$ ; evaluations of  $p$  are reflections of the evaluations made by the source.

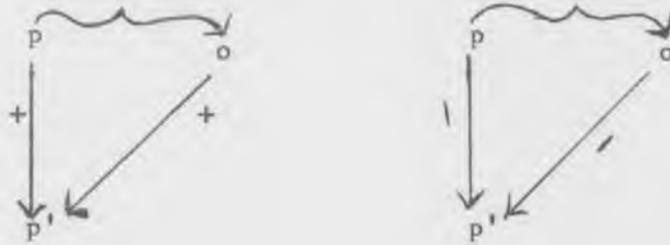


Figure 1. The Cooley Hypothesis. Given that  $p$  accepts  $o$  as a source, then the sign of  $p$  to  $p'$  is determined by (will have the same sign as) the sign of  $o$  to  $p'$ . Directed braces represent acceptance relations, while signed-directed line-segments represent evaluations.

Assumption 2. (Speier-Garfinkle Hypothesis) 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.

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Insert Figure 2 here

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If q's evaluation of p simply reflects that of o, one might suppose that it is superfluous. Certainly it should be less effective than o's evaluation in determining  $pp'$ , for if p were in doubt about the sign of  $pp'$  the information that  $qp'$  was positive would not much reassure him; after all, q is no more competent to evaluate than p. Nevertheless, q plays an important role in self-evaluation. By evaluating p before witnesses, o makes not only an evaluation but a reputation. This reputation is carried by those who constantly associate with p, and in their every action p sees a reflection of the evaluation made by o. This has little to do with determining the sign of  $pp'$ , which has already been determined, but it has a great deal to do with its stability. Without consensual validation, self-evaluations are fragile, subject to continual pressure to change or fluctuate. (For example, if others are not in agreement about their evaluation of p', the self is less resistant to experimentally induced change.<sup>13</sup>) But one can seldom rely on o to repeat  $op'$ . Sources do not confer honor (or dishonor) every day. In any case, sources are (in both Speier and Garfinkle) typically socially distant from p and therefore very infrequent associates of p. But p's equals are fairly constant associates, and if they have absorbed and carry his reputation, making it apparent in every



Figure 2. The Speier-Garfinkle Effect. P's equals witness the evaluation of the self made by the source, and their own evaluations are determined by the source.

interaction with  $p$ , the sign of  $pp'$  should be stable. In this sense, stable self-evaluation depends as much on evaluations by equals as by sources.

From the view just expressed, what is most important for stable self-evaluation is that the people  $p$  accepts as equals evaluate  $p'$  in the same manner as sources evaluate  $p'$ . Hence,

Assumption 3. (Stability Hypothesis) If  $p$  accepts  $o_1, o_2, \dots$  as sources and  $q_1, q_2, \dots$  as equals, then  $pp'$  is stable if and only if all evaluations  $op'$  and  $qp'$  have the same sign.

Note that we have not used the expression "witness" in Assumption 3, despite the fact that we are attempting to explicate the idea of "witness" in Speier and Garfinkle. There is no reason to take the term "witness" literally, since not all witnesses will be accepted by  $p$  as equals and not all carriers of  $p'$ 's reputation will actually have witnessed  $o$ 's evaluation of  $p$  in the literal sense. Two illustrations of stable self-evaluation are shown in Figure 3.

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Insert Figure 3 here

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But can only equals validate the self? Couldn't those people who are less capable than  $p$  himself at evaluating  $C$  nevertheless be witnesses of the evaluations made by the source? And if they could be witnesses of the source's evaluation, could they not carry reputations quite as well as anybody else? In certain circumstances it seems reasonable to suppose so. Nevertheless, these circumstances are limited by the fact that  $p$  is himself capable of being a source for his juniors. If they become dependent on  $p$

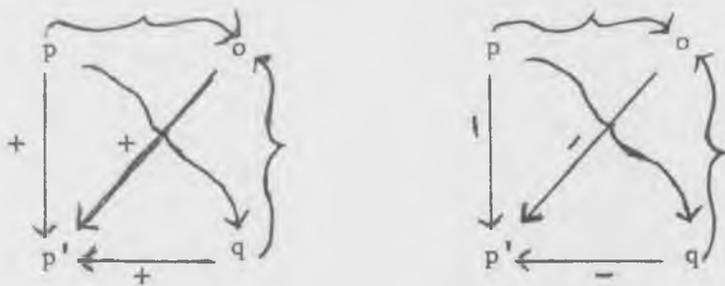


Figure 3. Stable Self-Evaluations. An equal with whom p frequently interacts is crucial to the evaluation process. When q's evaluation of p' has been determined by the same source as p's, the consistency of the two has the effect of maintaining the stability of self-evaluations.

for evaluations, he acquires the power to manipulate what they believe. Their evaluations, in that case, might simply be reflections of what  $p$  would like to believe, rather than the source's evaluations. Furthermore, he will be able to determine for them who they should accept as his source. While all this sounds as if it were in  $p$ 's own interest, assuming him to be ego-defensive, it is not. Surely  $p$ 's real difficulty is to obtain reliable and capable judgments on which he can depend with certainty. In any other case he is plagued with self-doubt. Juniors may very well be able to validate the source's evaluations, but only to the degree that they are independent of  $p$ . Where they are in no way subordinates of  $p$ , their reflections of the source's evaluations should play the same role as the reputations carried by equals.

### 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 whom  $p$  has accepted as a source, whom  $p$  has accepted as an equal, and whom  $p$ 's equals have accepted as a source. For if  $p$  does not accept  $o$  as a source, or  $p$  does not accept  $q$  as an equal, or  $q$  does not accept  $o$  as a source, no exact and definite predictions are possible from the theory so far formulated.<sup>14</sup> But we have no theoretical grounds for saying when  $p$  or  $q$  will accept  $o$  as a source or  $p$  accept  $q$  as an equal. 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 an equal. 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 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 sufficient conditions of acceptance as a source or an equal.

In this section, we will be largely concerned with the kind of characteristics, such as education or occupation, the states of which are (1) evaluated; (2) associated with specific abilities of various kinds; and (3) associated with general expectations.<sup>15</sup>

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.

Not only evaluations, but also specific abilities may be attached to the states of certain characteristics. Specific abilities, of course, may be directly attributed to actors, like  $p$ , but they may also be attributed to the states of such characteristics as age, sex, occupation, education and race. That is, because  $p$  possesses state  $D_x$  of characteristic  $D$  people may expect him to possess also state  $C_x$  of characteristic  $C$ . Because he is a professor, he may be expected to be articulate. Two such states (professor, articulate) 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 expectations 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 D is a diffuse status characteristic if and only if

- (1) the states of  $D$  are differentially status-valued, and
- (2) to each state,  $x$ , of  $D$  there is associated a distinct set  $Y_x$  of evaluated states of specific characteristics, and

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

Thus, education is a status-characteristic if people believe that college-educated people are "better" than those who never completed high school, if they think that college-educated people are likely to be cleaner, more verbal, more mathematical (just as possible examples of some elements of  $\gamma$ ), and if they believe college-educated people are more intelligent. 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 status class. 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 status structure. As it is possible to have no state of some characteristic D, it is possible to be outside a status structure altogether. For example, a professor's parents may be regarded as not having any position in the status structure of a university.

P possesses a number of different status characteristics (occupation, education, race, age, sex, ...), some of which are significant in some situations, some in others. There is no reason to believe that any one status characteristic is significant in all situations, nor even that there

is any one situation in which all status characteristics are significant at the same time. In those situations where the status characteristic D does determine the conceptions p holds of himself and others, we will say that D is activated. What this means is that in the particular situation the individuals are seen as possessing the properties of the status class  $D_x$  to which they belong. For example, if p is a medical intern, and believes that o knows more than himself about differential diagnosis because o is a senior resident, we speak of the medical status structure as activated in this particular instance.

We are going to assume that the roles played by individuals in evaluation situations are structured and determined by the status-characteristics activated in those situations. Therefore it is important for us to state when given status characteristics are activated, since this is equivalent to stating the conditions under which the process we are describing will take place. We believe the process to take place under the following circumstances. First, it takes place when p is required to perform some activity or function, such as making a decision, solving a problem, executing an instruction, manufacturing some product, which collectively we may refer to as the performance of task T. Second, this task requires that p possess some particular characteristic, say C, some state of which is instrumental to success in performing T. Third, p is in some doubt about which state he possesses of the characteristic C. We may speak of a situation that has these three properties as a situation of evaluational concern.

What status characteristics do for p is to provide some basis for inferring who is capable of evaluating whom with respect to the characteristic C. Not every characteristic is useful to p in this respect. Those that are, that is those that provide a basis for inferences about C, are said to be relevant to C. D is relevant to C in the first instance if D is associated with C. For example, status in the medical hierarchy is associated with diagnostic ability; it may therefore be used as a basis of inferring competence to evaluate a diagnosis. Note that inversions count among the characteristics associated with D: That is, if it is supposed that nurses, because they are nurses, are more likely to show the patient tender loving care, while Chiefs of Medicine are less likely to, TLC as well as diagnostic ability is associated with status in the medical hierarchy.

Even if D is not associated with C it may provide p with some basis for making inferences about C. It will be relevant to C in those cases where, given a situation of evaluational concern, D is not dissociated from C and there is no other basis of inference about C known to p. Two characteristics are dissociated when p knows that one cannot infer the state of one from the state of the other. If p believes that some Chiefs of Medicine are athletic, while others are not, and in particular that a Chief is about as likely to be athletic as an intern, then medical status and athletic ability are dissociated. This situation must be clearly distinguished from situations in which p does not know whether two characteristics are associated or not. Thus, p may never have heard of contrast sensitivity before (naturally enough, since we have just invented it); and not having heard of it, may be in some doubt as to how it is related to medical status. In this case,

contrast sensitivity is not associated with D, but equally is not dissociated. There are, in other words, three possible relations of D to C: associated, not associated, and dissociated. Now, if D and C are not associated but not dissociated, D will become relevant to C if there is pressure to evaluate states of C and no basis other than D to provide p with information about abilities. D still provides some basis for inference because it is associated with general expectation states. Chiefs of medicine are better than interns at all sorts of things, the GES assures the intern, and providing he has no information to the contrary (such as would be provided if D were dissociated from C) he may generalize from GES, establishing the relevance of D to a new characteristic C. This will of course not occur if there is a firmer basis of inference about C; if, for example, p knows that sex is associated with contrast sensitivity. But in the absence of any other basis of inference, D becomes relevant to C if not dissociated from it.

We may speak of a situation of evaluational concern, S, as socially structured by the characteristic D if D is activated in S and relevant to C. If S is socially structured by D 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 D is activated in some setting in which such specific and general expectations come to be attributed to p, o, and q; and D is relevant to C; then the roles of o and q in the evaluational process should not be in doubt. For given D, then 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 favor of o.

That is,  $o$  must be the status superior of  $p$  with respect to  $D$ . Furthermore,  $o$  will be a source for  $q$  if the same status differential exists between  $o$  and  $q$  and the same evaluational concern exists for  $q$  as for  $p$ . We may reasonably suppose the same situation to be of evaluational concern for  $q$  if  $q$  is required in some way to evaluate  $p$  and is in doubt about his ability to do so. Finally,  $p$  will regard  $q$  as his status equal with respect to  $C$  if they are status equals with respect to  $D$ . Thus, given  $S$  structured with respect to  $D$ ,<sup>16</sup>

- (3.1)  $P$  accepts  $o$  as a source with respect to  $C$  if  $o$  is a status superior of  $p$  with respect to  $D$ ;
- (3.2)  $Q$  accepts  $o$  as a source with respect to  $C$  if  $o$  is a status superior of  $q$  with respect to  $D$ ;
- (3.3)  $P$  accepts  $q$  as an equal with respect to  $C$  if  $q$  is a status equal of  $p$  with respect to  $D$ ;

which follow from definitions 1, 2, and 3.

For a given  $o$  and  $q$ , results 3.1 -3.3 are sufficient to determine the sign of the  $p_o$ ,  $q_o$ , and  $p_q$  relations, and therefore are sufficient to determine the process through which the sign and stability of self-evaluation are determined. For if all three are satisfied, the  $p_o$ ,  $p_q$ , and  $q_o$  relations are all positive; in which case, the antecedent conditions in assumptions 1-3 are all satisfied; in which case, the self-evaluation of  $p$  obeys the Cooley-Speier-Garfinkle laws, and we have our main result,

- (3.4) (Structured Evaluation Theorem) Let  $D$  determine the social structure of  $S$ , and let  $o$  be the status superior of status equals  $p$  and  $q$ . Then
  - (1) if  $o$  evaluates  $p$ ,  $pp'$  and  $qp'$  are determined, and
  - (2) the sign of  $pp'$  is stable,

which follows from 3.1-3.3 and assumptions 1-3. What 3.4 says

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Insert Figure 4 here

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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 provide  $p$  with some basis for believing that certain actors are sources and others are equals. Where  $p$  in fact believes in  $D$  as a status characteristic, and  $D$  is activated and relevant to  $C$ , predicting the self-evaluation of  $p$  should prove no problem for the theory of self-evaluation. For the competence to evaluate  $p$  with respect to  $C$  is determined by  $D$ ; therefore,  $o$ 's evaluation of  $p$  determines both  $pp'$  and  $qp'$ ; and the sign of  $pp'$  is stable, if  $pp'$  and  $qp'$  are determined by the same source.

#### 4. Social Sources of Unstable Self-Evaluation.

Given just  $p$ ,  $o$ , and  $q$  and the status-characteristic  $D$ , evaluations take place in a clearly-structured situation, the process of evaluation is well-determined, and our main result, 3.4, assures that the outcome,  $pp'$ , is stable. But the status structure  $D$  consists not just of the individuals  $p$ ,  $o$ , and  $q$ , but of a whole class of individuals at each state  $D_x$ . Hence  $p$  may have more than one status superior, and from the point of view of  $D$  they will all be equally acceptable sources. If they are equally acceptable sources, for  $pp'$  to be stable the sources must agree in their evaluation of  $p$ . For it follows from Assumption 3 that

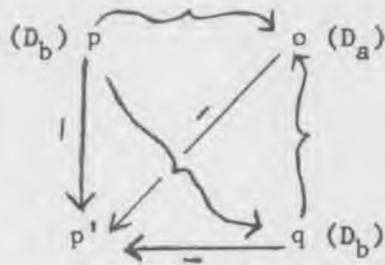


Figure 4. Status Conditions Determine the Sign and Stability of Self-Evaluation. If  $D_a$  is the higher and  $D_b$  the lower state of  $D$ , then  $o$  is a status superior and  $q$  a status equal of  $p$ . Therefore the acceptance of  $o$  as a source and  $q$  as an equal in evaluating  $C$  is determined. If these relations are determined, the evaluation  $o$  makes of  $p$  will be accepted by  $p$  and  $q$ , and the sign of  $pp'$  will be stable.

- (4.1) If  $p$  accepts two or more sources equally, then they agree in their evaluation of  $p$  or  $pp'$  is unstable.

Thus, if Doe is a student of mathematics, he can hardly develop a stable view of himself if he is told by Professor Jones that he has a promising future (which Jones says because of the elegance of Doe's proofs) but is told by Professor Smith that he had best find another career (which Smith says because Doe's problems are trivial). Stable self-evaluation depends on consensus among sources, who must share the same standards of evaluation.

But (4.1) holds only if all sources are equally acceptable; in other words, it assumes that there is no internal structure within the status class  $D_x$ . Obviously there are various ways in which  $p$  might regard some sources as more acceptable than others, even though they are alike with respect to  $D$ . First, they may possess different states of some other diffuse status characteristic, such as age or sex. Second, even if they do not differ in such characteristics as age or sex, which have very general status significance, they may differ with respect to characteristics that have a particular status-significance within the status structure  $D$ . Thus, from some points of view all officers are officers, but some were commissioned at West Point while others hold ROTC commissions. Third, each individual source may be characterized by a reputation attached to his particular name. Names, for those who know the internal structure of the class  $D_x$ , behave like status-characteristics for the simple reason that they are status-characteristics. That is, they satisfy definition 3; they have prestige, are associated with specific abilities, and imply general expectation states. Suppose Jones

has more prestige than Smith, is particularly talented in abstract algebra, and is more brilliant than Smith, who is well known in numerical analysis but something of a plodder. If such a structure exists, and if it is known to  $p$ , it defines clearly which source is superior and resolves those doubts about the self which dissensus among sources otherwise creates (see figure 5); in which case 3.4 holds as before.

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Insert Figure 5 here

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But knowledge of a structure that depends on recognition of personal names is more doubtful than one that depends on status classes, and there is much greater room in such a structure for dissensus about the competence of sources. Reputations are continually being formed, altered, replaced; their transmission is much less dependable than the transmission of attitudes that are, after all, part of the common culture; and a great deal depends on the sort of communication processes developed within the status class  $D_x$ . In any case, if there is dissensus among sources about standards, there is probably also dissensus among others about the reputation of sources. But agreement between  $p$  and  $q$  about sources is necessary to the stability of self-evaluation. For assumption 3 implies that

(4.2)                      Given dissensus among sources, if  $p$  accepts  $q$  as an equal, then  $pp'$  is unstable if  $p$  and  $q$  accept different sources.

(See figure 6.)

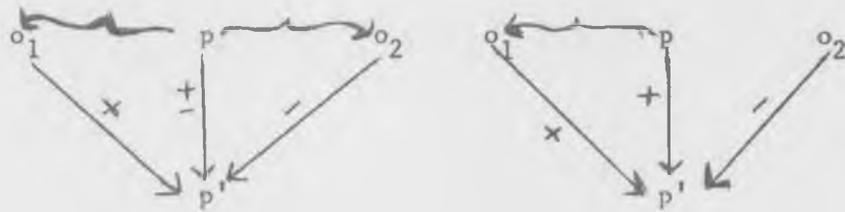


Figure 5. Stability of Self-Evaluation and Consensus Among Sources.

If  $p$  accepts both  $o_1$  and  $o_2$  as sources,  $p$  will some of the time believe he is good with respect to  $C$  and some of the time believe he is poor. The result is an unstable self-evaluation. However, if one of the sources has a higher reputation than the other, reputations will behave in the same manner as status-characteristics, determining acceptance as a source. The Structured Evaluation Theorem will therefore apply;  $pp'$  is determined and stable.

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Insert Figure 6 here

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Of course, if p did not accept q then q's evaluations would have no great significance. Hence pp' would be stable if p accepted only that q who accepted p's accepted source. There is presumably some pressure on p to do this, because unstable self-evaluation probably creates anxiety due to self-doubt. Furthermore, there is some pressure on p also to accept any q who does accept p's accepted source. For in the absence of some structural characteristic, such as D, the choice of a particular source requires social support. Status-characteristics provide social support for accepted sources because they are transmitted and maintained by the social groups of which p is a member. They are continually defined and redefined in normal social interaction. An individual choice of a source is a much more doubtful matter; but some support for that choice is assured if p accepts as equals those others who accept his accepted source. (See figure 7.)

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Insert Figure 7 here

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Thus, dissensus among sources creates pressures for the emergence of mutually exclusive subsets of actors within the class  $D_x$ , each forming an evaluational clique. Within each clique there is consensus about sources; between each clique there is dissensus about sources. The pressure of the strain due to instability pushes out of each clique any

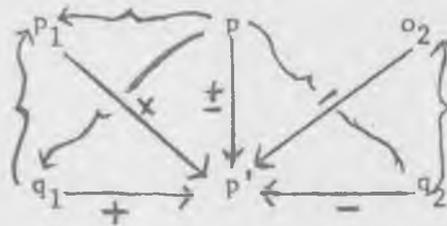


Figure 6. Stability of Self-evaluation and Consensus among equals. If  $p$  accepts  $o_1$  as a source but not  $o_2$ , stability of  $pp'$  depends on  $p$ 's equals,  $q_1$  and  $q_2$ , also accepting only  $o_1$  as a source. If one of them accepts  $o_2$  but not  $o_1$ , self-evaluation is unstable if  $p$  continues to accept  $q$ .

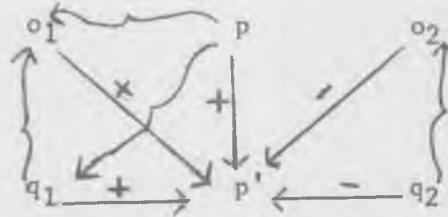


Figure 7. Formation of Evaluational Cliques. If there is dissensus about criteria of evaluation among sources, stability of self-evaluation is maintained only by the formation of mutually exclusive subsets of sources and equals, within each of which all acceptance bonds are positive, but between which there are no acceptance bonds. Above,  $p, o_1, q_1$  form one subset, while  $o_2$  and  $q_2$  form another. Because  $p$  does not accept evaluations from the  $o_2q_2$  subset, they have no affect on his self-evaluation which depends entirely on  $o_1$  and  $q_1$ .

equal who does not accept the source accepted within the clique; the pressure of doubt about the acceptability of sources draws into each clique any equal who does accept the source accepted within the clique. Providing that the sources accepted within each clique themselves share common standards of evaluation, the result of this decomposition of  $D_x$  is the stability of self-evaluation. For

- (4.3)  $Pp'$  is determined and stable if  $D_x$  is decomposed into two or more mutually exclusive, consensual subsets such that
- (1) within each subset all acceptance bonds exist, while between each subset no acceptance bonds exist, and
  - (2) within each subset all sources share common standards of evaluation.

This result follows naturally from 3.4, providing that (1)  $p$  does not accept those sources who disagree with the source he accepts, and (2) all the  $q$ 's accepted by  $p$  as equals accept only the source he accepts. For in that case all evaluations accepted by  $p$  will have the same sign and 3.4 will hold. (If there is consensus among all sources in  $D_x$  there is no reason why this structure should not consist of just one evaluational clique.)

Thus, we find that dissensus among sources generates evaluational cliques within  $D_x$ , if we assume that unstable self-evaluation is a strain, that not accepting a source or equal diminishes the significance of their evaluations, and acceptance of sources requires social support. We have treated this structure as an emerging structure, but of course it might from  $p$ 's point of view already have formed.  $P$  would then have found his place in one of the evaluational cliques by a process of differential association, instead of having created it de novo. Once formed, the

the structure of evaluational cliques is an equivalent of the status structure D, in the sense that the cliques behave like D and have the same consequences as D. The pressure to create them, therefore, may be thought of as essentially a pressure to create some equivalent of the status structure D within status classes.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>C. H. Cooley, Human Nature and the Social Order (New York: Scribners, 1902) (Quotations from Schocken edition, New York: Schocken, 1964), pp. 183-184.

<sup>2</sup>For example: see C. Couch, "Self-attitudes and Degree of Agreement with Immediate Others," American Journal of Sociology, 63 (1958), pp. 491-496; M. Manis, "Social Interaction and the Self-Concept," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 51 (1955), pp. 362-370; F. Miyamoto and S. Dornbusch, "A Test of Interactionist Hypotheses of Self-Conception," American Journal of Sociology, 61 (1956), pp. 399-403; J. Moore, "The Interactionist Hypotheses of Self-Conception," Technical Report #6, Laboratory for Social Research, Stanford University, 1964; L. Reeder, G. Donohue, and A. Biblarz, "Conceptions of Self and Others," American Journal of Sociology, 65 (1960), 153-159; W. Rosengren, "The Self in the Emotionally Disturbed," American Journal of Sociology, 66 (1961) pp. 454-462; J. Sherwood, "Self Identity and Referent Others," Sociometry, 28 (1965), pp. 66-81. There are three exceptions: C. Backman, P. Secord, and J. Peirce, "Resistance to Change in the Self-concept as a Function of Consensus Among Significant Others," Sociometry, 26 (1963), pp. 102-111; M. Helper, "Learning Theory and the Self-concept," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 51 (1955), pp. 184-194; R. Videbeck, "Self-Conceptions and the Reactions of Others," Sociometry, 23 (1960), pp. 351-359. 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.

<sup>3</sup>H. Zetterberg, "Compliant Actions," Acta Sociologica, 2 (1957), pp. 179-201 (Theorem 8).

<sup>4</sup>J. Berger and T. Conner, "Performance Expectations and Behavior in Small Groups," Technical Report #18, Laboratory for Social Research, Stanford University, 1966; S. F. Camilleri and J. Berger, "Decision-Making and Social Influence: A Model and an Experimental Test," Sociometry, 30 (1967), pp. 365-378.

<sup>5</sup>H. Speier, "Honor and Social Structure," Social Research, 2 (1935), pp. 74-97.

<sup>6</sup>H. Garfinkle, "Conditions of Successful Degradation Ceremonies," American Journal of Sociology, 61 (1956), pp. 420-424.

<sup>7</sup>J. Berger, B. P. Cohen, J. L. Snell, and M. Zelditch, Types of Formalization in Small Groups Research (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), Chapter 2.

FOOTNOTES (Continued)

<sup>8</sup>M. J. Huntington, "The Development of a Professional Self-Image," The Student Physician, ed. R. K. Merton, G. G. Reader, and P. L. Kendall (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957), pp. 179-187.

<sup>9</sup>M. Rosenberg, Society and the Adolescent Self-Image (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965).

<sup>10</sup>Miyamoto and Dornbusch, op. cit.

<sup>11</sup>M. Sherif, O. J. Harvey, and B. J. White, "Status in Experimentally Produced Groups," American Journal of Sociology, 60 (1955), pp. 370-379; O. J. Harvey, "An Experimental Approach to the Study of Status Relations in Informal Groups," American Sociological Review, 19 (1953), pp. 357-367.

<sup>12</sup>Although stability of self-evaluation is probably a common enough subject in clinical theories and investigations, it is only seldom studied in investigations bearing on the Cooley-Mead hypothesis. Exceptions include: Backman, Secord, and Peirce, op. cit.; J. Brownfain, "Stability and the Self-concept as a Dimension of Personality," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 48 (1952), pp. 597-606; Helper, op. cit.; and Rosenberg, op. cit., pp. 151-154. Note that, though few in number, the first of them predates studies testing the Cooley hypothesis, which began in 1955.

<sup>13</sup>Backman, Secord, and Peirce, op. cit.

<sup>14</sup>One can argue, of course, that what the theory predicts is that self-evaluation is independent of the source and equal if they are not accepted by p. "Acceptance of other" as a variable relevant to the Cooley hypothesis is investigated in Couch, op. cit.; Manis, op. cit.; and Sherwood, op. cit.; though it is not always possible to say whether the "other" involved is a source or an equal.

<sup>15</sup>J. Berger, B. P. Cohen, and M. Zelditch, "Status Characteristics and Expectation States," Sociological Theories in Progress, ed. J. Berger, M. Zelditch, and B. Anderson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966), pp. 29-46.

<sup>16</sup>We omit here the case in which two status characteristics structure S, one of which associates  $D_x$  with  $C_x$  while the other associates  $D_x$  with  $C_{\bar{x}}$ . The result, of course, would be status ambiguity, in which case the results of this section would not follow.