SOCIAL STRUCTURE, BEHAVIOR, AND THE MEANING
COMPONENT OF SELF-SYMBOLS

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
Worth Cary Summers
1964

ABSTRACT

SOCIAL STRUCTURE, BEHAVIOR, AND THE MEANING COMPONENT
OF SELF-SYMBOLS

by Worth Cary Summers

The central focus of this thesis is the inter-
relationship between self-conception, social structural
involvement, and behavior. Symbolic interactionist theory
has asserted that individuals describe themselves in terms
of the group memberships which they feel identify them-
selves, the categories according to which their reference
groups identify them, and in accordance with norms associated
with their reference groups. Additionally, it is asserted
that these self-descriptions permit prediction of how an
individual will behave by indicating how he will define
situations, and the norms to which he will adhere.
Empirical results from the Twenty Statements Test have
attested to the validity and potential usefulness of this
view.

In an attempt to improve upon the kinds of self-
social structural-behavioral links that were forthcoming
from the Twenty Statements Test the Asset-Liability
Instrument (ALI) was developed. This instrument requires
respondents to list their most important assets and their
most important liabilities and thereby elicits evaluated

self-descriptions. It was reasoned that by thus specifically requiring respondents to <u>evaluate</u> themselves, the value according to which such self-assessments were made would sharply delineate both the kind of involvement that the respondent had in the social structure and his potential behavior.

A sample of 372 students from introductory sociology and social psychology classes were administered the ALI and their responses were classified into nine content categories. Hypotheses designed to determine the ability of the ALI to provide the desired links between respondents, their involvement in the social structure, and their behavior were developed.

Problems encountered at a number of points in working with the ALI and in interpreting results from it led to a reconsideration and reformulation of the rationale which had been used to justify its use. This reformulation focuses upon the "relational" property of symbols including self-symbols. In this view the <u>meaning</u> of all symbols constitutes a class of forthcoming behaviors between classes of actors and objects. It is on the basis of the meanings of an actor's symbolic self-concept that he is related to the environment, and according to which his behavior is shaped and guided. Other symbols representing the limits of the behavioral relationships which are appropriate to any given self-symbol are organized into normative evaluative scales. A comparative relationship between the

symbolic representation of actual behavior and these limit-
ing symbols constitutes a self-evaluation.

Difficulties encountered in using the ALI are attri-
buted to the fact that rather than elucidating the connection
between an actor, the social structure, and behavior,
self-evaluations actually obscure it by virtue of their
added complexity. This fact, in addition to various other
technical problems associated with the ALI, are sufficient
to severely limit its utility as a means of yielding the
kind of information for which it was designed.

Recommendations are made for developing instruments
capable of exploiting the theoretical possibilities of the
reformulated position.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE, BEHAVIOR, AND THE MEANING

COMPONENT OF SELF-SYMBOLS

By

Worth Cary Summers

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

1964

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are a number of people to whom I owe a great deal in connection with this thesis. I am and remain especially indebted to Dr. Frederick B. Waisanen who served as my thesis advisor until his departure for South America. It was from him that I received a most stimulating and challenging introduction to the ideas of Symbolic Inter- actionist theory and it was he who suggested that I look into the possibilities of developing an instrument utilizing self-evaluations and who secured the sample used in the present study. After Dr. Waisanen's departure Dr. Robert L. Stewart kindly made room in a very busy schedule to assume the time-consuming task of directing the thesis to completion. The present form of the thesis owes a great deal to his relevant and often painfully penetrating criticism and suggestions. Fortunately for me, Dr. Stewart's skill as a critic is matched by his patience. Thanks, too, are due to Dr. Archibald O. Haller for valuable suggestions and criticisms, and to Dr. Carl Couch the third member of the thesis committee. Needless to say, I alone am responsible for any shortcomings in the present work.

It is unfortunate but inevitable that no expression of gratitude would be adequate to convey my appreciation to my wife Janet who has helped me in more ways than she knows.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

THE ASSET-LIABILITY INSTRUMENT

Introduction

Belief that the self (a) reflects involvement in

the social structure, and (b) that it is an important

determinant of behavior, has resulted in continued efforts

to use measurements of the self as a technique for empirically

linking individuals to the social structure and for predict-

ing their behavior. The method that has been most often

employed for this purpose is the Twenty Statements Test

(TST)[1] in which respondents write up to twenty statements in

answer to the question "Who am I?" The theoretical rationale

underlying its development and justifying its use in empirical

research has been stated best by Kuhn:

> There is no way for the individual to answer such
> a question except by referring to himself as a
> member of the groups that he feels identify him,
> or to social categories which his reference groups
> hold to be significant in identifying him, or
> finally, to evaluations of himself which hinge on
> norms held by his reference groups. Whichever of
> these referents he chooses, his answer consists of
> attitudinal statements, which are the best indexes
> of what he will do in any situation. They point

---

[1](Thomas McPartland), Manual for the Twenty Statements
Problem (revised, Department of Research, the Greater Kansas
City Mental Health Foundation, 1959).

2ort>2

to the norms that he will invoke to define a situation, to determine the role that he will play, and to supply the values that he will seek to effectuate.[2]

Responses on the TST have been subjected to several different scoring procedures and methods of content analysis; results have confirmed an association between certain categories of content analysis and social structural involvement, such as, religious affiliation,[3] social class,[4] age, sex, and involvement in professional schools,[5] and certain behaviors, such as, differential readiness to evaluate performance on the basis of cues from others,[6] and behavior of patients in a psychiatric ward.[7] The development of the Asset-Liability Instrument (ALI), which is to be discussed and evaluated in this thesis, was stimulated by this theory and by these promising results.

---

[2] C. Addison Hickman and Manford Kuhn, Individuals, Groups, and Economic Behavior (New York: The Dryden Press, 1956), pp. 43-44.

[3] Manford H. Kuhn and Thomas S. McPartland, "An Empirical Investigation of Self-Attitudes," American Sociological Review, Vol. 19, No. 1 (1954), pp. 68-76.

[4] Thomas S. McPartland and John H. Cumming, "Self-Conception, Social Class and Mental Health," Human Organization, Vol. 17, No. 3 (1958), pp. 24-29.

[5] Manford Kuhn, "Self-Attitudes by Age, Sex, and Professional Training," Sociological Quarterly, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1960), pp. 39-55.

[6] Carl J. Couch, "Self-attitudes and Degree of Agreement with Immediate Others," American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 63, No. 5 (1958), pp. 491-496.

[7] Thomas S. McPartland, John H. Cumming, and Wynona S. Garretson, "Self-Conception and Ward Behavior in Two Psychiatric Hospitals," Sociometry, Vol. 24, No. 2 (1961), pp. 111-124.

The ALI will be discussed in detail at a later point
in this chapter. Briefly, however, it asks respondents to
indicate their "most important assets (positive factors)"
and their "most important liabilities (negative factors)."
Behind the selection of this particular approach to the
measurement of the self was the belief that it would link
respondents to the social structure and to their behavior
more clearly and conclusively than had the TST. It was
reasoned that as with the TST, subjects would describe
themselves in terms that were associated with the reference
groups with which they were involved; but in addition, by
asking for assets and liabilities they would also assess
and describe themselves in accordance with the values
held by their reference groups. It was believed that these
values would (a) closely reflect their source in the social
structure and (b) would be an important influence on their
behavior.

Following Kuhn then, it was proposed that there was no
way in which an individual could answer the question posed
by the ALI--"What are your most important assets (positive
factors?)" and "What are your most important liabilities
(negative factors?"--except by:

1. "referring to himself as a member of the groups
   that he feels identify him, or to social cate-
   gories which his reference groups hold to be
   significant in identifying him,

2. [and by simultaneously evaluating himself according
   to the values derived from norms held by his
   reference groups.]

3. "Whichever of these referents he chooses, his answer consists of attitudinal statements, which are the best indexes of what he will do in any situation. They point to the norms that he will invoke to define a situation, to determine the role that he will play, and to supply the values that he will seek to effectuate."

Accordingly, the original objective of this thesis was to determine whether the ALI would, in fact, live up to these expectations.

However, this determination has been complicated considerably by developments which occurred subsequent to the collection of the data. Problems encountered in developing the coding categories, in the selection of hypotheses, and in attempting to analyze and interpret the results led to a reconsideration and reformulation of the theoretical rationale underlying and justifying the development of the ALI. This reformulation has had two important consequences which have greatly affected the organization of this thesis. First, it has confirmed the soundness of Kuhn's assertion regarding the importance of self-descriptions. Second, it has, on the other hand, demonstrated the invalidity of the basic assumption upon which the ALI rests--that self-evaluations would yield "better" results than a self-description,--and furthermore that this invalidity is the source of much of the difficulty encountered in using the ALI. While these problems can be understood and explained in terms of the reformulated position, they cannot be eliminated in this thesis for they

are a necessary result of the instrument itself and can
only be avoided by using different techniques.

As a result of these developments, the emphasis of
this thesis has shifted from an evaluation of the ALI based
on empirical results to an evaluation based upon a consider-
ation of the theoretical foundation upon which the instrument
rests. With respect to the organization of the thesis this
occurs in the following ways:

1. The discussion of the ALI and an interpretation

    of the results of the ALI is carried out in

    accordance with the original line of argument upon

    which it was based, insofar as this is possible.

2. Difficulties encountered in attempting to do

    this are indicated.

3. The problems encountered are then explained as

    resulting from technical characteristics of the

    ALI, and from inconsistencies between the

    assumptions underlying the ALI and the reformulated

    theoretical position.

In the remainder of this chapter the Asset-Liability
Instrument, the procedure for coding and scoring it, and the
hypotheses relating to it are discussed. In addition,
some of the problems encountered in working with it are
pointed out. In Chapter II, the results of the hypotheses
are presented along with a brief summary and discussion of
some of the technical and interpretive difficulties associated

with its use. In Chapter III, the theoretical reformulation
is presented, followed by an evaluation of the ALI in which
it is indicated how the inconsistencies between the ALI
and the reformulation led to the problems encountered in
working with and in interpreting the results of the instrument.
Finally, a brief discussion of the implications that the
theory and the flaws uncovered in the ALI have for the
development of suitable instruments and for further theoreti-
cal development is presented.

The Asset-Liability Instrument

The ALI is an adaptation of questions initially
employed as a technique for distinguishing between inner
and other directedness. Riesman[8] asked respondents to indi-
cate their three best personality traits, and Littunen
and Gaier,[9] and Gaier and Wambach[10] had respondents list
three of their greatest personality assets, and three of
their greatest personality liabilities. Although the
results of these studies are irrelevant[11] to the main

---

[8]David Riesman, Faces in the Crowd (New Haven, Conn.:
Yale University Press, 1950).

[9]Yrjo Littunen and Eugene L. Gaier, "Occupational
values and Modes of Conformity," Journal of Social Psychology,
Vol. 51, 1960, pp. 123-133.

[10]Eugene L. Gaier and Helen S. Wambach, "Self-
Evaluations of Personality Assets and Liabilities of Southern
White and Negro Students," Journal of Social Psychology,
Vol. 51, 1960, pp. 135-143.

[11]They are irrelevant largely because they are
uninterpretable, Riesman's because of the extreme informality
with which the responses were used, and Littunen et al
because of inappropriate application of statistical analysis.

purpose of this thesis, the kinds of answers which these

questions elicited suggested that a similar question

might lead to a significant differentiation of respondents

according to the evaluated self-descriptions. The ALI

appears below.

Figure 1. The Asset-Liability Instrument.

1. In the space below please indicate what you think are
    your <u>most important</u> ASSETS (positive factors).

    _____   _____

    _____   _____

    _____   _____

    _____   _____

    _____   _____

11. In the space below, please indicate what you think are
     your most important LIABILITIES (negative factors)

    _____   _____

    _____   _____

    _____   _____

    _____   _____

It can be seen that several characteristics were

built into the ALI in order to bring it into accord with

the theoretical statement with which this chapter was begun.

First, as has already been indicated, evaluations are explicit-

ly called for by asking for assets (positive factors) and

for liabilities (negative factors). Second, the instrument

was made more open-ended than the question employed by

Riesman, and Littunen, Gaier, and Wambach, by providing for

eight, rather than three, responses in order to allow for the possibility that, if given the opportunity, the subjects might provide additional useful responses. Third, since the kinds of self-responses that are made are of central importance for the theory it was felt that by removing the term "personality," as used by the above mentioned authors, the possibility of a systematic biasing of the self-symbols would be removed.

Coding the ALI

Content Categories

Nine categories were developed into which the asset and liability responses were separately coded by content analysis. It is to be emphasized that the theory provided no explicit basis for deciding a priori what properties or characteristics the categories should exhibit. In a general and rather vague way it was assumed that all of the responses included within a category would represent some underlying value or valued category of self-identification, and that it would suggest, (a) a possible reference group as its source, and (b) certain kinds of behaviors. The basis for deciding on such a connection is undefined by the theory; more about this will be said under the section headed Hypotheses in Chapter I. Because of the lack of explicit criteria for grouping certain kinds of responses into categories, meanings were imputed to responses and

hence also to the different categories. More will be said

in Chapters II and III concerning the validity of imputing

meanings to self-symbols.

1. Physical. These are statements which deal
with the respondent's physical appearance, or other
attributes which suggest that the respondent views him-
self as a physical object. Statements dealing with physical
characteristics of health are also included.

Examples include: "strength," "looks," "coordination,"
"complexion," "too tall," etc.

2. Material or Economic. These statements reflect
differential economic advantage or disadvantage or possession
or lack of possession of material goods. Individuals are
not included in this category.

Examples include: "few luxuries," "fail to make
ends meet," "need of money," "accumulated savings," but not
"my friends." Also included are statements indicating desire
for economic advantage, e.g., "desire for financial gain."

3. Significant Others. These statements presumably
indicate close primary relationships or an appreciation of
specific individuals.

For example, "my friends," "good wife," would be
scored as category 3, but, "friendly" would be scored as
category 4--social skills. Similarly, "my fiance" would
fall in category 3, but "engaged" would fall under
category 6--statements of Social Location or Categorical
Placement. Similarly, "husband," "father," given by a
male respondent as an asset would be placed in category 6--
Social Location, but if he had listed "my wife," or "son,"
these would be included in the present category.

4. Social Skills. These statements mention a
specific social ability or lack of ability and are regarded
as indications that the respondent perceives interaction and
social involvement in general to be important per se. All
statements in which people are mentioned are automatically
included provided they do not fall into category 3--for
example, "ability to speak before a group." Not included
are some statements in which social relationships themselves
appear in a negative light. For example, "too easily
influenced by others," seems to be a statement of insuf-
ficient autonomy and is classified into category 5--
Normative, Imperative, or Directive statements.

Examples include, "poised," "talk too much," extrovert," "interested in others," "sarcastic," "sense of humor," "personality."

5. <u>Normative, Imperative or Directive</u>. These statements seem to be generalized descriptions of ideal or normative behavior frequently having the characteristics of values or of moral or ethical imperatives. They are regarded as representing valued, culturally carried, generalized recipes for behavior applicable to many situations. They are abstractions of complex ways of acting or behaving.

Examples include, "haven't a set goal," "ability to adjust," "not enthusiastic enough," "rebellious to authority," "desire," "liberal outlook," "good Republican," "little prejudice." But statements such as, "feel insecure," "moody," are placed in category 8, a residual category which includes markedly subjective and affect states.

6. <u>Social Location or Categorical Placement</u>. These statements serve to place the respondent within some clearly defined social category. They distinguish him from others and establish his social position on the basis of certain well defined roles or other classificatory criteria. In contrast to category 5 statements, it is assumed that by making self-assessments within this category a respondent would tend to see himself in terms of categories of other actors rather than in terms of the more general and pervasive ideals or norms.

Examples include, "member of the middle class," "white," "ROTC Cadet," "married," "fraternity man," "male."

7. <u>Job or Role Skills or Their Lack</u>. These statements express the respondent's possession of skills or abilities requisite to performance within a specific role or setting. Also included are capacities to enjoy various activities.

Examples include, "manual skills," "athletic," "fast runner," "good musician," "good salesman."

8. <u>Non-Specific or Idiosyncratic</u>. These are statements of mood or affect and general statements that are neither imperative nor especially predictive or helpful in defining subsequent behavior. They may indicate a lack of facility in defining one's relationship to people or situations.

Examples include, "luck," "upbringing," "early family environment," "faith in the future of America," "education," "backing of my parents and family." Also included are statements of future events which may indicate

a lack of direction, e.g., "no job for the summer," "armed
service obligation," and abstract or general conditions
which may accrue to one, e.g., "opportunity to advance,"
"freedom as an American," "have traveled much," "think
all people have some good."

9. <u>Intellectual or Scholastic Characteristics</u>.
This is a category which was created for the college sample.
Statements which are included would ordinarily have been
classified into one of the other categories. Included are
all references to characteristics which would directly
pertain to scholastic or intellectual competence.

Examples include, "smart," "have difficulty concen-
trating on my school work," "I catch on to things quickly,"
"poor grades."

There were occasions when certain responses could

have, with some justification, been placed in either of

two categories. In such instances, if the statement in

doubt appeared between two other statements, both of which

clearly fell into one of the disputed categories, then it was

included in that category; otherwise, the statement was

included in that alternative category which had the greatest

frequency or saliency for the respondent.

Coding Reliability

Two measures of the reliability of the coding

procedure are available: one, a measure of the reliability

over time using the same coder, and the other, a measure of

inter-coder reliability. After a lapse of 2-1/2 years

the original coder was able to code 94% of all of the

responses of 20 subjects into the same categories into which

they had originally been placed. On another sample of 20

subjects, using an independent coder, 87% of all of the

responses from 20 subjects were placed into the categories
into which they had been placed by the original coder.

The essential point to consider in connection with
the coding procedure, however, is not the apparent
"reasonableness" of the consistency-reliability figures but
the validity of the coding procedure; that is, the
correspondence between the meanings that the coded
responses have for the subjects and the meanings which
the various categories have to the researcher. A great
deal more will be said in reference to the validity of the
coding procedure in the course of the discussion of
meaning of the categories which occurs at the end of
Chapter II under Critique, and especially in Chapter III.

The frequency distribution of the respondents'
responses in each of the asset and liability categories
appears in Table 1. The frequency distribution of each
category as it relates to the scoring and analysis of the
results will be discussed in this chapter under Scoring
the ALI, and in Chapter II under Method of Analysis.

Scoring the ALI

Three alternative procedures for scoring the ALI
were considered--the Modal, Proportional, and the Absolute.
In the Modal technique each individual would be assigned
to the category into which the majority of his responses were
coded. In the Proportional technique each individual would
be given a score for each response category according to the

									Total
Significant Others	97.8	1.1	.5	.5					100
Social Skills	55.9	28.5	11.3	1.3					100
Normative	37.9	26.3	19.4	9.1	4.0	2.4	.5	.3	100
Social Location	96.5	3.0	.5						100
Job or Role Skills	96.5	3.0	.3	.3					100
Non-Specific Ideosyncratic	53.0	29.8	12.6	4.0	.5				100
Intellectual Scholastic	79.8	18.5	1.1	.3	.3				100

*N = 372 for each asset and each liability category.

Table 1. Percentage distribution of people by number of statements made in each asset and liability category.*

Number of Asset Statements

Content Categories	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total %
Physical	65.3	26.1	6.5	.8	.8	.3	.3					100
Material or Economic	87.9	7.3	2.2	1.6	.5	.3						100
Significant Others	75.5	11.8	7.8	3.0	1.6				.3			100
Social Skills	36.0	30.4	19.9	9.4	1.1	1.3	.3					100
Normative	30.1	29.0	17.5	11.3	3.9	4.3	.5	.5	.5		.3	100
Social Location	83.3	10.8	4.0	1.3	.3	.3						100
Job or Role Skills	78.8	15.9	4.0	1.3								100
Non-Specific Ideosyncratic	76.1	17.7	5.1	.5	.5							100
Intellectual Scholastic	47.0	44.4	8.6									100

Number of Liability Statements

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total %
Physical	79.0	16.7	4.0	.3						100
Material or Economic	87.6	9.4	2.2	.3	.3					100

ratio of the number of his responses in that category to
his total response frequency. In the Absolute technique
some arbitrary number of responses in a given category
would be defined as distinguishing between individuals
that have or have not responded to that category in a way
that is meaningful for the analysis.

Although the Modal technique is simple and has
frequently been employed with the TST, responses on the
ALI did not fall clearly into modal categories and so this
approach was not used. A final choice between the
Proportional or the Absolute technique would ultimately
need to be based on theoretical and empirical considerations.
Since this thesis is not intended as an exploration of
various scoring techniques, and since neither the original
theory as stated by Kuhn nor the reformulation of it in
Chapter III provided any basis for deciding between one or
another of these alternatives, the decision to use the
Absolute technique was based upon the fact that of the two
it raised fewer difficulties than the Proportional technique.
The main difficulty in using the Absolute technique is the
establishment of cutting points; the basis on which this
was done in this thesis is to be found at the beginning
of Chapter III.

The Proportional scoring method was not used for
several reasons. It is possible to have anywhere from 0
to 8 responses in any one of the nine categories for
assets or for liabilities; because of the great number of

categories in relation to the total number of responses
the maximum was around 4. Furthermore, for each category
the median frequency was always either at 0 or 1 responses.
Since the median number of total responses was 5 for
Assets and 3 for Liabilities, any score based upon a pro-
portion would ultimately rest upon very small numbers in
both the numerator and denominator. This would have the
consequence of making the Proportional score highly sensitive
to variations of one or two responses and hence, sensitive
also to any unreliability or invalidity of the coding
procedure. Under these conditions, using such proportions
as a metric score would be highly misleading.

One bit of evidence gives weight to the validity
of using the Absolute scoring technique. In the course
of the analysis of each of the hypotheses the sample was
dichotomized according to those making fewer and more than
the median number of total responses for assets and for
liabilities. In every case there was no difference in
the results for those who made more than the median and
for those who made fewer than the median number of total
statements. Thus, it would appear that the absolute pre-
sence or absence of a response in a category was more signifi-
cant than its frequency relative to the total number of
statements.

Assets and Liability statements were analyzed
separately in this thesis because it was not known if they
could be meaningfully combined. For example, it was not

known if a Social Skill asset statement was equivalent to
or opposite from a Social Skill liability statement.
Furthermore, it was not known how they would behave with
respect to different independent variables.

Additional Measures and Indices

The purpose of the ALI is to link an actor to the
social structure and to behavior by virtue of his self-
assessments; therefore, several indices and measures of
reference group involvement and of behavior were obtained.
These are described and defined below prior to their use
in the hypotheses. The extent to which the following
measures are appropriate to the problem is considered
in Chapters II and III.

Important Others and Agreement
with Important Others

The following question was used to elicit the sub-
ject's reference groups and his perception of the extent
to which they agreed with his own self-assessment. It
was originally intended that the "others" would, like the
ALI responses, be classifiable into categories, e.g.,
primary, secondary, etc.; however, it was not possible
to work out a satisfactory set of categories. Nevertheless,
the number of "others" mentioned, as well as the amount
of Agreement, do figure in the Mean Agreement Score. The
scoring of the Agreement and Mean Agreement portion of the
following question are given below.

18

Figure 2. Question for important others and agreement
with important others.

All of us have certain "other" (individuals and/or groups)
who are particularly important to us. Please list some
of your important others in the spaces at left below.
For each "other" listed, indicate whether there would most
likely be agreement or disagreement with the assets and
liabilities you have listed above.

	Would this "other" generally agree or disagree with you regarding most of the assets and liabilities you have listed above? Circle the appropriate response.
Others Who are Important to You	
_____	Would agree can't say may disagree
_____	Would agree can't say may disagree
_____	Would agree can't say may disagree
_____	Would agree can't say may disagree
_____	Would agree can't say may disagree
_____	Would agree can't say may disagree
_____	Would agree can't say may disagree
_____	Would agree can't say may disagree

Agreement and Mean Agreement Score

In the Important Other and Agreement with Important
other question respondents were asked to indicate if each
important other which they listed "would agree," "can't
say," or "may disagree," with most of the assets and
liabilities statements which they made. Each respondent
was given an agreement score by scoring "would agree" as
2, "can't say" as 1, and "may disagree" as 0 and then

summing across all "important others." A Mean Agreement
Score was then computed by dividing the Agreement Score
by the total number of important others listed. This last
score served as the measure of perceived agreement with
significant others and was independent of variations in the
number of significant others listed by the subjects.

Index of Self-Esteem

This index was obtained by dividing the total number
of asset statements by the total number of liability state-
ments. The rationale for this is based upon the assumption
that more asset than liability statements are an indication
of a more favorable than unfavorable self-evaluation. In
order to avoid certain metric difficulties involved in
utilizing ratios as scores the index of self-esteem and
the mean agreement score were divided at the median
when they were used in the testing of hypotheses.

Importance of Religion

Respondents were asked "how important is your
religion in the way in which you live your life?"; five
alternatives were possible from "One of the most important
influences in the way that I live my life," to "One of the
most unimportant influences in the way that I live my
life." Responses were dichotomized by combining "one of the
most important . . ." and "a fairly important . . ." into

an "Important" category, and "Neither important or unim-

portant . . ." "Fairly unimportant . . ." and "One of the

most unimportant . . ." into a "Not important" category.

Socio-economic Level

Respondents were asked to indicate their fathers'

occupations; five socio-economic levels were computed using

the North-Hatt index of occupational prestige and are based

upon a breakdown employed previously by Davis et al.[12]

The Elite group contains such occupations as major pro-

fessionals, presidents of medium large firms, management

in large firms; for the Middle-Middle, secondary teachers,

wholesale salesmen and middle managers are representative;

Working Class Elite include plumbers, carpenters, owners

of small retail stores, white collar supervisors, and

farmers; Respectable Working Class is characterized by

postmen, barbers, mechanics, busdrivers, clerks in retail

stores, and machine operators; Low Status by garbage

collectors, janitors, and truck drivers.

Hypotheses

Not all of the possible combinations of content

categories of the ALI and independent measures of involve-

ment with reference groups or behavior are specifically

---

[12]James A. Davis and David Gottlieb, Jan Hajda, Carolyn Huson, Joe L. Spaeth, Stipends and Spouses/The Finances of American Arts and Science Graduate Students (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

accounted for in the following hypotheses. Eclectic as
they are, these specific hypotheses were chosen because,
when taken as a whole, they seemed to provide a reasonable
test of whether or not the ALI constituted a valid means
of linking, (a) the self, (b) reference groups, and
(c) behavior. There was no intention that the hypotheses
should contribute to any substantive sociological or social-
psychological knowledge.

While all of the following hypotheses seem to be
more or less "reasonable" in light of Kuhn's statement and
the meanings which have been imputed to the response
categories, reasonableness is a far cry from theoretical
specification. The position represented by Kuhn's state-
ment seems capable of asserting only that the symbols in
terms of which individuals represent themselves will in
some unspecified way have their links or connection to group
and to behavior revealed ipso facto. This serious theoreti-
cal hiatus between the self-symbol, social structural
involvement, and behavior is bridged in the case of these
hypotheses only by intuition, empathy, and some vague
sense of appropriateness. Nor is there any help along
these lines to be had from the theoretical reformulation
in Chapter III. The nature of the difficulty is more
clearly seen, however, and it is possible to offer some
suggestions for theoretical development in this area.

Hypothesis I. According to Clark the "collegiate
subculture," characterized by an orientation that is

predominantly concerned with social activities, "has been
a strong if not the dominant governor of student life ever
since the 1890's. . . . Today, the fraternities and
sororities set the patterns of the collegiate way of life."[13]
This view of one of the predominant value orientations of
college students, in conjunction with the foregoing inter-
pretation of the meaning of the Social Skill category,
leads us to assume that over time, the effect of the
"collegiate subculture" would be (to) increase the likeli-
hood that subjects would come to value and to evaluate
themselves according to standards that were consistent with
the kinds of responses which were categorized into the
Social Skills category. Hence Hypothesis Ia.

    Ia. <u>The number of Social Skill asset and liability
        statements will increase with grade in school</u>.

At the same time that socialization is presumably
occurring within the "collegiate subculture" the effects
of socialization from the family and church are presumably
weakened and decrease in importance. The Normative
category is presumed to represent values and criteria for
behavior derived from a familial or religious context.
Hence Hypothesis Ib.

    Ib. <u>The number of Normative asset and liability
        statements will decrease with grade in school</u>.

----

[13]Burton R. Clark, <u>Educating the Expert Society</u>
(San Francisco, Calif.: Chandler Publishing Company,
1962), p. 203.

Hypothesis II. The traditional role for the male in our society is to assume responsibility for securing a livelihood; therefore, we expect males to be more likely to see and evaluate themselves in terms of these roles.

> II. Males will make more Role and Job asset
>   and liability statements than will females.

Hypothesis III. Either because the definition and evaluation of one's self in terms of Scholastic or Intellectual attributes leads to higher grades or because higher grades lead to such self-assessments, saliency of Intellectual or Scholastic statements should be associated with objective evidence of grades.[14]

> IIIa. Higher grade point averages will be
>   associated with those individuals who
>   make Intellectual or Scholastic asset
>   statements as opposed to those who make
>   none.
>
> IIIb. Lower grade point averages will be
>   associated with those individuals who make
>   Intellectual or Scholastic liability
>   statements as opposed to those who make
>   none.

Hypothesis IV. If religion is perceived to be an important influence on the way in which one lives his life, then we would expect individuals to view and evaluate themselves in terms of standards associated with that religion. Such evaluations presumably would yield responses on the

---

[14]Wilbur B. Brookover, Ann Patterson and Shailer Thomas, Self-Concept of Ability and School Achievement, Final Report of Cooperative Research Project No. 845, Office of Research and Publications, Michigan State University, 1962.

ALI that would fall into the Normative category. Hence,

      IVa. <u>Those who perceive their religion to be
           important in the way in which they live
           their lives will make more Normative
           asset and liability statements than will
           those for whom religion is of little or no
           importance.</u>

<u>Hypothesis V</u>. Membership in many organizations should be associated with a tendency to value interpersonal relations and the possession of certain associated skills.

      V. <u>Those who belong to more organizations
         while in school will make more Social Skill
         asset and liability statements than will
         those individuals who belong to few or no
         organizations.</u>

<u>Hypothesis VI</u>. There is ample evidence[15] that individuals at the lower economic levels of our society are exposed to fewer of the opportunities and possess fewer of the skills requisite for adequate performance in educational, social, and economic pursuits. Such a condition is likely to produce experiences which cause these individuals to evaluate themselves relatively unfavorably. Furthermore, differences between socio-economic levels are likely to be more marked when they are within a context which places a premium on certain skills that tend to be distributed in favor of those at higher economic levels.

---

[15]Cf., Alex Inkeles, "Industrial Man: The Relation of Status to Experience, Perception and Value," <u>American Journal of Sociology</u>, Vol. 66 (1960), pp. 1-31.

VIa. <u>Self-esteem as measured by the ratio of
      asset to liability statements will increase
      with socio-economic level.</u>

<u>Hypothesis VII</u>. Assuming that individuals attempt

to maximize relatively favorable evaluations of themselves,

that these evaluations are largely based upon cues from

significant others, and that such cues will more likely

be forthcoming when an actor shares the values of these

significant others, then, when the evaluations of signifi-

cant others are perceived to correspond to one's own self-

evaluations, there should be a maximizing of favorable

responses from them, and correspondingly, there should

be high self-esteem.

VII. <u>There will be a positive correlation be-
      tween self-esteem and mean agreement score.</u>

This list of hypotheses originally included several

hypotheses which related categories of the ALI and categories

of Important Others. However, these had to be abandoned

when the proposed classification of Important Others proved

to be totally unworkable.

<u>Description of the Sample</u>

The questionnaire was administered to classes of

beginning social psychology students at four institutions--

112 were from Michigan State University, 112 from Northern

Michigan University, 107 from Michigan Tech., and 40 were

from Suomi College. Table 2 presents a summary description

of the sample in terms of sex, class in school and socio-economic level.

The fact that this sample was not randomly drawn will not be of concern in this thesis since there will be no attempt to generalize any results to a population. Furthermore, the mere presence of connections between an actor, social structure, and behavior, which are expected to be revealed by the self, are assumed to obtain regardless of what subsamples of any population might be observed, although the kinds of connections will vary from sample to sample.

Table 2. Percentage description of sample in terms of sex, grade in school and socio-economic level.

Grade in School

Sex	Freshmen (N=84)	Sophomores (N=109)	Juniors (N=94)	Seniors (N=68)	Graduates (N=17)	Total
Male	53.5	62.3	76.5	73.5	100	252
Female	46.5	37.7	23.5	26.5	0	120
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	372

Socio-economic Level

Sex	"Low status" (N=68) χ=18.3	"Respectable Working Class" (N=37) χ=10.0	"Working Class Elite" (N=151) χ=43.2	"Middle Middle" (N=43) χ=12.1	"Elite" (N=61) χ=16.3	Not Ascertainable (N=12) χ=.03	Total
Male	75	67.5	69.5	67.4	54	75	252
Female	25	32.5	30.5	32.6	46	25	120
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	372

CHAPTER II

FINDINGS

In this chapter the results from the hypotheses will be
presented and discussed; in addition, a brief critique of the
ALI will be made in terms of these results and in terms of
certain of the methodological and interpretive difficulties
associated with the instrument itself. A theoretical
critique of the instrument will be postponed until Chapter III.

Method of Analysis

Having decided to use the Absolute method of scoring
for the ALI, it is necessary to determine those cutting
points of the distribution that will yield groups which
differ in the property represented by the response category
in question. With self-esteem, mean agreement score, and
gradepoint average it was possible to use the median as
a point for dichotomizing the distributions--a procedure
that has the double advantage of being consistent from
application to application and of being the most power-
ful point at which to dichotomize these distributions for the
Chi Square test. Unfortunately, the task was more compli-
cated for the frequency distributions of ALI categories.
As can be seen from Table 1 in Chapter I, these distributions

28

are markedly skewed in the direction of many responses for each of the categories and the modal frequency was <u>always</u> either 0 or 1.

As a result of the restricted variance and skewedness of these distributions and because the total number of persons at the median comprised a rather large proportion of the total number of persons in the sample, the use of the median as a cutting point posed some special problems in the analysis. Three possible ways of arriving at cutting points for the frequency distributions of the various ALI categories were considered. All respondents who fell in the group in which the median also fell could be:

1. Randomly assigned to the groups on either side of the median. This procedure was rejected because reassigning the large number of cases in the median group would tend to wash out any difference that might exist between the groups above and below the median.

2. Dropped from the analysis. In which case,
   a) when the median fell at 0 it would be clearly impossible to analyze the results, there no longer being any group below the median.
   b) When the median fell at 1 the analysis could proceed with a 0 or 2 or more response split.

3. Retained as a separate group. In which case,

    a)   when the median fell at 0 the analysis could

         proceed with a 0, or 1 or more, response split.

    b)   when the median fell at 1 the analysis could

         proceed with a three-way split of 0, 1 and

         2 or more responses.

Of methods "2" and "3" the preference for the analysis was for method "2"--dropping the median group from the analysis--for two reasons. First, the groups which remained would be "extreme" and more likely to reveal differences in relation to control variables. Second, it is believed that method "2" tends to reduce any effects of unreliable coding. Thus, it is more likely that one of the responses of an individual might be miscoded than that two might be and it is therefore possible that the "1 response" category has a disproportionate share of individuals who are there by virtue of coding error.

Nevertheless, method "3" was used under the two following conditions: (1) if discarding the "1 response" category drastically reduced the number of individuals falling in the "2 or more" response group thus resulting in the distribution being too skewed for a reliable application of the Chi Square test or (2), if the result of retaining the "1 response" category was clearly the same as the result obtained by omitting it. Under the second condition it was retained in the analysis to emphasize the fact that the relationship was strong enough to be revealed by one response.

This last contingency was applied to only one case in the
analysis, Hypothesis IVa. It should be noted that in every
case the result of omitting the "1 response" category was
such that it strengthened an already existing relationship
or had no effect when a relationship was not present. In
no case where this category was omitted would its inclusion
have changed the direction of any obtained relationships;
therefore, the procedure provided a "fair" test of the
hypotheses.

Results

Hypotheses Ia and Ib proposed that:

The number of Social Skill (SS) asset and liability
statements will increase with grade in school.

The number of Normative asset and liability state-
ments will decrease with grade in school.

It will be recalled that a complimentary increase
and decrease of these two categories of evaluation was
expected as a result of the assumption that they were
reciprocally related modes of evaluation. That is,
students would come to reflect, through their SS statements,
what was assumed to be a dominant orientation of student
reference groups--an emphasis upon social activities, personal
attractiveness, and acceptance by others. It was also
assumed that normative moralistic criteria of behavior supposed-
ly derived from familial and religious reference groups,
and supposedly also related to the Normative response category,

would become less relevant or appropriate in the new
context.

The results, presented in Table 3 and 4, do not
support such a simple interpretation. Only males were
included in this analysis since it was found that females
made significantly more SS statements than did males, thus
introducing the possibility that the scoring by the Absolute
technique would be affected by different numbers of females
at the various class levels. Although females did not differ
from males in this category, for the sake of uniformity in
the discussion of results females were also removed from
the analysis of Hypothesis Ib, since the two hypotheses
are related. When males and females were analyzed separately
for Hypothesis Ia there were some slight departures from
the overall pattern of relationships[1] which had originally
obtained with the combined group. While these were not
great and the overall pattern remained the same, males
and females differed sufficiently to introduce an unwanted
interpretive complexity at this stage of the analysis.

The tables reveal that, in general, males increase
the number of Normative and SS evaluations which they make
as grade level increases. For, whereas there are fewer
than the expected number of freshmen making "many" asset
or liability statements for both categories of response,
seniors are overrepresented in all of these categories. It

[1]The departures merely consisted of differences in the
relative magnitudes but not direction of the discrepancy be-
tween actual and expected frequencies at the sophomore and
junior grade levels for the combined group.

33

Table 3. Class in school and number of males making social-skill asset and liability statements.

	Asset Statements			Liability Statements**		
Class in School	2 or more	None	Total	1 or more	None	Total
Freshmen	7 (14.02)*	26 (18.98)	33	13 (17.86)	31 (26.14)	44
Sophomores	22 (20.82)	27 (28.18)	49	34 (27.61)	34 (40.39)	68
Juniors	17 (18.27)	26 (24.73)	33	24 (29.23)	48 (42.77)	72
Seniors	22 (14.88)	13 (20.12)	35	24 (20.30)	26 (29.70)	50
Total	58	92	150	95	139	234

$X^2 = 12.31$ d.f. 3 .01 > p > .005 $X^2 = 7.43$ d.f. 3 .10 > p > .05

Table 4. Class in school and number of males making normative asset and liability statements.

	Asset Statements			Liability Statements		
Class in School	2 or more	None	Total	2 or more	None	Total
Freshmen	13 (19.52)	23 (16.48)	36	11 (17.63)	27 (20.37)	38
Sophomores	23 (24.40)	22 (20.60)	45	25 (21.34)	21 (24.66)	46
Juniors	27 (27.11)	23 (22.89)	50	21 (22.27)	27 (25.73)	48
Seniors	27 (18.98)	8 (16.02)	35	20 (15.77)	14 (18.23)	34
Total	90	76	166	77	89	89

$X^2 = 12.30$ d.f. 3 .01 > p > .005 $X^2 = 8.43$ d.f. 3 .05 > p > .025

*Figures in parentheses represent expected frequencies.
**Cutting point was shifted in accordance with rule 3a in "Method of Analysis."

is concluded that males as freshmen do not tend to evaluate themselves according to either SS or Normative values but that they do so evaluate themselves by the time they are seniors.

The fact that there is a significant increase in the number of individuals evaluating themselves by Normative standards rather than the anticipated decrease requires a modification of the interpretation of the meaning of this category. One possible interpretation of this result is that standards of behavior and conduct are acquired concurrently with school attendance. Hence the category may represent abstract, general criteria for behavior that have been derived from the greater exposure to ideas and diverse kinds of people encountered in school, and not from the accumulated teachings of home and church as had been previously supposed. Evidence from Hypothesis IVa reported at a later point, which shows that the Normative category is not associated with stated importance of religion, further supports this interpretation.

There is a parallel increase in self-assessments for both assets and liabilities for the Normative and SS categories and this would support the view that these evaluations are being made in terms of certain standard values, since the incorporation of values should reveal itself both in favorable and in unfavorable evaluations.

There remains the problem of accounting for the correspondence between the theoretical and actual frequencies

of evaluation in these two categories for assets and liabili-
ties at the sophomore and junior grade levels. While there
is insufficient information to determine what sort of pro-
cesses may be involved, three possibilities can be con-
sidered. First, it is possible that the Chi Square test
is insufficiently sensitive to changes; computing the mean
proportion of statements for each class might have been more
sensitive, although as indicated previously, such an
approach would have raised some formidable difficulties.
Second, the apparent leveling off of the rate of change in
evaluations might be the result of some complex interaction
between differential rates of change in self-evaluations
for asset and liability statements. Thus, if self-evaluations
according to some set of values would result primarily in
liability assessments, then it is possible that there would
be less of a tendency to evaluate oneself in terms of
such values until such time as asset statements would be
forthcoming as well. Finally, it is possible that a change
from no or few evaluative statements in one category to many
statements in that category involves a period of transition
during which time the values are learned only imperfectly,
and, hence, during which evaluations in terms of these
values might have been improperly coded.

The foregoing interpretations suffer from the fact
that they assume chronological processes when the data are
not longitudinal. Consequently the possibility that these
findings are artifactual cannot be entirely ruled out. In

addition, this interpretation would not be complete until all of the other categories of self-evaluation have been analyzed in a similar manner--a task which was too extensive to be undertaken in this thesis.

One source of artifactual contamination can be ruled out. On the possibility that variations in the frequency of Normative and of SS statements could be explained on the basis of the total response frequency, a "best" median split of the total number of asset and the total number of liability statements (including all categories of classification) was run against grade level in school. No significant differences were found either for total number of asset statements or for total number of liability statements.

The possibility that the total number of responses might be associated with any of the asset or liability categories examined was similarly tested for all subsequent hypotheses. This possibility was rejected in all cases.

In general, then, the results are interpreted as indicating an association between one's mode of evaluation on the ALI and a certain connection with the social structure. For males, increasing involvement in college, as represented by increasing grade level, was associated with greater tendency to evaluate oneself according to Social Skill and Normative categories. The Normative category is reinterpreted as possibly indicating the presence of abstract norms of behavior which are not necessarily

confined to early socialization, but which may result

from contact with other reference groups (in the college

perhaps) and which may increase with wider experience.

Hypothesis II proposed that:

Males will make more role and job asset and
liability statements than will females.

The data in Table 5 below do   not permit the

acceptance of the hypothesis.

Table 5.   Number of role and job skill asset and liability
           statements by sex.

| | Role and Job Skill Statements | | | | | |
| | Assets | | | Liabilities | | |
Sex	1 or more	None	Total	1 or more	None	Total
Males	55	197	252	6	246	252
Females	24	96	120	7	113	120
Total	79	293	372	13	359	372
	x^2 n.s.			x^2 n.s.		

The most likely interpretation of these results is

that the meaning of the Job or Role Skill category upon

which the hypothesis was derived is incorrect. A re-

examination of the responses which were coded into this

category do, indeed, confirm this;[2] the kind of behavioral

and social structural context to which these responses refer

---

[2]Some examples include, "good at sports," "manual
skills," "good musician," etc.

are at once so specific and diverse that they cannot be

regarded as relating specifically to sex roles as had been

thought. In short, in view of the kinds of responses which

were actually included into this category the original

hypothesis appears to be manifestly bad. This raises, in

addition, the question of just what it is that all of these

responses have in common which would justify their inclusion

into the same category. Knowing that they all refer to some

specific skill in a specific kind of setting hardly seems

a sufficient basis for inferring an additional general

property which they exhibit in common. If there is in

fact such a general property it is certainly not given

either from the theory or from the nature of the responses.

It may well be that for subjects who are more directly

involved in the actual business of earning a living, or who

are closer to it than is a sample comprised predominantly

of lower division college students, this particular category

might become more dominant and reveal the expected pattern.

In any case, there is no relationship between self-assessments

of job or role skill and differentiation according to sex

roles.

Hypotheses IIIa and IIIb proposed respectively that:

Higher grade point averages will be associated
with those individuals who make Intellectual or
Scholastic asset statements as opposed to those
who make none.

Lower grade point averages will be associated with
those individuals who make Intellectual or Scholastic
liability statements as opposed to those who make none.

The data, presented in tables 6 and 7 permit us
to accept both of these hypotheses.

Table 6. Grade point average by number of Intellectual,
Scholastic asset statements.

Number of intellectual scholastic asset statements	Grade Point Average*		
	Above median	Below median	Total
2 or more	18 (14.48)	10 (13.52)	28
One	91 (82.23)	68 (76.77)	159
None	72 (89.29)	91 (78.71)	163
Total	181	169	350

$$X^2 = 7.416, \ df = 2, \ p < .025$$

Table 7. Grade point average by number of Intellectual
Scholastic liability statements.

Number of intellectual scholastic liability statements	Grade Point Average		
	Above median	Below median	Total
One or more	25 (37.23)	47 (34.77)	72
None	156 (143.77)	122 (134.23)	278
Total	181	169	350

$$X^2 = 10.47, \ df = 1, \ p < .005$$

*Because grade point average was originally compiled
using grouped data it was impossible to compute the average
grade point for the different number of statements made. As
a result, a less powerful best median break was utilized.
The median grade point average was 2.50.

In contrast to the preceding result in Hypothesis II the Intellectual or Scholastic statements do seem to share a common property which is relevant to a context from which such statements might have been drawn or to a certain kind of behavior. Thus, they all refer to mental ability and all respondents are involved in a context in which evidence to this effect is forthcoming.

Although the hypotheses are born out, it is a moot point as to whether performance (and, more generally, whether behavior) is the result of self-conception or whether the self-conception is the result of performance. Symbolic interaction theory would accept both as true together, and in the final chapter a rationale for this view is elaborated.

Hypothesis IV proposed that,

Those who perceive their religion to be important in the way in which they live their lives will make more Normative asset and liability statements than will those for whom religion is of little or no importance.

The data are presented in Tables 8 and 9 and do not permit the hypothesis to be accepted. Catholics and Protestants were analyzed separately on the chance that parochial instruction might have led to more marked effects for Catholics, although there were no measures of such separate instruction.

Neither for Catholics nor for Protestants is there a significant departure from expected frequencies on either assets or liabilities. This finding, in addition to that presented in the previous discussion of Hypothesis Ib,

Table 8. Number of Protestants and Catholics making 0 and
          2 or more Normative asset statements by importance
          of religion.

| Importance of | Catholics | | | Protestants | | |
Religion	0	2 or more	Total	0	2 or more	Total
Important	29	38	67	37	65	102
Not Important	5	5	10	21	29	50
Total	34	43	77	58	94	

Number of Normative Asset Statements

X^2 n.s. X^2 n.s.

Table 9. Number of Protestants and Catholics making 0 and
          2 or more Normative liability statements by
          importance of religion.

| Importance of | Catholics | | | Protestants | | |
Religion	0	2 or more	Total	0	2 or more	Total
Important	33	36	69	61	47	108
Not Important	7	7	14	25	33	58
Total	40	43	83	86	80	166

Number of Normative Liability Statements

X^2 .n.s. X^2 n.s.

requires a modification in our understanding of the Normative
category of evaluation. Responses which fell into this
category were believed to be the result of self-evaluations
made in terms of abstract, moralistic values. It was felt
that such values would most likely to imparted within a
context providing for religious instruction, and that
those who conceived of themselves as having their lives

governed by their religion would reveal the internalization of such precepts as Normative, Imperative, or Directive statements on a self-assessment.

It now appears that such evaluative statements are independent of religious commitment (as we have measured it) and are more readily interpretable as the product of such experiences as college, which may foster the formation of some sort of personal credo or ideology of behavior according to which they act and evaluate themselves. However, the data do not permit us to test the extent to which such values actually do influence behavior.

Hypothesis V proposed that,

Those who belong to more organizations in school will make more Social Skill asset and liability statements than those individuals who belong to few or no organizations.

Respondents at all schools except Michigan State,[3] were asked "How many organizations, clubs, or groups have you belonged to while attending college?" Since answers varied with the year in school, respondents were divided into "many" and "few" membership groups separately for each class in school so that these groups came closest to the best median break for that class. All classes were then combined for the analysis.

From Table 10 it is evident that the hypothesis is only partially supported. Only Social Skill asset evaluative statements are associated with membership in more organizations.

---

[3]This question was added to the questionnaire after its initial administration to Michigan State subjects.

Table 10. Relationship between number of Social Skill
          asset and liability statements and organizational
          membership.*

| | Skill in Social Relationship Statements | | | | | |
| | Assets | | | Liabilities | | |
Member- ship in Organi- zations	2 or more	None	Total	2 or more	None	Total
Many	47 (39.19)	38 (45.81)	85	19 (21.25)	66 (63.75)	85
Few	30 (37.81)	52 (44.19)	82	23 (21.25)	60 (62.25)	82
Total	77	90	167	42	126	167

$$x^2 = 5.88 \text{ d.f. } 1 \text{ } p < .02 \qquad x^2 \text{ n.s.}$$

*Graduate students were excluded and data for MSU
were unavailable.

The present evidence might suggest that individuals may only

evaluate themselves in a manner appropriate to their

involvement within the social structure when such an

evaluation results in a relatively favorable self-

conception. Yet, such an interpretation would be contrary

to other findings already reported, e.g., Hypotheses I and

III, that if individuals are evaluating themselves according

to certain values they will evaluate themselves by these

values both favorably and unfavorably. An interpretation

more consistent with the preceding remarks might be that

individuals may be inhibited from becoming involved in the

kinds of situations where experiences with reference groups

may confirm or reinforce an unfavorable evaluation of

themselves. A sufficient number of such cases would tend

to wash out any trend for favorable and unfavorable evaluations

to be made simultaneously in a given category.

Hypothesis V then gives only partial support to the view that the ALI links the self to reference groups and to possible behavior by virtue of SS evaluative statements. A more meaningful test of the category would have been to ask respondents to list the groups to which they belonged, the amount and nature of their participation in each, and the importance to them of the views of these groups. The establishment of such clear cut reference groups and degree of behavioral involvement would at least have clarified the interpretation of the results of the above findings. What are the effects of a disproportionate amount of liability statements over asset statements with respect to the seeking out or the avoidance of interaction, etc.?

Hypothesis VI proposed that,

Self-esteem as measured by the ratio of asset to liability statements will increase with socio-economic level.

The assumption lying behind this hypothesis was that the higher the socioeconomic level the greater would be the opportunities to acquire the skills and to be exposed to experiences that would lead to successes and hence to favorable evaluations in a school situation.

Table 11 indicates that the hypothesis cannot be accepted. Since evidence will subsequently be presented in connection with hypothesis VII that supports the validity of the index of self-esteem we can tentatively rule that

out as a factor which might have yielded these results.

Table 11. Number of individuals above and below the median
self-esteem score by socio-economic level.

| | Self-esteem | | |
	Above median	Below median	Total
Elite	27	34	61
Middle-Middle	19	22	41
Working Class Elite	87	63	150
Respectable Working Class	17	20	37
Low Status	35	32	67
Total	185	171	356

$$X^2 \text{ n.s.}$$

One explanation for these findings is that individuals
with low self-esteem and low socioeconomic levels do not go
to college, but if this were generally the case then we
would expect the low status group to be relatively higher
in self-esteem than the other groups--which it is not.
It may be that such socioeconomic level has been about
equally able to find a context in which suitable levels of
self-esteem could be maintained; research on school sub-
cultures suggests that this could very well be the case.[4]

---

[4]David Gottlieb and Benjamin Hodgkins, "College
Student Subcultures: Their Structure and Characteristics
in Relation to Student Attitude Change," The School Review,
Vol. 71, pp. 266-289.

Hypothesis VII proposed that,

There will be a positive correlation between self-esteem and perceived agreement with significant others on self-evaluations.

Results are presented in Table 12 and permit acceptance of the hypothesis.

Table 12. Self-esteem and perceived agreement with significant others on self-evaluation.

Mean Agreement with Significant Others	Self-esteem		
	High	Low	Total
High	94	73	167
Low	69	94	163
Total	163	167	330

$$x^2 = 6.42, \text{ df. } 1, \quad p < .01$$

Acceptance of the reasoning underlying the hypothesis is not such a simple matter. On the one hand, there are indications that individuals evaluate themselves in accordance with the actual and perceived evaluations of others[5] while, on the other hand, there is evidence that there is distortion or selective perception involved in estimates of the evaluations of one's self by others particularly for those with high self-esteem.[6] Thus, the data not only support

[5]See for example, S. Frank Miyamoto and Sanford Dornbusch, "A Test of Interactionist Hypotheses of Self-Conception," American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 61 (1956), pp. 399-403.

[6]Ezra Statland, Stanley Thorely, Edwin Thomas, Arthur R. Cohen, and Alvin Zander, "The Effects of Group Expectations and Self-Esteem upon Self-Evaluations," J. of

47

the assumptions of the hypothesis, but also support a hypothesis which has some very different implications for the interpretation of human behavior. For example, the implications of an assumption that people perceive themselves favorably because they perceive nearly everything about themselves favorably, including the reactions of others, are quite different from those leading from the assumption that people, as a result of behaving in accordance with the expectations of others, receive cues confirming self-evaluations. Although there is no way to resolve this with the present data, it is possible to suggest a rapprochement.

There seems to be no reason why the two processes could not be operating simultaneously. Thus, we can conceive of individuals as sharing the values of others with whom they are in contact so that their behavior is favorably confirmed by these others. Such individuals would be likely to assume that most other individuals in groups with whom they were in contact would also evaluate them as they evaluated themselves--leading to distortions of the imputed evaluation of others toward oneself. Those who had a rather low self-esteem would, on the other hand, be concerned with, and hence more vulnerable and sensitive to, the

Abnormal and Social Psychology, Vol. 54 (1957), pp. 55-63; and Arthur R. Cohen, "Some Implications of Self-Esteem for Social Influence," in Hovland and Janis (eds.), Personality and Persuasibility (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), pp. 102-109.

objective clues from others with whom they happened to be in contact.

Discussion and Critique

On the basis of the results and the discussion so far, six major criticisms may be leveled against the ALI. We will first consider three which are directly related to an interpretation of the foregoing results, and then three more which are more directly relevant to some of the technical characteristics of the ALI as a research device. It will be noted that some of these criticisms have been explicitly anticipated in preceding remarks while others have not. Of the nine hypotheses and sub-hypotheses discussed above Hypotheses IIIa and b, and VII were completely confirmed, Hypotheses Ia, Ib, and V were partially confirmed if the reinterpretation and speculation with respect to them are accepted, and Hypotheses II, IV, and VI were disconfirmed.

In Chapter I it was pointed out that the hypotheses which had been selected were varied enough so that the results, when taken as a whole, should indicate whether or not the ALI did link self-conceptions to involvements in the social structure and to behavior. However, in view of the mixed support that the hypotheses have received it is difficult to give an unequivocal overall assessment of the effectiveness and validity of the instrument. If one accepts as valid those reinterpretations which were given to the meanings of the content categories and the other speculative

explanations offered in the course of the analysis, then, in a very general way, it does appear that the instrument reflects certain kinds of involvement in the social structure and is related to certain kinds of behavior. Just what kinds of involvement and just how this is reflected is difficult if not impossible to specify for four interrelated reasons.

1. The extent and nature of the involvement within the social structure is measured quite crudely by control variables such as, socio-economic level, number of organizational memberships, grade level in school, etc. This is true especially in view of the fact that this is a crucially important point in the link which we are endeavoring to establish between actors, social-structure, and behavior via the symbols of self-representation. From the standpoint of Kuhn's statement, such involvement is the context _from which_ derive the symbols used in the self-assessment, and _to which_ the symbols are to link the actor, and _in which_ behavior occurs.

2. The basic assumption behind the ALI was that by eliciting self-representations that were _evaluations_, various connections between actors, social-structural involvement and behavior would be clearly revealed. That they are not clearly revealed is apparent from the two preceding chapters; the basic reason for this is that _evaluations_ by their very nature obscure rather than clarify these connections. The theoretical formulation developed in the following chapter will supply the reasoning behind this apparent contradiction.

3. Related to "2" is the fact that meanings have been imputed to responses on the ALI with virtually no knowledge of the accuracy with which this has been done. Presumably, of course, the validity of the coding procedure was to be determined from the results of the hypotheses, the hypotheses being derived in part from the imputed meanings of responses in the various categories. The circularity which follows from trying to establish the validity of the categories at the same time that the instrument is being validated is readily apparent.

4. The weaknesses discussed in "2" and "3" are made more serious and make more serious the following criticism. As noted in Chapter I no precise theoretical rationale is available for linking particular categories of self-assessment to either involvement in the social structure, to reference groups, or to behavior. That is, while the theory is explicit in asserting a connection between self- and social structural involvement, and behavior at an abstract level, it is notably vague with respect to particular instances of these connections. This weakness is largely responsible for the difficulty that was had in showing that the hypotheses logically followed from the meaning attributed to a category.

When these four factors are viewed in combination, there remains little of an established standpoint from which interpretive judgments can be made. We are placed in the position of saying with some conviction that

"something is going on," but are at a loss to define and
evaluate precisely what that may be. This is best seen
by contrasting the results forthcoming when, (a) these four
criticisms are minimized, i.e., when the content category
from the ALI and the control variable were relatively con-
crete and clearly defined, as in the case of Hypothesis II
which related grade point averages to mental or scholastic
evaluative statements; and (b) when these same criticisms
are most applicable--that is, when the meanings of the
content category and the control variable are vague, as in
Hypothesis V which related Social Skill statements to organi-
zational membership.

But what is the likelihood that these criticisms
could be eliminated by any or all of the following measures:

1. A more precise specification and measurement of
   involvement in the social structure (or of reference
   groups), or of behavior?

2. Supplementary questions which would clarify the
   basis upon which the self-evaluations were made?

3. Supplementary questions which would clarify the
   meanings of the responses for the subjects?

4. An elaboration of the theory which would permit
   more precise links between ALI responses, reference
   groups, and behavior?

Without elaborating at this point, let us only suggest that
for reasons to be presented in Chapter III only the first
of these remedial measures could be successful.

Three additional criticisms of the ALI are concerned mainly with the "mechanical" difficulties associated with it as a research technique.

5. There are many possible ways of constructing categories for the ALI responses as is suggested by "2," "3," and "4" above, and unless alternative methods are developed and tested there is no way of knowing which would yield the best results. There is a possibility that results vary with the obviousness with which a given response can be associated with some category on the ALI and the obviousness with which such a category can be associated with behavior or social structural involvements. Thus, Intellectual or Scholastic statements are rather clear cut as to what they mean and their extension to a context of scholastic achievement, e.g., grades, obvious. This seems to occur at just that point where the category is also most narrowly defined and of least general applicability. Disturbingly, this may indicate that the ALI works best where the links between actor, social-structure, and behavior are most obvious and trivial; that is, at just that point where it is needed least. For surely the results obtained in Hypothesis III could have been gotten far more easily by a straight-forward question to the effect of "How much scholastic ability do you have?" There is more than just a strong hint of vacuousness in finding obvious connections between obvious measures.

6. The present system of classification yields 18 separate categories for assets and liabilities and unless this number could be drastically cut the system is an extremely cumbersome and unwieldly one with which to work. It is not yet clear whether one category is properly interpreted as remaining the same for assets and for liability statements. No attempt has yet been made to determine whether treating these separately or in combination would be the best research startegy. Results from Hypothesis V suggest that until this kind of an investigation would be undertaken any combining of asset and liability categories would be premature.

7. As previously noted in Chapter I it is somewhat problematical whether the scoring procedure should be of the Proportional or Absolute method. No attempt has been made to test the effectiveness of one approach over another, let alone explore the consequences of the previously noted troublesome characteristics of each.

In view of the fact that from the standpoint of the position to be developed in Chapter III criticisms "2" through "4" will be shown to be attributable to a judgmental flaw in the rationale behind the development of the ALI, the very great effort that would be needed to resolve "5," "6," and "7" would be best spent developing techniques more consistent with the theoretical positions presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER III

Introduction

It was noted in Chapter I that attention has been
directed toward studying and measuring the self in the
belief that it provides a uniquely important link between
an actor's social-structural involvement and his behavior.
It was proposed that a measure of the self which included
an explicit self-evaluation would yield results that would
be particularly useful in this respect. However, a number
of significant problems (listed at the end of Chapter II)
were found to be associated with the ALI and particularly
with interpretations of the results from it. These dif-
ficulties precipitated a re-examination of the rationale
behind the assumption that the self, as measured by techniques
like the TST and the ALI, was as important as originally
believed. The theoretical position arising from this
re-examination is developed in the first part of the present
chapter. It attempts to reassert the social and behavioral
importance of the symbolically represented self by
focusing on what is here called the relationality or the
relational property of symbols. This position is then
used as a basis for reaffirming the theoretical and empirical
importance of the symbolic self, and for an analysis and

54

explanation of the problems encountered in using the ALI.
Some suggestions for further development of the theoretical
position, and for the construction of instruments that are
consistent with this line of thinking are also given.

The Theoretical Restatement

In Mead's terminology symbols have the capacity to
arouse attitudes--tendencies to behave or imagery of contact--
toward the object symbolized;[1] "an organization of attitudes
with reference to what we term objects is what constitutes
for us the meaning of things."[2] Things are meaningful, then,
in terms of (a) an actor's behavioral tendencies, or (b) imagery
of behavior with respect to some aspect of the environment.
Relationality simply refers to the existence of such
behavioral relationships between a class of actors and a
class of objects.[3] These behavioral relationships are
thought of as being a complex sequence of actor-object
relationships. Consequently, the full meaning of a symbol
includes all of the potential behavioral relationships
between an actor and objects which might occur in a sequence

---

[1]George H. Mead, The Philosophy of the Act (Chicago,
Ill.: The University of Chicago Press, 1938), p. 222.

[2]George H. Mead, Mind, Self and Society (Chicago,
Ill.: The University of Chicago Press, 1934), p. 125.

[3]Throughout this paper it will be convenient to
understand "object" as referring to any person, behavior,
thing, or situation, or to any combination of these which
have been isolated as units and given names.

56

or in different situations, either as actual behavior or as this behavior can be known through reflective thought. The relationships inherent in symbols serve as "recipes" or "formulae" according to which behavior is governed, guided, and shaped. We are not here asserting a doctrine of of symbolic determinism, for "unpacking" the entire meaning inherent in a symbol would reveal that behavior could materialize in a variety of alternative ways contingent upon who an actor might be and on what might transpire during the course of behavior, and yet the behavior would remain consistent with the relationships inherent in the meaning of that symbol.[4]

A formidable difficulty arises in explicating the concept of relationality: the thought patterns and the language in which we are necessarily forced to communicate implies a unique existence to physical objects. "Object" and "actor" are somehow felt to be isolated things, independent of and more substantial than any relationship which they might assume. However, it is against precisely this

---

[4]It might be argued that a symbol which included many contingencies, which permitted numerous behaviors in a variety of circumstances, all of which were consistent with the meaning of the symbol, is *prima faci* evidence that the symbol is so vague as to be without meaning. That this is not necessarily or even generally the case can best be illustrated by an analogy to chess. In chess the meaning of the various pieces can be conveyed precisely and exhaustively in terms of rules which specify the relationships which can obtain between the chessmen and the squares of the board. The game itself, however, like all human behavior, is infinitely varied and complex.

notion that we are arguing, for "object" and "actor" are

<u>mutually</u> implied by one another in terms of behavioral

<u>relationships</u>. In conventional speech it is apparently a

grammatical or conceptual convenience to focus upon one

portion of actual relationships and give names to actors,

objects and relationships as if there were no connection

between them.[5] The fact that symbols are used in this manner

should not be allowed to obscure the fact that in order to

understand the meaning of any symbol, regardless of whether

it <u>names</u> an actor, an object, or a relationship, it is

necessary to refer symbolically to each of the others.

For example, it is clear that the meaning of symbols which

name relationships, e.g., "trip," "coctail party," "conference,"

"fight," or "work," can only be conveyed to others by reference

to other symbols, thereby indicating what some class or sub-

class of actors <u>do</u> in relationship to some class or sub-

class of objects. We can only partially cope with these

---

[5]This may only be a handicap of Indo-European language.
For example, contrast the usual mode of speaking of behavior
in English with the Navaho. "The Navaho speaks of 'actors'
and 'goals' (the terms are inappropriate to Navaho), not
as performers of actions or as ones upon whom actions are
performed, as in English, but as entities linked to actions
already defined in part as pertaining especially to classes
of beings. . . [In speaking the Navaho links] individuals
to actions and movements distinguished, not only as actions
and movements, but as well in terms of the entities in
action or movement. This division of nature into classes
of entity in action or movement is the universe that is
given; the behavior of human beings or of any being indivi-
duated from the mass is customarily reported by assignment to
one or other of these given divisions." Harry Hoijer, "The
Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis," in <u>Readings in Anthropology</u>, Vol. I,
(New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1959), pp. 219-231.

semantic limitations by stressing that when "object,"
"actor," or "relationship" are used in this essay they
should be understood to be an incomplete part of the tri-
polar relationship--they are only grammatically, and not
analytically, separate.

The shared meanings of a group's symbols both reflect
and lead to patterned behavior on the part of the members
of that group. When the behavioral relationships inherent
within the meaning of a symbol are thus shared and when they
constitute a common organizing principal of behavior toward
the environment for a number of individuals, then that
symbol can be said to be a norm. Frequently, relatively
stable sets of behavioral relationships between classes of
actors and classes of objects acquire names; when this
occurs they can be regarded as roles, e.g., father, student,
president, or as situations, e.g., dinner, examination,
conference.

Inasmuch as the extensions[6] of a symbol are to
classes or relationships, actors, or objects, it is possible
to conceive of symbols, including norms and roles and
situations, as differing in the specificity or generality
of the classes of which they are true. For example, the
extension of the symbol "house" is more inclusive with

---

[6]The concept of extensions is borrowed from logic
where it is used to indicate the universe of which terms
or predicates are true.

respect to kinds of actors and relationships than is the
symbol "dog house." And, in general, symbols differ in the
degree to which the behavior which they imply is specified
or uniquely determined for a given universe of actors.

In this thesis the theoretical importance of the
concept of relationality lies in its application to particular
kinds of symbols designated as self-concepts. If an actor
can be said to have meaning for himself in the same way
that any other symbol has meaning for him then all that has
been said with respect to the relationality of a symbol
applies as well when it is oneself that is symbolized.
Once again the vagaries of our language force the impression
that the self must be a concrete object; however, response
protocols from instruments like the TST suggest that the
self is more appropriately regarded as a cluster of symbols
each of which defines complex relationships between a
class of actors and a class of objects in particular societal
contexts. From the foregoing discussion it should now be
clear that very different empirical implications follow
from theoretical commitments to self-concept conceived in
terms of meanings and relationships than follow from a
self-concept which is seen as an entity with the attendant
connotations of isolation and uniqueness. In the evaluation
of the ALI which appears at a later point in this chapter
these implications become directly relevant.

Some examples of responses on the Twenty Statements
Test make the relational property of the self more apparent.

As noted above, symbols will vary with respect to the generality of the classes of actors, objects, and relationships which are their extension. This factor may be observed in the self-definitions of the TST protocols. For example, responses such as "one with red hair," "21 years old," seem to be so general with respect to the classes of actors or objects of which they might be true that the behavioral relationships which would be implied by these symbols would be largely indeterminate, that is, they do not have specific or fixed meanings. On the other hand, "friend," "wife," "doctor," and "night club performer," seem to be increasingly specific with respect to classes of actors and classes of objects and consequently, increasingly specific with respect to the behavioral relationships which could exist between them. Such responses suggest shared meanings and relation-ships; that is, they imply norms and roles. Thus, in these responses there is an implied social context in which the meanings of these symbols are shared, in which they emerge, and in which they govern behavior. Such self-designations, besides specifying, i.e., naming, a class of actors also imply socially defined ways of behaving toward specific categories of individuals, objects, or groups, in certain specific kinds of situations. In short, an individual's potential behavior is given in the meanings of the symbols by which he chooses to designate himself.[7]

---

[7]This position on the self appears to be quite close to that advanced by Sherif and Sherif. These authors conceive of the self as a subsystem of interrelated attitudes

With the foregoing in mind, the self can be defined
as the symbolic representation of a set of relatively
stable relationships to the environment which an actor
experiences as "being" himself--the self is the sum of
the meanings which he has for himself. One reason for
believing that the self-concept is an important area of
concern for social-psychology is simply that it is, in the
present view, the locus of the meanings whereby an actor
establishes behavioral relationships with his environment.
These symbols should reveal, then, the different ways in
which individuals are engaged with other persons, groups
or events. Furthermore, a knowledge of the symbols by which
an individual represents himself to himself should yield
important information about the context in which he has
established these behavioral relationships. From the
properties of the social-structural context additional
inferences about the actor and his behavioral relationships
might be drawn. For, if the objects, i.e., the people,
situations, and things, in relation to which the actor de-
rives his meanings can in turn be seen to change or to be
organized in certain ways, then much more of the likely
behavior of the actor could be known and explained. For

which an actor has toward himself, others, groups and
institutions, and values and "which define and regulate
his relatedness to them in concrete situations." Muzafer
Sherif and Carolyn W. Sherif, An Outline of Social Psychology
(New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), p. 581.

example, it is quite possible that self-conceptions of the

kind yielded by the TST can be arranged according to the

degree to which the relationships which they suggest are

components of formal or informal structures; knowing this

would be to know much of the structure and organization of

the objects to which an actor would or would not be

addressing himself. The meanings attached to self-symbols

differ then in the degree to which they are fixed in

formally constituted group processes, in the degree to

which they imply particular settings or contexts, and in the

degree to which they permit the establishment of behavioral

relationships in different kinds of situations.

It is assumed that the extent and form of the be-

havioral relationships which may constitute the meaning of

any particular self-concept for an actor are derived from

the norms, values, and beliefs of groups which are important

to him. These may vary in their lack of contradiction,

the accuracy with which they are perceived, the degree of

consensus with which they are held, and the strength of

any sanctions involved in violation or compliance with

them, as well as in numerous other ways. Important as these

factors might be in determining the nature of the relation-

ship between a self-conception of some particular sort and

actual behavior, they cannot be dealt with in this essay.

Also to be excluded is any discussion of the precise

mechanisms involved in the acquisition of self-conceptions.

For this thesis it suffices to make the following three

related assumptions relevant to this point: First, self-concepts are formed from the store of symbols available in the groups with which actors are in contact. These symbols represent any of the behavioral relationships which have acquired meanings in these groups. Second, individuals behave toward an actor according to the meanings which he has for them, and, ultimately, according to the relationships which he affects with them or according to the identity they have assigned to him. Third, individuals acquire meaning for themselves as "selves" from the nature of the relationships which they establish with their environment, particularly from cues in the actions and behavior of other individuals around them. Fourth, the greater the amount of time spent in some location within the social structure the greater will be the likelihood of forming a self-concept from the symbols at that location in accordance with assumption three, in particular, the greater is the likelihood that an aspect of the self-concept will be linked to a normative reference group associated with that location.

A fifth assumption summarizes and condenses much of what has already been said with respect to the self and actual behavior: to some important extent the meanings which the world has for an actor derive from experienced relationships to it by virtue of the relational property of his self-symbols--since behavior will be consistent with the meanings it will also tend to be consistent with the self.

This last assumption suggests the existence of an evaluative dimension to the self. Judgments as to the <u>consistency</u> of actual behavior with behavior implied by the meanings of a self-concept implicitly involve a comparison by the actor of his actual behavior against certain criteria or standard relationships--in short, it entails an evaluation according to relevant normative standards by means of symbolic behavior.

It would not be inconsistent with the view that the experience of social reality is largely a process of experienced relationships to assert that for social groups certain actor-object relationships serve as standards and represent different degrees of, for example, goodness, value, sacredness, or appropriateness. These patterns of ordered relationships may be thought of as shared internalized evaluative scales, while values, as distinct from an evaluation, may then be regarded as relatively favorable locations on such a scale. The symbols "good," "immoral," "funny," "honest," or "shocking" which result from an evaluation convey meaning to others; that is, they are significant symbols and <u>represent the relative positions between whatever relationships that have been evaluated and those behavioral relationships that may comprise comparative points on the shared scale of reference</u>.

The actor's experience of the outcomes of these evaluative acts with respect to his self-concept constitutes his self-esteem. Just as the self was regarded as a set of

relationships so also can self-esteem be regarded as a

set of evaluations of these relationships. Consequently,

it is possible to have as many specific self-esteems as

there are somewhat distinct relationships comprising the

self. It is possible, too, that there is a generalized

self-esteem as the composite of all such evaluations.

Self-esteem at any one time, then, might consist of any

number of experienced discrepancies or convergencies between

actual and ideal relationships.

A graphical but over-simplified representation of

self-evaluations and self-esteem may be helpful in conveying

these concpets and their connection to self-symbols.

Figure 3. Graphical representation of self-evaluation.
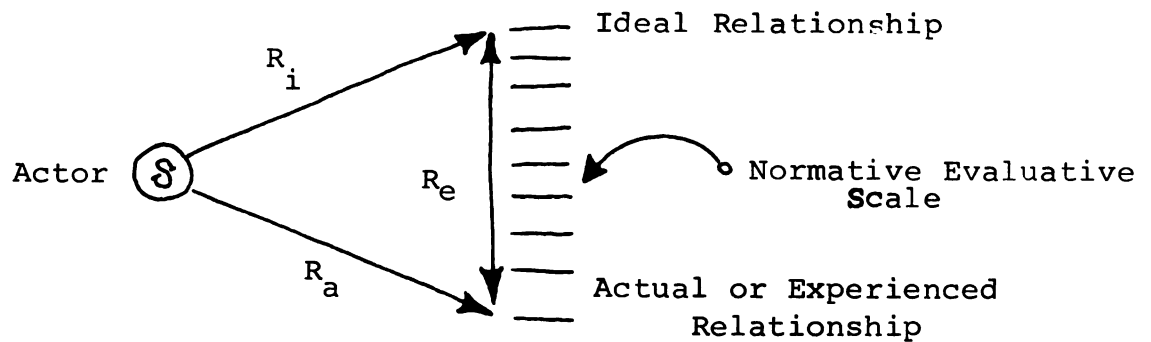
In Figure 3, three relationships relevant to the meaning of

a given self-symbol, S, are represented by straight lines.

R_i represents an ideal behavioral relationship as given by

the meaning of S, R_a is an experienced behavioral relationship

relevant to S, and R_e is the symbolically experienced

discrepancy between the ideal and the actual relationships.

This discrepancy is experienced as a level of self-esteem,

and the comparison of the two relationships R_i and R_a is

an evaluation. The meaning of this and other possible
discrepancies consist of relationships between the ordered
relationships which comprise points on the normative evalua-
tive scale appropriate to S. From this example it can be
seen that self-evaluations have a more complex meaning
structure than do non-evaluative self-symbols; a self-
evaluation is in fact a relationship of relationships.
The significance of this distinction between self-symbols
and self-evaluations will be pointed out later in this
chapter in connection with the critique of the ALI.

One theoretical convenience of thinking of the self
in terms of its esteem-dimension is that it suggests that
changes in self-concept can possibly be interpreted in
terms of fairly specific propositions of level of aspiration
theory. Should this be true then it would have implications
for the interpretation of the self as a meaning. For,
changes in the relative positions of an ideal and an actual
self, by shifts of either one along some scale, would also,
by definition, result in changed relationships between the
actor and his symbolic environment.

In speaking of normative comparative scales we are
simply indicating that such scales can be reconstructed from
the behavior of individuals.[8] It does not necessarily imply

---

[8]The recent work of Clyde Coombs describes theoretical
and methodological techniques of great promise for investi-
gating the existence and the characteristics of such scales.
See Clyde H. Coombs, A Theory of Data (New York: John Wiley
& Sons, Inc., 1964).

any awareness of scales as such on the part of those so behaving. That individuals can choose between alternatives with some consistency is sufficient justification to attempt to use scales as an explanatory device.

The concept of reference group offers one possibility for tying the relational property of the self, along with the interpretation of norms as scales, back into the social structure. Groups to which an individual compares himself-- comparative reference groups--and groups from which an indi- vidual has adopted norms or values--normative reference groups--have been elaborated by Merton and Rossi.[9] Within the framework which is being employed, normative reference groups can be regarded as those groups which provide the scales governing the appropriateness of various relation- ships which actors affect with their environments, and which are a major factor in the development and maintenance of the self-concept. Comparative reference groups can be viewed as occupying important points of comparison along one kind of normative evaluative scale.

In summary then, location and involvement in the social structure affect an actor's self-concept through reference groups, which in turn provide the behavioral or

---

[9]Robert K. Merton and Alice S. Rossi, "Contributions to the Theory of Reference Group Behavior," in Robert K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (revised and enlarged; Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1957), Chapter VII.

symbolic settings and conditions under which an actor establishes stable relationships with his environment, which then become symbolized as a self-concept. They provide normative depth to the behavior associated with any self, and they may provide important points of reference in relation to which the self is evaluated. Second, self-concepts influence behavior since, to a large extent, they select and give meaning to certain portions of the environment in relation to which behavior occurs.

Evaluation of the Rationale
Justifying Self-Descriptions

It can now be seen how this theory reconfirms Kuhn's justification of the assertion that self-descriptions provide links between an actor, the social structure, and behavior. The particular symbols in terms of which an actor conceives of himself have the virtue of (a) being a portion of the shared symbols of some group, (b) designating a class of actors, (c) designating classes of objects, and (d) designating a class of relationships between "(b)" and "(c)" which define both "(b)" and "(c)" in terms of one another in a context of on-going behavior. Implicitly then, given the symbols in terms of which an actor defines himself and the meanings which these symbols have for the actor, we should also have (1) a significant portion of the behavior in which that actor is likely to engage, and (2) some understanding of the nature and scope of his social-psychological location

in the social structure both inferred from the fact that
these symbols will reflect their source in the unique
symbolic universe shared by some groups in the social-
structure. <u>The links arise then from the context from which
the symbols were derived and are "given" by relationality
comprising their meaning.</u>

Evaluation of the Asset-Liability Instrument

It is possible also to show that some of the funda-
mental difficulties associated with the ALI are explainable
from the standpoint of this theoretical position. Since
the significant criticisms were most relevant to this issue,
and because in what follows we will attempt to show that
they are sufficiently damaging to warrant rejecting the
ALI as a technique for linking self to reference groups
and to behavior, only these three criticisms will be con-
sidered here.

It will be recalled that in essence the criticisms
labeled "2," "3," and "4" centered around the following
points:

"2." Self-evaluations obscured the very links between
actors, social-structural involvement, and be-
havior that they were supposed to reveal,

"3." Lack of knowledge of the meanings to be attri-
buted to the responses which would justify their
categorization,

"4." Absence of explicit theoretical basis for linking
a response on the ALI to social structure or to
behavior.

It will also be recalled that the fundamental assumptions

justifying the ALI were that by merging self-<u>description</u>

and self-<u>evaluation</u>

(1) the values according to which the self-assessments
     would be made would closely reflect their source
     in the social structure (as had the categories
     of self-description in the TST) and

(2) the values would be an important influence on
     behavior.

It was assumed that on the basis of these two considerations

the ALI would be an effective means of linking the self to

reference groups and to behavior.

Now the difficulties noted in criticisms "2" through

"4" can be seen to directly negate assumption "(1)" above;

that is, <u>on just those points where the ALI was expected</u>

<u>to be the most effective it has been found to be the most</u>

<u>defective</u>. An explanation of this curious result from the

standpoint of the present perspective follows.

<u>Criticism "2"</u>: In Chapter I, no clear distinction

was drawn between categories of self-description and self-

evaluations as to the possible consequences that each might

have in establishing links between actors, the social-

structure, and behavior. It was felt that the symbols would

somehow reveal both values and categories and would, there-

fore, yield more obvious relationships, and that the

responses themselves would somehow reveal their connection

to the social structure and demonstrate their implications

for behavior. However, it can now be seen that the symbols

on the ALI are far more complex than non-evaluative self-

descriptions, for self-evaluations are relationships <u>of</u>

relationships. For, whereas symbols of self-description
are relationships of classes of actors, and objects, an
evaulation of such symbols introduce an additional relation-
ship--the one between the symbol and another symbol on an
evaluative scale.

From the standpoint of the present theory the symbols
elicited by the ALI have, by virtue of their complexity, so
obscured the kinds of links which were supposed to be forth-
coming from them[10] that the ALI is rendered virtually useless
for accomplishing the task for which it was designed.

Criticism "3": Closely related to "2," and partly
resulting from it, is the absence of certainty associated
with the meanings which were imputed to various responses
on the ALI. However, in accordance with the present
chapter, it should be apparent that it is just these meanings
that are essential to the task of relating the self to
reference groups and behavior--to which end the ALI was
constructed. Without these meanings there are no relation-
ships and, consequently, no links except those that can
be derived solely on the basis of an uncertain and unreliable
empathy.

---

[10]This is true with the possible exception of some
obvious and trivial instances such as the previously noted
connection between grades and Intellectual or Scholastic
asset and liability statements.

Criticism "4": Absence of a theoretical basis for
relating specific categories of response on the ALI to specific
instances of reference group involvement or behavior did
not entirely frustrate all attempts at deriving testable
hypotheses. But, if it is true that the self is important
because it links modes of symbolic representation to specific
contexts of social processes and to activity, then it is
particularly serious that it is at just this point that there
is no theoretical rationale according to which these links
are predictable. It is at this point too, that the present
theoretical statement is silent and in greatest need of
development; more will be said of this later.

Since the difficulties giving rise to these three
criticisms of the ALI appear to reinforce the obscurity of
the very relationship which the ALI was designed to reveal,
and since criticism "2" appears to be a sufficient condition
preventing the elimination of "3" and "4" and is by the very
nature of the ALI not capable of being eliminated, we can
only conclude that, from the standpoint of the theoretical
statement in this chapter, the Asset-Liability Instrument
does not accomplish what was intended for it.

Implications for Further Research and Development of the Theory

Two of the most significant problems for empirical
research posed by the position developed in this chapter are
(a) finding suitable techniques for gathering these self-
symbols, and (b) finding techniques for getting at the

meanings inherent within these symbols. If the ALI is inadequate for doing this, what sort of techniques would be acceptable and empirically feasible?

First, in any such technique the fundamental error of the ALI, which gave rise to criticism "2", must be avoided. Specifically this means that self-descriptions and self-evaluation should be independently measured. These two components of the self can probably be much more precisely and fruitfully studied by instruments designed to mesh with the theoretical properties of evaluations and self-representation. Combining these into one instrument only obscures both.[11, 12]

Second, the gathering of self-symbols could best be done by an instrument with a minimum amount of structure in order to avoid leading subjects to represent themselves in terms of symbols which they otherwise might not use. This requirement seems to be admirably met by the TST, consequently our attention will be directed to the problem of discovering the meanings of symbols derived from this or some similar technique.

---

[11]This depends, of course, on the presence of a theory which will give such information.

[12]For an example of promising research which combines such separate measures see, F. B. Waisanen, "Self-Attitudes and Performance Expectations," Sociological Quarterly, Vol. 3 (1962), pp. 208-219.

Third, it would be as unnecessary as it would be difficult to completely catalog all of the meanings of all of the symbols gathered from some population of respondents. From the standpoint of research which would utilize these meanings, the problem would reduce to getting just enough material to fit the requirements of a particular problem.[13] Any number of techniques of questionnaire construction currently employed in social-psychology would probably be adaptable to this end. However, it would be premature to suggest specific techniques until one had acquired a "feel" for the ways in which respondents indicate the nature of the relationships entailed by their self-symbols. This might best be done in an interview situation. Specific techniques should follow only after a close look has been had at the relational structure of self-symbols as they appear to the respondent.

Fourth, the measurement of these relationships (at such time as suitable techniques are developed), should proceed concurrently with independent efforts to assess the respondent's involvement in and commitment to reference groups and the context of his behavior, i.e., the objects toward which relationships are established. It is at this point that a wedding of the theoretical position presented

---

[13]This would be true provided, of course, that the state of knowledge and of theoretical development were sufficiently advanced to permit this.

in this chapter with some form of organizational theory might be fruitfully consummated.

Finally, the lack of an adequate theory whereby responses on the ALI can be linked to the social structure and to behavior seems to be partly a result of a lack of information concerning the meanings which the symbols possess. That is, no adequate theory is possible until we know what the self-statements mean and we won't know that until we let the respondents tell us. There are, however, some likely avenues of approach to the development of such a theory which have been suggested already in this chapter. The one that has some empirical confirmation behind it is the rationale employed by McPartland and Cumming and McPartland, Cumming and Garretson, in which it is suggested (in different terminology, of course) that there is a certain isomorphism between the structure of responses on the TST and the structure of behavior associated with it, e.g., bizarre self-responses and bizarre behavior, nonsocial self-responses and non-social behavior, etc.[14] Theoretical developments could be forthcoming too from the observation that self-symbols may vary in the extent to which the relationships implied by them were to formally or to informally

---

[14]In criticism "5" of Chapter II it was noted that the obviousness and narrowness of the categories on the ALI might be associated with strong but theoretically trivial relationships. This example of McPartland et al. is an instance of manifestly non-trivial and non-obvious relationships yielded by a rather specific and non-obvious theoretical proposition.

constituted groups. Still other theoretical propositions might follow from a knowledge of the specificity or generality of classes of <u>objects</u> and <u>relationships</u> which might be associated with the degree to which any self-symbol implies a narrow or broad range of behavior. Similarly, the degree of specificity or generality of the class of <u>actors</u> to which a self-symbol referred could be related to the degree of similarity or uniqueness of behaviors and social-structural involvements of a number of individuals.

Summary

The central focus of this thesis has been an assessment of the Asset-Liability Instrument. This instrument was developed as a technique for eliciting self-symbols that would enable respondents to be linked in important ways to their location in the social structure and which would enable predictions to be made regarding their behavior. This was to be accomplished in the ALI by combining self-descriptions and self-evaluations into one instrument. This combination would, it was reasoned, accomplish two things. First, it would yield categories according to which individuals thought of themselves and which had already been proven useful in research with the TST. Second, the most salient values held by the respondents would also be forthcoming. It was argued that these values would reflect the groups in which the respondent was significantly involved, and would also be of consequence for his behavior.

A number of problems were encountered in using the ALI and in interpreting results from it. This in turn led to a reconsideration of the theoretical justification behind the basic assumption that self-symbols were an adequate way of linking an actor to the social structure and to his behavior by means of self-symbols. This reconsideration had two major consequences for the thesis: (1) it reconfirmed the rationale behind the assumption of the theoretical and empirical value of self-representations, and (2) it also confirmed the fact that the ALI is incapable of eliciting such useful self-descriptions.

From this new perspective the links between self-symbols, social-structure, and behavior are seen to be a consequence of two characteristics of the symbolic self. First, they are derived from a unique context which is significant to the actor and in which symbols and their meanings are socially shared and developed. Second, the meanings of self-symbols establish behavioral relationships between certain socially defined categories of actors and objects.

For a number of reasons the ALI fails as a method of empirically linking an actor to his social-structural involvement and to his behavior. However, one reason in particular is sufficient to condemn it: the combination of self-descriptive and self-evaluative statements into a single instrument which was to give the ALI its unique value

as a method of revealing these links, is just that feature
which obscures them. Self-description and self-evaluations
are theoretically and empirically distinct; as a consequence
of combining them the meaning of the responses on the ALI,
and hence the relationships which they were to reveal,
are hopelessly confounded.

Finally, some very general suggestions for further
development of the theory and for developing instruments
which avoid the major flaws exhibited by the ALI are
presented and briefly discussed.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Brookover, Wilbur B., Ann Patterson and Shailer Thomas.
    Self-Concept of Ability and School Achievement.
    Final Report of Cooperative Research Project No.
    845. Office of Research and Publications, Michigan
    State University, 1962.

Clark, Burton R. Educating the Expert Society. San Francisco:
    Chandler Publishing Company, 1962.

Cohen, Arthur R. "Some Implications of Self-Esteem for
    Social Influence," in Hovland and Janis (eds.).
    Personality and Persuasibility. New Haven:
    Yale University Press, 1959.

Coombs, Clyde H. A Theory of Data. New York: John Wiley
    and Sons, Inc., 1964.

Davis, James A. with David Gottlib, Jan Hajda, Carolyn Huson,
    Joe L. Spaeth, Stipends and Spouses/ The Finances
    of American Arts and Science Graduate Students.
    Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962.

Gaier, Eugene L. and Helen S. Wambach. "Self-Evaluations
    of Personality Assets and Liabilities of Southern
    White and Negro Students," Journal of Social
    Psychology, Vol. 51 (1960), 135-143.

Gottlieb, David and Benjamin Hodgkins. "College Student
    Subcultures: Their Structure and Characteristics
    in Relation to Student Attitude Change," The School
    Review, Vol. 71 (1963), 266-289.

Hickman, C. Addison and Manford Kuhn. Individuals, Groups,
    and Economic Behavior. New York: The Dryden
    Press, 1956.

Hoijer, Harry. "The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis," in Readings
    in Anthropology, Vol. I. New York: Thomas Y.
    Crowell, 1959.

Inkeles, Alex. "Industrial Man: The Relation of Status
    to Experience, Perception and Value," American
    Journal of Sociology, Vol. 66 (1960), 1-31.

79

Littunen, Yrjo and Eugene L. Gaier. "Occupational Values and Modes of Conformity," Journal of Social Psychology, Vol. 51 (1960), 123-133.

McPartland, Thomas. Manual for the Twenty Statements Problem, (Revised, Department of Reserach, the Greater Kansas City Mental Health Foundation, 1959).

Mead, George H. Mind, Self and Society. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1934.

_____. The Philosophy of the Act. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1938.

Merton, Robert K., and Alice S. Rossi. "Contributions to the Theory of Reference Group Behavior," in Robert K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure. Revised and enlarged; Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1957.

Miyamoto, S. Frank, and Sanford Dornbusch. "A Test of Interactionist Hypotheses of Self-Conception," American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 61 (1956).

Riesman, David. Faces in the Crowd. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1950.

Sherif, Muzafer and Carolyn W. Sherif. An Outline of Social Psychology. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956.

Stotland, Ezra, Stanley Thorely, Edwin Thomas, Arthur R. Cohen, and Alvin Zander. "The Effects of Group Expectations and Self-Esteem Upon Self-Evaluations," J. of Abnormal and Social Psychology, Vol. 54 (1957), 55-63.

Waisanen, F. B. "Self-Attitudes and Performance Expectations," Sociological Quarterly, Vol. 3, No. 3 (1962), 208-219.