This chapter proceeds on the assumption that there is two-way traffic between social theory and empirical research. Systematic empirical materials help advance social theory by imposing the task and by affording the opportunity for interpretation along lines often unpremeditated, and social theory, in turn, defines the scope and enlarges the predictive value of empirical findings by indicating the conditions under which they hold. The systematic data of The American Soldier,1 in all their numerous variety, provide a useful occasion for examining the interplay of social theory and applied social research.

More particularly, we attempt to identify and to order the fairly numerous researches in The American Soldier which, by implication or by explicit statement, bear upon the theory of reference group behavior. (The empirical realities which this term denotes will presently be considered in some detail. It should be said here, however, that although the term "reference group" is not employed in these volumes, any more than it has yet found full acceptance in the vocabulary of sociology as distinct from social psychology, reference group concepts play an important part in the interpretative apparatus utilized by the Research Branch of the Information and Education Division of the War Department.)

At two points, we deal briefly with related subjects which are not, however, part and parcel of reference group theory. We review the statistical indices of group attributes and social structure as variously adopted in these researches, and attempt to indicate, though very briefly and programmatically, the specific value of systematically incorporating such indices in further research. And, in equally brief fashion, we point

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1. In collaboration with Alice S. Rossi.

out how data analyzed by the Research Branch from a psychological standpoint can be supplemented and usefully re-worked from the standpoint of functional sociology.

A common procedure for extracting and attempting to develop the theoretical implications of *The American Soldier* is adopted throughout the analysis. This entails the intensive re-examination of cases of research reported in these volumes, with an eye to subsuming the findings under higher-level abstractions or generalizations. In the volumes themselves, the authors austerely (and, in our judgment, wisely) limit their analysis to the interpretation of the behavior of soldiers and to the organizational contexts in which that behavior occurred. But manifestly, the analytical concepts hold not merely for the behavior of soldiers. By provisionally generalizing these concepts, we may be in a position to explore the wider implications of the materials for social theory.

Our discussion thus grows out of an internal analysis of every research study in these volumes in which some reference group concept was used by the authors as an interpretative variable. The object of collating these cases is to determine the points at which they invite extensions of the theory of reference group behavior which can be followed up through further strategically focused research. Occasionally, the effort is made to suggest how these theoretical extensions might be incorporated into designs for empirical research which will thus build upon the findings of the Research Branch. In this way, there may be provision for continuity in the interplay between cumulative theory and new research.

The inductive re-examination of cases admits also the linking of these reference group conceptions with other conceptions prevalent in social psychology and sociology which have not ordinarily been connected with the theory of reference group behavior. In the degree that such connections are established, *The American Soldier* will have served a further function of empirical research: the provisional consolidation of presently scattered fragments of theory.

Along these lines, an effort will be made to indicate the coherence between reference group theory and conceptions of functional sociology. It appears that these deal with different facets of the same subject: the one centers on the processes through which men relate themselves to groups and refer their behavior to the values of these groups; the other centers on the consequences of the processes primarily for social structures, but also for the individuals and groups involved in these structures. It will be found that reference group theory and functional sociology address different questions to the same phenomena but that these questions have reciprocal relevance.

Throughout, then, this essay aims to learn from *The American Soldier* what it has to yield for the current state of reference group theory and related theoretical problems. Committed as we are to the notion that the development of social theory requires a large measure of continuity, rather than a collection of self-contained and allegedly definitive results, this means that the present re-working of some of the materials in *The American Soldier* is itself a highly provisional phase in an ongoing development rather than a stable stopping point. Nor is it assumed, of course, that each and all of the extensions of reference group theory here proposed will in fact turn out to be sound; like any other form of human activity, theorizing has its quota of risk. Indeed, it is when every hypothesis provisionally advanced at a particular stage in the development of a discipline turns out to be apparently confirmed that the theorist has cause for alarm, since a record of unvarying success may indicate a defective and overly-compliant apparatus for confirmation rather than an unexceptionably sound theory.

**THE CONCEPT OF RELATIVE DEPRIVATION**

Of the various concepts employed by the authors of *The American Soldier* to interpret their multiform materials, there is one which takes a major place. This is the concept of relative deprivation. Its central significance is in some measure evidenced by its being one of the two concepts, expressly called to the attention of the reader in the chapter introducing the two volumes. As the authors themselves put it, after a brief allusion to the conception of varying profiles, “Other conceptual tools, notably a theory of relative deprivation, also are introduced to help in more generally ordering otherwise disparate empirical findings.” (I, 52)

Although the concept of relative deprivation is periodically utilized for the interpretation of variations in attitudes among different categories of men, varying, for example, with respect to age, education and marital status, it nowhere finds formal definition in the pages of these volumes. Nevertheless, as we shall presently discover, the outlines of this conception gradually emerge from the various instances in which it is put to use. It is in the very first instance of such use, for example, that the authors refer to the nature of the theoretical utility of the conception and to its possible kinship to other, established concepts of sociological theory:

The idea (of relative deprivation) is simple, almost obvious, but its utility comes in reconciling data, especially in later chapters, where its applicability is not at first too apparent. The idea would seem to have a kinship to and, in part, include such well-known sociological concepts as “social frame of reference,” “patterns of expectation,” or “definitions of the situation.” (I, 125)

This absence of a formal definition of relative deprivation is no great handicap. In any case, the authors escape the well-established tradition of works in sociological theory to be replete with numerous definitions
which remain unemployed. In place of an explicit definition of the concept we can assemble an array of all those occasions, scattered through the volumes and dealing with seemingly unrelated types of situations, in which the concept has been put to use by the authors, and in this way we can learn something of the actual operational character of the concept.

The following list represents, albeit in much abbreviated form, every research in which some version of the concept of relative deprivation (or a kindred concept, such as relative status) is explicitly drawn upon in The American Soldier:

1. With reference to the drafted married man: “Comparing himself with his unmarried associates in the Army, he could feel that induction demanded greater sacrifice from him than from them; and comparing himself with his married civilian friends, he could feel that he had been called on for sacrifices which they were escaping altogether.” (I, 125)

2. “The average high school graduate or college man was a clear-cut candidate for induction; marginal cases on occupational grounds probably occurred much more often in groups with less educational attainment. On the average, the non high school man who was inducted could point to more acquaintances conceivably no more entitled to deferment than himself, who nonetheless had been deferred on occupational grounds . . . when they compared themselves with their civilian friends they may have been more likely to feel that they were required to make sacrifices which others like them were excused from making.” (I, 127)

3. “The concept of relative deprivation is particularly helpful in evaluating the role of education in satisfaction with status or job, as well as in some aspects of approval or criticism of the Army. . . . With higher levels of aspiration than the less educated, the better educated man had more to lose in his own eyes and in the eyes of his friends by failure to achieve some sort of status in the Army. Hence, frustration was greater for him than for others if a goal he sought was not attained. . . .” (I, 153)

4. “. . . the concept of differential deprivation and reward . . . may help us understand some of the psychological processes relevant to this problem. In general, it is of course true that the overseas soldier, relative to soldiers still at home, suffered a greater break with home ties and with many of the amenities of life in the United States to which he was accustomed. But it was also true that, relative to the combat soldier, the overseas soldier (in rear areas of an active theater) not in combat and not likely to get into combat suffered far less deprivation than the actual fighting man.” (I, 172)

5. “The concept of differential deprivation would lead us to look further for a reason why the actually more deprived group of soldiers seemed little more critical than the less deprived group . . . the less the differential between officers and men in the enjoyment of scarce privileges—the extreme case being that of actual combat—the less likely was the enlisted man to be critical of the officers and the easier it was for him to accept the inevitability of deprivation.” (I, 181)

6. “. . . as would be expected . . . those soldiers who had advanced slowly relative to other soldiers of equal longevity in the Army were the most critical of the Army’s promotion opportunities. But relative rate of advancement can be based on different standards by different classes of the Army population. For example, a grade school man who became a corporal after a year of service would have had a more rapid rate of promotion compared with most of his friends at the same educational level than would a college man who rose to the same grade in a year. Hence we would expect, at a given rank and a given longevity, that the better educated would be more likely than others to complain of the slowness of promotion. . . . A similar phenomenon appeared to operate between different branches of the service.” (I, 250)

7. “From the studies of enlisted men reported previously in this chapter, it would be expected that attitudes of officers about promotion, like those of enlisted men, would reflect some relationship with level of expectation and with level of achievement relative to that of one’s acquaintances. Thus we would expect a captain who had been in grade a long time compared with other captains to be less happy about the promotion situation than a lieutenant in grade a relatively short time.” (I, 279)

8. “. . . it seems likely that both Northern and Southern Negroes may have been considerably influenced in their overall adjustment by other psychological compensations in being stationed in the South, which can be understood if we look at their situation as one of relative status.

“Relative to most Negro civilians whom he saw in Southern towns, the Negro soldier had a position of comparative wealth and dignity.” (I, 563)

9. “Putting it simply, the psychological values of Army life to the Negro soldier in the South relative to the Southern Negro civilian greatly exceeded the psychological values of Army life to the Negro soldier in the North relative to the Northern Negro civilian.” (I, 564)

These nine excerpts touch upon the core interpretative statements in which the notion of relative deprivation or affiliated concepts were expressly utilized to interpret otherwise anomalous or inconsistent findings. To these explicit uses of the concept we shall later add several research cases not subjected by the authors to interpretation in terms of reference group concepts which nevertheless seem explicated by such concepts.

In all these cases, it should be noted, the concept of relative deprivation serves the same theoretical purpose: it is used as an interpretative intervening variable. The researches were designed to study the sentiments and attitudes of American soldiers—their attitudes toward induction, for example, or their appraisals of chances for promotion. These attitudes are typically taken as the dependent variables. The analysis of data finds that these attitudes differ among soldiers of varying status—for example, older or married men exhibited more resentment toward induction than younger or unmarried men; those enjoying the status of high school and college graduates were less likely to be optimistic about their prospects
for promotion in the Army. These status attributes are in general taken provisionally as the independent variables. Once the relationships between independent and dependent variables are established, the problem is one of accounting for them: of inferring how it comes to be that the better educated are typically less optimistic about their chances for promotion or how it comes to be that the married man exhibits greater resentment over his induction into military service. At this point of interpretation, the concept of relative deprivation is introduced, so that the pattern of analysis becomes somewhat as follows: the married man (independent variable) more often questions the legitimacy of his induction (dependent variable), because he appraises the situation within the frame of reference (interpretative variable) yielded by comparing himself with other married men still in civilian life, who escaped the draft entirely, or with unmarried men in the Army, whose induction did not call for comparable sacrifice. We may thus tag the major function of the concept of relative deprivation as that of a provisional after-the-fact interpretative concept which is intended to help explain the variation in attitudes expressed by soldiers of differing social status. And since after-the-fact interpretations have a distinctive place in the ongoing development of theory, we shall later want to consider this characteristic of the concept of relative deprivation at some length.³

The collation of these key excerpts serves as something more than a thin summary of the original materials. Since the studies employing the concept of relative deprivation deal with diverse subject-matters, they are scattered through the pages of The American Soldier and thus are not likely to be examined in terms of their mutual theoretical linkages. The juxtaposition of excerpts admits of a virtually simultaneous inspection of the several interpretations and, in turn, permits us to detect the central categories which were evidently taken by the Research Branch as the bases of comparison presumably implicit in the observed attitudes and evaluations of soldiers. And once the categories of analysis employed by the Research Branch are detected, their logical connections can be

³ At this point it need be noted only in passing that it is premature to assume that ex post facto interpretations are in principle not susceptible to empirical nullification. To argue this, as Nathan Glazer does in his overly-quick rejection of the concept of relative deprivation, is to be opaque to the interplay between theory and research in the historical development of a discipline. As we shall see, there is no foundation for saying, as Glazer does, that the notion of relative deprivation cannot conceivably be nullified: “Thus, [with the concept of relative deprivation] a little imagination will permit us to cover any conceivable outcome. . . .” And later, he claims, that the conception “cannot be refuted by facts, and it will be found to hold true whatever the outcome of a given set of data.” It will presently become clear that propositions incorporating the concept of relative deprivation are readily subject to empirical nullification, if they are in fact untrue. To appreciate one reason for our stress on empirically-oriented sociological theory as an ongoing development, see the consequences of neglecting this fact as exhibited in Nathan Glazer, “The American Soldier” as science,” Commentary, 1949, 8, 487-96.

REFERENCE GROUP THEORY

worked out, thus leading to formulations which seem to have significance for the further development of reference group theory.

If we proceed inductively, we find that the frames of reference for the soldiers under observation by the Research Branch were provisionally assumed to be of three kinds. First of all are those cases in which the attitudes or judgments of the men were held to be influenced by comparison with the situation of others with whom they were, in actual association, in sustained social relations, such as the “married civilian friends” of the soldier in excerpt 1, or the “acquaintances” of the non-high-school man in excerpt 2.

A second implied basis of comparison is with those men who are in some pertinent respect of the same status or in the same social category, as in the case of the captain who compares his lot “with other captains” in excerpt 7 without any implication that they are necessarily in direct social interaction.

And third, comparison is assumed with those who are in some pertinent respect of different status or in a different social category, as in the case of the non-combat soldier compared with combat men in excerpt 4, or the enlisted men compared with officers in excerpt 5 (again without social interaction between them being necessarily implied).

For the most part, as we learn from this inspection of cases, the groups or individuals presumably taken as bases for comparison by soldiers do not fall simply into one or another of these three types, but involve various combinations of them. Most commonly, presumed comparison is with associates of the same status, as the grade-school man compared with friends of the same educational level in excerpt 6, or with various unassociated “others” who are of a status similar in some salient respect and dissimilar in other respects, such as the Negro soldier who compares himself with the Negro civilian in excerpts 8 and 9.

If these attributes of the individuals or groups serving as presumed frames of reference are arranged in a matrix, then the conceptual structure of the notion of relative deprivation (and affiliated concepts) becomes more readily visible. The schematic arrangement enables us to locate, not only the frames of comparative reference most often utilized in the interpretation of data by the Research Branch, but additional possible frames of reference which found little place in their interpretation. It thus affords an occasion for systematically exploring the theoretical nature of relative deprivation as an interpretative tool and for indicating the points at which it possibly deepens and broadens the apposite theory of reference group behavior.

In substance, the groups or individuals taken as points of reference in the nine excerpts are explicitly characterized by these few attributes. The presence of sustained social relations between the individual and those taken as a basis for comparison indicates that they are to this
degree, in a common membership group or in-group, and their absence, that they are in a non-membership or out-group. When it comes to comparative status, the implied classification is slightly more complex: the individuals comprising the base of comparison may be of the same status as the subject or different, and if different, the status may be higher, lower, or unranked. The array of reference points implied in the interpretations of the Research Branch thus appears as follows:

ATTRIBUTES OF INDIVIDUALS, SOCIAL CATEGORIES AND GROUPS TAKEN AS A FRAME OF COMPARATIVE REFERENCE BY INDIVIDUALS*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IN SUSTAINED SOCIAL RELATIONS WITH INDIVIDUAL</th>
<th>SAME STATUS</th>
<th>DIFFERENT SOCIAL STATUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes—(membership or in-group)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 married friends</td>
<td>5 officers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 non high school acquaintances</td>
<td>8, 9 Negro</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 friends at same educational level</td>
<td>civilians in South</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7 acquaintances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No—(non-membership or out-group)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 soldiers in U.S. or in active combat</td>
<td>5 officers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 soldiers of equal longevity</td>
<td>8, 9 Negro</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 other captains</td>
<td>civilians in South</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ORIENTATIONS OF INDIVIDUAL TO

* The numbers refer to the appropriate excerpts which are here being provisionally classified.

Examination of this matrix of variables implied by the notion of relative deprivation at once directs attention to several empirical and theoretical problems. These problems, as will presently become evident, not only bear specifically upon the concept of relative deprivation but more generally upon a theory of reference group behavior.

It will be noted from the preliminary survey of cases contained in the matrix that, at times, the authors of The American Soldier assume that individuals take as a base for self-reference the situation of people with whom they are in direct social interaction: primarily, the in-group of friends and associates. At others, the assumed frame of reference is yielded by social categories of people—combat soldiers, other captains, etc.—with whom the individual is not in sustained social relations. In order to highlight the connection of the concept of relative deprivation with reference group theory, these "others" with whom the individual does not interact are here designated as non-membership groups or out-groups. Since both membership groups and non-membership groups, in-groups and out-groups, have in fact been taken as assumed social frames of reference in these interpretations, this at once leads to a general question of central importance to a developing theory of reference group behavior: under which conditions are associates within one's own groups taken as a frame of reference for self-evaluation and attitude-formation, and under which conditions do out-groups or non-membership groups provide the significant frame of reference?

Reference groups are, in principle, almost innumerable: any of the groups of which one is a member, and these are comparatively few, as well as groups of which one is not a member, and these are, of course, legion, can become points of reference for shaping one's attitudes, evaluations and behavior. And this gives rise to another set of problems requiring theoretical formulation and further empirical inquiry. For, as the matrix arrangement of cases drawn from The American Soldier plainly suggests, the individual may be oriented toward any one or more of the various kinds of groups and statuses—membership groups and non-membership groups, statuses like his own or if different, either higher, lower, or not socially ranked with respect to his own. This, then, locates a further problem: if multiple groups or statuses, with their possibly divergent or even contradictory norms and standards, are taken as a frame of reference by the individual, how are these discrepancies resolved?  

4. We recognize that this sentence is replete with implicit problems which it would be premature to consider at this point. It involves, for example, the problem of criteria of "membership" in a group. Insofar as frequency of social interaction is one such criterion, we must recognize that the boundaries between groups are not exact but sharply drawn. Rather, "members" of given groups are variously connected with other groups of which they are not conventionally regarded as members, though the sociologist might have ample basis for including them in these latter groups, by virtue of their frequent social interaction with its conventional membership. So, too, we are here momentarily by-passing the question of distinctions between social groups and social categories, the latter referring to established statuses between the occupants of which there may be little or no interaction. It will also be noticed by some that the formulation contained in The American Soldier extends the formulations by such theorists of social psychology as George H. Mead who confined himself to membership groups as significant frames of reference in his concept of the "general other" and in his account of the formation of self-attitudes. All this bears only passing mention at this point since it will be considered at a more appropriate place.

5. Though this problem is reminiscent of the traditional but only slightly clarified problem of conflict between multiple group affiliations or multiple roles, it is by no means identical with it. For, as we have seen, frames of reference are yielded not only by one's own membership groups or one's own statuses, but by non-membership groups and other statuses, as well.
These initial questions may help establish the range of our inquiry. That men act in a social frame of reference yielded by the groups of which they are a part is a notion undoubtedly ancient and probably sound. Were this alone the concern of reference group theory, it would merely be a new term for an old focus in sociology, which has always been centered on the group determination of behavior. There is, however, the further fact that men frequently orient themselves to groups other than their own in shaping their behavior and evaluations, and it is the problems centered about this fact of orientation to non-membership groups that constitute the distinctive concern of reference group theory. Ultimately, of course, the theory must be generalized to the point where it can account for both membership- and non-membership-group orientations, but immediately its major task is to search out the processes through which individuals relate themselves to groups to which they do not belong.

In general, then, reference group theory aims to systematize the determinants and consequences of those processes of evaluation and self-appraisal in which the individual takes the values or standards of other individuals and groups as a comparative frame of reference.6

From our brief preliminary examination, it appears that the researches in The American Soldier utilizing the concept of relative deprivation can act as a catalyst quickening theoretical clarification and the formulation of problems for further empirical study. But the precise nature of these formulations can be better seen through a detailed examination of several of these cases after we have more definitely connected the concept of relative deprivation with the theory of reference group behavior.

**RELATIVE DEPRIVATION OR RELATIVE DEPRIVATION**

In developing their concept of relative deprivation, the authors of The American Soldier have, on the whole, centered their attention on the deprivation component rather than the relative component of the concept. They have, so to say, focused on relative deprivation rather than on relative deprivation. The reason for this seems both apparent and understandable, in view of the conspicuously deprivational character of the Army situations with which they dealt. By and large, American men viewed service in the armed forces as at best a grim and reluctantly accepted necessity:

The vast majority of men did not come into the Army voluntarily... the acceptance of the soldier role probably tended to be passive in character, at least with respect to initial attitudes... the passive attitude toward military service implied a relative absence of identification with broad social goals which would serve to deflect attention away from the day-to-day frustrations in the new environment. Recruits were therefore likely to be sharply aware of the deprivational features of Army life. (I, 208-9)

It was, then, the patterns of response to a basically deprivational situation which most often called for study and it was primarily in the service of interpreting these patterns of response that the concept of relative deprivation was developed. As the term, relative deprivation, itself suggests, the concept was primarily utilized to help account for feelings of dissatisfaction, particularly in cases where the objective situation would at first glance not seem likely to provoke such feelings. This is not to say that the concept was wholly confined to interpreting the feelings of dissatisfaction, deprivation, or injustice among soldiers, since the presumed practice of comparing one's own situation with that of others often resulted in a state of relative satisfaction. In the main, however, satisfactions stemming from such comparison with others are seen in the role of offsetting excessive dissatisfaction in cases of multiple comparison: for example, the dissatisfaction of the noncombat man overseas, presumably reinforced by comparison with those serving in the United States, is tempered by satisfaction with his status as compared with the combat man. (I, 173)

As the authors themselves evidently recognize, "deprivation" is the incidental and partial component of the concept of relative deprivation, whereas the more significant nucleus of the concept is its stress upon social and psychological experience as "relative." This may be seen from the text at the point where the authors introduce the notion of relative deprivation and suggest its kinship to such other sociological concepts as "social frame of reference, patterns of expectation, or definitions of the situation." (I, 125) It is the relative component, the standards of comparison in self-evaluation, that these concepts have in common.

By freeing the concept of relative deprivation from confinement to the particular data which it was initially designed to interpret, it may become generalized and related to a larger body of theory. Relative deprivation can provisionally be regarded as a special concept in reference group theory. And since The American Soldier provides systematic empirical data and not merely discursive views on the concept of relative deprivation, the way is possibly opened for progressively clarifying crucial variables so that further cumulative research bearing on the theory can be mapped out.

All this, however, is still programmatic. Whether The American Soldier does indeed have these functions for reference group theory can only be determined through inspection, at closer range than we have yet attempted, of the researches in these volumes bearing upon the theory.

The analysis of these several cases is intended to document and to
elaborate the emergence of those problems of reference group theory briefly foreshadowed in the foregoing pages and to indicate further related problems which have not yet received notice. Toward this end, the essential facts and basic interpretation as these are set out by the Research Branch will be summarized for each case, and followed by a statement of its apparent implications for the advancement of reference group theory.

By way of preview, it may be said that these cases generate the formulation of a wide range of specific problems which will be taken up in detail and which are here roughly indicated by the following list of headings:

- Membership-groups operating as reference groups;
- Conflicting reference groups and mutually sustaining reference groups;
- Uniformities of behavior derived from reference group theory;
- Statistical indices of social structure;
- Reference group theory and social mobility;
- Functions of positive orientations to non-membership groups;
- Social processes sustaining or curbing these orientations;
- Psychological and social functions of institutions regulating passage from one membership group to another;

and

A review of concepts kindred to reference group theory.

MEMBERSHIP GROUP AS REFERENCE GROUP

Case #1. This research deals with soldiers’ evaluations of promotion opportunities as these were elicited by the question, “Do you think a soldier with ability has a good chance for promotion?” A generalized finding, necessarily and too much abbreviated in summary, holds that for each level of longevity, rank and education, “the less the promotion opportunity afforded by a branch or combination of branches, the more favorable the opinion tends to be toward promotion opportunity.” (I, 256) Within the limits of the data in hand,7 this paradoxical response of greater satisfaction with opportunities for mobility in the very branches characterized by less mobility finds clear demonstration. Thus, although the Air Corps had a conspicuously high rate of promotion, Air Corps men were definitely far more critical of chances for promotion than, say, men in the Military Police, where the objective chances for promotion were “about the worst in any branch of the Army.” So, too, at any given rank and longevity, the better educated soldiers, despite their notably

7. It is important that we introduce this caveat, for it is scarcely probable that this relationship between actual mobility rates and individual satisfaction with mobility chances holds throughout the entire range of variation. If promotion rates were reduced to practically zero in some of these groups, would one then find an even more “favorable opinion” of promotion chances? Presumably, the relationship is curvilinear, and this requires the sociologist to work out toward the conditions under which the observed linear relation fails to obtain.

higher rates of promotion in general, were the more critical of opportunities for promotion.

This paradox is provisionally explained by the Research Branch as a result of evaluations occurring within the frame of reference provided by group rates of promotion. A generally high rate of mobility induces excessive hopes and expectations among members of the group so that each is more likely to experience a sense of frustration in his present position and disaffection with the chances for promotion. As it is put by the authors, “Without reference to the theory that such opinions represent a relationship between their expectations and their achievements relative to others in the same boat with them, such a finding would be paradoxical indeed.” (I, 251, italics supplied)

Theoretical implications. First of all, it should be noted that it was an anomalous finding which apparently elicited the hypothesis that evaluations of promotion chances are a function of expectations and achievements “relative to others in the same boat with them.” And, in turn, the raw uninterpreted finding appears anomalous only because it is inconsistent with the commonsense assumption that, in general, evaluations will correspond to the objective facts of the case. According to common sense, marked differences in objective rates of promotion would presumably be reflected in corresponding differences in assessments of chances for promotion. Had such correspondences been empirically found, there would seemingly have been little occasion for advancing this hypothesis of a group frame of reference. As it turns out, the data suggest that men define the situation differently. But it is not enough to mention these “definitions of the situation”; it is necessary to account for them. And the function of the concept of relative deprivation (as with other concepts of reference groups) is precisely that of helping to account for observed definitions of a situation.

In this case, it required systematic empirical data, such as those assembled in The American Soldier, to detect the anomalous pattern, not detectable through impressionistic observation. And this illustrates a basic role of systematic empirical research in reaching unanticipated, anomalous and strategic findings that exert pressure for initiating or extending theory.8 The data and the hypothesis advanced to account for them open up further theoretical and research problems, which can here receive bare mention rather than the full exposition they deserve.

The hypothesis makes certain important assumptions about the group taken as a point of reference by the soldiers and thus affecting their level of satisfaction with promotion opportunities. This assumption is stated, as we have seen, in the form that evaluations are “relative to others in
the same boat.” And the data are consistent with the view that four
groups or social categories have presumably been taken as a context or
frame of reference: men with similar longevity, similar educational
status, similar rank, and in the same branch of the Service.

Now, this hypothesis, suitably generalized, raises all manner of fur­
ther questions germane to reference group theory and requiring renewed
inquiry and analysis. Which conditions predispose toward this pattern
of selecting people of the same status or group as significant points
of reference? The idiomatic phrase, “in the same boat,” raises the same
sociological problems as the idiomatic phrase, “keeping up with the
Joneses.” Who are the specific Joneses, in various social structures, with
whom people try to keep up? their close associates? people in imme­
diately higher social or income strata with whom they have contact?
When are the Joneses people whom one never meets, but whom one
hears about (through public media of communication, for example)?
How does it happen that some select the Joneses to keep up with, others
the Cabots, or the Cassidy, and finally that some don’t try to keep up
at all?

In other words, the hypothesis advanced in The American Soldier
regarding individuals of similar status being taken as frames of reference
for self-evaluations at once opens up an interrelated array of problems,
amenable to research and constituting important further links in the
development of reference group theory. When are one’s member­
ship-groups not taken as reference groups in arriving at evaluations? After
all, many men were apparently aware of the differences between the
table of organization of the Air Corps and their own branch. When
would these mobility rates among men not in the same boat affect their
own level of satisfaction? And these sociological problems, though they
might have originated elsewhere, were in fact generated by the anom­
alous empirical findings developed and provisionally interpreted in this
study.

That new systematic experience, such as that represented by the data
and hypothesis of The American Soldier, does indeed generate the
formulation of further theoretical questions is suggested by glancing
briefly at the somewhat contrasting work of a notable theorist in social
psychology, George H. Mead, who did not steep himself in systematic
empirical materials. Mead was, of course, a forerunner and an impor­
tant forerunner in the history of reference group theory, particularly with
respect to his central conception, variously expressed in his basic writ­
ings, but adequately enough captured in the statement that “The in­
dividual experiences himself as such, not directly, but only indirectly,
from the particular standpoint of other individual members of the same

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group, or from the generalized standpoint of the social group as a whole
to which he belongs.”

In this formulation and in numerous others like it,10 Mead in effect
advances the hypothesis that it is the groups of which the individual
is a member that yield the significant frame of reference for self-evalu­
ations. And this he illustrates abundantly with anecdotal instances drawn
from his varied personal experience and insightful reflection. But, pos­
sibly because he was not exposed to systematic empirical evidence, which
might prove seemingly inconsistent with this formulation at specific
points, he was not driven to ask whether, indeed, the group taken as a
point of reference by the individual is invariably the group of which he
is a member. The terms “another,” “the other” and “others” turn up on
literally hundreds of occasions in Mead’s exposition of the thesis that
the development of the social self entails response to the attitudes of
“another” or of “others.” But the varying status of “these others” pre­
sumably taken as frames of self-reference is glossed over, except for the
repeated statement that they are members of “the” group. Thus, Mead,
and those of his followers who also eschew empirical research, had little
occasion to move ahead to the question of conditions under which non­
membership-groups may also constitute a significant frame of reference.

Not only does the research from The American Soldier point directly
to that question, but it leads further to the problems raised by the facts
of multiple group affiliations and multiple reference groups. It reminds
us that theory and research must move on to consider the dynamics of
selection of reference groups among the individual’s several member­
ship groups: when do individuals orient themselves to others in their occu­
pational group, in their congeniality groups, or in their religious group?

How can we characterize the structure of the social situation which leads
to one rather than another of these several group affiliations being taken
as the significant context?

Following out the hypothesis advanced in the text, we note as well
the problem raised by the simultaneous operation of multiple reference
groups. Further steps call for study of the dynamic processes involved
in the theoretically supposed counter-tendencies induced by multiple
reference groups. For example, what are the dynamics of evaluation, and
not merely the final evaluation, of the mobility system among college
graduates relatively new to the Military Police: on the hypothesis ad­
vanced in The American Soldier, they would be moved, through refer­
cence to the status of other college graduates, toward dissatisfaction, but
as comparatively new replacements and as M.P.’s they would be moved

9. George H. Mead, Mind, Self and Society (The University of Chicago Press,
1934), 138 (italsics supplied).
10. For example, see ibid., 151-156, 193-194.
toward relative satisfaction. How are these counter-tendencies ultimately resolved in the evaluation which comes to the notice of the observer?

Turning finally to the dependent variable in this study, we note that it consists in soldiers' evaluations of the institutional system of promotion in the Army, and not to self-evaluations of personal achievement within that system.\textsuperscript{11} The men were in effect asked to appraise the system of promotion in terms of its effectiveness and legitimacy, as can be seen from the carefully worded question which elicited their judgments: "Do you think a soldier with ability has a good chance for promotion?"

This introduces a problem, deserving attention which it has not yet received: do the two types of evaluations, self-appraisals and appraisals of institutional arrangements, involve similar mechanisms of reference group behavior? At this point, it is clear that research is needed to discover the structure of those social situations which typically elicit self-evaluations or internalized judgments—for example, where comparison with the achievements of specified others leads to invidious self-depreciation, to a sense of personal inadequacy—and the structure of those situations which typically lead to evaluations of institutions or externalized judgments—for example, where comparison with others leads to a sense of institutional inadequacies, to the judgment that the social system militates against any close correspondence between individual merit and social reward.

Here, as with many of The American Soldier researches, the implications of procedure, analysis, and interpretation are of course not confined to further studies of behavior of soldiers. They bear upon some of the more strategic areas of study in the larger social system. For example, the sociological factors which lead men to consider their own, relatively low, social position as legitimate, as well as those which lead them to construe their position as a result of defective and possibly unjustified social arrangements clearly comprise a problem area of paramount theoretical and political importance. When are relatively slim life-chances taken by men as a normal and expectable state of affairs which they assess of their own position as compared with their legitimate expectations, but as the results of an arbitrary social system of mobility, in which rewards are not proportioned to ability?\textsuperscript{12} The concepts of relative deprivation and of relative reward help transfer these much-discussed but little-analyzed patterns of behavior from the realm of impressionistic speculation to that of systematic research.

**MULTIPLE REFERENCE GROUPS**

Several researches in The American Soldier afford occasion for looking into theoretical problems arising from the conception that multiple reference groups provide contexts for evaluations by individuals. Two of these cases have been selected for attention here because they apparently exhibit different patterns of multiple comparison: in the first of these, multiple reference groups provide contexts which operate at cross-purposes; in the second, they provide contexts which are mutually sustaining.

**Conflicting reference groups. Case #2.** During the latter part of 1943 and the early part of 1944, the Research Branch conducted a series of surveys from which they developed a picture of differences in attitudes (reflecting personal adjustment) of noncombat men overseas and of men stationed in the United States. Though consistent, the differences in attitudes were not large. Among noncoms still in the United States, for example, 41 per cent reported themselves as "usually in good spirits" in comparison with 32 per cent of those overseas; 76 per cent of the one held that the "Army is run pretty well or very well" compared with 63 per cent of the other. (I, 167, Chart IV) But since other surveys found that the major concern of the men overseas was to get back home (I, 187), the authors observe that considerably greater differences in attitudes expressing personal adjustment might well have been expected.

Three factors are tentatively adduced to account for the absence of greater differences, factors operating to curb the expectable\textsuperscript{13} degree of dissatisfaction expressed by the noncombat soldier overseas. Of these, much in the public eye, function as models or reference-figures testifying to a mobility-system in which, apparently, careers are still open to talents. For some, these success-models are living testimony to the legitimacy of the institutional system and in this comparative context, the individual reflects criticism of the system onto himself. See Merton, Fiske and Curtis, Mass Persuasion, 152ff. But these observations remain impressionistic and anecdotal, since they do not provide systematic designs for inquiry into this behavior along the lines suggested by the researches of The American Soldier.

11. True, as the text implies, the institutional evaluations probably reflect soldiers' assessments of their own position as compared with their legitimate expectations, but this is not at issue here. The reference group hypothesis attempts to account for variations in the nature of these expectations in terms of the social contexts provided by the distribution of statuses in significant in-groups.

12. Such questions have of course been raised on numerous previous occasions. But they have ordinarily been regarded as distinct and self-contained problems of interest in their own right and not as special problems subsumable under a theory of reference group behavior. For example, it has been suggested that conspicuously "successful" individuals who have risen rapidly in a social hierarchy and who are...
we attend only to the interpretative concept of “differential deprivation and reward”14 which, it will be remembered from an earlier excerpt, may help us understand some of the psychological processes relevant to this problem. In general, it is of course true that the overseas soldier, relative to soldiers still at home, suffered a greater break with home ties and with many of the amenities of life in the United States to which he was accustomed. But it was also true that, relative to the combat soldier, the overseas soldier not in combat and not likely to enter into combat suffered far less deprivation than the actual fighting man. (I, 172)

Theoretical implications. In effect, the authors suggest that two contexts of comparison, operating at cross-purposes, affected the evaluations of overseas noncombat troops. What, then, can be learned from this case about the grounds on which certain contexts rather than others become pertinent for such evaluations?

It should be noted at the outset that the status of those constituting the contexts of evaluation is, in some significant respect, similar to the status of the men making the evaluation. Thus, the soldiers still at home are similar in that they too are not in combat, and the combat soldiers are similar in that they too are overseas. Beyond this, other similarities and dissimilarities, pertinent to the situation, affect the resulting evaluations in contrasting ways. Thus, the overseas noncombat soldier is, by the standards of Army life, worse off than the soldier at home in that he is comparatively deprived of amenities and cut off from social ties, and better off than the combat soldier in that he is not exposed to the same measure of deprivation and risk. It is as though he had said, “Bad off as we are, the others are worse off,” a comparison not seldom adopted by those who would accommodate themselves to their position. His definition of his situation is then presumably the resultant of these counteracting patterns of comparison.

This suggests the general hypothesis that some similarity in status attributes between the individual and the reference group must be perceived or imagined, in order for the comparison to occur at all. Once this minimal similarity obtains,15 other similarities and differences pertain to the situation, will provide the context for shaping evaluations. Consequently, this focuses the attention of the theorist immediately upon the factors which produce a sense of pertinent similarity between statuses, since these will help determine which groups are called into play as comparative contexts. The underlying similarities of status among members of in-groups, singled out by Mead as the social context, thus appear as only one special, though obviously important, basis for the selection of reference groups. Out-groups may also involve some similarity of status.

By implication, the hypothesis of the Research Branch at this point provides a clue to the factors affecting the selection of reference groups. The hypothesis does not hold that the two categories of men—the combat men overseas and the noncombat men at home—constituted the only ones with which any particular individual among the overseas combat men compared himself. He may indeed have compared his lot with that of numerous and diverse others—a civilian friend in a cushy job back home, a cousin enjoying life as a war correspondent, an undrafted movie star whom he had read about in a magazine. But such comparisons by an individual, precisely because they involve personal frames of reference, might well be idiosyncratic. They would not provide contexts common to (many or most of) the individuals in the status of overseas noncombat men. To the degree that they are idiosyncratic, they would vary at random among the various categories of soldiers. Consequently, they would not aggregate into statistically significant differences of attitudes between groups or social categories of soldiers.

In other words, the statistics of The American Soldier on differential definitions of their situation among combat men,16 overseas noncombat men and men still in the United States are taken to manifest the impact of socially structured reference groups more or less common to men in each category. It is not mere indolence or lack of insight which keeps the sociologist from seeking to track down all the comparative contexts which hold for any given individual; it is, rather, that many of these contexts are idiosyncratic, not shared by a large fraction of other individuals within the same group or social category. The comparative statistics in The American Soldier are plainly not intended to manifest and cannot manifest those numerous private contexts peculiar to individuals and hence varying at random to the social category. One does not look to these sociological data for idiosyncratic contexts of appraisal.

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14. The other two are, first, physical selection since men overseas had to meet more rigorous standards and second, “a sense of the significance of one’s army job.” In this latter connection, the authors remark: “While the difference between theaters . . . cannot prove or disprove hypotheses, the fact that, on the average, United States-overseas differences in attitudes toward Army jobs were negligible or reversed—as compared with United States-overseas differences in personal esprit or attitudes toward the Army—is a fact not to be overlooked.” (I, 173)

15. This minimum of status similarity apparently presupposed by reference group behavior clearly requires systematic study. Some similarity in status can of course always be found, depending only on the breadth of the status category. One can compare oneself with others, if only in the most general social capacity of “human being.” And more germane to the case in question, the overseas combat man could (and did) compare himself with the noncombat man back home by virtue of their similar status as soldiers, and with civilians by virtue of their similar status as young adult American males. The theoretical and research problem at this point is to determine how the structure of the social situation encourages certain status-similarities to become the basis for such comparisons, and leads other status-similarities to be ignored as “irrelevant.”

16. The American Soldier does not supply data on the attitudes of combat men at this point in the text, although opposite data are found at other places in the volumes. (e.g., I, 111)
The reference groups here hypothesized, then, are not mere artifacts of the authors' arbitrary scheme of classification. Instead, they appear to be frames of reference held in common by a proportion of individuals within a social category sufficiently large to give rise to definitions of the situation characteristic of that category. And these frames of reference are common because they are patterned by the social structure. In the present case, for example, the degree of closeness to combat provides a socially organized and socially emphasized basis of comparison among the three categories of soldiers—overseas combat, overseas noncombat, and troops back home. It is, accordingly, categories such as these which provide the common comparative contexts for definition of the situation among these men. This is not to deny that other contexts may be of great consequence to particular individuals within each of these social categories. But these become relevant for the sociologist only if they are shared sufficiently to lead to group differences in evaluations.

In these pages, The American Soldier affords a clue, and possibly an important clue, for solving the sociological problem of finding the common residual which constitutes the reference groups distinctive for those in a social status category.

There is another problem implicit here about which little can be learned from this case: what are the patterns of response among members of a group or status category when they are subject to multiple reference groups operating at cross-purposes? In the present case, the net evaluation of their lot among overseas noncombat men apparently represented a compromise, intermediate between the evaluations of noncombat men at home and of men in actual combat. But it is not implied by the authors of The American Soldier that this is the only pattern of response under such circumstances. It is possible, for example, that when several membership groups exert diverse and conflicting pressures for self-appraisal, the individual tends to adopt other, non-membership groups as a frame of reference. In any event, there arises the large and imperfectly defined problem, previously alluded to, of searching out the processes of coming to terms with such conflicting pressures. That the social scientists of the Research Branch were cognizant of this line of inquiry, emerging from their wartime studies, is suggested by the fact

Thus, a study of political behavior found that individuals, under cross-pressures, were more likely to delay their final vote decision. And as the senior author goes on to say: “But such delay is not the only possible reaction. Other alternatives range all the way from individual neurotic reactions, such as an inability to make any decision at all, to intellectual solutions which might lead to new social movements. Many of the baffling questions about the relationship between individual attitudes and social environment may be answered when these problems of cross-pressures and reactions to them are thoroughly and properly studied.” Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet, The People's Choice (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948, second edition), xxii.

that the director, Stouffer, is now developing researches on the varying patterns of response to the simultaneous but conflicting demands of primary groups and of formal organizational authorities.18

Mutually sustaining reference groups. Case #3. In its bare outlines, this study (I, 120-130) is concerned with the feelings of legitimacy ascribed by men to their induction into service. Patterns of response to the question, “At the time you came into the Army, did you think you should have been deferred?” showed that married men, over 20 years of age, who had not been graduated from high school were most likely to maintain that they should have been deferred. In this status category, 41 per cent, as compared, for example, with only 10 per cent of unmarried high school graduates under 20 years of age, claimed that they should not have been inducted at all. More generally, it is found that the statuses of age, marital condition and educational level are consistently related with willingness for military service.

Since the hypotheses advanced to account for these findings are essentially of the same type for each of the three status categories, we need concern ourselves here with only one of these for illustrative purposes. As we have seen in an excerpt from this case, the authors provisionally explain the greater reluctance for service of married men in terms of the standards of comparison yielded by reference to other status categories. The key interpretative passage bears repetition at this point:

Comparing himself with his unmarried associates in the Army, he could feel that induction demanded greater sacrifice from him than from them; and comparing himself with his married civilian friends he could feel that he had been called on for sacrifices which they were escaping altogether. Hence the married man, on the average, was more likely than others to come into the Army with reluctance and, possibly, a sense of injustice. (I, 125, italics supplied)

Theoretical implications. However brief and tentative the interpreta-

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17. Thus, a study of political behavior found that individuals, under cross-pressures, were more likely to delay their final vote decision. And as the senior author goes on to say: “But such delay is not the only possible reaction. Other alternatives range all the way from individual neurotic reactions, such as an inability to make any decision at all, to intellectual solutions which might lead to new social movements. Many of the baffling questions about the relationship between individual attitudes and social environment may be answered when these problems of cross-pressures and reactions to them are thoroughly and properly studied.” Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet, The People's Choice (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948, second edition), xxii.


19. Since it is not germane to our chief purpose, we have made no effort throughout this paper to report the numerous technical steps taken by the Research Branch to determine the adequacy of their data. But readers of The American Soldier will be well aware of the diverse and often imaginative procedures adopted to cross-check each set of data. In the present case, for example, it is shown that the responses to this question were not merely a reflection of the soldiers' sentiments subsequent to induction. For "when asked of new recruits, whose report on their feelings about induction could not be colored by months or years of subsequent Army experience, the (same kind of) question discriminated significantly between recruits who later became psychoneurotics and other men." (I, 123n) This note is intended to emphasize, once and for all, that our summary of a research case does not at all reproduce those subtle and cumulative details which often lend weight to the data in hand. For these details, rather than the more general questions to which they give rise, a firsthand study of The American Soldier is necessary.
First of all, it reinforces the supposition, hinted in the preceding case, that it is the institutional definitions of the social structure which may focus the attention of members of a group or occupants of a social status upon certain common reference groups. Nor does this refer only to the fact that soldiers will take the official institutional norms (the rules governing induction and exemption) as a direct basis for judging the legitimacy of their own induction into the service. These same rules, since they are defined in terms of such statuses as marital condition and age, also focus attention on certain groups or statuses with which individuals subject to service will compare themselves. This is, in effect, implied by the authors who, referring to the greater sacrifices entailed by induction of the married man, go on to say: "This was officially recognized by draft boards. . . . The very fact that draft boards were more liberal with married than with single men provided numerous examples to the drafted married man of others in his shoes who got relatively better breaks than he did." (I, 125, italics supplied) The institutional norms evoke comparisons with others similar in particular aspects of status—"others in his shoes"—thus encouraging common reference groups for these married soldiers. In addition to these common reference groups, as previously stated, there may well have been all manner of idiosyncratic reference groups, which, since they vary at random, would not have resulted in the statistically discernible reluctance for service which was comparatively marked among married men.

A second problem is highlighted by the hypothesis which uniformly assumes that the married soldier compares himself with like-statused individuals with whom he is or has been in actual social relations; associates in the Army or civilian friends. This, then, raises a question concerning reference group behavior when the frame of comparative reference is provided by impersonal status categories in general (other married men, noncoms, etc.) and by those representatives of these status categories with whom he is in sustained social relations. Which, for example, most affects the evaluations of the individual when these operate at cross-purposes (a problem clearly visible in the matrix of variables set out earlier in this paper)?

This question leads at once to the comparative significance of general status categories and intimate subgroups of which one is a member. Suppose, for example, that all or almost all of a married soldier's married associates have also been drafted, even though, in general, this status category has a smaller proportion of inductions than the category of the unmarried male. Which basis of comparison will, on the average, prove more effective? Will he compare himself with the other drafted bene-

dicts in his clique or subgroup and consequently be the more ready to accept induction for himself, or will he compare himself with the larger status category of married men, who are in general more often deferred, and consequently feel aggrieved over his own induction? The question has, of course, more general bearing. For example, are workers' expectations regarding their personal prospects of future employment shaped more by the present employment of themselves and their associates on the job or by high rates of unemployment prevailing in the occupation at large?

This case from The American Soldier thus points to the need for cumulative research on the relative effectiveness of frames of reference yielded by associates and by more general status categories. It suggests the salient items of observation which must be incorporated in such projected studies, so that this problem, at least in its major outlines, can lend itself to research, here and now, not in some remote future. Such projected studies could readily include items of data on the norms or situation of close associates as well as data on knowledge about the norms or situation prevailing in the given status at large. Subsequent analysis would then be in terms of systematic comparison of individuals in the same status but with immediate associates who have distinctly opposed norms or who are in contrasting situations. Replicated studies including such materials would substantially advance our present understanding of the workings of reference group behavior. 20

Third, the theory assumes that individuals comparing their own lot with that of others have some knowledge of the situation in which these others find themselves. More concretely, it assumes that the individual knows about the comparative rates of induction among married and single men, or the degree of unemployment in their occupation at large. 21 Or, if the individual is taken to be positively oriented toward the norms of a non-membership group, the theory of course assumes that he has some knowledge of these norms. Thus, the theory of reference group behavior must include in its fuller psychological elaboration some treatment of the dynamics of perception (of individuals, groups and norms)

20. Thus, a current unpublished research in the sociology and social psychology of housing by R. K. Merton, P. J. S. West, and M. Jahoda, Patterns of Social Life, includes a study of the comparative effectiveness of "primary environment of opinion" (constituted by the opinions of one's close associates) and of "secondary environment of opinion" (constituted by the opinions of those with whom one is not in close association). When these operate at cross-purposes, it appears that the primary environment does take some measure of precedence.

21. It may of course turn out that, under certain conditions, individuals extrapolate their knowledge of the situation of associates in a given social category to that social category at large. Or, it may develop that the situation of one's associates is accorded greater weight by the individual than the contrasting situation which he knows to obtain in the social category at large. These are questions amenable to empirical research and salient for reference group theory.
and in its sociological elaboration, some treatment of channels of communication through which this knowledge is gained. Which processes make for accurate or distorted images of the situation of other individuals and groups (taken as a frame of reference)? Which forms of social organization maximize the probabilities of correct perception of other individuals and groups, and which make for distorted perception? Since some perceptual and cognitive elements are definitely implied even in a description of reference group behavior, it will be necessary for these elements to be explicitly incorporated into the theory.

A fourth problem emerging from this case concerns the empirical status of reference group concepts. In this study, as well as in others we consider here, the interpretative concept of relative deprivation was introduced after the field research was completed.22 This being the case, there was no provision for the collection of independent systematic23 evidence on the operation of such social frameworks of individual judgments. That a significant proportion of married soldiers did indeed compare their lot with that of married civilian friends and unmarried associates in the Army in arriving at their judgment remains, so far as the data in hand go, an assumption. These comparisons are inferred, rather than factually demonstrated, intervening variables. But they need not remain assumptions. They not only happen to square with the facts in hand, but are of a kind which can be directly tested in future inquiries employing the concept of reference group.24 These studies can be de-

22. Although the concept is after-the-fact of data collection, it was introduced early enough in the analysis to permit its use in suggesting types of tabulations which would otherwise not have been undertaken. From the interpretative standpoint, therefore, relative deprivation was not confined to use as an ex post facto conception.

23. The emphasis on systematic data is essential, for The American Soldier has abundant indications that in many cases assumed reference groups were indeed taken as a context of comparison. For example, their text includes remarks by overseas soldiers which clearly indicate that the soldiers back home are sometimes taken as a point of reference in assessing their own situation: "I think I've had my share being overseas over two years. That's plenty for any man. . . . Let them USO boys get some of this chow once in a while, then they will know what it is to sleep in the mud with mosquitoes buzzing around them like a P-38." "We should have a chance to breathe a little fresh air for a while. But I guess you better keep them USO boys back there or there won't be any USO." "It is hard as hell to be here and read in every paper that comes from home where Pvt. Joe Dokes is home again on furlough after tough duty as a guard in Radio City." "We receive letters from soldiers who have not yet left the States and who are on their second furlough." (1, 188) These remarks also contain passing allusions to the source of information regarding the situation of the men back home: "read in every paper," "we receive letters," etc. But such telling anecdotal materials are properly enough not regarded as a basis for systematic analysis by the authors of The American Soldier.

24. A recent example of the possibility of now anticipating the need for data on reference group behavior is provided by the 1948 voting study in Elmira, (since published by P. F. Lazarsfeld and W. N. McPherson under the title Voting, Chicago Press, 1954). Under a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation for the study of panel techniques in social research, a conference at Swarthmore on reference group concepts was arranged, with an eye to having materials bearing on these concepts signed to incorporate systematic data on the groups which individuals actually do take as frames of reference for their behavior and can thus determine whether variations in attitude and behavior correspond to variations in reference group contexts.

This possibility of converting the intervening variable of reference groups from assumption into fact brings us to a fifth problem. Before plunging into research on the conditions under which individuals compare themselves with specified other individuals or groups, it is necessary to consider the psychological status of these comparisons. For when individuals explicitly and consciously adopt such frames of reference, sociological researches involving interviews with large numbers of people face no great procedural difficulties. Appropriate questions can elicit the needed information on the groups, status categories or individuals which are taken as a frame of reference. But there is, of course, no reason to assume that comparisons of self with others are uniformly conscious. Numerous experimental studies in social psychology have shown that individuals unwittingly respond to different frames of reference introduced by the experimenter. To the extent that unwitting reference groups are involved in the ordinary routines of daily life, research techniques must be extended to detect their operation.

Appropriate research procedures must also be designed to discover which reference groups are spontaneously and explicitly brought into play, as distinguished from the study of responses to reference group contexts provided by the experimenter or suggested by the interviewer. Both interview and experimental studies have heretofore been largely centered on responses to reference group contexts supplied for the subjects. These studies can be further advanced by providing ordered arrays of comparative contexts, somewhat as follows:

"Compared with others on your work-team (or other membership-group), do you feel you are getting a fair income for what you do?"

"Compared with the men in the front office, do you . . . etc. . . .?"

"Compared with the president of the firm, do you . . . etc. . . .?"

Or similarly, information about the salaries of various individuals and groups could be given an experimental group and withheld from a matched group of workers to determine whether the subsequent self-introduced into the Elmira voting study. The American Soldier provides numerous further conceptions which can be similarly incorporated in further research. It is this process of an ongoing interplay between theory and empirical research which is overlooked by verdicts such as Glazer's that the concept of relative deprivation "cannot be refuted by facts." (See footnote 3 of this chapter.) A theoretical concept, emerging or developed in the course of one inquiry, if it has any empirical relevance at all, can then be utilized (and if defective, modified or nullified) in subsequent researches. If it is to be creative at all, research cannot be confined to the testing of predetermined hypotheses. New concepts and hypotheses emerge in the process of inquiry, and these become the basis for further inquiry. This, we take it, is precisely how continuity in science occurs.
appraisals and satisfactions of the experimental group are modified by possible reference groups supplied by the investigator.

But such tentative types of inquiry, in which the particular reference groups are provided, do not, of course, enter into the uncharted region of the spontaneous selection of reference groups in varying situations. Why will A, in one situation, compare himself with B, and in another, with C? Or, more concretely and illustratively: when do workers compare their lot with that of fellow-workers in close association, and when with others of markedly different status? which aspects of the social structure and which psychological processes limit the range of individuals and groups regarded as pertinent frames of reference? It is this type of problem—the processes shaping the selection of reference groups—that stands in most conspicuous need of research.25

UNIFORMITIES OF BEHAVIOR DERIVED FROM REFERENCE GROUP THEORY

To this point, we have examined researches in which the concept of relative deprivation was explicitly utilized by Stouffer and his associates to interpret empirical findings. In doing so, we have attempted, first, to indicate how this concept can be incorporated in a more general, though still primitive, theory of reference group behavior and second, how these studies give rise to further empirical and theoretical problems that can become the object of new and cumulative research.

We want now to consider whether the theory of reference groups does indeed have wider applicability than the seemingly special concept of relative deprivation. Fortunately, the numerous researches of The American Soldier enable us to check this, at least to some degree. For some of these researches involve findings which are apparently not germane to the concept of relative deprivation—since they deal with self-images, but not with levels of satisfaction with one's lot—but which can, we believe, be explicated by applying reference group conceptions to them. In the course of seeing whether this theory permits us to detect sociological uniformities underlying apparently disparate patterns of behavior, we shall also have occasion to add to the list of specific problems needing solution if reference group theory is to be advanced.

Case #4 (II, 242-72). Combat groups were in general subject to high personnel turnover. It is true that some outfits were trained and entered into combat with few changes in personnel, but even in these instances, casualties required frequent replacements. The Research Branch seized upon the sociologically significant fact that inexperienced soldiers thus found themselves in two distinctly different social structures: some being for a time in homogeneous outfits comprised wholly of similarly green troops, and others, in divisions with combat veterans. And here the study took a decisive sociological turn. Unlike the ordinary polling studies in social psychology, which compare aggregates of individuals of different status (age, sex, class, etc.), they did not merely compare the attitudes of inexperienced and of veteran troops. This would have been only a comparison of aggregates of men in two distinct statuses, an important type of comparison but of severely limited value for sociology. Rather, they defined this as an occasion for studying the impact of group contexts upon the attitudes of types of individuals, a problem which is of course old, older than sociology itself, but which has less often been the object of systematic empirical research than of impressionistic discussion.

The Research Branch therefore centered upon the group contexts in which these troops found themselves: green troops in outfits comprised wholly by their own kind; equally inexperienced replacements in divisions otherwise composed of combat veterans; and the veterans themselves in these divisions.24 Questions were put to these three groups of soldiers in several of what the Research Branch calls "attitude areas" (willingness for combat, confidence in their ability to take charge of a group in combat, appraisal of their physical condition, and so on). These surveys found apparently diverse patterns of differences in response among the three groups. In the first "attitude area," for example, veterans expressed greater reluctance to get into combat than the troops in green outfits, with the replacements being intermediate to the two. Whereas 45 per cent of the green troops were "ready to get into an actual battle zone," this dropped to 28 per cent among the replacements and to only 15 per cent among the veterans. It is, of course, the contrast between the green troops and the replacements which is most significant, since these were alike in their individual attribute of lack of combat experience, but different with respect to the kind of group in which they found themselves. This same pattern, with the replacement intermediate to those of the veteran and green troops, occurred in responses to questions about attitudes toward noncoms.

But, the Research Branch reports, this is only one pattern of response. Quite another pattern was found with regard to the men's confidence in their ability "to take charge of a group of men" in combat. As some

25. A notable beginning is found in the pioneering study by Herbert H. Hyman, The Psychology of Status, Archives of Psychology, No. 289, 1942. Hyman sought to have his subjects report the groups or individuals which they had taken for comparison with their own status. This kind of direct questioning can of course elicit only the conscious and remembered frames of comparison. But the advancement of reference group theory has suffered by the general failure to follow up Hyman's suggestive lead on spontaneously emerging frames of group reference.

26. There is, of course, a fourth group context which might have entered strategically into the systematic comparison, namely, the divisions comprised wholly of combat veterans, except that the replacement practices of the Army did not make it possible for the Research Branch to include such all-veteran divisions in this study.
might expect on commonsense grounds, the veterans more often expressed confidence in their capacity to fulfill this role than did the green troops in green outfits. But it is of crucial significance that, unlike the first instance of willingness for combat, where the replacements were intermediate in their responses, in this case, they were consistently the least confident of the three groups.27

Again, on yet another type of "attitude"—toward his own physical condition—the replacement was virtually indistinguishable from the other green troops, but far more likely than the veteran to consider himself "in good physical condition."

These three sets of data, then, seem to show three different patterns of response, in the first of which the replacement responds more like the veteran than the green troops; in the second, most remote from the veteran and also unlike other green troops; and in the third, quite like his counterpart in green outfits. And since these are diverse patterns, the Research Branch has advanced diverse interpretations. With regard to the replacements' approximation to the veterans' reluctance to go into combat, it is suggested that "to some extent the replacements took over the attitudes of the combat veterans around them, whose views on combat would have for them high prestige." (II, 250) With regard to capacity for leading a group in combat, where the replacements differ most from the veterans, it is suggested that "for the veterans, experience was their strong point, and also the point at which replacements in contact with them felt the greatest inferiority, standing as they did in the shadow of the veterans." (II, 251) And when the replacement is quite like his counterpart in green outfits, as with appraisals of physical condition, this is tentatively explained by saying that these judgments probably reflect an actual (objective) difference in physical condition between veterans and others.

Theoretical implications. It will be at once granted that this poses an intriguing challenge and problem for sociological theory. For the response-behavior of the replacements seems to exhibit almost random variation, a situation distasteful to the theorist whose task it is to perceive underlying uniformities amid such apparent disorder. It is reminiscent of the situation confronting Durkheim when he found an immense variety of suicide rates, differing among the sexes, rural-urban areas, military and civilian populations, religious groups, and so on. Rather than advance new and separate interpretations of each set of differentials, he attempted to derive these numerous variations from a limited set of propositions. So here, these various patterns of response of replacements set sociological theory the task of discerning the significant variables and conditions which bring about this seeming diversity of response-behavior.

As is well known, the first step in the search for sociological order amid apparent disorder is to re-examine, in theoretical terms, the concepts in terms of which the data are reported. More often than not, it will be found that these concepts may profit by clarification and reformulation. That appears to be the case here. These several sets of data are all reported as attitudes falling into distinct "attitude-areas." The theorist might at once consider the possibility that basic conceptual differences in these data might be obscured by use of a single crudely defined concept.28 The single blanket concept of "attitude" may also fail to direct the analyst's attention to the appropriate body of theory for interpreting the data. And finally, by tacitly including significantly different elements in the data under this one undifferentiated concept, the empirical findings may exhibit anomalies, contradictions, and lack of uniformities which are only apparent, not real.

What does a conceptual reformulation of these data show? The first variable, "willingness for combat," may indeed be usefully described as an "attitude" in the approximate sense of "a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related."29 But the second variable, "self-confidence in leadership capacities," as here indexed, appears not so much a preparatory set for behavior, as a self-image and a self-appraisal. Two consequences flow from this provisional reformulation of a single "attitude" concept into the two concepts of attitude and of self-appraisal. First, it is no longer assumed that the data bearing on these two variables need manifest the same comparative distributions: that now becomes a moot question and not a tacit presumption. And second, the reformulation in terms of self-appraisal leads us at once to the reference group theory of self-appraisals.

27. Were there opportunity here for a full re-analysis of these data, it would be necessary to take account of problems of "question reliability," since three distinct index-questions in this "attitude area" of "self-confidence" led to somewhat different patterns of response. However, that is not essential for the purposes in hand, particularly since we are here concerned primarily with the replacements, who were consistently less confident than the veterans and green troops on all three items. (For figures, see II, 252.) See also the analysis of questions in this study by P. L. Kendall and P. F. Lazarsfeld, "Problems of Survey Analysis," in R. K. Merton and P. F. Lazarsfeld, Continuities in Social Research (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1950), 133-196.

28. In the introduction, Stouffer calls special attention to the looseness of the concept "attitude" as adopted in these studies: "... in the main work of the Research Branch and in most of the text of the present volumes there is no operational definition of attitudes—whence, concepts like 'attitudes,' 'tendencies,' and 'opinions' are used more or less loosely and even sometimes interchangeably. ..." (I, 42) We are here engaged in exploring some of the empirical and theoretical consequences of the re specification of a concept. For a clear statement of this procedure, see W. J. Goode and P. K. Hatt, Methods in Social Research (New York: McGraw Hill, 1952), 48-53.

29. The particular definition cited is that by C. W. Allport, but various current conceptions of "attitude" have essentially this same core-denotation.
Reformulation of the concept in which the dependent variables are stated thus provides a tentative link with theory of the past: we are not forced to improvise wholly new hypotheses, standing alone and unconnected with a general body of theory, but can, perhaps, derive these findings from an established set of hypotheses centered about the structure, functions and dynamic mechanisms of self-appraisals in diverse group contexts. This is, moreover, the theory which incorporates the concept of relative deprivation, used elsewhere in these volumes, but not here.

With this new conceptual basis, we are prepared to re-examine the data of *The American Soldier* to see whether they do indeed exhibit the anomaly of three distinct patterns of response under the same conditions. If a general theory is to move out from these data and beyond the interpretations advanced in the text, then it should be able to incorporate these seemingly different patterns of response as expressions of an underlying regularity.

Stemming then from the theoretic background provided by James, Cooley and Mead, and by Hyman, Sherif and Newcomb, the hypothesis holds that, insofar as subordinate or prospective group members are motivated to affiliate themselves with a group, they will tend to assimilate the sentiments and conform with the values of the authoritative and prestigeful stratum in that group. The function of conformity is acceptance by the group, just as progressive acceptance by the group reinforces the tendency toward conformity. And the values of these “significant others” constitute the mirrors in which individuals see their self-image and reach self-appraisals. Applied to the specific case in hand, the significant others in the membership-group are similarly inexperienced men for the green soldier in a green outfit, whereas for the replacement, the significant others are experienced veterans, with their distinctive sets of values and sentiments.

In applying the general hypothesis, it must be anticipated that the replacements, as “outsiders” motivated to affiliate themselves with the prestigeful and authoritative stratum (the veterans), would more nearly conform to *all* of the veterans’ values and sentiments here under inspection. We should be clear on this point. If its interpretative utility is to be properly assessed, the hypothesis must stand on its own feet, and not be modified or abandoned because the text of *The American Soldier* reports that the responses of replacements in these distinct “attitude areas” were in fact different. The present hypothesis gives us a set of instructions to the effect that we must re-examine these reportedly different patterns in order to determine whether they are actually different, or merely speciously so.

In a provisional way, and to the extent that the reported data allow us to say, it appears that the differences are only apparent. Underlying these manifest differences in the percentage distribution of replies to the given questions by veterans, replacements, and green troops, are regularities of response corresponding to those anticipated in the hypothesis.

Thus, first, with respect to willingness for combat, the sentiments of veterans held, in effect, that “combat is hell,” and consequently, veterans most frequently expressed reluctance to enter into combat. The green troops, in contrast, who had more lately quit the civilian ranks, were more likely to have at the outset the values of the wartime civilian population, with all its “conventional stereotypes” of combat as affording occasions for dramatic heroism. This is in fact borne out by the text at another place and in another connection, where it is reported that “probably the strongest group code [among combat men] . . . was the taboo against any talk of a flagwaving variety. . . . The core of the attitude among combat men seemed to be that any talk that did not subordinate idealistic values and patriotism to the harsher realities of the combat situation was hypocritical, and a person who expressed such ideas a hypocrite.”

In this first instance, then, our hypothesis drawn from reference group theory would lead us to anticipate that the replacements, seeking affiliation with the authoritative and prestigeful stratum of veterans, will move from the civilian-like values toward the more tough-minded values of the veterans. And this, as we know, is indeed the case. For replacements, the assumed function of assimilating the values of the veterans is to find more ready acceptance by the higher-status group, in a setting where the subordinate group of replacements does not have independent claims to legitimate prestige.

But if the hypothesis is consistent with the first set of data on willingness for combat, can it also hold for the second set of data dealing with the so-called attitude of self-confidence regarding capacity for leadership, particularly since it was found that, in this instance, the replies of replacements were remote from those of the veterans, even more so than the replies of the green troops? Indeed, the text refers to this as a “different” or “divergent” pattern of response. To be sure, the manifest distribution of replies differs from the first. But, viewed in terms

30. II, 150 (italics supplied). Essentially the same point of a contrast in values regarding combat between the civilian population and combat men is made at numerous places in the two volumes, e.g., at II, 111-112, 151; I, 484. Notice should also be taken of Chart VIII in Chapter 3 of volume II, showing that veterans were far more likely than inexperienced troops to say that “this war is not worth fighting.” And finally, it should be said that this contrast between the definitions of the combat situation by civilians and by combat men is drawn by Brewster Smith, who also conducted the analysis of replacement behavior now under review.
of reference group theory, it is, we believe, only another expression of the same underlying dynamic regularities of behavior in this group context.

This can be tested by applying the hypothesis. In the case of self-confidence, as we have seen, we deal with a self-appraisal rather than with an attitude in the sense of a preparatory set for action. The values and sentiments of the veteran stratum hold, in effect, that "actual combat experience is needed to prepare a private to take charge of a group of men in combat." Thus, if, as the hypothesis anticipates, replacements seek to assimilate this value and judge themselves accordingly, if they see themselves in the mirror provided by the values of the prestigious veterans, they can only appraise themselves as, by and large, unprepared for spontaneous leadership in battle. On the hypothesis, the replacements would, in short, behave just as they do, being most likely to say that they are not ready to take charge of men in combat (involving a lower self-estimate than that found among the green troops, not vis-à-vis the veterans). Thus, although their distribution of replies differs markedly from that of the veterans, leading the Research Branch to describe this as another pattern of response, the replacements are engaging in the same pattern of behavior in the two instances—when this is construed in terms of reference group theory. They are assimilating the values of the veterans, and thus presumably affiliating themselves with this authoritative and prestigious stratum. In the first instance of "willingness for combat," this calls only for direct reaffirmation of the veterans' sentiments, leading the replacements' distribution of responses to resemble that of the veterans. In the second instance of self-confidence in leadership capacity, they also assimilate the veteran standards but since this is not merely an attitude but a self-appraisal, they apply these standards to themselves, find themselves comparatively wanting, and thus give distributions of responses to the self-appraisal questions differing from those of the veterans. Thus, a uniformity of social process apparently underlies the different patterns of manifest replies.

The same hypothesis can be tested anew on other items from these data on "attitudes" of veterans, replacements, and green troops; for example, those dealing with "attitudes toward physical condition." In this case, the green troops and replacements respond alike, with 57 per cent and 56 per cent respectively saying that they are in good physical condition, whereas only 35 per cent of the veterans make that claim. This is reported as a third pattern of response, again on the manifest empirical level of response-frequencies, leading the Research Branch to another interpretation of this apparently new pattern: the similarity of answers by replacements and green troops, it is suggested, "undoubtedly parallels similarity in the men's actual physical condition."

Here, it is said, the responses represent, not an assimilation of veterans' attitudes, but more nearly a faithful reporting of objective differences in the physical condition of fatigued veterans—"beat-up Joes"—and of the fresh replacements and green troops.

But this only poses another problem for theory: under which conditions do men respond by reporting the objective situation rather than a socially reflected image? Does this third, apparently different, pattern of response require a new hypothesis? It seems that, again, no additional ad hoc variables need be introduced, although in the absence of the required data, this must of course remain for future research to examine. It appears that the veterans do not hold poor physical condition as a distinctive and positive social value (except, as the text indicates, as a possible rationalization for escaping further combat) in the same sense that they hold the belief that "combat is hell" or that "combat experience equips a private to take charge of men in combat." Replacements seeking to affiliate themselves with the prestigious and socially validated veterans will therefore not be served by asserting that they are in poor physical shape, that they, too, are in effect "beat-up Joes." If anything, this claim would only be the occasion for rejection of replacements by veterans, since it would represent, not a bid for affiliation with the group, but for equality of status. Moreover, the replacements' recognition of their comparatively good physical condition does not affirm a counter-value, which might also threaten their acceptance by the veterans. Within the same group context, then, there is no functional or motivational basis for replacements to reproduce the self-judgments of the veterans, and apparently objective differences in the physical condition

31. The statistical data of replies to the question, "Do you think you have been giving enough training and experience so that you could do a good job of taking charge of a group of men on your own in combat," constitute one basis for the view that veterans hold this value. Discussions of the values of combat men, especially in II, Chapter 3, bear this out.

32. II, 263. This refers to their "absolute" ratings in response to the question, "Do you think that you are in good physical condition?" Alternative questions which refer to "combat" conditions possibly introduce the factor of replacements' assimilated reluctance for combat; they tend to be intermediate to veterans and green troops in their responses to these.

33. Here, as elsewhere, a slightly more generalized formulation of the problem directs our attention to the saliency of data now presented in various, and unconnected, pages of The American Soldier. At several points in these volumes, recourse is had to the assumption that soldiers' replies represent "objective reporting" rather than group-conditioned judgments. But, without a general formulation, the need for collating these and for clarifying the theoretical issue is not likely to be perceived. See, for example, the interpretation of responses of "nonreturnees in predominantly returnee outfits," where it is said: "In part this agreement between returnees and nonreturnees suggests that there was some basis in fact as well as in attitude for the returnees' preference for and greater comfort in their own outfits. But these data may not be taken as sure corroboration of this point, since they may be, at least in part, simply evidence that the attitudes of returnees affected the opinions of the nonreturnees around them as well." (II, 515, 517)
dition of fatigued veterans and of fresh replacements and green troops find expression.

In so far as differences in these three patterns of manifest response can be theoretically derived from a functional theory of reference group behavior, this case illustrates one major service of theory for applied social research: the reconstruction through conceptual clarification of apparent irregularities in data leads to the provisional discovery of underlying functional and dynamic regularities. But, as we have suggested, the avenues between social theory and applied research carry two-way traffic: not only can theory reformulate some of the materials in *The American Soldier*, but on the basis of the same materials we can specify the types of further sociological indices and observations needed to achieve continuity and cumulation in the theory of value-assimilation, the group context of self-appraisals, and the objective assessment of situations. A brief list of such indices must stand in lieu of a detailed analysis of their potential for the advancement of this theory.34

1. **Index of actual social relations**: There is plainly need for systematic data on the social relations actually obtaining between the prestigious and authoritative stratum, and the newcomers to a group. Is there an empirically discoverable tendency for those in most frequent or most enduring affiliative contact to exhibit value-assimilation?

2. **Index of motivations of incoming group members**: The theory presupposes a concern among newcomers to affiliate themselves with the higher status group. For research purposes, it would of course be necessary to divide newcomers in terms of the presence, absence, or degree of such motivations. A derivative analytical procedure, moving in another direction, would consist in taking such affiliative motivations not as given, but as problematical, in turn requiring explanation.

3. **Index of social cohesion and of associated values**: Do the newcomers represent a scattered aggregate of individuals, or an organized subgroup? If the latter, do they have their own group values with distinctive claims to moral legitimacy? And in such instances, does continuous contact lead to more nearly reciprocal, rather than one-sided, assimilation?35

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34. The reader might be tempted to say that most of the following have been recognized as probably significant variables from the earliest days of modern sociology. But here, as at many points in this paper, it must be said that there is a great difference—in fact, the all the difference—between impressionistic and sporadic references to such variables, and systematic incorporation of these variables into research. Only through the latter procedure will theory and research both advance. Impressionism is no adequate substitute, if only because it is so flexible and vague in character as not to admit of decisive nullification of a provisional hypothesis. As Nietzsche, not ordinarily one to understand the ethos of science, put it in an insightful moment, “it is certainly not the least charm of a theory that it is refutable.” It is the object of systematic incorporation of variables into research to allow for nullification as well as confirmation, a rather difficult assignment for an author, wedded to a theory, and not exposed to data sufficiently incriminating to have him divorce himself from that theory.

35. It will be noted that the materials in *The American Soldier* did not allow in general for study of the effects of replacements upon veterans, a problem manifestly involved in an extended setting of the problem. However, the Research Branch was clearly sensitive to the problem. At one point, for example, they were able to determine, roughly, if veterans’ pride in their company was affected by a comparatively high proportion of replacements. (See II, 255-257)

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specifically military situation, but for a wider range of situations corresponding to the requirements of the theoretic formulations, thus extending the scope of data to which these can perhaps be applied.

And finally, the very existence of such systematic data permitting provisional reconceptualization may importantly advance the development of theory, by highlighting the need for a series of sociological indices to be incorporated into research on these problems, thus providing for further cumulation of sociological knowledge by linking past theory, present data, and future research.

Although undertaken as an applied social research, The American Soldier has, then, the potential by-products of furthering the parsimony, continuity, scope and cumulation of sociological theory. And, as is not infrequently the case with applied research, the by-products may prove more significant for the discipline of sociology than the direct application of findings.

STATISTICAL INDICES OF SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Before continuing with our review of problems in reference group theory, it will be useful to consider explicitly the implications of these researches for the study of social contexts. From the foregoing examination of the researches on assessment of promotion opportunities and on replacements' self-evaluations, it can be seen that The American Soldier is a fertile source for the development of relatively precise, statistical indices of social structure. In these and other studies, the survey data are analyzed in terms of the distribution of responses by social units (companies, divisions, branches of service). And in their analyses relating frequency distributions or rates characterizing social units to the responses of individuals and subgroups within these diverse units, they have moved well beyond the point ordinarily reached in studies of social ecology.

Like the use of statistical indicators in ecology for depicting different kinds of social units on an areal basis, The American Soldier provides indices of attributes of social structure, but unlike the ecological studies, The American Soldier goes on to make a systematic analysis of the attitudes or evaluations of like-statused individuals within diverse social structures.

This combination of indices suggests numerous statistical indices of group attributes or social structure which can be built into future sociological research. Moreover, the use of frequency distributions or proportions or rates as indices of social structures has the special merit of reminding us that these structures often vary in terms of degree, and not necessarily in terms of all-or-none qualities. For instance, social systems do not provide simply for mobility or for fixity of its members; they exhibit varying rates of mobility. They are not simply heterogeneous or homogeneous, but have varying degrees of heterogeneity. They are not integrated or unIntegrated, cohesive or dispersive, but have varying degrees of integration and cohesion.

Because statistical indices of such attributes of social systems have seldom been utilized in conjunction with indices of individual behavior, comparative sociology has been largely limited to loose and indecisive findings. Relatively strict comparison has been lacking as most of us most of the time have been confined to talking about "different" social structures rather than studying structures shown to differ in specifiable degree. When statistical indices of group attributes have been adopted—for example, variations in racial proportions among groups—these have typically not been combined with systematic comparisons of the behavior of like-statused people within these distinctive groups. And, relatively, when relatively precise measures of individual attitudes have been obtained, these have seldom been combined with similarly definite measures of social structure. Thus, social psychology has in the past decade or so moved toward the systematic use of indices of individual attitudes and sentiments primarily among aggregates of mutually unrelated individuals.

The studies of the Research Branch suggest the feasibility and the importance of developing indices both of social structure and of the behavior of individuals situated within the structure. Their occasional comparisons of the status-structure of different branches of the Army thus involve indices of stratification similar to those provided by frequency distributions of a population among the several social classes. Once such indices are established, it becomes possible to have systematic, not anecdotal, comparisons of the behavior of people of similar class status living within differently proportioned class structures. This will result in advancing beyond the more familiar characterizations of "the
middle-class man" or "the working-class man" to determine their characteristic behavior within differently constituted class systems. In the same fashion, other types of social differentiation can be indexed by the frequency distributions of various statuses (education, race, age, etc.) and combined with the systematic study of individuals similarly situated within these varying structures.40

In this respect, The American Soldier may represent a prelude to the immediate future in which indices of mobility rates, cultural change, group cohesion and social differentiation will be regularly and systematically incorporated into comparative studies of social structure. And once this is done, it will become possible to compare the patterns of reference group behavior of like-statused individuals within these various social systems.

REFERENCE GROUP THEORY AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

Other researches reported in The American Soldier which do not make explicit use of the concept of relative deprivation or kindred concepts can also be recast in terms of reference group theory. One of the more rigorous and seminal of these is the panel study of relationships between the conformity of enlisted men to official values of the Army and their subsequent promotion.

This study also illustrates the widely-known but seldom elucidated point that the same social research can be variously analyzed in at least three separate, though related, respects: its documented empirical findings, its methodology or logic of procedure, and its theoretical implications.

Since the methodology and the empirical findings of this study have been amply discussed—the one in the paper by Kendall and Lazarsfeld, the other in The American Soldier itself—we need not concern ourselves with them here. Instead, we limit our discussion to some of its theoretical implications.

These implications divide into three related kinds. First, the implications for reference group theory as the empirical findings are re-examined within the context of that theory. Second are the implications which enable us to connect reference group theory with hypotheses of functional sociology. And third, the implications which, once suitably generalized, enable us to see that this study bears, not only on the conformity-and-mobility patterns of American soldiers in World War II, but possibly also on more general and seemingly disparate patterns of behavior, such as group defection, renegadism, social climbing, and the like.

Tracing out these implications comprises a large order which can scarcely be entirely filled, not because of limitations of space but because of limitations of our own sociological knowledge. But even an approximation to achieving our purpose should help us recognize the theoretical linkages between presently separated types of social behavior.

We begin by following our now customary practice of briefly sketching out the chief findings of the study as these are set forth in The American Soldier.

Case #5 (I, 258-275). This research was concerned, not with rates of promotion which were determined by changes in the table of organization, but with the incidence of promotion: which men were the more likely to be advanced? Since the decision of the commanding officer regarding promotions was by no means based upon objective tests of capacity or performance by enlisted men, there was much occasion for interpersonal relations and sentiments to play their part in affecting this decision. Accordingly, the Research Branch advanced the hypothesis that, "One factor which hardly would have failed to enter to some extent into the judgment of an officer in selecting a man for promotion was his conformity to the officially approved military mores." (I, 259)

It is noted further, and we shall have occasion to return to this point in some detail, that "in making subjective judgments, the commanding officer necessarily laid himself wide open to charges of favoritism and particularly of succumbing to the wiles of those enlisted men most skilled at 'bucking.' " (I, 264)

A panel study of three groups of enlisted men was designed to find out whether the men who expressed attitudes in accord with the established military mores subsequently received promotions in proportions significantly higher than the others. This was consistently found to be the case. For example, "of the privates who in September 1943 said they did not think the Army's control was too strict, 19 per cent had become Pfc's by January 1944, while only 12 per cent of the other privates had become Pfc's." (I, 261-2) So, too, when men in the three samples are arranged according to their scores on a "quasi-scale of attitudes of conformity," it was uniformly found in all three groups "that the men whose attitudes were most conformist were the ones most likely to be promoted subsequently." (I, 263)

40. Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee, Voting makes extensive use of such procedures, providing further evidence, perhaps, of continuity in social research. For a more detailed account of sociological indices, see Section 2 of the paper by Kendall and Lazarsfeld, in Continuities in Social Research.
Theoretical Implications. In discussing this panel study, we want to bring into the open some of the connections between reference group theory and functional sociology which have remained implicit to this point—an objective to which this study lends itself particularly well, since the findings of the study can be readily reformulated in terms of both kinds of theory, and are then seen to bear upon a range of behavior wider than that considered in the study itself.

The value of such reformulation for social theory is perhaps best seen in connection with the independent variable of "conformity." It is clear, when one thinks about it, that the type of attitude described as conformist in this study is at the polar extreme from what is ordinarily called "social conformity." For in the vocabulary of sociology, social conformity usually denotes conformity to the norms and expectations current in the individual's own membership-group. But in this study, conformity refers, not to the norms of the immediate primary group constituted by enlisted men but to the quite different norms contained in the official military mores. Indeed, as data in The American Soldier make clear, the norms of the in-groups of associated enlisted men and the official norms of the Army and of the stratum of officers were often at odds. In the language of reference group theory, therefore, attitudes of conformity to the official mores can be described as a positive orientation to the norms of a non-membership group that is taken as a frame of reference. Such conformity to norms of an out-group is thus equivalent to what is ordinarily called nonconformity, that is, nonconformity to the norms of the in-group.

This preliminary reformulation leads directly to two interrelated questions which we have until now implied rather than considered explicitly: what are the consequences, functional and dysfunctional, of positive orientation to the values of a group other than one's own? And further, which social processes initiate, sustain or curb such orientations?

Functions of positive orientation to non-membership groups: anticipatory socialization. In considering, however briefly, the possible consequences of this pattern of conformity to non-membership group norms, it is advisable to distinguish between the consequences for the individuals exhibiting this behavior, the sub-group in which they find themselves, and the social system comprising both of these.

For the individual who adopts the values of a group to which he aspires but does not belong, this orientation may serve the twin functions of aiding his rise into that group and of easing his adjustment after he has become part of it. That this first function was indeed served is the gist of the finding in The American Soldier that those privates who accepted the official values of the Army hierarchy were more likely than others to be promoted. The hypothesis regarding the second function still remains to be tested. But it would not, in principle, be difficult to discover empirically whether those men who, through a kind of anticipatory socialization, take on the values of the non-membership group to which they aspire, find readier acceptance by that group and make an easier adjustment to it. This would require the development of indices of group acceptance and adjustment, and a comparison, in terms of these indices, of those newcomers to a group who had previously oriented themselves to the group's values and those who had not. More concretely, in the present instance, it would have entailed a comparative study among the privates promoted to higher rank, of the subsequent group adjustment of those who had undergone the hypothesized preparation for status shifts and those who had previously held fast to the values of their in-group of enlisted men. Indices of later adjustment could be related to indices of prior value-orientation. This would constitute a systematic empirical test of a functional hypothesis.

It appears, further, that anticipatory socialization is functional for the individual only within a relatively open social structure providing for mobility. For only in such a structure would such attitudinal and behavior preparation for status shifts be followed by actual changes of status in a substantial proportion of cases. By the same token, the same pattern of anticipatory socialization would be dysfunctional for the individual in a relatively closed social structure, where he would not find acceptance by the group to which he aspires and would probably lose acceptance, because of his out-group orientation, by the group to which he belongs. This latter type of case will be recognized as that of the marginal man, poised on the edge of several groups but fully accepted by none of them.
Thus, the often-studied case of the marginal man and the case of the enlisted man who takes the official military mores as a positive frame of reference can be identified, in a functional theory of reference group behavior, as special cases of anticipatory socialization. The marginal man pattern represents the special case in a relatively closed social system, in which the members of one group take as a positive frame of reference the norms of a group from which they are excluded in principle. Within such a social structure, anticipatory socialization becomes dysfunctional for the individual who becomes the victim of aspirations he cannot achieve and hopes he cannot satisfy. But, as the panel study seems to indicate, precisely the same kind of reference group behavior within a relatively open social system is functional for the individual at least to the degree of helping him to achieve the status to which he aspires. The same reference group behavior in different social structures has different consequences.

To this point, then, we find that positive orientation toward the norms of a non-membership group is precipitated by a passage between membership-groups, either in fact or in fantasy, and that the functional or dysfunctional consequences evidently depend upon the relatively open or closed character of the social structure in which this occurs. And what would, at first glance, seem entirely unrelated and disparate forms of behavior—the behavior of such marginal men as the Cape Coloured or the Eurasian, and of enlisted men adopting the values of military strata other than their own—are seen, after appropriate conceptualization, as special cases of reference group behavior.

Although anticipatory socialization may be functional for the individual in an open social system, it is apparently dysfunctional for the solidarity of the group or stratum to which he belongs. For allegiance to the contrasting mores of another group means defection from the mores of the in-group. And accordingly, as we shall presently see, the in-group responds by putting all manner of social restraints upon such positive orientations to certain out-group norms.

From the standpoint of the larger social system, the Army as a whole, positive orientation toward the official mores would appear to be functional in supporting the legitimacy of the structure and in keeping the structure of authority intact. (This is presumably what is meant when the text of The American Soldier refers to these conformist attitudes as "favorable from the Army's point of view.") But manifestly, much research needs to be done before one can say that this is indeed the case. It is possible, for example, that the secondary effects of such orientations may be so deleterious to the solidarity of the primary groups of enlisted men that their morale sags. A concrete research question might help clarify the problem: are outfits with relatively large minorities of men positively oriented to the official Army values more likely to exhibit signs of anomie and personal disorganization (e.g. non-battle casualties)? In such situations, does the personal "success" of conformists (promotion) only serve to depress the morale of the others by rewarding those who depart from the in-group mores?

In this panel study, as well as in several of the others we have reviewed here—for example, the study of soldiers' evaluations of the justification for their induction into the Army—reference group behavior is evidently related to the legitimacy ascribed to institutional arrangements. Thus, the older married soldier is less likely to think it "fair" that he was inducted; most enlisted men think it "unfair" that promotions are presumably based on "who you know, not what you know"; and so on. In part, this apparent emphasis on legitimacy is of course an artifact of the research: many of the questions put to soldiers had to do with their conception of the legitimate or illegitimate character of their situation or of prevailing institutional arrangements. But the researchers' own focus of interest was in turn the result of their having observed that soldiers were, to a significant degree, actually concerned with such issues of institutional legitimacy, as the spontaneous comments of enlisted men often indicate.

This bears notice because imputations of legitimacy to social arrangements seem functionally related to reference group behavior. They apparently affect the range of the inter-group or inter-individual comparisons that will typically be made. If the structure of a rigid system of stratification, for example, is generally defined as legitimate, if the rights, perquisites and obligations of each stratum are generally held to be morally right, then the individuals within each stratum will be less likely to take the situation of the other strata as a context for appraisal of their own lot. They will, presumably, tend to confine their comparisons to other members of their own or neighboring social stratum. If, however, the system of stratification is under wide dispute, then members of some strata are more likely to contrast their own situation with that of others, and shape their self-appraisals accordingly. This variation in the structure of systems and in the degree of legitimacy imputed to the rules of the game may help account for the often-noticed

44. Qualitative descriptions of the behavior of marginal men, as summarized, for example, by E. V. Stonequist, The Marginal Man (New York, Scribner's, 1937), can be analytically recast as that special and restricted case of reference group behavior in which the individual seeks to abandon one membership group for another to which he is socially forbidden access.

45. For example, in response to the question, "If you could talk with the President of the United States, what are the three most important questions you would want to ask him about war and your part in it?", a substantial proportion of both Negro and white troops evidently raised questions regarding the legitimacy of current practices and arrangements in the Army. The Negro troops of course centered on unjust practices of race discrimination, but 31 per cent of the white troops also introduced "questions and criticisms of Army life." (1, 504 et passim.)
fact that the degree of dissatisfaction with their lot is often less among the people in severely depressed social strata in a relatively rigid social system, than among those strata who are apparently "better off" in a more mobile social system. At any rate, the range of groups taken as effective bases of comparison in different social systems may well turn out to be closely connected with the degree to which legitimacy is ascribed to the prevailing social structure.

Though much remains to be said, this is perhaps enough to suggest that the pattern of anticipatory socialization may have diverse consequences for the individuals manifesting it, the groups to which they belong, and the more inclusive social structure. And through such re-examination of this panel study on the personal rewards of conformity, it becomes possible to specify some additional types of problems involved in a more comprehensive functional analysis of such reference group behavior. For example:

1. Since only a fraction of the in-group orient themselves positively toward the values of a non-membership group, it is necessary to discover the social position and personality types of those most likely to do so. For instance, are isolates in the group particularly ready to take up these alien values?

2. Much attention has been paid to the processes making for positive orientation to the norms of one's own group. But what are the processes making for such orientations to other groups or strata? Do relatively high rates of mobility serve to reinforce these latter orientations? (It will be remembered that The American Soldier provides data tangential to this point in the discussion of rates of promotion and assessment of promotion chances.) Suitably adapted, such data on actual rates of mobility, aspirations, and anticipatory socialization to the norms of a higher social stratum would extend a functional theory of conformist and deviant behavior.

3. What connections, if any, subsist between varying rates of mobility and acceptance of the legitimacy of the system of stratification by individuals diversely located in that system? Since it appears that systems with very low rates of mobility may achieve wide acceptance, what other interpretative variables need to be included to account for the relationship between rates of mobility and imputations of legitimacy?

4. In civilian or military life, are the mobile individuals who are most ready to reaffirm the values of a power-holding or prestige-holding group the sooner accepted by that group? Does this operate effectively primarily as a latent function, in which the mobile individuals adopt these values because they experience them as superior, rather than deliberately adopting them only to gain acceptance? If such orientations are definitely motivated by the wish to belong, do they then become self-defeating, with the mobile individuals being characterized as strainers, strivers (or, in the Army, as brown-nosers bucking for promotion)?

Social processes sustaining and curbing positive orientations to non-membership groups. In the course of considering the functions of anticipatory socialization, we have made passing allusion to social processes which sustain or curb this pattern of behavior. Since it is precisely the data concerning such processes which are not easily caught up in the type of survey materials on attitudes primarily utilized in The American Soldier, and since these processes are central to any theory of reference group behavior, they merit further consideration.

As we have seen, what is anticipatory socialization from the standpoint of the individual is construed as defection and nonconformity by the group of which he is a member. To the degree that the individual identifies himself with another group, he alienates himself from his own group. Yet although the field of sociology has for generations been concerned with the determinants and consequences of group cohesion, it has given little systematic attention to the complementary subject of group alienation. When considered at all, it has been confined to such special cases as second-generation immigrants, conflict of loyalties between gang and family, etc. In large measure, the subject has been left to the literary observer, who could detect the drama inherent in the situation of the renegade, the traitor, the deserter. The value-laden connotations of these terms used to describe identification with groups other than one's own definitely suggest that these patterns of behavior have been typically regarded from the standpoint of the membership group. (Yet one group's renegade may be another group's convert.) Since the assumption that its members will be loyal is found in every group, else it would have no group character, no dependability of action, transfer of loyalty to another group (particularly a group operating in the same sphere of politics or economy), is regarded primarily in affective terms of sentiment rather than in detached terms of analysis. The renegade or traitor or climber—whatever the folk-phrase may be—more often becomes an object of vilification than an object of sociological study.

The framework of reference group theory, detached from the language of sentiment, enables the sociologist to identify and to locate renegadism, treason, the assimilation of immigrants, class mobility, social climbing, etc. as so many special forms of identification with what is at the time a non-membership group. In doing so, it affords the possibility of studying these, not as wholly particular and unconnected forms of behavior, but as different expressions of similar processes under significantly different conditions. The transfer of allegiance of upper class individuals from their own to a lower class—whether this be in the pre-revolutionary period of 18th century France or of 20th century Russia—belongs to the same family of sociological problems as the more familiar identification of lower class individuals with a higher class, a subject which has lately begun to absorb the attention of sociologists in a society where upward social mobility is an established value. Our cultural emphasizes notwithstanding, the phenomenon of topdogs adopting the values of the underdog is as much a reference group phenomenon lending itself to further inquiry as that of the underdogs seeking to become topdogs.

In such defections from the in-group, it may turn out, as has often
been suggested, that it is the isolate, nominally in a group but only slightly incorporated in its network of social relations, who is most likely to become positively oriented toward non-membership groups. But, even if generally true, this is a static correlation and, therefore, only partly illuminating. What needs to be uncovered is the process through which this correlation comes to hold. Judging from some of the qualitative data in *The American Soldier* and from other studies of group defection, there is continued and cumulative interplay between a deterioration of social relations within the membership group and positive attitudes toward the norms of a non-membership group.

What the individual experiences as estrangement from a group of which he is a member tends to be experienced by his associates as repudiation of the group, and this ordinarily evokes a hostile response. As social relations between the individual and the rest of the group deteriorate, the norms of the group become less binding for him. For since he is progressively seceding from the group and being penalized by it, he is the less likely to experience rewards for adherence to the group’s norms. Once initiated, this process seems to move toward a cumulative detachment from the group, in terms of attitudes and values as well as in terms of social relations. And to the degree that he orients himself toward out-group values, perhaps affirming them verbally and expressing them in action, he only widens the gap and reinforces the hostility between himself and his in-group associates. Through the interplay of dissociation and progressive alienation from the group values, he may become doubly motivated to orient himself toward the values of another group and to affiliate himself with it. There then remains the distinct question of the objective possibility of affiliating himself with his reference group. If the possibility is negligible or absent, then the alienated individual becomes socially rootless. But if the social system realistically allows for such change in group affiliations, then the individual estranged from the one group has all the more motivation to belong to the other.

This hypothetical account of dissociation and alienation, which of course only touches upon the processes which call for research in the field of reference group behavior, seems roughly in accord with qualitative data in *The American Soldier* on what was variously called brown-nosing, bucking for promotion, and sucking up. Excerpts from the diary of an enlisted man illustrate the interplay between dissociation and alienation: the outward-oriented man is too sedulous in abiding by the official mores—“But you’re supposed to [work over there]. The lieutenant said you were supposed to”—this evokes group hostility expressed in epithets and ridicule—“Everybody is making sucking, kissing noises at K and S now”—followed by increasing dissociation within the group—“Ostracism was visible, but mild . . . few were friendly toward them . . . occasions arose where people avoided their company”—and more fre-

**PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL FUNCTIONS**

In our review of the foregoing case, an effort was made to distinguish between the consequences of positive orientation toward a non-membership group for the individual, the membership-group and the larger social system. If, as we assume, an established pattern of behavior typically has such diverse consequences, it can be usefully examined from both a psychological and sociological standpoint. On occasion, *The American Soldier* analyzes behavior only, in terms of a psychological framework. In some of these instances, the same situation may be profitably re-examined in terms of its implications for a framework of functional sociology. This is not to say that the sociological orientation is necessarily “superior” to the psychological, or that it is necessarily at

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46. “An official War Department pamphlet given to new recruits attempted to give “bucking” a blessing: “Bucking implies all the things a soldier can honestly do to gain attention and promotion. The Army encourages individuals to put extra effort into drill, extra ‘spit and polish’ into personal appearance. At times this may make things uncomfortable for others who prefer to take things easier, but it stimulates a spirit of competition and improvement which makes ours a better Army.” I, 264.

47. It is interesting to see how one’s professional background apparently shapes one’s description of *The American Soldier*. In his review of the book, Gordon W. Allport, the psychologist, refers to what he calls its “sociologic bias.” And here, a pair of sociologists are saying, in effect, that it has a marked “psychological orientation.” The authors might well take comfort in the twin “charges.”
odds with it. But it is different. And by regarding these materials from a perspective differing from that in the text itself, we may, perhaps, bring out further implications of these applied researches for social theory.

Case #6 (II, 272-54). Among the cases exhibiting a marked psychological orientation is the brief account of the experiences of men in replacement depots, those army stations through which they filtered from their training outfits to some depleted combat outfit in need of personnel. The author paints a vivid psychological portrait of the replacement depot: of the "apparently irreducible sources of psychological disturbance" characteristic of the depot, with its replacements handled in bulk and impersonally by permanent depot cadre, having only a casual status, and lacking the "support of social ties and the security of having an established niche in some organization." Probably, "the most salient psychological characteristic of depot life... was that the situation led to a state of anxious uncertainty without opportunity for resolving the tension." (II, 274) One consequence of the depot experience was to make the replacement "welcome many aspects of a permanent assignment." While this did not mean they welcomed combat itself, "even in this regard... the termination of anxious uncertainty was probably in some respects a psychological gain. The new combat man could say to himself, for better or for worse, 'This is it.' " (II, 176).

The Research Branch, then, was centrally concerned with the question: what were the effects of these experiences upon the replacement? But the same data involve another type of problem, this time from the standpoint of functional sociology: the problem, not of the effect of the depot upon the replacement, but upon his subsequent incorporation in a combat group.

Functional analysis of this situation would begin by conceptualizing the social role of the replacement depot, which falls into the category of an organization providing for the movement of individuals from one group to another. As typically follows upon a somewhat more generalized description of a situation, other situations nominally different on a common-sense level, are seen as belonging to the same general category. Materials presently scattered in the numerous pages of The American Soldier become cases in point of this pattern of transition from one group to another: for example, the replacement depot is, in this respect, essentially no different from the reassignment station as an intermediary between a combat outfit and a new domestic post. Furthermore, sociologists have long been interested in the standardized social patterns providing for passage from one group to another in various institutional areas, for example, the transition of the high school graduate to a first year at college.

The personal and social difficulties involved in such transfers are assumed to arise primarily from the dual process of breaking down old group affiliations (or of putting them into secondary place) and of building new group ties. That, in a sense, is comparable to the process of the recruit’s initial absorption into his first army outfit, with all the attendant growing pains of group-formation. But in this special setting, the individual is immeasurably eased in his adjustment since it is not a problem peculiar to him. Every other member of the newly-forming group is experiencing a similar problem, whether he is a first-year college student or a raw army recruit.

Once he is a part of this group, however, transfer to another already established group is quite a different matter, as any child who is transferred from one school to another in mid-semester can report. In this case, his initial exposure to the new group is most apt to involve an intensification of old ties—his old friends, his former teachers, his old school are imbued with disproportionately great affect. This is much the same phenomenon as that of soldiers separated from their old combat outfits and settling into new domestic army stations. One study in The American Soldier reports that such returnees place tremendous importance on being permitted to “continue to wear the insignia of their old units” (II, 507-8),—just as the abruptly transferred school child may intensify his old group ties. Both reflect resistance to a sudden weaning from a former group affiliation. The school child, being a lone individual, presents no challenge to the unity of the new group, and in time, he is usually taken into the ranks. But should a sizable number of new youngsters confront the group with their emphasis on old school ties, we might well find a need emerging for an “educational depot,” to forestall the dysfunctional consequences of these challenges to the unity of the group. This is precisely the problem of the army situation. Being built on fragile enough grounds, the unity of an army outfit might be seriously impaired by the introduction of a sizable number of replacements, if their former group...

* On this, see how C. S. Lewis, in the first part of his autobiography, mockingly describes the functional requirement for “faggig” (hazing) in the English public schools or, at least, in the one school which he had the fortune to attend. “The interesting thing is that the public-school system had thus produced the very thing which it was advertised to prevent or cure. For you must understand (if you have not been dipped in that tradition yourself) that the whole thing was devised to ‘knock the nonsense’ out of the smaller boys and ‘put them in their place.’ If the junior boys weren’t faggig, as my brother once said, ‘they would become insufferable.’... Obviously a certain grave danger was ever present to the minds of those who built up the Wyvernian hierarchy. It seemed to them self-evident that, if you left things to themselves, boys of nineteen who played rugger for the county and boxed for the school would everywhere be knocked down and sat on by boys of thirteen. And that, you know, would be a very shocking spectacle. The most elaborate mechanism, therefore, had to be devised for protecting the strong against the weak, the close corporation of Old Hands against the parcel of newcomers who were strangers to one another and to everyone in the place, the poor, trembling schoolboys against the furious and ravishing sheep.” C. S. Lewis, Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1955), 104-106.
attachment had not broken down prior to their admittance to the new outfit.

Thus from the perspective of the replacements' eventual ease of absorption into a combat group, new to them, as well as from the point of view of their potential effect upon the group they enter, there may well be a functional requirement for their not being transferred immediately from the training outfit to the outfit with which they will shortly serve in combat. One alternative is that which was in fact the practice utilized during the war years: filtering the newly trained soldier through replacement depots. This suggests the latent function possibly performed by the replacement depot: it may serve to loosen the soldier's previous army group ties, thus making him more amenable to ready absorption into his combat outfit. In much the same way that the sandhog adjusts to normal atmospheric pressure at the end of a day's work under water by going through de-compression chambers, so the soldier is “de-grouped” by passing through replacement depots. This would seem all the more important in view of the speed with which replacements were actually sent into combat upon joining a combat outfit. In one study, it was found that half the replacement infantrymen went into combat less than three days after joining their outfit.

In other words, the excessive psychological anxiety noted by the Research Branch as characteristic of depot life may also be regarded as a behavioral index of a state of temporary “grouplessness.” But whichever is emphasized—the underlying sociological phenomenon of grouplessness or the external and visible psychological anxiety—the functional sociologist would seek to trace out its organizational consequences, i.e., its impact on the absorption of the replacement into his most important army group, the unit with which he serves in combat.

This anxiety accompanying the de-grouping process may well be dysfunctional for the individual soldier at the time he is experiencing it, and for some soldiers, it may have had serious effects upon overall personal adjustment. Yet this same process of de-grouping may have functional consequences for other organizational units, particularly the combat outfit in which the de-grouped replacement is the more readily absorbed. Empirical test of this hypothesis could be provided by an extension of the procedure adopted in the study of returnees (see the foregoing footnote). For each level of men's attachment to their previous outfit, it could be determined, first, whether the longer the period that men have spent in a replacement depot, the more effectively, they have divested themselves of their previous group solidarity, and second, whether those men who had been thus “de-grouped” were the more effectively incorporated into their new combat outfit. To the extent that this was found to be the case, it would have bearing on the more general problem of factors and processes affecting the passage from old to new membership groups. And, in some measure, this would supplement the perceptive analysis of the replacement depot provided by The American Soldier.

CONCEPTS KINDRED TO REFERENCE GROUP THEORY

From allusions scattered throughout the foregoing discussion, it is evident that certain facts of reference group behavior were noted long before the term, reference group, was coined by Hyman in his important

48. We have previously mentioned the similarity between the function of the replacement depot and that of the reassignment station through which the returnee soldier is transferred from his combat outfit to his domestic army post. An examination of the study of the returnee in The American Soldier (II—Chapter on problems of Rotation and Reconversion) suggests that the de-grouping process of the returnee is of much longer duration, for the returnee has been removed from his most cohesive army group. Thus in a survey of returnees and non-overseas men in which the soldiers were asked about their sense of belonging to their new outfit, the returnees were much more apt to say they did not feel they belonged to their outfits than the non-returnees, even though in a large proportion of the cases the returnees had been with the outfit longer than the non-returnees. In the Air Force, for example, 34 per cent of the returnees and 15 per cent of the non-returnees said they did not feel they “belonged” to their outfits. The difference between returnee and non-returnee in other branches of the Army decreases slightly from the difference of 17 per cent in the more cohesive air corps to 11 per cent in the quartermaster corps. (II, 507) The rapidity and ease of the de-grouping process and subsequent re-absorption into a new group would appear to depend on the intensity of the former group ties.

49. To note this possible function of anxiety is not thereby to advocate anxiety. For even as a concomitant of the de-grouping process, not all such anxiety situations are dysfunctional for the social organization. In the case of their officer candidate schools, for example, which “can be conceived of as an ordeal,” one consequence of a high anxiety situation was to strip the officer candidate of any vestige of his former enlisted man's values, which apparently militated against his subsequent ability to see the enlisted man's point of view. After an analysis of the “ordeal” of an officer candidate school in case-study terms, it is said: “... there is enough plausibility in this account of the transmission of culture to suggest that we have in this process an explanation of why so many officers, themselves formerly enlisted men, seemed to fail as officers to carry over their enlisted experience and try to see the enlisted man's point of view in handling their men.” (I., 391) From the hierarchy-conscious perspective of the Army, this may or may not be considered objectionable. But the evidence seems clear that enlisted men—products of a culture system which expounds the worth of democratic equality—functioned best when they believed the gap between themselves and their leaders was not infeasible, when they felt their officers had relatively few special privileges they did not have, and so on. (I., 369) But, in other cases, the functional consequences of the de-grouping process for the Army's objectives may far outweigh the temporary dysfunctional consequences to the individual exposed to the replacement depot. From the standpoint of a narrowly defined conception of social engineering, this might lead to recommendations for the extension of “de-grouping” through explicit provision for such transitional organizations or statuses in various institutional orders. But this would presuppose an exclusive concern with organizational objectives—e.g., increased efficiency of a fighting machine—which one need not be ready to advocate. In this instance, for example, one's values may lead one to conclude that organizational efficiency, through de-grouping with its attendant anxieties, exists too high a price. This is scarcely the first time that such moral problems of social engineering have occurred. It might be found, as so many 19th century writers asserted, that hunger, acute anxiety and insecurity are powerful incentives for work. Were this confirmed, it scarcely follows that the sociologist would advocate hunger as a prod to work.
study of 1942. Thus, half a century ago, DuBois noted that "A white Philadelphian with $1,500 a year can call himself poor and live simply. A Negro with $1,500 a year ranks with the richest of his race and must usually spend more in proportion than his white neighbor in rent, dress and entertainment." But though the specific fact that self-appraisals are relative to "the" group framework was often remarked, it was not conceptualized in terms general enough to lead to systematic research on the implications of the fact. Such a term as "reference group" is useful, not because the term itself helps explain behavior, but because it does not easily allow us to overlook this component in self-appraisals. The very generality of the term leads to the perception of similarities beneath apparent dissimilarities of behavior.

But apart from these isolated observations, there have been several lines of development in sociology and social psychology which now give promise of merging in a functional theory of reference group behavior. Each of these has, after its own fashion, made major contributions, but in retrospect, the impressive fact is that, in large measure, their mutual implications have not yet been consolidated. As is generally known, these are the conceptions of in- and out-groups set forth by Sumner, the ideas regarding the social self developed by James, Cooley and Mead, the

51. W. E. B. DuBois, The Philadelphia Negro, 1899, as quoted by E. F. Frazier, The Negro in the United States (New York: Macmillan, 1949, 299n). Frazier develops the observation further to indicate the cross-pressures to which the Negro professional man is subject. "The Negro professional man or clerical worker often feels under great compulsion to keep up the requirements of upper-class behavior," as a Negro community professional man is subject. "As the Negro becomes increasingly integrated into the larger community, the professional man or woman or clerical worker is escaping from the obligations of the upper class role in the Negro community and can orient his behavior with reference to his middle-class status." Ibid., 300, italics supplied.

Interestingly enough, technical problems in developing samples for public opinion polls forced attention to the same fact that economic status is relative to the income distribution of the environs. Thus: "The owner of a small shoe store in Dubuque, Iowa, who is married, has no children, and enjoys an income of $5,000 a year, finds himself thrown with the prosperous people of the town. . . . He finds himself, economically, close to 'the top of the heap' in Dubuque. His association with other prosperous people inclines him to regard his fate as being rather intimately bound up with that of the prosperous people elsewhere. . . . Give the same $5,000 a year income to an assistant sales manager who lives in New York City and has two daughters of school age, and you will find that he does not regard himself as belonging to the same economic level as the Dubuque shoe dealer, nor does he think or vote like that man on many important subjects." Elmo Roper, "Classifying respondents by economic status," Public Opinion Quarterly, 1940, 4, 270; see also, S. S. Wilks, "Representative sampling and poll reliability," ibid., 263: "A $3000-a-year salary in a small Arkansas town means one thing and a $3000-a-year salary in New York City means something entirely different. The problem of economic status in sampling is handled at present on what amounts to a relative basis in each sampling locality.

more recent systematic researches on reference group behavior represented by the work of Hyman, Sheriff and Newcomb, and the very numerous special studies on concrete problems of human behavior such as those dealing with acculturation, assimilation, the marginal man, social mobility, multiple roles, conflicting loyalties, cross-pressures, and the like.

The general and, in this truncated form, un instructive fact that men are variously oriented to groups besides their own was captured in the terminology invented by Sumner to distinguish between "ourselves, the in-group, or in-group, and everybody else, or the other-groups, out-groups." Sumner proceeded to describe the relations between these types of groups. Essentially, these somewhat premature observations held that conditions of amity and order obtain in the in-group whereas the relation to out-groups is that of hostility, plunder and exploitation. That this is the case (under unspecified conditions) Sumner was able to show through numerous illustrations drawn from history and ethnology. But in adopting a descriptive, rather than an analytical, outlook on the facts of the case, he inevitably blurred and obscured the otherwise conspicuous fact that, under certain conditions, the out-group becomes a basis of positive, not merely hostile, reference and that the science of sociology is thereby committed to determine the conditions under which one or the other orientation to out-groups obtained. In short, the initial distinction put Sumner well on the way toward opening up a series of problems regarding reference group behavior. But this avenue to the development of a theory of reference group behavior, in principle open to those who would explore it since the appearance of Folkways in 1906, was not followed up by systematic research.

With only the slight exaggeration inevitable in having a single sentence summarize a large number of facts, it may be said that the anticipations of reference group theory by James, Cooley, and Mead remained almost wholly undeveloped for a generation or more. Particularly among sociologists their conceptions were treated, not as a beginning but as a virtual conclusion, repeatedly quoted and illustrated with new examples of multiple selves, the looking-glass self, responses
to the significant gestures of "others," and so on. And because the words of the forefathers became final words, little was built upon their insightful suggestions. They were honored, not in the manner in which men of science do honor to their predecessors, by extending and elaborating their formulations on the basis of cumulatively developed problems and systematic researches bearing on these problems, but in the manner in which litterateurs honor their predecessors, by repeatedly quoting "definitive" passages from the masters' works.

Certain social psychologists, among whom Hyman, Sherif, and Newcomb are representative, have somewhat advanced this theory by designing empirical researches which would feed back into theoretical formulations of reference group behavior. And since their data were systematic rather than anecdotal, they soon found themselves confronted with many of the same theoretical problems which emerge from the researches of *The American Soldier*. Newcomb's study, in particular, centered not only on the reference group contexts of attitudes, perceptions, and judgments, but also considered the social organization which affected the selection of reference groups.

The researches of *The American Soldier* belong to this last line of development, consisting of numerous empirical studies of ostensibly different types of behavior, which nevertheless involve similar social and psychological processes. Since social scientists are equipped with some, though not nearly enough, methods for the study of reference group behavior in the ordinary course of everyday life, they need not look only to the contrived situations of the social-psychology laboratory, which leaves outside its walls the established social relations which comprise the organization of groups in society. An Army private bucking for promotion may only in a narrow and theoretically superficial sense be regarded as engaging in behavior different from that of an immigrant assimilating the values of a native group, or of a lower-middle-class individual conforming to his conception of upper-middle-class patterns of behavior, or of a boy in a slum area orienting himself to the values of a settlement house worker rather than the values of the street corner gang, or of a Bennington student abandoning the conservative beliefs of her parents to adopt the more liberal ideas of her college associates, or of a lower-class Catholic departing from the pattern of his in-group by casting a Republican vote, or of an eighteenth century French aristocrat aligning himself with a revolutionary group of the time. However these may differ in detail, they are not necessarily unconnected forms of behavior "belonging," respectively, to the jurisdictions of the sociology of military life, race and ethnic relations, social mobility, delinquency (or "social disorganization"), educational sociology, political sociology, and the sociology of revolution.

Such conventional divisions in terms of superficially distinct spheres of human behavior serve to obscure the similarity of social and psychological processes with which more abstract conceptions, such as those of reference group theory, are concerned. As can be seen from the matrix of variables in the first part of this paper, the combination of elements may differ, thus giving rise to overtly distinctive forms of behavior, but these may nevertheless be only different expressions of similar processes under different conditions. They may all represent cases of individuals becoming identified with reference groups to which they aspire or in which they have just achieved membership. And to the extent that this is so, the observed behaviors can, in principle, be derived from a few relatively general conceptions holding for them all, rather than having their similarity obscured by varying terminologies, such as promotion, assimilation (and acculturation), class straining (and over-conformity), socialization, social deviation, renegadism, or again, relative deprivation, role conflict, cross-pressures and false consciousness.

The early development of reference group conceptions is studded with instances in which particular historical occurrences in the society led sociologists to focus on spheres of social behavior in which patterns of reference group behavior happened to be conspicuous. Thus, studies of assimilation, clearly a process in which there is reference to the culture of non-membership groups, were precipitated by waves of immigration to this country and the subsequent throes of absorption of people of diverse cultural background. So, too, growing sociological interest in mobility between social classes and in "false consciousness" whereby men identify themselves with classes, "to which they do not belong," seems in part a response to open public discussion of classes, and to a possibly heightened sense of class conflict. In such instances, the sociologists' choice of subject-matter was more nearly dictated by concrete practical problems than by the requirements of systematic theory. As a result, there was a marked tendency for the interpretative conceptions to remain *particularized* to the special sphere of behavior under consideration. Distinctive concepts appropriate for each sphere were developed as separate and almost isolated tools of analysis, and their theoretical overlappings and connections were often lost to view. Specialization of inquiry in terms of the concrete practical problems generated by social change sometimes developed at the expense of a more general body of theory. Special cases usurped attention and special concepts were introduced, but the task of their theoretical consolidation was only barely begun.

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Though our brief examination of cases has provided only intimations to this effect, they are perhaps enough to lend weight to the possibility that these are not unrelated forms of social behavior but concrete manifestations of underlying patterns of reference group behavior. It seems probable that if special inquiries trace out the theoretical connections between these forms of behavior, they will develop one of those theories of the middle range which consolidate otherwise segregated hypotheses and empirical uniformities. The wider, more inclusive conception would mean, for example, that research on the adjustment-patterns of immigrants would contribute its share to the same theory that helps direct research on, say, factors in social mobility. And these steps toward consolidation would result in a more rapid cumulation of reference group theory, since research on diverse departments of human behavior would become mutually stimulating and sustaining. At least, that seems to be the import of this preliminary review of reference group conceptions in *The American Soldier.*

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55. A historian of science has commented on comparable problems of theoretical consolidation in the natural and physical sciences: "... of all forms of mental activity the most difficult to induce ... is the art of handling the same bundle of data as before, but placing them in a new system of relations with one another and giving them a different framework, all of which virtually means putting on a different kind of thinking-cap for the moment." H. Butterfield, *The Origins of Modern Science* (London: Bell, 1949), 1.