opposite. It is clear that the situational facts did not determine in any simple sense the contrasting community structures which emerged. Rather, the situations set certain limits, but within these limits contrasting value-orientations influenced the development of two quite different community types.

It would appear that solutions to problems of community settlement pattern and the type of concrete social action which ensues are set within a value framework which importantly influences the selections made with the range of possibilities existing within an objective situation.

FRIENDS, ENEMIES, AND THE POLITE FICTION

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Social interaction of any kind requires some degree of consensus. This is true only if the word consensus sheds its connotation of empathy, of emotional rapport, and is confined to meaning agreement on the terms of which interaction takes place. Consensus may thus be defined as the tacit delineation of mutually accepted norms of behavior. Since it takes two to make a quarrel, a quarrel requires consensus in this sense. The examination of certain situations in which consensus is purposefully manipulated may illuminate its significance in interaction; the primary object of this paper, however, is to relate the analysis of interaction to more general sociological categories, and thereby to develop further insights into the processes of social interaction.

Most of the commoner terms in the literature of sociology suffer from confusion and ambiguity, but none probably so much as “status” and “role”. We shall, however, start from the definitions stated by Parsons: “A social system is a system of processes of interaction between actors... Each individual actor is involved in a plurality of such interactive relationships... The participation of an actor in a patterned interactive relationship... has two principal aspects. On the one hand, there is the positional aspect—that of where the actor in question is located in the social system relative to other actors. This is what we will call his status... On the other hand, there is the processual aspect, that of what the actor does in his relations with others... It is this which we shall call his role.” In this rendering, “status” has a locational, almost non-behavioral, reference; “role” denotes the behavioral aspect of participation in the social system. The attractiveness, and the dangers, in this use of the terms, lie in its derivation from a basic paradigm in intellectual manipulation—the graphical expression of a binomial. There is, of course, the convenient rag-bag of “personality” into which items not covered by the terms can be stuffed and packed off to the psychologists for sorting, but even so, there are specifically social elements in the individual’s social behavior which are not comprehended within either term. Some of these elements are dealt with in this paper; meanwhile, the words “status” and “role” will be used to indicate the locational and action elements in social interaction.

The roles that an individual plays in different social situations may sometimes be present as possible alternatives in the same situation. A man may invite workmates or colleagues into his home and meet them in the same situation as that in which he enacts the role of husband and parent. The roles of husband and of parent may themselves overlap in this way in different situations within the home. At work, the member of the staff of a factory who is in a clique-relationship with some other members may find a similar overlapping, or juxtaposition, of the two roles. When the ambiguities in such situations become stressed, the fictive character of roles emerges into obviousness and a false social position has to be resolved by some

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1 Talcott Parsons, “The Social System,” 1952, Tavistock Publications Ltd., p. 25. It will be noted that Parsons does at any rate drop the dubious element of expectation usually brought into the definition of “role.”
declaration pointing to association with one of the groups—an affirmation of one status—and rejection of the other. But since such declarations carry with them a threat to a status in which the individual is involved, and which therefore constitutes a value to him, they are with rare exceptions covered by entry into a form of joking relationship and emerge as banter.

To use banter is to play at being hostile, distant, unfriendly, while intimating friendliness. It is a style of interaction used when two roles are presented to an individual and he decides to retain the status appropriate to both, while, as he must, acting out the role of only one. Banter, then, becomes a style for managing children taken by parents or teachers when other adults are present and forbid the adoption of a role attaching exclusively to their status as teacher or parent. It is frequent among adolescent boys and girls when they are together and there is a desire both to retain the security of the individual's status in his own peer-group and to assume a sexually attractive role towards the opposite sex. It is used by married people and intimate friends in argument, when each is concerned to maintain both the status of an intimate and the status of membership of a larger group whose prestige—as masculine, or as feminine, or as educationally, socially or economically powerful—weighs in the argument. In every case, the relationship with the group dominant at the occasion of interaction is retained; it is the other relationship which bears the episode of banter, as of less social significance at the time but nevertheless requiring safeguard for the future.

Status positions may be structured according to the esteem, and so the rights and privileges, accorded them in society; in effect, this is equivalent to structuring in terms of the security within the total environment offered by a status. But in a society in which status may be gained, and therefore may also be lost, the occupancy of a status has constantly to be tested and proved. In social organizations which are instrumental in character—armies, factories and working sub-communities and the like—status changes are frequent and status is the dominant and most clearly determined value. In such organizations small group membership is of importance to the individual, both in cliques to provide mutual validation for status and in cabals to extend each person's control over the status-gaining process. Situations are therefore constantly arising in which a clique-membership status is presented in interaction situations which also involve the status of membership in the organization as a whole. In certain areas of interaction, when clique and sub-community statuses come near to equivalence in importance, banter becomes the prevailing style—it is almost impossible to behave in any other way in messrooms and canteens. The following account illustrates the sort of occasion which gives rise to banter; it is representative of many such occasions in this organization. It may be remarked, in parenthesis, that considerably less security was attached to organizational status in this particular concern than in most, largely because of a policy of “allowing responsibility to grow with the person” and an associated policy of neither discharging nor downgrading; it was therefore necessary to check continually the security (i.e. the location in the esteem structure) of one's status and the adequacy of role-playing to find out whether the disguised adjustments to the organization which were the equivalent of bowler-hatting were not taking place around one. Membership of cliques and cabals (usually with the same people in both) therefore becomes of primary importance.

At the end of a foremen’s meeting, the supervisor (Foreman A) of a department of skilled workers asked for a reconsideration of the earnings of two men who consistently failed to earn a bonus although their work was of a very high standard; they were both unmarried and were not worried about not making bonus, but he thought the special care they always gave jobs merited extra money, even though they were not liable to be met with demands to repeat jobs which had produced unsatisfactory articles. The chairman's view was that the provisions of the wage system met the case since the firm did not need articles produced to meet higher tolerances than were enough to meet design requirements, and that if
men were prepared to spend time doing this rather than in producing more in the same time, the factory lost as well as the men, and should certainly not have to pay more for doing so. There was by now fairly general discussion. At this point the supervisor received support from a departmental manager, one of a number of young men who had risen fairly rapidly in the firm. This man argued that the firm frequently needed work done requiring special care and that it should provide a financial reward to those who constantly employed it and who would be called upon on such occasions. The counter-argument, which was that such occasions were known to be allowed for by rate fixers, came from another member of the same clique (Dept. Manager B). Both became fairly involved in the positions they had taken up, and the discussion became warmer than any previous exchange in the meeting. The end came like this (as recorded on tape).

Foreman B.: You get this type of person in every department. You get the type that prefer to turn out a high class job and not bother about making bonus.

Chairman (to Foreman A.): Your men aren't complaining about this are they?

Foreman A.: No, only the rate fixer puts a time on the job, and they're taking time in excess of that.

Chairman: Well, they're below average then. And they're quite happy about not making bonus, and we're quite happy, at the moment, to have our machines run at a low utilization rate. If the time comes when we're short of machines, then we'll have to consider doing something about it.

Foreman A.: Thats all I wanted to know—the general policy. (Long pause—a feeling that the subject had not really been disposed of)

Dept. Manager B. (restating his previous argument): If we really had the class of work suitable for this type of man, then surely the men would earn bonus.

Dept. Manager A. (resuming argument): What do you mean by this class of work?

Dept. Manager B.: The high class work that these men seem to be prepared to do.

(Several voices)

Chairman (easing off): We're getting onto a rather thorny subject now. High class . . .

Dept. Manager A. (raising voice: No, No. Supposing these two characters got married or came up against it—the sort of position most of us are in—their output would probably double at the same quality. Mean-time we can't do much about it, but the existence of these two people in the factory has been quite justified.

Dept. Manager B. (grinning): Because of their low machine utilization?

In the case of this interchange, the socially dominant group was clearly the meeting, which represented indeed the factory organization itself for those present. It was necessary for departmental managers both to act out roles appropriate to their special status in it, which, as they were members of a young, rapidly promoted group, comprehended a special degree of involvement in the welfare of the firm and a capacity for ready judgment and apt verbalization. On the other hand, the intimate and valuable relationship within the clique had to be safeguarded. Short of prearranged rehearsal of serious argument, which too would have had the character of play, banter was the only way out.

The two-fold nature of the banter relationship seems to indicate that "status" is not entirely adequate as a description of a social location. It is implicit in the usage of the term that there should be incompatibility to some extent between one status and another, as there is between one role and another; if two roles are not incompatible, in any sense, (i.e., do not contain within their range of permitted behavior acts which would be inappropriate to the other) then they are, of course, one and the same. Here we have a type of situation in which a dual status is possible. The fact is that, in the interaction situation, a status is the "membership of a group and of a particular category" claimed by the individual and ad-
mitted by the group. The admission of the claim is conveyed by consensus, its rejection by the withholding of consensus.

In all societies, the joke is the short cut to consensus. And it is the characteristic double understanding of the joking relationship that permits of the maintenance of two status positions through the same unit of social action, through performance in the same "role." It allows consensus to exist on two planes, so to speak, when consensus, and the member relationship it subsumes, is almost by definition an element exclusive to one relationship at a time; the friendly ridicule of banter is an act of overt exclusiveness which, by sharing the joke with the excluded "victim," includes him in a special relationship with the actor. The effect is to maintain undamaged the status pattern—the nexus of memberships—pertaining to an individual.

There are other occasions when what we may call a primary status membership of a socially dominant group is threatened by the simultaneous presentation of an alternative, secondary, status membership, which on its side is not valuable enough to be safeguarded. However, simple rejection of a relationship is damaging to the primary status, implying a disregard for values which is dangerous to the esteem structure in which the primary status is located. The style normally used in rejection is again one which encases the act in a form of joking relationship. To use irony is to play at being friendly—at maintaining a member-relationship—while intimating enmity, rejection. In this case, the element of reassurance in the joking relationship refers to the status occupied in the group more socially significant to the occasion—the joke is shared with them at the expense of the other. With both banter and irony the first object is the defense of the primary status against the threat of the simultaneous presence of another; to accept the secondary status is to abdicate from the other.

The child, ridiculously exaggerating the strength and prowess of another, establishes a joking relationship with his peers and safeguards his position in the esteem structure of the group when it is threatened by the secondary subordinate status offered in the overweening demonstration or claims of the other. The force of the irony lies in the convention which disguises hostility in a style overtly connoting goodwill, helpfulness, friendliness.

A declaration of enmity is in fact a rejection of a secondary member-relationship to accept which would threaten the secure occupation of a primary membership. But the outright declaration of enmity would provoke a conflict which would, whatever the loss or gain which came out of it, damage the primary membership. It would damage it because consensus between an individual engaged in a conflict and those not so engaged would be impossible. The entry into irony, by establishing consensus along the line of the primary relationship through the shared joke, allows the rejection of the secondary relationship without danger to the primary. The ironic style comes a good deal into interactions engaging persons whose status is insecure or vague, and is operated especially by persons in motion through esteem systems. It may often be sequentially related to banter. There comes a period in the career of the social or occupational success when the status in a group or clique or cabal useful and significant at an earlier stage has to be safeguarded on occasions by banter, and a later period when it has to be rejected by irony. The behavior of successful Trade Union leaders and industrialists who become successful politicians may follow such a pattern as may that of women making successful marriages, children emerging from street play groups, schoolboys being made prefects, students being appointed to the University staff. It is displayed typically in some middle class treatment of Negroes and Jews, in the treatment of some adult children by parents and of some parents by their adult children. Fundamentally, its use is in those situations when primary status has to be protected without disrupting the social organization in which both primary and secondary statuses are involved. A second illustration, drawn from the same milieu as the first, may demonstrate more clearly

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3 Although consensus may be replaced by loyalty, in which consensus itself has become institutionalized, and the relationship safeguarded.
the operation of this particular style of manipulating consensus.

The manager of a small branch factory of a large concern was at the head office talking over current difficulties of selling his particular product with the sales manager and the general manager. The branch had been through a difficult period of building up production, and the rather unexpected shrinkage of the market was causing its head some concern; the discussion was therefore being carried on seriously, that is, each assumed an equally serious attitude in advancing his views. The office was closed, and there was consequently less pressure for decisions as a result of this particular discussion, but there was obvious unity in the acceptance of the purpose of the discussion and of its importance. After some time, the chairman looked in. The chairman was a man of fairly wide industrial interests and with a growing public reputation. He listened in silence for a minute and then turned to the general manager and said "But, Frank, I am right, aren't I, in thinking that sales of this particular job don't matter so much? You were saying, weren't you, a couple of days ago, that you weren't worried about selling this particular job. We had plenty of use to make of the space if it was scaled down." After the embarrassed pause which this entry provoked, the chairman rephrased the statement, using his normal, rapid, rather emphatic delivery, but winking broadly at the branch manager and the sales manager. These two became involved in the amusement which continued through several variations of the same theme, to none of which, naturally enough, could the general manager find any sufficient response. In the end, the general manager entered the amusement and the situation dissolved. There was, of course, no attempt to reconcile the attitude of involvement displayed by the general manager in the earlier part of the discussion with the markedly dissociated opinion betrayed by the chairman.

The ironic elements in the situation were the sharing of the joke with the others present, including the observer, and the superficial attitude of association with the general manager in clarifying the situation. According to the present interpretation, the chairman was engaged in rejecting a secondary status implied in a high-up, policy-making, clique relationship between himself and a man in a subordinate position in the concern, and asserting a primary status clear above all three other members of the organization present, a status, that is, in which association with the sales manager and a branch manager could be treated by him, on occasion, as equivalent or primary as well as secondary to that between himself and the general manager. Had he kept silent, he would have accepted the clique relationship implied in the secret knowledge.4

This sort of occasion occurs as one among many. To treat it in isolation is to give it, as far as the actors were concerned, an utterly disproportionate significance. Other occasions would, in fact, display quite other or even contrary significance for the status of the people involved. Interactions between members of an enduring community take on a regulatory or cybernetic character, especially when, as in an industrial concern, status changes are frequent.

Secondly, the occasion for the use of the safeguards operating through banter and irony appears only when two discrete status positions are presented to an individual simultaneously. It was perfectly possible for the clique members to occupy unreservedly and securely their status positions within the clique when interaction situations included only other members of the clique; it was similarly possible for them to act out the roles appropriate to their status within the larger groups of the organization in the absence of other members of the clique. And it is quite possible for no need for safeguarding to arise even though the clique and the major group is represented in the situation, provided that no threat to the primary status emerges from the situation.

We carry with us the capacity for acting out a number of roles, for occupying a variety of status positions. A function of that capacity is to keep the roles and status positions discrete—to act out a role in which we follow modes of behavior more or less inappropriate to other roles. The foregoing sections have reviewed the procedures usually followed when this inappropriateness becomes actually embarrassing. Normally, of course, roles are acted out in separation and without any of the embarrassment, social or moral, which may result from their juxta-

position in the same interaction situation.

In terms of social structure, cities are arenas for status-gaining or status-changing activity. They can be so by virtue of the discreteness of social institutions in them, a discreteness which is demonstrated in the functional differentiation of urban areas and in the demarcation of clearly defined sectors in the life-space of the individual. Prestige or status can be improved much more easily in one sector than in all, in one institution than in all. Occupational promotions are worked out separately in terms of improvements in class status, in prestige within the clique and so on. The embarrassments usually attendant upon change of role which may have to be overcome by banter and irony are in fact mostly avoided by resigning from one milieu or group and gaining admission to another. Status gains, that is, are not usually registered within the same groups, but by movement between groups. Urban society, because of the discreteness and multiplicity of its institutions, provides perpetual opportunities of escape from the embarrassments of a new or challenged status.

For instance, in interviews with some fifteen members of the executive grades in a factory in a large town, it appeared that more than half had moved house within two years of obtaining their biggest rise. In most cases also, the rise in occupational status had itself involved a substantial lateral move in the organization, and in some, a move from one city to another. Urban society, because of the discreteness and multiplicity of its institutions, provides perpetual opportunities of escape from the embarrassments of a new or challenged status.

In terms of a cultural tradition framed in terms of community status, this discreteness of status positions looks as if individuals in different status positions behaved as though they were different persons. This characteristic of urban society has given rise to a number of speculations about its schizophrenic nature. "As if" behavior in urban society is so functionally necessary that it has to be arranged for even when two different statuses are occupied in two groups with virtually the same membership. In those cases cited above in which there was still overlapping between, for example, neighbor group and work group, the shift in occupational status was treated by an "as if" arrangement until a move of residence could be made. As one man, who had risen rapidly to the position of deputy departmental manager but who still lived in a housing estate near the works put it "Jock's all right in the cinema queue, but its Mr. Cullen on the shop floor. If any of them call me 'Jock', then I know they're trying to start something."

The conditions affecting similar situations in small communities are different. There is no possibility of maintaining groups so discrete that status changes can be made in one sector and then be validated in others. Thus status gains in occupation, sport, political and church groups, in clubs and associations, and even through marriage tend to remain isolated. In contrast with the city factory executives, men who had risen to foreman, department manager and higher ranks in a small town factory all retained first-name relationships with the work people—not only those whom they had previously worked alongside, but newcomers also. The only cases in which promotion had been followed by a change in residence were those facilitated by the existence of a group of "firm's houses" reserved for managerial staff. It was noticeable that people at managerial level recruited directly from large cities tended to use, in their relationships with work people, the behavioral cues and status symbols current in urban society, and also to remain conscious of their stranger status for periods of up to twenty years residence in the town.

"As if" arrangements of another kind are therefore necessary in local communities, this time being directed against the acknowledgment of a particular status dissociated in rank from the community status—the position occupied in the esteem system of the whole community. In terms of the present analysis, this indicates that no break in membership is permitted; consensus has to be maintained in all interactions between members of the community. (Thus, while banter is a permitted—indeed a frequent—style, irony is not permitted, and when used isolates the actor, not the victim, from the primary group.)

During one period of field work in a factory in a small town, I had occasion to transcribe certain figures and other records kept in the office of a departmental manager in a factory. One afternoon, a conversation with the manager led to his talking about
the effects of promotion on the behavior of different men in the factory, and eventually, to something of a diatribe against one particular person who had moved up into an executive position the year before. He had tried to get support for his promotion from everybody, had blackened the man who was leaving and whose post he hoped to fill, had gone into local politics on the same side as the divisional manager, had displayed unpleasant anxiety when the time came for the decision. Now, despite his fulsome affability, he was unpopular with his colleagues, was looked on by those lower down as a talebearer, and so on. All this was delivered with gestures and emphasis distinctly more lively than previously in the conversation, which ended with this episode, both of us returning to separate desks. Later in the afternoon, he telephoned the man of whom he had been speaking; there was a question about the allocation of a morning's time put in by a shiftworker in one or the other of their departments. The whole matter, which could easily have been a matter of dispute, was handled with the greatest mateyness and ease; first names were used, there was appreciably no sense of effort in maintaining the demonstration of friendliness; there was no over-emphasis, nor, on the other hand, any discrepancy between facial expression and words or tone of voice; each other's account of the facts was fully accepted and agreement quickly reached.

Inside the space of one hour, my companion had displayed quite marked enmity and equally well marked friendship towards the same person. There was, as far as I could judge, no suspicion of awareness that there was any incompatibility between the two episodes—both were acted through as natural expressions of two distinct roles.

In addition to the safeguard styles of banter and irony, and the means of avoidance possible in urban society, there exist the devices of "as if" arrangements by which difficulties in interaction encountered by the discrepancy between status positions occupied by the same individual may be surmounted. "As if" arrangements may be subsumed under the general heading of polite fictions. The arrangements are in general directed toward the exclusion from the terms of interaction of any status occupied by a participant which is incompatible with the establishment of the consensus necessary for participant membership alongside the rest of the group.

Role displacement—the substitution of an entirely new, incompatible role for another—is as familiar a feature of the careers of most people as physiological change, and occurs as a well-marked aspect of the process of socialization. But what also occurs in socialization is a change in behavior within the same role. While expectations of behavior change with roles when the child moves out of his position in a family situation to the street group or the school or the extended family, expectations also change when the child reaches certain ages; actions greeted with the pleasant attention of laughter or affectionate remonstrance at eighteen months may arouse much less pleasant responses at three years, and violence at a later age. Socialization can indeed be seen as a process by which society continually raises standards on the role of the child in this way.

The shift of behavioral patterns within the same role is typical not only of the socialization process, but also of other constellations of institutionalized behavior. In Scotland, where Sunday is marked out with special behavior and symbols by a significantly large proportion of the population, role-behavior in the family, the extended family and in the residential sub-community, undergoes considerable change of a cyclical character. Other changes are also regularly observable at other times in the week—for instance, on Saturday afternoon, and at special periods in the year such as the summer holiday and festival days. It is not possible to regard changes of this sort as extensions of some role, since there is implicit in them the same inconsistency with the normal, everyday patterns of behavior. There is, in fact, the displacement of behavioral features which is normally associated with change of role.

In small communities, social situations of different kinds (at work, in the public house, in church, at sport, at home, in clubs) so often involve the same group membership that, as Kaufman has shown, status positions in each of them are merged in, and indistinguishable from, a generalized community status. Nevertheless, institutional behavior varies with each different situation.

encountered by the individual in a small community, and not merely with the overt purpose of the group.

In all situations which admit of typical, institutionalized, behavior, such behavior has to be validated consensually. Change from one form of behavior to another, whether through a cycle of status positions or through a cycle of institutions, denotes a change from one application of consensus to another. The establishment of consensus is mediated by the exchange of behavioral cues, sometimes obvious—as in the case of children when emerging from the school gates—sometimes extremely subtle—as in Quaker business meetings, in which unanimity has to be achieved and voting procedures are not admitted. What is conveyed through such behavioral cues is the new range of permitted behavior and its further modal definition through approval and disapproval. The outcome of the establishment of consensus is membership, not merely of the group involved in the interaction, but of a type, a category identified with some precision in the schema of the social system with which a person socialized into it operates. The congruence of such classificatory schemas in an interaction through consensus allocates a status to the participant individuals.

The classificatory schema is more refined and detailed in respect of behavioral categories lying close to the individual, that is, more familiar, than at the periphery. Social distance straightens behavior in interaction because the categories involved are peripheral to the individuals concerned, and are prescribed by a minimal range of norms. Interaction of this kind runs to stereotype behavior or more properly, cliche behavior. Foreign visitors to a country are often disconcerted to find not only that they are being treated as stereotype Englishmen, Americans, or Indians but that they in fact behaving like stereotype Englishmen, Americans, or Indians. At the other extreme, interaction between persons socialized into the same classificatory schema either through membership in the same local community or through long intimacy is prescribed by a maximal range of norms and runs to spontaneous behavior.

Spontaneity in interaction springs from a consensus so comprehensive that the behavior possible in the circumstances is no less than what each socialized individual would condone or approve in himself. Thus spontaneous interaction is determined by the existence of a consensus applying to all norms of social behavior of the system into which the individuals concerned have been socialized.

Between spontaneous and cliche behavior in interaction lies an array of possible categories of action identified in common usage as "role-playing"; such categories are marked by a restrictive, delineating, quality, with criteria to distinguish appropriate from inappropriate behavior. The criteria are of two kinds. One applies to the place in the value system occupied by the institution in which the interaction situation occurs; the other applies to the places in the esteem system occupied by the participant actors. With the first kind, institutional behavior gains in complexity and in variability the higher in the scale of value it lies. One may, for example, compare the variety of forms of religious action in the Middle Ages, especially the inclusion of spontaneous activity in art forms of poetry, music, painting and dancing with the relatively specific nature of religious action now. The higher the place occupied by an institutional form, the greater the number of social norms relevant to behavior in situations occurring in the institution. As for the second criterion, it has been sufficiently established that the esteem system of a group, community, or society, is structured according to the social norms prevailing among their members. In G. C. Homans's words, the persons coming closest to achieving the group norms hold the highest social rank.

The norms which apply to any particular interaction are a selection from the whole range applying to the whole socialized behavior common to the participants, the selection being determined by the institutional character of the interaction and by the rank of the participants. The way in which the norms are mediated into action—the way in which people make themselves aware of how to act in the situation—is by the operation of consensus. The classificatory schema referred to above may then be viewed as a

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hierarchy of consensus subtending the norms of behavior into which individuals are socialized. Differences in the social behavior of a person can be regarded as differences in the number as well as the kind of norms involved in the situation. Cliché behavior involves fewest norms, requiring little consensus. Spontaneity involves most norms, requiring maximum consensus. Between these two extremes lies social action involving varying ranges of norms determined by the values accorded to the situation and the participants and requiring an appropriate degree of consensus.

The phenomenon of the “polite fiction” appears now as an intrinsic element in social behavior. Status exists as membership first of the group in which the position is occupied and secondly of a rank order in the esteem system; status is realized only in such membership. The prerequisite of membership is consensus extending through the group in interaction. Consensus is necessary at whatever normative level interaction occurs, subtending the range of norms to which behavior in it relates. In passing from one interaction to another, the individual moves from one status to another. This usually involves both a displacement of membership and a shift in the range of social norms engaged. Both changes must be validated by the establishment of consensus in the new situation as in the old. This is accomplished naturally and with complete freedom in most cases. But, as we have seen, occasions arise when the memberships involved in two separate, although proximate, situations overlap. There is then presented a dilemma situation of two possible ranges of norms of differing coverage, each with its appropriate level of consensus. Such accidents are quite frequent in most individual's lives. When two people with a fairly intimate relationship allowing for an approximation to spontaneous behavior are joined by a third acquaintance, the change to a new consensus subtending a more restricted range of norms is almost always automatic and unthinking. Not to execute the change, or to revert to the previous consensus and normative level is, in any society, bad manners, an affront to the newcomer which lies in rejecting the status-membership claim implied in his presence. It may well be, of course, that experience of occasions on which such rejection has occurred accidentally or intentionally, or when cues have been misinterpreted as rejection, arouses some fleeting sense of artificiality in making adjustments of consensus in this way. More definitely, “as if” arrangements in which two status memberships are occupied on different occasions in a group with the same participant members induce such a sense. In military service, the dual nature of the relationship of a superior officer or N.C.O. with the group immediately under his command is given acknowledgment in the phrase “on parade, on parade; off parade, off parade”.

Embarrassment arises through the failure to establish or maintain consensus about the range of social norms affecting behavior in an interaction. It is potential typically in situations in which two statuses are presented simultaneously. Two devices are commonly used to avoid embarrassment. In one kind of situation dealt with in this paper, the status alternative to that occupied by a membership of the group dominant in the interaction is lower in the esteem system operating for the group; the ironic style admits of rejection of the lower status while safeguarding consensus through a joking relationship with the dominant group and the primary status within it, a consensus which might be broken by a display of bad manners. In the other kind of situation reviewed, the secondary status presented is also rejected, but safeguarded for the future, again through the joking relationship. We have called the two styles irony and banter, with some sense of straining ordinary usage, because the meanings of the two words contain, without precision it is true, the implications of a consensus withheld from the recipient in the case of irony, and shared with him in the case of banter.

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Fowler, in distinguishing the correct usages of humor, wit, sarcasm, irony, etc., presents them in an interesting table, in which the aim or motive of irony is identified as “exclusiveness,” its province as “statement of facts,” its method or means as “mystification” and the audience as “an inner circle.” (H. W. Fowler, A Dictionary of Modern English Usage, Oxford: 1926, p. 241.)