# **Prioritizing other impacts over social inequality ideologically justifies self -evaluation processes that are congruent with the disproportionate distribution of society’s resources.when evaluating impacts, de valuing structural inequality’s significance confirms the self-view that a favorable social position is justified based on objective superiority.we must reject therefore reject impact evaluations that confirm the legitimacy of privileged positions.**

Stolte 83 (John F. Stolte, Adjunct Professor University of Texas MD Anderson School of Health Professions Professor Emeritus Northern Illinois University P.H.D. in Sociology at University of Washington June 1983 " The Legitimation of Structural Inequality: Reformulation and Test of the Self-Evaluation Argument" American Sociological Review , Jun., 1983, Vol. 48, No. 3"THE LEGITIMATION OF STRUCTURAL INEQUALITY: REFORMULATION AND TEST OF THE SELF EVALUATION ARGUMENT\*" )

Different in many ways, Marx's radical conflict theory (1886), Mosca's elite conflict theory (1939), and Parsons's functional theory (1949) are similar in one respect. Each describes an important process in stratification: **structural inequality is ideologically justified so as to "allocate feelings of potency, competence, and, above all, importance and self-worth in a manner congruent with (the distribution of) primary resources" (power, wealth, and pres- tige**) (Della Fave, 1980:959). Della Fave amplifies this insight, synthesizing ideas from Mead's (1934) theory of the self-concept and Bem's (1967) theory of self-perception. According to Mead, objectivity of self-view is promoted by seeing oneself from the per- spective of the "generalized other," a compos- ite conception of attitudes and expectations held in general by others toward the self. Mead used the economic marketplace to illustrate the impact of the "generalized other" on the self- concept (Reck, 1964). A person learns the "objective" value of an economic good through observing the price others regularly pay for it. Similarly, a person gets a sense of self-worth through the reflected appraisals, high or low, received generally across a career of symbolic interactions. 'Mead's theory is compatible with Bem's (1967) self-perception approach, subsumed as a special case within attribution theory (Kelley, 1967). A person looks at his/her own behavior as something to explain. S/he makes judgments about (attributions of) causes, in a manner taken to be reasonable with reference to an external, objective observer, thus achieving an explanation. **Della Fave argues that the "ex- ternal observer" of attribution theory is closely analogous to "the generalized other" of sym- bolic interaction theory.2 Considered in the context of structural in- equality, the two theories link self-evaluation and legitimation. If it is evident to a person that s/he occupies a favorable social position, s/he will develop a favorable self-evaluation. The evident facts of the situation and the positive reflected appraisals confirm that self-view. To an objective observer ("the generalized other"), it would seem reasonable to attribute the advantaged position to the "objective" superiority of the self in competence, in morality, etc. The person thus comes to be- lieve that s/he deserves to-occupy a privileged position.** Conversely, if it is apparent to a per- son that s/he occupies a disadvantaged social position s/he will develop an unfavorable self- evaluation. The negative reflected appraisals and the obvious facts of the situation lead the person to attribute his/her relative deprivation to the "objective" inferiority of the self. Con- sequently, the person will come to believe that s/he deserves to be located where s/he is lo- cated in the structure of inequality. Both ad- vantaged and disadvantaged actors will there- fore come to accept the structure of inequality as legitimate, right, and reasonable.