**INTRODUCTION**

- **Social Interaction** - the process by which people act and react in relation to others
- Members of every society rely on social structure to make sense out of everyday situations.
- The world can be confusing or disorienting - and even frightening - when society's rules are unclear.

- What concept does this remind you of?
  - Culture Shock
  - Durkheim’s Anomie
Take about 30 seconds and complete the statement “I am ________” as many times as you can.

We will revisit this list later in the lesson, so keep it handy.
Status - a social position that a person holds
- Part of our social identity and helps define our relationship to others.
- Examples: Mother, Brother, Student, Paper Boy

Status Set - all the statuses a person holds at a given time
- Changes over the life course.
- Example: It is possible to be an aunt and an employee and a spouse and a religious leader and...

Master Status - a status that has special importance for social identity, often shaping a person's entire life
- Can be negative or positive.
- Examples: Disabled, Homosexual, Racial Minority
Ascribed & Achieved Status

**Ascribed Status** - a social position a person receives at birth or takes involuntarily later in life
- Examples: Female, Asian, First-Born

**Achieved Status** - a social position a person takes on voluntarily that reflects personal ability and effort
- Examples: Honor Student, Attorney

Most statuses involve a combination of ascription and achievement.
- People's ascribed statuses influence the statuses they achieve.
- Example: It is more difficult for a Hispanic female to become a doctor than it is for a white male.
Did you write down any statuses?
Which of them are ascribed and which are achieved?
Are any of them master statuses?

Additional Info on TST Results
**Roles**

- **Role** - behavior expected of someone who holds a particular status
  - A person *holds* a status and *performs* a role.
  - Both statuses and roles vary by culture.
  - Actual role performance varies according to an individual's unique personality.
  - Example: As an employee, one role you must perform is arriving on time.

- **Role Set** - a number of roles attached to a single status
  - Example: Mothers have to do a variety of things because they hold that status, such as give birth, feed the children, set rules, etc.
  - Similarly, think of all the things you have to do because you’re a student!
Roles

Role Conflict & Role Strain

Role Conflict - a conflict among the roles connected to two or more statuses

- We experience this when we find ourselves pulled in various directions as we try to respond to the many statuses that we hold.
- Ex: Holding off on having kids for a career. Others?
- Responses:
  - Deciding something “has to go.”
  - Separating parts of our lives so that we perform roles for each status at distinct times and/or in distinct settings.
    - Ex: “Leaving the Job at Work.” Others?

Role Strain - tension among the roles connected to a single status

- Ex: Imagine that you need to study for an exam, but you also have a paper due and you do not have time for both - this is role strain!
Role Exit - the process by which people disengage from important social roles

- Process of “Becoming an Ex” (Ebaugh)
  1. Starts with doubting ability to continue in a certain role.
  2. Imagine alternative roles.
  3. Decide to pursue a new life.

- Past roles continue to influence our lives.
  - “Exes” carry with them a self-image shaped by an earlier role, which can interfere with building a new sense of self.

- Exes must also rebuild relationships with people who knew them in their earlier life.
  - This includes learning new social skills.

Examples: Ex-Wife, Retired Teacher
**The Social Construction of Reality** - the process by which people creatively shape reality through social interaction

- Although behavior is guided by status and role, we have the ability to shape who we are and to guide what happens from moment to moment.
  - Reality is not as fixed as we may think.
- Social interaction is a complex negotiation that builds reality.
**Social Construction of Reality**

- **Thomas Theorem** - situations that are defined as real are real in their consequences (W.I. Thomas 1966)
  - Ex: Yelling “FIRE!” in a theater → People will run whether there is a fire or not!
  - Prejudice → Discrimination
  - Ex: **Cologne & Confidence**

- **Ethnomethodology** - the study of the way people make sense of their everyday surroundings (Harold Garfinkel 1967)
  - Everyday behavior rests on a number of assumptions.
    - Ex: How are you? = Polite
  - One good way to discover the assumptions we make about reality is to purposely break the rules.
    - Ex: Elevator Experiment → Everyone knows the basic script for riding an elevator involves getting in and then turning around and facing the doors. If you face the back, and make people question their assumptions about elevator riding, people react strangely and this is a classic ethnomethodology experiment.
  - **Other Examples**
As we present ourselves in everyday situations, we reveal information - consciously and unconsciously - to others.

*Presentation of Self* - a person's efforts to create specific impressions in the minds of others

- This process is referred to as *impression management*.
- How do we do this?
  - Everything we do! How we talk, dress, walk, etc.
Goffman argued that people live their lives much like actors performing on a stage.

**Dramaturgical Analysis** - the study of social interaction in terms of theatrical performance

- Performance includes our statuses (parts), our roles (scripts), the way we dress (costume), the objects we carry (props), where we are (the set), and even our tone of voice and gestures (demeanor).

- Example: Doctor’s Office (in text): Others
Nonverbal Communication - communication using body movements, gestures, and facial expressions rather than speech

- Examples: Winking, Posture, Gait
  - People use many parts of the body to convey information to others through body language.
  - Facial expressions are the most important type of body language.
- Eye contact is another key element of NC.
  - We typically use EC to invite social interaction (or maintain it).
- Hands also speak for us.
- Gestures supplement spoken words.

Body Language & Deception
- In everyday performances, unintended body language can contradict our planned meaning.
- Because nonverbal communication is hard(er) to control, it offers clues to deception.
Gender & Performance

- Gender is a central element in personal performances.
  - What are some ways that we “do gender” or “perform gender”?
    - Costume, Word Choice, Props
  - Demeanor - the way we act and carry ourselves
    - Is a clue to social power because powerful people enjoy more freedom in how they act.
    - Since women generally occupy positions of lesser power, demeanor is a gender issue as well.
  - Use of Space
    - The more power you have, the more space you use.
    - Our culture traditionally has measured femininity by how little space women occupy - the standard of daintiness - and masculinity how much territory a man controls - the standard of turf.
    - Personal Space - the surrounding area over which a person makes some claim to privacy
      - Men (with their greater social power) often intrude into women’s personal space.
      - If a woman moves into a man's personal space, however, he is likely to take it as a sign of sexual interest.
Staring, Smiling & Touching

Eye Contact
- Eye contact encourages interaction.
- Women hold eye contact more than men,
- But men have their own brand of eye contact: staring.
  - (Some argue that) when men stare at women they are claiming social dominance and defining women as sexual objects.

Smiling
- Although it often shows pleasure, smiling can also be a sign of trying to please someone or of submission.
  - Women smile more often than men.
- People everywhere smile! But culture plays a part in specifying what situations trigger which emotions.

Touching
- Mutual touching suggests intimacy and caring.
  - Apart from close relationships, touching is generally something that men do to women, and (some claim) it amount to a subtle ritual by which men claim dominance over women.
  - Mutual touching and personal space norms also vary by culture.
    - Examples?

Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?
As carefully as individuals may craft their performances, slip-ups of all kinds occur. The result is *embarrassment*, which is discomfort following a spoiled performance.

- Goffman calls this “losing face”.
- Embarrassment is an ever-present danger because idealized performances usually contain some deception.
- Additionally, most performances involve juggling so many elements that one thoughtless moment can shatter the intended impression.
Even when we suspect others are putting on an act, we are unlikely to challenge their performance.

An audience often overlooks flaws in a performance, allowing an actor to avoid embarrassment.

- If we do point out a misstep, we do it quietly and only to help someone avoid an even greater loss of face.
  - Ex: “Psst... your fly is down.”
- Often members of an audience actually help the performer recover a flawed performance.
  - This is known as tact, which is helping someone “save face.”
  - Ex: “I think what you meant to say is...”
- Tact is common because embarrassment creates discomfort for both the actor and everyone else as well.
  - People who observe awkward behavior are reminded of how fragile their own performances often are.
  - Since we all help construct reality, we help others along the way to ensure the survival of the reality we have all helped to construct.
Three Applications

INTERACTION IN EVERYDAY LIFE
**EMOTIONS: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF FEELING**

- Although emotions seem very personal and internal, society guides our emotional life.
- Emotions serve a social purpose - they support group life by allowing us to overcome our self-centeredness and build connections with others.
- The Cultural Side of Emotions - culture plays an important role in guiding human emotions.
  - Culture defines what triggers an emotion.
  - Culture provides rules for the display of emotions.
  - Culture guides how we value emotions.
- Emotions on the Job
  - Hochschild (1979/1983) explains that the typical company tries to regulate not only the behavior of its employees but also their emotions.
    - Ex: Flight Attendants - Emotional Scripts
    - Modern Research
- Main Point: We socially construct our emotions as part of our everyday reality, a process sociologists call *emotion management*. 
Language is the thread that weaves members of a society into the symbolic web we call culture.

Language communicates not only a surface reality but also deeper levels of meaning.

One such level involves gender; language defines men and women differently in terms of both power and value.
Language & Power
- Men often use language to establish control over their surroundings.
  - A man attaches a female pronoun to items because it reflects the power of ownership.
  - Maleness is also the **neutral default**, reflecting our androcentricity (e.g., male-centeredness).

Language & Value
- Typically the English language treats as masculine whatever has greater value, force or significance.
- Language also confers two different values on the two sexes.
  - Articles: [Gender & Language](#)
  - Cycle: Language both mirrors social attitudes and helps perpetuate them.
The Foundation of Humor

- Humor arises from *contradiction*, ambiguity, and double meanings found in different definitions of the same situation.
  - The greater the opposition or difference between the two definitions of reality, the greater the humor.
- A joke is well told if the comedian creates the sharpest possible opposition between the realities.
  - Film: “The Aristocrats” Trailer
The Dynamics of Humor: “Getting It”
- To “get” humor, you must understand both the conventional and the unconventional realities well enough to appreciate their difference.
- Our enjoyment of a joke is increased by the pleasure of figuring out all the pieces needed to “get it.”
- In addition, getting the joke makes you an “insider.”
- Not getting a joke leads to frustration.
- If a joke has to be explained, it isn't very funny.
The Topics of Humor

- Humor rarely travels well.
- Topics that lend themselves to double meanings or controversy generate humor.
  - This controversy often walks a fine line between what is funny and what is “sick.”
  - Example: [Dead Baby Jokes](#)
- Every social group considers certain topics too sensitive for humorous treatment.
  - Ex: 9/11 in USA - “I → NY”
  - Ex: Nazis/Holocaust in Germany
The Functions of Humor - What are they?

- Humor works as a safety valve for potentially disruptive sentiments.
- Humor provides an acceptable way to discuss a sensitive topic without appearing to be serious.
- People also use humor to relieve tension in uncomfortable situations.
- Establishing a bond between people.
Humor & Conflict

- Humor can also be used to put down others.
- Real conflict may be masked by humor in situations where one or both parties choose not to bring the conflict out into the open.
- “Put-down” jokes make one category of people feel good at the expense of another.
- Ethnic conflict is one driving force behind humor in most of the world.
  - The typical ethnic joke makes fun of some disadvantaged category of people, at the same time making the joke teller feel superior.
  - Disadvantaged people also make fun of the powerful, although usually with some care.
    - For instance, people target their leaders with humor.
Social interaction is an important part of our lives.

We each occupy many roles and statuses.

We are all social actors playing out these roles!

Reality is socially constructed.

- For example, we socially construct feelings, gender (through language), and humor.

Any questions?