Social Interaction

Elements of Social Interaction

Statuses

- Positions in society that are used to classify individuals in a hierarchical structure
- Ascribed Status: one that is given involuntarily, due to factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, and family background
- Achieved Status: gained as a result of one's efforts or choices
- Master Status: Status by which a person is most identified
    - Typically, the most important status that a person holds and affects all aspects of that person's life.
    - Generally, how people view themselves and holds symbolic value
    - Pigeonholding: may view a person only through the lens of their master status

Roles

- Each status has a **role**: set of beliefs, values, attitudes, and norms that define expectations for those who hold the status.
- Role performance: carrying out of behaviors that are associated with a given role.
- Role Partner: the person with whom one is interacting
- Role Set: various roles associated with a status
- Role Conflict: difficulty in satisfying the requirements or expectations of multiple roles
- Role Strain: difficulty in satisfying multiple requirements of the same role
- Role Exit: dropping of one identity for another

Groups

- Consists of two or more people who share similar characteristics and a sense of unity.
- Dyad: two-person group. Triad: three-person group
- As group size increases, intimacy is traded for stability
- Common characteristics that are shared by a social group include: values, interests, ethnicity, social background, family ties, and political representation.
- Social interaction is the most important characteristic that strengthens a social group
- Meet many basic human needs: provide an opportunity to belong and be accepted; offer protection, safety, and support.
- Peer Group: defined by association of self-selected equals around similar interests, ages, and statuses.
    - Provide an opportunity for friendship and feelings of belonging.
- Family Group: determined by birth, adoption and marriage.
    - Joins members of different ages, sexes, generations through emotional ties.
    - Can sometimes be filled with conflict
        - Especially true during adolescent years; when peer groups compete with family groups.
    - May also struggle with cultural gaps and social differences between generations.
- In-Groups: groups where an individual belongs
    - Contrasted with **out-groups**: individual competes or is in opposition with

- Reference Groups: establish the terms by which individuals evaluate themselves

Primary and Secondary Groups
- Primary Group: interactions are direct, with close bonds providing warm, personal and intimate relationships to members
  - Often last a long period of time
  - E.g. – core group of friends, family, members of a team
- Secondary Group: interactions are superficial and there are few emotional bonds.
  - Typically, last for a short period of time
  - E.g. – students working together for a group project.

Community and Society
- Community (*Geminschaft*): groups united by feelings of togetherness due to shared beliefs, ancestry, or geography
  - E.g. – families and neighborhoods
- Society (*Gesellschaft*): groups that are formed because of mutual self-interests working together toward the same goal
  - E.g. – companies and countries

Observing and Analyzing Groups
- Interaction Process Analysis: technique for observing, classifying, and measuring the interactions within small groups
- System for multiple level observation of groups (SYMLOG): revised version of the above
  - Belief is that there are three fundamental dimensions of interaction:
    - Dominance vs submission
    - Friendliness vs unfriendliness
    - Instrumentally controlled vs emotionally expressive
- Group Conformity: group holds power over its members which creates pressure that ultimately shapes members' behaviors.
  - Individuals conform in an attempt to fit in and be accepted by the group
  - Individuals will often participate in behavior that they normally wouldn't
- Groupthink: refers to group conformity, and occurs when members begin to focus solely on ideas generated within the group while ignoring outside ideas.

Networks
- The observable pattern of social relationships among individuals or groups.
- These patterns can be determined by mapping the interactions between individual units
- Network Redundancy: overlapping connections with the same individual
- Analysis is used to gain understanding of the actions of individuals and groups to study the broader social structure
- Immediate Networks: dense with strong ties
- Distant Networks: looser and contain weaker ties
- Combination of immediate and distant network provides the most benefit to individuals since they can work complementarily to provide different resources.

Organizations

- Entities that are set up to achieve specific goals and are characterized by having a structure and a culture
- Everyone is involved with multiple organizations throughout their lifetime: school, sports teams, companies, music groups, etc.
    - As such, the study of these is at the heart of sociology
- Formal Organization: different from groups in many ways
    - Continue despite the departure of an individual member
    - Have expressed goals that are generally recorded in written format
    - Organizations have enforcement procedures that seek to control the activities of their members
    - Characterized by the hierarchical allotment of formal roles or duties to members
- Characteristic Institution: basic of organization of society is found here
    - In modern times this is a **bureaucracy**
- Bureaucracy: rational system of political organization, administration, discipline, and control
    - Generally, has six characteristics:
        - Paid, nonelected officials on a fixed salary
        - Officials who are provided rights and privileges from making a career in holding office
        - Regular salary increases, seniority rights, promotion upon passing exams or milestones
        - Officials who enter organization by holding an advance degree or training
        - Responsibilities, obligations, privileges and work procedures that are rigidly defines
        - Responsibility for meeting the demands of one's position
    - **Iron law of oligarchy:** democratic or bureaucratic systems naturally shift to being ruled by an elite group
- Mcdonaldization: Shift in focus towards efficiency, predictability, calculability, and control in societies

Makes them slow to change and less efficient

Self-Presentation and Interacting with Others

- Self-Presentation: process of displaying oneself to society through culturally accepted behaviors. Used interchangeable with **impression management**

Expressing and Detecting Emotions

- Basic Model of Emotional Expression: emotional expression involves a number of components: facial expressions, behaviors, postures, vocal change, and physiological changes
    - Darwin assumed that expression is like evolution and should be similar across cultures
    - Stated that animals exhibited muscle actions that are similar to humans.
    - Researchers have found that many basic human emotions are universally experienced and the corresponding facial expressions are recognized

- Appraisal Model: closely relates to the above model and states that there a biologically predetermined expressions once an emotion is experienced.
- Social Construct Model: assumes that there is no biological basis for emotions
  - Emotions are based on experiences and the situational context only
  - Suggests that certain emotions can only exist in certain social encounters
  - Emotions are displayed differently (play different roles) in different cultures.
  - One must be familiar with social norms for a certain emotion to perform the corresponding correct emotional behavior
- Display Rules: cultural expectations of emotions
  - Govern which emotions can be expressed and to what degree.
  - May differ as a function of culture, gender or family background
- Cultural Syndrome: Shared set of beliefs, attitudes, norms, values, and behaviors among members of the same culture
  - Influence the rules for expressing and suppressing emotions and can sometimes influence the way some emotions are experienced.

Impression Management
- Attempt to influence how others perceive us. Done through the regulation or controlling of information in social interactions. Used synonymously with self-presentation.
- Authentic Self: describes who person actually is
- Ideal Self: who we would like be under optimal circumstances
- Tactical Self: who we market ourselves to be when we adhere to others' expectations.
- Look on page 335 for table of common impression management strategies

Dramaturgical Approach
- how individuals create images of themselves in various situations.
- A person's status can be likened to that person's part in the performance and role in a script.
  - Front stage: where the actor is in front of the audience and performs according to the setting, role and script
    - Conforms to the image that he wants others to see
  - Back Stage: actor is not being observed by an audience and is free to act in ways that may not be congruent with his desired public image.

Two Part Self Theory
- **"I"** – creative expression of the individual
- **"Me"** – part of self that is response to the environment

Verbal and Nonverbal Communication
- Communication: ability to convey information by speech, writing, signals or behavior
  - Foundation of social interaction and is often used to elicit changes, generate action, create understanding, share a point of view or inform.
- Verbal Communication: transmission of information by using words.
  - Often dependent on nonverbal cues for the receiver to understand the sender's full meaning
- Nonverbal Communication: how people communicate without words

- Function in expressing emotion, conveyance of attitudes and personality traits, and facilitation of verbal communication
- Often dictated by culture. E.g. – in U.S eye contact is needed to seem trustworthy

Verbal	Nonverbal
Spoken language	Facial expressions
Written language (print and electronic)	Body language (posture)
Sign languages (American Sign Language)	Gestures
Tactile languages (Braille alphabet)	Tone of voice (prosody)
	Eye contact
	Amount of personal space

Animal Signals and Communications

- Any behavior of one animal that affects the behavior of another
- Nonhuman animals communicate with one another to convey information such as emotions, intent, status, health and the location of resources
  - Use nonverbal means like body language, rudimentary facial expressions, visual displays, scents, and vocalization
- Body language can indicate if an animal is frightened, aggressive, relaxed or embarrassed, can also signify a readiness to mate
- Facial expressions seem to be more highly conserved between species than body language
  - E.g. – showing teeth and lunging forward signals aggression
- Visual displays are common in sex discrimination for birds
  - Bioluminescence, colour plumage (peacocks), and dancing are used for visual communication.
- Scent communication is commonly used to communicate interspecifically (between members of the same species) and interspecifically (between members of different species)
  - E.g. – pheromones or skunks
- Vocalization is also common. Various levels of sophistication
  - E.g. – prairie dogs have different noises for different types of predators. Or bird calls