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 (Gemeinschaft)**: 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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbal</th>
<th>Nonverbal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spoken language</td>
<td>Facial expressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written language (print and electronic)</td>
<td>Body language (posture)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sign languages (American Sign Language)</td>
<td>Gestures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tactile languages (Braille alphabet)</td>
<td>Tone of voice (prosody)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eye contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Amount of personal space</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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