

# CHAPTER 5



## SOCIAL INTERACTION AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE



- Seppala, Emma and Marissa King “Burnout at Work Isn’t Just About Exhaustion. It’s Also About Loneliness” *Harvard Business Review* June 29, 2017 <https://hbr.org/2017/06/burnout-at-work-isnt-just-about-exhaustion-its-also-about-loneliness>
- Data from University of Chicago General Social Survey <http://gss.norc.org/>
- Finds rising level of exhaustion correlated with loneliness
- “Emotional Exhaustion”
- Resilience
  - ✦ **Promote a workplace culture of inclusion and empathy.**
  - ✦ **Encourage employees throughout the organization to build developmental networks.**
  - ✦ **Celebrate collective successes.**

# LEARNING OUTCOMES

- 1 Explain the importance of social interaction and its relationship to social structure
- 2 Describe and illustrate status set, ascribed and achieved statuses, master status, and status inconsistency
- 3 Explain how and why social roles differ, and how people cope with role conflict and role strain

# LEARNING OUTCOMES

- 4 **Compare and illustrate symbolic interaction, social exchange, and feminist explanations of social interaction**
- 5 **Describe and illustrate nonverbal communication, its importance, and cross-cultural variations**
- 6 **Summarize the benefits and costs of online interaction**

# Key Topics



- 5-1 Social Structure
- 5-2 Status
- 5-3 Role
- 5-4 Explaining Social Interaction
- 5-5 Nonverbal Communication
- 5-6 Online Interaction

# Key Terms

Social Interaction	The process by which we act toward and react to people around us
Social Structure	organized pattern of behavior that governs people's relationships
Status	Social position that a person occupies in a society
Role	The behavior expected of a person who has a particular status
Social Construction	(Symbolic Interactionism) Perception of reality is a creation of the social interaction of individuals and groups.

# Social Structure



## **Social Interaction**

- The process by which we act toward and react to people around us
- Central to all human social activity
- Affected by elements of social structure
- People influence each other's behavior.
- **Exchange Theory:** People respond based on what they think is at stake for them.

# Social Structure



## **Social structure**

- An organized pattern of behavior that governs people's relationships
- Makes life orderly and predictable
- Includes
  - status,
  - roles,
  - groups,
  - organizations, and institutions.



# Status



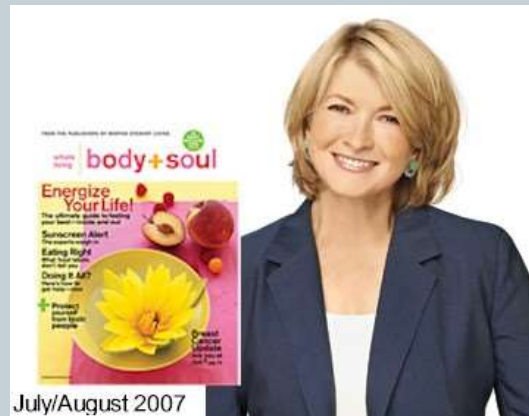
## **Status**

- A social position
- Examples: student, professor, son, mother, employee
- Statuses can be ranked but do not always imply differing amounts of prestige. (Stratification)

# Status



- **Status set:** a collection of social statuses that an individual occupies
- Changes throughout the life course
- Statuses are always relational—linked to other statuses.
  - Employer—employee
  - Parent—child
  - Homemaker - Felon



# Status



- An **ascribed** status is a position that we are born into—female, African American.
- An **achieved** status is a position that we have through choice—friend, athlete.
- How does status enter into the Nature vs. Nurture debate?

# Status—Application



Identify whether it is ascribed or achieved.

- Latino
- Bartender
- Father
- Nurse
- Adolescent

# Status



## **Master status:**

- Determines a person's identity
- Highly visible
- Shapes a person's entire life
- Examples: gender, race

# Status



- **Status inconsistency** refers to occupying social positions that create conflict because they are ranked differently.
- A person who is both a student and an instructor may experience status inconsistency.

A recent [analysis of government survey data](#) by economists at the University of British Columbia found that the wage gap between other castes and Dalits has decreased to 21 percent, down from 36 percent in 1983, less than the gap between white male and black male workers in the United States. The education gap has been halved.

(<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/22/>)

# Role



- **Role:** behavior that is expected of a person in a particular status
  - A student is expected to read, take notes, write papers, and attend class.
- Roles are based on mutual obligations.
  - A professor must grade the papers written by the students.

# Role—Application



Describe the role for each of these statuses:

- Attorney
- Son
- Waiter
- Mother





# Role



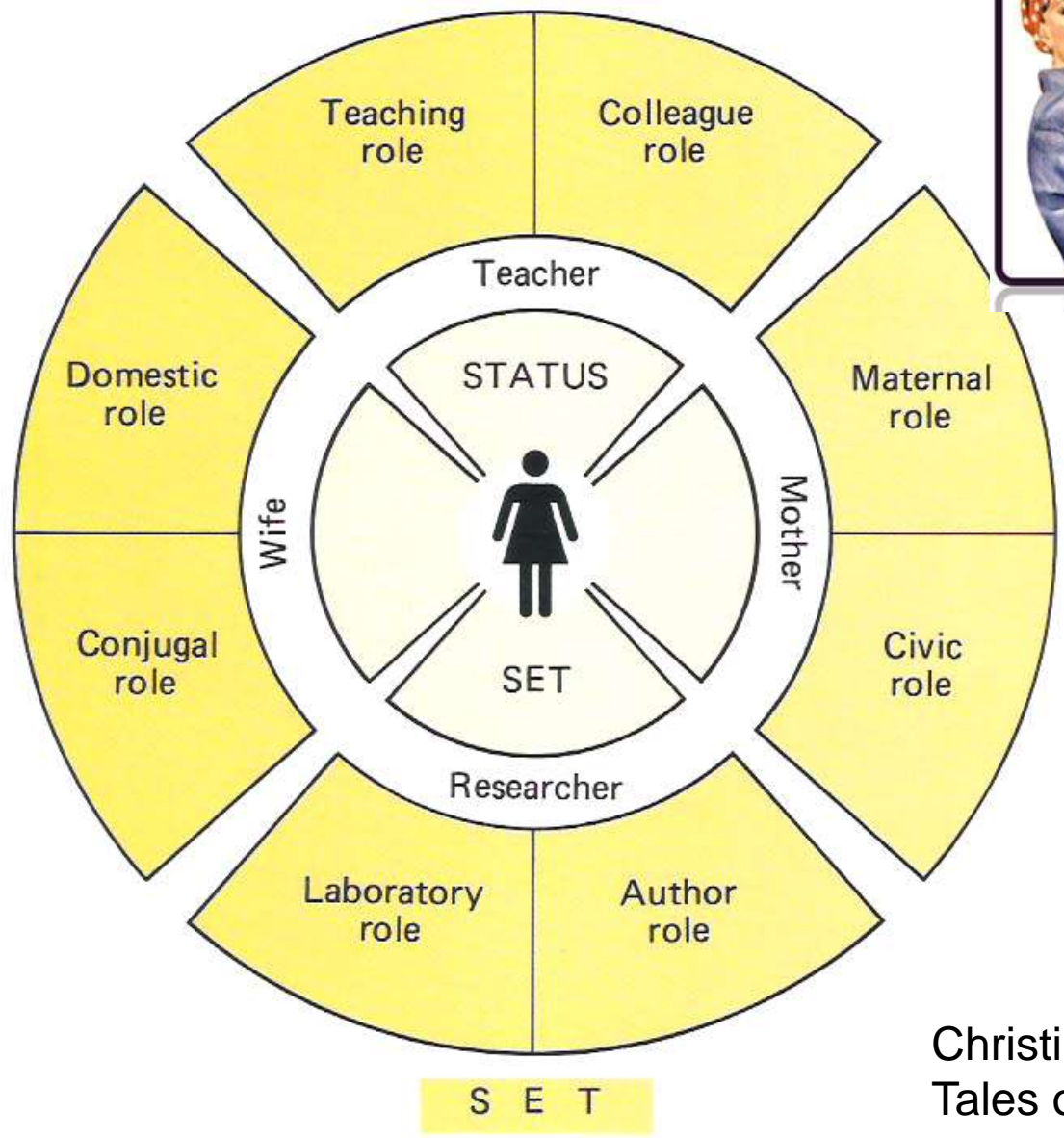
- **Role performance:** the actual behavior of a person who occupies a status
- Individuals enact roles differently.
  - Personality – Nature?
  - Circumstances – Nurture?
  - Eg. An extrovert will play the role of student differently from an introvert.

# Role



- **Role set:** the different roles attached to a single status
- A student may interact differently with a professor and a fellow student.
- A nurse will interact differently with a doctor, another nurse, and a patient.

Status Set and Role Set **R O L E**



Christine Oppong –  
Tales of Bolivia

# Role



**Role conflict:** the frustration and uncertainties a person experiences when confronted with the requirements of two or more statuses

- Examples: being a supervisor and a friend; being a mother, student, employee, and volunteer

# Role



- **Role strain:** involves incompatible demands among roles within a single status
- Examples: an employee with more than one boss; nurses who must be both compassionate and firm

# Role—Application



Is it role conflict or strain?

- A man finds it difficult to be a politician because he doesn't like public speaking.
- A mom cannot take time off from work to go to her daughter's soccer match.
- A friend asks a student for assistance in cheating.

# Role



## Ways we cope with role conflict and strain

- Deny the problem.
- Compromise or negotiate.
- Set priorities.
- Compartmentalize
- Refuse more roles.
- Exit a role or status.

# Explaining Social Interaction



*The chaotic and crowded back-stage conditions in many restaurant kitchens stand in stark contrast with the efficient and relaxed front-stage behavior of its servers. Can you think of a situation where your front- and back-stage behaviors differ dramatically?*



# Functionalist Explanations

## Emile Durkheim



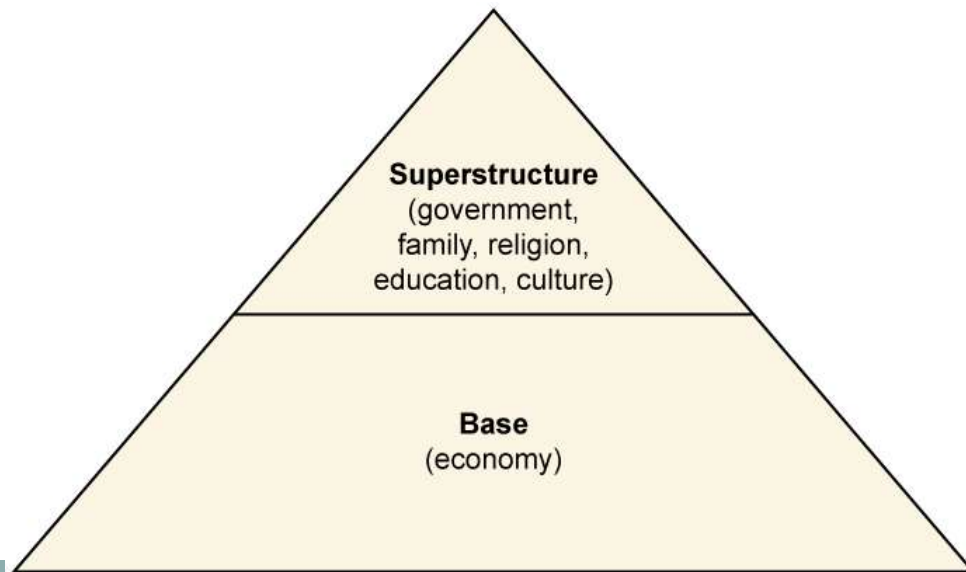
- Society is greater than the sum of its parts – connectivity
- **Collective Conscience** - Communal beliefs, morals, and attitudes of a society the
- **Social integration**, or the strength of ties that people have to their social groups, is a key factor in social life
  - Mechanical Solidarity
  - Organic Solidarity
- **Realism**: External social realities are independent of the perception of individuals

# Conflict Explanations

## Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels

- Conflict in society as the primary means of change

“Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other—Bourgeoisie and Proletariat” (Marx and Engels 1848).



# Explaining Social Interaction



## **Conflict Theory**

- Four specific types of alienation
  - *Alienation from the product of one's labor*
  - *Alienation from the process of one's labor*
  - *Alienation from others*
  - *Alienation from one's self*

# Explaining Social Interaction



**Symbolic interaction theory** examines how people communicate knowledge, ideas, beliefs, and attitudes and how they interpret situations.

- The **social construction of reality** occurs as people perceive and understand through social interaction.
  - Monday is Monday because people agree that it is.
  - Race is constructed differently in different societies.

# Symbolic Interaction

## Max Weber

- **Class** - Society is split between owners and laborers.
- **Status** is based on noneconomic factors such as education, kinship, and religion.

Both status and class determined an individual's power, or influence over ideas.

- **Rationalization** – society is one built around logic and efficiency rather than morality or tradition
- **Iron cage** - the individual is trapped by institutions and bureaucracy

# Explaining Social Interaction



- **Self-fulfilling prophecy Thomas theorem**

- Formulated in 1928 by [W. I. Thomas](#) and [D. S. Thomas](#)

“If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences.

- **Empiricism** – Realities in the outside world are the product of individual perceptions.

# Explaining Social Interaction



- **Ethnomethodology:** studies how people construct and learn to share definitions of reality that make interaction possible (Harold Garfinkel, 1967)
  - People make sense of their everyday lives through observing conversations and general rules.
  - Ethnomethodologists study interaction by analyzing conversations and violating rules.
  - Garfinkel tested people's reactions to unexpected behavior.

# Explaining Social Interaction—Application



How might ethnomethodologists question the assumptions of ...?

- A restaurant
- A supermarket
- A family dinner



# Explanations

## Erving Goffman



- Erving Goffman analyzed social life as theater.
- **Impression management** involves presenting ourselves in a favorable light by controlling settings, appearances, and manner.
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zlRx8GClxYY>

# Explaining Social Interaction



- **Dramaturgical analysis:** examines social interaction as if it were a stage where people act out different scenes
- *Impression management:* suppressing unfavorable traits and stressing favorable ones
- *Front stage:* where the actual performance takes place
- *Backstage:* a place, concealed from the audience, where people can relax or prepare
- Erving Goffman -

# Explanations Erving Goffman



We use expressive resources in impression management.

- The *setting*: physical space
- *Appearance*: clothing, hairstyles, props
- *Manner*: how we act

# Improvisational Theater – Acting as Truth

1. Take two minutes to think of a situation involving three people in which there is a role conflict
2. Share your situation with the class
3. Assign three actors to take these roles
  1. Variation: actors do not all know the full story
4. Debrief

## **Examples:**

- A job interview
- A difference of opinion with a professor
- A first date

# Explanations—Application



How might you manage the setting, appearance, and manner for these situations?

- A job interview
- A difference of opinion with a professor
- A first date

# Explaining Social Interaction



**Social Exchange Theory:** assumes that social interaction is based on maximizing rewards and minimizing costs

- Interactions are most satisfying when there is a balance.

# Explaining Social Interaction—Application



What are the potential costs and benefits of these interactions?

- A student and professor
- A first date
- A friendship

# Explaining Social Interaction



- Feminist theories:** study interaction according to gender roles
- Many feminist scholars maintain that interaction often involves a dominant-subordinate relationship in which men are usually dominant.
  - **Emotional labor** is the management of feelings to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display.
  - Women are more likely than men to have jobs where they are required to perform emotional labor.

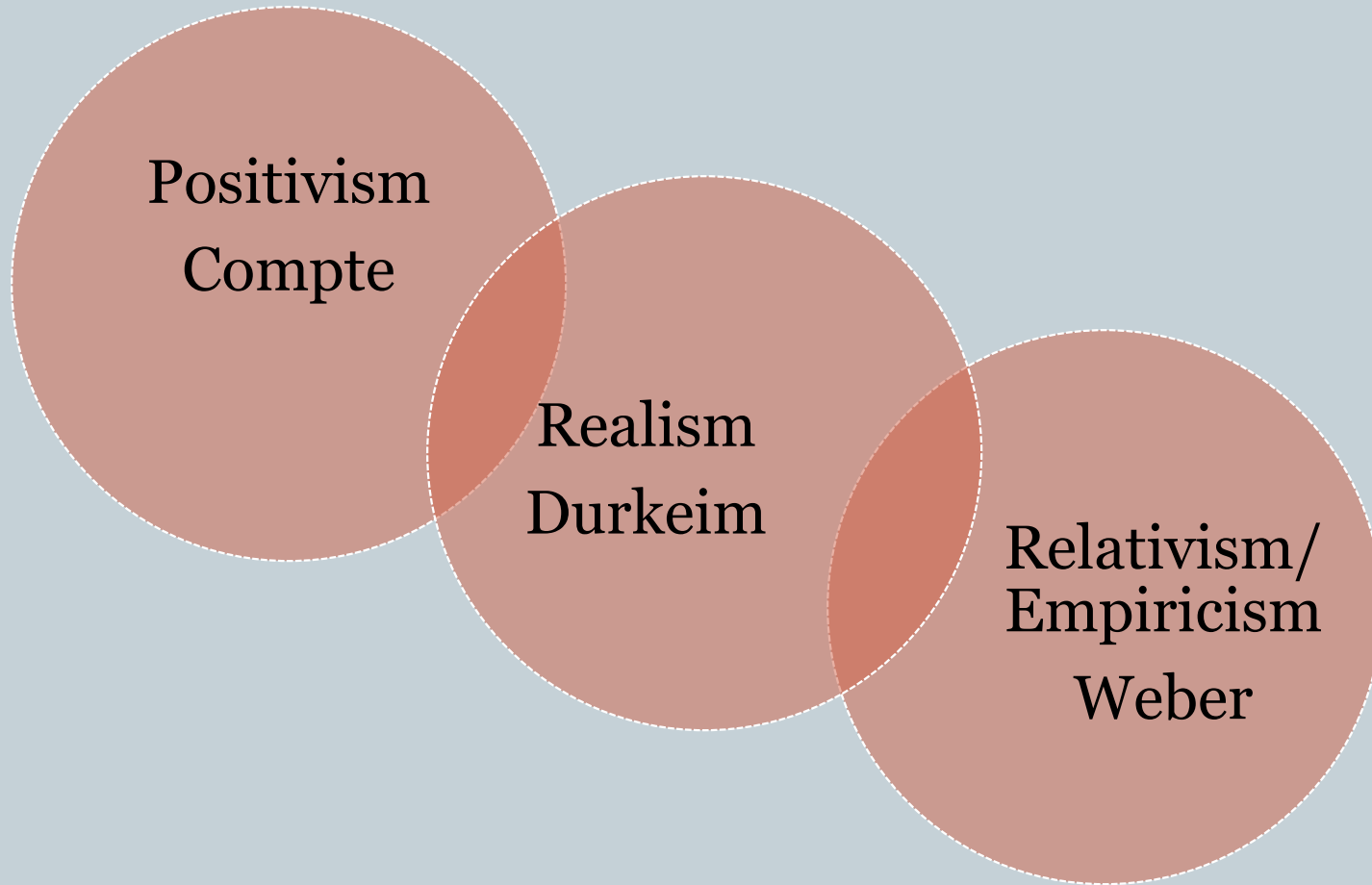


# Explaining Social Interaction



- **Gender Roles in interaction:**
  - Women and men speak about the same amount.
  - Women are more likely to do conversation “maintenance work.”
  - Men’s speech reflects conversational dominance.

# Explaining Social Interaction



# Nonverbal Communication



**Nonverbal communication** involves messages sent without using words.

- Transmits feelings and emotions
- Includes silence, gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, touch, and personal space

# Nonverbal Communication



**UNITED  
STATED**  
okay

**SOUTH  
AMERICA**  
not okay

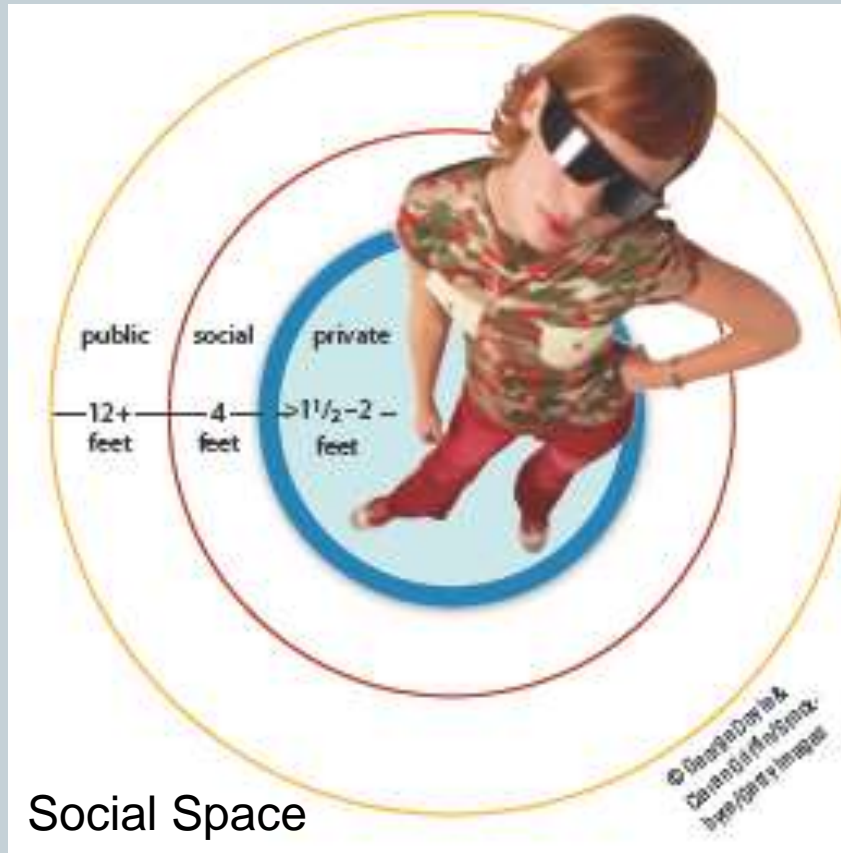
**JAPAN**  
money

**FRANCE**  
zero

**GERMANY**  
vulgar gesture

**OTHER  
COUNTRIES**  
better  
check first

# Nonverbal Communication



# Nonverbal Communication—Application



How might you nonverbally communicate each of the following?

- “I’m angry with you!”
- “I’m confused.”
- “Don’t come any closer.”
- “You’re cute!”

# Virtual Communication

## Broadcast

- Press
- Radio
- Television
- Web sites
- Paging
- Blogging
- YouTube

## Virtual Interaction

- Telegraph
- Telephone
- Cell Phone
- Email
- Texting
- Twitter
- Facebook

What's  
Next?



# Virtual Communication



## Electronic Communications

- Manifest Function (Benefits)

- Email, text, etc.

- Latent Function

- Miscommunication
- Snap Chat in the news

[Hackers to leak thousands of unauthorized Snapchat pictures](#) (USA Today)

- Dysfunction

- Gossip
- Cyberbullying - [Megan Meier Foundation](#)





# KEY TERMS

- Social interaction
- Social structure
- Status
- Status set
- Ascribed status
- Achieved status
- Master status
- Status inconsistency
- Role
- Role performance
- Role set
- Role conflict
- Role strain
- Self-fulfilling prophecy
- Ethnomethodology
- Dramaturgical analysis
- Social exchange theory
- Nonverbal communication

# Chapter Review



1. What is social structure?
2. What are the parts of social structure?
3. What is the social construction of reality?
4. How do different perspectives explain interaction?
5. What is the importance of nonverbal communication?
6. How does online communication shape one's interactions?