Developing Our Vision: 
A Social Psychological Lens

• Course objectives

1) Familiarize students with a sociological approach to social psychology

2) Provide students with the theoretical and substantive insights necessary to think systematically about the interrelationship between “self” and “society”

3) Encourage students to think systematically about their personal life experiences and situations from a social psychological perspective

4) Introduce students to readings that provide them with opportunities to reflect on different types of individuals and life experiences
Introduction to Society and the Individual

• Defining Social Psychology
  – Psychological version
    • psych processes in relation to social stimuli
  – Sociological version
    • relationships between social structure and individuals’ psychological attributes, behaviors, and interpersonal processes
- Major debate (social structure vs. the interpretive process)
  - negotiated order
- **Value of Social Psychology,** Draws our attention to:
  - Individuals’ engagement with social world (solving problems)
  - Nature of knowledge
  - Taken-for-granted reality
  - Self as social force
  - Self as social product
- **Hewitt states:**

  Symbolic interactionism tries to reveal the social origins of the self, the nature of social constraints, and, crucially, the ways in which the social order depends on the actions of individuals with selves. It seeks to show how society forms individuals, how it limits individuals, and how it makes individuals what they are. At the same time it portrays human actors who are capable of changing the very social order that has formed them. (264-265)
• Several key principles
  – 1) humans share a social psychology (symbols, selfhood)
  – 2) knowledge is partial and tentative (shape of puzzle keeps changing)
  – 3) our knowledge of reality shapes reality, actions shapes conditions
• Liberated consciousness
  – How did definitions emerge and sustain themselves
Symbolic Interactionsim

• Rooted in American Pragmatism (philosophical movement, late 1800s and early 1900s)
  – Four major points
    1) mind as an instrument for adaptation
    2) mind and mental activities were thought to be open to scientific study
    3) saw the organized and dynamic character of the human mind
    4) emphasized the importance of the social world for the emergence of the individual

• Conveys image of the social world—"indeterminancy"

• Pragmatists recognized that without society to provide an organizing principle which facilitates meanings and structures, individuals would experience total chaos in their efforts to achieve determination and adapt to their environments
George Herbert Mead’s contribution: “what a thing is in nature depends not simply on what it is in itself, but also on the observer”

The only true reality is “practical reality,” reality which is not in some kind of use is empty as far as knowledge is concerned:

– Issue is not that something is in itself unknowable in principle, but that it can be known in so many ways (the role a thing takes depends largely on the interests, assumptions and practical skills of the actor who treats the thing as an object

– The status of a thing as an object is thus problematic, it is determined through the course of interaction and requires active selection of certain elements from the many involved in our field of experience (represents an abstraction)
Mead’s words are instructive:

“Language does not simply symbolize a situation or object which is already there in advance; it makes possible the existence or the appearance of that situation or object, for it is a part of the mechanism whereby that situation or object is created”

- From pragmatist perspective, project of interactionist sociology, then, is to examine systematically the process of determination of indeterminancy in so far as this process shapes society and is in turn shaped by it
- W.I. Thomas “if men(women) define situations as real they are real in their consequences
- Charles Horton Cooley “looking glass-self”
• All varieties of contemporary symbolic interactionism (basic premises)

1) humans act toward things on the basis of the meaning those things have for them

2) meanings emerge from social interaction

3) meanings are modified and dealt with through an interpretative process used by persons when they respond to things they encounter

• Two competing schools of thought emerged in the post Median years: processual (Chicago) and structural (Iowa)

• Key questions:
  – What affects the self?
  – How do people manage the self?
  – How does the self influence behavior?
Stryker’s Summary of SI

1) Behavior is dependent on a named or classified world. The names or class terms (e.g., race, marriage, adolescent, woman, father, religion) attached to aspects of the environment, both physical and social, carry meaning in the form of shared behavioral expectations. Individuals learn through social interaction how to classify these objects and how they are expected to behave toward them.

2) Among the class terms learned in interaction are the symbols that are used to designate “positions” (e.g., father, son, employee, student) which are relatively stable aspects or components of social structure. These positions carry the shared behavioral expectations that are conventionally labeled “roles” (e.g., fathers are expected to support their families financially, sons are expected to show their fathers respect).

3) Persons who act in the context of organized patterns of behavior, i.e., in the context of social structures, “name” one another by recognizing others as occupants of positions. When they “name” one another they invoke expectations about each others’ behavior.

4) Persons acting in the context of organized behavior apply names to themselves as well. Stryker calls these names “positional designations.” They become part of the “self” and people internalize expectations about their own behavior.

5) When entering interaction situations (e.g., classroom), persons define the situation by applying names to it (e.g., Society and the Individual, Intro), to the other participants in the interaction (e.g., students, professor, TA), to themselves (student), and to particular features of the situation (e.g., upper division course, lower division, elective, course for major), and use these definitions to organize their own behavior in the situation.

6) Social behavior is not completely determined by these definitions. However, initial definitions may constrain the possibilities for alternative definitions to emerge from interaction. Behavior is the product of a role-making process, initiated by the expectations people express as they define situations. This process may involve a tentative, sometimes extremely subtle, probing interchange among actors. It also can reshape the form and content of the interaction.

7) The degree to which roles are “made” rather than simply “played,” will depend on the larger social structures in which interactive situations are embedded. Some structures are “open” (e.g., most college parties) and others relatively “closed” (e.g., courtroom trial) with respect to novelty in roles and in role enactments or performances. All structures impose some limits on the kinds of definitions which may be called into play without disrupting the situation and thus the possibilities for interaction.

8) To the degree that roles are made rather than only played as given, changes can occur in the character of definitions, the names and the class terms used in those definitions, and the possibilities for interaction. Over time, such changes at the micro-level can lead to changes in the larger social structure within which interactions take place.
Mead’s Theoretical Model of Mind, Self, and Society

**Society** (organized social community characterized by members’ intersubjectivity)

**Selfhood**: reflexivity (subject and object), developmental phases—imitation, play, and game

**Mind**: acquired when person uses symbols and not merely signs, process involves internal conversation of significant gestures

Taking the role of the other: interpret meaning

**Significant gestures**: respond to perceived intent

**Social acts** (minimal social grouping, most basic foundation for social behavior)
Social Exchange/Rational Choice

• Basic Assumptions
  – Humans are rational, sometimes inadequate information
  – Individuals and groups act, in a general way, to maximize benefits and minimize costs
  – Individuals who perceive that no profitable alternative is available will choose the one they perceive to be the least problematic

• Types of Rewards and Costs (punishments & rewards foregone)

• Four general principles
  – Behavior is determined by expected profit
  – Norm of reciprocity
  – Norm of fair exchange
  – Balanced exchanges
• How do social exchanges differ from economic exchanges?

• Distinguish between mutual and univocal reciprocity

• Model features
  – Resourceful: search for and find possibilities
  – Restricted: scarcity
  – Expectations: attach subjective probabilities to events
  – Evaluate: order preference, evaluated events
  – Maximize: maximize expected utility

• Criticisms:
  – Excessive emphasis on rationality
  – Limited cognitive capabilities
  – Measurement issue (find common metric for different rewards and costs)
Symbolic Exchanges

- Continuum from utilitarian to purely symbolic
- Documentary method of interpretation: take behavior as evidence of person’s orientation
  - Issue of trust
  - Typical gestures (impute others’ meanings)
- Social exchange: 2 dimensions for evaluating goods/services
  1) Utilitarian or intrinsic value: use of a good/gesture to receiver that is independent of any information it may convey about giver’s intention or orientation
  2) Symbolic or communicative value: amount of information a good/gesture conveys to its receiver about the giver’s intention or orientation
Symbolic exchanges: the cost or importance of each token or gesture to the giver is higher than its utilitarian value to the receiver, balance of this difference is maintained at the symbolic level

- Occur in structured social setting (limits kinds of symbolic exchanges)
- Type of indexical expression (communication rooted in context), need to know something about:
  1) biography and purpose of expression
  2) circumstances of the utterance
  3) previous course of conversation
  4) actual or potential interaction between persons communicating

- Vocabulary of symbolic exchanges
  1) food & drink
  2) gifts
  3) love tokens
  4) attendance at formal gatherings and some kinds of visits
  5) forms of refusing symbolic exchanges
• Social structure can affect symbolic exchange process

• Implication for studying social interaction as:
  – Process of pure communication (reality would be distorted because communications have):
    1) content
    2) people with real interests, incur costs
  – Social exchange (if seen as independent of symbolic process, would need to pretend that social relationships exist independently of the people that take part in them)
  – Connection between S.I. And S.E.
    • How do relationships come to be defined as ones in which certain types of social exchanges may be expected?
Interactional Ritual Chain Model

• Focus on situation, symbols & emotions (some are ceremonial and others are everyday experiences)

• Ritual quality
  1) copresence of 2 or more persons
  2) common focus of attention, mutual awareness
  3) common emotional tone/mood (some discrepancy possible)
  4) membership symbol (physical object, similar characteristics, gestures, words, ideas)

• Individual seeks symbolic and emotional payoffs

• Interpersonal rituals: little ceremonies of everyday life
Physical Copresence

Common Focus of Attention and Mutual Awareness

Common Emotional Mood

Group Membership Symbols

IRC MODEL
• Key factors for IRC model
  – Sense of market opportunities: awareness of how many and how valuable others are to him/her

  – Cultural capital: person’s resources
    • Generalized cultural capital: symbols charged with group significance
    • Personalized cultural capital: special memory component
    • Reputation: location in the social structure, others’ knowledge of person

  – Emotional energy: general quality of confidence, enthusiasm, warmth, assertiveness (determines several things)
    • Who person wants to talk to or avoid
    • Length and intensity of encounter
    • Who will take the initiative
Person A

Market opportunities
Cultural capital
Emotional energy

Interaction
Ritual

Person B

Market opportunities
Cultural capital
Emotional energy
The Social Construction of Self

• **Self**: descriptions of oneself based on social relations
  – Abstraction, no physical or biological location
  – Reflexive character
  – Viewed as both process and structure
  – Draws on socially recognized categories

• **Key Concepts**
  – Identity (role identity): part of self, based on structured role relationship
    
    **Five distinct features:**
    1) social products
    2) self-meanings
    3) symbolic
    4) reflexive
    5) source of motivation for action

  – View of identities as cybernetic control systems
- **Commitment**: sum of the forces, pressures, or drives that influence people to maintain congruity between their identity setting and the input of reflected appraisals from the social setting

  - Cognitive and socioemotional bases

  - Alternative conceptualization: individuals committed to set of others relevant to specific identity
    - Need to be particular type of person
    - Relationships important to person
    - Identity salience & salience hierarchy: important to conceptualization of the self is constructed

  - Psychological centrality
• Relationship between self and society

Nonindustrialized societies: high degree of shared meanings

Industrialized societies: fewer shared meanings, competing pluralism of styles

• Self-concept: social product and social force

  – “Situated” self-concept: shifting

• Modified view and related social processes
  – Altercasting
  – Vocabularies of motives
  – Negotiation

  – “Biographical” self-concept: stable

• Rosenberg (1965): “totality of the individual’s thoughts and feelings with reference to oneself as an object”
• Specific components
  – Traits
  – Statuses
• Arrangement or structure
• Broad dimensions (self-esteem, self-confidence)

• Social structure/processes → self-concept → social behavior

• Technological development and self-concept
  – Self as project
• Self and interpersonal interaction
  – Self-concept: how individual sees himself/herself
  – Social self-concept: how other people actually see person
  – Reflected self: how individual believes others see him/her

  – A person’s view depends on:

  • Who these others are:
    – Expertise
    – Imputed motivation
    – Congruency/consensus
  • Which aspect of the self is under consideration
    – Role specific
    – Orientational others
  • Whether we are motivated to accept or reject their views
    – Self-favorability bias
    – Selective perception
Turning Points in Identity (Strauss)

- Turning Point: fundamental shift or transformation that leads a person to become someone other than he/she was before, contribute to changing person’s identity and perspective

1) Milestones
2) Forecasting
3) Ceremonial announcement
4) Meeting of a challenge
5) Self-test/courting of temptation
6) Handled important role well/poorly
7) Experimental role-drama
8) Surpasses performance of role model
9) Betrayal
10) Deception
Social Identity Elements

- General categorization scheme
  - Social statuses
  - Membership groups
    - Cultural groups
    - Common belief system
    - Interest groups and organizational affiliations
    - Socially defined groups
  - Social labels
  - Derivative statuses
  - Social types
  - Personal identity
Social Construction of Subjective Experience

- **Socialization**: process whereby individuals acquire ways of thinking, feeling, and acting which are important for participating in society
  - *Primary*: typically occurs during childhood
  - *Secondary*: introduces person to new spheres of society

- **Culture**: publicly available symbolic forms through which people experience and express their meaning
  1) symbolic experiences & gestures
  2) mythic lore or traditional knowledge
  3) ritual experience
  4) ways of organizing experience
  5) ways of evaluating reality
  6) modes of regulating conduct
  7) ways of forming social bonds
• Culture viewed as “tool kit”

Norms: guideposts culture provides, rules

Folkways < -------------------------- > Mores

• Self and socialization contexts
  – Large scale organizations
  – Family context
    • Location of family within larger social system
    • Kohn’s theory (occupational conditions and family life
    • Historical changes in family structure
  – School context
    • Social reinforcement
    • Expectancy effects
    • Social comparison process
  – Peer group patterns
    • Voluntary
    • Interaction between status equals
    • Gender segregation
SCOSE: Sociology of Emotions

- Sociologists’ recent interest
- Most emotions originate in social events
- Emotional states: 3 different dimensions which structure emotion vocabulary
  - Evaluation
  - Activation
  - Sense of potency

Positive emotions: distinguished by level of activation
Negative emotions: distinguished by activation and potency

- Emotions and sentiments
  - Surface
  - Deep
  - Authentic emotional knowledge

- Basic accounts of emotions in soc psy
  - Organismic
  - Interactive (label, interpret, manage)
### Negative Emotional States (Debatable)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activation</th>
<th>LA</th>
<th>MA</th>
<th>HA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HP</td>
<td>disappointed</td>
<td>upset</td>
<td>furious</td>
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<td></td>
<td>regret</td>
<td>disgusted</td>
<td>angry</td>
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<td>MP</td>
<td>distressed</td>
<td>envious</td>
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<td>LP</td>
<td>Broken-hearted</td>
<td>scared</td>
<td>petrified</td>
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<td>ashamed</td>
<td>terrified</td>
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• Emotion management (emotion work)
  – Evocation
  – Suppression

• General techniques of emotion work:
  – Cognitive
  – Bodily
  – Expressive

• Feeling rules
  – Life-long socialization
    • Recognize
    • Understand
    • Label
    • Display their own emotions
  – Ideologies as framing devices
  – Social movements
  – Collective behavior
  – Media: e.g., Valentine’s Day
Self and Social Interaction

• Goffman’s “dramaturgical approach”

• Expressiveness: capacity to give impression to other
  – Expression person gives
  – Expression person gives off

• Ways to influence definition of situation
  – Calculating, and aware
  – Calculating, but unaware

• Working consensus: lack of explicit negotiation, but an understanding to avoid open conflict

• Moral character to projecting a definition to a situation
  – Persons’ expectations for treatment
  – Persons’ claims about social characteristics
• Performance: all the activities of an actor on a given occasion which influences in any way other participants

sincere < -------------------------- > cynical

• Front: expressive equipment
  – Setting
  – Personal front
    • Appearance
    • Manner

• Social fronts: abstracted, expressive equipment grouped together

• Process of dramatic realization

• Team performances
  – Bond of reciprocal dependence
  – Bond of reciprocal familiarity
• Back region: impression knowingly contradicted, audience will generally be excluded

• Communication inconsistent with official impression
  – Treating of the absent
  – Staging talk
  – Team collusion

• Minimize possibility of team performance disruption
  – Defensive attributes (dramaturgical):
    • Loyalty
    • Discipline
    • Circumspection
  – Protective attributes
    • Discretion
    • Tactful inattention
  – Performers facilitating tact
Social Interaction and Order: Stigma

- **Stigma**: undesirable difference (others’ perspective)

  **Broad types:**
  - Physical disabilities or extreme conditions
  - Blemishes of individual character
  - Tribal

- **Key dimension:**
  - Discreditable (not immediately known)—passing
  - Discredited: (know or would be evident)—covering

Two important aspects of stigmas

1) **Visibility**: ease of being observed
2) **Obtrusiveness**: extent to which it interferes with interaction
• Stigmatized person’s response options
  – Direct attempt to correct condition
  – Correct situation indirectly
  – Use stigma as:
    • An excuse
    • Blessing in disguise
• Mixed contact situations
• Sympathetic others
• Phases of socialization related to stigma
• Types of places
  – Forbidden
  – Civil
  – Back
Self and Social Interaction: Managing Homelessness Stigma

- Social identities: attributes & imputations by others
- Personal identities: meanings attributed to self by the actor
- Self-concept: overarching view or image of self
- Identity work: activities designed to create, present, and sustain personal identities
  - Physical setting and props
  - Personal appearance
  - Selective association
  - Verbal construction (identity talk)
• Homeless strategies
  – Distancing
  • Associational: other homeless persons
    – Categorical
    – Specific groups
  • Street/occupational roles: panhandler, day laborer
  • Institutional

  – Embracement
  • Associational (e.g., good friend)
  • Role (e.g., tramp, bum, role-specific activities)
  • Ideological (especially religion)

  – Fictive storytelling
  • Embellishments
  • Fantasizing
Helen Ebaugh’s Becoming an Ex: The Process of Role Exit

• Role exit: process of disengagement from a role that is central to one’s self-identity and the re-establishment of an identity in a new role that takes into account one’s ex-role

• View of role exiting as generic social process
  – Characteristics and properties that transcend specific role
  – Emphasis on subjective meanings
  – Focus on master identities (strong attachment)
  – Draws on both role-taking and role-making perspectives
  – Process is embedded and shaped by various sociohistorical factors

• Key processes:
  – Disengagement: withdrawal from role(s), shifts in role sets
  – Disidentification: transformation in views of self
• Major moments (stages or sequential events) in role-exit process

1) First doubts
2) Seeking alternatives
3) The turning point
4) Creating the ex-role

• Descriptive properties of role-exit

1) Reversibility
2) Duration
3) Single versus multiple exits
4) Individual versus group exits
5) Degree of control
6) Social desirability
7) Degree of institutionalization
8) Degree of Awareness
9) Sequentiality
10) Centrality of the role
11) Voluntariness
Relationships and Sympathy Biography

Sympathy as a social act

- Socioemotional economy, feeling rules and patterns

- Sympathy margin (account)
  - Ascribed by others
  - Rights to:
    - Sentiment
    - Empathy
    - Display

- Sympathy etiquette
  - Do not make false claims
  - Do not claim too much sympathy
  - Claim some sympathy
  - Reciprocate to others for the gift of sympathy
Primary Relationships and Networks

- Primary relationship
  - Capacity to have favorable or unfavorable influence
  - Four key dimensions:
    1) Frequency: how often individuals engage in exchanges
    2) Strength: intensity of exchanges (may be most important)
    3) Diversity: different types of exchanges
    4) Duration: length of episodes

- Related definition: “the close relationship is one of strong, frequent, and diverse interdependence that lasts over a considerable period of time”

- Four major types of interdependencies
  - SBPR
  - Extrinsic
  - Intrinsic
  - Formal
• Dynamic qualities of PR
  – Development: phase of relationship
    • Formation
    • Maintenance/change
    • Dissolution
  – Dialectics: decision-making strategies (scarce resources notion)

• Structural features of primary network
  – Size: number of PR
  – Kin/non kin ratio
  – Overlap: extent to which persons in network are members of others’ network
  – Substitutability: extent to which members in network provide similar types of resources or exchanges to person

• Persons may identify with, change, and long for “high priority” dyad or small “high priority” core (sometimes referred to as family)
Construction of Social Structures

Border work/boundary work

- What kinds of borders/boundaries?

- Study of borders
  - Individuals movement back/forth
  - Groups and categories of people navigate respective borders in relation to one another
  - Social processes that help define borders

- Border work with children
  - Chasing game
  - Rituals of pollution
  - Invasions
• Key components of border work
  – Gender as oppositional dualism
  – Exaggeration of gender differences

Basis for Interaction

Individual ------------ Group membership

• Sculpting boundary
  – Classification as political process
  – Home and work realms

Integrationist ----------- Segregationist

• Modern view of self

• Calendars and keys study
The Social Psychological Lens: Take Home Messages

- Social reality—constructed process
  - Cognitive foundation
  - Innate search for difference and similarity
  - Sensitivity to borders/boundaries (realms of life)

- Politics of reality
  - Definitional contests to assign meaning to experience (social and individual activities)
    - Mental hospitals and psychiatric view of self
    - Medical definition of depression as a bio-chemical process
    - Claims makers, “wife-abuse,” and shelters
- **Social reality**—multiple layers/foci
  - **Self**
    - Past, present, future
    - Cognitive, behavioral, emotional
    - Structure
    - Individual well-being and control
    - Stigma
    - Impression management and identity work
    - Role exiting
    - Turning points
- **Reciprocal relationship between self and society**
  - Intersubjectivity
  - Human agency
  - Social saturation ("fragmented self")
  - Multiphrenia
    - Expansion of goals/wants & demands
    - Expansion of inadequacy
    - Expansion of rationality contexts
• Social reality (the study of)—multiple perspectives
  
  – SI, Social exchange/rational choice, IRC
  – Dramaturgical approach
  – Conceptual tools: liberated consciousness