**What Is Human Nature?**

Human nature is what sets us apart from other life forms. Sociologists consider our human nature to be our culture and society that makes us human.

1. The ***nature vs. nurture debate*** refers to the ongoing discussion of the respective roles of genetics and socialization in determining individual behaviors and traits. Ultimately both sides do play a role in making us the people that we are.

**The Process of Socialization**

1. ***Socialization*** is the process of learning and internalizing the values, beliefs, and norms of our social group and by which we become functioning members of society. The socialization process begins in infancy and is especially productive once a child begins to understand and use language, but it also is a lifelong process that continues into adulthood.
2. Social Isolation

**Theories of the Self**

1. The ***self*** is our experience of a distinct, real, personal identity that is separate and different from all other people. Sociologists look at both the individual and society to gain a sense of where the self comes from. Most believe the self is created and modified through interaction over the course of a lifetime.
2. Pscyhoanalysis focuses on the childhood and sexual aggression as a major influence on your identity. Consciousness is just the tip, its what’s below the surface in the unconscious that really is important.***Sigmund Freud's*** psychoanalytic approach divides the mind into three interrelated systems. The ***id*** consists of basic inborn drives that are the source of instinctive psychic energy. The ***superego*** is composed of the conscience, which serves to keep us from engaging in socially undesirable behavior, and the ego-ideal, which upholds our vision of who we believe we should ideally be. The superego represents the internalized demands of society. The ***ego*** is the realistic aspect of the mind that balances the forces of the id and superego.

He also believed that as we develop we go through four distinct psychosexual stages of development. You pass through the first three stages between the ages of one and five.There is little memory of these stages, but it sets stage for the rest of your life. The last stage begins around the age of 12. Few successfully complete this transition to maturity. Many are also thought to not successfully move through the other stages either. When this happens you become fixated and your behavior as an adult reflects that stage of your life. Being fixated in the first stages of life can cause you to smoke, overeat, or talk a lot. The fixations appear as hang ups later on in life.

1. ***Charles Cooley*** believed that one's sense of self depends on seeing one's self reflected in interactions with others. The ***looking-glass self*** refers to the notion that the self develops through our perception of others' evaluations and appraisals of us. There are three steps:
   * + We imagine how we look to others - not physically, but how we present ourselves. This is extremely important in regards to our significant others.
     + We imagine other people’s judgment of us. We try to picture other’s reactions and to interpret what they must be feeling.
     + We experience some kind of feeling about ourselves based on our perceptions of other people’s judgments. We respond to the judgement we believe others have of us - not necessarily what those judgements actually are.

Without society, there is no sense of self.

1. ***George Herbert Mead*** expanded Cooley's ideas about the development of the self. Mead also believed that the self was created through social interaction and that this process started in childhood, with children beginning to develop a sense of self at about the same time that they began to learn language. Mead argued that one of the key developments was the ability to think of ourselves as separate and distinct and to see ourselves in relationship to others. When children can take the perspective of the ***generalized other***, rather than specific individuals, they have passed through the final stage of development.

There are several stages:

Preparatory Stage - children under 3 lack a developed sense of self so they have a hard time distinguishing themselves from others. The process is begun through imitation and mimicking

Play Stage - they pretend to be others - mommy, princess, fire fighter referred to as taking the role of the particular or significant other. As they play the roles they internalize the expectations that role takes and gain new perspectives.

Game Stage - This is the final stage. Children begin to take part in organized games. At this point they must take into consideration the roles of all the players, not just their own. This perspective is known as generalized other. They begin to see a set of standards and see themselves from other’s viewpoints. They gradually internalize the expectations of the generalized other for themselves and begin to evaluate their own behavior.

Mead also believed in the dual nature of the self -the self as both subject and object. Referring to I is the subject component - the experience of a spontaneous, active, and creative part of ourselves, somewhat less socialized. The me is the object component - the experience of a norm abiding, conforming part of ourselves, more socialized and therefore reliant on others. The two parts are inseparable and form a united single self.

1. W.I. Thomas, another Chicago School sociologist. Under the Thomas Theorem, he states that “if people define situations as real, they are real in their consequences.” Basically the way we define a situation will determine its reality. Each **definition of the situation** lends itself to a different approach and the consequences are real.
2. ***Erving Goffman*** believed that meaning is constructed through interaction. He looks at how we define the situation both cognitively and through interaction. The way we express our definition to others is through expressions of behavior. He calls expressions given as verbal and inteneded. Expressions given off like an eye roll or a nod are generally nonverbal but may be intended or unintended. You have to be careful about reading meaning into others’ expressions of behaviors. People will deliberately say things to hide what they really feel so people think you get a clearer picture by looking at expressions given off. But those can be manipulated as well. He refers to this as impression management. Goffman argues that people are concerned with controlling how others view them. We do and say what we think is necessary to communicate who we are and what we think and we refrain from saying stuff that might damage our impression.

His approach, ***dramaturgy***, focuses on how individuals take on roles and act them out to present a favorable impression to their "audience." There are certain tools used to accomplish this: front - the setting that helps establish a particular meaning. Personal front - appearance,manner and style of dress as well as gender, race, and age. You don’t look like a professor. **region -** the location, scenery and props. We know how to interact with each other in school, but do we interact the same outside of school. Zoe telling me that Miss Pappas lives at school. **Backstage -** where we prepare for our performance and **front stage**. We behave differently in front of an audience then we do alone. To understand impression management we have to realize that we present different selves in different situations. The self itself is a social construction - it is created or invented in interaction with others. The self we portray can be supported or contradicted by others which makes it harder for our self image. when I am lecturing I am doing the teacher thing and you are doing the student thing. Another way we support selves that people present is by allowing them to save face - so they don’t realize or they can recover from doing something embarrassing. Goffman calls this **cooling the mark out**. You let it pass when the teacher mixes up to concepts because you know what she means or you don’t mention the fact that she has spinach between her teeth.

Some don’t like his theory because he is saying that we are always playing a part and never being honest about who we really are. But as Josh Meyrowitz says “While a dishonest judge may pretend to be an honest judge, even an honest judge must play the role of “honest judge”.

**Agents of Socialization**

1. ***Agents of socialization*** are the social groups, institutions, and individuals that provide structured situations in which socialization takes place. The four predominant agents of socialization are the family, schools, peers, and the mass media.

* The family is the single most significant agent of socialization in and teaches us the basic values and norms that shape our identity. Has the most long lasting influence. The family is our world until we start school so we don’t have anything to compare it to. We learn gender roles in families - what moms and dads, sisters, and brothers are supposed to do and then convert them to the real world. Not all aspects are deliberate or intended such as passing down mom’s depression or violent temper.
* Schools provide education and socialize us through a direct as well as a hidden curriculum (a set of behavioral traits such as punctuality, neatness, discipline, hard work, competition, and obedience) that teaches many of the behaviors that will be important later in life. It originally was started as a way to make better citizens and a workforce, but it has taken on roles of other social organizations - such as discipline, physical health, meals, and child care. For many this is their first experience away from home and they learn to become less dependent on the family.
* Peers provide very different social skills and can become more immediately significant than the family, especially as children move through adolescence. This is a way for them to exercise independe from and possibly reacing against adult control.They form peer subcultures that are entirely dependent on their own interests. Although they do create social bonds, they can also be a source of ridicule, self doubt and even rejection.
* The media has become an important agent of socialization, often overriding the family and other institutions in instilling values and norms. Television has one of the biggest impacts on people. A study was done in Fiji where they did not have TV until 1995. They were looking specifically at the impact of the WEstern view of weight on women. When the participants were interviewed again in 1998, the amount of self induced vominting and eating disorders had almost doubled. If this is the impact in a short amount of time, what about Americans who avearge 7 hours a day with some type of media? Some say we live in a fantasy world, but others say it helps us distinguish between reality and fantasy. Besides entertaining, the mass media also can educate and inform.

1. Adult Socialization - just because we are adults does not mean that the process of socialization is over. For example - college training wil teach you a great deal about expected behaviors. Once you get a job you will learn other unanticipated behaviors and expectations.
2. ***Resocialization*** is the process of replacing previously learned norms and values with new ones as a part of a transition in life.As your life circumstances change - marriage, children, divorce, moving, new job or retiring - your attitudes and behavior are modified. Even coming to grips with an illness or just aging, people must come to grips with things their body can no longer do. A dramatic form of resocialization takes place in a ***total institution***. This type of institution (a place such as a prison, cult, or mental hospital) cuts off people from the rest of society so that their lives can be controlled and regulated for the purpose of systematically stripping away previous roles and identities in order to create a new one.

**Statuses and Roles**

1. A ***status*** is a position in society that comes with a set of expectations. An ***ascribed status*** is one we are born with that is unlikely to change (gender or race). An **emboided** statusis located in our physical selves (beauty or disability).An ***achieved status*** is one we have earned through individual effort (job, hobby, skill) or that is imposed by others (criimnal, mental illenss, or drug addiction ). One's ***master status*** is a status that seems to override all others and affects all other statuses that one possesses. At times these blind people to other facets of their personalities. Assumptions are made because you are a doctor that quickly closes the door on other parts of who you are. This type of judgement is often referred to as **stereotyping** - but even though this is problematic, it is unavoidable.
2. ***Roles*** are the behaviors expected from a particular status. Some are more formal such as a professor that has written guidelines to follow, others are less formal like a class clown, but there are still guidelines to follow. Roles help shape our actions in ways that may come to define us to ourselves and others. For instance we often define ourselves by our personality traits.***Role conflict*** occurs when the roles associated with one status clash with the roles associated with a different status. ***Role strain*** occurs when roles associated with a single status clash. Some parents are torn between their duties of nurturing and disciplining. Some are not able to do both. Either of these may lead to ***role exit***. A divorce might lead to leaving the role of husband or wife.

**Emotions and Personality**

1. Though we tend to believe that our emotions are highly personal and individual, there are social patterns in our emotional responses. ***Role-taking emotions*** are emotions like sympathy, embarrassment, or shame, which require that we assume the perspective of another person and respond from that person's point of view. ***Feeling rules*** are socially constructed norms regarding the expression and display of emotions and include expectations about the acceptable or desirable feelings in a given situation. (Boys don’t cry) ***Emotion work*** refers to the process of evoking, suppressing, or otherwise managing feelings to create a publicly observable display of emotion. (airline attendants are asked to put their personal feelings aside and always be perky.)

**New Interactional Contexts**

1. Though most sociological perspectives on interaction focus on interactions that occur in ***copresence*** (when individuals are in one another's physical presence), modern technology enables us to interact with people very far away. Postmodern theorists claim that the role of technology in interaction is one of the primary features of postmodern life. Social thinkers must come to new ways to explain the development of the self and socialize us in different ways than before. The term saturated self has been used to describe this. The self is being constructed in new ways that were not seen by earlier symbolic interactionists who could not have imagined that interaction would one day include so many possible influences form both the real worked and the world of virtual reality.