

Social Interaction and Social Structure Part I

In reality, there is no such thing as absolute freedom.
The rules of social interaction determine one's
freedom.

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Social Interaction and Social Structure

- sociological significance of social structure
 - guides our behavior
 - behavior decided by location in social structure
- levels of sociological analysis
 - microsociology: focus on social interaction
 - macrosociology: large-scale features of social life



Social Interaction and Reality

- Reality is shaped by our perceptions, evaluations and definitions.
- Social reality is constructed from social interactions.
- Our response to someone's behavior is based on the meaning we attach to his/her actions.
- The ability to define social reality reflects a group's power within society.
 - Members of subordinate groups challenge traditional definitions, and perceive and experience reality in a new way.





Social Interaction and Reality

- **negotiation**: attempt to reach agreement with others concerning the same objective
 - People reshape reality by *negotiating* changes in patterns of social interaction.
- **negotiated order**: social structure that derives its existence from the social interactions through which people define and redefine its character
- **relationship between individuals and society**: interdependent with individuals both creating society and being products of that society



Social Interaction in Everyday Life

- ...a reciprocal exchange in which two or more people read, react and respond to each other
 - Felipe and Mary participate in a video conference.
 - David tweets his opinions about the latest political crisis.
 - Sally and Veronica argue about a new piece of gay rights legislation.
- examine face-to-face interactions: eye contact, smiling, body language
- Social interaction is reciprocal.





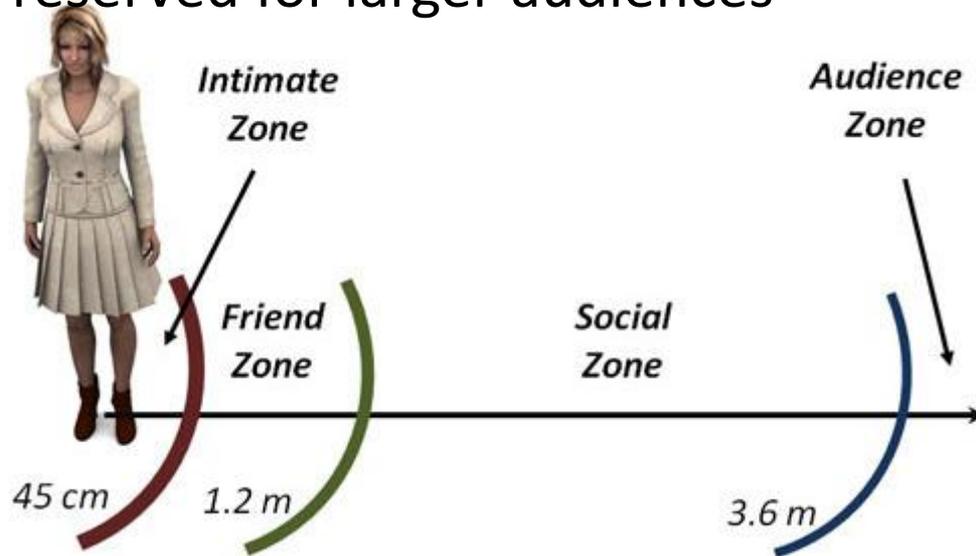
Social Interaction in Everyday Life: Personal Space

- **personal space**: region surrounding a person which they regard as psychologically theirs ... the most inviolate form of territory ... Most people value their personal space and feel discomfort, anger or anxiety when their personal space is encroached, although those living in densely populated places likely have lower expectations of personal space.
- **intimate zone**: reserved for close friends, lovers, children and close family members
- **personal/friend zone**: used for conversations with friends, to chat with associates and ingroup discussions



Social Interaction in Everyday Life: Personal Space

- personal space
 - **social zone**: reserved for strangers, newly formed groups and new acquaintances
 - **public/audience zone**: used for speeches, lectures and theater ... reserved for larger audiences





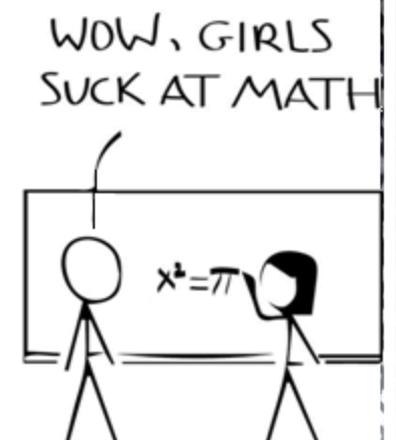
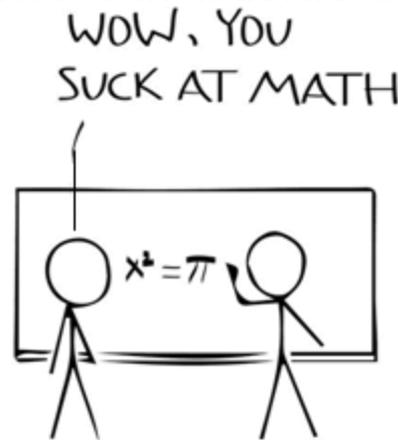
Social Interaction in Everyday Life: Personal Space

- Personal space is affected by a person's position in society, with more affluent individuals expecting a larger personal space.
- Males typically use more personal space than females.
- People use more personal space as they get older.
- Most people have a fully developed (adult) sense of personal space by age twelve.
- **touching**: Being comfortable with touching varies across cultures. In US culture, touching is normally reserved for the intimate zone, with all others being limited to a quick handshake.



Social Interaction in Everyday Life: Stereotype

- **stereotype**: a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person
 - assumptions about what people are like based on sex, race, age, social class, etc
 - classify others by visible characteristics
 - Ideas about characteristics guide our behavior.





Social Interaction in Everyday Life: Stereotype

How Self-Fulfilling Stereotypes Work

We see features of the person, or hear things about the person.



We fit what we see or hear into stereotypes, and then expect the person to act in certain ways.



How we expect the person to act shapes our attitudes and actions.



From how we act, the person gets ideas of how we perceive him or her.



The behaviors of the person change to match our expectations, thus confirming the stereotype.

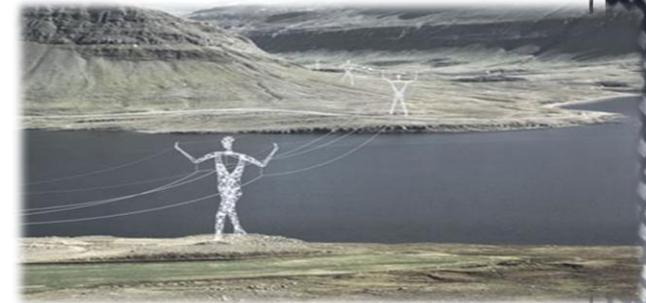


The Social Structure and the Individual

Social structure is comprised of the enduring and relatively stable patterns of relationships between groups of individuals, the way in which a society is organized into the positions people occupy and the relationships between them.

Humans are highly social animals. We live in groups and it is unusual for us to choose isolation from other people for long.

When we are deprived of human social contact, we often seek substitutes: talk radio, television shows, books, pets, stuffed animals, Tom Hanks' basketball, etc.





The Social Structure and the Individual

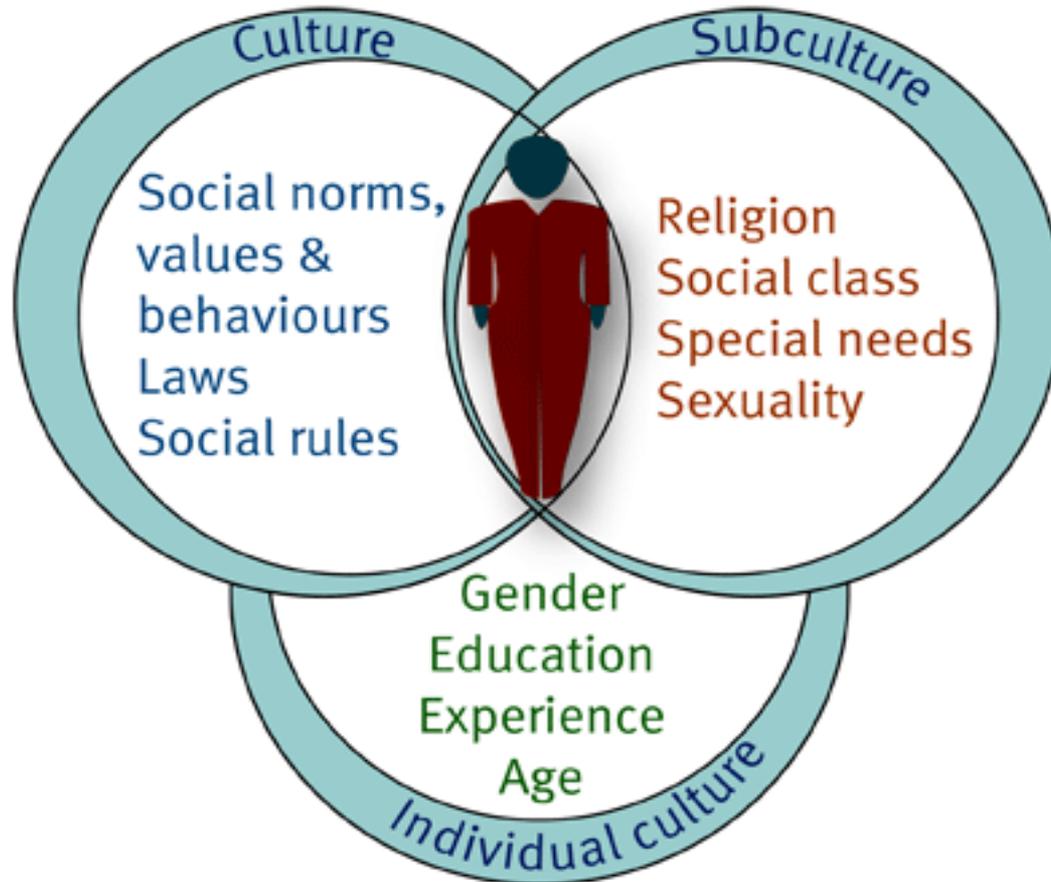
The need for human social contact and the rewards that it can bring lead most people to become members of numerous social groups: family members, employees of companies, citizens, members of ethnic groups, clubs, vocational associations, political parties, religious groups, etc.

Our behavior is adjusted to and by the various groups of which we are members. Our individual identities are greatly defined by the groups to which we belong and by our positions within them.

Think about the last time that you met a stranger at a social gathering. You probably asked questions about what groups he/she belongs to and does within them.



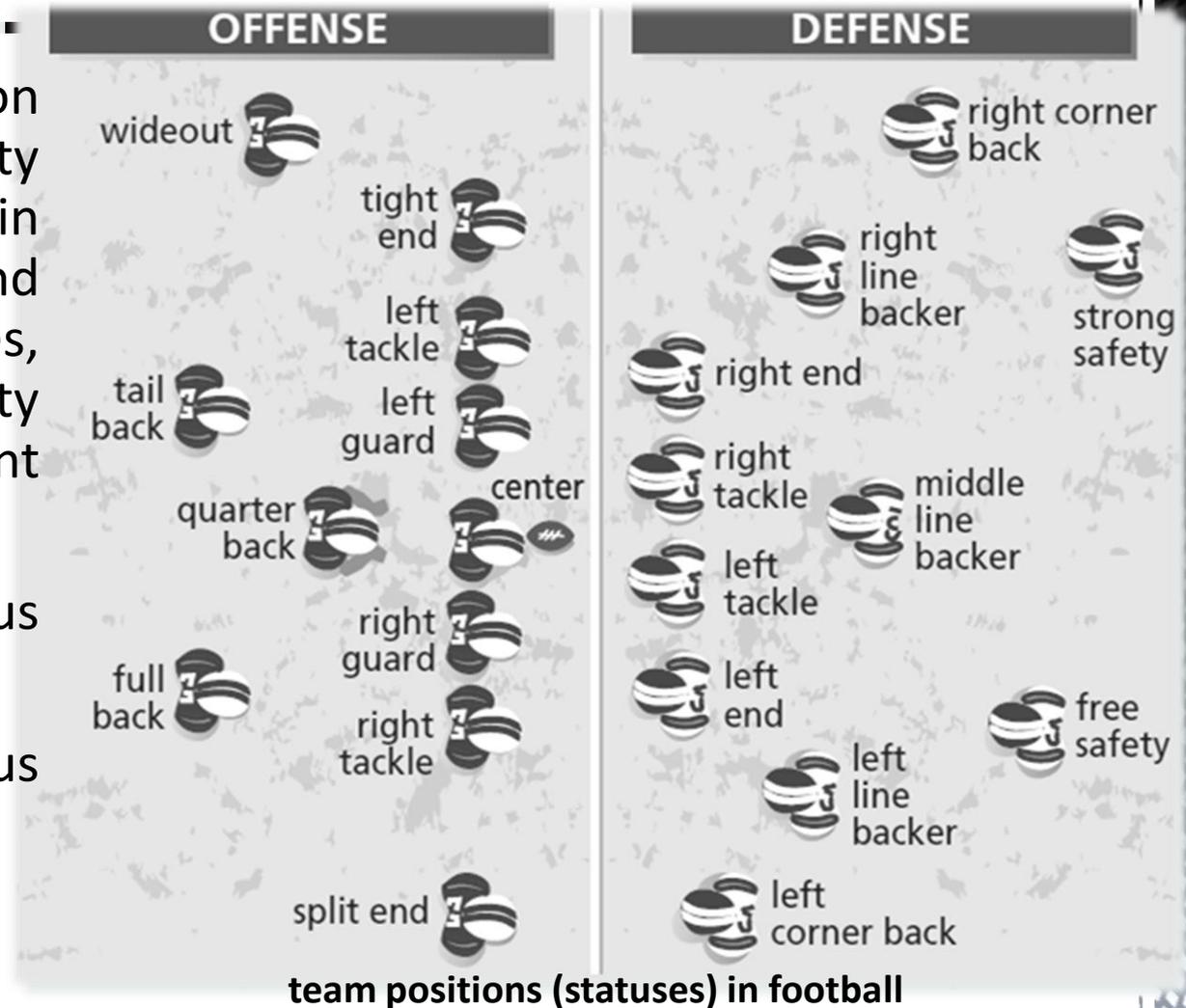
The Social Structure and the Individual





Elements of Social Structure: Social Status

- ...socially defined position in a group or society characterized by certain expectations, rights and duties ... In all cultures, members of the society will hold many different statuses.
- **ascribed status:** status one is born with
- **achieved status:** status one earns





Elements of Social Structure: Social Status

ACHIEVED STATUS

- accomplishment based
- There are preconditions to obtaining an achieved status.
- based on individual's qualities, capabilities, potential and abilities
- less stable since it is self-changing
- In modern societies, achieved status has more importance.

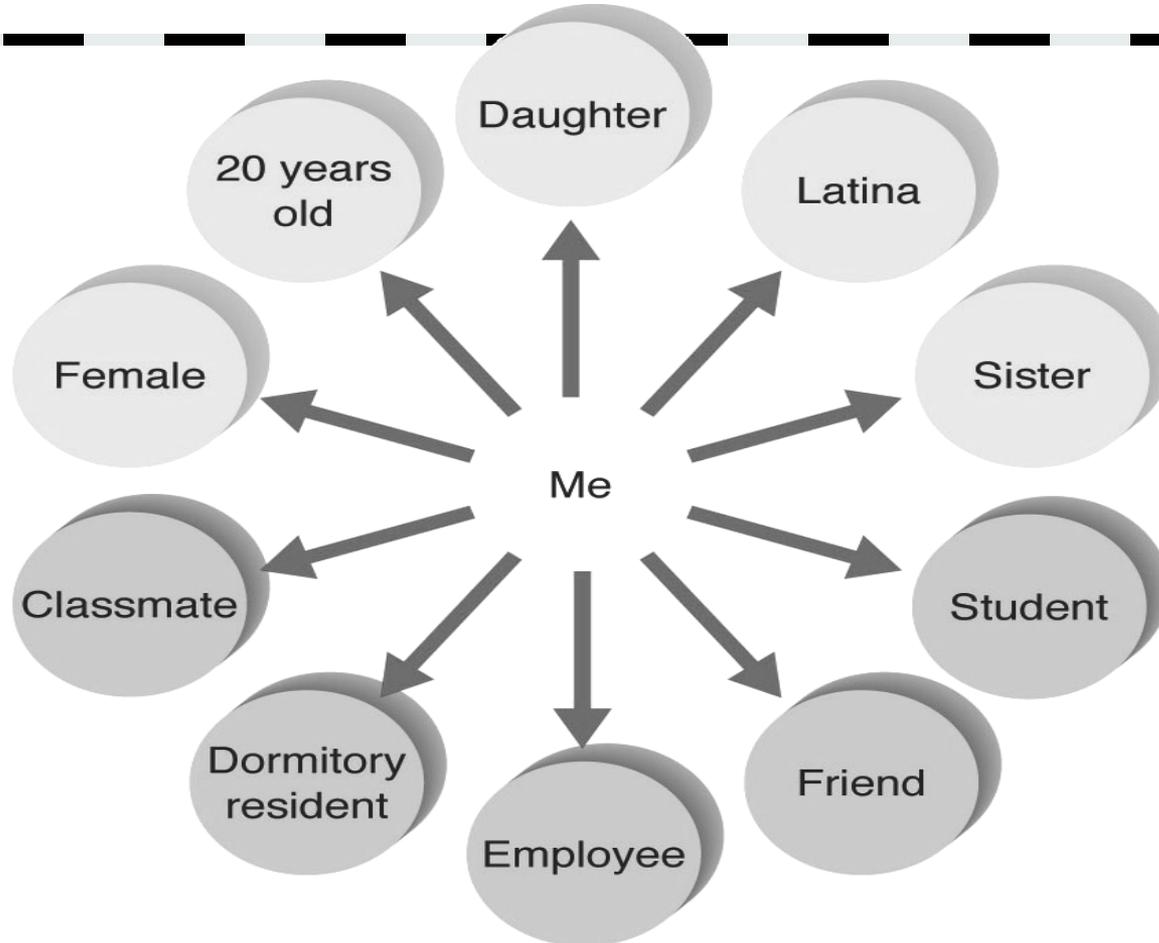
ASCRIBED STATUS

- imposed/bestowed by society as result of inheritance
- Society dictates ascribed status to a given individual.
- based on individual's age, sex, race, etc
- rigid, unbending and not easy to change





Elements of Social Structure: Social Status



Ascribed statuses

Achieved statuses



Elements of Social Structure: Social Status

- **master status**: status that dominates a person's other statuses and determines his/her general position in society
 - Societies deal with inconsistencies by agreeing that certain statuses are more important than others.
 - In the US, ascribed statuses such as race and gender can function as master statuses that have an important impact on one's potential to achieve a desired professional and social status.

THE STATUS THAT SEEMS TO DEFINE A PERSON
A PERSON'S "MASTER STATUS" CAN EITHER WORK IN FAVOR, OR AGAINST A
PERSON.
EXAMPLE: PERSONS WHO ARE INTELLECTUALLY CHALLENGED





Elements of Social Structure: Social Status

- **status symbol**: a perceived visible, external denotation of one's social position and perceived indicator of economic or social status
 - relates to how individuals and groups interact and interpret various cultural symbols
 - In the US, many luxury goods are often considered status symbols.
- With each distinctive status (whether ascribed or achieved) come particular **social roles**: the set of expectations for people who occupy that status.



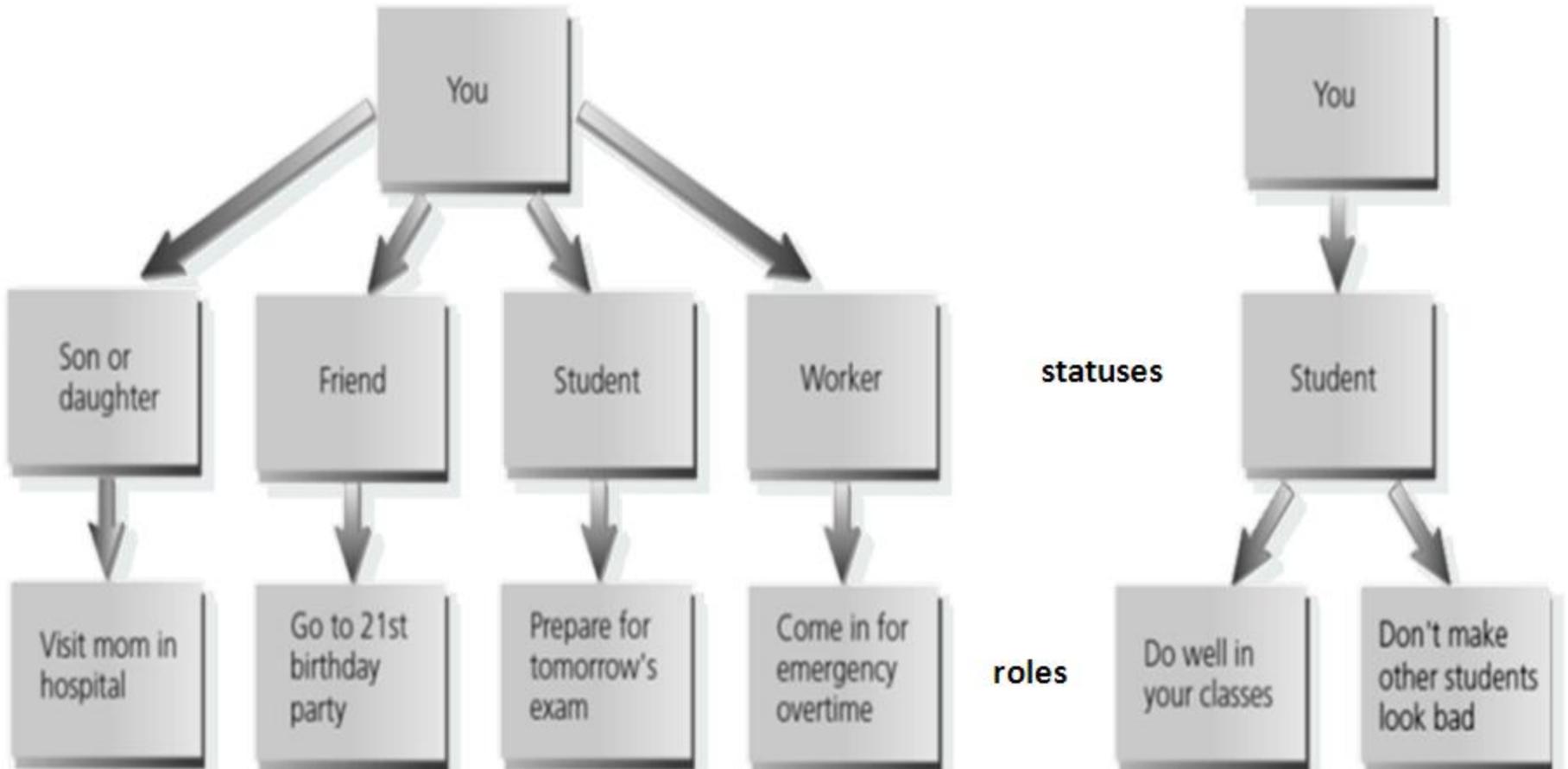
Elements of Social Structure: Social Role

- ...the behavior pattern which is associated with a particular status ... remains relatively stable even though different people occupy the position ... Each status has its own pattern of behavior which a person occupying that particular status is expected to follow.
- significant component of social structure
- **occupational role**: relates to a person's individual function (a profession)
- **relational (complementary) role**: governs how an individual behaves toward others (being a father or a boss)





Elements of Social Structure: Social Role





Elements of Social Structure: Social Role

- **role set**: complement of role relationships in which persons are involved by virtue of occupying a particular social status
- **role performance**: Actual performance of a social role varies from individual to individual.
- Role theory suggests that a substantial proportion of observable, day-to-day behavior is simply people carrying out roles and negotiating which role to prioritize. Once you understand someone's role and which of their many roles they are prioritizing, you can predict how they are going to behave.



Elements of Social Structure: Social Statuses and Social Roles

It is common for people to have multiple overlapping statuses and roles. This potentially makes social encounters more complex.

status	examples of roles	examples of conflict / strain
firefighter	puts out fires, saves lives, wears a uniform	voluntarily puts self in danger but has loved ones who need him/her
mother	provides food and shelter, nurtures family, disciplines children	fatigue and long shifts make household tasks and interactions difficult
PTA president	runs meetings, recruits new members, plans activities	trouble getting members to attend and follow through on promises

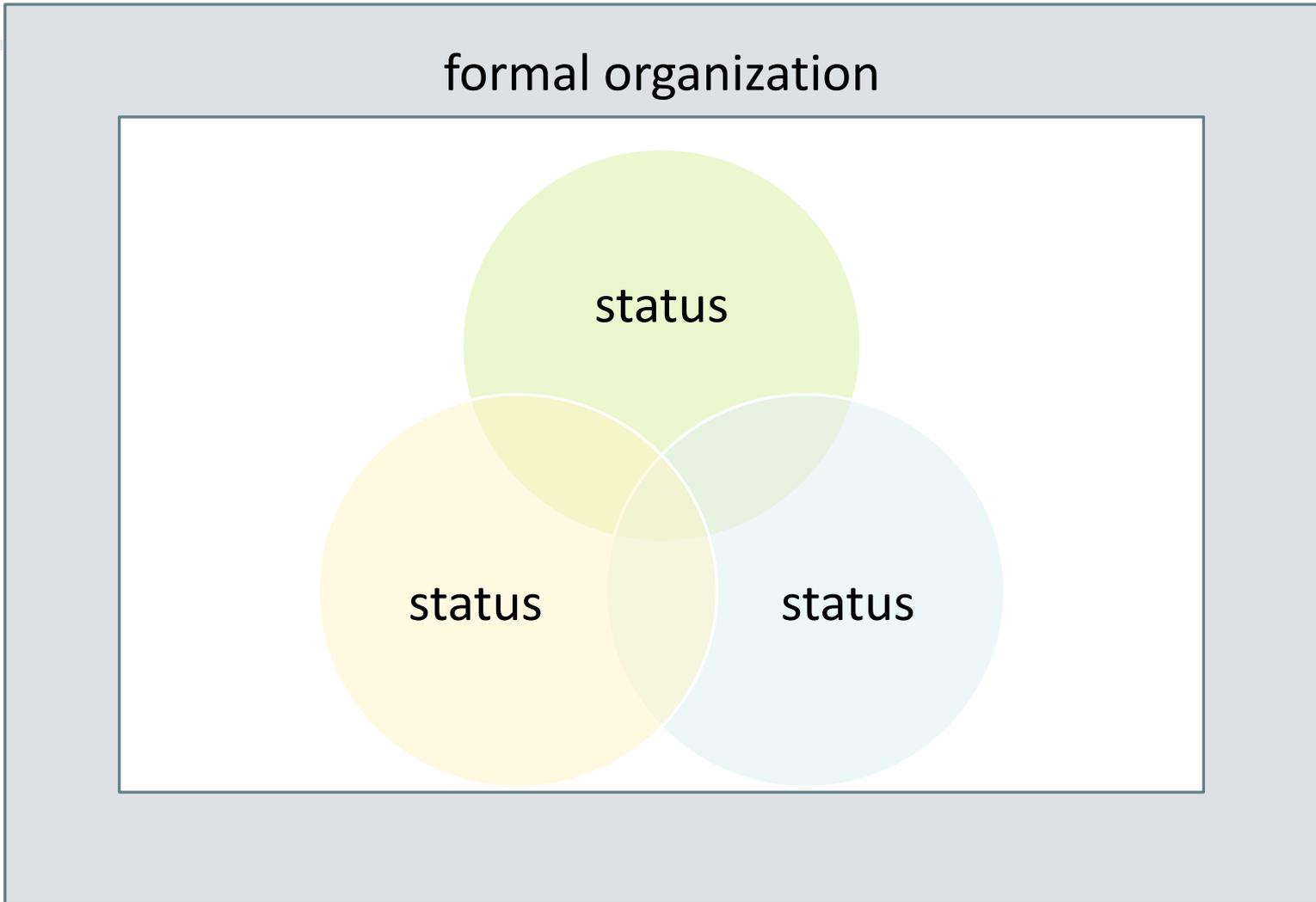


Elements of Social Structure: Social Role

- When individuals **approve of a social role** (consider the role legitimate and constructive), they will incur costs to conform to role norms and to punish those who violate role norms.
- Changed conditions can render a social role outdated or illegitimate, in which case social pressures are likely to lead to **role change**.
- **role exit**: process of disengagement from a role that is central to one's identity in order to establish a new role and identity ... involves doubt, alternatives, turning point and new identity



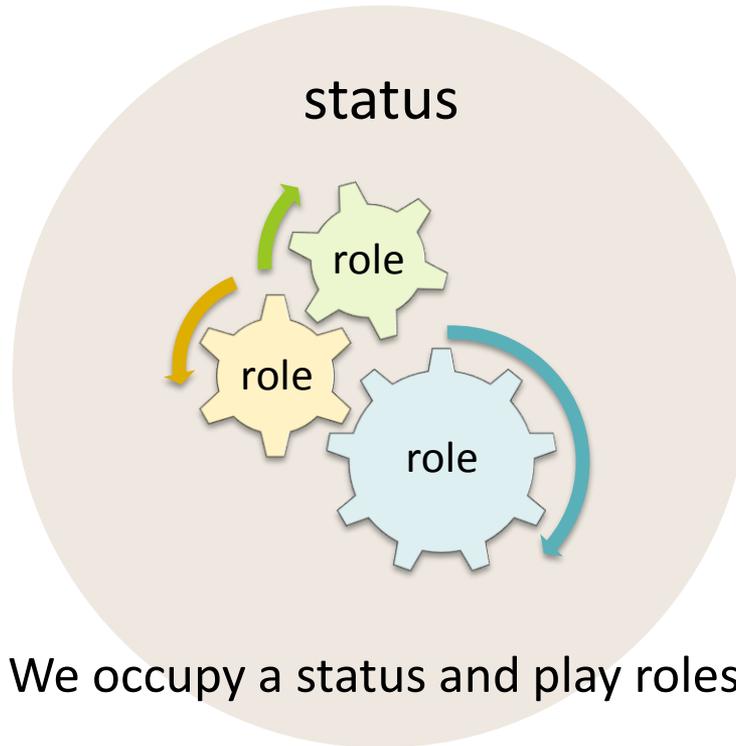
Elements of Social Structure: Fitting into Society





Elements of Social Structure: Fitting into Society

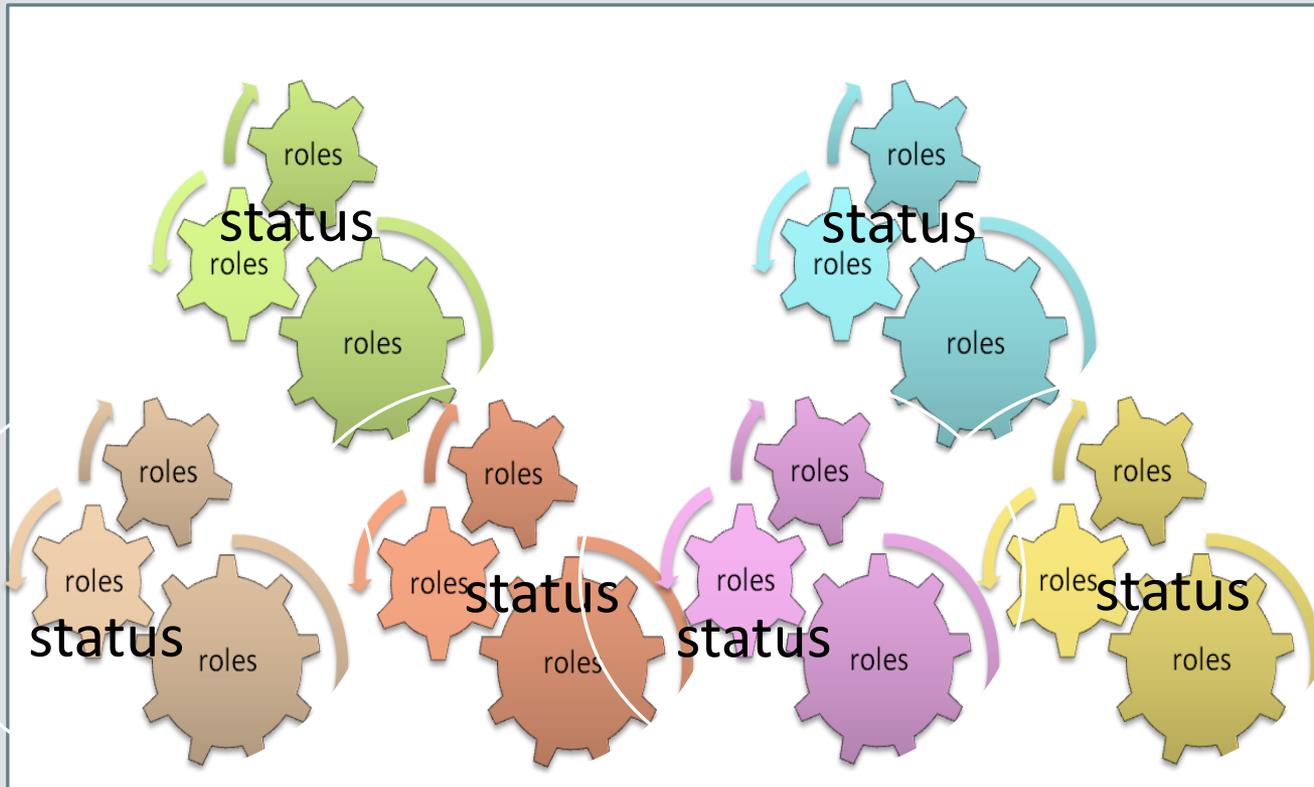
formal organization





Elements of Social Structure: Fitting into Society

formal organization



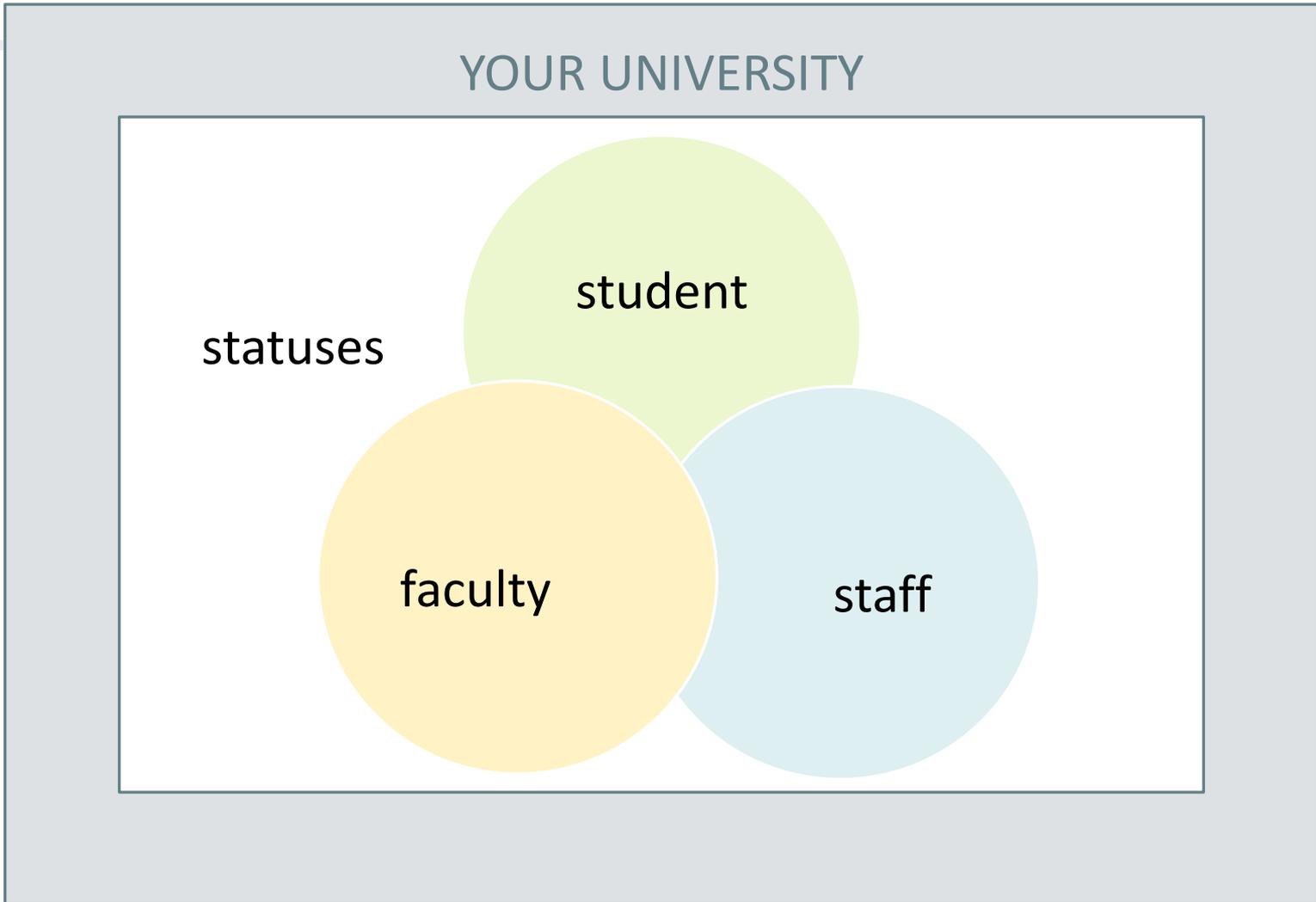


Elements of Social Structure: Fitting into Society

YOUR UNIVERSITY
formal organization

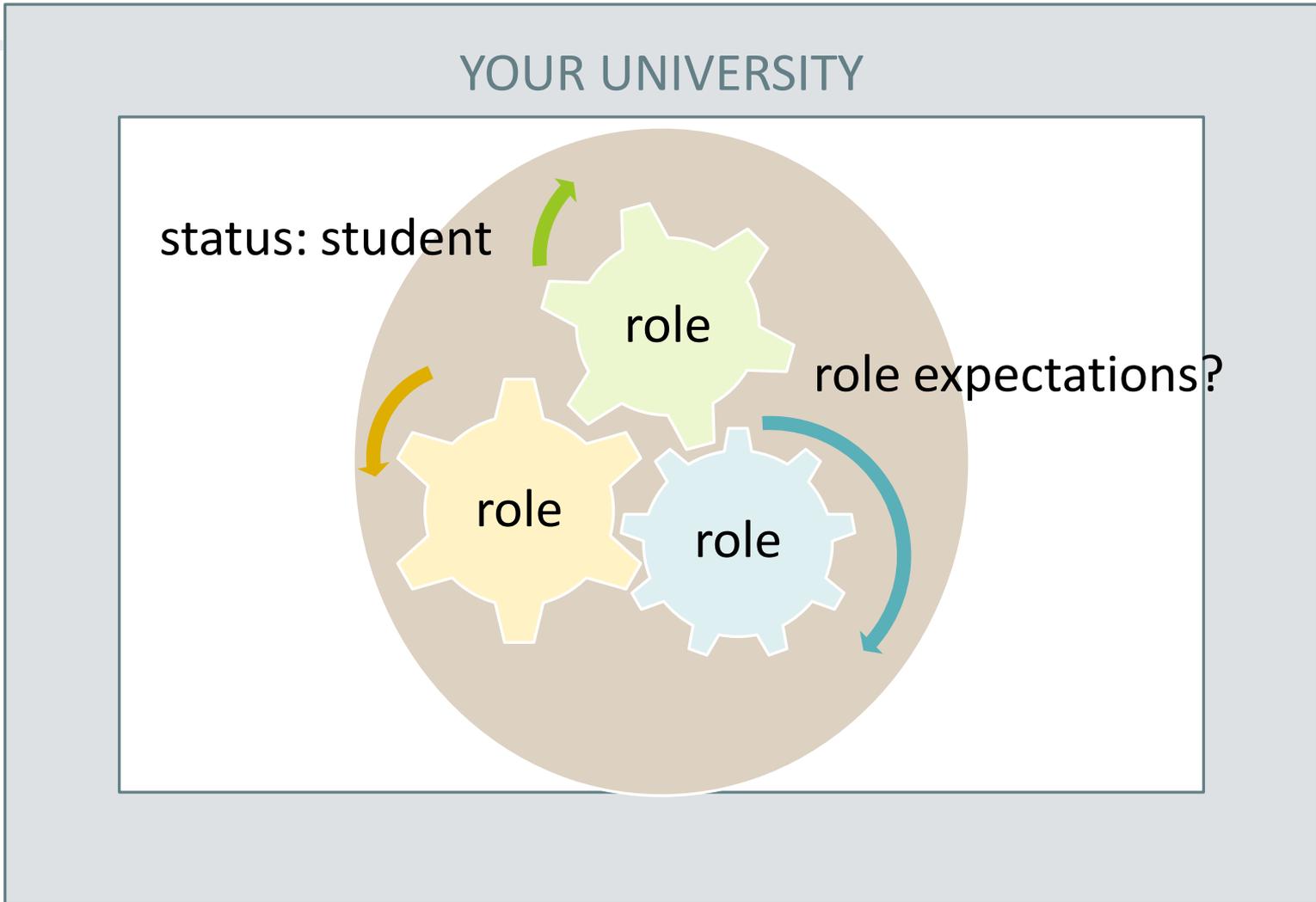


Elements of Social Structure: Fitting into Society





Elements of Social Structure: Fitting into Society





continued in Social Interaction and Social Structure Part II

