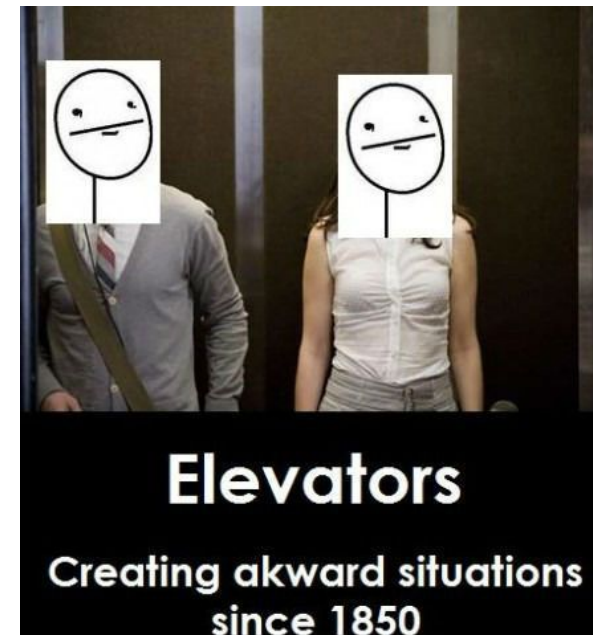


# Social Interaction, Status and Role

## Social Interaction

- **Social Interaction** occurs when two individuals are in presence of each other.
- Interaction does not necessarily mean talking – can include both verbal (Language) and non-verbal behaviour (symbols, gestures, facial expressions)



- Max Weber : Importance of social interaction in the study of sociology
- He argued that main subject matter of sociology is 'social action'
- A social action involves two or more people taking into account one another
- Anything people are conscious of doing because of presence of other people is social action
- Entire social life is made of multiple social interactions, socialization can never happen
- **Entails awareness of the other and response towards this awareness**

## **Importance of Context in making sense of Interaction**

(Source: Heritage, 1985)

A: I have a 14-year-old son.

B: Well, that's all right.

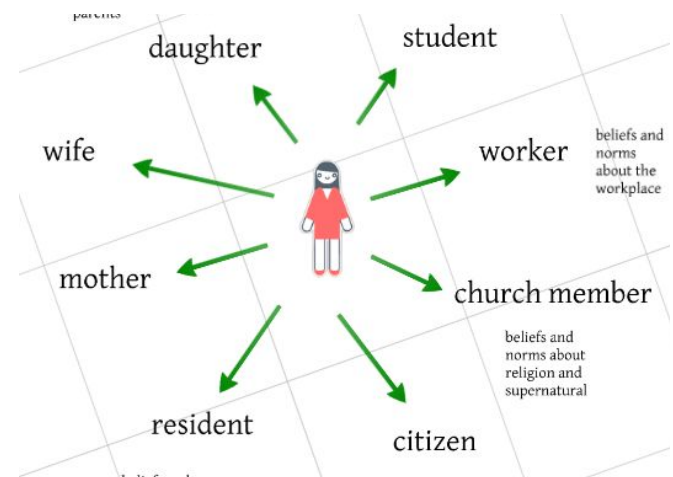
A: I also have a dog.

B: Oh, I'm sorry.

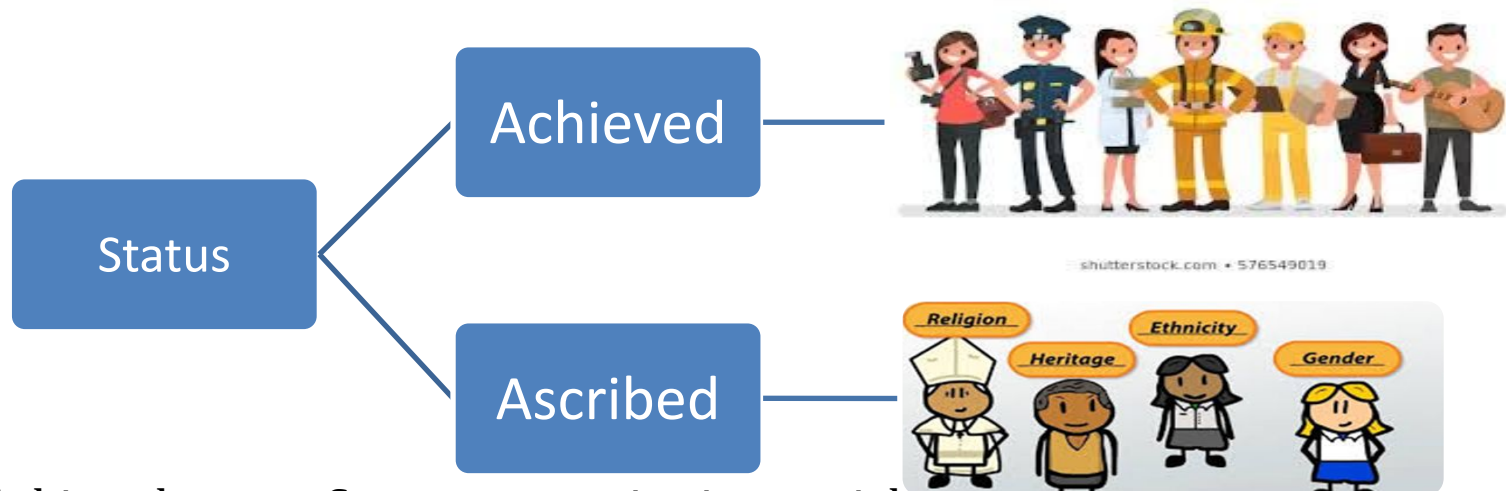
What do you think is happening here? What is the relation between the speakers?

## Elements of Social Interaction- Status and Role

- In general, social interaction generally takes place as per the status individuals occupy because it always happens in a social context/environment
- Status here does not refer to the common usage of idea of prestige
- **Status – Socially defined positions that individuals occupy**
- Ex: Religious background, Educational Qualification, Professional Role, Familial Role, Nationality, Position in an formal/informal organizational order
- Status exists independently of specific Individuals who occupy them
- People occupy more than one status at a time.
- Statuses can also keep changing.



- Two types of Status:



- Achieved status: Status one attains in a social system by merit or effort. Individual action important here.
- Will include statuses like Professional Roles, Class/Income Positions, Educational Qualifications
- Ex: Child of Farmer parents becoming a Medical Doctor.
- Ascribed Status: Position one hold by virtue of being born in a social grouping. Ex: Nationality, Race, Caste, Religion, Gender, Birth Order, family positions
- Ex: Someone born as African/Indian/America or a Dalit or a Man/Woman

# Roles

- Roles refer to the dynamic aspects of status.
- They are culturally defined rules for appropriate behaviour as entailed in a particular status.
- Comprises both – rights and obligations
- Just as status, roles also exist regardless of individuals who perform them
- A status may include multiple roles
- Ex: Male or Female head of the household- may be expected to earn, provide for family members, manage finances, ensure elderly and child care, provision of essentials, health services and schools etc.

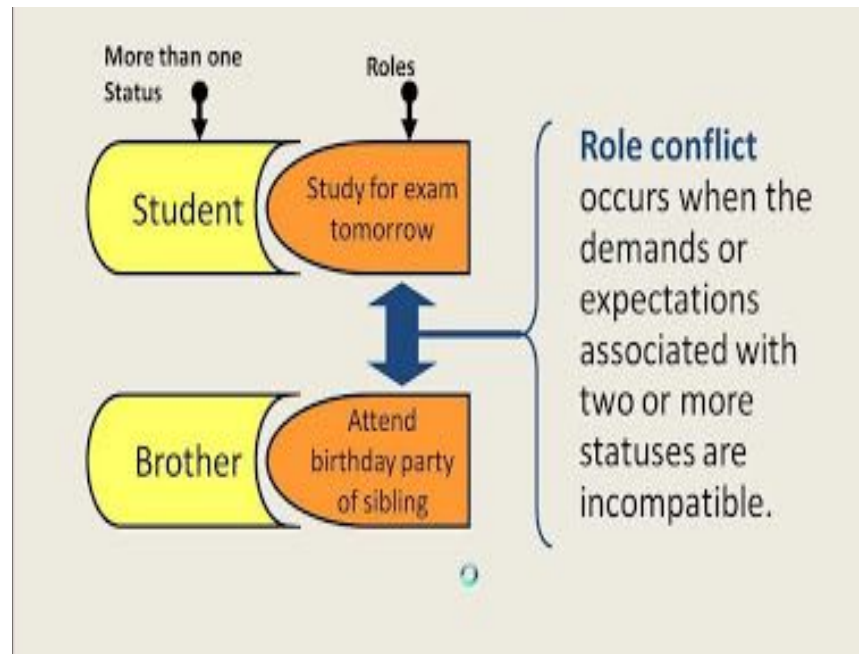
# Role-Strain

- Concept given by Jack Goode.
- The term role-strain refers to contradictory expectations attached to the same role.
- Single role having conflicting demands attached to it
- Ex: Mothers and Fathers expected to loving and nurturing but also expected to be strict and disciplining.
- Ex: Bosses expected to be visionary and leaders taking company to heights but also accommodative/sympathetic of personal/familial situations of employees.
- Stress felt in a position is not due to personality but due to the nature of expectations attached to the position.



# Role Conflict

- Clashes of our multiple roles in our everyday life is referred to as role conflict
- As societies become more complex, individuals will keep on occupying many more statuses and thus experience of role conflict will also keep rising and will be a major source of stress in modern time



- Think of Role Conflict in Contemporary Times of COVID-19
- Role of Doctors, especially Government Doctors
- As a Doctor, you are responsible for every life, As a Public employee, you are forced to go by the rules of the government



- *“Coronavirus victims in Italy will be denied access to intensive care if they are aged 80 or more or in poor health should pressure on beds increase, a document prepared by a crisis management unit in Turin proposes. Some patients denied intensive care will in effect be left to die, doctors fear”.*  
(Excerpt from The Telegraph, 14 March, 2020)

## Finally Remember...

- Role Conflict and Role Strain are not the same.
- Role conflict involves multiple statuses.
- Role Strain involves single status but multiple roles attached to it.
- Think of more examples from your own life to understand the distinction