Who are you? Well, it really depends on the situation. In the classroom, you are a student; at home, you are a child, a sibling, a parent, a spouse, or a partner. In your office, you are the boss or the employee; in your studio, you are an artist or a woodworker. These are all facets of who you are, grounded in the real activities of your everyday life—school, work, hobbies, relationships. On line, though, reality need not limit you to such mundane identities. Online, you can be anyone you want!

Below is a sampling of actual online usernames from a variety of internet domains. Since people generally choose their own usernames, we can assume that they are meant to express something about the user's personality—sort of like a personalized license plate. Some names might cause us to modify our opening question a bit: Who do these people *think* they are? Or, perhaps, *wish* they *were*?

angelbabee3 mostwanted
bluechihuahua motherwitch
crazyaboutjesus nerd87
heartbreakah rebelcutie
intensejello superman22
ladyinpain viciousvixen
luvsexxy yummmiest
mauiwowee

Choosing a username is one of many ways we express ourselves in social interac tion. Because our online identities are usually disembodied and removed from the context of our everyday lives, we can say anything we want about who we are (or think we are, or wish to be). Whether or not these folks are actually heartbreakers, rebel cuties, or supermen in real life, they can be those things online. What's your username?

SocIndex

Then and Now

600 B.C.: A Hindu surgeon performs the fi rst rhinoplasty (nose job), reconstruct ing a patient's nose from a portion of tissue from the cheek

2007: 284,960 nose jobs are performed in the United States alone

Here and There

United States: Almost 50% of American women are on weight-loss diets on any given day

Nigeria: Waikiriki women are confi ned to a "fattening" hut for fi ve weeks before their wedding

This and That

The top fi ve cosmetic surgery procedures for women are breast augmentation, liposuction, nose reshaping, eyelid surgery, and tummy tuck

The top fi ve cosmetic surgery procedures for men are nose reshaping, eyelid sur gery, liposuction, male breast reduction, and hair transplantation

HOW TO READ THIS CHAPTER

In this chapter, you will learn how the self is connected to all social phenomena (such as gender and race, and the e! ects of mass media) and how interaction constructs them all. You will be acquiring some new analytic tools (including the concepts of socialization and impression management), which will be referenced again in the chapters to come. In addition, you will be introduced to a new way of looking at the self—indeed, a new way of looking at *your* self—that emphasizes the role of the social in creating the individual. And you will be reminded of the reverse: as your society makes you who you are, you have a role (in fact, many roles!) to

play in shaping your society.

What Is Human Nature?

"That's just human nature" is a phrase we often use to ex plain everything from violence and jealousy to love and al truism. But what is human nature, really? What is the thing about us that is unique and irreducible, that we all have in common and that separates us from other creatures? From a sociologist's perspective, it is culture and society that make us human. These things that we have created also make us who we are. We have to *learn* the meanings we give to food, housing, sex, and everything else, and society is the teacher.

You would be a very di! erent person had you been born in fourteenth-century Japan, in an Aztec peasant family, or in the Norwegian royal court. You would have learned a di! er ent language, a di! erent set of everyday skills, and a di! erent set of meanings about how the world works. Also, your sense of who you are would be radically di! erent in each case be cause of the particular social structures and interactions you would encounter. If you were a member of an Aztec peasant family, for example, you would expect to be married to some one of your parents' choosing in your early teens (McCaa 1994). Girls would be considered old maids if they were still single at " fteen and might end up as prostitutes or concu bines if they did not " nd a husband by this tender age.

nature vs. nature debate the ongoing discussion of the respective roles of genetics and socialization in determin ing individual behaviors and traits

certain instincts? These are questions posed in what is of ten called the **nature vs. nurture debate**. Those taking the nature side, often sociobiologists, some psychologists, and others in the natural sciences, argue that behavioral traits can be explained by genetics. Those taking the nurture side, so ciologists and others in the social sciences, argue that human behavior is learned and shaped through social interaction. Which of these arguments is right?

Both are right. You don't have to look far to see that ge netics, or nature, plays a role in who we are. For example, research shows that high levels of testosterone contribute to stereotypically masculine traits such as aggressiveness and competitiveness (Van Goozen et al. 1994). However, it is also true that facing a competitive challenge (such as a baseball game) causes testosterone levels to rise (Booth et al. 1989). So is it the hormone that makes us competitive, or is it com petition that stimulates hormone production? An additional example involves a study of moral and social development in people with brain injuries. Stephen W. Anderson and col leagues (1999) studied patients whose prefrontal cortex had been damaged. Those who had received the injury as infants struggled with moral and social reasoning, " nding it di# cult or impossible to puzzle out questions like "Is it acceptable for a man to steal the drug needed to save his wife's life if he can't a! ord to pay for it?" People who received the same injury as adults, however, were able to deal with such issues. Anderson and his research team hypothesized that there is a crucial period in brain development when people acquire the capacity for moral reasoning. In other words, nature pro vides a biological window through which social and moral development occurs.

The point is that there is a complex relationship be tween nature and nurture. Either one alone is insu# cient to explain what makes us human. Certainly heredity gives us a basic potential, but it is primarily our social environment that determines whether we will realize or fall short of that potential or develop new ones. We are subject to social in- $ uences from the moment we are born (and even before), and these in$ uences only increase over the years. In part because the in$ uence of social contact happens so gradu ally and to some extent unconsciously, we don't really notice what or how we are learning.

The Nature vs. Nurture Debate

If it is culture and society that make us human, what role does our genetic makeup play? Aren't we *born* with

The Process of Socialization

We often speak of "socializing" with our friends, yet the idea of "socializing" is only part of what sociologists mean by **socialization**. Socialization is a twofold process. It includes

socialization the process of learning and internalizing the values, beliefs, and norms of our social group, by which we become functioning members of society

the process by which a society, culture, or group teaches individuals to become functioning members, and the pro cess by which individuals learn and internalize the values and norms of the group. Socialization thus works on both an individual and a social level: we learn our society's way of life and make it our own. Socialization accomplishes two main goals. First, it teaches members the skills neces sary to satisfy basic human needs and to defend themselves against danger, thus ensuring that society itself will continue to exist. Second, socialization teaches individuals the norms, values, and beliefs associated with their culture and provides ways to ensure that members adhere to their shared way of life.

Social Isolation

We can appreciate how important socialization is when we see what happens to people who are deprived of social contact. When infants are born, they exhibit almost none of the learned behaviors that characterize human beings. Even their instincts for food or shelter or self-preservation are barely recognizable and almost impossible for them to act on alone. Babies do have innate capacities but can only fully develop as human beings through contact with others. There are several startling cases that demonstrate this (New ton 2004).

Mowgli, the "Man Cub" Fictional accounts of feral children, like Mowgli, the hero of the animated Disney fi lm *The Jungle Book*, are quite different from real socially isolated children who struggle to learn language and interact with others.

Perhaps you have heard myths about feral children, or children who have grown up in the wild. Supposedly there are real cases of children being raised by wolves, as well as works of " ction such as *Tarzan of the Apes* and *The Jungle Book*. Such stories present images of primitive humans who have survived outside society and who are both heathen and uncivilized yet pure and uncorrupt, who lack in social graces but possess the keenest of instincts. Legend has it that as far back as the thirteenth century, experiments were conducted by German emperor Frederick II to see whether humans could return to their natural and perfect state as depicted in the biblical Garden of Eden. Without human contact, the children who were used in these cruel experi ments did not reveal any divine truths to the experiment ers—they simply perished (Van Cleve 1972).

Although scienti" c ethics would never allow such ex periments today, there are unfortunately real-life cases in volving children who have lived in extreme social isolation. Sociologist Kingsley Davis (1940) studied several of these cases to better understand the relationship between human development and socialization.

One case from the 1930s involves a child named Isabelle, who was sequestered with her unmarried mother in a dark room of the family's Ohio home (K. Davis 1940, 1947). The mother, a deaf-mute, communicated with her using only ges tures. Isabelle consequently did not learn to speak at all and communicated by making low, croaking sounds. When she was " nally discovered by authorities, it was found that, in almost all ways, she had failed to develop like a normal child. Her behavior could only be described as primitive and bi zarre, although there was never evidence of any congenital physical or mental disability. Isabelle did have a remarkable capacity for learning once she was exposed to regular hu man contact. But language skills were only part of what she later had to acquire in order to take her place as a member of society. Although she eventually overcame many of the e! ects of her social isolation, it was only through intensive training with medical and psychological specialists. It took two years after her rescue for her to acquire language and learn to interact with others, demonstrating that without so cialization, we are almost totally devoid of the qualities we normally

associate with being human. Isabelle was able, with intensive remedial socialization, to "catch up" to her peers and become a normal child, something she was denied by her upbringing.

The socialization process begins in infancy and is espe cially productive once a child begins to understand and use language (Ochs 1986). But socialization is not complete at that point. It is a lifelong process that continues to shape us through experiences such as school, work, marriage, and parenthood, as we will see in the next few sections.

Theories of the Self

Having a sense of one's self is perhaps the most fundamental of all human experiences. When seventeenth-century philoso pher René Descartes exclaimed, "I think, therefore I am," he was expressing this basic fact—that we possess a conscious ness about ourselves. More recently, some have wondered whether higher mammals or primates might also have this same self-consciousness; while that has yet to be determined,
we do know that consciousness is at the core of humanness. The **self** is our experience of a distinct, real, personal iden tity that is separate and di! erent from all other people. We can be "proud of ourselves," "lose control of ourselves," or want to "change ourselves," suggesting that we have the ability to think about ourselves as if we were more than one being and to see ourselves from the vantage point of an observer. Our thoughts and feelings emanate both *from* and *toward* ourselves; this is, in e! ect, how we come to "know" ourselves.

But just where does this sense of a self come from? How do we arrive at self-knowledge? When sociologists address these questions, they look at both the individual and soci ety to " nd the answer. They believe that the self is created and modi" ed through social interaction over the course of a lifetime. But while sociologists agree that the self is largely a social product, there are still a number of di! erent theories about how the self develops, as we will see.

Psychoanalytic Theory: Sigmund Freud

The psychoanalytic perspective on the self, which is usually associated with Sigmund Freud, emphasizes childhood and sexual development as indel
just below the surface was a far greater area of the mind, the subconscious and the unconscious. He proposed that this unconscious energy was the source of our conscious thou ghts and behavior. For example, the unconscious urge to slay our rivals may manifest itself in a conscious decision to work harder at the o# ce in order to outshine a com petitive coworker.

According to Freud, the mind consists of three interrelat ed systems: the id, the ego, and the superego. The **id**, which is composed of biological drives, is the source of instinctive, psychic energy. Its main goal is to achieve pleasure and to avoid pain in all situations, which makes the id a sel" sh and unrealistic part of the mind. For example, despite all your hard work, sometimes that competitive coworker is the one who gets the raise—not exactly what the pleasure-seeking id desired. The **ego**, by contrast, is the part that deals with the

self the individual's conscious, refl ex ive experience of a personal identity separate and distinct from other in dividuals

id, ego, and **superego** according to Freud, the three interrelated parts that make up the mind. The id consists of basic inborn drives that are the source of instinctive psychic energy. The ego is the realistic aspect of the mind that balances the forces of the id and the superego. The superego has two components (the conscience and the ego-ideal) and represents the internalized demands of society.

Dreams and the Subconscious In his book *Interpretation of Dreams*, psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud outlined three psychological systems—the id, the ego, and the superego—which regulate subconscious drives and help keep an individual mentally balanced.

ible in$ uences on an individ ual's identity. While Freud's ideas have generated a great deal of controversy among academics, they remain compelling for sociologists, as noted in Chapter 2.

Perhaps his greatest con tribution to understanding the self is his idea of the un conscious mind, as featured in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900/1955). Freud believed that the conscious level of awareness was but the tip of the iceberg and that

real world. It operates on the basis of reason and helps to mediate and integrate the demands of both the id and the superego. So the ego is the part of the self that says, “Okay, this time the other guy won, but if I keep trying, I’m bound to get that raise eventually.”

The **superego** is composed of two components: the con science and the ego-ideal. The conscience serves to keep us from engaging in socially undesirable behavior, and the ego ideal upholds our vision of who we believe we should ideally be. The superego develops as a result of parental guidance, particularly in the form of the rewards and punishments we receive as children. It inhibits the urges of the id and encourages the ego to " nd morally acceptable forms of be havior. So the superego helps suppress the urge to kill your competitor and keeps you working toward getting that raise in socially acceptable ways. Each of these systems serves a di! erent mental or emotional function, yet they all work to gether to keep the individual in a more or less healthy state of balance.

Freud also proposed that between infancy and adult hood, the personality passes through four distinct **psycho sexual stages of development** (1905). This theory emerged from his therapy work with adult patients who were asked to try to recall earlier periods from their lives. According to the theory, a child passes through the " rst three stages of devel opment between the ages of one and " ve. Most people have little or no memory whatsoever of this period, yet accord ing to psychoanalytic theory it is supposed to set the stage for the rest of one’s adult life. The last stage of development begins around the age of twelve, but few people successful ly complete this " nal transition to maturity. In some cases, the transitions through the " rst three stages are not com pletely successful either, so that people may " nd themselves stuck, or “" xated,” at an earlier stage. Perhaps you’ve known someone who is considered to have an “oral " xation”—this person, thought to be partially stuck in the " rst stage of de velopment, might smoke, overeat, or be verbally aggressive. Someone who is “anal retentive”—a neatnik, tightwad, or control freak—is thought to be partially stuck in the second stage. These kinds of personality traits, rooted in early child

The Looking-Glass Self: Charles Cooley

Around the same time Freud was developing his theories (early 1900s), other social theorists interested in the self were working on the other side of the Atlantic. Charles Cooley, an early member of the Chicago School of sociology, devised a simple but elegant way to conceptualize how individuals gain a sense of self. His idea is captured in the following short poem, which summarizes a profound and complex process.

Each to each a looking-glass,
Re! ects the other that doth pass.

Cooley referred to this concept as the **looking-glass self** (1909). He believed that we all act like mirrors to each other, re$ ecting back to one another an image of ourselves. We do this in three steps.

1. *We imagine how we look to others*—not just in a physical sense, but in how we present ourselves. For example, we may imagine that others " nd us friendly, funny, or hard working. The idea we have of ourselves is particularly important in regard to signi" cant others. Whether they are parents, bosses, friends, or partners, we care about how we look to these people.

2. *We imagine other people’s judgment of us*. We try to picture others’ reactions and to interpret what they must be feel ing. What is their opinion of me? Do they think I am smart enough? Lazy? Boring? Too tall? Not talkative enough?

3. *We experience some kind of feeling about ourselves based on our perception of other people’s judgments*. If we imagine, for instance, that they think of us as competent, we may feel pride; conversely, if we think they consider us inadequate, then we may feel shame or embarrassment. The important point here is that we respond to the judgments that we *be lieve* others make about us, without really knowing for sure what they think. And we’re not always right. We may draw wildly unrealistic conclusions. But according to Cooley, it is these perceptions, not

hood (according to Freud), appear as "hang-ups" in the adult.

Other sociologists have extended Freud's work in this area, focusing especially on gender identity—our selves as feminine or masculine. Nancy Chodorow, a feminist and psychoanalytic sociologist, has written widely on human behavior and internal psychic structures and how patterns of gendered parenting and early childhood development can lead to the reproduction of traditional sex roles in society (1978, 1994).

reality, that determine the feelings we ultimately have about ourselves.

The social looking-glass, the way we see ourselves re- $ ected back from others to gether with the feelings we develop as a result of what we imagine they see in us, forms

psychosexual stages of develop ment four distinct stages of the develop ment of the self between birth and adult hood, according to Freud. Each stage is associated with a different erogenous zone.

looking-glass self the notion that the self develops through our perception of others' evaluations and appraisals of us

our concept of self. For Cooley, there could be no sense of self without society, for there is no individual self without a corresponding "other" to provide us with our looking-glass self-image.

The suggestion that we are dependent on what oth ers think of us—or rather what we think they think—for our own self-concept might seem appalling: are we really that hung up on what other people think? But while some of us may be in$ uenced to a greater or lesser degree, *all* of us come to know our selves through relationships, either real or imagined, with others.

Mind, Self, and Society: George Herbert Mead

Another member of the Chicago School, George Herbert Mead, expanded upon Cooley's ideas about the development of the self and laid the essential groundwork that became the theory of symbolic interactionism. Mead also believed that self was created through social interaction. He believed that this process started in childhood—that children began to de velop a sense of self at about the same time that they began to learn language. The acquisition of language skills coincides with the growth of mental capacities, including the ability to think of ourselves as separate and distinct and to see our

is referred to as taking the role of the **particular or signi! - cant other**. As children learn the behavior associated with being a mother or doctor, they internalize the expectations of those particular others and begin to gain new perspectives in addition to their own. Such play also serves the purpose of anticipatory socialization for the real-life roles a child might play in the future.

In the " nal or **game stage** of development, children's self-awareness increases through a process Mead described using the example of games. By the early school years, children begin to take part in organized games. Each child must follow the rules of the game, which means that he or she must simultaneously take into account the roles of all the other players. Mead calls this overview the perspective of the **generalized other**. Thus children begin to under stand the set of standards common to a social group—their playmates—and to see themselves from others' viewpoint. By taking the perspective of the generalized other, children are able to see themselves as objects. They gradually learn to internalize the expectations of the generalized other for themselves and to evaluate their own behavior. This is the beginning of understanding the attitudes and expectations of society as a whole.

Mead also recognized the dialectical or **dual nature of the self**: that is, the self as both subject and object. What we refer to as "I" is the subject component—the experience of

preparatory stage the fi rst stage in Mead's theory of the development of self wherein children mimic or imitate others

play stage the second stage in Mead's theory of the development of self where in children pretend to play the role of the particular or signifi cant other

particular or signifi cant other the perspectives and expectations of a particular role that a child learns and internalizes

game stage the third stage in Mead's theory of the development of self wherein children play organized games and take on the perspective of the gen eralized other

generalized other the perspectives and expectations of a network of others (or of society in general) that a child learns and then takes into account when shap ing his or her own behavior

dual nature of the self the belief that we experience the self as both subject and object, the "I" and the "me"

selves in relationship to oth ers (1934).

According to Mead, the development of the self un folds in several stages as we move through childhood. First is the **preparatory stage**. Children under the age of three lack a completely developed

sense of self, and so they have di# culty dis
tinguishing themselves from others. Such chil dren begin the development process by simply imitating or mim
icking others around them (making faces, playing patty cake) without fully under standing the meaning of their behavior. After age three, children enter the **play stage** of development when they start to pretend or play at be ing "mommy," "" re" ghter," "princess," or "doctor." This
a spontaneous, active, and creative part of ourselves, some what less socialized. What we refer to as "me" is the object component— the experience of a norm-abiding, conform ing part of ourselves, more socialized and therefore reliant on others. The two components are inseparable and are

The Particular Other According to Mead, once children learn about the self, they begin imitating others and playing roles. They begin to learn about perspectives other than their own.

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united to form a single self in each of us. It is this process of recognizing the dual nature of the self, taking the role of the particular other, and seeing the perspective of the general ized other that Mead suggests leads to the development of the self.

Dramaturgy: Erving Goffman

Erving Go! man is another among the group of symbolic in teractionists who see micro-level, face-to-face interaction as the building block of every other aspect of society. Go! man believes that all meaning, as well as our individual selves, is constructed through interaction. Many of his key ideas are ex pressed in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1956).

To understand Go! man's work, we " rst need to brie$ y consider another of the early Chicago School sociologists, W. I. Thomas. What is now called the **Thomas theorem** (Thomas and Thomas 1928) states that "if people de" ne sit uations as real, they are real in their consequences" (p. 572). In other words, because we encounter ambiguous situations every day, many meanings are possible. The way we de" ne each situation, then, becomes its reality.

For example, suppose you're walking down the street and you witness a woman slapping a man in public. What are the possible meanings of that situation? It could be a " ght or spousal abuse; it could be a joke or a friendly greeting, de
pending on how hard the slap is. It could be that he has just passed out and she is hoping to revive him. The participants could be actors shooting a scene from a " lm. Each of these de" nitions leads to a di! erent set of potential consequenc
es—you might intervene, call the police, stand by and laugh, ignore them, summon paramedics, or ask for an autograph, depending on which meaning you act upon. Each **de! nition of the situation** lends itself to a di! erent approach, and the consequences are real.

Go! man looks at how we de" ne situations interaction ally—not just cognitively within our own heads, but expressions, mannerisms, body language, or styles of dress are important indicators to others about the de" nition of the situation.

IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT Reading meaning in others' expressions of behavior requires a bit of caution. We know that people may deliberately say things to hide what they re ally feel, so we tend to think we get more real insight from ex pressions given o! because we believe them to be unintend ed. But expressions given o!

in in teraction with others. Think about it: how do you get your de" nition of the situation across to others? If you think a classroom lecture is boring, you may look over at your best friend and roll your eyes . . . she nods, indicating that she knows what you mean. The eye roll and the nod are **expres sions of behavior**, tools we use to project our de" nitions of the situation to others. What Go! man calls **expressions given** are typically ver bal and intended—most of our speech falls into this category. Almost all of what we say, we *mean* to say, at least at that moment. Only in situations of extreme emotional response— such as fear, pain, or ecstasy—might we make unintended utterances. **Expressions given o"**, like the eye roll and the nod, are typically nonverbal but observable in various ways and may be intended or unintended. Things like facial can be manipulated as well. In a sense, Go! man is saying that it's not just what you say but how you say it that creates meaning. And he is a cynic, although he believes that ev eryday actors can be sincere.

Go! man sees social life as a sort of con game, in which we work at controlling the impressions others have of us. He calls this process **im pression management**. Like actors on a stage, we play our parts and use all of our com municative resources (verbal and nonverbal) to present a particular impression to oth

ers. We say and do what we think is necessary to commu nicate who we are and what we think, and we refrain from saying and doing things that might damage the impression we want others to have of us.

It is this focus on the performance strategies of im pression management that has led scholars to refer to Go! man's central ideas as **dramaturgy**—and the the atrical allusion is entirely intended. As in the theater, we use certain tools to aid in our impression manage

ment. The **front**, for exam ple, is the setting that helps establish a particular meaning (like a classroom for teaching or a bar for drinking). Our **personal front**—appearance,

Thomas theorem classic formulation of the way individuals defi ne situations, whereby "if people defi ne situations as real, they are real in their consequences"

defi nition of the situation an agree ment with others about "what is going on" in a given circumstance. This consen sus allows us to coordinate our actions with those of others and realize goals.

expressions of behavior small actions such as an eye roll or head nod, which serve as an interactional tool to help project our defi nition of the situation to others

expressions given expressions that are intentional and usually verbal, such as utterances

expressions given off observable expressions that can be either intended or unintended and are usually nonverbal

impression management the effort to control the impressions we make on others so that they form a desired view of us and the situation; the use of self presentation and performance tactics

dramaturgy an approach pioneered by Erving Goffman in which social life is analyzed in terms of its similarities to theatrical performance

front in the dramaturgical perspective, the setting or scene of performances that helps establish the defi nition of the situation

personal front the expressive equip ment we consciously or unconsciously use as we present ourselves to others, including appearance and manner; they help establish the defi nition of the situation

region in the dramaturgical perspec tive, the context or setting in which the performance takes place

backstage in the dramaturgical per spective, places in which we rehearse and prepare for our performances

frontstage in the dramaturgical per spective, the region in which we deliver our public performances

social construction the process by which a concept or practice is created and maintained by participants who col lectively agree that it exists

manner, and style of dress (or "costume"), as well as gender, race, and age—helps establish the de" nition of the situation as well.

For example, Dr. Ferris is told quite often that she "doesn't look like a profes sor." This illustrates how we use elements of personal front to make judgments about peo

ple: our images of professors usually involve gru! , grizzled, older men in unfashionable clothes, and so someone who is younger, friendlier, and fe

wear (for that matter, professors rarely think of their students this way either!). So when we encounter one another in unfa miliar regions, we often don't know how to behave because the old classroom scripts don't work.

In addition, there are places known as back regions, or **backstage**, where we prepare for our performances—which take place in front regions, or **frontstage**. We behave di! erent ly—and present di! erent selves—frontstage than we do back stage; your professor behaved di! erently this morning while he showered, shaved, dressed, and made breakfast for his kids than he is behaving now, lecturing and answering questions in his sociology classroom. For Go! man, the key to understand ing these nuances in impression management is to recognize that we present di! erent selves in di! erent situations, and the responses of others to those selves continually shape and mold our de" nitions of situation *and* self. Thus we can say that the

male and who wears hipper jewelry must work harder at con vincing others that she is in fact a

professor. Similarly, when a student happens to see Dr. Ferris at a restaurant, movie theater, or department store, the student's response is almost always the same: "What are you doing here?"

The social setting, or **region** (which includes the location, scenery, and props), makes a big di! erence in how we perceive and interact with the people we encounter there. Students and professors recognize one another and know how to interact when on campus or in the classroom. But in other venues, we are out of context, and this can confuse us. We seldom think of our professors as people who have o! -campus lives—it's hard to see them as people who dine out, see movies, or buy under

self is a **social construction** (Berger and Luckmann 1966). The self is something that is created or invented in interaction with others who also participate in agreeing to the reality or meaning of that self as it is being presented in the situation.

We also make claims about who we are in our inter actions. These claims can be either accepted or contradicted by others, which can make things either easier or harder for our self-image. Most of the time, others support the selves we project. For example, when your professor starts lecturing and you begin to take notes, you are supporting the version of self that he is presenting: he is "doing professor," and in response, you are "doing student." Another way that we sup

port the selves that people present is to allow them to save

Front and Back Regions Just like Gene Simmons, pictured on stage with his band, Kiss, and at home, we present ourselves differently depending on the situation. Others' responses to our behavior in those different settings shape our defi nitions of ourselves.

TABLE 5.1

Perspective Approach to the Self and Interaction Case Study: Identity in Childhood

PSYCHOANALYSIS Freud's theory of the unconscious mind as com posed of an interrelated system (id, ego, superego) that underlies human behavior; personality devel ops through psycho-sexual stages.

LOOKING-GLASS SELF Cooley's theory of the self concept as derived from how we imagine others see us, and the feelings about ourselves based on the perceived judgments of others.

MIND, SELF, AND SOCIETY Mead's theory of the self that develops through three stages (preparatory, play, and game); in role taking the particular or generalized other, we learn to see ourselves as others do.

DRAMATURGY Goffman's theory of the presentation of self; we are like actors on a stage whose performance strategies aid in impression management.

face—to prevent them from realizing that they've done some thing embarrassing. Go! man calls this **cooling the mark out**, a phrase borrowed from con games, but it can be used as a tool of civility and tact as well. When the professor mixes up two related concepts in a lecture, for example, you let it pass because you know what she really meant to say. Or, even worse, you overlook the spinach between your professor's

Parents instill a conscience (superego) in children through rules that govern their instinctual behavior (id) until children mature and are self-governing (ego).

Parents and signifi cant others serve as a refl ection to children, who develop a sense of self based on their appraisals, real or imagined.

Children gain a sense of self through imitation, play, and games, in which they learn various roles and take on the perspectives of others.

Children learn the arts of impression management and may present a different self to their parents than to other children or teachers.

ANALYZING EVERYDAY LIFE

Impression Management in Action

teeth until it can be called to his attention privately! There are also situations in which the selves we project are contested or even destroyed. For example, if you raised your hand in a 200-person lecture hall and told the professor that he had spinach between his teeth, you would be under mining the self he is trying to present. His identity as an ex pert, an authority " gure, a senior mentor, would be publicly damaged once you called attention to his dental ga! e (unless he was able to de$ ect the situation gracefully). In Go! man's view, then, the presentation of self and impression manage ment are about power as well as about self. If you embarrass your professor in front of an auditorium full of students, he no longer possesses quite as much power as he did a few moments before.

Go! man's view of our interactions can be disturbing to some people, for it suggests that we are always acting, that we are never being honest about who we really are. But Go! -man would challenge this interpretation of his work. Yes, some people deliberately deceive others in their presenta tion of self, but we must all present *some* type of self in social situations. Why wouldn't those selves be presented sincere ly? As Go! man-inspired sociologist 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' " (1985, p. 30).

This exercise in ethnography is designed to help make your own impression management visible—and to help you see how integral it is to your everyday life. You will observe your self acting and interacting in two di! erent social situations and will then do a comparative analysis of your presentation of self in each setting. Observing one's own behavior is a variant of the ethnographic method you read about in Chap
ter 3 known as **autoethnography**.

Step 1: Observation

Choose two di! erent situations that you will encounter this week in everyday life, and commit to observing yourself for 30 minutes as you participate in each. For example, you may observe yourself at work, at a family birthday celebration, at lunch with friends, in your math class, riding on the bus or train, or watching a softball game. The two situations you choose don't need to be ex
traordinary in any way; in fact, the more mundane, the better. But they should be markedly di! erent from one another.

Step 2: Analysis

After observing yourself in the two situations, consider the following questions.

cooling the mark out behaviors that help others to save face or avoid embar rassment, often referred to as civility or tact

autoethnography ethnographic de scription that focuses on the feelings and reactions of the ethnographer