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Fall 2021

Th 1:00 – 4:00

# Cognitive Sociology

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Office Hours: Thursday 4:00 – 6:00 and by appointment

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Welcome to “Cognitive Sociology,” where we will explore the fascinating relations between the social and the mental. Using classical and contemporary works in sociology, anthropology, psychology, history, geography, linguistics, memory studies, and philosophy, we will examine the sociocultural underpinnings of major mental processes (perception, attention, memory, classification, signification) as well as the sociocognitive foundations of identity. In so doing, we will be drawing on major theoretical traditions such as phenomenology, ethnomethodology, symbolic anthropology, structuralism, frame analysis, and semiotics. Throughout the semester, you will use these traditions in a variety of substantive contexts, acquire an intellectually pluralistic perspective that promotes engagement with different theoretical perspectives, and produce original, thematically-inspired pieces of sociological thinking.

There are six books we will be using extensively throughout the course:

1. Eviatar Zerubavel's *Social Mindscapes* (ISBN 0-674-81390-1)
2. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality* (ISBN 0-385-05898-5)
3. Eviatar Zerubavel's *Generally Speaking* (ISBN 9780197519288)
4. Eviatar Zerubavel's *The Fine Line* (ISBN 0-226-98159-2)
5. Wayne Brekhus's *Peacocks, Chameleons, Centaurs* (ISBN 0-226-07292-4)
6. Eviatar Zerubavel's *Taken for Granted* (ISBN 978-0-691-17736-6)

I will supply you with copies of the first, third, fourth and sixth books. The other two you should get on your own. All the other required course readings are posted on the course website on [sakai.rutgers.edu](http://sakai.rutgers.edu). You are expected to read all the assigned readings prior to the class for which they are assigned.

There are three written course assignments, which I will discuss in our first meeting: a ten-page paper on attention due on **October 14**, a ten-page paper on classification due on **November 4**, and a ten-page paper on markedness and unmarkedness due on **December 9**. Each of them will count for one third of your final grade.

The Rutgers Sociology Department strives to create an environment that supports and affirms diversity in all manifestations, including race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, social class, disability status, region/country of origin, and political orientation. We celebrate diversity of theoretical and methodological perspectives, seek to create an atmosphere of respect and mutual dialogue, have zero tolerance for violations of these principles and have instituted procedures for responding to grievances.

Unless the situation changes, the course will be conducted in person. Other than during office hours, the best way to reach me is by email. I also make a point of being highly available on one-on-one video chats on either FaceTime or Zoom, so feel free to reach me whenever you want to talk.

## September 2                    The Sociology of Thinking

The sociomental; cognitive individualism; cognitive universalism; the impersonal, collective, normative, conventional, and political aspects of cognition; sociomental control; cognitive pluralism; cognitive socialization; the social distribution of knowledge; verstehen

Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: Free Press, 1995 [1912]), pp. 12-18.

Charles Cooley, *Human Nature and the Social Order* (New York: Schocken, 1964 [1922]), 119-22.

Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Harvest, 1936 [1929]), pp. 1-3, 33-34.

Eviatar Zerubavel, *Social Mindscapes: An Invitation to Cognitive Sociology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 1-6, 17-22.

Wayne Brekhus, "The Rutgers School: A Zerubavelian Culturalist Cognitive Sociology," *European Journal of Social Theory* 10 (2007): 448-60.

## September 9                    The Social Construction of Reality

Intersubjectivity; phenomenological sociology; language and typification; thought communities; cognitive subcultures; cognitive traditions; cognitive norms and cognitive deviance; cognitive disputes; cognitive conventions; reification and essentialism; ethnocentricity and contempocentricity

Emile Durkheim, "The Dualism of Human Nature and Its Social Conditions," in Robert N. Bellah (ed.), *Emile Durkheim: On Morality and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973 [1914]), pp. 151-53, 161-62.

Ludwik Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981 [1935]), pp. 38-51.

Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor, 1967 [1966]), pp. 19-28, 34-46, 59-82, 89-92, 129-63.

Alfred Schutz and Thomas Luckmann, *The Structures of the Life-World* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), pp. 299-304.

Zerubavel, *Social Mindscapes*, pp. 6-17, 100-10.

Eviatar Zerubavel, "The Five Pillars of Essentialism: Reification and the Social Construction of an Objective Reality," *Cultural Sociology* 10 (2016): 69-76.

## September 16                    Concept-Driven Sociology

Concept-driven research; social pattern analysis; generic (formal) sociology; transcontextual theorizing; decontextualizing; focusing; epistemic readiness; sensitizing concepts; proto-concepts; generalizing;

examplifying: multiple-cultural, multihistorical, multidomain, multilevel; extrapolating; analogizing: cross-cultural, cross-historical, cross-domain, cross-level; parallels (“Simmelarities”)

Eviatar Zerubavel, *Generally Speaking: An Invitation to Concept-Driven Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), pp. 1-72.

## September 23                    The Sociology of Attention I

Worldviews, standpoints, and perspectives; optical communities; optical norms and optical deviance; optical traditions; optical socialization; epistemic revolutions; optical pluralism; attention and inattention; noticing and ignoring; figure and background; background persons; focusing: intellectual, moral, and erotic; focused and unfocused interaction; framing: metamessages, the out-of-frame; sociomental filters; relevance and irrelevance

Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, pp. 271-76.

Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*, pp. 89-105.

Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970 [1962]), pp. 111-35.

Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1974), pp. 40-48, 58-74, 227-30, 251-69, 311-15.

Murray S. Davis, *Smut: Erotic Reality / Obscene Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 26-33, 216-24, 230-34, 238-46.

Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 4-6, 8-11, 81-82, 87-90, 149-50.

Zerubavel, *Social Mindscapes*, pp. 23-34.

Asia Friedman, *Blind to Sameness: Sexpectations and the Social Construction of Male and Female Bodies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), pp. 27-51.

Eviatar Zerubavel, *Hidden in Plain Sight: The Social Structure of Irrelevance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 1-22.

## September 30                    The Sociology of Attention II

The social organization of attention; the social organization of relevance and noteworthiness; attentional communities; attentional traditions; norms of attending (focusing) and disattending; attentional socialization; attentional deviance; attentional battles; joint attention; joint disattention: co-denial, conspiracies of silence; agenda-setting

Erving Goffman, *Behavior in Public Places: Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings* (New York: Free Press, 1963), pp. 83-88.

Joan P. Emerson, “Behavior in Private Places: Sustaining Definitions of Reality in Gynecological Examinations,” in Hans-Peter Dreitzel (ed.), *Recent Sociology No.2: Patterns of Communicative Behavior* (London: Macmillan, 1970), pp. 74-93.

Goffman, *Frame Analysis*, pp. 202-15.

- Eviatar Zerubavel, *The Fine Line: Making Distinctions in Everyday Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993 [1991]), pp. 108-12.
- Takahiko Masuda and Richard E. Nisbett, "Attending Holistically versus Analytically: Comparing the Context Sensitivity of Japanese and Americans," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 81 (2001): 922-34.
- Eviatar Zerubavel, *The Elephant in the Room: Silence and Denial in Everyday Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 29-32, 47-57.
- Zerubavel, *Hidden in Plain Sight*, pp. 49-71, 79-82, 89-93.
- Gabrielle LeFleur, "Desire/Desirability: Gender Asymmetries in Heterosexual Erotic Attention," *Symbolic Interaction* (forthcoming).

## October 7                      Classification I

Categories; delineation and separateness: mental partitioning, boundaries; difference and similarity; lumping and splitting; mental differentiation; rites of passage; mental divides and quantum leaps; the social construction of historical discontinuity; mental distance: metric vs. topological, mental compression and mental inflation; rigid mindedness: compartmentalization, polarization, purity and contamination, one-drop thinking

- Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960 [1909]), pp. 15-25.
- Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Praeger, 1966), pp. 3-4, 35-40, 121-28.
- Suzanne J. Kessler and Wendy McKenna, *Gender: An Ethnomethodological Approach* (New York: John Wiley, 1978), pp. 142-67.
- Davis, *Smut*, pp. 122-24, 134-41, 144-49, 155-60.
- Zerubavel, *The Fine Line*, pp. 1-60.
- Eviatar Zerubavel, "Lumping and Splitting: Notes on Social Classification," *Sociological Forum* 11 (1996): 421-30.
- Eviatar Zerubavel, *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 82-100.
- Claus-Christian Carbon and Helmut Leder, "The Wall Inside the Brain: Overestimation of Distances Crossing the Former Iron Curtain," *Psychonomic Bulletin and Review* 12 (2005): 746-50.
- Friedman, *Blind to Sameness*, pp. 80-86.

## October 14                      Classification II

Fuzzy mindedness; culture and classification; the politics of classification; border disputes; etics and emics; fuzzy sets; prototypes; hybridity and liminality; the flexible mind: essence vs. potential, ambiguity, polysemy

- Kenneth L. Pike, *Language in Relation to A Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior* (The Hague: Mouton, 1967 [1954]), pp. 37-39, 41-46.
- Charles O. Frake, "The Ethnographic Study of Cognitive Systems," in Stephen A. Tyler (ed.), *Cognitive Anthropology* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1969 [1962]), pp. 28-39.
- Victor Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage," in *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970 [1964]), pp. 93-99.
- Zerubavel, *The Fine Line*, pp. 61-80, 103-22.
- Martin W. Lewis and Kären E. Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 4-12, 33-38, 150-54.
- Friedman, *Blind to Sameness*, pp. 141-49.

## October 21                      Classification and Identity

Identity and alterity; monosexuality, omnisexuality, and polysexuality; private and public time; home and work; integrators and segmentors; the grammar of identity

- Eviatar Zerubavel, *Hidden Rhythms: Schedules and Calendars in Social Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985 [1981]), pp. 157-66.
- Eviatar Zerubavel, "The Rigid, the Fuzzy, and the Flexible: Notes on the Mental Sculpting of Academic Identity," *Social Research* 62 (1995): 1093-1102.
- Christena Nippert-Eng, *Home and Work: Negotiating Boundaries through Everyday Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 48-60, 67-91.
- Nicole Isaacson, "The 'Fetus-Infant': Changing Classifications of *In Utero* Development in Medical Texts," *Sociological Forum* 11 (1996): 459-77.
- C. L. Carr, "Cognitive Scripting and Sexual Identification: Essentialism, Anarchism, and Constructionism," *Symbolic Interaction* 22 (1999): 1-17.
- Eviatar Zerubavel, "Language and Memory: "Pre-Columbian" America and the Social Logic of Periodization," *Social Research* 65 (1998): 320-24.
- Wayne H. Brekhus, *Peacocks, Chameleons, Centaurs: Gay Suburbia and the Grammar of Social Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 12-16, 24-31, 35-58, 74-89, 93-98, 137-64, 179-214.

## October 28                      Semiotics

Language and meaning; semiotics: semantics, syntactics, and pragmatics; representation and symbolism: signifiers and signifieds; structuralism: semiotic contrast; message and code; the fetishism of commodities; conspicuous consumption; metaphor

- Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (New York: International Publishers, 1967 [1867]), Vol. 1, pp. 35-38, 71-83.

- Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (New York: Mentor Books, 1953 [1899]), pp. 60-80.
- Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, pp. 221-24, 228-35, 303-13.
- Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959 [1915]), pp. 15-17, 65-69, 114-24.
- Raymond Firth, "Hair as Private Asset and Public Symbol," in *Symbols: Public and Private* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973), pp. 271-74.
- Eviatar Zerubavel, "The Language of Time: Toward A Semiotics of Temporality," *Sociological Quarterly* 28 (1987): 343-47, 353-54.
- Zerubavel, *Social Mindscapes*, pp. 68-80.

## November 4                      **Markedness and Unmarkedness I**

Marking and labeling; markedness and unmarkedness: presence and absence, the ordinary and the special, the common and the exceptional; semiotic weight; semiotic asymmetry; taken-for-grantedness; the implicit: assumptions and cognitive defaults; semiotic superfluity, the unarticulated; semiotic communities; marking traditions and conventions; socio-semiotic norms; marking disputes

- Linda R. Waugh, "Marked and Unmarked: A Choice between Unequals in Semiotic Structure," *Semiotica* 38 (1982): 299-316.
- Eviatar Zerubavel, *The Seven-Day Circle: The History and Meaning of the Week* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989 [1985]), pp. 113-20, 133-38.
- Johanna Foster, "Menstrual Time: The Sociocognitive Mapping of 'the Menstrual Cycle,'" *Sociological Forum* 11 (1996): 525-31, 542-44.
- Jamie Mullaney, "Making It 'Count': Mental Weighing and Identity Attribution," *Symbolic Interaction* 22 (1999): 269-81.
- Eviatar Zerubavel, *Taken for Granted: The Remarkable Power of the Unremarkable* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), pp. 1-31.

## November 11                      **Markedness and Unmarkedness II**

Marked and unmarked identities; naming and namelessness; normality and abnormality; the politico-semiotics of identity: semiotic exclusion, pathologization and othering; the exotic; the basic and the derivative; deviance; the sacred and the profane; representativeness and generalizability: genericization, neutralization; normalization and naturalization; dominance and unmarkedness; self-evidence and cognitive hegemony; semiotic invisibility

- Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method* (New York: Free Press, 1982 [1895]), pp. 91-93, 97-104.
- Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, pp. 34-38.
- Wayne H. Brekhus, "Social Marking and the Mental Coloring of Identity: Sexual Identity Construction and Maintenance in the United States," *Sociological Forum* 11 (1996): 497-520.

- Ashley W. Doane, "Dominant Group Ethnic Identity in the United States: The Role of 'Hidden' Ethnicity in Intergroup Relations," *Sociological Quarterly* 38 (1997): 375-91.
- Pamela Perry, "White Means Never Having to Say You're Ethnic: White Youth and the Construction of 'Cultureless' Identities." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 30 (2001): 65-79.
- Celia Kitzinger, "'Speaking as a Heterosexual': (How) Does Sexuality Matter for Talk-in-Interaction?" *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 38 (2005): 221-24, 255-59.
- Zerubavel, *Taken for Granted*, pp. 32-59.

## November 18                      **Markedness and Unmarkedness III**

Language and speech; backgrounding and foregrounding: unmarking, marking the unmarked; naming and de-naturalization: nouns and adjectives, deautomatization, defamiliarization; awareness raising; ethnomethodology; expectation and surprise; mocking normality; marking shifts and assumption reversals: retronyms

- Horace Miner, "Body Ritual among the Nacirema," *American Anthropologist* 58 (1956): 503-07.
- Harold Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1967), pp. 36-49, 53-55.
- Zerubavel, *Hidden Rhythms*, pp. 19-30.
- Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 194-98.
- Jonathan N. Katz, *The Invention of Heterosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007 [1995], pp. 148-66.
- Wayne H. Brekhus, "A Sociology of the Unmarked: Redirecting Our Focus," *Sociological Theory* 16 (1998): 34-49.
- Sally Robinson, *Marked Men: White Masculinity in Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), pp. 23-32.
- Zerubavel, *The Elephant in the Room*, pp. 62-68.
- Zerubavel, *Hidden in Plain Sight*, pp. 82-89.
- Zerubavel, *Taken for Granted*, pp. 60-98.

## December 2                      **The Sociology of Memory**

Collective memory; mnemonic communities; impersonal recollections; social sites of memory; norms of remembrance; mnemonic traditions; mnemonic socialization; mnemonic battles; plotlines and narratives; the social construction of historical continuity; periodization and identity; kinship; genealogical capital: pedigree; common ancestry; co-descent; genealogical communities: family, ethnicity, nationhood and citizenship; genealogical narratives: origins, "roots," indigenusness, antiquity, out-pasting; matrilineal and patrilineal descent; the one-drop rule; the social organization of relatedness; the politics of ancestry and descent; genealogical engineering: purity, assimilation, endogamy and exogamy, integration and segregation; symbolic kinship and descent; awakening narratives: the temporally divided self



- Michael Frisch, "American History and the Structures of Collective Memory: A Modest Exercise in Empirical Iconography," *Journal of American History* 75 (1989): 1133-43.
- Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 31-36.
- Zerubavel, *Social Mindscapes*, pp. 81-99.
- Zerubavel, *Time Maps*, pp. 11-36, 52-54, 102-10.
- Eviatar Zerubavel, *Ancestors and Relatives: Genealogy, Identity, and Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 31-39, 46-48, 59-74, 77-103, 118-31.
- Thomas DeGloma, *Seeing the Light: The Social Logic of Personal Discovery* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), pp. 8-18, 132-48.
- Thomas DeGloma, "The Strategies of Mnemonic Battle: On the Alignment of Autobiographical and Collective Memories in Conflicts over the Past," *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 3 (2015): 156-83.

**December 9**

**Conclusion**