Sociology of Emotions/
Social Construction of Sex

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http://www.iastate.edu/~soc.134
The sociology of emotion

- Common-sense belief: Our emotions represent our “true” self, not social rules
- Sociology of emotions studies how culture shapes the way we feel
- Arlie Hochschild: pioneered sociology of emotions
- People do “emotion work”: attempting to make feelings correspond to feeling rules
  - Emotion evocation: bringing about desired feeling
  - Emotion suppression: stifling undesired feeling
- Organizations may demand emotion work from workers
Managing emotions in an animal shelter

- Arnold Arluke (1994): participant observation in animal shelter
- How can society both treat animals with affection and kill them?
- Institution of animal shelter deals with this contradiction
- Employees must accept premise that sometimes it is necessary to kill animals
- Employees must be socialized to manage uncomfortable feelings about killing

Strategies of emotion management

1. Transforming shelter animals into virtual pets
   - Workers learned not to treat animals as pets
   - “Shelter mascots” served as surrogate pets

2. Focusing on the animal
   - Workers frame killing as eliminating suffering

3. Resisting and avoiding euthanasia
   - Workers may avoid killing animals they become attached to

4. Focusing on the owner
   - Workers feel angry at bad owners who are responsible for killing

5. Dealing with others
   - Workers avoid discussing job with outsiders
   - Workers neutralize criticism by defining as ill-informed

Sex vs. gender

- Sex: biological maleness or femaleness
- Gender: psychological, social, and cultural aspects of maleness and femaleness
- The two sexes are assumed to be
  - Universal (found in all cultures throughout history)
  - Exhaustive (there’s no third sex)
  - Mutually exclusive (a person can’t be both)
- Recently, sociologists have been questioning the taken-for-grantedness of the categories “man” and “woman”
  - Do the two sexes belong to the physical world or the world of meaning?
- Two important pieces of evidence:
  - Cross-cultural variation
  - Existence of intersexuals (and our reaction to them)