Ch. 5 Social Structure and Social Interaction

I.  SOCIAL STRUCTURE: THE MACROLEVEL

PERSPECTIVE:

--Social structure (Macro perspective) is the stable pattern of social relationships existing in a particular society or group.

--Provides framework within which we interact with others The structure affects the interaction -- ie, the economic structure, for example, affects how we interact with others (boss and employee in capitalism).

--Social Structure includes:

         Social institutions, groups, statuses, roles, and norms.

A.  Functional Theory: Social structure is essential because it creates order and predictability in a society (Parsons, 1951).

 --Also helps individuals form a self-concept

 --Connects people to larger society through webbed pattern of social relationships (thus, homeless people are at a disadvantage ‘cause little connections).

 --Social structure helps people make sense of their environment (both children and adults).

B.  Conflict Theory: Social structure creates boundaries that define insiders and outsiders.

 --Marx said the way economic production is organized is the most important structural aspect of any society.

         --Here, in capitalist societies, where few people control the labor of many, the social structure reflects a system of relationships of domination among categories of people (owner—worker, employer—employee

II.  COMPONENTS OF SOCIAL STRUCTURE

A.  status: a socially defined position in a group or society characterized by certain expectations, rights, and duties.

--Independent of the people occupying them

        1.  status set: all statuses at a given time (ie, you might be a student, a son, a boyfriend, and an employee -- that's your status set.)

                 a. ascribed status: social position conferred at birth or received involuntarily later in life (ie, your social class: if you are born into a wealthy family, that wealth is 'given' to you; you didn't do anything to earn it. Someone's ethnicity is also their ascribed status..

                 --Affects achieved status (race, ethnicity, gender affect what we achieve, mostly because people tend to treat us differently and have different expectations on us depending on our gender, race, and ethnicity, to name a few)

                 b. achieved status:  a social position a person assumes voluntarily as a result of personal choice, merit, or direct effort (occupation, education, income/ criminal, drug addict, homeless person).

                 c. master status: the most important status a person occupies, determines a person’s general social position. (Being poor or rich, ‘cause it affects other aspects of life

 Women: traditionally, daughter, wife, mother, but now, increasingly, occupation.

Men: traditionally, occupation

         2.  Status symbols:  Material signs of status, informing others of social position (wedding ring diamond, clothing, cars, homeless cart, school bag, uniform, etc.)

B. role: A set of behavioral expectations associated with a given status

        1.  role expectation:  a group of society’s definition of the way a specific role ought to be played.

--Role performance is how a person actually plays that role. Sometimes it's different than what is expected (ie, when a wife cheats on her husband; when a political figure lies to the public; when a parent abuses their child).

         2.  role conflict: occurs when incompatible role demands are placed on a person by two or more statuses held at the same time.

         3.  role strain: occurs when incompatible demands are built into a single status that a person occupies (Women in the job market due to lower pay, less prestige, more road blocks. Another example is the President of the USA -- we have all of these expectations for that one status, and he/she can't possibly do it all).

         4.  role exit: occurs when people disengage themselves from social roles that have been central to their self-identity (divorcees, retirees, ex-cons, graduates).

 C. social groups: consists of two or more people who interact frequently and share a common identity and a feeling of interdependence (friends, college classes, work).

social network: a series of social relationships that links an individual to others.

D. social institutions:  A set of organized beliefs and rules that establishes how a society will attempt to meet its basic social needs.

--Usually centers around 5 social institutions:

         --The family, Religion, Education, Economy, Government/politics

--A group is composed of specific, identifiable people

--An institution is a standardized way of doing something.

A. Durkheim's Typology: How do societies hold

together?

--First, a typology is just a classification scheme containing two or more mutually exclusive categories that are used to compare different kinds of behavior or types of societies.

1. Mechanical solidarity: Refers to the social cohesion in preindustrial societies (simple, less advanced societies).

--Based on shared moral beliefs, values

a) People are united by shared values and common social bonds.

b) Automatic sense of belonging

c) Social interaction is face-to-face, intimate, primary groups

d) little specialization (minimum division of labor—similar work, little specialization, similar status

--The division of labor in preindustrial societies made social structure/interaction a certain way, because it was based on face-to-face interaction and shared morals and values.

 --Conscious Collective

2. Organic solidarity: Refers to the social cohesion found in industrial societies (modern and advanced societies).

--The division of labor changes so interaction changes.

--Interaction is based on people’s shared dependence on one another.

a) ‘Organic’ like organs of a body functioning interdependently.

b) Social interaction is:

* + less personal
  + more status oriented
  + more focused on specific goals and objectives

c) People perform specialized tasks

d) People feel united by their mutual dependence

e) Bound together by practical considerations

--ALL due to changes in the division of labor

--But Durkheim argued that in reality, modern societies, organic solidarity was as yet imperfectly realized.

 B. Tonnies' Typology: refers to degree of social

solidarity. (1855-1936)

--Tonnies’ asked: What happens when a loss of community occurs?

* gemeinschaft: (“community”)

--A traditional society in which social relationships are based on personal bonds of friendship and kinship and on intergenerational stability.

--(Preindustiral USA, Simple, small scale societies)

        a)Relationships based on ascribed statuses.  Commitment to the group.

--What you’re born into, not achieving beyond

         b)strong sense of belonging and commitment to group

         c) social control and social solidarity are maintained by the community

         d) limited privacy

2. gesellschaft: (“association”):

--A large, urban society, in which social bonds are based on impersonal and specialized relationships, with little long-term commitment to the group or consensus on values (Modern, urban, industrialized societies)

a. relationships are based on achieved statuses

b. interactions are intentional and calculated

