Lecture Notes

# Chapter 5: Interaction, Groups, and Organizations: Connections That Work

## Learning Objectives

1. Demonstrate the impact social networks can have on the lives of individuals.
2. Provide examples of how verbal and non-verbal interaction guides our behavior.
3. Describe the needs primary and secondary groups meet for members of society and the overall society.
4. Show how the characteristics of bureaucracy apply to formal organizations.
5. Explain why networking with people from different cultures has become increasingly important.

## Chapter Overview

Chapter five is the first chapter to highlight how we exist as social beings, not just as individuals. This chapter begins with a discussion of social networks at the micro-, meso-, and macro-level. Then, the chapter continues to describe the interactive nature of social behavior and examines social interaction through a rational choice, ethnomethodological, and dramaturgical perspective. In the next section, the authors detail the role of groups. This section begins by discussing roles and statuses before it moves to the importance of groups in everyday life. The authors detail primary, secondary, reference, and peer groups as well as highlighting the difference between in-groups and out-groups. The final section examines modern organizations and the development of bureaucracies. The authors investigate the benefits and disadvantages of rational organizations. The chapter concludes by highlighting a problem-specific to macro-level institutions, international policy.

## Lecture Outline

I. Networks and Connections in Our Social World

A. Our *social networks* are micro-level contacts and exchanges between individuals and other individuals, small groups, and large (even global) organizations

B. *Networking* is using our social networks to get information, favors, or resources

C. Network links can be casual and personal or based on official positions and channels

II. Networks at Micro-, Meso-, and Macro-Levels

A. Family and Friends: Micro-Level Networks

1. Our micro-level networks consist of individuals we have personal ties to

2. They may also consist of individuals we share common interests with

B. Meso- and Macro-Level Networks

i. We are linked to networks through many outlets:

1. The Internet connects individuals who may have previously been unable to contact with one another

a. Blogging; Chat rooms; Message boards; MySpace.com; Facebook.com

ii. (Micro) Local civic, sports, and religious organizations

iii. (Meso) Institutions at the community or national level

iv. (Macro) Our nation where we live or are citizens

v. Global entities like the United Nations

C. Networks can open opportunities

i. But obligations to networks can also limit our freedom to make choices

D. Interactions at the meso- and macro-level are more formal

III. The Process of Interaction: Connections at the Micro-Level

A. The Elements of Social Interaction

i. *Social interaction* is two or more individuals purposefully relating to each other

1. All interaction has three important components:

a. Involves an action on the part of two or more individuals

b. Has a common goal that people hope to achieve

c. Takes place in a social context

i. Includes cultural norms and rules governing the situation, the setting, and other factors shaping the way people perceive their circumstances

2. The action, goal, and context helps us interpret the social meaning

ii. People assume that others will share their interpretation of a situation

1. Shared assumptions create cues for behavior

2. We determine our dress, manner, speech, and actions based on what we feel is appropriate in a situation

a. Socialization helps us determine social interaction

iii. People interact using verbal *and* non-verbal communication

1. *Non-verbal communication* are interactions using facial expressions, the head, eye contact, body posture, gestures, touch, walk, status symbols, and personal space

2. Non-verbal communication symbols are the hardest to learn because they are culture specific

a. We learn non-verbal communication through socialization

b. All cultures use non-verbal communication

iv. Personal space is another example of non-verbal language

1. The amount of personal space an individual needs to be comfortable varies by:

a. Cultural setting

b. Gender

c. Status

d. Social context of the interaction

v. There are four categories of social distance that we expect in U.S. culture:

1. *Intimate distance* is the public distance reserved for private and affectionate relationships among adults (0–18 inches)

2. *Personal distance* is the public distance for interaction between friends and for informal interaction with acquaintances (18 inches—4 feet)

3. *Social distance* is the distance for impersonal business relations. A greater distance implies more formal interaction or a significant difference in the status of the two people (4–12 feet)

4. *Public distance* is the distance most public figures use for addressing others, especially used in formal settings and in situations where the speaker has very high status (12 feet and beyond)

vi. We use personal space to communicate one’s position in relation to others

1. Individuals with higher positions and status have greater control of physical space

2. Women and men differ in non-verbal language differences

a. Women are more sensitive to subtle cues

B. Theoretical Perspectives on the Interaction Process

i. Symbolic interaction theory has two variations used to evaluate interaction

1. *Dramaturgy* – the study of social life from the framework that life is similar to a play or drama on stage, with scripts, props, and scenes to be played

a. Assumptions of Dramaturgical analysts:

i. We create an impression for our audience through the play

ii. Individuals learn new lines to add to their scripts through socialization

iii. Individuals perform scripts for social audiences in order to maintain certain images, much like the actors in a play

iv. Individuals use props as visible symbols to create or reinforce our roles

v. Individuals perform according to society’s script for the situation

1. As they do this, they take into consideration how their actions will influence others

2. They work to create an impression that works to their advantage through *impression management*

vi. Individuals use *tact*, *humor*, and other strategies to try to create positive impressions for themselves and for others

b. Dramaturgical analysts believe interaction occurs on two stages

i. *Front stage behavior* is our scripted behavior that individuals act out for the public

ii. *Backstage behavior* is behavior that individuals would find unacceptable to act out in front of audiences

ii. Rational (or Exchange) Choice Theory

1. Assumes that relationships are formed (and persist) based on the rewards and costs of the interaction to the individual

a. When benefits of the interaction are high and costs are low, interaction will be valued and sustained

b. If the benefits of interaction are high and if the costs are low, the interaction will be valued and sustained

c. For exchange theorists, every interaction involves:

i. Calculations of self-interest

ii. Expectation of *reciprocity* or a mutual exchange of favors

iii. Decisions to act in ways that have current or eventual pay-off for the individuals

C. Social Status: The Link to Groups

i. *Social Statuses* are positions that individuals hold in the social world

1. Social statuses define how individuals interact with others

2. A *status set* is the combination of statuses held by an individual

3. Power or deference associated with statuses also shape interaction

ii. *Ascribed statuses* are statuses that are assigned at birth and do not change during an individual’s lifetime

iii. *Achieved statuses* are statuses that are chosen or earned by decisions one makes or by personal ability

iv. *Master statuses* are statuses that are most important and take precedence over others

D. The Relationship between Status and Roles

i. *Roles* are the expected behaviors, rights and obligations associated with a status

1. Roles define how each individual in an interaction is expected to act

ii. Statuses (positions) and roles (behavioral obligations of the status) form the link with other people in the social world because they must be carried out in relationships with others

iii. Individuals also hold *formal and informal statuses*

iv. Statuses connect people and make them integral parts of meso- and macro-level organizations

E. Role Strain and Role Conflict

i. Because every status has role expectations, and because every person has multiple statuses, sometimes it is impossible to carry out all of our obligations

ii. *Role strain* is tension between roles *within* one status

iii. *Role conflict* is conflict *between* the roles of two or more statuses

IV. Groups in Our Social World: The Micro-Meso Connection

A. Groups are necessary for protection, to obtain food, to manufacture goods, to get jobs done

B. Groups meet our social need for belonging and acceptance, support us, and place restrictions on us

C. *Groups* are two or more people who interact with each other because of shared/common interests, goals, experiences, and needs

i. Groups create a sense of belonging among members

ii. Groups share a common goal

iii. Members are in contact with one another

iv. Groups have defined membership and norms for adding new members

v. Groups provide rules for members’ behaviors

D. Groups form through a series of steps:

i. Initial interaction between potential members

1. Possible members will form groups when membership is rewarding and meets members’ needs

ii. A collective goal emerges

iii. Groups attempt to expand their collective goals by building membership and pursuing new goals

E. The Importance of Groups for the Individual

i. Groups establish our place in the social world and provide us with support and a sense of being

ii. Issues specific to our need for groups are:

1. *Anomie* or a state of normlessness

a. Rapid social change or conflict can cause the norms for behavior in society to break down

2. Suicide

a. The degree to which an individual was integrated into the group or the degree of social bonds with others can predict suicide

b. Durkheim found three types of suicide, predicted by levels of social integration:

i. *Egoistic suicide* results from little social bond to the group or society; the result of personal despair

1. Our common notion of suicide

ii. *Anomic suicide* occurs when a society or one of its parts is in disorder or turmoil and lacks clear norms and guidelines for social behavior

iii. *Altruistic suicide* occurs when such a strong bond or group obligation exists that the individual is willing to die for the group

F. Types of Groups

i. *Primary groups* are groups with close contacts between members who maintain lasting personal relationships

1. Characteristics of primary groups:

a. There is a strong sense of belonging and shared identity in primary groups

b. Group members also have strong loyalty in primary groups

c. Individuals allow the primary group’s expectations to influence the activities they choose to pursue

d. Belonging is the main reason for membership (versus accomplishing)

e. Primary groups have *intrinsic value*

i. Not for utilitarian values, like making money

ii. *Secondary groups* are groups with formal, impersonal, businesslike relationships between members

1. Characteristics of secondary groups:

a. Large membership base

b. Task-oriented with a specific purpose to achieve or with focus on accomplishing a goal

c. Relationships based on accomplishing required tasks and achieving the goals of the group

d. A clear division of labor exists among members

e. Members often use specialized communication to interact with one another

f. Membership can be short-term or long lasting

iii. *Reference groups* are groups composed of members who act as role models to one another and establish standards against which members measure their conduct

1. Individuals look to reference groups to set guidelines for behavior and decision-making

2. Individuals do not have to be members of their reference groups or for their standards to influence potential members

iv. *Peer groups* are people who share similar age or social status; they can also serve as reference groups

v. *In-groups* are groups to which individuals feel a sense of loyalty and belonging

1. In-groups can also serve as a reference group

2. People judge others according to their own in-group identity

vi. *Out-groups* are groups to which individuals do not belong, but that exists in competition or opposition to an in-group

1. Out-groups are often perceived as an outside threat or with hostility

2. Out-groups help to create solidarity among in-group members

V. Modern Organizations and Their Evolution

A. We have statuses and roles in each group, and these link us to networks and the larger social world

B. The Evolution of Modern Organizations

i. Each type of society has a different organizational structure

ii. Modern organizations and bureaucracies began with industrialization and were the dominant form of organization by the 1800s

1. *Rationality* or the attempt to reach maximum efficiency, is the governing principle of most modern organizations

a. Standardization of behavior and products is a result of rationality

iii. *Formal organizations* are complex secondary groups formed to pursue and achieve certain goals

1. Some organizations provide us with work necessary for survival, others are forced upon us, and others are organizations we voluntarily join

iv. *Bureaucracies* are specific types of very large formal organizations with the primary goal of maximizing efficiency

1. Characteristics of bureaucracies:

a. Formal relations between participants

b. Clearly laid out procedures and rules

c. Pursuit of stated goals

2. The rise of bureaucracies and other large organizations have made some societies *organizational societies,* or societies where a majority of the members work in organizations

C. Characteristics of Modern Organizations

i. Individuals require organizations for human interaction and to meet their needs

ii. Organizations need humans in order to hold positions and carry out tasks, or fill roles

D. Characteristics of Bureaucracy

i. Max Weber is the central theorist to help us understand the rise of bureaucracies and rationality in the modern world

ii. Weber found 6 characteristics of *ideal-type bureaucracies,* or the dominant and essential characteristics of organizations that are designed for reliability and efficiency

1. Division of labor based on technical competence

2. Administrative hierarchy

3. Formal rules and regulations

4. Impersonal relationships

5. Emphasis on rationality and efficiency

6. Provision of life-long careers

iii. Bureaucracies also have an *informal structure,* or the unwritten norms and the interpersonal networks people utilize within an organization to carry out roles

E. Problems in Bureaucracies

i. *Alienation* or feeling uninvolved, uncommitted, unappreciated, and unconnected resulting from workers experience routine, boring tasks or dead-end jobs with no possibility of advancement

ii. Worker dissatisfaction caused by low pay and poor benefits; routine, repetitive and fragmented tasks; lack of challenges and autonomy leading to boredom; and poor working conditions

1. Many modern bureaucracies are sensitive to these problems and are moving toward workplace democracy

iii. *Oligarchy,* or the concentration of power in the hands of a small group

1. *The iron law of oligarchy* is Robert Michels’s term for the idea that power becomes concentrated in the hands of a small group of leaders in political, business, voluntary, and other organizations

a. This is the result of the division of labor

iv. *Goal Displacement* is when the original motives or goals of the organization are displaced by new, secondary goals that become primary

v. *Parkinson’s Law* states that in bureaucracies, work expands to fill the time and space available for its completion

1. Inefficiency is the outcome

vi. Policy makers are exploring *alternative organization structures*, or new approaches to organization that have developed to address some of the problems of bureaucracies

1. One example are *democratic-collective organizations* where organizations rely on cooperation, place authority and decision-making in the collective group, and use personal appeals to ensure that everyone participates in problem solving

a. Rules, hierarchy, and status distinctions are minimized in democratic-collective organizations

b. But, these new friendly efforts are still attempts to increase efficiency

VI. National and Global Networks: The Macro-Level

A. Multinational corporations contribute to the transfer of ideas and money around the world

B. Some businesses are global and can easily move their physical headquarters from one nation to another

C. National systems and international organizations are also governed through rational bureaucratic systems

D. The Internet and other communications-related technologies have contributed to the rise of national and global networks

VII. What Have We Learned?

A. Our social lives are lived in small groups and personal networks

B. The scope of those networks has broadened with increased complexity and includes the global social world

C. Our networks set norms and curb our behaviors, usually inclining us to conform to the social expectations of our associates