Unit 5 – **Social Structure**

Objective 1

Explain how statuses and roles impact the behavior of individuals and groups.

Objective 2

Compare different types of groups in society at the macro and micro levels.

Social Structure

- Network of interrelated statuses and roles that guide and make human interaction predictable
- Macro
  - Structure of society overall: preindustrial, industrial, postindustrial
  - Large groups: structure of industries, governments, bureaucracies, etc.
- Micro
  - Small groups: approximately 2-15 members

Status

- A socially defined position in a group or in a society, a way of defining where individuals fit in society and how they relate to others
  - Ascribed: Assigned though inherited traits or given automatically when a certain age is reached
  - Achieved: Achieved through direct efforts like special skills, knowledge, or abilities
- Master status: Is the one status of the many that you hold that plays the greatest role in shaping your life and identity
  - *Can your Master status change? Why/why not?*

Roles

Behavior expected of someone occupying a status

- Includes both rights and obligations, since most roles are reciprocal (father-son, wife-husband, employer-employee)

Role performance: behavior doesn't always meet expectations

- Role strain: Difficulty meeting the role set (multiple expectations) of a single status
- Role conflict: Fulfilling role of one status makes it difficult to fulfill the role of another status

Groups

Criteria:

- Consists of 2 or more people
- There is interaction among members
- Members have shared expectations
- Have some sense of common identity

Examples that DON'T meet the criteria:

- Aggregate: people gathered in the same place at the same time
- Social category: have shared traits or common status
- Social network: sum total of a person's direct and indirect relationships/interactions with other people

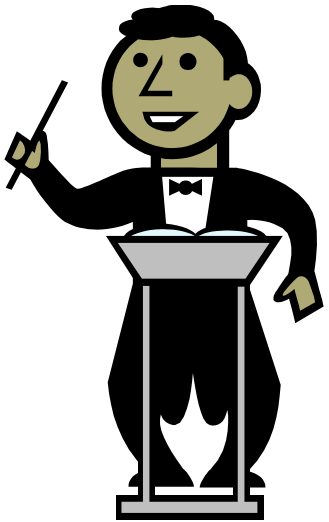
Examples that DO meet the criteria:

- Dyads/Triads: 2-3 people
- Small groups: Few enough members that everyone is able to interact on a face-to-face basis (less than about 15)
- Formal v. Informal: Degree of clear definition to the structure, goals, and activities of the group
- Primary v. Secondary: Degree of closeness, time, intimacy, emotional support
- In-group v. Out-group: Self-identification (symbols, clothing, names, slogans) and competition

- E-communities?
  - Definition: groups that interact online rather than face-to-face
  - *What examples DO meet the criteria to be a group?*
  - *What are some online examples that do NOT meet the criteria?*

Leaders

- Groups need leaders to carry out functions
  - Define boundaries: who does/doesn't belong
  - Set goals, assigning tasks, making decisions
  - Employ sanctions to ensure conformity to norms



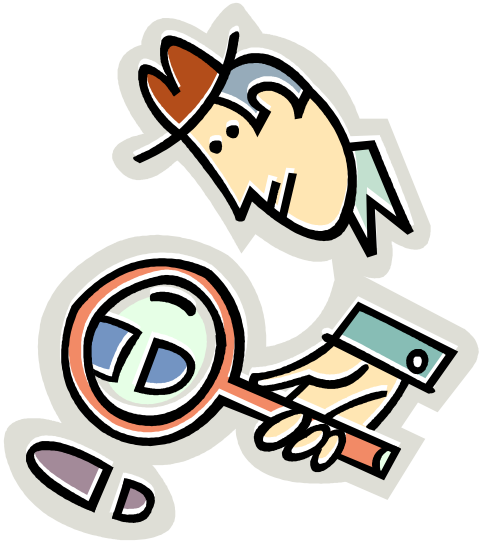
- Types of leadership
  - Instrumental: task-oriented, planning
  - Expressive: emotion-oriented, morale
  - *Can one leader be both? Examples?*

Social Institutions

- A way society organizes statuses and roles to satisfy one or more basic needs of society

- *Examples: what needs does it satisfy?*
  - *Family*
  - *Education*
  - *Economy*
  - *Government*
  - *Religion*

Perspectives

What aspects of social structure would be of most interest to a(n):

- *Interactionist?*
- *Functionalist?*
- *Conflict theorist?*