What is Society?

- Human **society** is a system of social interaction; includes culture and social organization
- Involves social interaction between two or more people
- The context is meaningful to those engaged in the activity
- According to sociologist Emile Durkheim, society is *greater than the sum of its parts*
- Society takes on a life of its own (sui generis)
- Sociologists recognize and examine the interrelatedness of the individual parts to understand how society operates
Macro & Micro Analysis

- Sociologists look at society from both a macro and a micro perspective
  - **Macroanalysis** is a systems approach used when examining large, complex, and highly differentiated patterns of social interaction that occur in organizations such as: bureaucracies, societies, and between different cultures, and groups.
  - **Microanalysis** is the study of smaller, less complex, and less differentiated interactions such as talking on the cell phone or emailing your friend.
Social Institutions

- **Social institution** is an established and organized system of social behavior with a recognized purpose.

- Social institutions can be examined from both a macro and a micro level of analysis.

- From the macro perspective, we examine the *functions* of the organization/system for the society.
Major Social Institutions

- Industrial societies have nine major institutions:
  1. family
  2. education
  3. work and the economy
  4. political institution (or state)
  5. religion
  6. health care
  7. mass media
  8. organized sports
  9. military
Functions of Social Institutions

• Around 1949–1951, Levy and Parsons, (functionalists), identified the following functions of all social institutions:
  1. Socialization of new members
  2. Production and distribution of goods and services
  3. Replacement of society’s members
  4. Maintenance of stability and existence
  5. Providing members a sense of purpose
Conflict: Social Institutions

- Conflict theorists see disharmony and the subordination of groups of individuals as inherent within social institutions
- Within the health care system, doctors are always superior to nurses and other service providers
- Doctors give orders and are paid more; nurses take orders and are paid less
- There is havoc within this system as insurance companies are dictating how much to pay and for what
Social Structures

• **Social structures** are the organized pattern of social relationships and social institutions that together compose society

• Structural analysis looks at patterns in social life that reflect and produce social behavior

• Social classes, racial/ethnic groups and women have different access to opportunities
What Holds Society Together?

- Emile Durkheim discussed two types of societies based on the type of social solidarity they exhibit
  - **Mechanical solidarity** exists in societies in which its members play similar roles within the society, share the same values, and hold the same things sacred
  - **Organic solidarity** exists in societies in which people have many different roles and roles are highly differentiated
Gemeinschaft & Gesellschaft

- These terms were used by Ferdinand Toennies, a German sociologist (1935):
  - Gemeinschaft = community; characterized by a sense of “we” feeling, a moderate division of labor, strong personal ties, strong family relationships, personal loyalty, and small simple social institutions (like Durkheim’s mechanical solidarity)

  - Gesellschaft = “society” characterized by fewer personal ties, the role of the nuclear is less important as is loyalty to the total society (like Durkheim’s organic solidarity)
Types of Societies

Preindustrial
1. Forging societies (hunting and gathering)
2. Pastoral societies
3. Horticultural societies
4. Agricultural societies

Industrial
5. Industrial societies
6. Postindustrial societies

Post-Industrial
- Information society
- Service economy
Industrial Societies

- Sociology began when Auguste Comte studied the industrial revolution, so our focus is on industrial and postindustrial societies, not on pre-industrial societies

- **Industrial societies** use machines and other advanced technologies to produce and distribute goods and services
Industrial Societies

- Industrial societies rely on a highly differentiated labor force and the intensive use of capital and technology.
- They have large formal organizations, such as bureaucracies, which hold society together.
- These bureaucracies take care of the economy, work, the government, and politics.
About Industrial Societies

- **Industrial societies** tend to be highly productive economically, with a large working class of laborers
- People live in urbanized centers where factories are located
- Immigration is common in industrial societies
- Having cheap labor is one of corporations’ main goals
- Industrialization has both advantages and disadvantages to society
Postindustrial Societies

- Postindustrial societies depend economically on the production and distribution of services, information, and knowledge.
- These societies are information-based, and technology plays an important role in the social organization.
- The United States is fast becoming a postindustrial society.
Technology & Postindustrialization

- Computer technology and the Internet are responsible for the advent of an information-based social structure.
- Multinational corporations globally link the economies of postindustrial societies.
- Postindustrial structures have a strong influence on the character of social institutions.
- Education, leisure, and discretionary income are important social functions.
- Joblessness dots the terrain for many.
Microanalysis of Society

- Groups are smaller units of analysis for the sociologist

- These are examined using microanalytic points of view

- Groups impinge on every aspect of our personal lives such as our attitudes about sex, family, and even the death penalty and physician-assisted suicide
Definition of Social Groups

- To sociologists, a **group** is a collection of individuals who:
  1. interact and communicate with each other
  2. share goals and norms
  3. have a subjective awareness of themselves as a distinct social unit

- Not all collections of people are groups
- There are also categories and collectives
**Status**

- **Status** is an established position in a social structure that carries with it a degree of prestige, i.e., social value.

- A status is a rank in society.

- Sociologists differentiate between **achieved** (the result of individual effort), **acquired** (given at birth), and **master status** (the person’s dominant status).
Roles

- **Role** is the behavior others expect from a person associated with a particular status; roles are acted or “played.”
- **Role expectation** is behaving as others expect someone in that position to behave.
  - We usually, but not always, behave as others expect us to.
- **Role modeling** is imitating or copying the way someone else in that role behaves.
  - Whose behavior do (or did you) copy or imitate?
Role Sets, Role Conflict, & Role Strain

- **Role sets** are all the roles occupied by the person at a given time
- **Role conflict** is when two or more roles impose conflicting demands and expectations
  - ex: a dad being a husband and a student simultaneously
- **Role strain** is when conflicting expectations within the same role are imposed simultaneously
  - ex: being a really good student
Everyday Social Interaction

- The meaning assigned to any behavior, speech, or action varies from culture to culture

- Not everyone in the world thinks, behaves, or feels about something the same way you do

- This is called, *cultural relativity* or *culturally relative*
  - A handshake, proper in one culture, can be morally wrong in another part of the world
    - A hug may be a proper greeting
Communication & Behavior

- Communication and behavior are complex subjects studied by linguists, authors, anthropologists, writers, speech and script writers, reporters, and sociologists.

- Language is restricted by societal values and tradition.

- Nonverbal communication is used more often than verbal behavior.
Interpersonal Relationships

- At the micro level of analysis we ask, “What holds or breaks up human relationships”?
- Human relationships are patterned by social forces and are predictable
  - 75% of our time is spent with other people
  - Isolation is unhealthy and is common mostly in people with mental diseases; autism, bi-polar disorders, and/or schizophrenia
Attractiveness

- Even with cyberspace dating, physical attractiveness influences one’s choices
- Jury decision favors the attractive lawyer and client, even when guilty
- In college, being asked out on a date is related to attractiveness
Theories of Interaction

- Sociologists use four different theories of human interactions and relationships:
  1. Social constructionism theory
  2. Ethnomethodology
  3. Impression management theory
  4. Social exchange theory
Social Constructionism

• Our perception of what is real is determined by the subjective meaning that we attribute to an experience

• There is no objective “reality” in itself

• Things do not have their own intrinsic meaning; it is subjectively imposed on them

• We will see this principle in the next slide
Death is Socially Constructed

- Two people were in an accident caused by a telephone pole.
- When the older, black, poor patient arrived at the hospital, he was announced DOA without any diagnostic tests.
- When the young, wealthy patient arrived, many diagnostic tests were given before he was pronounced dead.
Ethnomethodology

- Harold Garfinkel studied the norms of human interactions by breaking them.
- He watched to see how people reacted to disruption and what they did to restore the normative order.
- The basic premise of this approach is that everyone expects the same things.
- Studying norms by deliberately violating them reveals the norms that most people bring with them into their interactions.
Impression Management & Dramaturgy

- Irving Goffman (1959) discussed impression management, how one watches and manipulates another's behavior and adjusts theirs to the other’s expectations
- Goffman likened this to a con game
  - We are always conning others and also are being conned by them
- Goffman called this the dramaturgy model, and likens it to a stage play
Dramaturgy

• People present different faces (give off different impressions) on different stages (in different situations or different roles) with different others

• This is called **impression management**
  ◦ Impression management is a perilous game

• We can easily find ourselves in embarrassing situations and we may have to restore face by giving a good explanation or excuse
Social Exchange Theory

- The **social exchange model** of social interaction holds that our interactions are determined by the rewards or punishments that we receive from others.

- This theory argues that behavior that is rewarded will be repeated or continued and behavior that is disapproved of or punishment will be discontinued or not repeated.
Interaction in Cyberspace

- Also referred to as virtual interaction, communication via chat rooms, computer bulletin boards, or email

- Distant learning or virtual classrooms are in greater demand than ever before

- Visual imagery is easy to come by with technology such as YouTube, Facebook, and MySpace

- These technologies are allowing us to manage our impressions to others and our presentation of self
Sex, Age, & Race

- Internet usage patterns differ for men and women, racial minority groups, and age groups
- Men use cyberspace technology more than women do
- Women use email more to communicate with friends and relatives than men do
- 75% of youth ages 14-25 years use online social networking and the frequency of this usage is steadily increasing
Online Dating

- Online dating is becoming increasingly socially accepted in the U.S.

- Popularity is influenced by factors such as:
  - low cost networking
  - few time and location restrictions, and
  - anonymity is possible and there is less initial negative judgments or discrimination