Chapter 1 : Chapter 7: Human Society

In sociology, a social system is the patterned network of relationships constituting a coherent whole that exist between individuals, groups, and institutions. It is the formal structure of role and status that can form in a small, stable group.

Overview[edit] The notion of social structure as relationship between different entities or groups or as enduring and relatively stable patterns of relationship [3] emphasises the idea that society is grouped into structurally related groups or sets of roles , with different functions, meanings or purposes. One example of social structure is the idea of " social stratification ", which refers to the idea that most societies are separated into different strata levels , guided if only partially by the underlying structures in the social system. This approach has been important in the academic literature with the rise of various forms of structuralism. Therefore, structure is an important issue for management. Social structure may be seen to influence important social systems including the economic system , legal system , political system , cultural system , and others. Family , religion , law , economy , and class are all social structures. The "social system" is the parent system of those various systems that are embedded in it. History[edit] The early study of social structures has informed the study of institutions, culture and agency, social interaction, and history. Weber investigated and analyzed the institutions of modern society: One of the earliest and most comprehensive accounts of social structure was provided by Karl Marx, who related political, cultural, and religious life to the mode of production an underlying economic structure. Marx argued that the economic base substantially determined the cultural and political superstructure of a society. Subsequent Marxist accounts, such as that by Louis Althusser , proposed a more complex relationship that asserted the relative autonomy of cultural and political institutions, and a general determination by economic factors only "in the last instance". A, [5] arguing that only the constitution of a multitude into a unity creates a "social structure" basing this approach on his concept of social will. In this context, Durkheim distinguished two forms of structural relationship: The former describes structures that unite similar parts through a shared culture; the latter describes differentiated parts united through social exchange and material interdependence. Some follow Marx in trying to identify the basic dimensions of society that explain the other dimensions, most emphasizing either economic production or political power. Still others, notably Peter Blau , follow Simmel in attempting to base a formal theory of social structure on numerical patterns in relationshipsâ€"analyzing, for example, the ways in which factors like group size shape intergroup relations. Giddens emphasizes the duality of structure and agency, in the sense that structures and agency cannot be conceived apart from one another. This permits him to argue that structures are neither independent of actors nor determining of their behavior, but rather sets of rules and competencies on which actors draw, and which, in the aggregate, they reproduce. Burns and collaborators actor-system dynamics theory and social rule system theory , and Immanuel Wallerstein World Systems Theory provided elaborations and applications of the sociological classics in structural sociology. Definitions and concepts[edit] As noted above, social structure has been identified as the relationship of definite entities or groups to each other, enduring patterns of behaviour by participants in a social system in relation to each other, and institutionalised norms or cognitive frameworks that structure the actions of actors in the social system. Lopez and Scott distinguish between institutional structure and relational structure, where in the former: Microstructure is the pattern of relations between most basic elements of social life, that cannot be further divided and have no social structure of their own for example, pattern of relations between individuals in a group composed of individuals - where individuals have no social structure, or a structure of organizations as a pattern of relations between social positions or social roles , where those positions and roles have no structure by themselves. Some types of social structures that modern sociologist differentiate are relation structures in family or larger family-like clan structures , communication structures how information is passed in organizations and sociometric structures structures of sympathy, antipathy and indifference in organisations - this was studied by Jacob L. Social rule system theory reduces the structures of 3 to particular rule system arrangements, that is, the types of basic structures of 1 and 2. It shares with role theory , organizational and institutional sociology , and network analysis the concern with structural properties and developments and at

the same time provides detailed conceptual tools needed to generate interesting, fruitful propositions and models and analyses. Sociologists also distinguish between: It may be caused by larger system needs, such as the need for labour , management , professional and military classes, or by conflicts between groups, such as competition among political parties or among elites and masses. Others believe that this structuring is not a result of natural processes, but is socially constructed. It may be created by the power of elites who seek to retain their power, or by economic systems that place emphasis upon competition or cooperation. Ethnography has contributed to understandings about social structure by revealing local practices and customs that differ from Western practices of hierarchy and economic power in its construction. Critical implications[edit] The notion of social structure may mask systematic biases, as it involves many identifiable subvariables, for example, gender. Some argue that men and women who have otherwise equal qualifications receive different treatment in the workplace because of their gender, which would be termed a "social structural" bias, but other variables such as time on the job or hours worked might be masked. Modern social structural analysis takes this into account through multivariate analysis and other techniques, but the analytic problem of how to combine various aspects of social life into a whole remains.

Chapter 2 : Social system - Wikipedia

THE SOCIAL SYSTEM In the history of sociological theory, Talcott Parsons holds a very special place. His The Structure of Social Action (), was a pioneer work that has influenced many social.

Meaning, Elements, Characteristics and Types Article shared by: This article provides information about the meaning, elements, characteristics, types, maintenance and functions of social system: In the arrangement, every part has a fixed place and definite role to play. The parts are bound by interaction. To understand the functioning of a system, for example the human body, one has to analyse and identify the sub-systems e. Likewise, society may be viewed as a system of interrelated mutually dependent parts which cooperate to preserve a recognisable whole and to satisfy some purposes or goal. Social system may be described as an arrangement of social interactions based on shared norms and values. Individuals constitute it and each has place and function to perform within it. Meaning of Social System: System signifies, thus, patterned relationship among constituent parts of a structure which is based on functional relations and which makes these parts active and binds them into reality. Differences within the society are not excluded. These are, however, subordinated to likeness. Inter-dependence and cooperation are its basis. It is bound by reciprocal awareness. It is essentially a pattern for imparting the social behaviour. It consists in mutual inter action and interrelation of individuals and of the structure formed by their relations. It is not time bound. It is different from an aggregate of people and community. Individuals constitute it, and each has place and function to perform within it. In the process, one influences the other; groups are formed and they gain influence, numerous subgroup come into existence. But all of these are coherent. They function as a whole. Neither individual, nor the group can function in isolation. They are bound in oneness, by norms and values, culture and shared behaviour. The pattern that thus comes into existence becomes the social system. But the interacting units may be groups or organisation of individuals within the system. The social system, according to Charles P. In the social system each of the interacting individual has function or role to perform in terms of the status he occupies in the system. For example, in the family parents, sons and daughters are required to perform certain socially recognised functions or roles. Similarly, social organisations function within the frame work of a normative pattern. Thus, a social system presupposes a social structure consisting of different parts which are interrelated in such a way as to perform its functions. Social system is a comprehensive arrangement. It takes its orbit all the diverse subsystems such as the economic, political, religious and others and their interrelation too. Social systems are bound by environment such as geography. And this differentiates one system from another. Elements of Social System: The elements of social system are described as under: The faiths and knowledge brings about the uniformity in the behaviour. They act as controlling agency of different types of human societies. The faiths or the faith is the result of the prevalent customs and beliefs. They enjoy the force of the individual are guided towards a particular direction. Man does not live by reason alone. Sentiments â€" filial, social, notional etc. It is directly linked with the culture of the people. End Goal or object: Man is born social and dependent. He has to meet his requirements and fulfill his obligations. Man and society exist between needs and satisfactions, end and goal. These determine the nature of social system. They provided the pathway of progress, and the receding horizons. The society lays down certain norms and ideals for keeping the social system intact and for determining the various functions of different units. These norms prescribe the rules and regulations on the basis of which individuals or persons may acquire their cultural goals and aims. In other words ideals and norms are responsible for an ideal structure or system of the society. Due to them the human behaviour does not become deviant and they act according to the norms of the society. This leads to organization and stability. These norms and ideals include folkways, customs, traditions, fashions, morality, religion, etc. Every individual in society is functional. He goes by status-role relation. It may come to the individual by virtue of his birth, sex, caste, or age. One may achieve it on the basis of service rendered. Like the status, society has prescribed different roles to different individuals. Sometimes we find that there is a role attached to every status. Role is the external expression of the status. While discharging certain jobs or doing certain things, every individual keeps in his mind his status.

This thing leads to social integration, organization and unity in the social system. In fact statuses and roles go together. It is not possible to separate them completely from one another. Conflict is a part of social system, and order is its aim. It is implicit, therefore, that some should be invested with the power to punish the guilty and reward those who set an example. The authority exercising power will differ from group to group; while the authority of father may be supreme in the family, in the state it is that of the ruler. It implies confirmation by the superior in authority, of the acts done be the subordinate or the imposition of penalty for the infringement of the command. The acts done or not done according to norms may bring reward and punishment. Characteristics of Social System: Social system has certain characteristics. These characteristics are as follows: System is connected with the plurality of Individual actors: It means that a system or social system cannot be borne as a result of the activity of one individual. It is the result of the activities of various individuals. For system, or social system, interaction of several individuals has to be there. Human interactions or activities of the individual actors should not be aimless or without object. These activities have to be according to certain aims and objects. The expression of different social relations borne as a result of human interaction. Order and Pattern amongst various Constituent Units: Mere coming together of various constituent units that from social system does not necessarily create a social system. It has to be according to a pattern, arrangement and order. Functional Relationship is the Basis of Unity: We have already seen different constituent units have a unity in order to form a system. This unity is based on functional relations. As a result of functional relationships between different constituent units an integrated whole is created and this is known as social system. Physical or Environmental Aspect of Social System: It means that every social system is connected with a definite geographical area or place, time, society etc. In other words it means that social system is not the same at different times, at different place and under different circumstances. This characteristic of the social system again point out towards its dynamic or changeable nature. Linked with Cultural System: Social system is also linked with cultural system. It means that cultural system bring about unity amongst different members of the society on the basis of cultures, traditions, religions etc. Expressed and implied Aims and Objects: Social system is also linked with expressed and implied aims. In other words, it means that social system is the coming together of different individual actors who are motivated by their aims and objectives and their needs.

Chapter 3 : Social Structure | Definition of Social Structure by Merriam-Webster

Social system definition is - the patterned series of interrelationships existing between individuals, groups, and institutions and forming a coherent whole: social structure. the patterned series of interrelationships existing between individuals, groups, and institutions and forming a coherent whole: social structure.

We organize ourselves into various kinds of social groupings, such as nomadic bands, villages, cities, and countries, in which we work, trade, play, reproduce, and interact in many other ways. Unlike other species, we combine socialization with deliberate changes in social behavior and organization over time. Consequently, the patterns of human society differ from place to place and era to era and across cultures, making the social world a very complex and dynamic environment. Insight into human behavior comes from many sources. The views presented here are based principally on scientific investigation, but it should also be recognized that literature, drama, history, philosophy, and other nonscientific disciplines contribute significantly to our understanding of ourselves. Social scientists study human behavior from a variety of cultural, political, economic, and psychological perspectives, using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. They look for consistent patterns of individual and social behavior and for scientific explanations of those patterns. In some cases, such patterns may seem obvious once they are pointed out, although they may not have been part of how most people consciously thought about the world. This chapter covers recommendations about human society in terms of individual and group behavior, social organizations, and the processes of social change. It is based on a particular approach to the subject: The chapter describes seven key aspects of human society: Although many of the ideas are relevant to all human societies, this chapter focuses chiefly on the social characteristics of the present-day United States. The ways in which people develop are shaped by social experience and circumstances within the context of their inherited genetic potential. The scientific question is just how experience and hereditary potential interact in producing human behavior. This setting includes home, school, neighborhood, and also, perhaps, local religious and law enforcement agencies. How individuals will respond to all these influences, or even which influence will be the most potent, tends not to be predictable. Furthermore, culturally induced behavior patterns, such as speech patterns, body language, and forms of humor, become so deeply imbedded in the human mind that they often operate without the individuals themselves being fully aware of them. Every culture includes a somewhat different web of patterns and meanings: Within a large society, there may be many groups, with distinctly different subcultures associated with region, ethnic origin, or social class. Some subcultures may arise among special social categories such as business executives and criminals , some of which may cross national boundaries such as musicians and scientists. Fair or unfair, desirable or undesirable, social distinctions are a salient part of almost every culture. The form of the distinctions varies with place and time, sometimes including rigid castes, sometimes tribal or clan hierarchies, sometimes a more flexible social class. Class distinctions are made chiefly on the basis of wealth, education, and occupation, but they are also likely to be associated with other subcultural differences, such as dress, dialect, and attitudes toward school and work. The class into which people are born affects what language, diet, tastes, and interests they will have as children, and therefore influences how they will perceive the social world. Still, many people live lives very different from the norm for their class. The ease with which someone can change social class varies greatly with time and place. Throughout most of human history, people have been almost certain to live and die in the class into which they were born. The times of greatest upward mobility have occurred when a society has been undertaking new enterprises for example, in territory or technology and thus has needed more people in higher-class occupations. In some parts of the world today, increasing numbers of people are escaping from poverty through economic or educational opportunity, while in other parts, increasing numbers are being impoverished. What is considered to be acceptable human behavior varies from culture to culture and from time period to time period. Every social group has generally accepted ranges of behavior for its members, with perhaps some specific standards for subgroups, such as adults and children, females and males, artists and athletes. Unusual behaviors may be considered either merely amusing, or distasteful, or punishably criminal.

Some normal behavior in one culture may be considered unacceptable in another. For example, aggressively competitive behavior is considered rude in highly cooperative cultures. Conversely, in some subcultures of a highly competitive society, such as that of the United States, a lack of interest in competition may be regarded as being out of step. Although the world has a wide diversity of cultural traditions, there are some kinds of behavior such as incest, violence against kin, theft, and rape that are considered unacceptable in almost all of them. The social consequences considered appropriate for unacceptable behavior also vary widely between, and even within, different societies. Punishment of criminals ranges from fines or humiliation to imprisonment or exile, from beatings or mutilation to execution. The form of appropriate punishment is affected by theories of its purpose to prevent or deter the individual from repeating the crime, or to deter others from committing the crime, or simply to cause suffering for its own sake in retribution. The success of punishment in deterring crime is difficult to study, in part because of ethical limitations on experiments assigning different punishments to similar criminals, and in part because of the difficulty of holding other factors constant. Technology has long played a major role in human behavior. The high value placed on new technological invention in many parts of the world has led to increasingly rapid and inexpensive communication and travel, which in turn has led to the rapid spread of fashions and ideas in clothing, food, music, and forms of recreation. Books, magazines, radio, and television describe ways to dress, raise children, make money, find happiness, get married, cook, and make love. They also implicitly promote values, aspirations, and priorities by the way they portray the behavior of people such as children, parents, teachers, politicians, and athletes, and the attitudes they display toward violence, sex, minorities, the roles of men and women, and lawfulness. Membership in these groups influences how people think of themselves and how others think of them. These groups impose expectations and rules that make the behavior of members more predictable and that enable each group to function smoothly and retain its identity. The rules may be informal and conveyed by example, such as how to behave at a social gathering, or they may be written rules that are strictly enforced. Formal groups often signal the kind of behavior they favor by means of rewards such as praise, prizes, or privileges and punishments such as threats, fines, or rejection. Affiliation with any social group, whether one joins it voluntarily or is born into it, brings some advantages of larger numbers: Such social prejudice may include blind respect for some categories of people, such as doctors or clergy, as well as blind disrespect for other categories of people who are, say, foreign-born or women. The behavior of groups cannot be understood solely as the aggregate behavior of individuals. It is not possible, for example, to understand modern warfare by summing up the aggressive tendencies of individuals. Several children together may vandalize a building, even though none of them would do it on his or her own. By the same token, an adult will often be more generous and responsive to the needs of others as a member of, say, a club or religious group than he or she would be inclined to be in private. The group situation provides the rewards of companionship and acceptance for going along with the shared action of the group and makes it difficult to assign blame or credit to any one person. Social organizations may serve many purposes beyond those for which they formally exist. Private clubs that exist ostensibly for recreation are frequently important places for engaging in business transactions; universities that formally exist to promote learning and scholarship may help to promote or to reduce class distinctions; and business and religious organizations often have political and social agendas that go beyond making a profit or ministering to people. The conditions of one generation limit and shape the range of possibilities open to the next. It also learns aspirations for how society can be maintained and improved. On the other hand, each new generation must address unresolved problems from the generation before: Slavery in the early history of the United States, for example, still has serious consequences for African-Americans and for the U. Grievances may be relieved just enough to make people tolerate them, or they may overflow into revolution against the structure of the society itself. Many societies continue to perpetuate centuries-old disputes with others over boundaries, religion, and deeply felt beliefs about past wrongs. Governments generally attempt to engineer social change by means of policies, laws, incentives, or coercion. Sometimes these efforts work effectively and actually make it possible to avoid social conflict. At other times they may precipitate conflict. The outlook of the Soviet Union, for example, is strongly influenced by the devastating losses it suffered in both world wars. The societies of American Indians were ravaged and displaced by the

diseases and warfare brought by colonists from Europe. Natural disasters such as storms or drought can cause failure of crops, bringing hardship and famine, and sometimes migration or revolution. Convenient communication and transportation also stimulate social change. Groups previously isolated geographically or politically become ever more aware of different ways of thinking, living, and behaving, and sometimes of the existence of vastly different standards of living. Migrations and mass media lead not only to cultural mixing but also to the extinction of some cultures and the rapid evolution of others. The size of the human population, its concentration in particular places, and its pattern of growth are influenced by the physical setting and by many aspects of culture: Some religious groups also take a strong stand on population issues. Leaders of the Roman Catholic church, for example, have long campaigned against birth control, whereas, in recent years, religious leaders of other major faiths have endorsed the use of birth control to restrict family size. Quite apart from government policy or religious doctrine, many people decide whether to have a child on the basis of practical matters such as the health risk to the mother, the value or cost of a child in economic or social terms, the amount of living space, or a personal feeling of suitability as parents. In the United States, the trend toward casual adolescent sexual relations has led to increasing numbers of unexpected and unwanted pregnancies. Great increase in the size of a population requires greater job specialization, new government responsibilities, new kinds of institutions, and the need to marshal a more complex distribution of resources. Population patterns, particularly when they are changing, are also influential in changing social priorities. The greater the variety of subcultures, the more diverse the provisions that have to be made for them. As the size of a social group increases, so may its influence on society. The influence may be through markets such as young people who, as a group, buy more athletic equipment , voting power for example, old people are less likely to vote for school bond legislation , or recognition of need by social planners for example, more mothers who work outside the home will require child-care programs. To gain something we want or need, it is usually necessary to give up something we already have, or at least give up an opportunity to have gained something else instead. For example, the more the public spends as a whole on government-funded projects such as highways and schools, the less it can spend on defense if it has already decided not to increase revenue or debt. Social trade-offs are not always economic or material. Sometimes they arise from choices between our private rights and the public good: Or choices may arise between esthetics and utility. For example, a proposed large-scale apartment complex may be welcomed by prospective tenants but opposed by people who already live in the neighborhood. Different people have different ideas of how trade-offs should be made, which can result in compromise or in continuing discord. How different interests are served often depends on the relative amounts of resources or power held by individuals or groups. Peaceful efforts at social change are most successful when the affected people are included in the planning, when information is available from all relevant experts, and when the values and power struggles are clearly understood and incorporated into the decision-making process. There is often a question of whether a current arrangement should be improved or whether an entirely new arrangement should be invented. On the one hand, repeatedly patching up a troublesome situation may make it just tolerable enough that the large-scale change of the underlying problem is never undertaken. On the other hand, rushing to replace every system that has problems may create more problems than it solves. It is difficult to compare the potential benefits of social alternatives. In a very large population, value comparisons are further complicated by the fact that a very small percentage of the population can be a large number of people. For example, in a total population of million, a rise in the unemployment rate of only one-hundredth of 1 percent which some people would consider trivially small would mean a loss of 10, jobs which other people would consider very serious. Judgments of consequences in social trade-offs tend to involve other issues as well. One is a distance effect:

Chapter 4 : Social Systems, Basic Concepts of Sociology Guide

Thus, a social system presupposes a social structure consisting of different parts which are interrelated in such a way as to perform its functions. Social system is a comprehensive arrangement. It takes its orbit all the diverse subsystems such as the economic, political, religious and others and their interrelation too.

Egyptian Social Structure Egyptian society was structured like a pyramid. At the top were the gods, such as Ra, Osiris, and Isis. Egyptians believed that the gods controlled the universe. Therefore, it was important to keep them happy. They could make the Nile overflow, cause famine, or even bring death. In the social pyramid of ancient Egypt the pharaoh and those associated with divinity were at the top, and servants and slaves made up the bottom. The Egyptians also elevated some human beings to gods. Their leaders, called pharaohs, were believed to be gods in human form. They had absolute power over their subjects. After pharaohs died, huge stone pyramids were built as their tombs. Pharaohs were buried in chambers within the pyramids. Because the people of Egypt believed that their pharaohs were gods, they entrusted their rulers with many responsibilities. Protection was at the top of the list. The pharaoh directed the army in case of a foreign threat or an internal conflict. All laws were enacted at the discretion of the pharaoh. This grain was used to feed the people in the event of a famine. The Chain of Command Ancient Egyptian royalty, nobility, and clergy enjoyed lives of wealth and comfort while farmers and slaves struggled to subsist. No single person could manage all these duties without assistance. The pharaoh appointed a chief minister called a vizier as a supervisor. The vizier ensured that taxes were collected. Working with the vizier were scribes who kept government records. These high-level employees had mastered a rare skill in ancient Egypt â€" they could read and write. Noble Aims Right below the pharaoh in status were powerful nobles and priests. Only nobles could hold government posts; in these positions they profited from tributes paid to the pharaoh. Priests were responsible for pleasing the gods. Religion was a central theme in ancient Egyptian culture and each town had its own deity. Initially, these deities were animals; later, they took on human appearances and behaviors. Seated here is Thoth, the god of learning and wisdom, carrying a scepter symbolizing magical power. Nobles enjoyed great status and also grew wealthy from donations to the gods. All Egyptians â€" from pharaohs to farmers â€" gave gifts to the gods. Soldier On Soldiers fought in wars or quelled domestic uprisings. During long periods of peace, soldiers also supervised the peasants, farmers, and slaves who were involved in building such structures as pyramids and palaces. Skilled workers such as physicians and craftspersons made up the middle class. Craftspersons made and sold jewelry, pottery, papyrus products, tools, and other useful things. Naturally, there were people needed to buy goods from artisans and traders. These were the merchants and storekeepers who sold these goods to the public. The Bottom of the Heap At the bottom of the social structure were slaves and farmers. Slavery became the fate of those captured as prisoners of war. In addition to being forced to work on building projects, slaves toiled at the discretion of the pharaoh or nobles. Farmers tended the fields, raised animals, kept canals and reservoirs in good order, worked in the stone quarries, and built the royal monuments. Social mobility was not impossible. A small number of peasants and farmers moved up the economic ladder. Families saved money to send their sons to village schools to learn trades. These schools were run by priests or by artisans. Boys who learned to read and write could become scribes, then go on to gain employment in the government. It was possible for a boy born on a farm to work his way up into the higher ranks of the government. The Social Pyramid The pharaoh was at the very top of ancient Egyptian society, and servants and slaves were at the bottom. Who was in the middle? Click on this interactive pyramid to find out how merchants, artists, farmers, and others stacked up. Links at the bottom of the page lead to other facts about ancient Egypt. This page comes from Odyssey Online, a website for kids produced by Emory University.

Chapter 5 : Social System: Meaning, Elements, Characteristics and Types

Written by a pioneer in the field of sociological theory, whose first work, The Structure of Social Action, was a controversial and influential text when published in , this book presents more recent advances in the author's work on the theory of action.

Top Ten Facts about Social Security Social Security provides a foundation of income on which workers can build to plan for their retirement. It also provides valuable social insurance protection to workers who become disabled and to families whose breadwinner dies. Social Security is more than just a retirement program. It provides important life insurance and disability insurance protection as well. About 62 million people, or more than 1 in every 6 U. While older Americans make up about 4 in 5 beneficiaries, another one-fifth of beneficiaries received Social Security Disability Insurance SSDI or were young survivors of deceased workers. About 95 percent of people aged who worked in jobs covered by Social Security in have earned life insurance protection through Social Security. About 89 percent of people aged who worked in covered employment in are insured through Social Security in case of severe disability. The risk of disability or premature death is greater than many realize. Some 6 percent of recent entrants to the labor force will die before reaching the full retirement age, and many more will become disabled. Social Security provides a guaranteed, progressive benefit that keeps up with increases in the cost of living. Social Security benefits are progressive: Social Security benefits are based on the earnings on which you pay Social Security payroll taxes. For example, benefits for a low earner with 45 percent of the average wage retiring at age 65 in replace about half of his or her prior earnings. But benefits for a high earner with percent of the average wage replace about one-third of prior earnings, though they are larger in dollar terms than those for the low-wage worker. Once someone starts receiving Social Security, his or her benefits increase to keep pace with inflation, helping to ensure that people do not fall into poverty as they age. In contrast, most private pensions and annuities are not adjusted or are only partly adjusted for inflation. Social Security provides a foundation of retirement protection for nearly every American, and its benefits are not means-tested. Almost all workers participate in Social Security by making payroll tax contributions, and almost all elderly Americans receive Social Security benefits. In fact, 97 percent of the elderly aged 60 to 89 either receive Social Security or will receive it, according to Social Security Administration estimates. The near-universality of Social Security brings many important advantages. Social Security provides a foundation of retirement protection for people at all earnings levels. Social Security provides a higher annual payout than private retirement annuities per dollar contributed because its risk pool is not limited to those who expect to live a long time, no funds leak out in lump-sum payments or bequests, and its administrative costs are much lower. Indeed, universal participation and the absence of means-testing make Social Security very efficient to administer. Administrative costs amount to only 0. Means-testing Social Security would impose significant reporting and processing burdens on both recipients and administrators, undercutting many of those advantages while yielding little savings. Social Security benefits are modest. The average disabled worker and aged widow received slightly less. For someone who worked all of his or her adult life at average earnings and retires at age 65 in , Social Security benefits replace about 39 percent of past earnings. As health care costs continue to outpace general inflation, those premiums will take a bigger bite out of their checks. Social Security benefits are modest by international standards , too. Children have an important stake in Social Security. Social Security is important for children and their families as well as for the elderly. About 6 million children under age 18 lived in families that received income from Social Security in That number included nearly 3 million children who received their own benefits as dependents of retired, disabled, or deceased workers, as well as others who lived with parents or relatives who received Social Security benefits. Social Security lifted 1. The figures in the chart use the comprehensive Supplemental Poverty Measure, with corrections for underreporting, in order to show the full effect of non-cash benefits. By the more conventional, cash-only official poverty measure, Social Security lifted 1.

feudal system, feudalism - the social system that developed in Europe in the 8th century; vassals were protected by lords who they had to serve in war patriarchy, patriarchate - a form of social organization in which a male is the family head and title is traced through the male line matriarchate.

The feudal states were not contiguous but rather were scattered at strategic locations surrounded by potentially dangerous and hostile lands. The fortified city of the feudal lord was often the only area that he controlled directly; the state and the city were thereforeâ€¦ Origins of the idea The terms feudalism and feudal system were generally applied to the early and central Middle Agesâ€"the period from the 5th century, when central political authority in the Western empire disappeared, to the 12th century, when kingdoms began to emerge as effective centralized units of government. Before and afterward, however, political units were fragmented and political authority diffused. The mightier of the later Carolingians attempted to regulate local magnates and enlist them in their service, but the power of local elites was never effaced. In the absence of forceful kings and emperors, local lords expanded the territory subject to them and intensified their control over the people living there. In many areas the term feudum, as well as the terms beneficium and casamentum, came to be used to describe a form of property holding. The Granger Collection, New York Fiefs still existed in the 17th century, when the feudal modelâ€"or, as contemporary historians term it, the feudal constructâ€"was developed. At that time, the fief was a piece of property, usually land, that was held in return for service, which could include military duties. The fief holder swore fidelity to the person from whom the fief was held the lord , dominus, or seigneur and became his or her man. These institutions survived in England until they were abolished by Parliament in and, after the Restoration , by Charles II in Until their eradication by the National Assembly between and , they had considerable importance in France, where they were employed to create and reinforce familial and social bonds. Their pervasiveness made students of the past eager to understand how they had come into being. These characteristics were in part deduced from medieval documents and chronicles, but they were interpreted in light of 17th-century practices and semantics. These commentaries, produced since the 13th century, focused on legal theory and on rules derived from actual disputes and hypothetical cases. They did not include nor were they intended to provide dispassionate analysis of historical development. Legal commentators in the 16th century had prepared the way for the elaboration of the feudal construct by formulating the idea, loosely derived from the Libri feudorum, of a single feudal law, which they presented as being spread throughout Europe during the early Middle Ages. The terms feudalism and feudal system enabled historians to deal summarily with a long span of European history whose complexities wereâ€"and remainâ€"confusing. The feudal construct neatly filled the gap between the 5th and the 12th century. A variety of Roman, barbarian, and Carolingian institutions were considered antecedents of feudal practices: Roman lordship and clientage, barbarian war chiefdoms and bands, grants of lands to soldiers and to officeholders, and oaths of loyalty and fidelity. In the 17th century, as later, the high point of feudalism was located in the 11th century. Those who formulated the concept of feudalism were affected by the search for simplicity and order in the universe associated with the work of Nicolaus Copernicus â€" and especially Isaac Newton â€" Historians and philosophers were persuaded that if the universe operated systematically, so too must societies. In the 16th century some students of the law and customs of the fief declared that feudal institutions were universal and maintained that feudal systems had existed in Rome, Persia , and Judaea. Adopting a similar position, Voltaire â€" contested the judgment of Montesquieu â€" that the appearance of feudal laws was a unique historical event. Adam Smith â€"90 presented feudal government as a stage of social development characterized by the absence of commerce and by the use of semi-free labour to cultivate land. The association popularly made between the feudal construct and ignorance and barbarism fostered its extension to regions which Europeans scarcely knew and which they considered backward and primitive. Vico, GiambattistaGiambattista Vico, from an Italian postage stamp, These efforts, predictably, resulted in misconceptions and misunderstanding. Historians using the feudal model for comparative purposes emphasized those characteristics which resemble or seem to resemble Western feudal practices and neglected

other, dissimilar aspects, some of which were uniquely significant in shaping the evolution of the areas in question. For Westerners, the use of the feudal model necessarily created a deceptive sense of familiarity with societies that are different from their own. Page 1 of 3.

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By the time of European settlement in , Aboriginal peoples had occupied and utilized the entire continent and adapted successfully to a large range of ecological and climatic conditions, from wet temperate and tropical rainforests to extremely arid deserts. Population densities ranged fromâ€¦ Although it is generally agreed that the term social structure refers to regularities in social life, its application is inconsistent. For example, the term is sometimes wrongly applied when other concepts such as custom, tradition, role , or norm would be more accurate. Studies of social structure attempt to explain such matters as integration and trends in inequality. In the study of these phenomena, sociologists analyze organizations, social categories such as age groups , or rates such as of crime or birth. This approach, sometimes called formal sociology, does not refer directly to individual behaviour or interpersonal interaction. Therefore, the study of social structure is not considered a behavioral science; at this level, the analysis is too abstract. It is a step removed from the consideration of concrete human behaviour , even though the phenomena studied in social structure result from humans responding to each other and to their environments. Those who study social structure do, however, follow an empirical observational approach to research, methodology , and epistemology. Social structure is sometimes defined simply as patterned social relationsâ€"those regular and repetitive aspects of the interactions between the members of a given social entity. Even on this descriptive level, the concept is highly abstract: The larger the social entity considered, the more abstract the concept tends to be. For this reason, the social structure of a small group is generally more closely related to the daily activities of its individual members than is the social structure of a larger society. In the study of larger social groups, the problem of selection is acute: Various theories offer different solutions to this problem of determining the primary characteristics of a social group. Before these different theoretical views can be discussed, however, some remarks must be made on the general aspects of the social structure of any society. Social life is structured along the dimensions of time and space. Specific social activities take place at specific times, and time is divided into periods that are connected with the rhythms of social lifeâ€"the routines of the day, the month, and the year. Specific social activities are also organized at specific places; particular places, for instance, are designated for such activities as working, worshiping, eating, and sleeping. Territorial boundaries delineate these places and are defined by rules of property that determine the use and possession of scarce goods. Additionally, in any society there is a more or less regular division of labour. Yet another universal structural characteristic of human societies is the regulation of violence. All violence is a potentially disruptive force; at the same time, it is a means of coercion and coordination of activities. Human beings have formed political units, such as nations, within which the use of violence is strictly regulated and which, at the same time, are organized for the use of violence against outside groups. Furthermore, in any society there are arrangements within the structure for sexual reproduction and the care and education of the young. These arrangements take the form partly of kinship and marriage relations. Finally, systems of symbolic communication , particularly language, structure the interactions between the members of any society. Page 1 of 4.

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A social system exists between any two or more people who have a common purpose or orientation and interact within a limited scope or area. Examples of social systems include family groups, neighborhoods, governments and regions. The concept of social systems is central to the study of sociology.

He produced a general theoretical system for the analysis of society that came to be called structural functionalism. Parsons was an advocate of "grand theory," an attempt to integrate all the social sciences into an overarching theoretical framework. Later, he became intrigued with, and involved in, an astonishing range of fields: Parsons is also well known for his idea that every group or society tends to fulfill four "functional imperatives". Parsons contributed to the field of social evolutionism and neoevolutionism. He divided evolution into four subprocesses: Furthermore, Parsons explored these subprocesses within three stages of evolution: Parsons viewed the Western civilisation as the pinnacle of modern societies, and out of all western cultures he declared the United States as the most dynamically developed. For this, he was attacked as an ethnocentrist. His attempt to structure the world of action according to a mere four concepts was too much for many American sociologists, who were at that time retreating from the grand pretensions of the s to a more empirical, grounded approach. Pattern variables Parsons asserted that there were two dimensions to societies: By this he meant that there are qualitative differences between kinds of social interaction. Essentially, he observed that people can have personalized and formally detached relationships based on the roles that they play. The characteristics that were associated with each kind of interaction he called the pattern variables. Some examples of expressive societies would include families, churches, clubs, crowds, and smaller social settings. Examples of instrumental societies would include bureaucracies, aggregates, and markets. Affectivity Vs affective neutrality: When actor is oriented towards maximum satisfaction from a given choice. Situations are judged according to uniform criteria universalism and not according to actor or individuals relation with the given subject particularism. Defining people on the basis of biological difference and performance is judging people according to their performance and capacity. Self orientation Vs Collective Orientation when the actor acts out of personal interest it is self orientation.

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Social structure, in sociology, the distinctive, stable arrangement of institutions whereby human beings in a society interact and live together. Social structure is often treated together with the concept of social change, which deals with the forces that change the social structure and the organization of society.