

Definitions of Social Structure

- The ordered relationships and patterned expectations that guide social interaction. (Thompson & Hickey)
- A collective reality that exists apart from individuals, constructing the context in which people interact. (Hess, Markson & Stein)
- The recurring patterns of behavior people create through their interactions and relationships. (Kornblum)
- The patterns of interactions and networks of relationships found within a society. (Hebding & Glick)
- The stable pattern of social relationships that exist within a particular group or society. (Kendall)
- The organized pattern of rights and obligations of persons and groups within a society or a section of a society. (Doob)

So it seems that a social structure is :

- ◆ A society’s social positions, the relationships among those positions and the kinds of resources attached to each of the positions.
- ◆ The framework of society that was already laid out before you were born.
- ◆ How people learn certain behaviors and attitudes because of their location in the social structure.
- ◆ What provides guidelines for our behaviors as well as limits our behaviors.

Elements of the Social Structure

Culture - non material aspect, beliefs, values, norms, language (Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis) Cultural Universals: cooking, funeral ceremonies, medicine, taboos

Roles - (behaviors attached to a status or social position)

role expectations (societal), role performance (individual), role conflict, role strain, role exit

Statuses - status set, ascribed, achieved, master, status symbols

Groups in groups/out groups, primary, secondary, reference group, formal organizations, (social solidarity or cohesion)

Institutions: a set of organized beliefs and rules that establish how a society will attempt to met its basic social needs.

Societies basic needs (functional requisites or prerequisites)	Characteristics of institutions:
reproduce - <i>Family</i>	1.Institutions tend to be resistant to change.
socialize - <i>Education</i>	2.Institutions tend to be interdependent.
maintain order - <i>Politics</i>	3.Institutions tend to change together.
provide goods and services - <i>Economy</i>	4.Institutions tend to be the site of major societal problems.
provide a purpose or “explain the magic” - <i>Religion</i>	