

Introduction
association among
members whereas
affinal relationships
recognize



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Introduction

As the basic unit of life, a family forms the basis of all societal relationships.

Many anthropologists believe that a family allows the advancing of other relationships through strengthening of social bonds and associations. The concept of kinship has been studied by anthropologists who have arguably noted it as the principle element of social bonding. Despite the fact that kingships are rooted in economic systems, their establishment usually plays a core role in influencing individuals' behavior.

In tracing human descent, kinship narrows down to specific segments, which define societal relationships[1]. One of these is the unilineal kinship whose membership is mainly determined at the time of birth. Of importance also is the fact that membership of outsiders to this kingship can be established through other set rules and guidelines by a given kinship. This essay discusses unilineal kinship units with reference to structure attributes, their interdiction, arrangements of personnel and potions of authority and the different terms anthropologist use to refer to them.

Kinship

As mentioned above, kinship forms the foundation of any group or relationship that is to be governed by kinship norms and ethics. Additionally, these groups get allied to others and assimilate them in their existing relationship as a way of expanding their relational domain. In other words, kinship is centered at advancing the responsibilities and rights of most of its members unlike the western world in which other factors like citizenship, politics, economics and work play a major role[2].

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Nevertheless, this does not nullify the role of kinships in the Western world since nuclear families have a vital social institutional role especially when it comes to property inheritance along kinship identities. Besides property inheritance, relatives are quite significant in ritual occasions and ceremonies. For instance, most people who celebrate thanksgiving functions believe that that it is more of a family affair than the involvement of other people from outside. It therefore suffices to mention that family relationships have more weight than kin relationship as the former focuses on blood relationships and issues of descent.

Blood and marriage relationships

Consanguineal and affinal are two common terms used to refer to different types of kinship relationships. Consanguineal refers to a kinship relationship that is principally defined by blood association among members whereas affinal relationships recognize marriage as a source of kinship bonding among group members. Of significance is the fact that formation and regulation of conduct is determined by the manner in which the group is tied to the kinship.

From a general perspective, a kinship system encompasses all relationships that could be founded on marriage or blood, linking different people in a social web of rights and obligations and involved kinship terminologies[3]. Anthropologists therefore refer to a kinship as a system based on the fact that it has relationships, development of ideologies, includes people with varying behavior and recognition of the kinship terminology. Despite the fact that kinship systems have biological relationships, they are solely considered as cultural phenomena. In explaining this, most societies base their <https://assignbuster.com/introduction-association-among-members-whereas-affinal-relationships-recognize/>

classification of a kin on a cultural ground as opposed to the inclusion of biological or scientific ties linking members of the society.

It is also worth noting that there exists differences in social groups that are normally established by kinships and these variations dictate the behavior of kin towards each other[4]. Moreover, kinship bonds that are culturally defined have two major functions, which are seen as fundamental in the continuation of any given society. Many anthropologists believe that the first and most important function of kinships revolves around their ability to guarantee continuation of various generations. Caring and educating of children is essential in every society in order to make them functioning members of the society in future. This is considered to be a key significance of the kinship unit based on the usefulness of such members in any given society. Another function of kinship is to allow for organized transmission of material wealth and social power from one generation to another.

As such, inheritance and succession are commonly done within the kinship setup. Another important function of kinships is the fact that they define a domain for other people upon which one can receive aid from[5]. However, this domain varies broadly from one society to another. According to the Western societies, this domain could be smaller compared to others from different societies. This is common in cases where a wide range of relationships for kin groups are included with beneficial obligations and rights. Notably most human societies have expanded kin groups, a condition which has been augmented by ability to adopt social groups that are bigger than nuclear families.

Formation of descent groups

What is descent? From an anthropological point of view, descent is used to refer to an affiliation that has been culturally established with single or both parents. Many societies consider descent as a crucial basis for the formation of any social group. For instance, the nuclear family can be referred to as a descent group especially when descent group is used to imply groups with consanguineal kin that are recognized to be lineal descendants belonging to the same ancestor, who are beyond two generations[6]. In cases where these descent groups are present, they play an irreplaceable role in the organization of domestic life, culture propagation among children, inheritance and succession, performance of religious rituals, solving of disputes, warfare and political organization. In understanding kinship units, it is important to note that there are two types of basic rules, also known as kinship ideology. These rules are very important especially for the operation of kinships in the society.

Cultural systems which follow the unilineal descent rule acknowledge group membership emanating from either maternal or paternal line, but not both links. Under this descent, two rules exist: patrilineal and matrilineal descent[7]. To be precise, societies with patrilineal descent argue that the descent group of an individual resembles that of his father.

On the other hand, societies with matrilineal rule believe that a person's mother is the one who determines the descent group. Furthermore, bilateral descent reckons that, parents, mother and father are to be considered in determining the descent group of an individual and for the establishment of kinship rights and obligations. Aside from these differences, the absence of <https://assignbuster.com/introduction-association-among-members-whereas-affinal-relationships-recognize/>

nonoverlapping kinship groups in bilateral descent systems is regarded as a major defining characteristic for the two systems initially differentiated by parents[8]. In general, bilateral kinships are not common in most societies around the world despite the fact that they form the foundation of Western culture.

Unilineal kinship

What causes the occurrence of unilineal cultures? Anthropologists pose that unilineal systems are mainly caused by two factors, which are considered to be principal merits of the system[9].

The first advantage is the formation of nonoverlapping descent groups that allow their continuity over a given period of time even though there could be membership changes. Furthermore, corporate descent groups are permanent and their existence is not determined by the presence of individual members at any given time in life. Through birth, corporations admit new members to replace old and dead ones for this continuity to be realistic.

Nevertheless, these changes do not hinder the upholding of the corporation's integrity. In such cases, the established groups can go ahead and own property around the world, equivalent to how current corporations operate today. Additionally, these rules provide membership that is unambiguous to every person in the society. In other words, it is easy to trace and define group membership in cases where descent is based on one line[10].

Knowledge of one's descent and that for others helps in comprehending social roles, duties and ownership. It also permits a person to increase the

number of those people a person relates or identifies with in the society, including known and unknown persons.

An important factor in the understanding of unilineal kinship units is the fact these systems operate differently in every society around the world despite the fact that they share a host of similar properties. Additionally, the actual behavior of members may not necessarily correspond to known rules as outlined in the system ideology[11]. It can therefore be argued that systems of descent and kinship define means through which a society is able to interact with circumstances in the environment. In other words, kinship rules are likely to be bent and altered in order to suit changing times, a phenomenon common to several cultural ideas. Consequently, acceptable deviations from what the society recognizes as norms breeds flexibility for unilineal systems, which they would otherwise miss. This flexibility is extremely important for the purpose of human adaptation. Throughout human history, there are several explanations that have been given by anthropologists concerning the evolution of unilineal kinship units.

Moreover, there are diverse reasons, which give people shared interests that allow them to merge and be justified by kin relations. The reasons may be economic in nature, defined by land or farm animals. They could also be religious, political, religious or warfare. These varied interests play a pivotal role in determining kinship ideologies even as they take their own life.

As mentioned above, there is a possibility for the manipulation of kinship ideologies due to ever-changing historic and economic circumstances.

Unilineal descent groups

In analyzing unilineal kinship units, it is essential to understand the linearity of human relationships. Firstly, a lineage refers to a collection of kin, with members who have a common ancestor and can evidently display genealogical connections.

Male-related lineages are called patrilineages while female-related are known as matrilineages[12]. Furthermore, lineages do not have same sizes but may vary with three generations being the lowest number for upward increment. In corporate groups, lineages own property like land and all members remain responsible for the behavior of colleagues.

In cases where related lineages exist, they may be considered for the formation of clans, though they may not have a specific common ancestor. On the other hand, clans whose members may feel closely related normally come together to form a phratry. Similarly, the functions of clans and lineages vary broadly in the world. For instance, lineages are considered local or domestic groups, which allow individual members to embrace the spirit of cooperation among themselves. Contrary, clans lack the domestic nature of lineages as they spread, covering several villages. As a result, clans are closely associated with religious and political functions compared to domestic ones observed among lineages. Another significant function of clans is the regulation of marriage[13].

While most clans are exogamous and do not allow inter-marriages among clan members, this ensures that their unilineal character remains intact and strong. This allows children who are born to identify their maternal and

paternal relatives with a lot of ease. Lastly, clan exogamy promotes peaceful social coexistence within a given society as clans get bound together through marriage relationships.

Patrilineal descent groups

As mentioned above, these types of lineages emphasize the dominance of fathers as they represent the adopted descent group.

It involves closely related members including fathers' children and sons' too. Based on this arrangement, succession and inheritance are quite easy as leadership power allows. Membership for this descent group is considered as the most important fact of life as fathers, brothers and their children are recognized as the closest kin[14].

According to the rules of this group, its members have a right towards land, participation in ceremonies and have political and legal obligations especially during warfare.

Matrilineal descent group

In understanding this group of unilineal kinship, it is worth noting that societies around the world recognize two major ties within a family. These ties include the bond between a woman and her children and that which exists between siblings in the family. Whereas patrilineal societies put a lot of weight on male authority as the controller of the system, matrilineal system recognizes a woman's brother than her husband. Although a man gains certain rights above his wife after marriage, this does not extend to the

children[15]. Additionally, there are several responsibilities that do not belong to the husband but to the brothers of the woman.

Since children within this system belong to the mother's descent group, membership consists of the following: woman, her siblings, her children, her sisters' children and her daughters' children. This system has a close correlation with the matrilineal rule, which acknowledges the fact that men ought to live near the wife's kin after marriage. This is to say that the man can be viewed as a stranger especially within the domestic group as the woman is being surrounded by her kin.

Conclusion

From the above analysis, it is evident that unilineal kinship units have a significant and irreplaceable role in the society. It is fundamental in tracing of somebody's descent group through patrilineal or matrilineal.

Additionally, a unilineal group is seen as a collective group that survives lifetime situations and changes. While membership to unilineal group is determined at birth, there are rules have been designed to address the issue of outsiders who would wish to join the system. Above all, solidarity among members is highly emphasized as they see other as relatives.

Among key functions of unilineal kinships include mutual aid, security and regulation of marriage. Age sets, interdependently, and marriage links are essential in uniting unilineal kinship units.

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