

# Chapter 7

## Relatedness: Kinship, Marriage, Family, and Friendship

Humans are social creatures that develop a variety of social connections. This is known as relatedness

Forms of relatedness may include friendship, marriage, adoption, procreation, descent from a common ancestor, common labor, co-residence, sharing food, sharing some kind of substance

And one of the most important to anthropologists: kinship

Kinship is the various systems of organization that societies have constructed on principles derived from the universal human experience mating, birth and nurturance

### **Kinship versus Biology**

Mating, birth and nurturance are ambiguous human experiences so cultural constructed systems of kinship try to deal with the ambiguity

1. one society looks at the female role of childbirth and thus kinship is based on this
2. one society focus on the male line of descent
3. adopting children and siblings

Kinship is often an idiom (an expression whose meaning is not predictable from the usual meanings of its constituent elements) e.g. the use of kinship names like uncle, auntie, sister and brother in a non-biological context

Kinship principles define social groups, locate people within those groups and position the people and groups in relation to one another both in space and time

How does technological advances play into kinship? Surrogate parents? Organ transplants? [Two](#) genetic moms and one genetic dad?

### **Descent**

The next chapter will look at affinal relationships like marriage since they are culturally defined connections

Other kinships relationships are based on birth or nurturance (descent)

Some see descent through “blood” (technically genetic) consanguineal kin

Certain cultural groups may adopt another and see him or her as a “blood” relative

The transformation is explained in terms of nurturance (feeding, clothing, sheltering, etc.)

Cultures around the world rely on two basic strategies:

1. people are connected through both mother and father
2. people are connected through mother *or* father but not both

### **Bilateral Descent**

Bilateral descent is when someone sees descent being the same from the father’s and mother’s side

Types of:

1. bilateral descent group – descent through a common ancestor
2. bilateral kindred – all relatives, related through male or females of one person or group of siblings

Bilateral kindred forms around particular individuals and includes all the people linked to that individual through kin of both sexes (relatives in English)

The central person is the *ego*

Events relate to ego such as birth, marriage or death

Each person has his or her own bilateral kindred e.g. ego’s father’s sister’s daughter has kindred that includes people related to her through her father and her father’s siblings but not related to ego.

Kinships create interlocking status roles where you act one way same to your “uncles” but a different way to your “father”

Bilateral descent may be useful because of its flexible nature but problematic if a clear-cut membership in a particular social group must be determined

### **Unilineal Descent**

Unilineal descent traces kin relationships through the mother *or* father

Unilineal descent groups are the most common type of group

Patrilineal – traces through father

Matrilineal – traces through mother

A person does not pick a type unilineal descent as has already been institutionalized in the group

Patrilineage (most common): father – child link that all male and females pass through

Matrilineage: mother – child link that all male and females pass through in matrilineage the mother's brother plays a bigger role in a child's life than the child's biological father

Lineage is composed of all those people who believe they can specify the parent child links connect them to one another through a common ancestor

Prior to the nation-state lineages were the main political associations in societies

a clan is group that believes that they are in some way connected by cannot specify the precise genealogical link

Clans tend to be larger than a lineage

### **Kinship Terminologies**

There appear to be six patterns in terms of kinship:

1. generation
2. gender e.g. primo and prima in Spanish but cousin in English
3. affinity based on connection through marriage
4. collaterality direct line and “off to one side” mother and aunt
5. bifurcation distinguishes the mother's side from the father's side
6. relative age is the person younger or older even if both are brothers

What the heck is second [cousin](#) once removed?

### **What is marriage?**

A prototypical marriage involves a man and a woman, transforms the status of the man and the woman, and stipulates the degree of sexual access of the married partners may have to each other, ranging from exclusive to preferential.

Marriage establishes the legitimacy of children born to the woman and creates relationships between the kin of the woman and the kin of the man.

This format is not the only way societies have used the definition of marriage as marriage has been two men, two women, multiple wives, multiple husbands, a living woman and the ghost of a deceased male (found in China, Sudan and India). Sometimes sexual relations are part of marriage and sometime they are not.

Marriage is a rite of passage and as such the role of each individual in the marriage changes or takes on new roles

The two main rights and/or obligations of marriage most often, though not always, involve:

1. sexual relations
2. children

### **Whom to Marry and Where to Live**

Societies often use kinship systems to exercise control over the marriages contracted by members

Exogamy - rules that specify marrying someone outside of a defined social group

Endogamy - marrying within a specified social group

Either pattern may be strictly enforced or merely preferred

Once you are married you have to live somewhere

1. neolocal - a new independent household (though rare bilocal does exist in bilateral societies)
2. partilocal - partners live with (or near) the husband's father (most common in the world)
  - virilocal - living with husband's kin
3. matrilocal - living with (or near) the wife's mother
  - uxorilocal (uhk-sawr-uh-loh-kuhl) - living with wife's kin
4. avunculocal - living with husband's mother's brother
5. ambilocal - living with either the husband's or wife's group (found in unilineal societies)

### **How many spouses?**

Monogamy - one spouse

Polygamy (plural marriage) - more than one spouse

Polygyny – man with more than one wife

Polyandry – a woman with more than one husband

### **Marriage as Alliance**

The institution of marriage has primarily been used to form alliances between two families

Thus, the main issue of the marriage revolves around resources and who benefits or loses in the marriage transaction

Bride service – the groom works for the bride's family for a set period of time

Bridewealth – certain symbolic goods are transferred from the groom's family to the bride's family

Dowry – transfer of family wealth from parent to daughter

A dowry are often seen as the wife's contribution to the new household

hypergamy is where a person (usually the wife) marries up in social status

sororate – the wife dies young so the husband marries the wife's sister

levirate – the husband's brother marries the wife

### **Family**

A family at the most base level is a woman and her dependent children

Conjugal family is spousal pair and children

nonconjugal family woman and her children

nuclear family – two generations husband, wife and children

polygynous family – husband, cowives and children

extended family – multigenerational

joint families – siblings and spouses living together

blended family – previously divorced people remarry

family by choice – family not of heterosexual marriage

## **Divorce**

Divorce is common in almost all cultures though the affects of divorce vary from culture to culture as well as when a divorce may occur

## **Friendship**

Who is a friend? Difficult to define for anthropologists.