6

Ties That Connect
Marriage, Family, and Kinship

In a "free" society like our own, one should have the right to have sexual relations with anyone one chooses, isn't that so? Why does the government have to tell us who we may or may not marry? By what right does the United States government tell us that we may have one, and only one, spouse? We open a newspaper and read that in Pakistan, in the year 2002, a woman was gang raped because her brother had a sexual affair with a woman of a higher caste. Barbaric! Sexual affairs should be no one else's business. Why should the sister be held responsible for her brother's actions? In the case just cited, the Pakistani caste groups are endogamous, and this sexual affair violated the rules of endogamy. Families and clans are frequently held collectively responsible when a member violates the rules, and a sister was punished for her brother's transgressions. There are strict rules about sex, even in free societies like our own. If you live in Massachusetts, you can marry your first cousin. In Pennsylvania or Oregon, you cannot. Though polygamy, marriage with more than one wife, was practiced among the ancient Israelites, as described in the Bible, it is not permitted among Orthodox Jews today. Mormons had to give up polygamy so that Utah could become a state.

As we will see, kinship plays a fundamental role in weaving the tapestry of culture. In the societies anthropologists studied earlier, most of daily life was organized on the basis of kinship relationships. In these small-scale societies, all religious, economic, and political behavior took place within the context of the social structure. This social structure was organized on the basis of kinship, which is why the study of kinship was so important in anthropology. Even with increasing industrialization and globalization in so many parts of the world today, kinship continues to be important. As Parkin notes, "Many societies still think in terms of lineages, affinal alliance systems, residence rules and marriage payments, while virtually all are still organized in families of some sort and use kin terms to identify and classify relatives" (1997: ix-x). One of the striking features an examination
of kinship reveals is the limited number of possibilities of rules regarding whom one can marry—that is, marriage rules, family organization, residence patterns after marriage, forms of descent and descent groups, and other aspects of kinship. We must also remember that these are the rules for societies and that people's actual practices may vary from these rules, as is always the case for all rules, even rules about an explosive topic like incest.

In Chapter 2, when we described weddings in two different societies, kinship played a role in the proceedings. In each case, groupings of kin played significant roles in the course of the event. The Kwakiutl have groups based on kinship that they refer to as numayms. How does one become a member of a numaym? What are one’s responsibilities toward other members of the numaym? What are one’s rights and privileges as a member of a numaym? What is one’s relationship with people in different numayms? Are all one’s kin in one's own numaym?

In contrast to the Kwakiutl wedding is the American wedding described in Chapter 2. Once again, groupings of people based on kinship participated—the bride’s side and the groom’s side, immediate relatives and distant relatives. In addition, there were those who were not relatives at all but who attended as friends, neighbors, and fellow workers. What are the differences between the ways relatives are grouped in Kwakiutl society and the ways they are grouped in our own society? What do these differences mean? This chapter presents concepts that anthropologists have developed to answer these questions.

In Chapter 2, we point out that a Kwakiutl wedding is an example of what are called total social phenomena. This means that political, economic, religious, and aesthetic aspects of the society, as well as kinship, are brought into play simultaneously. Despite the interwoven nature of all these aspects of culture in a Kwakiutl wedding, kinship can be disentangled for the purposes of analysis. The discussion of marriage, family, and kinship that follows will deal with the cultural rules to be found in a variety of societies. It is important to note that in every society, there will always be variations in behavior and deviations from these cultural rules. Through time, these cultural rules may be transformed. In the succeeding chapters on religion, politics, economics, and art, we will see that kinship plays a crucial role in these various cultural domains of small-scale societies.

Such societies were shaken to their roots as they were incorporated into colonial empires and then into new nations. However, kinship and kin groups have continued to be very significant in people's lives, whether they remained in their rural villages or migrated to look for work in expanding cities like Lagos in Nigeria, or Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea. Until recently, it was widely believed by anthropologists that kinship relations withered in modern industrial societies. The sociologist Lewis Wirth had hypothesized that with the growth of urbanism, kinship bonds would weaken and decline in importance. As we shall see later, research on kinship in America has revealed just the opposite. New forms like the transnational families in parts of Europe, Asia, and the Americas have been created. Though relatives may not be living in the same town or city, they maintain contact by letter, phone, and e-mail.
Marriage

Almost all known societies recognize marriage. The ritual of marriage marks a change in status for a man and a woman and the acceptance by society of the new family that is formed. However, the Na, which we describe later in this chapter, do not have marriage or marriage rituals. Marriage, like all other things cultural, is governed by rules. Just as the rules vary from one society to another, so does the ritual by which society recognizes and celebrates the marriage. In the American wedding, the bridegroom places a ring on the third finger, left hand, of the bride and repeats the ritual formula, “With this ring, I thee wed.” In the Kwakiutl wedding, the bridegroom comes as a member of a feigned war party to capture the bride and “move” her from her father’s house with the payment of many blankets. These represent just two of the many ways that societies recognize and accept marriage and the formation of a new family. At both Kwakiutl and American weddings, large numbers of guests are present who represent society, serving as witnesses to the marriage signifying that marriage is more than a private affair and is recognized publicly by society. Sometimes, the ritual may be as minimal as in the Trobriand case mentioned in the previous chapter, where marriage is symbolized merely by the couple’s publicly eating together.

Marriage Prohibitions

Societies also have rules that state whom one can and cannot marry. Rules about whom one cannot marry are directly related to the incest taboo. Like marriage, the incest taboo is found in all societies and is therefore a cultural universal. The incest taboo forbids sexual relations between certain categories of close relatives. Almost universally, forbidden categories include mother and son, father and daughter, and brother and sister. Since sexual partners cannot be sought within the immediate family because of the incest taboo, they must be sought elsewhere. The incest taboo that forbids sexual relations also necessarily forbids marriage, since marriage almost always includes sexual access. In many societies, there are people with whom one can have sexual intercourse but whom one cannot marry. Marriage prohibitions, therefore, are wider in scope than the prohibitions against sexual intercourse. Both the incest taboo and prohibitions against marrying certain close relatives have the effect of compelling individuals to seek sexual partners and mates outside their own group. Beyond the immediate family, there is great variation from one society to another in the rules regarding which categories of relatives one is forbidden to marry. Even within the United States, there is variation among the states in the laws regarding which relatives one may not marry. Some states permit marriage between first cousins while others prohibit it; still others prohibit marriage between second cousins. For example, the Office of Human Services of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts decrees: “No man may marry his . . . stepmother, grandson’s wife, wife’s mother, wife’s daughter, brother’s daughter, sister’s daughter, father’s sister or mother’s sister” in addition to other relatives (Registrar
of Vital Records and Statistics, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, courtesy of Ron Palazzo). However, first cousins are absent from this list.

There are a few striking examples of marriage between members of the immediate family that seem to violate the universality of the incest taboo. Among the pharaohs of ancient Egypt, such as Tutankhamen, the boy king, as well as among the royal lineages of Hawaii and the Incas in Peru, brother and sister married. In each instance, the ruler had to marry someone equal in rank, and who could be better qualified than one's own brother or sister?

**Endogamy and Exogamy**

In anthropological terms, marriage within the group is called *endogamy* and marriage outside the group is called *exogamy*. A rule of exogamy, like the incest taboo, requires that members of the group seek spouses outside their own group. A rule of exogamy is frequently conceptualized as an extension of the incest taboo in that the same term is used for both. For example, among the Trobriand Islanders, the term *suvasova* is used for the incest taboo and is also extended to forbid sexual relations and marriage with women of one's own larger kin group, or *dala*, all of whom are called sisters. A rule of endogamy requires individuals to marry within their own group and forbids them to marry outside of it. Religious groups such as the Amish, Mormons, Catholics, and Jews have rules of endogamy, though these are often violated when marriages take place outside the group. As noted in Chapter 5, castes in India and the castes of the Newari of Nepal are also endogamous. Rules of endogamy preserve separateness and exclusivity, and are a means of maintaining boundaries between one group and other groups. In this sense, the brother-sister marriages referred to above reach the absolute limit of endogamy in order to preserve sanctity and power within the ruling families of those societies. More typical are those cases where the immediate family is exogamous, while the larger group, frequently an ethnic group or religious sect, is endogamous.

**Sister Exchange**

Since a rule of exogamy demands that spouses come from outside one's group, relationships are created through marriage with other groups. If a man cannot marry his own sister, he gives his sister to someone in another group. According to the basic principle of exchange, something given, if accepted by the receiver, must be returned with its equivalent. If a man accepts another man's sister, he must therefore return his own sister as the equivalent. After all, the receiver, too, may not marry his own sister. In fact, in a number of societies over the world, there is a rule requiring that two men exchange sisters; anthropologists refer to this as *sister exchange*. If a man does not have a biological sister, he returns a woman for whom he uses the same kinship term that he uses for his sister. Recently, feminist anthropologists have argued that this form of marriage could just as easily be conceptualized as brother exchange. However, where men are dominant in a society, this is
seen as sister exchange "from the native point of view." When Margaret Mead went to study the Mountain Arapesh in New Guinea, she asked them why they didn't marry their own sisters, expecting a response indicating revulsion at the very thought. Instead, Mead's informant stated, "What is the matter with you anyway? Don't you want a brother-in-law?" (Mead, 1935: 68). This is because one hunts, gardens, and travels with one's brother-in-law among the Arapesh. Thus a marriage creates a link not only between husband and wife but also, through the wife, between two men who are brothers-in-law to each other.

**Marriage Payments**

In many societies marriage involves a transfer or exchange of property. Sometimes, payments are made by the groom and his family to the family of the bride, as occurs among the Kwakiutl. This payment is known as *bridewealth*. In other instances, the bride brings property with her at the marriage. This is known as *dowry*. When dowry is paid, goods move in the opposite direction from bridewealth payments. In societies that practice sister exchange, there may be an option to give bridewealth if one does not have a sister to exchange. However, it is also common to find sister exchange accompanied by the payment of bridewealth, so that groups are exchanging both women and bridewealth payments. In China, both bridewealth and dowry were paid.

**Bride Service**

Sometimes the groom exchanges labor for his bride, in lieu of the payment of bridewealth. When the groom works for his wife's family, this is known as *bride service*. It may be recalled that in the Old Testament Jacob labored for seven years in order to marry Leah and then another seven years to marry Rachel, Leah's younger sister, thus performing fourteen years of bride service for his father-in-law. Bride service is also practiced by the Yanomamo, a people living in the lowlands of Venezuela. During this time, the groom lives with the bride's parents and hunts for them. Since the Yanomamo also have sister exchange, one might say that during this period of bride service, when men live with the bride's parents, they really are practicing brother exchange. However, since men determine whom women will marry, the Yanomamo do not conceptualize this as two women exchanging their brothers. After the period of bride service is over, the husband takes his wife back to his group. Yanomamo women prefer to marry within the same village rather than into some distant village; that way they can remain close to their families after marriage so that their brothers can offer them a degree of protection from husbandly abuse.

**Number of Spouses**

Another set of rules concerning marriage is exemplified by the biblical case of Jacob—rules regarding number of spouses. Some societies, like our own, practice *monogamy*; that is, only one spouse at a time is permitted. However, according to the Bible, husbands could have more than one wife. This is known
Shell rings are presented as bridewealth at an Abelam marriage.

as polygyny and is still permitted in many societies in the world, particularly Islamic societies. Jews living in Muslim countries continued to practice polygyny, as occurred in the Bible, up until recently but not in Christian countries. Jews coming to Israel from Muslim countries were allowed to bring several wives, but they were forbidden to marry more than one wife in Israel itself. Sometimes, as in the case of Jacob, a man marries several sisters. This practice is known as sororal polygyny. In the societies in which it occurs, it is usually explained by saying that sisters have a good relationship with one another, and this will help overcome the inevitable jealousy that arises between co-wives. On the other hand, many people, such as the Trobriand Islanders and the Kanuri of Nigeria, explicitly forbid sororal polygyny. The Kanuri explanation for this prohibition is that the good relationship between two sisters should not be undermined by the unavoidable friction that arises between two co-wives. This simply demonstrates that whatever rules are in effect, the people will offer an explanation for their existence that is perfectly rational in their eyes. An alternative form of marriage, known as polyandry, in which one woman may have several husbands, occurs but is rather rare. In almost all cases, a woman marries several brothers; this is known as fraternal polyandry. Today, among ethnic Tibetans in north-west Nepal, the ideal form of marriage is fraternal polyandry, in which the eldest brother is the primary husband and nominally the father of all the children, whether or not he is the biological father (Levine, 1987). Sometimes, anthropol-
ogists wish to refer to plural spouses in general, either husbands or wives. In that case, they use the term **polygamy**, in contrast to the term **monogamy**. Because of the frequency of divorce and subsequent remarriage in the United States, it is sometimes said that Americans practice serial **monogamy**. We may not have more than one spouse at a time, but some people have numerous spouses, one after the other. Some of the Mormons in the southern part of Utah still practice polygamy, usually sororal polygamy, and the law looks the other way unless the bride-to-be is under the legal age for marriage. The rest of the Mormons formally gave up polygamy in order to be able to form the state of Utah.

**Levirate and Sororate**

The exchange of a woman for another woman or the exchange of a woman for bridewealth is an indication that more than the bride and groom are involved in a marriage. Marriage is a significant concern of the kin groups of the marrying couple. A further demonstration of this is found in the customs of the **levirate** and the **sororate**. Under the levirate, if a man dies, his widow then marrying one of his
brothers. The brother of the dead man steps into the deceased's place, thereby continuing the relationship between the two kin groups established by the first marriage. In the levirate, a woman marries one brother after the death of another brother; in fraternal polyandry she can be married to two brothers simultaneously. Orthodox Jews today still practice the levirate if the brother of the deceased husband is unmarried. When a deceased wife is replaced in the marriage by her sister, usually an unmarried younger sister, this is known as the sororate. It is like sororal polygyny, but in the sororate a man marries two sisters, the second after the death of the first. The levirate and sororate illustrate what the British anthropologist Radcliffe-Brown referred to as the equivalence of siblings (1952), where one same-sex sibling can be substituted for another.

**Dissolution of Marriage**

Stability of marriage varies from one society to another. Almost all societies provide a means for divorce or the dissolution of a marriage; however, this may be very difficult in some societies. Divorce is invariably more difficult after children have been born to the couple. Where bridewealth has been paid, it would have to be returned if the wife leaves her husband. This may be difficult to achieve if the bridewealth, paid several years before, has been spent, dispersed, or consumed. Some anthropologists have argued that the higher the bridewealth payment, the more stable the marriage and less likely a divorce, since it would require the return of bridewealth, which is so difficult in such societies. Others have said that frequency of divorce and stability of marriage are related not to the amount of bridewealth but to the degree of incorporation of a wife into her husband's family or kin group. Among the Manchus of Manchuria, who conquered China in the seventeenth century, the wife went through a fire ceremony in front of the hearth in her husband's house. This ritual served to conceptually incorporate her permanently into his kin group. In contrast, as noted in Chapter 2, at marriage, the Kwakiutl paid bridewealth to the bride's family. At a subsequent ceremony, the bride's family paid a large amount of goods to "repurchase" her, thereby reiterating her membership in the kin group of her birth. The husband must make a new bridewealth payment if he wishes her to continue to be his wife. The bridewealth and repurchase payments of the Kwakiutl, which were integral parts of Kwakiutl marriage, symbolize how two people may be joined in marriage and yet retain an identity in their own kin groups. The difference in these ceremonies indicates that divorce was more difficult among the Manchus than among the Kwakiutl.

**Postmarital Residence**

Where the newly married couple live after the marriage ritual is performed is also governed by cultural rules, which are referred to as rules of postmarital residence. In the North American wedding described in Chapter 2, the newly
married couple set up their own household. In the case of a couple with two careers in two different cities, two households are often created, though it would appear that the primary residence of the Schwarzeneggers was their Pacific Palisades home. The postmarital residence rule in American society is that the new couple form an independent household. This is referred to as neolocal residence (see Figure 6-1). It is clear that this is a rule in American society, since breaching it brings sanctions. If the newly married couple live for an extended period with the family of either the husband or the wife, this move is typically explained in terms of economic hardship or the couple’s student status. Gossips will make snide comments about the lack of independence of the couple, since they continue to live as though they were children, and gossip is a strong sanction. If the newly married couple move in with the husband’s parents, comments are

FIGURE 6-1 Rules of residence.

A. Neolocal residence

B. Viriloclal residence

C. Uxorilocal residence

D. Avunculocal residence

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\begin{align*}
\triangle & = \text{male} \\
\bigcirc & = \text{female} \\
\triangle & = \text{means marriage} \\
\downarrow & = \text{person moves}
\end{align*}
\]
made about two women in the same kitchen and the mother-in-law problem; if they move in with the wife’s parents, the result is inevitable difficulties between father-in-law and son-in-law. Neolocal residence not only characterizes our society but is found in other societies as well.

Probably the most common form of postmarital residence is the situation in which the newly married couple live in the household of the groom’s parents. This is known as virilocality (also referred to as patrilocal residence). With a rule of virilocality, the wife is incorporated, to a greater or lesser extent, into the household of her husband’s kin, since it is she (the bride) who must leave her own family. The groom merely remains in his household.

Less frequent is the case in which the newly married couple live in the household of the bride’s parents. This is called uxorilocality (also referred to as matrilocal residence). In this instance it is the husband who must be incorporated into his wife’s family. In the past, in some Pueblo societies of Arizona and New Mexico that had a rule of uxorilocality, the degree of incorporation of the husband into his wife’s family was so slight that the wife could divorce him simply by leaving his belongings on the doorstep. Today in the Pueblo area, neolocal residence prevails, reflecting the influence of the larger American society. When a groom performs bride service for his wife’s father, as Jacob did for Laban in the Bible, he lives uxorilocally for the period of the bride service. Then, like Jacob, he usually returns with his wife to live virilocally, with his own family.

Still another rule of postmarital residence is the arrangement in which, after marriage, the wife joins her new husband, who is living with his mother’s brother rather than with his own father. This is called avunculocality. This rule of residence involves two separate and distinct moves. The earlier move occurs when a man, as an adolescent, leaves his father’s house to go to live with his mother’s brother, from whom he will inherit later in life. The incorporation of the young man into the household of his mother’s brother is associated with matrilineal descent, discussed below. After the marriage, the wife joins her husband at his maternal uncle’s house. The Trobriand Islanders have an avunculocally rule of postmarital residence.

Sometimes a society will have a rule of residence stating that after marriage, the couple can live either with the bride’s family or with the groom’s family. In contrast to our own society, they cannot establish an independent household. This is called bilocal residence. On Dobu, an island near the Trobriands, the married couple spend one year in the bride’s village and the following year in the groom’s village, alternating in this manner between the two villages every year. Among the Iban of Borneo, however, a choice must be made at some point after marriage between affiliation with one side or the other, and this choice becomes permanent.

Lastly, there is a postmarital residence rule in which husband and wife live with their respective kin, apart from one another. This is known as duolocal residence. The Ashanti of Ghana, who traditionally lived in large towns, have this form of postmarital residence. Husbands and wives live in the same town, but not
in the same household. At dusk, one could see young children carrying the evening meal from their mother’s house to their father’s house for their father to eat.

FAMILY TYPES AND HOUSEHOLDS

The rules stating where a couple should live after marriage result in different types of families. People who are related to one another by some form of kinship constitute a family, while people who live together under one roof form a household. The members of a household may not necessarily all be related by kinship to one another. Family and household units, therefore, may not coincide. In the Ashanti example just discussed, the family unit of husband, wife, and children live in two separate households. With neolocal postmarital residence, as exists in America, the family that is formed is the nuclear family (see Figure 6-2). It consists of the husband, the wife, and children until they marry, at which point those children will establish their own nuclear families. The nuclear family is an independent household that operates autonomously in economic affairs, in the rearing of children, and in other phases of life.

What happens when there are plural spouses, as in societies that practice polygyny or polyandry? Among the Kanuri, where polygyny is practiced, only a small proportion of men actually have more than one wife. However, in polygynous families, each wife must have her own house and hearth. This is typical of a number of African societies. The husband must visit each wife in turn, at which time she cooks for him, and he must stay the night with her. Though he may favor one wife over another, he should treat them equally. A man’s house and those of his wives form a single walled compound or household. Even though they have separate hearths and separate houses, they are all under the authority of the husband, who is the head of the household. Such a household might also include slaves belonging to the head of the household. In polyandrous societies, like Tibet, a woman and her several husbands, usually brothers, live in the same house and form a single household.

When several related nuclear families live together in the same household, they form an extended family. When there is a rule of virilocal residence, the household consists of an older married couple, their married sons and wives, and the unmarried children of both the older couple and their married sons. These all form one extended family. Their married daughters will have left the household to join the households of their husbands. The center of this type of extended family is a core of related men. Their in-marrying wives come from many different places and are not related to each other. Uxorilocal postmarital residence results in extended families of a very different sort. In this case, a core of related women remain together, and their husbands marry into the extended family. With avunculocal residence there is once again a core of men forming the basis of the extended family, but this core of men is linked through women. Avunculocal residence occurs when a young man moves to his mother’s brother’s house during adolescence. The wives in this case also marry into the family.
FIGURE 6-2 Family types.

A. Nuclear family

B. Virilocl extended family

C. Uxorilocl extended family

D. Avunculocal extended family

E. Stem family

F. Joint family

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\text{\(\triangle\)} = \text{male} \\
\text{\(\bigcirc\)} = \text{female} \\
\text{\(\bigcirc\rightarrow\bigcirc\)} = \text{moves off} \\
\text{\(\triangle \bigcirc\)} = \text{deceased}
\]
Extended families also vary in their extent. The most extensive extended family is the one that consists of parents and married children of one sex, their spouses, and their own children. Some extended families consist only of parents and one married son and his family. Such a family is known as a stem family and occurs in parts of rural Ireland. Since the amount of land inherited is small and cannot be profitably subdivided, only one son, typically the youngest one, inherits the land, while his older brothers go off to the cities, become priests, or emigrate to Boston or Hong Kong. Another type of extended family is the joint family, which includes brothers and their wives and children who stay together as a single family after the parents have died. In most of the examples discussed above, family type and household coincide and perform a variety of functions, including the socialization of children, cooperation in economic activities, and political decision making.

DECENT

The kinds of family groups that we have just described are based on both kinship and common residence. Beyond the family, there are groups based upon shared kinship or descent where the members need not live in the same place. Descent
groups are those whose memberships are descended from a common ancestor. These groups are usually called clans by anthropologists. We have previously discussed exogamy, that is, the rule that one must marry outside one's group. In most societies that have clans, though certainly not in all, clans are exogamous, and one must marry outside one's own clan.

**Patrilineal Descent and Matrilineal Descent**

Societies have rules that state that the child belongs either to the mother's clan or to the father's clan. A rule that states that a child belongs to his or her father's clan is called a patrilineal rule of descent. This means that children belong to their father's clan, the father belongs to his father's clan, and so forth, as illustrated in the diagram (see Figure 6-3). A daughter belongs to her father's clan, but her children do not. Children share common clanship with only one of their four grandparents; however, the other three grandparents are still their relatives and kinsmen. As one goes back through the generations, ties of kin relationships form a web of kinship. A rule of descent carves out of this web of kinship a much smaller segment, which comprises the members of one's own clan. Clans continue to exist through time, beyond the lifespan of individual members, as new generations continue to be born into the clan.

A matrilineal rule of descent states that a child belongs to the clan of his or her mother, not that of the father. The Trobrianders have such a rule of descent. Among the Trobrianders, as in all matrilineal societies, the continuity of the clan is not through a man's own children but through those of his sister.

In societies where either matrilineal or patrilineal clans are present, the clans have certain functions; that is, they carry out certain activities. Some of the activities of clans concern rituals. For example, the matrilineal clan of the Trobrianders serves as host at the ceremonial distribution (sagali) accompanying a funeral when a member of their clan dies. Ritual objects and spells are owned by clans. Clans also have political functions and may compete with one another for power and political positions and may even fight with one another. Each clan has some kind of leadership, almost always male, to organize these political activities. The chief (the leader) of a Trobriand clan directs the accumulation of large amounts of food to be given away at a Trobriand sagali. Finally, what has frequently been seen as the most important function of the clan is its ownership of land. Members of a clan have the right to use its land by virtue of the fact that they are born into the clan. Clan members may work together at tasks, such as building a communal house or canoe, that benefit the clan as a whole. The common ancestor from whom all the members of a clan believe that they are descended is sometimes conceived of as an ancestral or clan spirit. This ancestral spirit may be thought of as having a nonhuman form, perhaps that of an animal. In that case all members of the clan are thought of as having a special relationship to that animal, and they may be forbidden to eat it. Such an animal is called the clan totem, and, as noted in Chapter 5, it is a symbol that represents the clan and could be graphically represented, as depicted in the totem pole on page 100.
The clan is frequently referred to by anthropologists as a corporate descent group, because it has many of the characteristics of a modern corporation. Like a corporation, it has an existence independent of its individual members. Old clan members die and new ones are born, while the clan continues to operate through time. The corporation owns property, and so does the clan. However, anybody can buy stock in a corporation and become an owner, but membership in a clan is restricted to certain kinds of kin, as defined by the rule of descent.

In Chapter 5 we noted the way in which elements of the human body can be used metaphorically to discuss kinship. They can also be used to contrast relationships through the mother and relationships through the father. The way in which the contrast is symbolized differs in patrilineal and matrilineal societies. In many patrilineal societies, the connection between the child and the mother is seen in terms of mother’s milk and menstrual blood. In these societies, milk or blood sym-
bolizes the maternal relationship. Connection to the father is seen in terms of semen or bone. The Arapesh of New Guinea believe that a child is created through the semen contributed by the father and the blood of the mother. The Arapesh are patrilineal; the child belongs to the father’s clan. The child is seen as linked to the mother’s clan through the blood she provided. The mother’s clan continues to “own” the blood, and whenever the child’s blood is shed through injury or cutting initiation scars, the child’s mother’s clan must be paid.

Since the Trobrianders have matrilineal descent, one would expect them to conceive of their kinship system in a different way than the Arapesh do. Among the Trobrianders, children belong to the clan of their mother, sharing common substance with their mother and other clan mates. The father is considered an affine, a relative by marriage only, in contrast to a consanguine, a blood relative. When a child is conceived in the mother’s womb, the Trobrianders believe that an ancestral spirit from the mother’s clan has entered her womb. The creation of a child is not seen as the result of the merging of substance from mother and father, and therefore they do not believe that sexual intercourse has anything to do with the conception of a child. The father, by repeated acts of intercourse, not only makes the child grow, but molds the child so that the child resembles him in appearance. The child is like a piece of clay pressed between two palms that takes on the shape of the hands that mold it. But this has nothing to do with the conception of the child in the first place, which is all the doing of the maternal ancestral spirit of the mother’s clan. The child cannot be claimed by the father’s clan, which had nothing to do with its creation. Though the Trobriand father is a very important relative, he is still an affine, as are all the members of his maternal clan.

Cognitive Descent

Up to now, we have discussed clans based upon either a patrilineal or a matrilineal rule of descent. Anthropologists refer to these as unilineal descent groups. There are also societies that have groups based upon descent from a common ancestor, where individuals belong to the group because either their father or their mother was a member of that group. This is called a cognitive rule of descent. Individuals have the choice of belonging to either their father’s or their mother’s group, or they may have rights in both groups, though there is usually active membership in only one since a person can live in only one place at a time. Individuals may even have rights in all four kin groups of their grandparents. Although the kin group created by a cognitive rule of descent is based upon descent from a common ancestor, the links through which individuals trace their descent are through either males or females. The kin group that the Kwakiutl refer to as a nnumaym is a cognitive descent group. A Kwakiutl boy could claim membership in both his mother’s and his father’s group. He usually became a member of the nnumaym of the parent of higher rank, from whom he hoped to inherit the highest titles and the most property. In addition, he inherited rights in the nnumaym of the other parent. Cognitive descent groups have the
same functions as unilineal descent groups (patrilineal and matrilineal clans),
though their structures are different. For example, the Kwakiutl numaym owned
houses, fishing sites, berry-picking grounds, and hunting territories. The chiefs
of a numaym acted as political leaders in potlatching and in warfare. The num-
aym acted as a unit on ceremonial occasions, such as the marriage and repur-
chase of the bride, which is described in Chapter 2. Kwakiutl myths tell how the
supernatural ancestors of present-day numayms acquired magical powers that
were transmitted down the generations to their descendants.

DOUBLE DESCENT
In some societies in the world, each person belongs to two descent groups, one pa-
trilineal, where descent is traced through the father and father’s father, and the
other matrilineal, where descent is traced through the mother and mother’s
mother. Anthropologists call this double descent (see Figure 6-4). The two groups
to which an individual belongs do not conflict with one another, since each group
has its own distinct functions. For example, the Yako of southeast Nigeria had pa-
trilineal clans called yepon, which owned land in common and possessed a single
shrine and an assembly house, and whose men and their families resided together
and farmed together. At the same time, each Yako individual also belonged to the
matrilineal clan, or lejima, of his or her mother. The matrilineal clans carried out ritu-
al and religious activities, such as funerals and periodic rites during the year
aimed at maintaining fertility and harmony. While land is inherited patrilineally,
movable wealth, such as valuables and household goods, is inherited through the
matrilineal line. Thus, the two types of kin groups, patrilineal and matrilineal,
serve different functions.

Though patrilineal clans, matrilineal clans, and cognatic descent groups have the
same kinds of functions, they are structured very differently. Because of the rule of
descent, the structure of the patrilineal clan is that of men linked through their fa-
thers, along with their sisters who marry into other clans. The patrilineal clan is
almost always associated with virilocal postmarital residence. Sisters who marry
out and wives who marry in are incorporated in varying degrees into the patrili-
neal clans of their husbands. In the discussion of marriage and the family in the ear-
lier part of this chapter, we pointed out the variations in the degree of incor-
poration of the wife into her husband’s clan. Matrilineal clans are composed of
women related through their mothers and the brothers of these women. The
brothers remain members of the clan into which they were born throughout their
entire lives. Though they marry into other clans, in matrilineal societies, men are
never incorporated into the clans of their wives. When they die, their bodies are
usually brought back to be buried in their own clan land. Matrilineal clans are usu-
ally associated with avunculocal or uxorilocal postmarital residence. With a rule of
cognatic descent, both men and women have membership in several cognatic de-
cent groups, since they can trace multiple lines of descent. In this situation, hus-
bands and wives, regardless of where they reside, are never incorporated into the
descent groups of their spouses; this is the case among the Kwakiutl. As can be
seen, the different kinds of descent structures are associated with particular rules
of postmarital residence and have consequences for the degree of incorporation of
one spouse into the other spouse’s kin group.

One can see the different ways in which descent groups are structured when
one looks at the way in which political leadership operates. The political functions
of descent groups are carried out under the direction of leaders. In patrilineal soci-
eties like that of the Mongols, inherited leadership is usually structured in the fol-
lowing manner: It passes from father to son and from brother to brother (see
Figure 6-5). Leadership in matrilineal societies, like that of the Trobrianders, is
handed down from mother’s brother to sister’s son or from brother to brother. In a
matrilineal society, a son can never directly inherit a position of leadership from his
father. In such societies, though the line of descent goes through women, the women
themselves are rarely the heads of their clans. One may contrast the nature of the re-
lationship of a man to his father in patrilineal societies and to his mother’s brother
in matrilineal societies. In patrilineal societies, a son will replace his father in the po-
sition of leadership and is often perceived of as a competitor and antagonist of his
own father. His mother’s brother, who is not in his clan, is a source of support. In
contrast, in matrilineal societies, a sister’s son will succeed to the position of lead-
ership held by his mother’s brother. The relationship between these two parallels that of the father-son relationship in a patrilineal society. In the relationship between father and son in a matrilineal society, all the elements of antagonism and potential conflict between them are removed. In societies with cognatic descent groups, like that of the Kwakiutl, a man can succeed to political leadership by virtue of descent through his mother or through his father; thus he can be the heir of either his father or of his mother’s brother. The contrast between the father-son relationship and the mother’s brother-sister’s son relationship is therefore of no importance in societies with cognatic descent. An important structural feature of cognatic societies is that brothers are not equivalent. The optional nature of the descent rule permits the possibility that brothers may be in different descent groups. Among the Kwakiutl, it frequently happens that two brothers are in different umayms, which can even fight each other. In patrilineal and in matrilineal societies, which are unilineal, this can never happen, since brothers are always in the same clan.

CLANS

Clans come in many shapes and forms. In some societies, you belong to a clan simply because your father or your mother belonged to that clan. Other people with whom you cannot trace a relationship of kinship also belong to your clan. Anthropologists say that descent is stipulated in such a clan system. Where stipulated descent is found, there are no lengthy genealogies, and people usually remember back only to their grandfathers. Where long genealogies are kept, written or oral, each member of a clan can trace his or her kinship back to the founding ancestor of the clan and in this way to every other member of the clan. Anthropologists call this demonstrated descent. In societies where clans include large numbers of people living dispersed over a wide area, each clan may in turn be divided into smaller units. These are referred to as subclans.

Clans based on unilineal descent continued to exist, assuming a variety of roles, even long after the emergence of complex societies and states. Patrilineal clans in twentieth-century prerevolutionary China carried out religious functions in connection with ancestor worship, maintaining ancestral shrines and cemeteries. They
also had some economic functions and assisted clan members in obtaining education and other such endeavors. These patrilineal clans continue to function in the form of clan associations among overseas Chinese in San Francisco and New York within an urbanized, industrialized society moving into the second millennium.

When peasant societies were incorporated into nation-states, even Communist states, larger-scale kin units continued to exist. As recently as 1987, ethnic Albanian clans in Kosovo continued to feud with one another, answering one murder with another. As is the case in clan-based societies, when ongoing feuds are involved, all clan members are held responsible for the actions of a single member. The progress of this feud was reported on Yugoslavian television. After the Turkish earthquake, which occurred in the summer of 1999, the *New York Times* reported that forty members of a clan had traveled 600 miles from their home to try to rescue five trapped relatives. They brought their own equipment, including jackhammers, drills, electrical equipment, generators, and lights. This illustrates that members of a clan feel it absolutely necessary to come to the aid of fellow clan members in distress (*New York Times*, August 22, 1999: 12). In South Korea today, individuals still cannot marry if they have the same family name, and marriages within the same clan are legally banned, despite the fact that the Korean Civil Code on kinship was amended in 1990 to reflect a more bilateral system (Lee, 1999).

**Lineages**

Within clans with demonstrated descent, there are smaller units referred to as lineages. Sometimes all the people in the society believe themselves to be descended from a single ancestor. This founding ancestor may be historical or mythical, or a little of both. The kin groups of various sizes are related to one another in an extensive genealogy. The Bedouin Arabs of Cyrenaica in eastern Libya, studied by Emrys Peters (1960), provide us with an example of such a society. They are nomadic pastoralists who keep herds of camels and sheep in the desert areas of their territory and cows and goats in the wooded plateau areas. All the Cyrenaican Bedouin alive today consider themselves descended from the single ancestor Sa'ada, who heads the genealogy (see Figure 6-6). Sa'ada was the mother of the two sons, who are said to be the founding ancestors of the two largest groups of tribes—Baraghith and 'Aqqara. The genealogy in the diagram provides a set of ideas that the Cyrenaican Bedouin use to talk about how they are related to one another and how their group is related to all other groups. The genealogy is like a branching tree, extending out to its many twigs. Several twigs, or lineages, are part of a branch, and several branches, or groupings of lineages, are part of a larger limb. The larger limb represents a still larger grouping of lineages. This kind of descent system is called a segmentary lineage system. Groups at all the levels of segmentation are referred to as lineages. This kind of system is found in societies with patrilineal descent such as the Cyrenaican Bedouin. The constant branching out represents levels of segmentation. The branching out of the genealogy also has a close relationship to the occupation of geographical areas. The two groups of tribes, descended from each of the sons of Sa'ada, occupy the eastern and western halves of Cyrenaica. Lineages de-
FIGURE 6-6 Genealogy of the Cyrenaican Bedouin.

descended from brothers a few generations back graze their herds on lands adjacent to one another. Lineages that are further away genealogically occupy lands farther apart. In political action, lineages closely related to one another unite to oppose a threat from a more distantly related lineage. The Pushtuns who straddle the border between Afghanistan and northwestern Pakistan also have a segmentary lineage system. We will be discussing their current situation in Chapter 14. In Chapter 9 we examine how segmentary lineage systems operate politically.
MOIETIES

Another kind of grouping based on descent is one in which the entire society is divided into two halves, which are referred to as moieties. Moieties may be based upon a patrilineal or a matrilineal rule of descent. Sometimes in societies with moieties, a village site was divided in half, each half being occupied by the members of one moiety. As noted in Chapter 5, the two parts of a moiety are often referred to in oppositional terms, such as left and right. The Abelam of the Sepik River area of New Guinea have patrilineal moieties referred to simply as “us” and “them.” Among the Tlingit of the Pacific coast of northern Canada and Alaska, the two moieties are known as Raven and Wolf and are based on matrilineal descent. Moieties are usually composed of several clans.

THE NA: A SOCIETY WITHOUT MARRIAGE OR FATHERS

The Na live in Yunnan Province, China, not far from the Chinese border with Myanmar. Recently, a Chinese ethnographer has described their society as one in which marriage is absent. Consequently families have neither husbands or fathers (Cai, 2001). Is this believable? Didn’t we say that marriage is almost a human universal? Don’t the Na believe that males are involved in procreation? Don’t individuals know their biological fathers? When we look at other societies comparatively, the answers fall into place. The Na are not that different from other matrilineal societies we have looked at, such as Lesu and the Trobrianders. They are only more extreme in their practices.

The Na believe that sexual intercourse is necessary for procreation to occur. They say, “If the rain does not fall from the sky, the grass will not grow on the ground.” But they consider that the substance of which the child is made comes solely from its mother, as the Na are strongly matrilineal. “The man is merely a waterer” (Cai, 2001: 119). If the child resembles its father, they will guess who the father is (2001: 20) These beliefs are very similar to those of the Trobriand Islanders, who don’t even believe that a male is required for a female to become pregnant.

A Na child belongs to its mother’s lineage, and kinsmen are counted solely through its mother. Each lineage has two heads. One, the child’s mother, who is concerned with the internal affairs of the lineage; the other, its mother’s brother, who is the authority figure concerned with external affairs. Several lineages comprise a matrilineal clan, the members of which are collectively responsible for payment of blood money when someone from their lineage kills an individual from another group. The father has no social role since he is not considered a relative. There is no kinship term for him or for any members of his matrilineage. The mother’s brother plays the role that the father has in patrilineal societies (2001: 145).

The Na procreate through the practice of visits at night, in which men, unrelated to the women, visit them furtively, and leave at dawn, when the first rooster crows. Pleasure rather than procreation is the purpose of these visits. When a woman becomes pregnant, the child will belong to her lineage. The “biological” fa-
A Na mother and child, from Yunnan Province, China. The Na are a matrilineal society in predominantly patrilineal China.

ther considers her impregnation to be an act of charity on his part. The taking of "lovers" is very reminiscent of Lesu and the Trobrianders. In Lesu, all women take male lovers, who visit them like Na "lovers." In matrilineal societies, offspring clearly belong to the mother, and "marriage," if it occurs, may not restrict sexual partners to one's spouse.

Na rules about incest are very strict. No woman may have sexual intercourse with a relative, that is, with anyone matrilineally related to her (Cai, 2001: 125). The strongest incest taboo concerns brother and sister. Na brothers and sisters "work, eat, and raise the children born to the sisters together" (Cai, 2001: 121). Furthermore, they cannot speak about sex or make any allusions to sex (Cai, 2001: 127). Today, only one sex at a time can watch TV in the village, because if that sexual flirtation should occur on the TV, both sexes should not be watching it together. Brother and sister cannot sit in the same row at the movies. Since it is not always known who one's father is, it may happen that sexual relations take place between a father and his daughter (Cai, 2001: 460). For the Trobrianders, father-daughter sexual relations are not absolutely forbidden.

Today, the Na, a minority group, are under strong political and legal pressure to be more like the Han Chinese, the majority population, who are patrilineal, and to practice marriage like them. But the Na try to cling to their own cultural ways.
Cai Hua, the ethnographer, who is Han Chinese, questioned them closely about such matters as “jealousy between lovers,” adultery and illegitimacy, and the Na told him that these things do not exist in their culture. These subjects are the characteristic “problems” of patrilineal societies, such as the Han Chinese, since such societies are obsessed with doubts about who the father is. However, these issues are absent in matrilineal societies like the Na.

### KINDREDS

The descent groups examined above are all based on a rule of descent from a single common ancestor and are said to be ancestor-oriented. Kindreds, on the other hand, are reckoned in an entirely different way. Earlier, we described kinship as a web. Like a spider’s web, it extends out from the center. Each person is at the center of his or her web of kinship. Anthropologists refer to the individual at the center as the ego, and the relatives who make up that web of kinship constitute ego’s kindred. The kindred includes relatives on both ego’s mother’s and father’s sides. Individuals who are descendants of ego, as well as ego’s ancestors and everyone descended from those ancestors, are included in ego’s kindred. The kindred is ego-oriented. The kindred as a unit does not own land or any other property; it only has coherence as a group around the ego at its center (see Figure 6-7). Societies like our own, which do not have unilineal descent groups but do have kindreds, are known as bilateral societies. On an occasion such as the American wedding described in Chapter 2, the kindreds of the bride and groom attend. If any of the first cousins of the groom, for instance, his father’s brother’s son, get married, a different set of relatives will be present, though there will be an overlap with his kindred. This overlap occurs since the two egos share a certain set of relatives. Kindreds do not have continuity through the generations as do corporate kin groups based on a rule of descent.

### RELATIONS BETWEEN GROUPS THROUGH MARRIAGE

A rule of exogamy compels one group to give its women to another group in marriage, receiving the women of the other group in return. This is called sister exchange. Arapesh men state that they marry their sisters outside the group in order to obtain brothers-in-law. In general, marriages not only create links between brothers-in-law but also serve to create linkages between their respective kin groups. Groups that give women to and receive women from another also exchange goods and services such as bridewealth, bride service, and other kinds of services at rites of passage after children are born from the marriage. These links between kin groups established by marriage are called affinal links. During warfare, kin groups frequently use these affinal ties and turn to their in-laws for assistance. For this reason, marriage is the basis for what is referred to as alliance. Although affines may be in opposition to one another and may even fight one an-
other, the concept of alliance is nevertheless used by anthropologists to refer to linkages between kin groups established by marriage.

In our society, marriage is based upon the decision by the bride and groom to get married. Parents and other individuals are rarely involved. As we shall see below, today families from India play a more important role in the marriage choices of their American-born children. However, in other societies there are rules stating that one should marry a certain category of relative. These rules have the effect of continuing alliance over time between the groups. When groups continue to exchange sisters over generations, then women of one’s own group are always marrying into the group from which wives come. This marriage pattern, which we have called sister exchange earlier, is also referred to as a system of reciprocal exchange (see Figure 6-8). In such a system, the prospective husband and the prospective wife will already be related to one another.
FIGURE 6-8 Sister exchange, or reciprocal exchange.

Since their parents are brother and sister, they will be first cousins. Anthropologists refer to two kinds of cousins: parallel cousins, who are the children of the mother's sister or father's brother, and cross cousins, who are the children of the mother's brother or father's sister (see Figure 6-9). In a system with reciprocal exchange, parallel cousins, who are members of one's own group, are frequently referred to as siblings. Therefore they cannot marry. Cross cousins are never in one's own group but rather are members of the other group with which one has been intermarrying. These cross cousins are known as bilateral cross cousins, since they are simultaneously mother's brother's children and father's sister's children. Sister exchange continued over the generations has the same effect as marrying one's bilateral cross cousin. The Yanomamo of southern Venezuela have such a marriage system of direct reciprocal exchange. Every Yanomamo man must marry a woman whom he calls by the kinship term for female cross cousin (the Yanomamo term is suaboya), and this term is at the same time the term for wife. Among the Yanomamo, the terms for female cross cousin and wife are identical, as are those for husband and male cross cousin. Female parallel cousins, among the Yanomamo, are called by the same term as sisters. If a Yanomamo man has no biological sister to return to the man who gave him his wife, as we noted earlier, he returns a sister who is really his parallel cousin.
There are societies where the two kinds of cross cousins, mother’s brother’s children and father’s sister’s children, are referred to by different terms. These two types of cross cousins are not equally marriageable, as is the case for the Yanomamo. Some societies have a rule that a man ought to marry the daughter of his mother’s brother, but he may not marry the daughter of his father’s sister. Ideally, if every man married his mother’s brother’s daughter, in every generation, the result would be a picture like that in Figure 6-10. In Figure 6-10, the groups labeled A, B, and C, linked by the marriages, are patrilineages. This marriage rule occurs much more frequently in societies with a patrilineal rule of descent, though it also occurs in societies with matrilineal descent. If a man does not have a real mother’s brother’s daughter to marry, he may marry a classificatory mother’s brother’s daughter. A classificatory mother’s brother’s daughter is a woman whom a man calls by the same kinship term as his real mother’s
brother's daughter, and she is a member of the mother's brother's daughter's patrilineage. As one can see from the figure, lineage B gives its sisters to lineage A, and lineage C gives its sisters to lineage B, in every generation. From the perspective of lineage B, lineage A is always wife-taker and lineage C is always wife-giver. This system is very different from sister exchange in that you never return a woman to the lineage that gave you a woman. Since wife-giving lineage and wife-taking lineage are always different, a minimum of three groups is required. (However, it is usually the case that more than three groups are tied together in this kind of marriage alliance.) If there are three groups, then they can marry in a circle, with lineage A giving its women to lineage C. If, for example, the royal family of Great Britain gave its daughters in marriage to the royal family of Denmark in every generation, and the royal family of Denmark gave its daughters in marriage to the royal family of Sweden in every generation, and the royal family of Sweden gave its daughters in marriage back to the royal family of Great Britain in every generation, all intermarrying in a circle, then they would have this kind of marriage system. The Kachin of Myanmar (Burma), whose political organization will be discussed in Chapter 9, actually did have this kind of marriage system. It produces a structure of alliance between groups that anthropologists refer to as generalized exchange.

In the village of Lamalera in East Timor, this type of marriage system involving generalized exchange continues to be practiced, despite the adoption of Catholicism and substantial transformations of village economy (Barnes, 1998: 106). Though there is considerable variation in practice, 52 percent of marriages are with a man's mother's brother's daughter, and the hierarchical distinction between wife-givers and wife-takers remains significant today. Although the village of Lamalera is involved in the Indonesian national economy, economic cooperation in whale hunting, ownership of fishing and whaling boats, and the organization of fishing crews are still based on clan membership.

Some societies have the opposite form of the preferential rule of marriage with mother's brother's daughter. In those societies, a man cannot marry his mother's brother's daughter but should marry his father's sister's daughter. If every man married in this fashion, the result would be what is pictured in Figure 6-11. In the figure, groups A, B, C, and D are matrilineal lineages. This kind of marriage rule always occurs in societies with matrilineal descent. A man marries either his real or his classificatory father's sister's daughter. This marriage rule involves the return of a wife one generation after a wife has been given. In the first generation, D gives a woman to C, C gives to B, B gives to A, and A gives to D (if the lineages are marrying in a circle). In the next generation, the flow of women is reversed. Now D gives to A, A gives to B, B gives to C, and C gives to D. In the third generation, the flow is reversed once again. Every generation, women move in the direction opposite from the way they did in the previous generation. This resembles sister exchange in that a woman is returned to the group that originally gave a woman, but the return is made a generation later. Because the return is delayed one generation, there must be more than two groups operating in the system. A minimum of four groups is required. The Trobrianders
are an example of a society with a rule for marriage with father’s sister’s daughter and have this form of delayed exchange.

Each of these two marriage rules produces a different structure of alliances among groups, and both are different from the kind of alliance produced by bilateral cross-cousin marriage. Marrying one’s cross cousins, either mother’s brother’s daughter or father’s sister’s daughter, begins with a rule of exogamy stating that one must take a wife from outside one’s group. By specifying which relatives one should marry, different patterns of alliance among groups are created. Figures 6-8, 6-10, and 6-11 represent models of these different patterns and particular societies represent variations on these models.

Some societies, particularly in the Middle East, have a preferential marriage rule that is structurally opposite to this rule of exogamy. The rule states that a man should marry his parallel cousin, in this case, his father’s brother’s daughter. Since the societies of this area, like the Bedouin of Cyrenaica discussed above, are all patrilineal in descent, this marriage rule results in endogamous marriages. The Rif of Morocco, who have this marriage rule, say that they prefer to hold on to their daughters and marry them within their own group to avoid becoming entangled in alliances with other groups. This is not an explanation of what they do but rather their rationalization.

When one views marriage as an alliance, marriages may be contracted in which the procreative and sexual functions are not relevant. The Lavedu, a Bantu-speaking people of southern Africa, had a queen to whom women were given in marriage. The purpose of such marriages was to create political alliances, and sexual intercourse and procreation did not occur. Among the Kwakiutl, where privileges were transferred as a result of marriage, one man could
“marry” the foot of another, become son-in-law to the man whose foot he married, and obtain privileges through this fictive marriage at the repurchase ceremony described in Chapter 2.

KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY

Each society in the world has a set of words used to refer to relatives. This set of words or terms is called kinship terminology. Of course, the terms differ from one society to another, since all their languages are different. However, anthropologists have been able to sort the terms used in all societies into a few basic types. Americans accept their own kin terminology as being the “natural” way of classifying relatives as do members of all other societies. Both your father’s brother and your mother’s brother are referred to as uncle in American usage. Uncle is also used to refer to your mother’s sister’s husband and father’s sister’s husband. Though the term uncle is used for these four relatives, two of them are blood relatives on different sides of the family, while two are relatives by marriage. Each of these four relatives is related to you in a different way, but our kinship terminology ignores these differences and groups them under one term. Anthropologists diagram kinship terminologies such as our own in the method depicted in Figure 6-12.

The Yanomamo of Venezuela have a very different way of sorting their relatives. They use the same term for both father’s brother and mother’s sister’s husband, while they use a different term for mother’s brother and father’s sister’s husband. The Yanomamo kinship terminology is pictured in Figure 6-13.

You can see that the two societies sort the terms for kin in different ways. For the parental generation, both the Yanomamo and Americans have four terms. The Americans use father, mother, aunt, and uncle; the Yanomamo use haya, naya, yaya, and shoatiya. In the Yanomamo system, father’s brother and mother’s brother have different terms, whereas in our society the same term, uncle, is used for both. Conversely, the Yanomamo class father and father’s brother together, while we use different terms. In your own generation, we have a single term, cousin, for all the children of uncles and aunts. This term is unusual in that it is used for males and females. The Yanomamo are also consistent in their usage. The children of all relatives called by the same term as father and mother are referred to by the term for brother and sister. This means that parallel cousins are grouped with siblings. In contrast, the children of shoatiya, who are one’s cross cousins, are referred to by terms different from brother and sister, suaboysa and heriya. Which is more complicated? Neither. Which is more natural? Neither. These kinship terminologies are different because each is related to a different type of social structure. The terms in a kinship terminological system group some relatives and set apart other relatives in a way that reflects the relation of these relatives according to the rules of residence, marriage, and descent.

The American and Yanomamo kinship terminologies conform to two of these basic types of kinship terminology. Strange as it may seem, American kinship terminology is classified as Eskimo since it is identical to that of the Eskimos—or Inuit, as they
now prefer to be called—not in the words for the terms but in the pattern of organization. Its major characteristics are that it distinguishes between the generations and it distinguishes lineal relatives from collateral relatives (see Figure 6-14). Lineal relatives are those in the direct line of descent, that is, grandfather, father, son, grandson, grandmother, mother, daughter, granddaughter. The rest of the relatives are referred to as collateral and can be distinguished in terms of degree of collaterality, meaning
that second cousins are more remote than first cousins, and first cousins are more remote than siblings. The Eskimo type of terminology emphasizes individual nuclear families, and it is found in societies with a particular cluster of characteristics, such as neolocal rules of residence, kindreds, bilateral descent, and the absence of descent groups. Though Inuit society and our own differed in degree of complexity, subsistence pattern, and environmental setting, the pattern of organization of kinship terms and other kinship features was the same.

The kinship terminology of the Yanomamo is classified as Iroquois. The Iroquois type of terminology distinguishes between father’s side and mother’s side. However, the difference between lineal and collateral relatives is ignored; father and father’s brother are classed together, as are mother and mother’s sister. Generational differences are always recognized, as in Eskimo terminology. The social structure with which this terminology is usually associated is one in which one’s own kin group is distinct from the kin group from which one’s mother came. The group from which one’s mother came is the same group into which one’s father’s sister marries. In other words, the Iroquois terminology goes with sister exchange, which is the type of marriage pattern the Yanomamo have. This is why, in Yanomamo, the term for father’s sister’s husband is the same as that for mother’s brother, and the term for mother’s sister’s husband is the same as that for father’s brother. Female cross cousin is classed with wife and male cross cousin with brother-in-law. In every generation, “sisters” are exchanged between the two groups, and the kinship terminology reflects this. Iroquois terminology is associ-
ated with virilocal or uxorilocal residence, but not with neolocal residence. Instead of independent nuclear families, extended families are present. This type of terminology is also generally associated with unilinear descent, but not with cognatic descent or bilateral kinship reckoning. Iroquois is by far the most common type of kinship terminology found in the world. It should be noted that societies that have Iroquois kinship terminology may not have all these social structural features, but only some of them. The Iroquois themselves did not have sister exchange.

Besides Eskimo and Iroquois terminologies, four other major types of terminologies are distinguished by anthropologists. The Crow type, found, for example, among the Trobriand Islanders, is almost always associated with matrilineal descent groups, avunculocal residence, and extended families. Unlike Eskimo and Iroquois terminologies, the same term may be used for members of different generations. Omaha kinship terminology is the mirror image of Crow. It is associated with patrilineal descent groups and, like Crow, ignores generational differences in some terms. The simplest terminology, the one having the fewest terms, is the Hawaiian type, in which only generation and male-female distinctions are made. It is usually associated with cognatic descent groups. Despite its simplicity, it has been found in association with some societies, like the Hawaiian, that have complex political economies. In the last type of kinship terminology, Sudanese, every category of relative is distinguished by a different term. It is frequently associated with patrilineal descent and economically independent nuclear families, such as those found among certain nomadic pastoral societies of the Middle East.

Kinship terminology is a subject that has a long history in anthropology, and the regularity of its patterning was first noticed by Lewis Henry Morgan (1877). Studying kinship terminology is vital to the anthropologist in gaining insights into how societies operate. The anthropological data that have been accumulated have revealed that there is a general association of types of terminology with particular kinds of social structure, as pointed out above. However, some terminologies correspond only in part to the types of social structure described above, and sometimes particular terminologies are associated with different social structural features. For example, Iroquois kinship terminology may be found in association with kinship systems that have patrilineal descent but do not have sister exchange, such as the Enga in Papua New Guinea.

Some anthropologists, for example, David Schneider (1984), have been critical of the use of the anthropological concepts for analyzing kinship presented in this chapter. They see the use of this set of analytic concepts as the imposition of Western social science categories on indigenous ideas. Instead, they prefer to utilize only the native categories that the people in each society use to conceptualize kin relationships. In our view, the analysis must always begin with indigenous categories. These can and must be translated into anthropological concepts. These concepts have made possible the cross-cultural comparisons that have revealed the same regularities or patterns in social structural features in societies in many parts of the worlds. The kinship variables discussed so far in this chapter, including number of spouses, degree of incorporation of spouse, type of descent rule, and
structure of descent group, do not operate independently. They fit together into the particular patterns that have been revealed cross-culturally.

**FICTIVE KINSHIP**

People also rely on social relationships established by means of ritual observances, which are known as godparenthood, or *compadrazgo*. Godparenthood creates a set of relationships that, though nonkin in their derivation, utilize a set of terms based on kinship. The English labels for these relationships use kinship terms such as *father, mother, daughter, and son*, plus the prefix—*god*—differentiating them from real kinship. This is not simply an extension of kinship, but a different kind of relationship, which uses kinship as a metaphor. This kind of relationship is found in many parts of Mediterranean Europe and in Latin America. It also occurs among Hispanic populations in the United States. The ritual occasions upon which godparenthood is established are baptism, confirmation, and marriage, at which the godparent serves as a kind of sponsor. Real parents never carry out the role of godparents. Sometimes more-distant relatives may serve as godparents, while in other cases they may not. The *compadrazgo* relationship is frequently established between individuals of different classes for social, political, and economic reasons. In peasant communities, for example, a patron who is a wealthy or powerful member of the community and probably the landlord may serve as godparent to the children of clients who are economically and politically dependent upon him. In the relationship between godparent and godchild, the godparent is expected to protect and assist the godchild, while the godchild honors the godparent, just as the patron receives support from the client when it is needed and the client receives favors from the patron. Among the Quichua-speaking Otavaleno of the Ecuadorian Andes, *compadrazgo* has not been squeezed out by the expansion of capitalism, as some anthropologists in the 1960s had predicted (Colloredo-Mansfeld, 1998: 50). These indigenous people have become prosperous weavers and traders, and they now select *compadres* as they extend their handicraft business. When their children are confirmed or marry, they select *compadres* on the basis of their need to connect with sweater-factory owners, transport operators, and shopkeepers with whom they do business (Colloredo-Mansfeld, 1998: 52).

In Serbia, godparenthood, or *kunstvo*, described by anthropologist Eugene Hammel (1968), which could only be established between nonkin, was continued from one generation to the next. The word *kun* can be translated as “sponsor.” Members of one group (A) stood as godparents to another group (B), and the children of those godparents in A served as godparents to the next generation of godchildren in B. Godparenthood was not reciprocal, since the group of godchildren in B did not return the favor and act as godparents to A, but instead, acted as godparents to children in still another group (C). This created a structure of alliances between groups by means of godparenthood, which is the same as the structure of alliances created by marriage with mother’s brother’s daughter, which we referred to as the structure of generalized exchange.
The symbolic meanings that Americans attach to kinship were investigated by David Schneider (1980). He pointed out that Americans conceive of two kinds of relatives, blood relatives and relatives by marriage. Americans think that a child receives half of its blood from the mother and half from the father, while more distant relatives have smaller shares of that blood, depending on the degree of distance. People think that such relationships can never be terminated because blood—the symbolic carrier of the relationship—is always present. On the other hand, relatives through marriage are different from blood relatives in every respect. The relationships are established by people making choices rather than as the result of a natural process. Such kin are termed relatives-in-law. Relationships that are made by people can also be terminated by people, through divorce. When this happens, the in-law is no longer considered a relative.

**THE IMPACT OF BIOLOGICAL TECHNOLOGIES ON KINSHIP**

As a result of what have come to be known as reproductive technologies, Americans recently have begun to rethink the meaning of kinship in their own culture (see Strathern, 1992). The meanings of motherhood and fatherhood have been called into question by these new reproductive technologies. When an egg in a surrogate mother is fertilized with sperm from a man who, with his wife, have contracted to be the child’s parents, there may be conflict over the child between the couple and the surrogate mother. Motherhood has also been called into question when test-tube fertilization of an egg takes place. An egg from the would-be mother and sperm from the would-be father are brought together and the developing embryo is then implanted in a surrogate mother. If the sperm comes from an unknown donor, who is the real father—the man who has provided the sperm or the man who has acted as father in raising the child? Children conceived by artificial insemination are now seeking the identity of their donor fathers, who are often medical students who had donated their semen merely to help infertile parents have children. What formerly had been seen as a natural tie of kinship between father, mother, and child is clearly much more complicated by these new technologies.

The advent of the Human Genome Project and the “current comprehensions that diseases are genetically transmitted from generation to generation . . . [has led to] the medicalization of kinship” (Finkler, 2000: 3). Just as reproductive technologies have made us rethink definitions of family and kinship, so has the emphasis on the genetic transmission of disease resulted in a rethinking of kinship by many Americans. This is particularly true of those afflicted with diseases, which have been determined to be genetically inherited, as well as those with the potentiality of being afflicted. There has been an astronomical increase in the numbers of diseases that are now attributed to genetic inheritance, and consequently there is increased emphasis on family medical histories (Finkler, 2000: 15). Kinship is now
being thought of in terms of shared DNA. Finkler studied breast cancer patients
with a family medical history of the disease as well as women with no symptoms,
but with a similar genetic history. All of them, whether they had already contracted
the disease or not, saw family and kinship and the genetic distribution of the dis-
ease in their families as the cause of their breast cancers or the likely possibility that
they might contract the disease. She also worked with a group of adoptees. They
also shared the same "ideology of genetic inheritance [which] motivated them to
seek their birth parents to discover their real being and to learn about their medical
histories" (Finkler, 2000: 121). This emphasis on genetic inheritance in contempo-
rary American society is in effect a focus on the faulty genes, which one may have
inherited from one's ancestors, and which might cause one to become ill and even
die. It has therefore become important to individuals to know their biological par-
ents as well as the extended network of other biological relatives. Interestingly,
"the medicalization of kinship creates a tension between the stress on individual-
ism and choice in a democratic society [America], and an orientation to family and
kin" (Finkler, 2000: 185).

Twenty years ago, when children were adopted, the adoption papers were
sealed by the court and knowledge of their biological parentage was kept from
adopted children. If Schneider's principle—that biological blood ties to parents
can never be severed—is valid, then one can readily understand the need that such
children, now adults, often feel to know who their biological parents are. This de-
sire frequently invades the privacy that these biological parents sought. At present,
many adopted children have gone to court to have the sealed adoption papers
opened. Today, adoption has become such an open process that the adoptive par-
ents may establish a relationship with the biological parents even before the child
is born. A New York Times article revealed the way in which a prospective adopting
mother moved in with the biological mother weeks before the child arrived and
was fully involved in all the activities leading up to the birth (October 25, 1998).
The adoptive parents indicated that they intended to continue to involve the bio-
nological parents in raising the child.

One might argue that this represents a greater emphasis on the biological and
genetic aspects of kinship, a reinforcement of the idea of blood and consanguineal
relationships in the minds of Americans. The physical process of procreation is
very significant, since birth creates a social identity. For Americans, kinship repres-
sents ties of substance. When there is a question of where the substance is coming
from, questions about kinship and identity are also raised. In recent years, what so-
cial scientists have come to call a new biologism has been added to biological con-
ceptualization of family for Americans. Primordial conceptualizations of gender,
race, ethnicity, and genes as representing the "true essence of a person" have be-
come important in shaping the identity of Americans (Skolnick, 1998: 240).

Two highly publicized court cases, both settled in 1993 after extensive litiga-
tion, highlight these issues. In Florida, two female babies were switched at birth.
One of them died in early childhood, and genetic tests then revealed that she was
not the biological offspring of the parents who raised her. They sued for custody of
their living biological daughter, and a settlement was reached giving them visita-
tion rights. The girl herself, who felt a strong tie to the father who had raised her, sued some time later and was permitted by the court to terminate her relationship with her biological parents, to "divorce" her parents. A biological or blood relationship, which theoretically can never be severed, was treated as if it were equivalent to an in-law relationship. In another case, in Michigan, a baby was given up for adoption by her mother soon after birth. Then the mother, who later married the child's biological father, regretted the decision and sued for custody. After a two-year court battle, the biological parents won out over the adoptive parents, who were forced to relinquish the little girl. These two cases reveal the extent to which parentage and kinship have become contested. Biological relationship in one case has been reinforced, and the other case hinges on whether one can divorce one's parents. As Skolnick notes, "In some states today, unless a parent is found to be unfit or to have abandoned the child, the rights of biological parents are all but inviolate" (1998: 239).

DIFFERENT TYPES OF AMERICAN FAMILIES

Until the mid-twentieth century, the usual family type for Americans was the nuclear family that lived neolocally after marriage. Immigrant families, which included three generations, were an exception. As the age at which Americans married became later and later, the single-individual household became more frequent. A variant on this form is the household consisting of several unrelated young people, both men and women, who live together for financial reasons. The TV show Will and Grace portrays this form. Another household form consists of one or both grandparents and grandchildren. This occurs when the parents of the children are unable to care for them. Grandparents assume custody and responsibility instead of the state. There are now several websites which provide information about where grandparents raising grandchildren can receive help and support.

THE STEPFAMILY

The high rate of divorce and the subsequent remarriage of the divorced spouses has created a new type of family—the stepfamily. Thirty-five percent of children born now can expect to live with stepparents (Erera, 2002: 137). The stepfather is more likely to be living with and raising young children than the biological father, though the latter may continue to be involved in child-rearing and child support. Stepmothers rarely live with their stepchildren, unless the mother of the children has died or left the family. The stepfamily may also include nonresident children, in addition to nonresident parents. The modern stepfamily includes a variety of sibling relationships, such as full siblings, half-siblings, and stepsiblings. Half-siblings are considered blood relatives, while stepsiblings are not. Relations with in-laws and grandparents of the step family are highly varied. It may take from two to seven years for the stepfamily to "develop a sense of family with their [sic] own customs, rituals and history . . . [despite the absence of] clear behavior guides, norms or models" (Erera, 2002: 143–144). Mason notes that, in contrast to the Cinderella story, adolescent stepchildren experience less conflict with residential stepmothers than do adolescent children with their own mothers in nondivorced families (1998: 98).
GAY AND LESBIAN FAMILIES

The increasingly public lifestyles of gays and lesbians today have also challenged American views on the definition of marriage and the family, as well as contributing to the debate on biological versus other forms of parentage. Sexual relations between two men and between two women are still outlawed by statute in many states, although some states like Vermont have adopted a Civil Union Law, which provides a legal framework parallel to marriage (Erera, 2002: 164). Gay couples and lesbian couples, who see themselves as equivalent to heterosexual couples, may go through a ritual they refer to as a marriage or commitment ceremony. A New York Times op-ed column on August 11, 1993, dealt with the publication of an announcement of the wedding of two men in the Salina Journal, published in Salina, Kansas. The wedding ceremony had been performed by a Presbyterian minister. While gays and lesbians from all over the country wrote the newspaper, congratulating it, 112 subscribers canceled their newspaper subscriptions in protest, and some advertisers grumbled. The story gained a nationwide audience when the couple and the writer of the Salina Journal story were flown to New York to appear on a nationwide TV program.

In some places, homosexual couples can legalize their relationship by registering—as, for example, at City Hall, in New York City. Lesbian and gay couples have used various kinds of public ceremonies to make a public commitment to one another. These included a Jewish religious ceremony in which rings were exchanged and a ketubah (traditional wedding document) was signed, followed by a formal catered affair and wedding cake. Other examples included an elaborate “wedding” on a yacht beyond the three-mile limit, and a Wiccan (“early female spiritual tradition, or witchcraft”) “handfasting,” or betrothal ceremony (Sherman, 1992). Another gay couple described their ceremony as a “theme wedding” combining Jewish liturgical elements and a country-and-western theme (Lewin, 2001: 47).

Homosexual couples demand legal status as married couples, but much of American society does not yet seem to have accepted the validity of their claim. In California, which has a large homosexual community, the surviving member of a couple can inherit the deceased member’s pension. Mention of the surviving member of a homosexual couple in an obituary is often contested by the biological family of the deceased. Recently, in Hawaii, there has been discussion about the passage of legislation that would permit gays and lesbians to legally marry, but the Hawaii Supreme Court upheld an amendment to the state constitution forbidding gay and lesbian marriage (Erera, 2002: 164). There has been much consternation about this issue throughout the country, since laws about marriage and divorce passed by one state must be recognized by all other states. The backlash to this proposed legislation was the passage, in 1996, of the Defense of Marriage Act, signed by President Clinton, though he supported the rights of gays in the military. The campaign for the legalization of gay and lesbian marriage continues nevertheless.

Homosexuals not only “marry,” but also create three-generation families in a variety of ways. Lesbians previously in heterosexual marriages often try to bring their biological children into the new family, creating a stepfamily that resembles a heterosexual family in many ways (Erera, 2002: 168). In such a situation, the mother must also deal with the children’s father (Lewin, 1993). Though some
At a lesbian marriage ceremony in San Francisco, both parties chose to dress as brides.

states prohibit lesbians and gays from adopting children, independent adoption was often a route followed if possible, particularly by gay couples. Some married lesbian couples have used artificial insemination to have children. They prefer to call it alternative insemination to emphasize that it is as natural as insemination through sexual intercourse (Weston, 1991: 171). Stacey notes, "Numerous lesbian couples solicit sperm from a brother or male relative of one woman to impregnate her partner, hoping to buttress their tenuous legal, symbolic, and social claims for shared parental status of the 'turkey-baster babies'" (Stacey, 1998: 120–121). Gay men may create families by using a surrogate mother, who is impregnated with the sperm of one of the gay partners, or they may adopt or foster a child (Erera, 2002: 169).

The issue then is: What will be the relationship of the other woman in the couple to such children, who are the results of artificial insemination? That woman may attempt to adopt the children of her "spouse." In several states, including California, New Jersey, and New York, this kind of adoption by lesbians has been approved by the courts. Other states, such as Florida and New Hampshire, have statutes prohibiting adoptions by a second female parent, under the reasoning that a second female could not adopt a child until the natural mother surrendered her
rights to that child. Sometimes, each woman will have a child to produce a more equally balanced family. When gays and lesbians terminate their familial relationships, they sometimes end up in court arguing over the custody of the children and challenging the court system, since there are no precedents for such situations. As one might expect, biological claims of relationship are usually those that are recognized. The court has favored “the parental claims of donors who had contributed nothing more than sperm to their offspring over those of lesbians who had co-parented from the outset, even when these men [the sperm donors] had expressly agreed to abdicate paternal rights or responsibilities” (Stacey, 1998: 122).

Recently, several studies have focused on the distinctions between heterosexual and homosexual families. In terms of compatibility, same-sex couples seem to get along better than heterosexual couples. They share more interests and spend more time with one another. Heterosexual couples have the least egalitarian relationships, and lesbian couples, the most. These studies find that child-rearing is more nurturant, children more affectionate, parental relationships more cooperative and egalitarian among gay parents than among heterosexual parents. Gay parents prefer to live in communities that support the diversity of family life. As Stacey concludes, “Perhaps what is truly distinctive about lesbian and gay families is how unambiguously the substance of their relationships takes precedence over their form, emotional and social commitments over genetic claims” (1998: 138). Same-sex families are deemed to have a higher level of cohesion and be more flexible than heterosexual families (Erera, 2002: 173).

In American kinship, the term family refers to an infinitely extendable unit. It can be used to refer to the family group living together as a single household or, in its widest sense, to all the descendants of a single couple who gather at a family reunion. The anthropologist Kath Weston has studied the formation of lesbian and gay families in the San Francisco area (1991). When homosexuals “come out” to their biological families, they are often rejected and left to feel that they have no families. In response, a gay kinship ideology has emerged, which proclaims that “love makes a family.” These are families that people create by choosing one another, providing a great contrast with their own biological families. For homosexual kinship, choosing is valued over biology. These are extended families of choice and mutual agreement, which perform many of the functions of extended families based on kinship and marriage (Erera, 2002: 175). Schneider’s conclusions about American kinship were the reverse of this formulation. The composition of gay and lesbian families is highly varied, and the only consistent kinship terminology in use is in reference to generational peers as sister and brother. These “sisters” and “brothers” become “aunts” and “uncles” when their “siblings” have children. Within the lesbian family, kin terms used by children for their parents are still highly varied.

**Kinship and Class**

David Schneider’s work on American kinship was conducted among middle-class Americans, and he assumed that their value system was the ideal for the entire society, including the lower class. Lower-class kinship was seen as an adaptation to
the world of racism and poverty. Carol Stack (1974) has described a kinship system among poor black people in a small midwestern city that is quite different from the one described by Schneider. In this situation, relatives form a wide support network within which there is reciprocation, which Stack calls "swapping," of money, child care, food, clothing, shelter, and emotional support. Those biological relatives who choose not to be involved in a support network thereby renounce their status as kin. The core of this network is a cluster of linked households, usually two or even three generations of women. Relatives such as aunts and grandmothers may carry out the role of mother for children. Males are present, but they are usually boyfriends and mothers' brothers, rarely husbands or fathers. If a young couple should marry, the newly formed nuclear family draws the individuals away from their kin and out of their support networks. Should the young husband lose his job, the marriage has little chance to survive, since the couple always fall back on the resources of their respective kin networks, destroying the marriage. In this situation, ties between brother and sister are stronger than those between husband and wife. In the film Do the Right Thing, Spike Lee captures this contradiction when he contrasts the close emotional ties between the hero and his sister with the hero's antagonism toward his girlfriend, the mother of his child. In the kinship system described by Stack, mother's brothers more frequently serve as role models for young male children than fathers, giving the system a matrilineal cast. In writing about the way in which the criminal justice system should deal with juvenile offenders from the kinds of families Stack describes, Lund proposes that mother's brothers rather than fathers be made responsible for the supervision of such young offenders (1995).

More recent research in a small African-American low-income suburb near a once-booming industrial region in the Midwest presents the same picture of interdependence of kin for financial support, and an array of essential services (Hicks-Bartlett, 2000: 35). Even after employment is obtained, in the need for child care, funds for clothing for the new position, and money for transportation to the new job, individuals rely on their families and a network of relatives. Life in Chicago is the same where extended kin constitute a significant support group for girls in female headed households (O'Connor, 2000: 112). In a study of young low-income African-American men from the West Side of Chicago, out of 26, 14 lived with their mothers or grandmothers while 9 others regarded mother's address as their permanent address (Young, 2000: 146). Only four grew up with their fathers in the home, but only intermittently. Twenty-one of the 26 were fathers themselves, but only three lived with their children. On the basis of the information provided by Stack, above, one might hypothesize that the fathers who did not live with their own children were closer to their sisters than to the mothers of their children. They serve as mother's brothers, if their sisters have children. In contrast, in Skylan, a housing project in a major midwestern city, there were resident fathers (Barclay-McLaughlin, 2000: 60). Groveland, an African-American neighborhood in Chicago where 70 percent of the residents in single-family brick houses are homeowners, is characterized as lower middle class; however, some families had incomes below the poverty line. Though there are some intact families with resident fathers, in other families the father is absent (Pattillo-McCoy, 2000: 95). The perilous economic
situation of the African-American middle class in Groveland "often renders stability and mobility an extended family [concern], and sometimes even a community effort" (Barclay-McLaughlin, 2000: 99).

NEW FORMS OF THE FAMILY

The migration of men and women from the Caribbean to the United States within recent decades has created the phenomenon of the international family (Ho, 1993). Ho's study of Afro-Trinidadians living in Los Angeles reveals the way in which the households of women who migrate from Trinidad may include kin, fictive kin, friends, and the children of kin and friends. Family and the network of kinship are dispersed internationally. For individuals living in Los Angeles, the family includes people in such far-flung places as Trinidad, Tobago, Jamaica, Barbados, St. Vincent, the United States Virgin Islands, New York, and cities in Connecticut and Canada. Such networks of kin and family, out of which households potentially may be formed, include up to four generations of kin and fictive kin. These individuals constitute a network of support and exchange like the network described by Carol Stack. They may own property in common and provide child support, "childminding," and informal adoption. Ties are maintained by telephone contact, letter writing, visits during vacation, and even family newsletters and e-mail. The international family represents a globalization process, the result of migration for economic reasons, but a process with cultural outcomes, specifically, the "Caribbeanization" of America and the "Americanization" of the Caribbean (Ho, 1993: 39). The advent of the Internet has enabled such families, with members scattered across the globe, to keep in close touch with one another. In the summer of 1999, the New York Times reported that such a family, scattered over five continents, went online to hold a wake. One member delivered a eulogy online while the rest of the family watched it on their computer screens.

KINSHIP AND FAMILY REUNIONS

The family reunion in the United States, which involves kin relations beyond the nuclear family, has also been the subject of anthropological research. Neville (1987) recounts how every summer many southern Protestant families attend such gatherings. The descendants of a male ancestor, who are now living dispersed over the United States, come together at the same time and place each year (like the Worthy family, which meets at an old camp meeting ground in north Georgia on the third Sunday in July). The descendants of the common ancestor, both male and female, constitute a constantly expanding group of descendants, which doubles with each generation. However, not all these descendants choose to come to the reunion. Such reunions include a shared meal cooked and contributed by the women of each family as well as visiting and telling of stories about the common ancestor and the kinship connections that bind them all together. They may also include church services, introduction of members, business matters, and the election of officers. When the descendants come together at the reunion, they are reenacting the
Protestant biblical ideal of family and kinship. Exchanging food and partaking of a meal together once a year symbolize the solidarity of the kin group. Neville also points out a tendency to emphasize connections through women over those through men in the southern Protestant families. A nuclear family is more likely to attend the reunions of the mother’s family than the father’s. Such family reunions have become common among various ethnic and racial groups such as African Americans in the United States. In sharp contrast to the Afro-Trinidadian and African-American kin networks described above, the family unit that comes together at family reunions has only expressive and symbolic functions.

SUMMARY

• This chapter presents the basic concepts of kinship that anthropologists have used to analyze the small-scale societies that were the focus of their attention when anthropology first developed as a discipline. These include descent, family, post-marital residence, and marriage.

• The incest taboo and marriage prohibitions compel individuals to marry outside of the family.

• Societies have rules regarding number of spouses and postmarital residence rules, which result in the creation of a variety of types of families.

• Societies also have rules regarding how marriage is contracted. Bridewealth, dowry, and bride service are the alternatives.

• Kinship rules of descent create different kinds of kin groups or clans.

• Though their structures may differ, the functions of such groups—land ownership, economic and ceremonial functions—remain the same.

• Different types of marriage rules result in different structures of relationship or alliance between descent groups.

• Kinship terminology in different societies reflects the pattern of descent, family type, and marriage found in those societies.

• Some societies use kinship as a metaphor to create the important relationships of godparenthood.

• Americans have their own cultural ideas about kinship, which are currently being rethought in light of reproductive technologies, surrogate parenting, artificial insemination, the emphasis on genetic inheritance of disease, stepparenthood, and adoption by gay and lesbian couples.

• Kinship continues to be important not only in our own complex industrial society but also in other societies all over the world.
SUGGESTED READINGS


SUGGESTED WEBSITES

http://www.era.anthropology.ac.uk/Era_Resources/Era/kinship A website that teaches the reader how to calculate his or her own genealogy.


http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/anthropology/tutor/kinterms.html Compares kinship terminology in English and in Dani (Papua New Guinea). French and Spanish kinship terminologies are also considered.