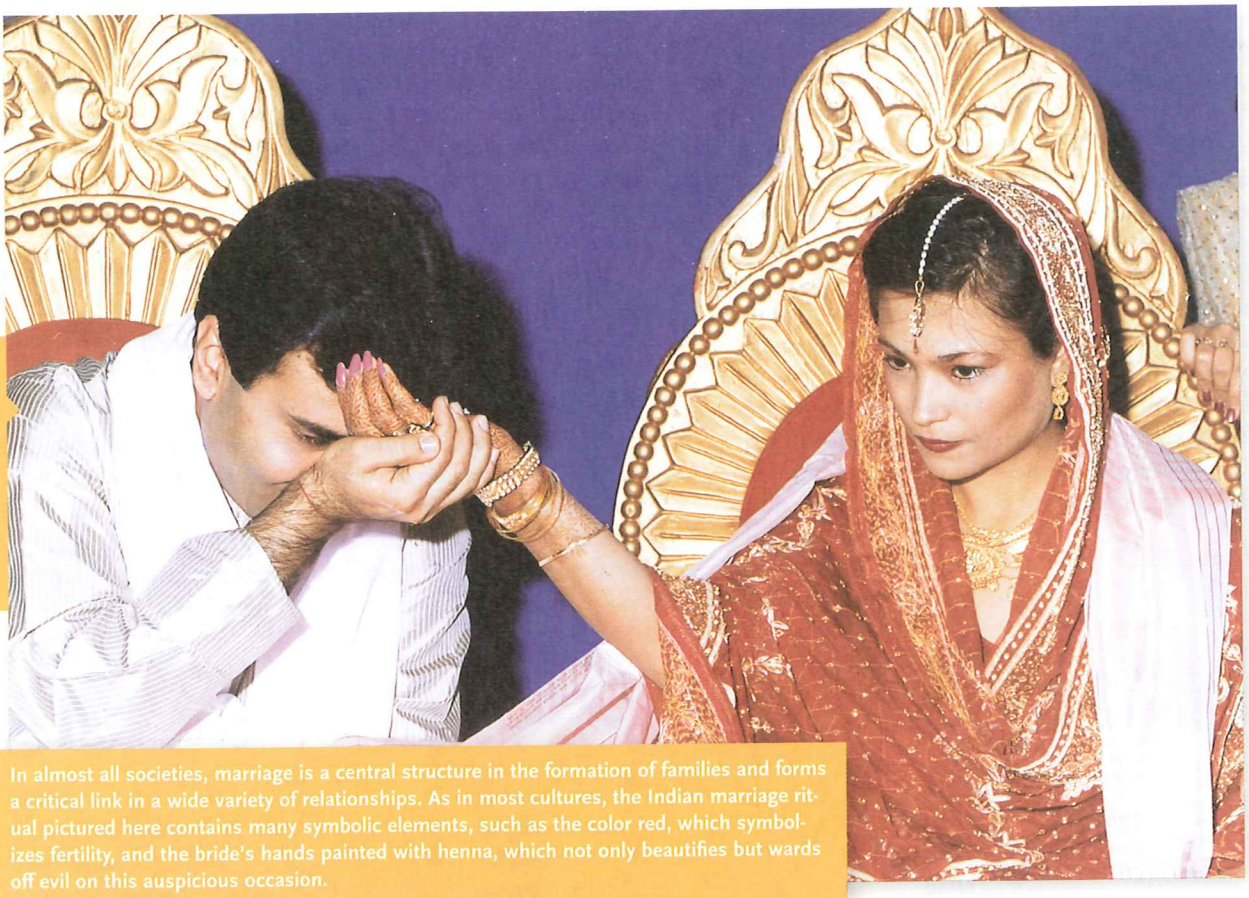


In almost all societies, marriage is a central structure in the formation of families and forms a critical link in a wide variety of relationships. As in most cultures, the Indian marriage ritual pictured here contains many symbolic elements, such as the color red, which symbolizes fertility, and the bride's hands painted with henna, which not only beautifies but wards off evil on this auspicious occasion.

Courtesy of Chander Dembla

THINKING POINT: As suggested by anthropologist Philip Kilbride, polygyny—the marriage of one man to several women—would have many advantages if adopted in the contemporary United States: limiting sex to several wives might halt the epidemic spread of sexually transmitted disease; permit greater autonomy for women who wish to both have a career and provide a loving home for children who would then have access to a co-parent; provide a legal, stable marital relationship for women who might otherwise remain single; and provide a more permanent and happier family situation for the many children of divorced parents. Is Kilbride right? Should Americans consider polygyny "an option for our time?"

—[See page 206 for further discussion.]

{chapter 9}

Marriage, Family, and Domestic Groups

CHAPTER OUTLINE

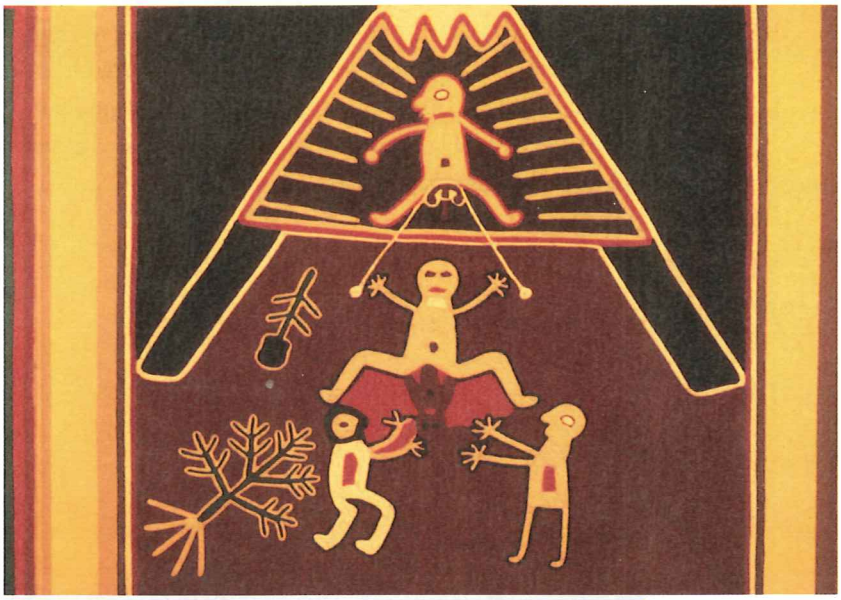
All human societies face the problem of regulating sexual access between males and females, finding satisfactory ways to organize labor within the family, assigning responsibility for child care, providing a clear framework for organizing an individual's rights and responsibilities, and, in many cases, for transferring property and social position between generations. For most societies marriage and family life offer the best solutions to these challenges, although the specific patterns vary widely in their forms and structures. In studying marriage, the family, and households, anthropologists pay attention to both rules and realities. Residence rules and ideals of family structure are related to cultural values. However, they also grow out of the imperatives of real life, in which individuals make choices that do not always accord with the rules. ≪

Functions of Marriage and the Family

The need to regulate sexual access is among the foremost requirements of the human animal. This need stems from the fact that human males and females are continuously receptive to sexual activity, rather than only receptive at certain times of the year. Sexual competition could therefore be a source of serious conflict if it were not regulated and channeled into stable relationships that are given social approval. These relationships need not be permanent, and theoretically some system other than marriage could have developed. But in the absence of safe and dependable contraception (as has been the case for most of human history) and with the near certainty that children would be born, a relatively stable union between a male and female that involves responsibility for children as well as economic exchange became the basis for most, though not all, human societies.

Differences in strength and mobility between males and females, as well as women's biological role in infant nurturing, led to a general gendered division of labor in nonindustrial societies. Marriage is the way most societies arrange for the products and services of men and women to be exchanged and for the care of children. An ongoing relationship between an adult male and an adult female provides a structure (a family) in which the male can provide food and protection and the female can nurse and provide the nurturing needed for the healthy development of children. Marriage also extends social alliances by linking different families and kin groups together, leading to cooperation among groups of people larger than the married couple. This expansion of the social group within which people can work together and share resources appears to be of great advantage for the survival of the species.

Marriage refers to the customs, rules, and obligations that establish a socially endorsed relationship between adults and children, and between the kin groups of the married partners. Although in most societies marriage and the subsequent formation of families rest on the biological complementarity of male and female and on the biological process of reproduction, both marriage and family are cultural patterns. As such, they differ in form and functions among human societies and also within societies, and change over time with changing political and economic circumstances. Anthropological research documents the conclusion that a vast array of family types, including families built on plural spouses, or same-sex partnerships, fulfill the functions of monogamous heterosexual marriage in satisfactory ways (Lathrop 2004:23). This variation in forms makes it difficult to find any *one* definition of marriage that will fit all cultural situations.



Courtesy of Serena Nanda

A primary function of the family—husband and wife sharing responsibility for children—is illustrated in this yarn painting of the Huichol Indians of Mexico. As the wife struggles to give birth, she pulls on a cord attached to her husband's genitals so that he, too, may share in the birth pains.

Even the most culturally widespread definition of marriage as establishing the legitimacy or status rights of children, for example, is not universal. Among the Navajo, a woman's children, whether or not she is married, become full legitimate members of her matriclan (Stone 2004:10). Similarly, marriage across cultures most often involves heterosexual unions, but there are important exceptions. Woman–woman marriage is found among the Nuer and some other African groups, in which a barren woman may divorce her husband, take another woman as her wife, and arrange for a surrogate to impregnate this woman. Children born from this arrangement, which did not involve sexual relations between the wives, become members of the barren woman's natal patrilineage and refer to her as their father. A similar cultural pattern, involving two males, is found among the Azande (Kilbride 2004:17), where royal power was importantly sustained by multiple wives. When there was a shortage of marriageable women, men would pay bridewealth for a young man to become their wife. The two men would be socially recognized as a married couple having sexual relations.

marriage The customs, rules, and obligations that establish a socially endorsed relationship between adults and children, and between the kin groups of the married partners.

In the United States, although marriage as a tie between one man and one woman is written into federal and most state laws, beginning in the 1980s, various developments have challenged the culturally based assumption that heterosexuality is a prerequisite for both marriage and parenthood. The growing national and international activism for equal marriage and adoption rights and the normalization of various kinds of reproductive technologies (see below) has put parenting, including biological parenting, within the reach of same-sex couples (Lewin 2009).

Same-sex marriage is only one of the many alternatives to marriage as an exclusively heterosexual, monogamous institution.

Just as any one definition of marriage finds many exceptions, so, too, does the concept of the family. In the United States, the normative idea of family is generally the nuclear family. This includes two marriage partners of different sexes and their offspring. Ties between the marriage partners and between them and their children are assumed to be strong. However, this pattern is not found in all other cultures and may, in fact, account for only a minority of families within the United States. In many societies, the most important family bond is between lineal blood relations (father and children or mother and children), or brothers and sisters, and ties between husband and wife are relatively loose. Within the United States, the high number of single-parent households, the high divorce rate, the increasing number of same-sex commitments and domestic partnerships, surrogacy, the large number of individuals who live in long-term relationships without marriage, as well as those who get married but remain childless challenge the dominance of the nuclear family as the primary cultural model.

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Families based on gay relationships are increasingly a part of the American family culture. In the family pictured here, the two fathers of the boy and girl have been together over 20 years. Their mothers have been in a relationship for over 15 years, and together they form a happy and successful family unit, as the children divide their time between their mothers' home and their fathers' home, which are very near each other.

From a cross-cultural perspective, the most basic tie in society appears to be that between mother and child. The provisioning and protective role is generally played by the mother's husband (who is usually a male), but it may be played by the mother's brother, the mother's female husband (see page 192), or even the whole community (Spiro 1958). All societies construct rules about sex, infant care, labor, and rights and obligations between generations, but they do so in very different ways.

Marriage Rules

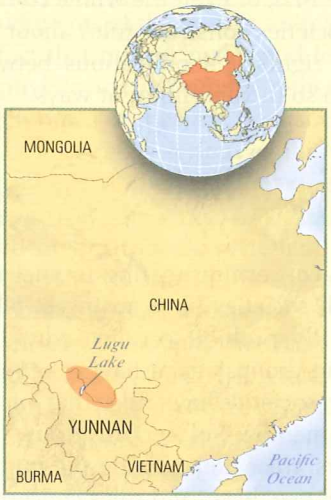
Every society has rules concerning mating (sexual relations) and marriage. All societies have an incest taboo. That is, they categorically prohibit certain individuals (and members of certain groups) from having sex with each other. Additionally, societies have rules that encourage marriage between members of certain groups and prohibit it among others, rules determining the number of spouses an individual may have, and rules concerning what happens to a marriage upon the death of one of the partners.

In the United States, marriage is primarily an affair of individuals, and the married couple tends to make a new home apart from the parents. Although choice is not as free in practice as American ideals would lead one to believe, theoretically people choose their own mates. Because sexual compatibility and emotional needs are considered important, mates are chosen on the basis of personal qualities such as physical attractiveness and the complex of feelings Americans call romantic love. Economic considerations are supposed to be subordinated to these. However, in most societies, marriage is less an affair of individual romantic love and more a link that binds two families or kinship groups together. In these societies, the choice of a mate is directly linked to the interests of the family group and most marriages are arranged. In **arranged marriage,** parents and other relatives determine the choice of spouse for their offspring. In most cases, a key purpose of such marriages is to forge or continue an alliance between two families or kin groups. However, depending on the socioeconomic environment and family structure, different qualities are emphasized for the bride and groom. The economic potential of the groom is of great importance almost everywhere; for brides, reproductive potential and health are important. In addition, each culture has its own special emphases. In India, where a woman is expected to live in a joint family, or at least spend much of her time with her husband's

arranged marriage The process by which senior family members exercise a great degree of control over the choice of their children's spouses.

Ethnography

Is Marriage Universal? The Na of China



The Na and some other allied societies of southwest China provide an example of a society whose cultural traditions raise questions about the universality of marriage and "the family" (Blumenfield 2004:15; Cai Hua 2001; Geertz 2001; Harrell 2002; Shih 2001; Walsh 2002). Na society does not have a word for "marriage." The culturally normative and most frequent Na institution that joins men and women in sexual and reproductive partnerships is called ***sese.*** In this relationship men pass a night in a lover's household and return to their own families in the morning. All sexual (and potentially reproductive) activity takes place at night during this concealed "visit" of a Na male to the household of a woman who has agreed beforehand to "lie" with him. The Na term for this "visit" suggests affection, respect, and intimacy, and the partners are called "lovers." The *sese* relationship does not, however, include notions of fidelity, permanence, paternal responsibility for children, or obligatory economic obligations (Shih 2001). Both women and men have multiple partners, serially or simultaneously. Ideally, no records are kept of "visits" to ascertain paternity of children, although in reality, knowledge of biological paternity is frequently known (Mattison 2009). There are, however, no Na words for "illegitimate" child, infidelity, or promiscuity; the Na "visit" is culturally treated as a mutually enjoyable but singular occurrence that entails no future conditions.

The *sese* relationship is made—and kept—voluntarily and is largely free of any contractual economic bonds. Although these relationships are generally not made public unless they become stable, ***sese*** is a culturally regulated custom whose boundaries are clearly understood by all. There is nothing of brute force or coercion in the Na "visits." Either party may offer, accept, or decline an invitation for a "visit." To spare the other's feelings, one may say: "Tonight is not possible. I already have one for tonight," and a woman may even turn away an invited lover at the door if she chooses. Jealousy is reported not to exist, as any man can choose to visit any woman. But although either the woman or the man may initiate the "visit," it is always the man who comes secretly to the woman's house. Concealment is necessary because of a Na taboo forbidding a household's male members to hear or see any sexual talk or activities involving household females. Males will never answer the door after dark lest they encounter a woman's lover. The lover himself makes every effort to avoid detection, often bringing food to prevent the guard dogs' barking, speaking only in whispers during intercourse, and leaving quietly before daybreak.

The Na are a matrilineal society (see page 176), and as in other matrilineal societies, children stay with the mother's

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The matrilineal family, which centers on a core of women, and includes brothers and sons, but not husbands and fathers, is the most important kinship group among the Na and allied ethnic groups in China.

household for their entire lives. This includes children by a variety of fathers, and the blood siblings of two or more generations. Ideas of "motherhood" and "fatherhood" are fluid. When a generation lacks females, a situation that threatens the continuity of the household, a household may "adopt" a relative's child or encourage a son to bring his lover into the household as a wife. Otherwise, the only males in a Na household are boy children born in the various generations, who are "brothers," "uncles," and "granduncles." Unlike some other matrilineal societies (see pages 178 and 209), Na families have no husbands, fathers, nuclear families, or structures of affinal relationships such as in-laws. The Na consider the matrilineal household as the family and both household and family are diverse and flexible.

For some anthropologists, the Na seem to fit neither into "descent" kinship theory, which envisions a universal, "natural" nuclear family of a man, his wife and their children, or the "alliance" theory, which views marriage as an exchange of women that expands into an in-law network (but see Walsh 2002). Anthropologists also seem to disagree on whether marriage is in fact absent among the Na and whether they are indeed unique when set in the context of the many diverse cultural patterns of marriage and family (Harrell 2001). For although the *sese* is the dominant sexual and reproductive relationship in Na culture, marriage has existed as a parallel cultural institution among the elites. In addition, there are two other, though rather infrequent, patterns of sexual encounter: the "conspicuous visit" and "cohabitation." In the conspicuous visit, which always follows a series of furtive visits, the effort to conceal the relationship is abandoned. This usually occurs after a long-term relationship that the community is presumed to know about in any case. Cohabitation, which is even more rare, occurs when a household is short of women by means of which to produce children or short of men to labor in its fields; under these circumstances a woman may bring her lover home as a husband.

Na matrilineal households are very strong and take care of all their members; the *sese* relationship does not undermine the very strong matrilineal household stability, nor the economic position of women or children. Male and female Na describe their society as valuing men and women equally, though almost all agree that women work much harder than men and have many more household responsibilities than their brothers.

In Na culture, (matrilineal) family love is considered more essential and longer lasting than romantic love. Many Na believe that people should not marry because marriage creates conflict within households. On the other hand, some Na say that as they become more wealthy, they will marry and move out of their matrilineal households. Indeed, there are now a variety of family types among the Na (Walsh 2004).

Historically, within the patrilineal, patriarchal, and ancestor-worshipping structure of mainstream Han Chinese culture, the Na are officially identified as a "primitive matriarchy" and the "visit" was condemned as a "barbarous practice." Intermittent government attempts to persuade the Na to marry included distributing land to men who would then set up nuclear families, raising their children together with their wives. The Maoist government also tried to force the Na into "normal" sexual, marriage, and kinship relations, including passing severe laws against unmarried Na "lovers." These laws have not generally been successful in assimilating the Na to mainstream Han Chinese values, although some Na now do marry and for many Na *sese* relationships are more stable than in the past.

It is possible that the recent expansion of China's public school education and state-sponsored movies—imbued with mainstream Han mores and lifestyles—into the formerly isolated Na villages will gradually induce shame among Na children for their cultural deviance, and their inability to name a father on the documents that will come in the wake of the modernization of China will begin to appear as a stigma. In spite of a strong ethnic identity that incorporates the *sese,* as the Na enter the wider world their "walking marriage" may be one more example of human cultural diversity that ultimately faces extinction, leaving us less familiar with the wide variety of cultural patterns of marriage and family that serve as counterpoints to our own.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. Can you envision a society without marriage? What do you think that society would look like?
2. Compare the Chinese government's attempt to end Na *sese* relationships and traditional family structure with attempts in the United States to ban same-sex marriage.
3. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages, from the Na point of view, of their system of "walking marriage" and matrilineal families?

© Judith Pearson

Among the Wodaabe of Niger, marriages are based on romantic attachment as well as arranged. To be chosen as the most charming and beautiful dancers and capture the hearts of young women, young men at the annual Gerewol celebration apply makeup, dance, and make facial expressions that display the whiteness of their eyes and teeth.

family, a demeanor of submissiveness and modesty is essential. Also, no one wants to arrange a marriage with a family that has the reputation of being quarrelsome or gossipy (Nanda 1999).

Where marriages are arranged, go-betweens are often used. A go-between, or marriage broker, has more information about a wider network of families than any one family can have. Furthermore, neither the family of the bride nor that of the groom loses face if its offer is rejected by the other party. Although the arranged marriage system tends to become less rigid as societies urbanize and industrialize, in most societies families and larger kin groups have a great deal of control over marriage and the choice of a spouse. Important cultural rules guide the arranging of marriages with, to a variable degree, some leeway for individual variation. Different patterns of choosing a mate are closely related to other social and cultural patterns, such as kinship rules, ideals of family structure, transfer of property at marriage, and core cultural values, all of which are rooted in how people make a living.

Incest Taboos

The most universal prohibition is that on mating among certain kinds of kin: mother and son, father and daughter, and sister and brother. The taboos on mating between kin almost always extend beyond this immediate family group, however. These prohibitions on mating between people classified as relatives are called **incest taboos.** Because sexual access is one of the most important rights conferred by marriage, incest taboos effectively prohibit marriage among certain kin.

incest taboos Prohibitions on sexual relations between relatives.

There have been some very unusual exceptions to the taboo on mating and marriage among members of the nuclear family. Brother–sister marriage was practiced by Egyptian royalty, in traditional Hawaiian society, and among the Inca in Peru. Although there are numerous explanations for these cases, brother–sister marriage probably served to keep family wealth and power intact and limit rivalries for succession to kingship.

Anthropologists have advanced several major theories to explain the universality and persistence of the incest taboo, particularly as it applies to primary (or nuclear) family relationships. In considering these theories, we should keep in mind that the possible origins of the taboo, its functions in contemporary societies, and the motives of individuals in respecting or violating the taboo are all separate issues.

Avoiding Inbreeding The inbreeding avoidance theory holds that mating between close kin produces deficient, weak children and is genetically harmful to the species. According to this theory, proposed in the late 19th century, the incest taboo is adaptive because it limits inbreeding. Work in population genetics appears to support the view that inbreeding is usually harmful to a human population. Moreover, these disadvantages are far more likely to appear as a result of the mating of primary relatives (mother–son, father–daughter, sister–brother) than of other relatives, even first cousins. However, it is not clear whether or not this effect would be observable in premodern societies with very high infant mortality rates or how prescientific peoples could understand the connection between close inbreeding and the biological disadvantages that result.

Preventing Family Disruption Bronislaw Malinowski and Sigmund Freud believed that the desire for sexual relations within the family is very strong. They suggested that the most important function of the incest taboo is preventing disruption within the nuclear family. Malinowski argued that as children grow into adolescence, it would be natural for them to attempt to satisfy their developing sexual urges within the group of people emotionally close to them—that is, within the family. Were this to happen, the role relationships within the family would be disrupted as fathers and sons, and mothers and daughters, would be

competing for sexual partners. These conflicts would hinder the family in carrying out its activities in a harmonious and effective way. According to this theory, the incest taboo arose to repress the attempt to satisfy sexual desires within the family and to direct such desires outward.

Although unregulated sexual competition within the family would undoubtedly be disruptive, it is not clear that the incest taboo is the only way this problem could be solved. An alternative to the incest taboo could be the regulation of sexual competition among family members. Furthermore, although Malinowski's theory suggests why the incest taboo exists between parents and children, it does not explain the prohibition of sexual relations between brothers and sisters or why the taboo should be extended beyond the nuclear family.

Forming Wider Alliances Another theory (Lévi-Strauss 1969/1949) stresses the adaptive value of cooperation among groups larger than the nuclear family. The incest taboo forces people to marry outside the family, thus joining families together into a larger social community. This has surely contributed to the success of the human species. However, the alliance theory really concerns marriage rather than sexual relations. It is possible to imagine a society where individuals had to marry outside of their family groups but were permitted to have sex within those groups, but no such society exists.

Thus, the familial incest taboo appears to have a number of advantages for the human species. In other animal species, incest is often prevented by expelling junior members from family groups as they reach sexual maturity. Because humans take so long to mature, the familial incest taboo seems to be the most efficient and effective means of promoting genetic variability, familial harmony, and community cooperation. These advantages can explain the spread and persistence of the taboo, if not its origins (Aberle et al. 1963).

Exogamy

Two types of marriage rules, exogamy and endogamy, together work to define the acceptable range of marriage partners. **Exogamy** specifies that a person must marry outside particular groups; **endogamy** requires people to marry within certain groups. Because of the association of sex and marriage, prohibitions on incest produce an almost universal rule of exogamy within the primary family group of parents and children and between brothers and sisters. Exogamous rules also apply to groups larger than the nuclear family. Most often, descent groups based on a blood relationship (such as lineages and clans) are exogamous.

The advantages of exogamy include the reduction of conflict over sex within the cooperating group, such as the hunting band, and the alliances between groups larger than the primary family, which are of great adaptive significance for humans. Such alliances may have economic, political, or religious components; indeed, these intergroup rights and obligations are among the most important kinds of relationships established by marriage.

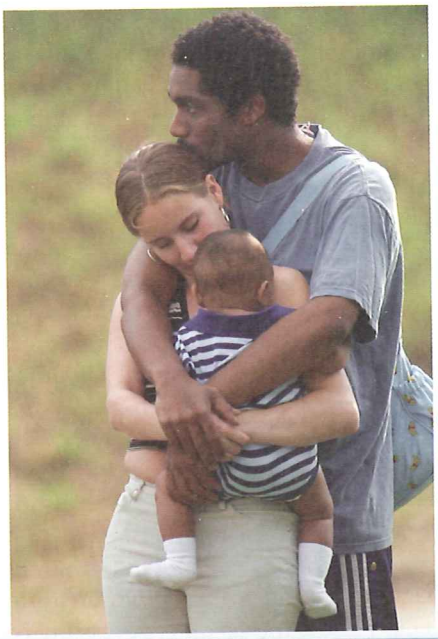
Early humans living in hunting-and-gathering bands exchanged women in order to live in peace with one another and to extend the social ties of cooperation. One outstanding feature of marriage arrangements among contemporary foragers is a system of exchange and alliance between groups that exchange wives. These alliances are important among peoples who must move frequently to find food. Different groups take turns visiting and playing host to one another, and this intergroup sociability is made easier by exogamy. One consequence of exchanging women is that each foraging camp becomes dependent on others for a supply of wives and is allied with others through the bonds that result from marriage. This system contributes to the maintenance of peaceful relations among groups that move around, camp with one another, and exploit overlapping territories. It does not entirely eliminate intergroup aggression, but it probably helps keep it down to a manageable level.

The Arapesh, a horticultural society in Papua New Guinea studied by Margaret Mead, were very clear and explicit that keeping one's own women for oneself is not advantageous. In these societies, not exchanging women between families would be just as unthinkable as not sharing food. In many societies, the very mention of incest is often accompanied by protestations of horror. For the Arapesh, incest simply does not make sense (Mead 1963:92/1935). When Margaret Mead asked about a man marrying his sisters, her Arapesh informant responded, "What, you would like to marry your sister? What is the matter with you? Don't you want a brother-in-law? Don't you realize that if you marry another man's sister and another man marries your sister, you will have at least two brothers-in-law, while if you marry your own sister you will have none? With whom will you hunt, with whom will you garden, with whom will you visit?" (Mead 1963:97/1935).

In peasant societies, rules of exogamy may apply to the village as well. In northern India, a man must take a wife from outside his village. Through exogamy, the Indian village becomes a center in a kinship network that spreads over hundreds of villages. Because the wives will come from many different villages, the typical Indian village has a cosmopolitan character. Village exogamy also affects the quality of Indian village family life. In a household where brothers' wives are strangers to one another, peace at any price is an important value. The

exogamy A rule specifying that a person must marry outside a particular group.

endogamy A rule prescribing that a person must marry within a particular group.



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All societies have rules of endogamy. In the United States, endogamy within so-called racial groups was at one time prescribed by law. This law against interracial marriage, which continued in some states until 1967, no longer exists but most, though not all, marriages continue to be within so-called racial groups.

potential for conflict among sisters-in-law shapes child rearing and personality and helps explain many rules of conduct in the northern Indian family, such as the repression of aggression.

Endogamy

Endogamy is a rule that requires marriage within one's own group, however that group is defined. In order to keep the privileges and wealth of the group intact, blood relations may be encouraged or required to marry. This helps explain endogamy among royalty. In India, the caste is an endogamous group. A person must marry someone within the caste or within the specific section of the caste to which he or she belongs. In the United States, although there are currently no named groups within which one must marry, so-called racial groups and social classes tend to be endogamous. In the past, racial endogamy was enforced by law in many states. In the case of social classes, opportunity, cultural norms, and similarity of lifestyle all contribute to maintaining endogamy. It may be as easy to love a rich person as a poor one, but it is a lot harder to meet one unless you are rich yourself. Endogamy is also an important rule for some religious groups in the United States, such as the Amish.

cross cousins The children of a parent's siblings of the opposite sex (mother's brothers, father's sisters).

parallel cousins The children of a parent's same-sex siblings (mother's sisters, father's brothers).

exogamous group A group within which one is not permitted to marry.

Preferential Marriages

In all societies, relatives are classified according to the rules of kinship that are part of culture. These classifications of kin are an important basis for choosing marriage partners. In addition to rules about whom one may not marry and the group within which one must marry, some societies have rules about the preferred categories of relatives from which marriage partners are drawn. Preferred marriage partners are often "cousins," that is, children of siblings at the parental generation, who are in fact biologically related, but who may not culturally be defined as such.

A common form of preferential marriage rules is cross-cousin marriage. **Cross cousins** are the children of one's parents' siblings of the opposite sex (mother's brother or father's sister) (see Figure 9.1). These statuses actually extend beyond first cousins, and would include, for example, a mother's mother's brother's daughter's daughter. Got that? **Parallel cousins,** children of the parents' same-sex siblings (mother's sister or father's brother), are rarely preferred marriage partners. In fact, marriage to them is often forbidden. In the differentiation between cross cousins and parallel cousins in many cultures we see clearly how kinship is not literally based on blood relations but rather culturally constructed.

Preferential cross-cousin marriage is related to the organization of kinship units larger than the nuclear family. Where descent groups are unilineal (formed by either the mother's or the father's side exclusively)—parallel cousins are members of one's own kinship group but cross cousins are not. Because unilineal kinship groups are usually **exogamous,** a person is prohibited from marrying a parallel cousin (who is often considered a brother or sister) but is allowed, or even required, to marry a cross cousin, who is culturally defined as outside the kinship group. Preferred cross-cousin marriage reinforces ties between kin groups established in the preceding generation. In this sense, the adaptive value of preferential cross-cousin marriage is that it establishes alliances between groups and intensifies relationships among a limited number of kin groups generation after generation.

There are a few societies that prefer parallel-cousin marriage, but even in these societies, such marriages are, in fact, not universally contracted (Webber 2007). For Muslim Arabs of North Africa, the parallel-cousin marriage preference is for the son or daughter of the father's brother. Muslim Arab culture has a rule of patrilineal descent; that is, descent and inheritance are in the male

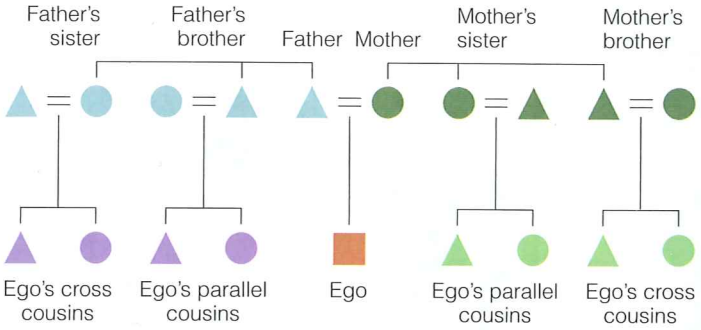

FIGURE 9.1 This diagram indicates the relationships of cross cousins and parallel cousins. In many cultures these relationships are important for determining who can and cannot marry, and for designating preferred marriage partners. Western cultures distinguish cousins by degree of biological closeness but do not distinguish between cross cousins and parallel cousins for purposes of marriage.

line. Parallel cousin marriage within this system helps prevent the fragmentation of family property because economic resources can be kept within the family. Another result of parallel-cousin marriage is to reinforce the solidarity of brothers. But, by socially isolating groups of brothers, parallel-cousin marriage adds to factional disputes and disunity within larger social systems. Thus, each system of marriage and family has elements that contribute to solidarity and stability at one level but may be disruptive at another level.

The Levirate and the Sororate The **levirate** is a custom whereby a man marries the widow of his dead brother. In some cases, the children born to this union are considered children of the deceased man. Among the Nuer, a pastoral people of Africa, a form called ghost marriage exists: A man can marry a woman "to the name of" a brother who has died childless. The offspring of this union are designated as children of the deceased. Thus, the levirate enables the children to remain within the dead husband's descent group and also keeps them from being separated from their mother. The **sororate** is a custom whereby, when a woman dies, her kin group supplies a sister as a wife for the widower. Also, where the sororate exists, the husband of a barren woman marries her sister, and at least some of these children are considered those of the first wife.

The levirate and sororate attest to the importance of marriage as an alliance between two groups rather than between individuals. Through such customs, group alliances are maintained and the marriage contract can be fulfilled even in the event of death. Because marriage involves an exchange of rights and obligations, the family of the wife can be assured that she will be cared for even if her husband dies. This is only fair if she has fulfilled her part of the marriage contract by providing domestic services and bearing children.

Where there are no available marriage partners in the right relationship for a preferential marriage, other kin may be substituted. For example, if a man is supposed to marry his father's sister's daughter, the daughters of all women classified as his father's sisters (whether or not they are biologically in this relationship) are eligible as marriage partners. Sometimes, if no brother, sister, or other qualifying relative is available, or if the brother or sister is undesirable, the levirate or sororate will not take place. A point to note here is that the levirate and the sororate are ideals; they refer to what people say should happen in their society, not to what necessarily does happen.

Number of Spouses

All societies have rules about how many spouses a person may have at one time. **Monogamy** permits only one man to be married to one woman at any given time. Monogamy is the rule in Euro-American cultures, but not in most of the world's societies. Given the high divorce rate and subsequent remarriage in the United States, perhaps the term *serial monogamy* is more accurate. In this pattern, a man or woman has one marriage partner at a time but, because of the ease of divorce, does not necessarily remain with that partner for life.

Polygamy is plural marriage. It includes **polygyny,** the marriage of one man to several women, and **polyandry,** the marriage of one woman to several men. Most societies permit (and prefer) plural marriage. In a world sample of 554 societies, polygyny was favored in 415, monogamy in 135, and polyandry in only 4 (Murdock 1949:28). Thus, about 75 percent of the world's societies prefer plural marriage. However, this does not mean that most people in these societies actually have more than one spouse.

levirate The custom whereby a man marries the widow of a deceased brother.

sororate The custom whereby, when a man's wife dies, her sister is given to him as a wife.

monogamy A rule that permits a person to be married to only one spouse at a time.

polygamy A rule allowing more than one spouse.

polygyny A rule permitting a man to have more than one wife at a time.

polyandry A rule permitting a woman to have more than one husband at a time.

Polygyny Polygyny is related to different factors in different societies. Where women are economically important, polygyny can increase a man's wealth and therefore his social position. Also, because one of the most important functions of marriage is to ally different groups with one another, having several wives from different groups within the society extends a man's alliances. Thus, chiefs, headmen, or leaders of states may have wives from many different clans or villages. This provides leaders with increased economic resources that may then be redistributed among the people, and it also binds the different groups to the leader through marriage. Polygyny thus has important economic and political functions in some societies.

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Although the Mormon Church officially outlawed polygyny in 1890, as many as 30,000 people who call themselves Mormon fundamentalists live in polygynous families in the western United States today.

Polygyny is found most typically in horticultural societies that have a high level of productivity. Although the most obvious advantages in polygynous societies seem to go to men—additional women in the household increase the labor supply and the productive yield, as well as the number of children—the status of females in such societies is not uniformly low. In some societies, women welcome the addition of a cowife because it eases their own workload and provides daily companionship. Although polygyny combined with patrilineality may mean that women are restricted by patriarchal authority, polygyny can also be combined with a high degree of sexual and economic freedom for women. Even in cultures in which polygyny is preferred, the ratio of males to females is usually such that few men can have more than one wife. Furthermore, where men must exchange wealth for wives, most men cannot afford more than one wife.

People from cultures where sexual fidelity in marriage is considered essential (particularly in the context of romantic love) may expect to find sexual jealousy in polygynous societies. This is not necessarily the case. Jealousy may occur in polygynous households, but relations between cowives may also be friendly and helpful. Some polygynous societies have mechanisms to minimize conflict between cowives. One is **sororal polygyny,** in which a man marries sisters, who may be more willing to cooperate and can get along better than women who are strangers to each other. Also, cowives usually live in separate dwellings. A husband who wants to avoid conflict will attempt to distribute his economic resources and sexual attentions evenly among his wives so there will be no accusations of favoritism. Where women's work is hard and monotonous, cowives may also provide welcome company for one another.

sororal polygyny A form of polygyny in which a man marries sisters.

Polygyny among the Tiwi Although polygyny is mainly found in horticultural societies, the foraging Tiwi of Australia (Martin and Voorhies 1975) also have polygyny. Within the constraints of the marriage rules, a Tiwi father betroths his infant daughter to a friend or potential ally that he thinks will bring him the most economic and social advantage, or to a man who has bestowed a daughter to him (Hart and Pilling 1960:15). If he is looking for "old-age insurance," a father might choose a man much younger than himself who shows signs of being a good hunter and fighter and who seems likely to rise in influence. When the older man can no longer hunt, his son-in-law will still be young enough to provide him with food. Because the girl is an infant when her future marriage is decided, husbands are a great deal older than their wives.

As a young man who looks good to one girl's father is usually attractive to other fathers, some men rapidly acquire several wives. As these wives begin to have children, he will betroth his own daughters to other men, while still acquiring more wives for himself. Young men who do not seem particularly promising to potential fathers-in-law have difficulty getting wives and will marry widows (and because men are much older than women in marriage, there are many widows).

The large, multiple-wife Tiwi household is an adaptation to their ecological conditions. The more wives a man has, the more food they can collect, and old wives are particularly useful in this respect because they know the environment well and are experienced in finding food. Younger wives serve as apprentices and reinforcements for older wives. For this reason, every man tries to marry an older woman first. Households with only one or two wives have a much lower standard of living than those with many wives, especially if both wives are young.

Because girls are betrothed when they are infants, their mothers are introduced to the men who will become their sons-in-law long before the marriage takes place. The relationship between a woman and her prospective son-in-law is very important. The son-in-law must immediately begin to provide food and favors to his mother-in-law, and he often joins her camp at this time. This strong relationship continues for the remainder of the mother-in-law's life.

From a Western perspective Tiwi women may appear to be pawns in a marriage game over which they have little control, but Tiwi women see themselves not simply as wives but as women who have a fluctuating inventory of husbands (Goodale 1971). Until their first pregnancy, Tiwi wives enjoy both sexual and social freedom. Young Tiwi women traditionally engage in several extramarital sexual unions with lovers of their own age, a practice that is tolerated although not officially approved. As a Tiwi woman gets older, her respect and power increase. As a senior wife, she has power in the domestic group and considerable influence over her sons. Cowives and their daughters form a cohesive economic and social unit, and Tiwi women have prestige, power, and independence based on solidarity with other women and economic complementarity with men.

Polyandry Polyandry (the marriage of one woman to more than one man) is found in parts of Tibet and Nepal and among the Toda and Pahari Hindus of India. Polyandry may be an adaptation to a shortage of females, but such a shortage is created among the Toda and Tibetans by female infanticide. In a society where men must be away from home for long periods of time, polyandry provides a woman with more than one husband to take care of her. In Tibet, polyandry appears to be related to the shortage of land. If several men marry one woman, this limits the number of children a man has to support. If brothers marry the same woman, land can be kept within the family rather than fragmented over the generations.

The Toda of southern India were a classic case of **fraternal polyandry.** Toda women married one man and at the same time become the wife of his brothers. If other brothers were born after the original marriage, they also shared in the marital rights. Sexual access to the wife rotated rather equally, and there is little reported friction or jealousy. When all the brothers lived with their wife in one hut, a brother who was with the wife placed his cloak and staff outside as a warning to others. When a wife became pregnant, determining the biological father is not considered necessary. Rather, a ceremony called "giving the bow," held in the seventh month of pregnancy, assigned the child a legal or social father. In this ritual, a man presented a ceremonial bow and arrow made from twigs and grass to the wife in front of his relatives. Usually the eldest brother performed this ceremony first, and subsequent children are considered his. After two or three children were born, another brother usually gave the bow. Occasionally a woman married several men who were not biological brothers. When these men lived in different villages the wife lived in the village of each husband for a month. The men arranged among themselves who gave the bow when she became pregnant. Because the practice of female infanticide has largely ceased among the Toda, the male-female ratio has evened out. For this reason, as well as the influence of Christian missionaries, the Toda today are largely monogamous (Queen and Haberstein 1974).

Exchange of Goods and Rights in Marriage

The essence of marriage is that it is a publicly accepted relationship involving the transfer of certain rights and obligations. These rights primarily involve sexual access of husband and wife to each other, rights over any children born to the wife, obligations by one or both parents to care for children born to the union, and rights of husband and wife to the economic services of each other.

In many cultures, marriage is also an important means of making alliances between families. Thus, marriage may also give the families or kin groups of the bride and groom certain rights to goods or services from each other. Sometimes this exchange is simply of gifts—items customarily given as a way of winning the goodwill of those with the power to transfer marital rights, though not necessary to complete the transfer. In other cases, the exchange of goods and services is an essential part of the transfer of marital rights (although the exchanges may still be called gifts). If these exchanges are not completed, the rights in marriage can be forfeited. Three kinds of exchanges made in connection with marriage are bride service, bridewealth, and dowry.

fraternal polyandry A custom whereby a woman marries a man and his brothers.

Bride Service and Bridewealth

In **bride service,** the husband must work for a specified period of time for his wife's family in exchange for his marital rights. Bride service occurs mainly in foraging societies, where accumulating material goods for an exchange at marriage is difficult. Among the Ju/'hoansi, for example, a man may work for his wife's family for as long as 15 years or until the birth of the third child.

The most common form of marriage exchange is **bridewealth,** in which cash or goods are given by the groom's kin to the bride's kin to seal a marriage. (Bridewealth was formerly called bride price, an inaccurate term conveying the misleading perception that marriage was merely an economic exchange [Ogbu 1978a]). A major function of bridewealth is legitimating the new reproductive and socioeconomic unit created by the marriage. In societies where bridewealth is customary, a person can claim compensation for a violation of conjugal rights only if the bridewealth has been paid. Furthermore, bridewealth paid at marriage is returned (subject to specified conditions) if a marriage is terminated.

Although most studies of bridewealth emphasize its role in entitling the husband to domestic, economic, sexual, and reproductive rights in his wife, bridewealth also confers rights on the wife. By establishing the marriage as legal—that is, recognized and supported by public sanctions—bridewealth allows wives to hold their husbands accountable for violations of conjugal rights. In sanctioning the proper exchanges of rights and obligations of both husbands and wives, bridewealth serves to stabilize marriage by giving both families a vested interest in keeping the couple together. However, that does not mean that divorce does not occur in societies with bridewealth.

Bridewealth transactions, although globally widespread, are particularly characteristic of Africa. They are especially common among East African pastoralists such as the Gusii, Turkana, and Kipsigis. Cattle, which dominate these societies culturally and economically, traditionally make up the greater part of bridewealth. Bridewealth payments are embedded in the economic strategies of households; they are related to the ways in which men and women engage in labor, distribute property, and maintain or enhance status. Thus, the amount of bridewealth paid varies as people adapt to changing economic, demographic, and social conditions.

bride service The cultural rule that a man must work for his bride's family for a variable length of time either before or after the marriage.

bridewealth Goods presented by the groom's kin to the bride's kin to legitimize a marriage (formerly called "bride price").

Bridewealth among the Kipsigis This adaptation to changing conditions is illustrated by bridewealth practices among the Kipsigis, a pastoral/horticultural society in East Africa. Although in some societies bridewealth payments extend over many years, the Kipsigis make a single bridewealth payment, traditionally consisting of livestock but now including some cash, at the time of marriage. The Kipsigis distribute the bridewealth within the immediate families of the bride and the groom. First marriages are paid for by the groom's father and subsequent marriages by the groom himself, although grooms working for wages may also help with the first payment. The bride's parents are primarily responsible for the negotiation and final acceptance of the bridewealth offer (Borgerhoff Mulder 1995:576). Although young people occasionally pick their own spouses, both young people and their parents are expected to be satisfied by the marriage arrangement, and sometimes the young are brought into line by threats of disinheritance. Personality differences and individual circumstances play a role in bridewealth payments, but certain patterns are also observable.

Kipsigis bridewealth amounts have fluctuated over time. In the past, when agricultural land was available and prices for crops were high, bridewealth was high because of the importance of women's labor in cultivation. As population increased in the 20th century and land became scarce, the value of women's labor in agriculture declined and therefore bridewealth payments have declined as well. Additionally, increased urbanization and participation in the national and global economy have opened numerous other opportunities for men to invest their wealth, making less available for bridewealth payments.

The bride's family must balance its desire for higher bridewealth payments with their concern for their daughter's happiness, the need to attract a good son-in-law, and the desire to avoid impoverishing the daughter in her new household. However, Kipsigis parents of girls educated beyond elementary school often demand high bridewealth, both as compensation for the high school fees they have spent on their daughters and because her increased earning potential will benefit her marital home.

Many Westerners who encountered bridewealth practices assumed that it was both a cause and a symbol of a very low status for women. This is not necessarily the case. John Ogbu (1978a) argued that such payments enhance rather than diminish the status of women by enabling both husband and wife to acquire reciprocal rights in each other. Indeed, as the Kipsigis illustrate, it is the families of higher-status, more educated women who demand higher bridewealth. The low status of women in some parts of Africa has nothing to do with the role of bridewealth in the legitimization of marriage. Despite the general persistence of bridewealth, women's status has declined with increasing modernization, urbanization,

Courtesy of Jean Zorn

Bridewealth is the most common form of gift exchange at marriage. Among the Medlpa of New Guinea, a marriage is formalized by the family of the groom giving gifts to the family of the bride. The bride's family comes to the groom's village to receive the gifts. The bigman of the groom's family (left) praises the quality of the gifts, while the bigman of the bride's family denigrates their value. Traditionally, pigs and various kinds of shells were part of the bridewealth. Pigs are still given, but these days cash and pig grease (rendered fat from the pig), which is in the can in the center, have replaced shell money.

and participation in wage labor economies (Borgerhoff Mulder 1995).

Dowry

Dowry—a presentation of goods by the bride's kin to the groom's family—is less common than other forms of exchange at marriage. **Dowry** has somewhat different meanings and functions in different societies. In some cases, this transfer of wealth represents a woman's share of her family inheritance. It may be used by her and her husband to set up a new household, kept by her as insurance in case her husband dies, or spent on her children's future. In other cases, dowry is a payment transferred from the bride's family to the groom's family.

In Indian culture, the use of dowry was typical. However, in 1961 it became illegal to demand dowry as a precondition for marriage. Dowry was outlawed because it was often misused as a way of extorting payments from families eager to marry off their daughters. Marriage gifts given without precondition remain legal in India. Because the difference between gifts given with preconditions and those given without is often difficult to determine, gift exchange at marriage remains very common. The functions of dowry in India are debated. One view is that dowry is a voluntary gift, symbolizing affection for a beloved daughter leaving home and compensating her for the fact that traditionally she could not inherit land or property. Dowry may also be viewed as a source of security for a woman because the jewelry given as part of her dowry is theoretically hers to keep. However, theories that view dowry as a source of economic security for a woman are challenged in the Indian context on several grounds. First, in reality, most women have no control over their dowries, which remain in the custody of their mothers-in-law or their husbands. Second, if the purpose of dowries really was economic security, they would be of a more productive nature, such as land or a shop, rather than the personal and household goods that constitute the main portion of Indian dowries today.

dowry Presentation of goods by the bride's kin to the family of the groom or to the couple.

Another theory holds that dowry in India is a transfer of resources to the groom's family as a recognition of their generosity in taking on an economic burden because upper-class and upper-caste women in India are not supposed to work. Dowry from this standpoint is a compensatory payment from the bride's family, which is losing an economic liability, to the groom's family, which is taking one on. Even as demanding dowry has been outlawed in India, a new emphasis on consumerism has increased its importance, especially among members of the middle classes striving for upward social mobility.

Globalization is beginning to have an effect on the dowry system in parts of India where lower class women have begun to work in expanding factory production. In South India, the increase of garment factories now allows these women to earn salaries that, while generally lower than those of men, are nevertheless becoming essential for family subsistence. Traditionally, the families of these women amassed dowries for their daughters (even if they had to borrow much of it), but now many of these women are saving their salaries for their own dowries. Even though the knowledge that a family's daughters and even wives are working brings lowered prestige, the material benefits are often essential. This somewhat greater independence for young, unmarried women is leading to more "love marriages," disrupting the kin support networks that traditionally accompany arranged marriages (Lessinger 2008).

Whatever the exact nature of exchanges of goods or services in marriage, they are part of the process of the public transfer of rights that legitimizes the new alliances formed. The public nature of marriage is also demonstrated by the ritual and ceremony that surround it in almost every society. The presence of members of the community at these ceremonies is a way of bearing witness to the lawfulness of the transaction. It is these publicly witnessed and acknowledged ceremonies that distinguish marriage from other kinds of unions that resemble it.

nuclear family A family organized around the conjugal tie (the relationship between husband and wife) and consisting of a husband, a wife, and their children.

conjugal tie The relationship between a husband and wife formed by marriage.

extended family Family based on blood relations extending over three or more generations.

consanguineal Related by blood.

domestic group (household) Persons living in the same house, usually, but not always members of a family.

neolocal residence System under which a couple establishes an independent household after marriage.

Families, Domestic Groups, and Rules of Residence

Three basic types of families identified by anthropologists are the elementary, or nuclear, family, the composite family, and the extended family. **Nuclear families** are organized around the **conjugal tie,** or the relationship between husband and wife. Composite (compound) families are aggregates of nuclear families linked by a common spouse, most often the husband. **Extended families** are based on **consanguineal,** or blood, relations extending over three or more generations.

A **domestic group,** or household, is not the same as a family. Although households most often contain related people, non-kin may also be part of a household. In addition, members of a family may be spread out over several households. The composition of a household is affected by the cultural rules about where a newly married couple will live.

The Nuclear Family

A nuclear family consists of a married couple and their children. It is most often associated with **neolocal residence,** where the married couple establishes an independent household. This type of family may exist as an isolated and independent unit, as it does in the United States, or it may be embedded within larger kinship units. Only 5 percent of the world's societies are neolocal.

The nuclear family is adapted in many ways to the requirements of industrial society. Where jobs do not depend on family connections, and where mobility may be required for obtaining employment and career success, a small, flexible unit such as the independent nuclear family has its advantages. Independence and flexibility are also requirements of foraging lifestyles, and more than three-quarters of all foraging groups live in nuclear family groups. In such societies, however, the nuclear family is not nearly as independent or isolated as it is in U.S. society. The family unit almost always camps together with the kin of the husband or the wife.

The Changing American Family

In the United States, in contrast to most other cultures, the monogamous, independent, neolocal nuclear family is the ideal for most people. It is related to the high degree of mobility required in an industrial system and to a culture that places emphasis on romantic love, the emotional bond between husband and wife, privacy, and personal independence. In nuclear family societies, a newly married couple is expected to occupy its own residence and to function as an independent domestic and economic unit. Larger kin groups are not involved in any

substantial way in mate selection or the transfer of goods, and the nuclear family's dissolution (whether from death or divorce) primarily affects only the nuclear family members.

The American nuclear family is ideally regarded as egalitarian, although for many families this is not the case. Although roles in the American nuclear family are less rigidly defined than in other societies, research indicates that even where mothers work full time, they are also responsible for most of the housework and child care (Lamphere 1997).

The idealistic picture of the independent nuclear family as typical of the United States must be modified to reflect some new (and some not so new) realities. One of these is the high rates of divorce and remarriage that enmesh nuclear families in ever larger and more complicated kinship networks. Sometimes called **blended families,** these networks include previously divorced spouses and their new marriage partners, and sometimes children from previous marriages, as well as multiple sets of grandparents and other similar relations. Although blended families do sometimes provide the kind of support provided in two-parent families, the facts are that only one child in six averages a weekly visit with a divorced father, and only one in four sees him once a month. Almost half of the children of divorced parents have not seen their biological fathers for more than a year and 10 years later more than two-thirds have lost contact with him (Hacker 2002:22).

Another factor in the changing American family is the availability of new technologies, particularly those involving the possibility of **surrogate motherhood,** in which a third party assists a couple to have a child. Surrogate motherhood also involves, of course, the willingness of some women to conceive, gestate, and part with a child. As anthropologist Helena Ragoné illustrates in her ethnography *Surrogate Motherhood: Conception in the Heart* (1994), surrogacy is both in opposition to, and also consistent with, American cultural assumptions and ideals about the importance of family, motherhood, fatherhood, and kinship. American laws surround surrogacy with many restrictions, reflecting fears of abuse of this technology for commercial purposes, and surrogacy has received much negative representation in the media. In some surrogacy programs, the surrogates and the couples are introduced to each other and interact closely throughout the process, beginning with insemination, through pregnancy and delivery. In other programs, the couple sees only the biography and photograph of the surrogate and they meet her only for finalizing the stepparent adoption and the pro forma court suit for paternity brought after the child is born.

Many anthropologists predicted that the increase in surrogate births would change the pattern of American kinship. In fact, Ragoné found the opposite to be true, illustrating once again the powerful hold of culture. The participants in surrogacy programs universally used reinterpreted traditional American kinship ideology and definitions of motherhood to recreate the conventional cultural norms that surround American parental roles, reproduction, birth, ideas about the importance of the family, and the biogenetic essence of kinship. Ragoné found that because the women who employ surrogates are not biologically related to their children, they tended to redefine motherhood as consisting of two parts: biological motherhood and social motherhood (a view held by many cultures with regard to fathers, see page 170). Regardless of the mechanics of surrogacy, the couples involved all emphasized the biological relationship of the child to the father, demonstrating the continued importance of the blood tie at the core of traditional Euro-American kinship ideology. The determination of childless couples to pursue surrogacy, in spite of the many difficulties, is also a testimony to the American cultural

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One of the important changes in the family in the United States over the past 50 years is the increasing number of women who work outside the home. In most families, women's domestic responsibilities have not decreased, but in some two-career families there is a movement toward more equal sharing of domestic work and child care.

blended family Kinship networks occasioned by divorce and remarriage in the United States that include the previously divorced spouses and their new marriage partners.

surrogate motherhood A variety of reproductive technologies in which a woman helps a couple to have a child by acting as a biological surrogate, carrying an embryo to term.

Anthropology Makes a Difference

Culture, Power, and Violence within Families

Although ideally families and households are tranquil and benign, too often this is not the reality. All over the globe, violence often occurs within families. Women and children, often the most vulnerable family members, are often its victims. (Eller 2006:115–145). As human rights activist Cesar Chelala points out, domestic violence—physical as well as psychological—occurs more frequently in societies where male power is embedded in cultural and religious patterns (2008; 2007). Thus, domestic violence is found more often in patrilineal, patrilocal societies than in matrilineal, matrilocal societies. It is the relative powerlessness of women within families; women's physical vulnerability; women's isolation from potential sources of support; concepts of sexual honor tied to female chastity; and the lack of alternative economic opportunities to marriage that often provide the context for domestic violence.

Domestic violence against women occurs in Western and non-Western societies, and in some cases, increases with urbanization, upward social mobility, or other factors associated with modernization. Dowry, for example, though outlawed as a prerequisite for marriage in India, is becoming more important among India's urbanized, increasingly modern, and upwardly mobile families. Sometimes, where a groom's family is dissatisfied with a bride's dowry, they may harass her to get her family to give more, or even murder her so that her son can marry again and receive another, and larger, dowry (Nanda and Gregg 2009; Sanghavi et al. 2009; Stone and James 2005).

Domestic violence is a major problem in the United States, where it often involves relative female powerlessness and economic dependence as well as a still strong ideology of male dominance. Though many women are vulnerable to domestic violence, immigrant women are particularly vulnerable. Many come from cultures with strong patriarchal values; they also often lack the language, cultural, and economically valuable skills that would provide alternatives to violent treatment within their families or access to social services. In addition, their U.S. visas are often dependent on their husbands, an added source of leverage against wives taking legal action (Sokoloff and Pratt 2005).

Anthropological understanding has been useful in providing social service and law enforcement agencies with a better knowledge of immigrant cultures, enabling culturally sensitive responses to domestic violence; but, in an ironic twist, this knowl-

ideology that a "family is two adults with a child or children" (Ragoné 1994:115), despite the expansion of alternative family structures we described earlier.

The many changes affecting the American family led anthropologist Philip Kilbride, in his book *Plural Marriages for our Times: A Reinvented Option* (1994), to suggest that the current problems of many American families might well be addressed by accepting polygyny as an alternative form of marriage. Kilbride notes, as we have, that many societies allow or even prefer polygyny. It is disparaged and illegal in the United States, he suggests, because of our particular cultural values rooted in religious beliefs that regard sexuality as sinful and identify polygyny with promiscuity and the valuing of sexual pleasure for its own sake. He points out the contradiction in the fact that the American ideal of monogamous marital fidelity is often transgressed by sexual relations outside marriage. As suggested in our chapter opening, polygyny might have many possible advantages in the United States, and we might be advised to rethink our resistance to it.

Another important trend in the United States is the increasing number of single-parent households. Single-mother families now account for almost 22 percent of all households with children—more than double the proportion of a generation ago. According to one study (Luker 1996), about half the children in the United States will spend at least some of their childhood in a single-parent family. Half of these will do so as the result of divorce or separation; the other half are mainly children of mothers who have never married, a figure about 5 times higher today than it was in the 1960s. Although there have always been many teenage pregnancies in the United States, until the 1970s, such pregnancies were quite likely to result in marriage. However, in the last several decades, there has been less pressure for pregnant teens to marry, and perhaps less advantage in doing so. In 1970, 30 percent of teenage mothers were unmarried at the time they gave birth; by 1995, this figure was 70 percent. To some extent, this mirrors the overall rise in the number of single mothers of every age. Just after World War II, almost every single mother was either a widow or a divorcee; fewer than one in 100 was an unmarried mother. Today unmarried mothers make up more than a third of the households headed by single women. And, though the focus of media attention is often on teenage single mothers, the rise in single motherhood is largely accounted for more by women in their 20s (*New York Times* 2006; Hacker 2002:22). Although woman-headed households are three times more common among African Americans than among European Americans (Andrews 1992:241), two-parent black fami-

edge has sometimes been used in the "cultural defense" to justify the abuse of women (Renteln 2004). In the cultural defense, attorneys argue that the mores concerning the treatment of women in a defendant's culture are so different from those of the United States, that they should be considered a mitigating factor in a defendant's violent behavior. This defense most frequently is used for males who have killed their wives, daughters, or other female relatives whom they view as having sullied their honor or family's reputation.

In an infamous 1988 New York City case, a Chinese man who beat his wife to death because he thought she was being unfaithful was acquitted when the defendant's lawyers, backed by anthropological testimony, argued that the intense shame and dishonor a Chinese man experiences when his wife is unfaithful meant that the husband could not be held fully accountable for his actions (Cardillo 1997). Women's groups, Asian Americans, and legal scholars strongly protested that "there should be only one standard of justice," which should not depend on a defendant's cultural background, and that the court's decision sent out the dangerous message that Asian women cannot be protected by American law (Norgren and Nanda 2006: 177).

In another case, *People v. Metallides* (1974) (Winkelman 1996), Metallides, a Greek immigrant, killed his best friend after this friend raped his daughter. Metallides's lawyers, supported by anthropological evidence, argued successfully that in Greek culture maintaining the family honor demanded that Metallides attempt to kill his friend. Similar cases have involved Hmong (Vietnamese) and Laotian refugees where anthropological testimony about a Hmong husband's culturally sanctioned control over his wife was used to mitigate homicide charges (Norgren and Nanda 1996: 272).

Anthropological testimony in cases using the cultural defense involving violence against women has been the subject of debate within the discipline. The cultural defense raises issues about the degree to which culture can compel individual actions as well as the role anthropologists should play in our legal system (Demian 2008). Anthropology makes a difference: Not by reinforcing the idea that "culture made me do it" is a valid excuse for domestic violence, but in raising awareness of the need for culturally and linguistically sensitive interventions that more effectively serve victims of domestic violence who come from other cultures.

lies are showing gains (Roberts 2008). At the same time, the rates of female-headed single-parent families and unmarried teenage mothers are increasing among both groups, and the differences between the two groups are shrinking.

Also changing is the number of single-father families, which now make up almost 6 percent of all households with children and approximately 20 percent of all single-parent households. Single-mother families and single-father families are different in important ways, however. A 2000 census study found that single fathers were 72 percent more likely to have a woman residing with them than a single mother was to have a man residing with her. And perhaps more important, the median income for custodial fathers is approximately $35,000 whereas that for single mothers is $21,000, including child-support payments (Hacker 2002:22).

The increase in single parenting has a number of causes: one is new forms of contraception that make it easier for couples to have an active sex life without being married, bringing with it a new cultural climate in which marriage can be disconnected from having and rearing children. As moral disapproval of out-of-wedlock births loses cultural force, the number of unmarried mothers can be expected to grow. Although much of the concern over single-parent female-headed households is expressed as political rhetoric about "family values," the real problem is that female-headed households and teenage pregnancy are correlated with poverty. Although single mothering is often cited as a cause of poverty, it has also been suggested as a symptom, because many unmarried teenage mothers are already disadvantaged by the poverty of their parents (Luker 1996).

Composite Families

Composite (compound) families are aggregates of nuclear families linked by a common spouse, most often the husband. Composite families are thus mainly **patrilocal,** structured by rules that require a woman to live in her husband's home after marriage. A polygynous household, consisting of one man with several wives and their respective children, constitutes a composite family. In this case, each wife and her children normally occupy a separate residence.

composite (compound) family An aggregate of nuclear families linked by a common spouse.

patrilocal residence System under which a bride lives with her husband's family after marriage.

Courtesy of Soo Ho Choi

In much of Asia, the family is an extended group of kin connected through patrilineal descent. Although this extended kinship group involves an individual in obligations to others, it is also, ideally, a source of lifetime security, social connectedness, and help when needed.

The dynamics of composite families are different from those of a family that consists of one husband, one wife, and their children, all of whom occupy a common residence. In the composite family, for example, the tie between a mother and her children is particularly strong. The relations between the children of different mothers by the same father is different in a number of ways from the relationship between full siblings in the typical European-American nuclear family. In analyzing the dynamics of the composite family, the interaction between co-wives must be taken into account, as well as the different behavior patterns that emerge when a man is husband to several women rather than just one, and where competition over inheritance and succession are likely.

Extended Families

The extended (consanguineal) family consists of two or more lineally related kinfolk of the same sex and their spouses and offspring, occupying a single household or homestead and under the authority of a household head.

stem family A nuclear family with a dependent adult added on.

patrilineal A lineage formed by descent in the male line.

matrilineal A lineage formed by descent in the female line.

matrilocal residence System under which a husband lives with his wife's family after marriage.

avunculocal residence System under which a married couple lives with the husband's mother's brother.

bilocal residence System under which a married couple has the choice of living with the husband's or the wife's family.

An extended family is not just a collection of nuclear families. In the extended family system, lineal ties—the blood ties between generations—are more important than ties of marriage. The extended family is the ideal in more than half of the world's societies. However, in stratified societies, even if it is ideal, it is found most often among the landlord and prosperous merchant classes; the nuclear or **stem family** (a nuclear family with a dependent adult added on) is more characteristic of the less prosperous peasants.

Extended families may be patrilineal or matrilineal. A **patrilineal** extended family is organized around a man, his sons, and the sons' wives and children. Societies with patrilineal extended families also tend to have patrilocal residence rules; that is, a woman lives with her husband's family after marriage. A **matrilineal** family is organized around a woman and her daughters and the daughters' husbands and children. Matrilineal families may have **matrilocal residence** rules (a man lives in the household of his wife's family) or **avunculocal residence** rules (a married couple is expected to live with the husband's mother's brother). If a couple can choose between living with either the wife's or the husband's family, the pattern is called **bilocal residence.**

Patrilineal, Patrilocal Extended Families In premodern China, the patrilineal, patrilocal extended family was the ideal. Lineal descendants—father, son, and grandson—were the backbone of family organization. The family continued through time as a permanent social entity. As older members were lost through death, new ones were added through birth. As in India, marriage in China was viewed more as acquiring a daughter-in-law than as taking

a wife. It was arranged by the parents, and the new couple lived with the husband's family. The obedient relationship of the son to his father and the loyalty and solidarity of brothers were given more importance than the ties between husband and wife. In both India and China, the public demonstration of affection between a married couple was severely criticized. In both systems, it was feared that a man's feeling for his wife would interfere with his carrying out responsibilities to his own blood kin.

In these cultures, a good wife was one who was a good daughter-in-law. She had to work hard, under the eyes of her mother-in-law and her husband's elder brothers' wives. With the birth of a son, a woman gained more acceptance in the household. As the years went by, if she had been patient and played her role well, the relationship between husband and wife developed into one of companionship and a more equal division of power. As her sons grew up, the wife achieved even more power as she began to arrange for their marriages. When several sons were married, a woman might be the dominant person in the household, even ordering her husband about, as his economic power, and consequently his authority, waned.

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The Hopi family is matrilineal and revolves around a core of women. A husband moves to his wife's household, in which he has important economic responsibilities but few ritual obligations. The most important male role in Hopi society, as in other matrilineal societies, is a man's relation to his sister's son, and a man retains authority and leadership in his natal household even after he marries.

Matrilineal, Matrilocal Extended Families In the matrilineal extended family, which is also generally matrilocal, the most important ties are between a woman and her mother and her siblings. In a patrilineal society, a child's father is responsible for providing for and protecting the mother-child unit. He has control over women and their children, and owns property with other males in his family. In a matrilineal society, these rights and responsibilities fall to a woman's brother rather than her husband. In matrilineal societies, a man gains sexual and economic rights over a woman when he marries her, but he does not gain rights over her children. The children belong to the mother's descent group, not the father's.

In matrilineal systems, a man usually goes to live with or near his wife's kin after marriage. This means that the man is the stranger in the household, whereas his wife is surrounded by her kin. Because a husband's role in the matrilineal household is less important than in the patrilineal one, marriages in matrilineal societies tend to be less stable.

The Hopi: A Matrilineal Society The Hopi, a Pueblo group in the American Southwest, are a matrilineal society. The matrilineage is conceived of as timeless, stretching backward to the beginnings of the Hopi people and continuing into the future. Both male and female members of the lineage consider their mother's house their home, but men move out to live with their wives after marriage. They return to this home for many ritual and ceremonial occasions, however, and also in the case of separation or divorce. The relationship of a man with his father's lineage and household is affectionate, involving some economic and ritual obligations but little direct cooperation or authority.

The Hopi household revolves around a central and continuing core of women. The mother-daughter relationship is an exceedingly close one, based on blood ties, common activities, and lifelong residence together. A mother is responsible for the economic and ritual training of her daughters. The daughter behaves with respect, obedience, and affection to her mother and normally lives with her mother and mother's sisters after marriage. A mother also has a close relationship with her sons, although a son moves to his wife's home after marriage.

A son belongs to his mother's lineage and keeps much of his personal and ritual property in her home. A son shows respect for his mother as head of the household and consults her on all important decisions.

The strongest and most permanent tie in Hopi society is between sisters. The foundation of the household group is the relation of sisters to one another and to their mother. The children of sisters are raised together; if one sister dies, another looks after her children. Sisters cooperate in all domestic tasks. There are usually few quarrels, and when they occur, they are settled by the mother's brother or their own brothers.

As in all matrilineal societies, a man's relationship to his sister's sons is very important. As head of his sister's lineage and household, a Hopi man is in a position of authority and control. He is the chief disciplinarian and has the primary responsibility for the important task of transmitting the ritual heritage of the lineage and clan. He is consulted in the choice of a spouse, instructs his nephews in the proper behavior toward his new relatives, and formally welcomes his niece's husband into the household. A man usually selects his most capable nephew as his successor and trains him in the duties of whatever ceremonial position he may hold. Boys may fear their maternal uncles as sources of power and authority.

Hopi husbands have important economic functions but do not participate in the matrilineage ritual. They may be peripheral in their wives' households, having not only divided residences but divided loyalties. A Hopi father's obligations to his sons are primarily economic. He prepares them to make a living by teaching them to farm and herd sheep. At a son's marriage, a father often presents him with a portion of the flock and a small piece of land. The economic support a son receives from his father is returned in the father's old age, when he is supported by his sons.

Whereas a boy's relationship with his maternal uncle is characterized by reserve, respect, and even fear, his relationship with his father is more affectionate and involves little discipline. A Hopi man's relationship with his daughter is also generally affectionate but not close, and he has few specific duties in regard to her upbringing.

In addition to matrilineages, the Hopi also have matrilineal clans that extend over many different villages. A Hopi man must not marry within his own clan or the clan of his father or his mother's father. Through marriage a Hopi man acquires a wide range of relatives in addition to those resulting from his membership in his mother's clan. Kinship terms are extended to all these people, leading to a vast number of potential sibling relationships and the lateral integration of a great number of separate lineages and clans. This extension of kinship relates a Hopi in some way to almost everyone in the village, to people in other villages, and even to people in other Pueblo groups who have similar clans. In the clans, men play important political and religious roles, in contrast to the marginal positions they have in domestic life (Eggan 1950).

Advantages of Extended Families Societies such as the United States that extol the benefits of individualism and material success are structured around the relatively isolated nuclear family unit. Other kinds of families, however, whether extended families or nuclear families embedded in small communities, are clearly adaptive under certain economic and social conditions, and have advantages for members of those societies. The extended family system prevails in all types of cultivating societies, where its main adaptive advantages are economic. One advantage of the extended family is that it provides more workers than the nuclear family. This is useful both for food and crafts production and marketing. Furthermore, in stable agricultural societies, ownership of land becomes important as a source of pride, prestige, and power. The family becomes attached to the land, knows how to work it, and becomes reluctant to divide it. A system in which land is divided into small parcels through inheritance becomes unproductive. The extended family is a way of keeping land intact, providing additional security for individuals in times of crisis.

Although the nuclear family appears well adapted to industrialized society, the extended family is not necessarily a liability in some urban settings. The principles of mutual obligation of extended kin, joint ownership of property, and an authority structure in which the male household head makes decisions after consulting with junior members have proved useful among the upper classes of urban India in their successful management of modern corporations (Milton Singer 1968).

Like family types, residence rules are usually adaptive to food-producing strategies and other economic factors. Patrilocality, for example, is functional in societies practicing hunting and in agricultural societies, where men must work cooperatively. Matrilocality appears to be adaptive in horticultural societies, where women have an important role in the economy. Nevertheless, many horticultural societies are patrilocal.

Patrilocal residence rules may also be adaptive in societies where males must cooperate in warfare (Ember and Ember 1971). Where fighting between lineages or villages is common, it is useful for men who will fight together to live together. Otherwise, they might wind up having to choose between defending their wife's local group, the one with whom they live, against the families with whom they grew up. Where warfare takes place between societies, rather than within them, and where men must leave their homes to fight, cooperation among women is very important. Because common residence promotes cooperation, matrilocal residence is a functional norm when males engage in warfare that extends beyond local groups.