

Chapter 8

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Marriage, Family and Domestic Groups

Chapter Outline

- Functions of marriage and the family
- Are Marriage and the Family Universal?
- Marriage Rules
- Choosing A Mate
- Exchange of Goods and Rights at Marriage
- Families, Domestic Groups and Rules of Residence

Functions of Marriage

- Regulates sexual access.
- Creates a family.
- Expands social group.

Marriage

Customs, rules, and obligations for relationships between:

- A sexually cohabiting man and woman
- Parents and children
- Families of the bride and groom

Regulate Sexual Access

Reasons:

- Limits sexual competition.
- Provides stability for children.
- Allows for stable economic exchange.

Incest Taboos

- Prohibit sexual relations between relatives.
- Universal to most cultures.
- Exceptions :
 - Brother-sister marriages among royalty in ancient Egypt
 - Traditional Hawaiian society

Reasons for Incest Taboo

- Avoids inbreeding.
- Prevents disruption in the nuclear family.
- Directs sexual desires outside the family.
- Forces people to marry outside the family and create a larger social community.

Family Structure

Marriage provides a stable structure:

- The male can provide food and protection.
- The female can nurse and nurture the children.

Expands Social Groups

- Links different families and kin groups.
- Leads to cooperation beyond the primary husband-wife pair.
- Allows people to share resources.
- Benefits the survival of the species.

Exogamy

- Rules specifying that a person must marry outside a particular group.
- Almost universal within the primary family group.
- Leads to alliances between different families and groups.

Endogamy

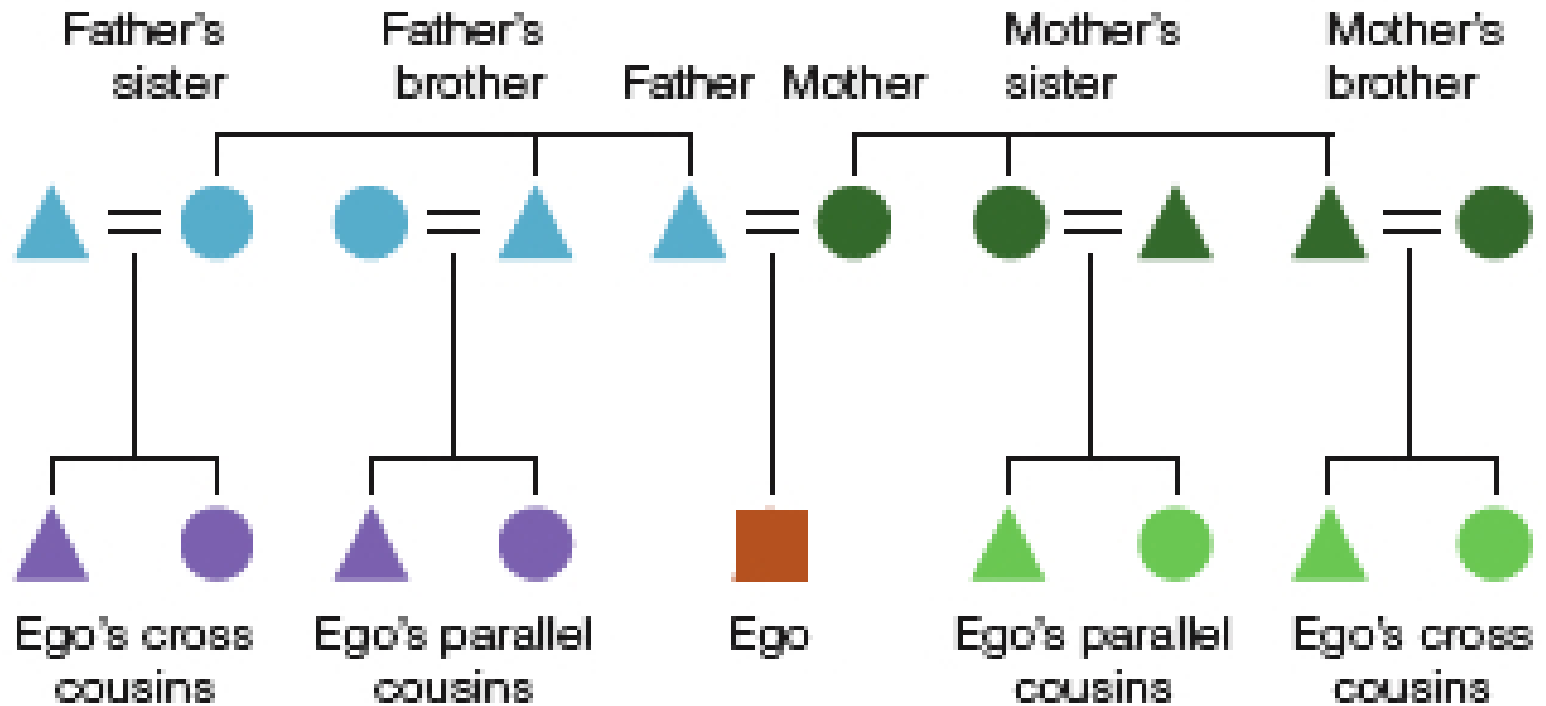
- Rules that marriage must be within a particular group.
 - In India, the caste is an endogamous group.
 - In the U.S., social classes tend to be endogamous.

Preferential Marriage Rules

- Rules about the preferred categories of relatives for marriage partners:
 - **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).

Diagram: Cross Cousins and Parallel Cousins



Preferential Marriage Rules

- Levirate - A man marries widow of a deceased brother.
- Sororate - When a man's wife dies, her sister is given to him as a wife.

Question

- Customs such as the levirate and sororate support the notion that
 - a) marriage is a negotiated alliance between kin groups rather than between individuals.
 - b) romantic love is the basis for marriage in most world societies.
 - c) children are relatively unimportant as a reason for getting married.
 - d) brothers often violently compete with one another to obtain wives.
 - e) being a widow or widower is a permanent status in societies with these customs.

Answer: a

- Customs such as the levirate and sororate support the notion that **marriage is a negotiated alliance between kin groups rather than between individuals.**

Number of Spouses

- All societies have rules about how many spouses a person can have at one time.
- Monogamy is the norm only in Europe and north America.
- 75% of the world's societies prefer plural marriage.

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.

Choosing a Mate

- In most societies, marriage is important because it links kin groups of the married couple.
- This accounts for the practice of arranged marriages.
- 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.

Exchange of Goods in Marriage

- Three kinds of exchanges made in connection with marriage are:
 - Bride service
 - Bridewealth
 - Dowry

Bride Service

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

Bridewealth

- The most common form of marriage exchange.
- Cash or goods are given by the groom's kin to the bride's kin to seal a marriage.
- A major function is to legitimate the new reproductive and socioeconomic unit created by the marriage.
- Bridewealth paid at marriage is returned if a marriage is terminated.
- A person can claim compensation for a violation of conjugal rights only if the bridewealth has been paid.

Dowry

- A presentation of goods by the bride's kin to the groom's family.
- Less common than other forms of exchange at marriage.
- Dowry has different meanings and functions in different societies.
 - In some cases it represents a woman's share of her family inheritance.
 - In other cases it is a payment transferred from the bride's family to the groom's family.

Question

- Which statement best summarizes anthropological thinking on the functions of dowry across the societies in which this custom is practiced?
 - a) The dowry is the woman's wealth that she is able to keep as her own economic security.
 - b) A dowry is received by the wife's extended family for their loss of a daughter.
 - c) Dowry is compensation from the groom's family since the bride will not inherit from her family.
 - d) In societies that practice the dowry, it is part of the process of legitimization of the new alliance formed by a marriage.

Answer: d

- The following statement best summarizes anthropological thinking on the functions of dowry across the societies in which this custom is practiced:
 - **In societies that practice the dowry, it is part of the process of legitimization of the new alliance formed by a marriage.**

Types of Families

- Anthropologists identify two basic types of families:
 1. Nuclear families are organized around the conjugal tie, the relationship between husband and wife
 2. The extended family is based on consanguineal, or blood, relations extending over three or more generations.

Neolocal Residence

- System under which a couple establishes an independent household after marriage.
- Only 5% of the world's societies are neolocal.

Households

- A domestic group, or household, is not the same as a family.
- Households may also include people who aren't related.

Changing American Family: Blended Families

- Blended families include previously divorced spouses and their new partners, children from previous marriages, and multiple sets of grandparents and other similar relations.
- Almost half of the children of divorced parents have not seen their biological fathers for more than a year.
 - 10 years later more than 2/3 have lost contact with him.

Changing American Family: Single-Parent Families

- Single-mother families now account for almost 22% of all households with children - more than double the proportion of a generation ago.
- About half the children in the U.S. will spend some of their childhood in a single-parent family.
- Single-father families now make up almost 6% of all households with children and approximately 20% percent of all single parent households.

Single-mothers and Single-fathers

- A 2000 census study found single fathers were 72% more likely to have a woman residing with them than a single mother was to have a man residing with her.
- The median income for custodial fathers is approximately \$35,000.
- The median income for single mothers is \$21,000 annually, which includes child support payments.

Composite Family

- Aggregates of nuclear families linked by a common spouse.
 - **Example:** Polygynous household consisting of one man with several wives.
- Most composite families are patrilocal, a system under which a bride lives with her husband's family after marriage.

Extended Family

- Blood relations extending over three or more generations.
- Economic advantages: keeps land intact and provides security in times of crisis.
- Provides a sense of participation and dignity for the older family members.

Extended Family

- Extended families may be patrilineal or matrilineal.
- A patrilineal extended family is organized around a man, his sons, and the sons' wives and children.
- A matrilineal family is organized around a woman and her daughters and the daughters' husbands and children.

Rules of Residence

- Patrilocal residence - a woman lives with her husband's family after marriage.
- Matrilocal residence - a man lives in the household of his wife's family.
- Avunculocal residence - 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.

Quick Quiz



1. Explanations regarding the function of familial incest taboos include all **except** which of the following:
 - a) This restriction forces people to make alliances with other families, expanding societal links.
 - b) Freud's idea was that such a taboo prevents disruption and conflict within the family.
 - c) Taboos prohibiting mating between closely-related individuals arose because of the higher incidence of deleterious traits.
 - d) Incest taboos restrict the known damaging consequences of inbreeding between parent and offspring and between siblings.

Answer: c

- Explanations regarding the function of familial incest taboos don't include the following:
 - **Taboos prohibiting mating between closely-related individuals arose because of the higher incidence of deleterious traits.**

2. Hypothetical case example: A young husband had an unfortunate encounter with a crocodile as he was herding his cows along the banks of the Nile River. As custom dictated, his brother subsequently married the bereaved widow, adding her to his polygynous household. This would be an example of
- a) the sororate.
 - b) the practice of bride-service.
 - c) the levirate.
 - d) an arranged marriage.
 - e) sororal polygyny.

Answer: c

- Hypothetical case example: A young husband had an unfortunate encounter with a crocodile as he was herding his cows along the banks of the Nile River. As custom dictated, his brother subsequently married the bereaved widow, adding her to his polygynous household. This would be an example of **the levirate**.

3. Which of the following does **not** describe contemporary patterns and/or ideals regarding the American family?
- a) a high divorce rate and the associated pattern social scientists call "serial monogamy"
 - b) changing household composition, from a nuclear family to more single-parent households
 - c) emphasis on romantic love as the basis for the emotional bond between husband and wife
 - d) during the past two decades, a significant decline in households headed by single parents, who are usually women
 - e) an ideal shared by most Americans is that of a nuclear family with a neolocal residence pattern

Answer: d

- The following does **not** describe contemporary patterns and/or ideals regarding the American family:
 - **during the past two decades, a significant decline in households headed by single parents, who are usually women.**

4. Persons related by "blood" as opposed to marriage are known as one's
- a) siblings.
 - b) parallel cousins.
 - c) consanguines.
 - d) affines.
 - e) domestic group.

Answer: c

- Persons related by "blood" as opposed to marriage are known as one's **consanguines**.