

Kinship

1. As an organizing principle for life
 - a. We tend to think of kin as something natural, biological or as having some basis beyond culture
 - i. For example, children reuniting with birth parents
 - b. Kinship is actually highly variable and artificial from one culture to the next
 - c. Kinship organizes groups larger than a single family or households
 - d. It can be seen as a form of social engineering

2. We need to start with basic assumptions:
 - a. Lots of things are better done in groups
 - i. Fishing – in Amazon done by stunning the fish in the water and collecting them as they float to the surface
 - ii. Hunting – before horses, plains Indians would herd buffalo off a cliff or into a boxed canyon
 - iii. Agriculture
 - iv. Raising livestock
 - v. Defense
 - b. Social organization
 - i. Network of people helps deal with:
 1. Inheritance

2. Mutual assistance
3. Performance of rituals
4. Trust is key in these relationships

3. Groups have requirements, in order to be successful:

a. Organization

i. Rules of membership: Who's in? Who's out?

ii. When groups become more desirable, how do you keep membership **exclusive**?

1. e.g. successful Indian Casinos need to regulate who is a member of their tribe.

iii. Sometimes groups are mutually exclusive – every person is supposed to belong to only one

1. Nations
2. Defensive groups

b. Groups need to maintain **continuity over time**

i. “Corporation”, meaning anything that exists beyond its individual members

ii. universities, churches, countries

c. Need ways to **conceptualize group unification**

i. What do all group members have in common?

1. Blood
2. nationality

3. religion

d. Rules inspiring loyalty

e. Ways of making groups run effectively

4. Many ways to fulfill these requirements

a. Bureaucracy

- i. a fairly new way of organizing in history
- ii. Requires writing, sometimes computers
- iii. Difficult in pre-modern settings

b. Formalization of age groups

- i. Born into an age set
- ii. You go through life with those people and they perform certain fxn within the society at each stage of life
 1. i.e. the Zulu had age-based armies

c. Kinship – we are all blood

- i. See it in all sorts of pre-modern societies
- ii. We do it to some extent
- iii. This is a model, NOT real biology
- iv. Arbitrary in many ways

1. 19th century a big anthropological discovery was that means of establishing kinship differ from one culture to the next

5. Forms of Kinship Organization

a. **Bilateral** or **Cognatic** kinship

- i. There's a single founding ancestor and every descendant, regardless of sex is a member
- ii. The Kuna have groups like this
- iii. But this puts a single person into many groups simultaneously

b. **Patrilineal** or **Agnatic** kinship

- i. Only the males pass on group membership
- ii. This doesn't mean that women aren't members, they just don't pass on their membership
 1. the Nuer have this system
 2. Euro-American cultures do this to some extent with passing on last names
 3. Royal inheritance
- iii. These rules get bent
 1. Divorce or children out of wedlock
- iv. Memories of genealogy get faked or altered
- v. Patrilineal systems turn up in societies around the world – very common with herding economies.
 1. Seem to be a bit more violence because brothers live with one another

c. 2 distinctions: Clans vs. Lineages

- i. a **Clan** is a descent group in which everyone claims being descended from a common ancestor but aren't sure how they connect to other clan members or ancestors
 - ii. a **Lineage** is a descent group in which not only do you know your ancestors, but you can trace all the connections between yourself and other members of the lineage
- d. Lineages can be subdivided, nesting segments
- e. Groups expand and contract depending on the situation
- f. 19th century saw the discovery of **Matrilineal** or **Uterine** kinship
- i. only daughters pass on membership
 - ii. This does NOT mean that the society was matriarchical
 - 1. i.e. the Iroquois had a matrilineal society, It was easier for many reasons:
 - a. the men often went off to war or to hunt.
 - b. The women dealt with much of the local business of the tribe.
 - c. Also, since the lineage was preserved through the women, the men could marry out into white settler society and white men could marry into the tribe.Ultimately this helped to preserve the tribal lineage.
- g. Certain feminists have claimed that matrilineal societies are evidence of a time when Matriarchical societies were the norm
- i. Get notions of "Goddess" worship

ii. Much of this turns out not to be true.

1. Men and women in many societies celebrate female fertility, regardless of being patriarchal societies

h. Some societies are both Matrilineal and Patrilineal

i. Many kinship relationships have nothing to do with descent groups

i. For example sometimes it might be more beneficial to seek out your mother's brother, to whom you are still related, but who is in a different descent group

j. Kinship become the framework for many things in life

i. But rules are not static

ii. You do have to work within the system

1. But over time, especially during times of civil war, things that were assumed to be rules, turn into preferences

6. Marriage

a. Many use marriage as a means of getting other things done – a social mechanism, just like descent groups

b. Alliances can be built on marriage exchange

c. Bilateral exchange:

i. You can marry your mother's brother's daughter or your father's sister's daughter

ii. Many people are called "wife" and "sister" even though they might not be so,

iii. This bilateral exchange sets up an even exchange

- d. Asymmetrical marriage exchange is much less common
- e. In the West, marriage is political especially in royal families
- f. Marriage debates are still going on
 - i. Homosexual marriage
 - 1. The Nuer marry women to women
 - ii. In France, they will issue a marriage licenses to a woman so that she can marry a dead man, if the two were engaged before he died.