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Human Culture and Ties that Connect

2.1. Conceptualizing Culture: What Culture is and What Culture isn't

Definition of Culture

- Edward B. Tylor
 - ✓ a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society
- B. Malinowski
 - ✓ cumulative creation of man

- ✓ the **handiwork** of man and the medium through which he achieves his ends.
- Robert Bierstedt
 - ✓ complex whole that **consists of everything we think and do and have** as members of society
- culture is the **common way of life** shared by a group of people
- It **includes all things beyond nature and biology**
- Therefore **Culture is**
 - ✓ **moral, intellectual and spiritual discipline** for advancement, in accordance with the norms and values based on accumulated heritage
 - ✓ a **system of learned behavior** shared by and transmitted among the members of the group
 - ✓ **collective heritage** learned by individuals and passed from one generation to another

- **individual** receives culture as part of social heritage and in turn, may **reshape the culture and introduce changes** which then become part of the heritage of succeeding generations

2.2 Characteristic Features of Culture

Main Features of culture

1. Culture Is Learned

- ✓ It **not transmitted genetically**
- ✓ it is acquired through the process of learning or interacting with one's environment
- ✓ human relies for their survival on behavior patterns that are learned
- ✓ **Enculturation:**
 - **process of acquiring culture after we born**
 - the process by which an individual learns the rules and values of one's culture

2. Culture Is Shared

- ✓ Thing, idea, behavior pattern **to qualify as being “cultural”** it **must have a shared meaning by at least two people within a society**

- ✓ In order to society to operate effectively, guidelines must be shared by its members
- ✓ Without shared culture
 - Members unable to communicate and cooperates
 - confusion and disorder world result

3. Culture Is Symbolic

- ✓ A symbol is something verbal or nonverbal, within a particular language or culture that comes to stand for something else
- ✓ Symbolic thought is unique and crucial to humans and to cultural learning
- ✓ There need be no obvious, natural, or necessary connection between the symbol and what it symbolizes
- ✓ symbol's meaning is not always obvious
- ✓ many symbols are powerful and often trigger behaviors or emotional states
 - ✓ Example: the designs and colors of the flags

4. Culture Is All-Encompassing

- ✓ It encompasses all aspects(material and non-material), which affect people in their everyday lives
- ✓ particular people's culture referring to all of its man- made objects, ideas, activities, old time things or those created lately

- ✓ Culture It is the sum total of human creation: intellectual, technical, artistic, physical, and moral
- ✓ It is the complex pattern of living that directs human social life

5. Culture Is Integrated

- ✓ Cultures are **not haphazard** collections of customs and beliefs
- ✓ It is integrated wholes, the **parts** of which, to some degree, are **interconnected** with one another
- ✓ A **culture is a system**, change in one aspect will likely generate changes in other aspects
- ✓ We can describe integrated nature of culture is by using the analogy between a culture and a living organism
 - ❖ human body comprises a number of systems, all functioning to maintain the overall health of the organisms

6. Culture Can Be Adaptive and Maladaptive

- ✓ Humans have both **biological and cultural ways of coping with environmental stresses**
- ✓ we use "cultural adaptive kits," which contain customary activities and tools that aid us

- ✓ unlike other animals, **people adapt to the environment & any ecological condition using culture**
- ✓ Culture has allowed the global human population to grow in population through out the long history
- ✓ Sometimes, adaptive behaviour that offers short-term benefits to particular subgroups or individuals may harm the environment and threaten the group's long-term survival
 - ✓ Example: driving Automobiles
- ✓ Many cultural patterns such as **overconsumption and pollution** appear to be **maladaptive** in the long run

7. Culture Is Dynamic

- ✓ Culture is **changing constantly** as new ideas and new techniques are added
- ✓ There are **no cultures that remain completely static** year after year
- ✓ This characteristics of culture **stems from the culture's cumulative quality**

2.3 Aspects/Elements of Culture

Two of the most basic aspects of culture are:

1) Material culture

- consist of **man-made objects**
 - ✓ such as: tools, implements, furniture, automobiles, buildings, physical substance which has been changed and used by man
- It is concerned with the **external, mechanical and utilitarian objects.**
- It is referred to as **civilization**

2) Non – Material culture

- The term 'culture' when used in the ordinary sense, means 'non-material culture'
- It is something **internal and intrinsically valuable**, reflects the inward **nature of man**
- consists of:
 - ✓ words, language
 - ✓ beliefs, values and virtues
 - ✓ habits, rituals and practices, ceremonies
 - ✓ customs and tastes, attitudes & outlook, our ways of acting, feeling and thinking
- Some of the aspects of non-material culture
 - **Values**

- **standards** by which member of a society **define what is good or bad, beautiful or ugly**
- central aspect of the nonmaterial culture of a society
- important because they **influence the behavior of the members of a society.**

➤ Beliefs

- cultural conventions that **concern true or false assumptions,** **specific descriptions of the nature of the universe and humanity's place in it**

❖ **Values are generalized** notions of what is good and bad; **beliefs are more specific** and, in form at least, **have more content**, example:

- ✓ Education is good – value
- ✓ Grading is the best way to evaluate students - belief

➤ Norms

- **shared rules or guidelines** that define **how people “ought” to behave** under certain circumstances
- They are generally connected to the values, beliefs, and ideologies of a society
- Norms vary in **terms of their importance** to a culture, these are:

1. Folkway

- Norms guiding **ordinary usages** and conventions of **everyday life**
- They are norms that are **not strictly enforced**
- Example: not leaving your seat for an elderly people inside a bus/taxi – result - a person getting a bad look

2. Mores

- **much stronger norms** than are folkways
- They are norms that are believed to be essential to core values and we insist on conformity
- Example: Steals, rapes, kills - violation are society's most important mores
- **People who violate mores are usually severely punished**, although **punishment for the violation of mores varies from society to society**, It may take the form of
 - ✓ Ostracism, vicious gossip, public ridicule, exile, loss of one's job, physical beating, imprisonment, commitment to a mental asylum, or even execution

2.4 Cultural Unity and Variations: Universality, Generality and Particularity of Culture

- i. Certain biological, psychological, social, and cultural features are
 - **Universal** - found in **every culture**
 - **Generalities** - common to **several but not all** human groups
 - **Particularities** - **unique** to certain cultural traditions

1) Universality

- cultural traits that **span across all cultures**
- **Most are biologically** that distinguish us from other species
 - ✓ Long period of infant dependency, Year-round sexuality, Complex brain that enables use of symbols, languages, and tools Social universals, Life in groups
 - ✓ A great **example** of universality is – **family**

2) Generality

- traits that **occur in many societies but not all of them**
- Societies can share same beliefs and customs because of **borrowing**
Domination (colonial rule)

- ✓ when customs and procedures are imposed on one culture can also cause generality Independent innovation of same cultural trait – Farming

✓ Examples - Nuclear family Parents and children

3) Particularity

- Trait of a culture that is **not widespread** Cultural borrowing
 - ✓ traits once limited are more widespread Useful traits that don't clash with current culture get borrowed
- **Examples:** – Food dishes
- Particularities are becoming **rarer in some ways but also becoming more obvious**
- Borrowed cultural traits are modified Marriage, parenthood, death, puberty, birth all celebrated differently

2.5. Evaluating Cultural Differences: Ethnocentrism, Cultural Relativism and Human Rights

The concepts of ethnocentrism and cultural relativism occupy key position in anthropology

I. ETHNOCENTRISM

- It refers to the tendency to see the behaviors, beliefs, values, and norms of **one's own group as the only right way of living** and to judge others by those standards
- operate on the premise that our own society's ways are the correct, normal, better ways, for acting, thinking, feeling and behaving
 - ✓ **Our own group is the centre or axis of everything**, and we scale and rate all others with reference to it
- It is a cultural universal
- **Alien cultural traits are often viewed as being not just different but inferior, less sensible, and even "unnatural".**
- Ethnocentrism results in:
 - **prejudices** about people from other cultures and the rejection of their "alien ways."
 - **prevent** us from **understanding and appreciating** another culture
 - **prevent open communication** and **result in misunderstanding and mistrust**
- The **positive aspect of ethnocentrism**:

- the **protection that it can provide for a culture**. By causing a rejection of the foods, customs, and perceptions of people in other cultures, it acts as a **conservative force** in preserving traditions of one's own culture

II. CULTURAL RELATIVISM

- The concept of cultural relativism states that cultures differ, so that a **cultural trait, act, or idea has no meaning but its meaning only within its cultural setting**
- A **culture has to be studied in terms of its own meanings and values**
 - we need to examine others behavior as insiders, seeing it **within the framework of their values, beliefs and motives**
 - Cultural relativism suspends judgment and views about the behavior of people **from the perspective of their own culture**
- Cultural relativism describes a situation where **there is an attitude of respect for cultural differences** rather than condemning other people's culture as uncivilized or backward
- Respect for cultural differences involves:
 - ✓ **Appreciating cultural diversity**, Accepting and **respecting** other cultures
 - ✓ Knowing that a person's own culture is only one among many;

- ✓ Recognizing that what is immoral, ethical, acceptable, etc, in one culture may not be so in another culture.

III. HUMAN RIGHTS

- Human rights are rights based on justice and morality beyond and superior to particular countries, cultures, and religions
- Such rights are seen as inalienable (nations cannot abridge or terminate them) and international (larger than and superior to individual nations and cultures)
- The idea of human rights challenges cultural relativism by invoking a realm of justice and morality beyond and superior to the laws and customs of particular countries, cultures, and religions
- Anthropologists respect human diversity. Most ethnographers try to be objective, accurate, and sensitive in their accounts of other cultures. However, their objectivity, sensitivity and a cross-cultural perspective got nothing to do with ignoring international standards of justice and morality

2.6 Culture Change

- anthropological account of the culture of any society is a type of snapshot view of one particular time

- there are no cultures that remain completely static year after year

Culture change can occur as a result of the following Mechanisms:

1) Diffusion

- The process by which cultural elements are borrowed from another society and incorporated into the culture of the recipient group
- Culture change can occur as a result of the following Mechanisms:
 - Direct
 - ✓ when two cultures trade with, intermarry among, or wage war on one another
 - Forced
 - ✓ when one culture subjugates another and imposes its customs on the dominated group
 - Indirect
 - ✓ when items or traits move from group A to group C via group B without any firsthand contact between A and C
 - group B might be traders or merchants
 - group B might be geographically situated between A and C

- ❖ In today's world, much international diffusion is indirect-culture spread by the mass media and advanced information technology

2) Acculturation

- When exchange of cultural features results groups having continuous firsthand contact
- This usually happens in situations of trade or colonialism
- In situations of continuous contact, cultures have also exchanged and blended foods, recipes, music, dances, clothing, tools, and technologies

3) Invention

- Invention is the process by which humans innovate, creatively finding solutions to problems
- people in different societies have innovated and changed in similar ways, which is one reason cultural generalities exist
- Often a major invention, such as agriculture, triggers a series of subsequent interrelated changes
 - ✓ example is the independent invention of agriculture in the Middle East and Mexico
 - It led to many social, political, and legal changes

4) Globalization

- The term globalization encompasses a series of processes, including diffusion and acculturation, working to promote change in a world in which nations and people are increasingly interlinked and mutually dependent
 - ✓ Promoting such linkages are economic and political forces, as well as modern systems of transportation and communication
- The mass media help propel a globally spreading culture of consumption
- Emigrants transmit information and resources transnationally, as they maintain their ties with home. In a sense such people live multilocally-in different places and cultures at once

2.7 Ties That Connect: Marriage, Family and Kinship

2.7.1 MARRIAGE

- marriage marks a change in status for a man and a woman and the acceptance by society of the new family that is formed

- anthropologists have debated whether or not families and the institutions of marriage are universals
 - ✓ **Nayar of Southern India**, did not have marriage in the conventional sense of the term
 - husband took no responsibility for the women
 - frequently he never saw her again
 - Nayar do not have marriage according to our definition in that **there is no economic, cooperation, regulation of sexual activity, cohabitation, or expectation of permanency**

2.7.1.1 Rules of Marriage

- Societies also have rules that state whom one can and cannot marry, rules regulating mating (sexual intercourse)
- common form of **prohibition** is **mating with certain type of kin** that are defined by the society as **being inappropriate sexual partners**
 - ✓ **incest taboos** - prohibitions on mating with certain categories of relatives
 - ✓ most **universal form of incest taboo** involves **mating between** members of the **immediate (nuclear) family**:
mother-sons, father-daughters, and brother-sisters

- ✓ There are a few striking examples of **marriage between members of the immediate family** that violate the universality of the incest taboo
 - **royal families among the ancient Egyptians, Incas and Hawaiians** were permitted
- **Marriage** is a permanent **legal union** between a man and a woman. It is an important institution without which the society could never be sustained

2.7.1.2 Mate Selection: Whom Should You Marry?

1) Exogamy

- **man is not allowed to marry someone from his own social group**
- **reasons** for which practice of exogamy got approval
 - ✓ A **conception of blood relation** prevails among the members of a group
 - ✓ **Attraction between a male and female gets lost** due to close relationship in a small group
 - ✓ popular idea that a great **increase of energy and vigor is possible in the progeny if marriage binds two extremely distant persons** who possess no kin relation
 - ✓ **exogamy has adaptive value** - it links people into a wider social network that nurtures, helps, and protects them

2) Endogamy

- requires individuals to marry within their own group and forbids them to marry outside it
- Religious groups such as the Amish, Mormons, Catholics, and Jews have rules of endogamy
- Castes in India and Nepal are also endogamous

3) Preferential Cousin Marriage

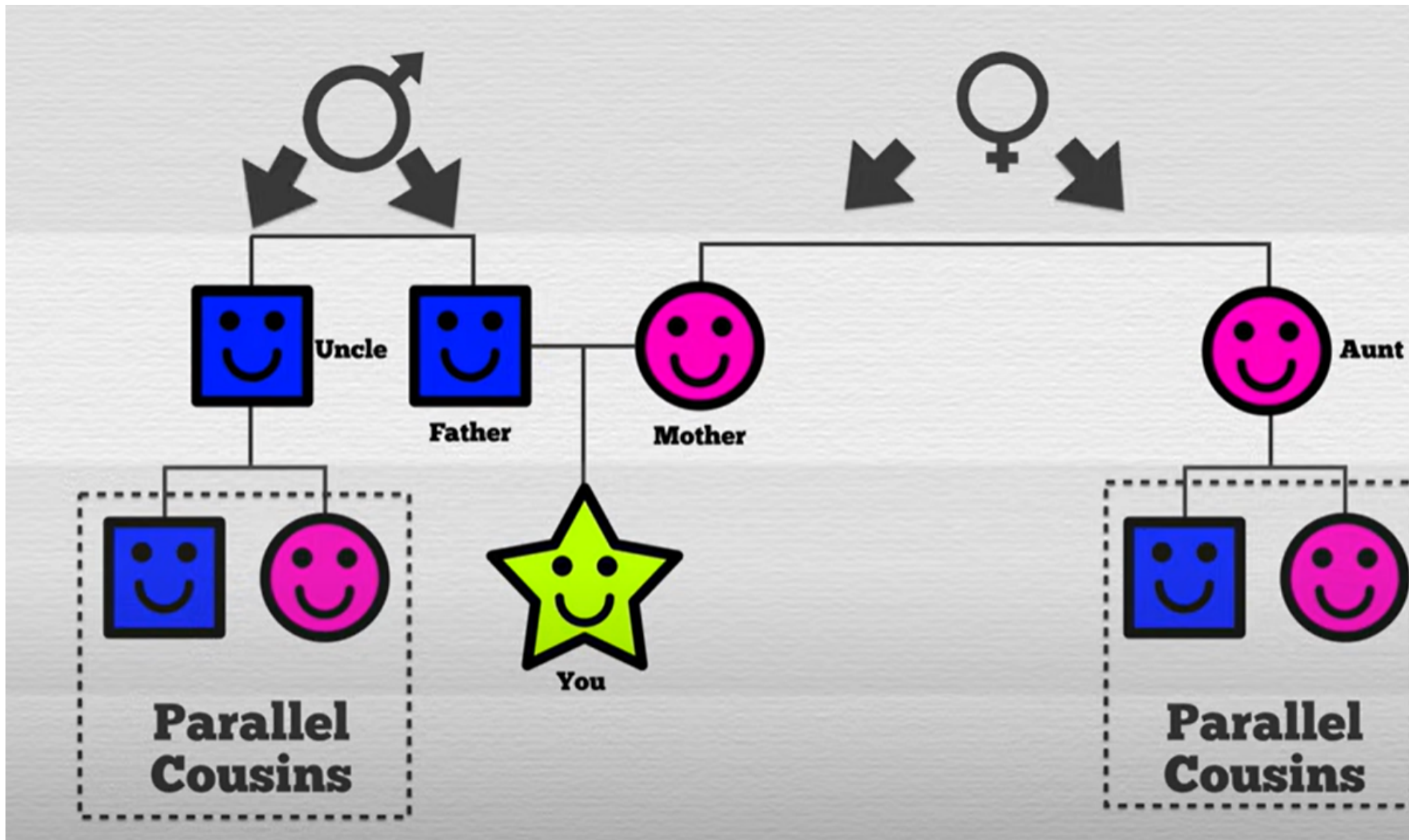
- Kinship systems based on lineages distinguish between two different types of first cousins:

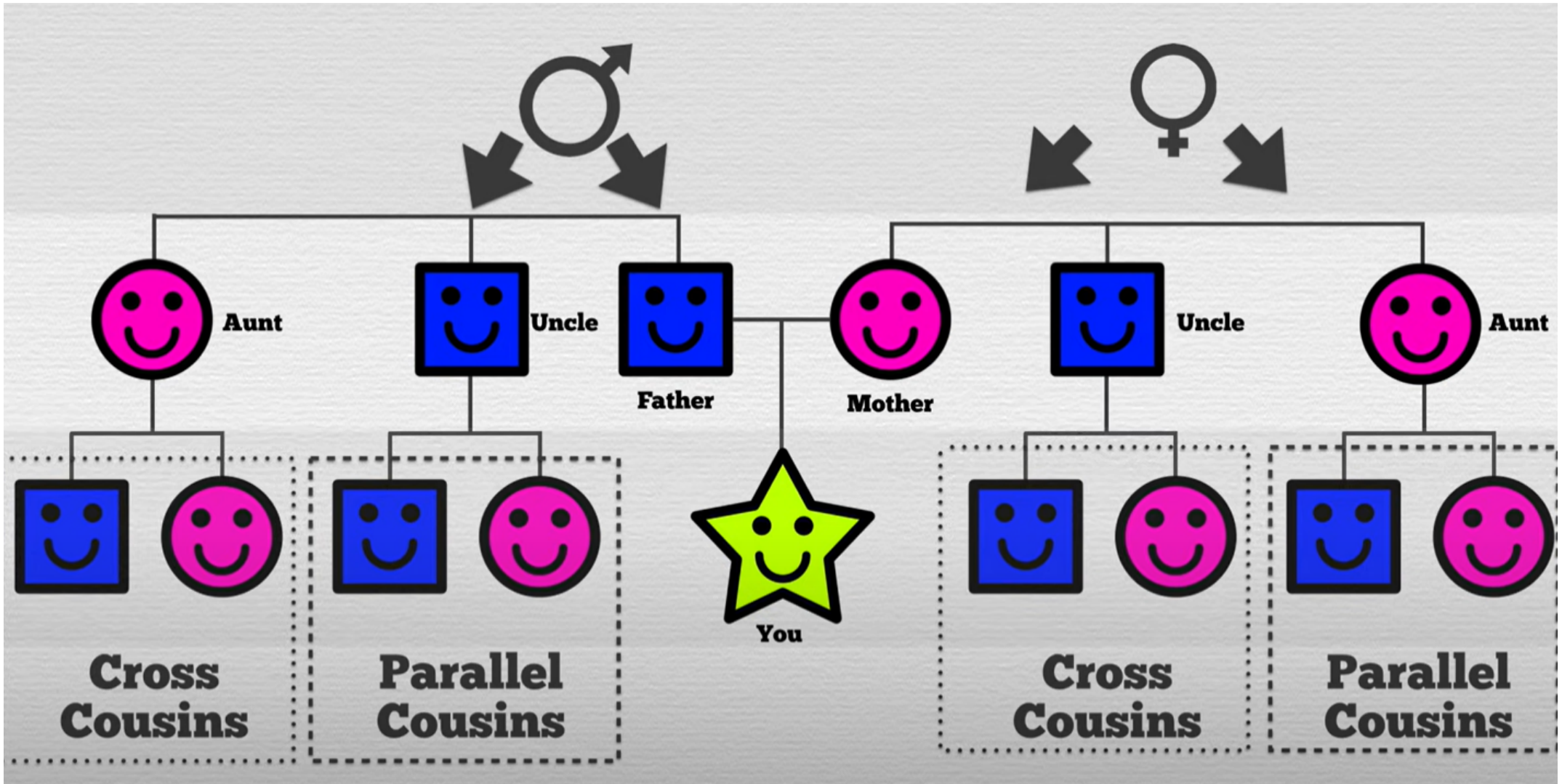
➤ Cross Cousins

- ✓ children of siblings of the opposite sex
- ✓ one's mother's brothers' children and one's father's sisters' children
- ✓ most common form of preferential cousin marriage is between cross cousins

➤ Parallel Cousins

- ✓ between the children of the siblings of the same sex
- ✓ either from one's father's brother's children or mother's sister's children





4) The Levirate and Sororate

- require a person to marry the husband or wife of **deceased kin**

➤ The levirate

- ✓ **widow** is expected to **marry the brother** (or some **close male relative**) of her **dead husband**
- ✓ **children** fathered by the woman's new husband are **considered to belong legally to the dead brother** rather than to the actual genitor
- ✓ serves as: social security for the widow and her children

➤ The sororate

- ✓ when a wife dies, is the practice of a widower's **marrying the sister** (or some close female relative) of his **deceased wife**
- ✓ family of the deceased is under a general **obligation to supply some equivalent relative** as a substitute

2.7.1.3. NUMBER OF SPOUSES

- how many mates a person may/should have
 - ❖ **Monogamy**
 - marriage of **one man to one woman at a time**
 - ❖ **Polygamy**

- marriage of a man or woman with two or more mates
- two types:
 - **Polygyny**
 - ✓ a man to two or more women at a time
 - ✓ **sororal polygyny** - Marriage of a man with two or more sisters at a time
 - **Polyandy**
 - ✓ woman to two or more men at a time
- ✓ **Advantages Polygamy marriage**
 - Having two/more wives - sign of prestige, wealth, power, & status both for the polygynous husband, wives and children
 - produces more children, who are considered valuable for future economic and political assets
 - encourages to work hard (more cows, goats..) for more wives
- ✓ **Drawbacks Polygamy marriage**
 - Jealousy among the co-wives who frequently compete for the husband's attention

2.7.1.4 Economic Consideration of Marriage

- Most societies view as a binding contract between at least the husband and wife
- contract includes the **transfer of certain rights between the parties involved**:
 - ✓ rights of sexual access
 - ✓ legal rights to children
 - ✓ rights of the spouses to each other's economic goods and services
- **transfer of rights is accompanied by the transfer of some type of economic consideration**
- transactions, which may take place either before or after the marriage can be **divided into three categories**
 - **Bride Price**
 - also known as **bridewealth**
 - **compensation** given upon marriage by the **family of the groom to the family of the bride**
 - bride price has been seen as **security or insurance for the good treatment of the wife**
 - mechanism to **stabilize marriage** by reducing the possibility of divorce
 - **symbol of the union** between two large groups of kin

➤ **Bride Service**

- groom **works for his wife's family**
- Example: recalled that in the Old Testament, Jacob labored
- practiced by the **Yanomamo**, a people living in the low- lands of Venezuela

➤ **Dowry**

- transfer of goods or money in the opposite direction, **from the bride's family to the groom's family**

2.7.1.5 Post-Marital Residence

- Where the newly married couple lives after the marriage
 - **Patrilocal Residence** - near the relatives of the **husband's father**
 - **Matrilocal Residence** - near the **relatives of the wife**.
 - **Avunculocal Residence** - near the **husband's mother's brother**
 - **Ambilocal/Bilocal Residence** - has a **choice of living with relatives of the wife or relatives of the husband**
 - **Neolocal Residence** - forms an independent place of residence **away from the relatives of either spouse**

2.7.2 FAMILY

- basis of human society; most important **primary group in society**; universal; most permanent and most pervasive of all social institutions; an endurable social unit
- two fundamentally different types of family

❖ **The Nuclear Family**

- ✓ Consisting of husband and wife and their children
- ✓ **two-generation family** formed around the conjugal or **marital union**
- ✓ everyday needs of economic support, childcare, and social interaction are **met within the nuclear family itself**
- ✓ **neolocal residence**, nor is there any particular obligation or expectation to care for their aging parents in their own homes
- ✓ parents are **not actively involved** in mate selection for their children

❖ **The Extended Family**

- ✓ consist of two or more families that are linked by **blood ties**
- ✓ married couple living **with one or more of their married children** in a single household or homestead and under the authority of a family head
- ✓ personal property in the household is not owned by the newlyweds, but is **controlled by the husbands' father**

- ✓ marriage is viewed more as bringing a daughter into the family than acquiring a wife
- ✓ There is a rough correlation found between extended family system and an **agricultural way of life**

2.7.2.1 Functions Marriage and Family

1. Biological Function

- (sexual and reproductive) function
- socially approved means to control sexual relation and a socially approved basis of the family
- The task of **perpetuating** the population of a society is an important function of a family
- **Society reproduces itself** through family

2. Economic Function

- brings **economic co-operation between men and women** and ensure **survival of individuals in a society**
- In small scale societies family is a self-contained economic unit of production, consumption and distribution

3. Social Function

- institution of marriage brings with it the creation and perpetuation of the family
 - ✓ the form of person to person relations and linking once kin group to another kin group

4. Educational and Socialization Function

- burden of socialization (via processes of enculturation and education) of new born infants fall primarily upon the family
- family behaves as an effective agent in the transmission of social heritage

2.7.3 KINSHIP

- Kinship is the method of reckoning relationship
- every adult individual belongs to two different nuclear families:
 - family of orientation
 - family in which he was born and reared
 - family of procreation
 - family to which he establishes relation through marriage
- kinship system is neither a social group nor does it correspond to organized aggregation of individuals
- It is a structured system of relationships where individuals are bound together by complex interlocking and ramifying ties

- **consanguineous kinship** - the relationship based on blood ties
- **final relationship** - kind of bond, which arises out of a socially or legally defined marital relationship

2.7.4 DESCENT

- refers to the social recognition of the **biological relationship** that exists between the individuals
- **rule of descent** refers to a **set of principles by which an individual traces his descent**
- three important rules of descent:
 - a. Patrilineal descent**
 - descent is **traced solely through the male line**
 - Succession and inheritance **pass through the male line**
 - b. Matrilineal descent**
 - descent is traced **solely through the female line**
 - only females acquire the succession and inheritance
 - c. Cognatic Descent**
 - **individuals are free to show their genealogical links either through men or women**

- There is **no fixed rule to trace** the succession and inheritance; **any combination of lineal link is possible** in such societies