# Chapter 10
# Social Structure, the Family, Gender, and Age

## Learning Objectives

**After reading this chapter you should be able to:**

**10.1** Discuss the general components of social structure, including status, the family, marriage, gender, and age.

**10.2** Describe the social structure, family, marriage, gender, and age in foraging societies.

**10.3** Describe the social structure, family, marriage, descent groups, gender, and age for tribal societies.

**10.4** Discuss how status differences, the family, gender, and age are related in chiefdom societies.

# Social Structure

**10.1** **Discuss the general components of social structure, including status, the family, marriage, gender, and age.**

All inorganic and organic things, from planets to living cells, have a structure—they consist of interrelated parts in a particular arrangement. Anthropologists use the idea of structure when they analyze different societies. Societies are not just random, chaotic collections of people who interact with one another. Rather, social interaction in any society takes place in regular patterns. As we discussed in Chapter 4, people learn the norms, values, and behavioral patterns of their societies through enculturation. In the absence of social patterns, people would find social life confusing. Anthropologists refer to this pattern of relationships in society as the **social structure**. Social structure provides the framework for all human societies, but it does not determine decision making of individuals.

## Components of Social Structure

One of the most important components of social structure is *status*. **Status** is a recognized position that a person occupies in society. A person's status determines where he or she fits in society in relationship to everyone else. Status may be based on or accompanied by wealth, power, prestige, or a combination of all of these. Many anthropologists use the term **socioeconomic status** (SES) to refer to how a specific position is related to the division of labor, the political system, and other cultural variables.

All societies recognize both *ascribed* and *achieved* statuses. An **ascribed status** is one that is attached to a person from birth or that a person assumes involuntarily later in life. The most prevalent ascribed statuses are based upon family and kinship relations (for example, daughter or son), sex (male or female), and age. In addition, in some societies, ascribed statuses are based on one's race or ethnicity. For example, as we shall see in a later chapter, skin color was used to designate ascribed status differences in South Africa under the system of apartheid.

In contrast, an **achieved status** is one based at least in part on a person's voluntary actions. Examples of achieved statuses in the United States are one's profession and level of education. Of course, one's family and kinship connections may influence one's profession and level of education. George W. Bush's and John Kerry's educational level and status are interrelated to their families of birth. However, these individuals had to act voluntarily to achieve their status.

Closely related to status is the concept of social *roles*. A **role** is a set of expected behavior patterns, obligations, and norms attached to a particular status. The distinction between status and role is a simple one: You "occupy" a certain status, but you "play" a role (Linton 1936). For example, as a student, you occupy a certain status that differs from those of your professors, administrators, and other staff. As you occupy that status, you perform by attending lectures, taking notes, participating in class, and studying for examinations. This concept of role is derived from the theater and refers to the parts played by actors on the stage. Whether you are a husband, mother, son, daughter, teacher, lawyer, judge, male, or female, you are expected to behave in certain ways because of the norms associated with that particular status.

As mentioned, a society's social statuses usually correspond to wealth, power, and prestige. Anthropologists find that all societies have inequality in statuses, which are arranged in a hierarchy. This inequality of statuses is known as **social stratification**. The degree of social stratification varies from one society to another, depending on technological, economic, and political variables. Small-scale societies tend to be less stratified than large-scale societies; that is, they have fewer categories of status and fewer degrees of difference regarding wealth, power, and prestige.

In some societies, wealth, power, and prestige are linked with ownership of land or the number of animals acquired. In U.S. society, high status is strongly correlated with income and property. Exploring the causes of differing patterns of social stratification and how stratification relates to other facets of society is an important objective in ethnographic research.

The social structure of any society has several major components that anthropologists study when analyzing a society. These components are discussed in the following sections on the family, marriage, gender, and age.

## The Family

In a comprehensive cross-cultural study, George Murdock (1945) found that all societies recognize the family. Thus, the family is a *universal* feature of humans and may have its roots in our primate heritage (Chapais 2008). Anthropologists define the **family** as a social group of two or more people related by blood, marriage, or adoption who live or reside together for an extended period, sharing economic resources and caring for their young. Anthropologists differentiate between the *family of orientation*, the family into which people are born, and the *family of procreation*, the family within which people reproduce or adopt children of their own (Murdock 1949). The family is a social unit within a much wider group of relatives, or *kin*. Kinship relationships beyond the immediate nuclear family play a significant role in most societies throughout the world. Anthropologists study kinship relationships along with the family to fully comprehend how individual thought and behavior is influenced by these interacting aspects of human communities.

Although variations exist in types and forms, as mentioned before, George Murdock found that the family is a universal aspect of social organization. The reason for the universality of the family appears to be that it performs certain basic functions that serve human needs. The primary function of the family is the nurturing and enculturation of children. The basic norms, values, knowledge, and beliefs of the culture are transmitted to children through the family.

Another function of the family is the regulation of sexual activity. Every culture places some restrictions on sexual behavior. Sexual intercourse is the basis of human reproduction and inheritance; it is also a matter of considerable social importance. Regulating sexual behavior is, therefore, essential to the proper functioning of a society. The family prohibits sexual relations within the immediate family through the incest avoidance behaviors, as discussed in Chapter 4.

Families also serve to protect and support their members physically, emotionally, and often economically from birth to death. In all societies, people need warmth, food, shelter, and care. Families provide a social environment in which these needs can be met. Additionally, humans have emotional needs for affection and intimacy that are most easily fulfilled within the family.

The two major types of families found throughout the world are the *nuclear* and *extended* families. A typical **nuclear family** is composed of two parents and their immediate biological offspring or adopted children. George Murdock believed that the nuclear family is a universal feature of all societies (1949). What he meant by this was that all societies have a male and female who reproduce children and are the core of the kinship unit.

However, as we shall see later, the nuclear family is not the principal kinship unit in all societies. In many societies, the predominant form is the **extended family**, which is composed of parents, children, and other kin relations bound together as a social unit.

## Marriage

In most societies, the family is a product of **marriage**, a social bond sanctioned by society between two or more people that involves economic cooperation, social obligations, rights, duties, and sometimes culturally approved sexual activity. Two general patterns of marriage exist: **endogamy**, which is marriage between people of the same social group or category, and **endogamy**, marriage between people of different social groups or categories.

A marriage may include two or more partners. **Monogamy** generally involves two individuals in the marriage. Though this is the most familiar form of marriage in Western industrial societies, it is not the only type of marriage practiced in the world. Many societies practice some form of **polygamy**, or *plural marriage*, which involves a spouse of one sex and two or more spouses of the opposite sex. There are two forms of polygamy: **polygyny**, marriage between one husband and two or more wives, and **polyandry**, marriage between one wife and two or more husbands. Although the majority of the world's population currently practices monogamy, polygyny is a common form of marriage and is permitted in 80 percent of human societies, many of which have relatively small populations (Murdock 1981a, 1981b). Although polyandry is the rarest form of marriage, a new survey of polyandry indicates that it occurs in 81 different societies (Starkweather and Hames 2012). Although marriages typically involve the uniting of males and females, a number of societies have homosexual marriages that are recognized socially and legally (L. Stone 2010). As we shall see, anthropologists have developed hypotheses regarding why certain forms of marriage develop within particular sociocultural systems.

## Gender

Gender relationships are another important component of the social structure of a society. When anthropologists discuss relationships between males and females in a society, they distinguish between *sex* and *gender*. **Sex** refers to the biological and anatomical differences between males and females. These differences include the primary sexual characteristics—the sex organs—and the secondary sexual characteristics, such as breasts and wider hips for females and more muscular development of the upper torso and extensive body hair for males. Note that these are general tendencies, to which many exceptions exist. That is, many males are smaller and lighter and have less body hair than

many females. Nevertheless, in general, males and females are universally distinguished by physiological and anatomical differences (L. Stone 2010).

In contrast to sex, most anthropologists view *gender* as cultural rather than biological. **Gender** refers to the specific human traits attached to each sex by a society. As members of a particular society, males and females occupy certain statuses, such as son, daughter, husband, wife, father, and mother. In assuming the gender roles that correspond to these different status positions, males are socialized to be "masculine" and females are socialized to be "feminine." Definitions of masculine and feminine vary among different societies (Yangisako and Collier 1990; L. Stone 2010).

**Gender and Enculturation**    One major issue regarding gender is the degree to which enculturation influences male and female behavior. To study this issue, anthropologists focus on the values, beliefs, and norms that may influence gender roles. They also observe the types of activities associated with young boys and girls. In many societies, boys and girls play different games as an aspect of enculturation. For example, in U.S. society, boys in comparison with girls are traditionally encouraged to participate in aggressive, competitive team sports. Cultural values and beliefs that affect gender roles are found in other societies as well.

**Sex and the Division of Labor**    A basic component of the division of labor in most societies is the assigning of different tasks to males and females. In studying this phenomenon, anthropologists focus on the issue of whether physical differences (sex differences) between males and females are responsible for these different roles. To address this issue, they ask a number of questions: Is there a universal division of labor based on sex? Does physical strength have anything to do with the work patterns associated with gender? Do childcare and pregnancy determine or influence economic specialization for females? To what degree do values and beliefs ascribed to masculine or feminine behavior affect work assignments?

**Gender and Status**    Another important issue investigated by anthropologists is the social and political status of males and females in society. As is discussed later, some early anthropologists such as Lewis Morgan believed that females at one time had a higher social and political status than males, but that through time this pattern was reversed. Anthropologists currently focus on how the status of males and females is related to biological factors, the division of labor, kinship relations, political systems, and values and beliefs.

Although sex characteristics are biologically determined, gender roles vary in accordance with the technological, economic, and sociocultural conditions of particular types of societies. In this and later chapters, we explore some recent studies by anthropologists who have broadened our understanding of the variation of gender roles among a wide range of societies.

## Age

Like kinship and gender, age is a universal principle used to prescribe social status in sociocultural systems. The biological processes of aging are an inevitable aspect of human life; from birth to death, our bodies are constantly changing. Definite biological changes occur for humans in their progress from infancy to childhood to adolescence to adulthood to old age. Hormonal and other physiological changes lead to maturation and the onset of the aging process. For example, as we approach old age, our sensory abilities begin to change: Our capacities for taste, eyesight, touch, smell, and hearing begin to diminish. Gray hair and wrinkles appear, and we experience a loss of height and weight and an overall decline in strength and vitality. Although these physical changes vary greatly from individual to individual and to some extent are influenced by societal and environmental factors, these processes are universal.

The biology of aging, however, is only one dimension of how age is related to the social structure of any specific culture. The human life cycle is the basis of social statuses and roles that have both a physical and a cultural dimension. The cultural meanings of these categories in the life cycle vary among different societies, as do the criteria people use to define age-related statuses. The definitions of the statuses and roles for specific ages have wide-ranging implications for those in these status positions.

**Age and Enculturation**    As people move through the different phases of the human life cycle, they continually experience the process of enculturation. Because of the existence of different norms, values, and beliefs, people in various societies may be treated differently at each phase of the life cycle. For example, the period of enculturation during childhood varies among societies. In the United States and other postindustrial societies, childhood is associated with an extensive educational experience that continues for many years. In many preindustrial societies, however, childhood is a relatively short period, and children assume adult status and responsibilities at a fairly young age.

Another factor influenced by aging in a society is how individuals are viewed at different ages. How is *old age* defined? For example, in many societies, old age is not defined strictly in terms of the passage of time. More frequently, old age is defined in respect to changes in social status, work patterns, family status, or reproductive potential (Cowgill 1986). These factors influence how people are valued at different ages in a society.

**Age and the Division of Labor**  The economic roles assumed by a person at different stages of the life cycle may also depend on age. Children everywhere are exposed to the technological skills they will need to survive in their environment. As they mature, they assume specific positions in the division of labor. Just as male and female roles differ, the roles for the young and old differ. For example, in some preindustrial societies, older people occupy central roles, whereas in others, they play no important roles at all. In industrial and postindustrial societies, the elderly generally do not occupy important occupational roles.

**Age and Status**  Age is one of the key determinants of social status. People are usually assigned a particular status associated with a phase of the life cycle. The result is **age stratification**, the unequal allocation of wealth, power, and prestige among people of different ages. Anthropologists find that age stratification varies in accordance with the level of technological development. For example, in many preindustrial societies, the elderly have a relatively high social status, whereas in most industrial societies, the elderly experience a loss of status.

One of the most common ways of allocating the status of people at different ages is through *age grades*. **Age grades** are statuses defined by age through which a person moves as he or she ages. For example, the age grades in most industrial societies correspond to the periods of infancy, preschool, kindergarten, elementary school, intermediate school, high school, young adulthood, middle age, young old, and old old (Cowgill 1986). Each of these grades conveys a particular social status.

# Social Structure in Hunter-Gatherer Societies

**10.2**  Describe the social structure, family, marriage, gender, and age in foraging societies.

The fundamental social organization in foraging societies is based upon family, marriage, kinship, gender, and age. The two basic elements of social organization for foraging populations are the nuclear family and the band. The nuclear family is the small family unit associated with procreation: parents and offspring. The nuclear family is most adaptive for hunting-gathering societies because it allows for the flexibility needed in a society that depends upon hunting and distribution of hunted game (Fox 1967; Pasternak 1976). Frequent nomadic mobility favors small nuclear family groupings for foraging tasks. Typically, hunting and gathering is conducted by small groups of nuclear families. For example, during certain seasons, the Baka forest people in Cameroon forage in the forest and build small huts made of bowed limbs covered with leaves for their nuclear families (Campagnoli 2005). Later during the season, these Baka nuclear families would settle in more permanent camps for several months with other relatives.

The most common type of band is made up of a related cluster of nuclear families ranging in size from 20 to 100 individuals. At times, in societies such as the desert-dwelling Shoshone Indians, the bands may break up into nuclear families to locate food and other resources. Under other circumstances, several families may cooperate in hunting and other foraging activities. In some instances, bands may contain up to four or five (sometimes more) extended families, in which married children and their offspring reside with their parents. These multifamily bands provide the webs of kinship for foraging societies, enabling them to cooperate in subsistence and economic exchanges.

The specific number of people in a band depends upon the carrying capacity of the natural environment. Most foraging groups had a range of 20 to 100 people. Foragers in the desert, the Arctic, and the tropical rain forest all lived in small multifamily bands residing in separate territories. Typically, band organization is extremely flexible, with members leaving and joining bands as circumstances demand. Personal conflicts and shortages of resources may encourage people to move into or out of bands. In some cases, when food or water resources are scarce, whole bands may move into the territories of other bands.

## Marriage and Kinship

Although a number of foraging groups such as the Ache practice *polygyny*, marriage between one male and two or more females, the most common type of marriage found in foraging societies is monogamy (Hill and Hurtado 1996; Ember, Ember, and Low 2007). Marriages are an important means of cementing social relationships. In some cases, betrothals are arranged while the future spouses are still young children. Typically, the girl is much younger than the male. For example, Ju/'hoansi San girls are often married between the ages of 12 and 14, whereas males may be 18 to 25 or older.

Although these marital arrangements are regular features of foraging societies, it does not mean the couple easily accepts these arranged marriages. A San woman expressed herself on her first marriage:

*When I married my husband Tsau I didn't fight too hard, but I cried a lot when I was taken to sleep in his hut. When the elders went away I listened carefully for their sleeping. Then, when my husband fell asleep and I heard his breathing, I very quietly sat up and eased my blanket away from his and stole away and slept by myself out in the bush.*

*In the morning the people came to Tsau's hut and asked, "Where is your wife?" He looked around and said, "I don't*

*know where my wife has gone off to." Then they picked up my tracks and tracked me to where I was sitting out in the bush. They brought me back to my husband. They told me that this was the man they had given to me and that he wouldn't hurt me.*

*After that we just lived together all right. At first when we slept under the same blanket our bodies did not touch, but then after a while I slept at his front. Other girls don't like their husbands and keep struggling away until the husbands give up on them and their parents take them back. (Lee 1993:83)*

**Marriage Rules**   Marital arrangements in foraging societies are intended to enhance economic, social, and political interdependence among bands and to foster appropriate band alliances. To do this, rules are established to determine who may marry whom. Many of these rules concern marriages among cousins. A common marriage rule found in foraging societies is referred to as *cross-cousin marriage*. A **cross-cousin** is the offspring of one's father's sister or one's mother's brother. In effect, a cross-cousin marriage means that a male marries a female who is his father's sister's daughter or his mother's brother's daughter.

In addition, foraging societies frequently have rules of residence that specify where the married couple must reside. Most band societies practice **patrilocal residence**, in which the newly married couple resides with the husband's father. Thus, if a man marries a woman from a different band, she must join her husband's band. In such societies, the patrilocal residence rule and cross-cousin marriage combine to create a system called *restricted marital exchange*, in which two groups exchange women

(Lévi-Strauss 1969). The purpose of this system is to foster group solidarity by encouraging kinship alliances.

The kinship diagram in Figure 10.1 gives a visual model of the social structure in some foraging societies. In the diagram, Ego is used as a point of reference, and kinship relationships are traced from Ego's offspring, parents, grandparents, and other relatives. Note that Ego has married his father's sister's daughter (his cross-cousin on his father's side). Because of the rule of patrilocal residence, Ego's father's sister had to move to another band with her husband. Therefore, Ego is marrying outside his own band.

Like Ego, Ego's wife's brother has married a woman outside his band. In keeping with the cross-cousin rule, their daughter has married Ego's son. Ego's daughter will eventually marry someone from another band. Through the rules of cross-cousin marriage and patrilocal residence, this restricted exchange develops strong networks of interfamily and interband kinship relations. These kin networks widen over the generations, expanding reciprocal economic, social, and political relationships.

**Brideservice**   Some foraging societies practice **brideservice**, in which a male resides for a specified amount of time with his wife's parents' band. The rule of residence that requires a man to reside with his wife's parents is called **matrilocal residence**. Among the Ju/'hoansi San, brideservice can last eight to ten years, and the husband and wife don't return to the husband's father's band for residence (the patrilocal rule) until after several children are born (Lee 1993). The husband will help his wife's band in its subsistence activities, which helps consolidate

**Figure 10.1**  Kinship and marriage patterns in hunting and gathering societies
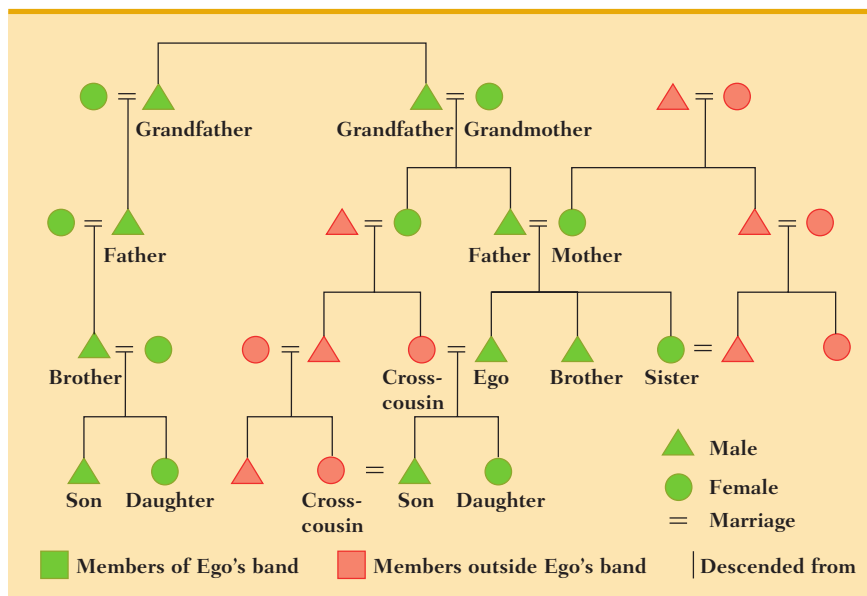
both economic and social ties between the two bands. An-other reason the Ju/'hoansi San practice brideservice is that females are not sexually mature at the time of their marriage. San girls who marry before their menarche are not expected to have sexual intercourse with their hus-bands. Thus, the brideservice period coincides with female maturation. But brideservice also functions to reinforce the kinship and reciprocal ties between bands. Other foraging groups like the Ache of Paraguay practice matrilocal resi-dence without brideservice (Hill and Hurtado 1996).

**Other Marital Patterns among Foragers** Not all foraging societies conform to the marital patterns just described. For example, in the past, most Eskimo (Inuit) marriage involved no preferred rules regarding cousin mar-riage or rituals and ceremonies sanctioning the new cou-ple's relationship. Traditionally, the man and woman sim-ply begin residing with each other. To some extent, the Inuit viewed this marriage arrangement as a pragmatic and utili-tarian relationship for economic and reproductive purposes (Balikci 1970). In addition, polyandry (marriage between one woman and more and two or more men) has been a feature of Inuit culture (Starkweather and Hames 2012). Undoubtedly, polyandry was associated with the long absence of males on hunting trips and the fear of wife abduction or unfaithful-ness. In addition, as men produce most of the food in Inuit society, women would benefit from having more than one male provider. In some cases, the Inuit would establish for-mal polyandrous relationships with other males, frequently brothers, in what is known as *fraternal polyandry*.

**Divorce** In most cases, divorce is easily accomplished in hunting-and-gathering societies. For example, Ju/'hoansi San divorces, which are most frequently initiated by the wife, are simple matters characterized by cordiality and cooperation. The divorced couple may even live next to one another with their new spouses. Because there are no rigid rules or complex kinship relations beyond the nuclear family to complicate divorce proceedings, the dissolution of a Ju/'hoansi San marriage is a relatively easy process (Lee 1993, 2013). As mentioned earlier, the Ache foragers of Paraguay practice polygyny, which is unusual for hunter-gatherers (Hill and Hurtado 1996). The Ache also practice a *serial monogamy* form of marriage with frequent divorces, and a woman may have 12 or more spouses during her life-time. The Ache marriages endure from several hours to 47 years (Hill and Hurtado 1996).

Divorce was also frequent and easily obtained among the Inuit (Balikci 1970). As with the San, one reason for this was the lack of formal social groups beyond the nuclear family. Another reason was the absence of strict rules gov-erning marriage and postmarital residence. Significantly, divorce did not necessarily lead to the cutting of kin ties. Even if an Inuit couple separated, and this happened for nearly 100 percent of the marriages studied, the kin ties endured (Burch 1970). Sometimes the couple reunited, and the children of first and second marriages became a newly blended family. Thus, divorce actually created kin ties, an important aspect of sociocultural adaptation in severe Arctic conditions.

## Gender

Gender as an aspect of social structure in foraging societies is an extremely important area of ethnographic research. Cultural anthropologists have been examining the inter-relationships among patterns of gender, subsistence, econ-omy, and political organization.

**Gender and the Division of Labor** Prior to recent ethnographic research on foraging societies, anthropolo-gists believed that male subsistence activities, especially hunting and fishing, provided most of the food resourc-es. In the traditional sex-based evolutionary perspective, males did the hunting and women gathered the vegeta-tion and cooperated within a pair-bonded nuclear family (Lovejoy 1981, Washburn and Lancaster 1968). In some of the foraging societies such as the Ju/'hoansi San, Semang, and Mbuti, women provided most of the food by gather-ing plants (Martin and Voorhies 1975; Dahlberg 1981; Lee 1993, 2013; Weisner 2002). In addition, women also some-times hunt or indirectly procure meat. Among the Batak foragers of the rain forests of Malaysia and the Agta in the Philippines, both men and women perform virtually every subsistence task (Estioko-Griffin and Griffin 1978; Endicott 1988). Women among the Agta go out into the forest to kill wild boars, just as the men do. The Tiwi of Australia and the Hadza foragers of East Africa demonstrate this same pattern (Goodale 1971; Woodburn 1982).

Carol Ember's cross-cultural study of foragers indi-cated that males have typically obtained meat by hunt-ing and fishing (Ember 1978). However, as Nicole Waguespack's recent global study of both ethnographic and archaeological evidence indicates, even in societies dominated by meat procurement, women play important economic roles and are involved in many different types of activities such as leatherworking and building shelters (2005). The division of labor cannot be simply described as a sex-based division of labor with men hunting and women gathering vegetation.

**Sex-Based Explanations of the Division of Labor** One early question posed by cultural anthropologists was: Why is the division of labor in foraging societies so strongly related to a sex (i.e., men hunt, women gather)? There are several possible answers to this question. The first answer is that males tended to hunt and women tended to be engaged in gathering or other nonsubsistence activities because males are stronger and have more endur-ance in the pursuit of large game. Another answer is that

because women bear and nurse children, they lack the freedom of mobility necessary to hunt (Friedl 1975). A third answer is that gathering, especially near a base camp, is a relatively safe activity that entails no potential dangers for women who are either pregnant or caring for children (Brown 1970b). Keeping their offspring alive and providing for them is a fundamental aspect of women's activities in foraging societies (Gurven and Hill 2009).

There is evidence for and against each of these theories. In some foraging societies, men and women are involved in both hunting and gathering. Further, women often perform tasks that require strength and stamina, such as carrying food, children, water, and firewood. Thus, gathering resources is not a sedentary or leisurely activity. Based on this evidence, anthropologist Linda Marie Fedigan proposed that heavy work and childcare activities are not mutually exclusive, as previously argued (1986).

In an essay entitled "Why do Men Hunt?: A Reevaluation of 'Man the Hunter' and the Sexual Division of Labor," Michael Gurven and Kim Hill assess some of the current explanations of male-female activities in foraging societies (2009). The traditional explanation for male hunting is to provision their families. However, hunting meat is less reliable and more costly than other means of foraging. One hypothesis suggested that males take on the high-cost and low-yield hunting in order to "show off" their status and physical abilities to attract females for mating opportunities (Hawkes and Bliege-Bird 2002; Hawkes et al. 2010). This is referred to as the "costly signaling model." Gurven and Hill provide a comprehensive, multidimensional model for why men hunt (2009). In their model, costly signaling is one factor that motivates male hunting activity, but it needs to be combined with other factors such as investing in children (parental investment), the social insurance provided with sharing and cooperation through coalition and alliance building, and assisting ill or incapacitated members of the foraging group. This model provides a fruitful avenue for further investigation of why men hunt in foraging societies.

Many research questions pertaining to gender roles and subsistence among foragers remain for future anthropologists. Much of the recent evidence suggests that gender roles and subsistence activities are not as rigid as formerly thought. In these cases, it appears that the subsistence strategies for both males and females are open and that behavior is flexible.

**Female Status**    Closely related to gender roles and subsistence is the question of the social status of women. Empirical data suggest that gender relations tend to be more *egalitarian*—men and women have more or less equal status—in foraging societies than in other societies (Friedl 1975; Shostak 1981; Endicott 1988; Lepowsky 1993; Ward 2003).

This may reflect the substantial contributions women make in gathering food.

Richard Lee notes, for example, that as a result of their important role in economic activities, Ju/'hoansi San women participate equally with men in political decision making (1981, 2013). Ju/'hoansi San women are treated respectfully, and there is little evidence of male domination or the maltreatment of females. A similar generalization could be applied to the Mbuti, Semang, and Agta, as well as to most of the other foragers. This hypothesis suggests, however, that in societies in which female contributions to the food supply are less critical or less valued, female status is lower. For example, among some of the traditional Eskimo and other northern foraging groups for which hunting is the only subsistence activity, females do not gather much in the way of resources for the family. Consequently, those societies tended to be more patriarchal, or male dominated, in political and economic matters (Friedl 1975; Martin and Voorhies 1975; Lepowsky 1993; Ward 2003).

Clearly, equality between males and females in foraging societies is not universal. In some groups, such as the Ju/'hoansi San and Agta, women have more equality, whereas in others, such as the traditional Eskimo, females have a lower status. Even in the most egalitarian groups, males tend to have some inherent cultural advantages. In some cases, meat is viewed as a more luxurious and prestigious food and thus enhances the male status. In addition, males are more likely to become the political and spiritual leaders in foraging societies. When considering gender relations in a broad, cross-cultural perspective, however, foragers tend to have much more equality than do most other societies.

## Age

Like kinship and gender, age is used in virtually all foraging societies as a basis for assigning individuals their particular status in the social hierarchy. Patterns of age stratification and hierarchy vary considerably from society to society, depending on environmental and cultural conditions. Age is also a primary aspect of the division of labor in foraging societies.

**The Roles of the Elderly**    In foraging societies, old age tends to be defined less in terms of chronology and more in terms of some change in social status related to becoming less involved in subsistence or work patterns or to becoming grandparents (Glascock 1981). In all societies, however, the onset of old age is partially defined in terms of the average life span. The general demographic and ethnological data on foraging societies indicate that definitions of "old age" vary from 45 to 75 years old.

An early study of aging hypothesized that in hunting and gathering societies, older people wield little power and have low status (Simmons 1945). This argument was

based on the assumption that because foraging societies had few material goods that older people controlled and could use as leverage with the younger generation, old age represented a loss of status. This hypothesis suggested that the status of older people is correlated with subsistence and economic activities. As foraging people age and decline in strength and energy, their subsistence contribution may be limited, thereby diminishing their status.

Most of the current ethnographic data, however, do not support this hypothesis. In an early account of foragers in the Andaman Islands off the coast of India, for example, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown ([1922] 1964) described the reverence and honor given to older males. Among the Mbuti in the Central Congo in Africa, age is a key factor in determining status, and the elders make the most important economic and political decisions for the group. Despite the fact that young people sometimes openly ridicule older people, the elders are able to dominate Mbuti society because of their cultural knowledge (Turnbull 1983).

Anthropologists who have studied the Ju/'hoansi San point out that though there was little material security at old age, the elderly were not abandoned and had a relatively high status (Thomas 1958; Lee 1979, 2013). Despite the fact that older people do not play a predominant productive role in subsistence activities, they are able to remain secure because of close kinship ties.

Anthropologists find that older people in foraging societies have a higher status than do younger people. Because of their accumulated knowledge, which is needed for subsistence activities, political decision making, and intellectual and spiritual guidance, older people tend to be respected. Human memory serves as the libraries of these societies and is important for the preservation of culture and the transmission of knowledge. Cultural traditions are memorized and handed down from generation to generation, and control of these traditions forms the basis of esteem.

In general, only in cases of extreme deprivation are the elderly in foraging societies maltreated. In their investigation of the treatment of the elderly in a wide variety of foraging societies, researchers concluded that practices directed against the elderly, such as abandonment, exposure, and killing, occur only under severe environmental circumstances, in which the elderly are viewed as burdens rather than assets (Glascock 1981). These practices have been documented for groups such as the Eskimo, but these cases appear to be exceptional. In most foraging societies, the young have moral obligations to take care of the elderly.

**Childcare Activities** Turnbull (1983) has remarked that one of the significant universal roles of elderly grandparents is babysitting. While the parents in foraging societies are involved in subsistence chores like hunting and collecting, grandparents often are engaged in childcare activities. Among the Ju/'hoansi San and the Mbuti, elderly grandparents care for small children while the children's mothers are away on gathering activities. The elderly teach the grandchildren the skills, norms, and values of the society. Reflecting on the Mbuti elders, who spend time telling stories and reciting myths and legends, Turnbull indicates that this role is the primary function of the Mbuti elderly in the maintenance of culture. In most foraging societies, this is the typical pattern for relationships between the young and the old. Recently, anthropologist Kristen Hawkes (2004) studied how the "Grandmother Effect" and the longer life span of women have had significant survival value in providing childcare for and nurturing the young children in foraging societies. She notes that in both historical and contemporary foraging societies, a third or more of women live beyond 45. The survival of these postmenopausal women would be extremely important for the welfare



An older !Kung San or Ju/'hoansi woman

and survival of these grandchildren in these foraging communities.

# Social Structure in Tribes

**10.3** Describe the social structure, family, marriage, descent groups, gender, and age for tribal societies.

Tribal societies differ from foraging societies in that tribal peoples produce most of their subsistence foods through small-scale cultivation (horticulture) and the domestication of animals (pastoralism). The evolution of food production corresponds to new forms of social organization. Like bands, social organization among tribes is largely based upon kinship. Rules concerning kinship, marriage, and other social systems, however, are much more elaborate in tribal societies, which have to resolve new types of problems, including denser populations, control of land or livestock, and sometimes warfare.

New and diverse forms of social organization have enabled tribal societies to adjust to the new conditions of food production. Unlike foragers, who sometimes have to remain separate from one another in small, flexibly organized bands, food producers have had to develop social relationships that are more fixed and permanent. Tribal social organization is based on family, the descent group, gender, and age. The social organization of tribal societies is much more complex than that of band societies.

## Families

The most common social grouping among tribal societies is the *extended family*. Most extended families consist of three generations—grandparents, parents, and children—although they can also contain married siblings with their spouses and children. Compared with the nuclear family, the extended family is a larger and more stable social unit that is more effective in organizing and carrying out domestic economic and subsistence activities (Pasternak 1976; L. Stone 2010). Even the extended family, however, cannot satisfy the complex needs of tribal societies for cooperation, labor, and reciprocity. To meet these needs, tribal groups have developed even more "extended" types of social organization, based on both kinship and nonkinship principles.

## Descent Groups

One of the more extended social groupings that exist in tribal societies is the descent group. A **descent group** is a social group identified by a person in order to trace actual or supposed kinship relationships. Descent groups are the predominant social units in tribal societies.

One major type of descent group is based on lineage. Anthropologists define **lineages** as descent groups composed of relatives, all of whom trace their relationship through *consanguineal* (blood) or *affinal* (marriage) relations to an actual, commonly known ancestor. Everyone in the lineage knows exactly how she or he is related to this ancestor.
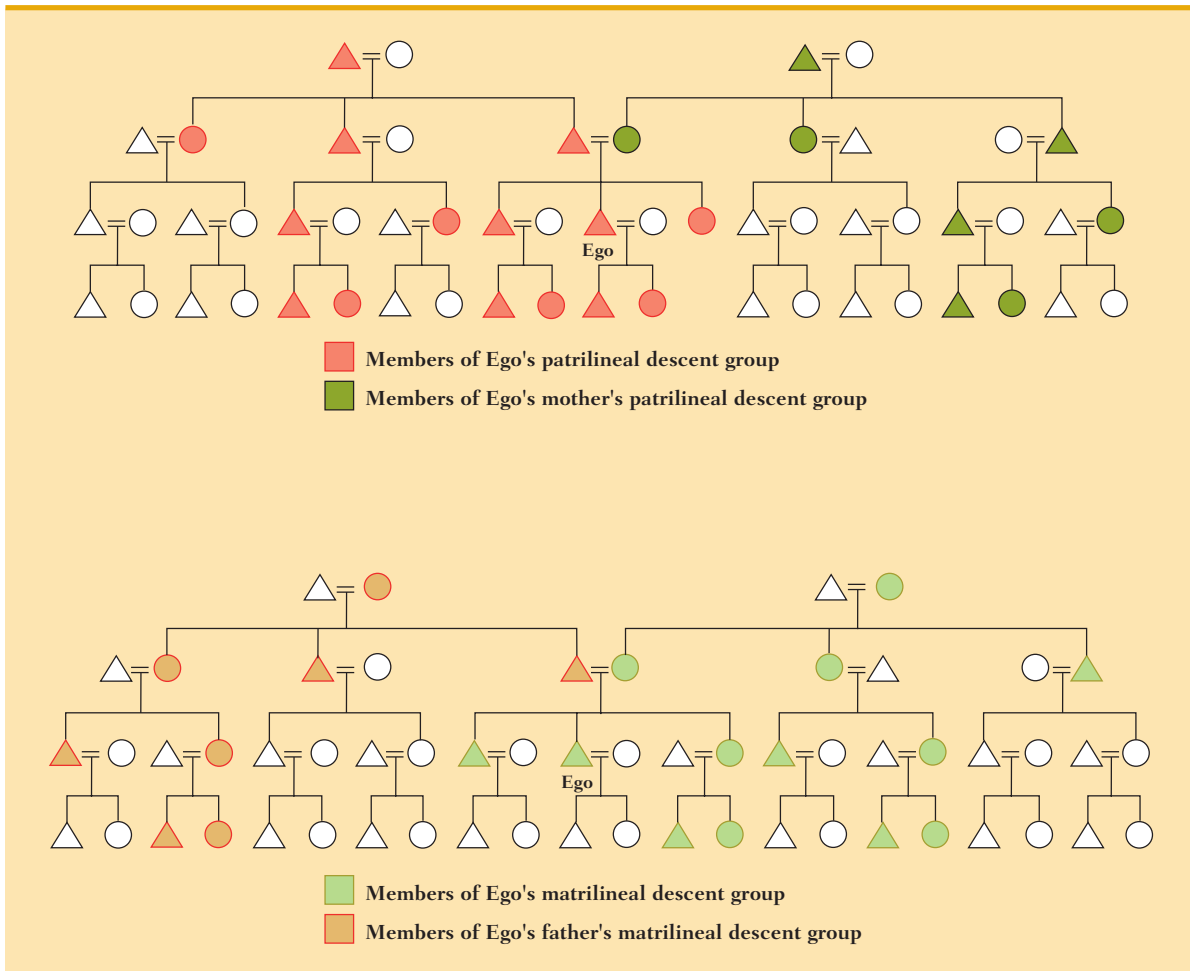
## Unilineal Descent Groups

**Unilineal descent groups** are lineage groups that trace their descent through only one side of the lineage or through only one sex. The most common type of unilineal descent group is a **patrilineal descent groups**, or *patrilineage*, composed of people who trace their descent through males from a common, known male ancestor (see Figure 10.2, top). Patrilineal descent groups are the predominant form of lineage in tribal societies (Pasternak 1976; L. Stone 2010).

Another form of unilineal descent group is the **matrilineal descent group**, or *matrilineage*, whose members calculate descent through the female line from a commonly known female ancestor (see Figure 10.2, bottom). Matrilineal descent groups occur most frequently in horticultural societies, although they are not the most common organizations. Matrilineal descent is found among a small number of North American tribal societies such as the Iroquois, Hopi, and Crow; among a number of tribes throughout Central and South Africa; and among a few peoples who live in the Pacific Islands (L. Stone 2010).

One very rare type of unilineal grouping is based on *double descent*, a combination of patrilineal and matrilineal principles. In this type of social organization, an individual belongs to both the father's and the mother's lineal descent groups. Several African tribal societies, such as the Afikpo Igbo in Nigeria, have a double-descent type of social organization (Ottenberg 1965).

**Ambilineal Descent Groups**  One other type of descent group is known as ambilineal descent. An **ambilineal descent group** is formed by tracing an individual's descent relationships through either a male or a female line. The members of these groups are not all related to each other through a particular male or female. Therefore, technically, this form of descent group is not unilineal. Usually, once an individual chooses to affiliate with either the father's or the mother's descent group, he or she remains with that descent group. Because each individual may choose his or her descent group, the ambilineal system offers more opportunity for economic and political strategizing. This choice frequently takes into account the relative economic resources or political power of the two family groups.

**Bilateral Descent**  A number of tribal societies practice **bilateral descent**, in which relatives are traced through

**Figure 10.2** A patrilineal descent system; (top) a matrilineal descent system (bottom).



both maternal and paternal sides of the family simultane-ously. This type of descent system does not result in any particular lineal descent grouping. For that reason, it is not too common in tribal societies. In those cases in which bilateral descent is found among tribes, a loosely struc-tured group known as a *kindred* is used to mobilize rela-tives for economic, social, or political purposes. **Kindreds** are overlapping relatives from both the mother's and the father's side of a family that an individual recognizes as important kin relations (see Figure 10.3 ). In U.S. society, for example, when a person refers to all of his or her relatives, that person is designating a type of bilateral kindred. This bilateral kindred, however, has no functional significance in U.S. society compared to its role in a tribal society.

**Clans**   A **clan** is a form of descent group whose members trace their descent to an unknown ancestor or, in some cases, to a sacred plant or animal spirit. Members of clans usually share a common name, but are not able to specify defini-tive links to an actual genealogical figure. Some clans are *patriclans*, groups distinguished by a male through whom

descent is traced. Other clan groupings are *matriclans*, in which descent is traced through a female. Some tribal socie-ties have both clans and lineages. In many cases, clans are made up of lineages that link their descent to a mythical ancestor or sacred spirit. In such systems, clans are larger groupings, consisting of several different lineages.

**Phratries and Moieties**   Among the more loosely struc-tured groups found in tribal societies are phratries and moie-ties. **Phratries** are social groupings that consist of two or more clans combined. Members of phratries usually believe they have some loose genealogical relationship to one another. **Moieties** (derived from the French word meaning "half") are composed of clans or phratries that divide the entire society into two equal divisions. In some cases, such as among the North American Hopi, the moiety divisions divide the vil-lage in half. People have to marry outside their own moiety. In addition, each moiety has specific functions related to economic and political organization and religious activities. Wherever phratries and moieties are found in tribal societies, they provide models for organizing social relationships.

**Figure 10.3** A kindred consists of relatives from both side of a family that Ego recognizes as important kin relations



**Ego**
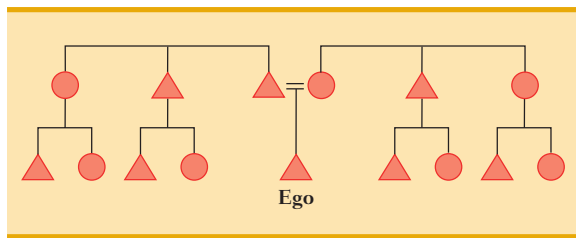
## Functions of Descent Groups

Descent groups provide distinctive organizational features for tribal societies. They may become corporate social units, meaning that they endure beyond any particular individual's lifetime. Thus, they can play a key role in regulating the production, exchange, and distribution of goods and services over a long period of time. Family rights to land, livestock, and other resources are usually defined in relation to these corporate descent groups.

### Descent Groups and Economic Relationships

Descent groups enable tribal societies to manage their economic rights and obligations. Within the descent groups, individual nuclear families have rights to particular land and animals. In most cases, horticultural tribes inherit their rights to land owned by their entire lineage. The lineage allocates the land to members of the lineage through what anthropologists (and attorneys) call *usufruct* rights or corporate rights to the land. Among some more advanced patrilineal horticulturalist peoples, land is sometimes transmitted from generation to generation through an eldest male, an inheritance pattern known as **primogeniture**. A less common pattern is **ultimogeniture**, in which property and land are passed to the youngest son.

In horticultural societies, separate families within patrilineages have joint rights to plots of land for gardening. For example, among the Yanomamö, villages are usually made up of two patrilineages; families within these lineages cultivate their own plots of land (Chagnon 2012). In this sense, the Yanomamö patrilineage is a like a corporate group. The transmission of status, rights, and obligations through these patrilineages occurs without constant disputes and conflicts. In these tribal societies, land is usually not partitioned into individual plots and cannot be sold to or exchanged with other descent groups.

Iroquois tribal society was based on matrilineal corporate groupings. Matrilineages among the Iroquois resided together in longhouses and had collective rights over tools and garden plots. These matrilineages were also the basic units of production in the slash-and-burn cultivation for maize and other crops. Property was inherited through

matrilineal lines from the eldest woman in the corporate group. She had the highest social status in the matrilineage and influenced decision making regarding the allocation of land and other economic rights and resources (Brown 1970a).

Sometimes in societies with bilateral descent, kindreds are the basic labor-cooperative groups for production and exchange. People living in bilateral societies can turn to both the mother's and the father's side of the family for economic assistance. The kindred is thus a much more loosely structured corporate group. The kindred is highly flexible and allows for better adaptation in certain environmental circumstances.
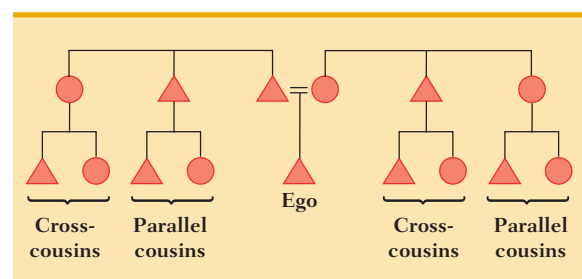
## Marriage

Corporate descent groups play a role in determining marital relations in tribal societies. Like foragers, most tribal peoples maintain exogamous rules of marriage with respect to different corporate groups, meaning people generally marry outside their lineage, kindred, clan, moiety, or phratry. Marriages in tribal societies are guided by rules that ensure the perpetuation of kinship ties and group alliances.

Some tribal societies practice different forms of cousin marriage, which are illustrated in Figure 10.4. For example, among the Yanomamö, a pattern called double cross-cousin marriage and patrilocal residence, in which a newly married couple resides with the husband's parents, is practiced among patrilineages in different villages. Males in one patrilineage, in effect, exchange sisters, whom they may not marry, with males of other patrilineages. When the sons of the next generation repeat this form of marriage, each is marrying a woman to whom he is already related by kinship. The woman whom the man marries is both his father's sister's daughter and his mother's brother's daughter. The woman is marrying a man who is both her mother's brother's son and her father's sister's son. This form of patrilineal exogamous marriage is common in many tribal societies. It is a type of restricted marriage exchange that helps provide for the formation of economic and political alliances among villages (Chagnon 2012; Hames 2004).

Some patrilineal tribal societies, including several in Southeast Asia, prefer a more specific rule of *matrilateral*

**Figure 10.4** Different types of cousin marriage



**Cross-cousins**    **Parallel cousins**    **Ego**    **Cross-cousins**    **Parallel cousins**

*cross-cousin marriage*. In this system, males consistently marry their mother's brothers' daughters. This produces a marital system in which females move from one patrilineage to another. More than two lineages are involved in this system. The patrilineages become specialized as either wife givers or wife takers. In an example with three lineages—A, B, and C—anthropologists have noted cycles of marital exchange. Lineage B always gives women to lineage A, but takes its wives from lineage C (see Figure 10.5). Claude Lévi-Strauss (1969) refers to this type of marital system as general exchange, in contrast to restricted exchange, which is practiced between two lineages.

Another form of cousin marriage found in some patrilineal societies is **parallel-cousin marriage**, in which a male marries his father's brother's daughter. Unlike the other forms of cousin marriage, parallel-cousin marriage results in endogamy—marriage within one's own descent group (see Figure 10.6 ). This form of marriage is found among the Bedouin and other tribes of the Middle East and North Africa.

**Polygyny**  Cross-cultural research has demonstrated that *polygyny*, in which a male marries two or more females, occurs most frequently in tribal societies (Ember, Ember, and Low 2007). In a classic cross-cultural study, anthropologists Kay Martin and Barbara Voorhies (1975) emphasized that polygyny is an ecologically and economically adaptive strategy for tribal populations. The more wives an individual male has, the more land or livestock he will control for allocation and exchange. This leads to an increase in both the labor supply and the overall productive value of the household. In addition, wealth in many of these tribal societies is measured in the number of offspring. Reproducing children for one's descent group is viewed as prestigious, and the children also become productive members of the household.

Anthropologist Douglas White (1988) did extensive cross-cultural research on polygyny. He describes one widespread type of polygyny as a wealth-enhancing form of marriage in which elder males accumulate several wives for productive labor, which increases their wealth. Strongly correlated with this wealth-enhancing polygyny is the ability to acquire new land for expansion. As new land becomes available, the labor produced by co-wives is extremely valuable. According to White, this wealth-enhancing form of polygyny is also related to warfare and the capture of wives. In his research, he found that tribal warfare often involved the capture of women from other groups as a major means of recruiting new co-wives for elder males.

Recently, a carefully controlled statistical multiple regression analysis of a broad cross-cultural sample from the Human Relations Area Files has indicated that the prevalence of warfare and the loss of males from warfare is highly correlated with polygynous marriages in nonstate societies (Ember, Ember, and Low 2007). This research indicates that the frequency of warfare, which as we will see in the next chapter is a fundamental aspect of tribal societies, is associated with the shortage of males and an increase in polygyny.

In addition to increasing wealth, polygyny enables certain individuals and lineages to have a large number of children. For example, roughly 25 percent of Yanomamö marriages are polygynous. One sample group of 20 Yanomamö political leaders had 71 wives and 172 children among them (Chagnon and Irons 1979). One Yanomamö individual named Shinbone had 11 wives and 43 children (Chagnon 2012). The Yanomamö case tends to demonstrate that polygyny is associated with warfare, high male mortality, and other factors including reproductive fitness.

**Bridewealth Exchange**  Among many tribal societies, marriages are accompanied by an exchange of wealth. The most common type of exchange, particularly among patrilineal societies, is called **bridewealth**, which involves the transfer of some form of wealth, sometimes limited-purpose money like shells or livestock, from the descent group of the groom to that of the bride. Bridewealth is not a commercial exchange that reduces a bride to a commodity; that is, the bride's family does not "sell" her to her husband's family. Bridewealth serves to symbolize and highlight the reciprocities and rights established between two descent groups through marriage. In a patrilineal society,

**Figure 10.5**  Matrilateral cross-cousin marriages among three lineages
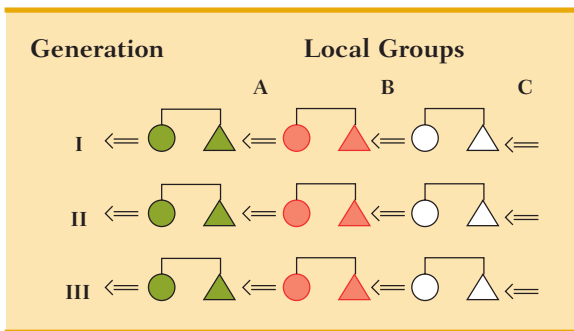


**Figure 10.6**  Patrilateral parallel-cousin marriage
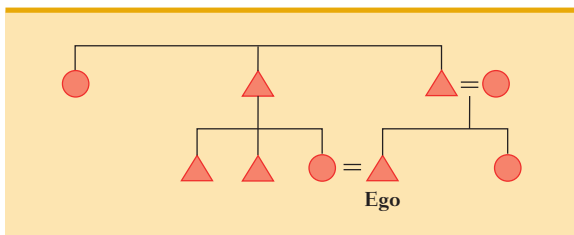
the bride becomes a member of a new corporate group that acquires access to her labor and eventually, to her offspring. In return, the husband's kin group has certain responsibilities toward the wife. The bridewealth reflects these mutual rights and obligations and compensates the bride's family for the loss of her labor and her reproductive potential. Once the bridewealth is paid, any children she has belong to the groom's family. It helps to forge an alliance between the two kin groups. One cross-cultural study of marriage transactions suggests that bridewealth exchanges in tribal societies relate to the need to introduce new female labor into the household, the transmission of property, and the enhancement of status for males (Schlegel and Eloul 1988). Failure to pay the bridewealth usually leads to family conflicts, including the possible dissolution of the marriage.

**Polyandry**    Not all tribal societies are polygynous. Just as in some hunter-gatherer groups, polyandry exists in tribal societies (Starkweather and Hames 2012). *Polyandrous marriages* are between a woman and two or more men. Systematic formal patterns of polyandry are found in formerly tribal societies in the Himalayan regions of northern India, Sri Lanka, and Tibet and, until recently, among the Todas of southern India. The most common type of classical polyandry is fraternal polyandry, in which brothers share a wife.

The Toda were a buffalo-herding, pastoralist tribe of approximately 800 people. Traditionally, parents arranged the marriages when the partners were young children. When a Toda girl married a specific individual, she automatically became a wife of his brothers, including those who were not yet born. Through patrilocal residence rules, the wife joined the household of the husband. There was little evidence of sexual jealousy among the co-husbands. If the wife became pregnant, the oldest male claimed paternity rights over the child. The other co-husbands were "fathers" in a sociological sense and had certain rights regarding the child, such as labor for their households. Biological paternity was not considered important. The most prevalent explanation for the development of polyandry among the Toda was that female infanticide was practiced, leading to a scarcity of females (Rivers [1906] 1967; Oswalt 1972; Walker 1986).

Among other cases of formal polyandry, such as in the Himalayan areas, a lack of land and resources fostered this practice. Nancy Levine found that among the Nyinba of northwestern Nepal, the ideal form of marriage is a woman who marries *three brothers from another family* (1988; Boyd and Silk 2012). This enables one husband to farm the land, another to herd livestock, and a third to engage in trade. Levine discovered that the males in these polyandrous marriages were very concerned about the paternity of their own children and favored close relationships with their own offspring, just as would be predicted by an evolutionary psychology hypothesis (see Chapter 4).

Anthropologists indicate that nonclassical cases of polyandry are much more frequent than indicated within the ethnographic record (Borgerhoff Mulder 2009; Hrdy 2000; Starkweather and Hames 2012). In some cases, informal types of polyandry are usually recorded as *serial monogamy* and polygyny where females are married to different males at various periods during their lifetimes. Monique Borgerhoff Mulder's ethnographic research among the horticulturalist group known as the Pimbwe of Tanzania discovered many cases of women mating with multiple men during their lifetimes (2009). Informal polyandry is also found in many tribal societies such as the Yanomamö when there is a shortage of males due to warfare or diseases (Starkweather and Hames 2012).

**The Levirate and Sororate**    The corporateness of descent groups in some tribal societies is exemplified by two rules of marriage designed to preserve kin ties and fulfill obligations following the death of a spouse. These rules are known as the levirate and the sororate. The **levirate** is the rule that a widow is expected to marry one of her deceased husband's brothers. In some societies, such as those of the ancient Israelites of biblical times and the contemporary Nuer or Tiv tribe, the levirate rule requires a man to cohabit with a dead brother's widow so that she can have children, who are then considered to be the deceased husband's. The essential feature of the levirate is that the corporate rights of the deceased husband and the lineage endure even after the husband's death. The **sororate** is a marriage rule that dictates that when a wife dies, her husband is expected to marry one of her sisters.

Both the levirate and the sororate provide for the fulfillment of mutual obligations between consanguineal (blood) and affinal (marital) kin after death. Reciprocal exchanges between allied families must extend beyond the death of any individual. These marital practices emphasize the crucial ties among economic, kinship, and political factors in tribal societies.

**Postmarital Residence Rules in Tribal Societies**
Anthropologists find that the rules for residence after marriage in tribal societies are related to the forms of descent groups. For example, the vast majority of tribal societies have patrilineal descent groups and patrilocal rules of residence. A less frequent pattern of postmarital residence is matrilocal residence, in which the newly wedded couple lives with or near the wife's parents. Yet, another rule of residence found in matrilineal societies is known as avunculocal, in which a married couple resides with the husband's mother's brother.

**Causes of Postmarital Residence Rules**    By studying the relationships between postmarital residence rules and forms of descent groups in tribal societies, anthropologists have found that residence rules often represent adaptions to the practical conditions a society faces. The most

widely accepted hypothesis states that rules of postmarital residence usually develop before the form of descent groups in a society (Fox 1967; Keesing and Strathern 1998; Martin and Voorhies 1975). For example, limited land and resources, frequent warfare with neighboring groups, population pressure, and the need for cooperative work may have been important factors in developing patrilocal residence and patrilineal descent groups. The purpose of these male-centered rules of residence and descent may have been to keep fathers, sons, and brothers together to pursue common interests in land, animals, and people.

What, then, creates matrilocal rules and matrilineal descent? One explanation, based on cross-cultural research by Melvin and Carol Ember (1971), proposed that matrilocal rules developed in response to patterns of warfare. The Embers suggested that societies that engage in internal warfare—warfare with neighboring societies close to home—have patrilocal rules of residence. In contrast, societies involved in external warfare—warfare a long distance from home—develop matrilocal residence rules. In societies in which external warfare takes males from the home territory for long periods of time, there is a strong need to keep the women of kin groups together. The classic example used by the Embers is the Iroquois, whose males traveled hundreds of miles away from home to engage in external wars, and this produced matrilocal residence and matrilineal descent.

Marvin Harris (1979) extended the Embers' hypothesis to suggest that matrilocal rules and matrilineal descent emerge in societies in which males are absent for long periods, for whatever reason. For example, among the Navajo, females tended sheep near their own households, and males raised horses and participated in labor that took them away from their homes. The Navajo had matrilocal residence and matrilineal descent.

### Generalizations on Marriage in Tribal Societies

It must be emphasized that descent, marriage, and residence rules are *not static* in tribal societies. Rather, they are flexible and change as ecological, demographic, economic, and political circumstances change. For example, tribal groups with rules of preference for marriage partners make exceptions to those rules when the situation calls for it. If a tribal society has norms that prescribe cross-cousin or parallel-cousin marriage and an individual does not have a cousin in the particular category, various other options will be available for the individual.

There are usually many other candidates available for an arranged marriage. As anthropologist Ward Goodenough (1956) demonstrated long ago, much strategizing goes on in tribal societies in determining marital choice, residence locales, and descent. Factors such as property and the availability of land, animals, or other resources often influence decisions about marital arrangements.

Often tribal elders will be involved in lengthy negotiations regarding marital choices for their offspring. These people, like others throughout the world, are not automatons responding automatically to cultural norms. Kinship and marital rules are ideal norms, and these norms are often violated.

**Divorce** Among tribal peoples, especially those with patrilineal descent groups, divorce rates may be related to bridewealth exchanges. One traditional view suggested that in patrilineal descent societies with a high bridewealth amount, marriages tend to be stable. In Evans-Pritchard's (1951) account of Nuer marriage, he noted that one of the major reasons for bridewealth is to ensure marital stability. In lineage societies, the man's family pays a bridewealth in exchange for the rights to a woman's economic output and fertility. The greater the bridewealth, the more complete the transfer of rights over the woman from her own family to that of her husband. The dissolution of a marriage, which requires the return of bridewealth, is less likely to occur if the bridewealth is large and has been redistributed among many members of the wife's family (Gluckman 1953; Leach 1953, 1954; Schneider 1953). In contrast, when the bridewealth is low, marriages are unstable, and divorce is frequent.

As Roger Keesing (1981) has pointed out, however, this hypothesis raises a fundamental question: Is marriage stable because of high bridewealth costs, or can a society afford to have a norm of high bridewealth only if it has a stable form of marriage? Keesing's own theories concerning divorce focus on rules of descent. In general, societies with matrilineal descent rules have high divorce rates, whereas patrilineal societies have low rates. In matrilineal societies, a woman retains the rights to her children and so is more likely to divorce her husband if he misbehaves. Among the matrilineal Hopi and Zuni, for example, a woman has only to put a man's belongings outside her house door to secure a divorce. The husband then returns to his mother's household, and the wife and children remain in the wife's household (Garbarino 1988).

Marriages in matrilineal descent groups tend to be less enduring than those in patrilineal groups because of the clash of interests (or corporate rights) over children. When a woman's primary interests remain with her lineage at birth and the people of her descent group have control over her and her children, her bond to her husband and his lineage tends to be fragile and impermanent (Keesing 1975). In contrast, in patrilineal societies, the wife has been fully incorporated into the husband's lineage. This tends to solidify patrilineal rights over children, leading to more durable marital ties.

## Gender

Gender is an extremely important element of social structure in tribal societies. Cross-cultural ethnographic

research on tribal societies has contributed to a better understanding of male–female relations. Anthropologists are interested in the interrelationships among gender roles, subsistence practices, female status, patriarchy, and sexism in tribal societies.

### Gender and Enculturation: Margaret Mead's Study

Although nineteenth-century anthropologists addressed the question of gender roles, their conclusions were largely speculative and were not based on firsthand ethnographic research. In the twentieth century, anthropologists went into the field to collect information concerning the roles of males and females. The first landmark ethnographic study of gender roles was carried out by Margaret Mead and involved three New Guinea societies: the Arapesh, the Mundugumor, and the Tchambuli. Mead's study was published in 1935 and was titled *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*.

Mead described these three tribes as having totally different types of gender roles. Among the Arapesh, males and females had similar attitudes and behavior. Mead described both sexes as unaggressive, cooperative, passive, and sensitive to the needs of others. Based on U.S. standards of the time, Mead described the Arapesh as feminine. In contrast, Mead described Mundugumor males and females as aggressive, selfish, insensitive, and uncooperative, much like the U.S. stereotype of masculinity. The Tchambuli, according to Mead, represented a complete reversal of U.S. conceptions of gender roles. Tchambuli females were dominant politically and economically, whereas males were submissive, emotionally dependent, and less responsible. Females were the breadwinners and the political leaders; they also engaged in warfare. Males stayed near the domestic camp and cared for the children. One of their primary activities was artistic work such as dancing, painting, and jewelry making. Hence, by U.S. standards, Tchambuli women were masculine, and Tchambuli men were feminine.

Mead concluded that societies can both minimize and exaggerate social and cultural differences between males and females. She argued that gender differences are extremely variable from society to society. Mead's study challenged the status quo in U.S. society regarding gender-role stereotypes. It also appealed strongly to the emerging feminist movement because it asserted that culture, rather than biology, determines (and limits) gender roles. Tchambuli women became an important symbol for the feminist movement in the United States during the 1960s.

### Mead's Study Reappraised

After restudying the Tchambuli (who actually call themselves the Chambri) during the 1970s, anthropologist Deborah Gewertz (1981) concluded that Mead's description of the reversal of gender roles was not a completely accurate hypothesis. Although Gewertz concludes that Mead was essentially valid in her descriptions and observations, she did not stay long enough

to see what was happening to the Chambri. According to Gewertz, Mead had viewed the Chambri at a time when they were going through a unique transition. For example, in the 1930s, the Chambri had been driven from their islands by an enemy tribe. All their physical structures and artwork had been burned. Consequently, the Chambri men were engaged full-time near the domestic camps in creating artwork and rebuilding at the time Mead conducted her study. Mead assumed that these were typical activities for males, when, in fact, they were atypical. After assessing her ethnographic data carefully, Gewertz concludes that the Chambri do not exhibit the complete reverse of traditional male and female gender roles that Mead had described. Gewertz found that the Chambri males allocate and control the distribution of goods and valuables and, hence, are dominant politically and economically, despite the fact that females produce most of the goods.

Gewertz's reevaluation of Chambri gender-role patterns challenges the hypothesis presented by Mead regarding the tremendous flexibility of gender roles in human societies. Although Gewertz notes that cultural values do influence gender roles, a complete reversal of the male and female roles was not evident in the Chambri case. Like many anthropologists of the era of the 1930s, Mead did not account for the complex regional histories that influenced gender roles in these New Guinea tribal societies.

**Patriarchy**  Despite Mead's conclusions concerning gender roles among the Tchambuli, most modern anthropologists agree that a pattern of matriarchy, in which females regularly dominate males economically and politically, is not part of the archaeological, historical, and ethnographic record (Bamberger 1974; Friedl 1975; Ortner 1974, 1996; L. Stone 2010). (See "Critical Perspectives: Were There Matriarchal States?" pages 212–214.) With some exceptions, most tribal societies tend to be patriarchal. Anthropologists have offered many hypotheses to explain the prevalence of patriarchy.

Sociobiologists and evolutionary psychologists view patriarchy in tribal societies as a consequence of innate reproductive strategies, leading to enhanced reproductive fitness. In this view, males are unconsciously motivated to reproduce with as many females as possible to increase their chances of reproductive success. As we have seen, some tribal males have many more children than others. These reproductive strategies involve competition among males for females. According to this model, this male competition, in turn, leads to political conflict and increases in warfare. These factors produce the patterns of patrilocality, patrilineality, polygyny, and patriarchy in tribal societies (Van den Berghe and Barash 1977; Chagnon and Hames 1979; Chagnon 2000). Another biologically based view suggested by Steven Goldberg is that males are always dominant in society because male hormones cause them

to compete more strongly than women for high status and dominance (1993).

Instead of referring to innate biological drives, cultural materialists such as William Divale and Marvin Harris (1976) maintained that patriarchy and gender hierarchy are caused by the scarcity of resources and recurring warfare in tribal societies. In general, when material resources are scarce, especially in horticultural societies, warfare between competitive tribes is prevalent. Because most warriors are male, both the status and the power of males in these societies become intensified. For these reasons, a male-supremacy complex develops. The Divale and Harris study was subject to extensive criticism based on methodological flaws and inadequate data (Hirschfeld et al. 1978). However, a cross-cultural study using the Human Relations Area Files indicates that the intensification of warfare is strongly associated with the decline of female status (Khalturina and Khorotayev 2006). This study found that societies that emphasize socialization for male aggression and an ideology of male toughness and superiority results in a higher frequency of wife beating and a higher level of separation between genders. In addition, confirming the earlier research discussed earlier, this cross-cultural analysis found that polygyny results from extensive warfare and increased male mortality, which decreases female power and enhances patriarchy. The relationship among tribal warfare, polygyny, and the development of patriarchal societies is a potential research project for future anthropologists.

**Patriarchy and Sexism in Tribal Societies**   Other anthropologists emphasize that although biological or material considerations may contribute to male domination, the cultural values used to define *female* are extremely important in the maintenance of tribal patriarchies. In other words, in many tribal societies, female roles have much less prestige than male roles. Many tribal societies adhere to mythologies, beliefs, and ideologies that justify male domination and female subordination. These mythologies, beliefs, and ideologies reinforce **sexism**—prejudice and discrimination against people based on their sex. Many patrilineal horticultural societies of New Guinea, for example, separate females from males during menstruation because they believe that menstruating females are unclean and will harm the community. Menstrual blood was often associated with witchcraft or the production of harmful potions; therefore, regular contacts with women were prohibited. Women were often thought to be radically different physically and psychologically from males, and their bodily fluids and essences were dangerous and evil (Lindenbaum 1972). These male anxieties, mythical beliefs, and prejudices frequently led to discriminatory practices against females. For example, most tribes in New Guinea have rules of residence that separate husbands and wives

into different houses, and young boys are taken from their mothers and segregated into men's houses.

In many of these tribal societies, women are excluded from political and sacred ritual activities, as well as from military combat. This limitation results in the cultural definition of males as the primary gender that ensures the survival of the society. Because of these views, women in many of these tribal societies are often subjected to social subordination, sexual segregation, excessive domination, and systematic physical abuse (Lindenbaum 1972; Chagnon 1997). At times, they are deprived of material resources during pregnancy, denied the same access to food as males, and are physically mutilated. Sexist ideologies are often used to justify these practices.

Yet, there is variation among tribal societies. Based on ethnographic research among the Vanatinal tribal people of Papua New Guinea, Maria Lepowsky reports that there is very little ideology of male dominance and no prohibitions regarding contact with women who are menstruating (1993). Lepowsky argues that the women among the Vanatinal are respected and treated as equals with the men. Vanatinal women can gain prestige through trading and exchanging valuables. Nevertheless, these women are not allowed to hunt, fish, or make war. Vanatinal men control and retain power over the mobilization of warfare and threats of violence. Thus, Vanatinal society is not a perfectly gender-egalitarian society. Another factor that has played a role in understanding gender roles and taboos in Papua New Guinea is that, to some extent, the anthropologists overemphasized the male interpretations of these taboos against women without taking into consideration the voices of women. In some cases, the women viewed the men's semen just as polluting as the men considered their menstrual blood.

**Gender, Subsistence, and Female Status**   A number of anthropologists propose that the status of women in tribal societies depends on their contributions to subsistence activities. As we have seen, both males and females are involved in horticultural production. Males usually clear the ground for the gardens, whereas women weed and harvest the crops. In cross-cultural surveys of tribal horticultural societies, women actually contribute more to cultivation activities in horticultural societies than do men (Martin and Voorhies 1975; Goody 1976). Nevertheless, patriarchy reigns in conjunction with a sexist ideology in most of these tribal groups. In some matrilineal horticultural societies, however, the status of females tends to be higher.

**Female Status in Matrilineal Societies**   In matrilineally organized societies such as the Iroquois, Hopi, and Zuni of North America, women have considerable influence in economic and political decision making. Also, the mothers and sisters of the wives in matrilineages can often offer support in domestic disputes with males. In addition, rights

to property—including land, technology, and livestock—are embodied in the matrilineages. In general, however, males in matrilineal societies hold the influential positions of political power and maintain control over economic resources. In most matrilineal societies, the mother's brother has political authority and economic control within the family. Thus, matrilineality does not translate into matriarchy.

### The Iroquois: Women in a Matrilineal Society

The Iroquois offer a good example of the status of females in matrilineal societies. The families that occupied the Iroquois longhouses were related through matrilineages. The senior women, their daughters, the daughters' children, the brothers, and the unmarried sons built the longhouses. Although husbands lived in the longhouses, they were considered outsiders. The matrilineages of the longhouse maintained the garden plots and owned the tools in common. These matrilineages planted, weeded, and harvested the corn, beans, and squash. The Iroquois women processed, stored, and distributed all of the food and provisioned the men's war parties. The men were highly dependent on the food supplies of the women.

The elder matrons in these matrilineages had the power to appoint the sachem, a council leader of the Iroquois political system. A council of 50 sachems governed the five different tribes of the Iroquois confederacy. Often they appointed their younger sons to this position and would rule until their sons were of age. Women could also influence decisions about peace and warfare and determine whether prisoners of war should live or die (Brown 1970a).

Clearly, as the Iroquois case indicates, women influenced the political and economic dynamics in some matrilineal societies. In their cross-cultural survey, Martin and Voorhies (1975) found that the status of women is higher in horticultural societies that practice matrilineal descent. In many of these matrilineal societies, males developed political power only if they had strong support from the relatives of their wives. Nevertheless, these findings also indicate that in the matrilineal societies, males still exercise political authority and assume control over key economic resources. In these societies, women may be held in high regard, but they are still economically and politically subordinate to men.

## Age

As mentioned above, all societies have *age grades*, groupings of people of the same age. Within an age grade, people learn specific norms and acquire cultural knowledge. In some tribal societies, age grades have become specialized as groupings that have many functions.

**Age Sets**   In certain tribal societies of East Africa, North America, Brazil, India, and New Guinea, specialized age groupings emerged as multifunctional institutions. In some tribal societies, age grades become much more formalized and institutionalized as age sets. **Age sets** are groups of people

of about the same age who share specific rights, obligations, duties, and privileges within their community. Typically, people enter an age set when they are young and then progress through various life stages with other members of the set. The transition from one stage of life to the next within the age set is usually accompanied by a distinctive rite of passage.

**Age Sets and Age Grades among the Tribal Pastoralists**   A number of tribal pastoralists of East Africa, such as the Karimojong, Masaai, Nuer, Pokot, Samburu, and Sebei, have specialized age-set and age-grade systems that structure social organization. The Sebei, for example, have eight age-set groups, each of which is divided into three subsets. The eight groups are given formal names, and the subsets have informal nicknames. Sebei males join an age set through initiation, in which they are circumcised and exposed to tribal secret lore and indoctrination.

The Sebei initiations are held approximately every six years and the initiation rituals extend over a period of six months. Those who are initiated together develop strong bonds. Newly initiated males enter the lowest level of this system, the junior warriors. As they grow older, they graduate into the next level, the senior warriors, while younger males enter the junior levels. Groups of males then progress from one level to the next throughout the course of their lifetimes (Goldschmidt 1986).

The Sebei age sets serve an important military function. The members of the age set are responsible for protecting livestock and for conducting raids against other camps. In addition, age sets are the primary basis of status in these societies. Among the most basic social rankings are junior and senior military men and junior and senior elders. All social interactions, political activities, and ceremonial events are influenced by the age-set system. The young males of other East African pastoralists, such as the Maasai and Nuer, go through similar painful initiation rites of passage at puberty that move them from the status of a child to that of a warrior adult male, and they live separately from other younger and older people (Evans-Pritchard 1951; Salzman 2004). The corporate units of age sets provide for permanent mutual obligations that continue through time. In the absence of a centralized government, these age sets play a vital role in maintaining social cohesion.

**The Elderly**   Among tribal pastoralists and horticulturalists, older people make use of ownership or control of property to reinforce their status. Societies in which the elderly control extensive resources appear to show higher levels of deference toward the aged (Silverman and Maxwell 1983). The control of land, women, and livestock and their allocation among the younger generations are the primary means by which the older men (and sometimes older women, in matrilineal societies) exercise their power over the rest of society. In many cases, this dominance by the elderly leads to age stratification or inequalities.

The system in which older people exercise exceptional power is called **gerontocracy**—rule by elders (usually male) who control the material and reproductive resources of the community. In gerontocracies, elderly males tend to monopolize not only the property resources, but also the young women in the tribe. Access to human beings is the greatest source of wealth and power in these tribal societies. Additionally, older males benefit from the accumulation of bridewealth. Through these processes, older men tend to have more secure statuses and economic prerogatives. They retire from subsistence and economic activities and often assume political leadership in tribal affairs. In this capacity, they make important decisions regarding marriage ties, resource exchanges, and other issues.

Gerontocratic tribal societies continue to be prominent today. Among the ancient Israelites—once a pastoralist tribe—the elders controlled the disposition of property and marriages of their adult children, and the Bible mentions many examples of tribal patriarchs who were involved in polygynous marriages. In a modern pastoralist tribe—the Kirghiz of Afghanistan—the elderly enjoy extensive political power and status gained partially through the control of economic resources. In addition, the elders are thought to be wise, possessing extensive knowledge of history and local ecological conditions, as well as medical and veterinary skills crucial to the group's survival (Shahrani 1981). Thus, the possession of cultural knowledge may lead to the development of gerontocratic tendencies within tribal societies.

# Social Structure in Chiefdoms

**10.4** Discuss how status differences, the family, gender, and age are related in chiefdom societies.

In our earlier discussion of social structure, we introduced the concept of social stratification, the inequality among statuses within society. Chiefdom societies exhibit a great deal of stratification. They are divided into different **strata** (singular: stratum), groups of equivalent statuses based on ranked divisions in a society. Strata in chiefdom societies are not based solely on economic factors, but rather cut across society based on prestige, power, and religious beliefs and practices.

## Rank and Sumptuary Rules

Chiefdom societies are **hierarchical societies** wherein some people have greater access than others to wealth, rank, status, authority, and power. The various families and descent groups—households, lineages, and clans in chiefdoms—have a specific ascribed rank in the society and are accorded certain rights, privileges, and obligations based on that rank. Social interaction between lower and higher strata is governed by **sumptuary rules** or cultural norms and practices used to differentiate the higher-status groups from the rest of society. In general, the higher the status and rank, the more ornate the jewelry, costumes, and decorative symbols. For example, among the Natchez, Native Americans of the Mississippi region, the upper-ranking members were tattooed all over their bodies, whereas lower-ranking people were only partially tattooed (Schildkrout and Kaeppler 2004).

Some of the Pacific chiefdoms had sumptuary rules requiring that a special orator chief speak to the public instead of the paramount chief. The highest paramount chiefs spoke a noble language with an archaic vocabulary containing words that commoners could not use with one another. Other sumptuary rules involved taboos against touching or eating with higher-ranking people. Sumptuary rules also set standards regarding dress, marriage, exchanges, and other cultural practices. In many of the chiefdoms, social inferiors had to prostrate themselves and demonstrate other signs of deference in the presence of their "social superiors." Symbols of inequality and hierarchy were thoroughly ingrained in most of these societies.

**A Case Study: Polynesia and Stratified Descent Groups** The ethnohistoric data on the Polynesian islands contain some of the most detailed descriptions of social stratification within chiefdom societies. The ideal basis of social organization was the conical clan (see Figure 10.7), an extensive descent group having a common ancestor who was usually traced through a patrilineal line (Kirchoff 1955; Sahlins 1968; Goldman 1970). Rank and lineage were determined by a person's kinship distance to the founding ancestor, as illustrated in Figure 10.7. The closer a person was to the highest-ranking senior male in a direct line of descent to the ancestor, the higher his or her rank and status were. In fact, as Marshall Sahlins (1985) suggested, the Hawaiians did not trace *descent*, but rather *ascent* toward a connection with an ancient ruling line.

Although Polynesian societies reflected a patrilineal bias, most had ambilineal descent groups (Goodenough 1955; Firth 1957). Senior males headed local descent groups in the villages. These local groups were ranked in relation to larger, senior groups that were embedded in the conical clan. Because of ambilateral rules, people born into certain groups had the option of affiliating with either their paternal or their maternal linkages in choosing their rank and status. In general, beyond this genealogical reckoning, these chiefdom societies offered little in the way of upward social mobility for achieved statuses.

## Marriage

As in tribal societies, most marriages in chiefdoms were carefully arranged affairs, sometimes involving cousin

**Figure 10.7**  Model of a conical clan
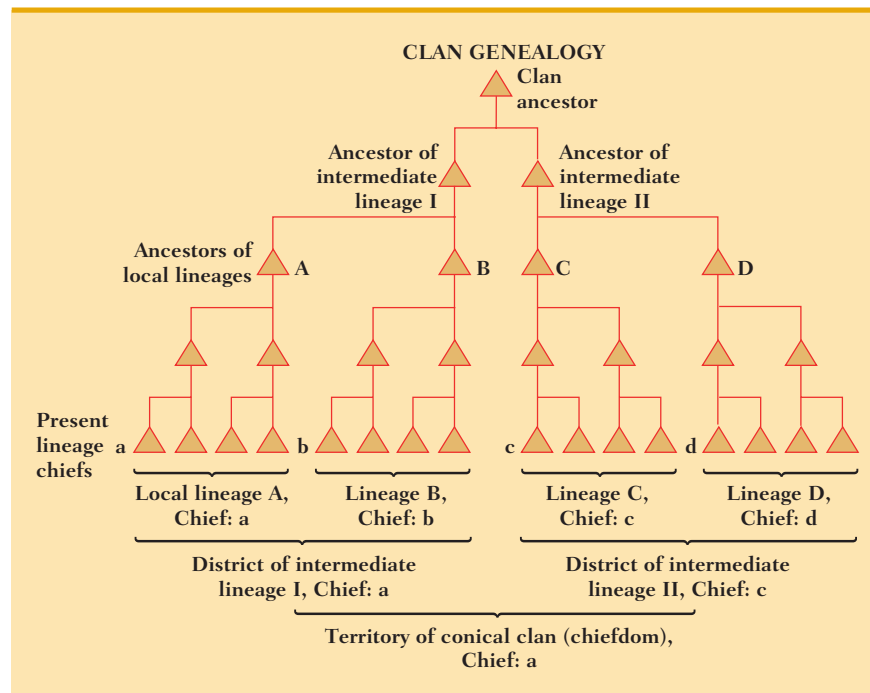


marriages from different descent groups. People who married outside of their descent group (exogamy) usually married within their social stratum (endogamy). In some chiefdom societies, however, marriages were sometimes arranged between higher-strata males and females of lower strata (a *hypergynous* marriage). Anthropologist Jane Collier (1988) noted that women in chiefdom societies that emphasized hereditary rank tended to avoid low-ranking males and tried to secure marriages with men who possessed more economic and political prerogatives.

One chiefdom in North America illustrates a situation in which marriage provided a systematic form of social mobility for the entire society. The Natchez Indians of the Mississippi region were a matrilineal society divided into four strata: the Great Sun chief (the eldest son of the top-ranking lineage) and his brothers, the noble lineages, the honored lineages, and the inferior "stinkards." All members of the three upper strata had to marry down (*hypogamy)* to a stinkard. This resulted in a regular form of social mobility from generation to generation. The children of the upper three ranks took the status of their mother unless she was a stinkard.

If a woman of the Great Sun married a stinkard, their children became members of the upper stratum, the Great Sun. If a noble woman married a stinkard, their children became nobles. However, if a noble man married a stinkard, their children would drop to the stratum of the honored lineage. Through marriage, all stinkard children moved up in the status hierarchy.

Although this system allowed for a degree of mobility, it required the perpetuation of the stinkard stratum so that members of the upper strata would have marriage partners. One way the stinkard stratum was maintained was through marriage between two stinkards; their children remained in the inferior stratum. In addition, the stinkard category was continually replenished with people captured in warfare.

**Endogamy**  Marriages in chiefdom societies were both exogamous and endogamous. Although marriages might be exogamous among descent groupings, the spouses were usually from the same stratum (endogamy). These endogamous marriages were carefully arranged so as to maintain genealogically appropriate kinship bonds and descent relations in the top-ranking descent group. Frequently, this involved cousin marriage among descent groups of the same stratum. Among Hawaiian chiefs, rules of endogamy actually resulted in sibling marriages, sometimes referred to as royal-incest marriage. One anthropologist categorized these sibling marriages as attempts to create alliances between chiefly households among the various Hawaiian Islands (Valeri 1985).

**Polygyny**  Many of the ruling families in chiefdom societies practiced polygyny. Among the Tsimshian of the Northwest Coast, chiefs could have as many as 20 wives, usually women from the high-ranking lineages of other groups. Lesser chiefs would marry several wives from lower-ranking lineages. In some cases, a Tsimshian woman from a lower-ranking lineage could marry up through the political strategies of her father. For example, a father might arrange a marriage between a high-ranking chief and his daughter. All these polygynous marriages were accompanied by exchanges of goods that passed to the top of the chiefly hierarchy, resulting

in accumulations of surplus resources and wives (Rosman and Rubel 1986). Among the Trobriand Islanders, male chiefs traditionally had as many as 60 wives drawn from different lineages. Many chiefdom societies exhibited high rates of polygyny in the high-ranking strata.

## General Social Principles in Chiefdoms

Among chiefdom societies, the typical family form was the extended family, with three generations living in a single household. In the Pacific region, for example, the basic domestic unit was usually a household made up of three generations; in some cases, two or three brothers with their offspring were permanent residents of the household. The households in a specific area of a village were usually part of one lineage. The extended family household was usually the basic economic unit for subsistence production and consumption in chiefdom societies.

Postmarital residence varied among chiefdoms. Patrilocal, matrilocal, and ambilocal types of residence rules were found in different areas. The ambilocal rule, found in many chiefdoms of the Pacific, enabled people to trace descent to ancestors (male or female) who had the highest rank in the society. This flexibility enabled some individuals to attain access to property, privileges, and authority in spite of the inherent restrictions on status mobility in chiefdom societies (Goodenough 1956).

## Gender

Typically, gender relations were highly unequal in chiefdom societies, with males exercising economic and political dominance over females. Bridewealth payments, along with arranged marriages, enabled men to claim rights to the labor of children and women. This practice was particularly significant among the highest-status descent groups. A woman's chances of success depended entirely on the rank of her siblings and parents. Higher-ranking males who wanted to control and manage their marital relations, labor, and potential offspring frequently married women with low-ranking brothers.

If a woman was fortunate enough to be born or marry into a high-ranking descent group, her ascribed or achieved status was secured. Anthropologist Laura Klein described how some high-ranking women among the Tsimshian Indians were able to maintain very high status in their society (1980). According to Sahlins (1985), some wives of high-ranking chiefs in traditional Hawaiian society married as many as 40 males (a type of royal polyandry) to maintain their high status. Thus, the women of the ruling stratum had a higher status than men or women from other strata. In an interesting discussion of the different chiefdoms that existed in the area of Appalachia in North America, archaeologists Lynne Sullivan and Christopher Rodning indicate that

there was a complementary relationship between males and females, which involved different pathways to power among the ruling elite (2001). The males ruled over the towns and villages, whereas the women ruled over the kinship groupings. These distinctions were demonstrated in
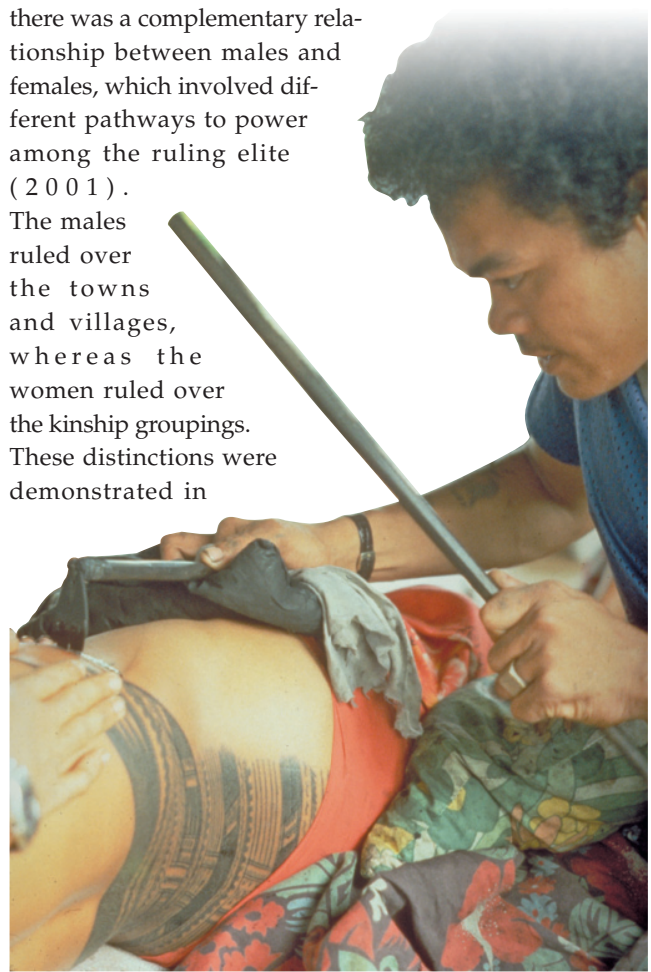


Tattooing in the Pacific Islands was used frequently to symbolize status relationships

the burials of the chiefly elite. The males were buried in the public architecture, while females were buried in the residential architecture.

Thus, among the ruling chiefly elite, women in chiefdoms had an important high status, but in general, men controlled and dominated economically and politically in chiefdom societies.

## Age

In many chiefdom societies, senior males had much more authority, rank, and prestige than other people. As in some tribal societies, this form of inequality produced gerontocratic systems. As people—especially in the higher-ranking descent groups—aged, they received more in the way of status, privileges, and deference from younger people. Because senior males controlled production, marriages, labor, and other economic activities, they became the dominant political authorities. Senior males also possessed special knowledge and controlled sacred rituals, reinforcing their authority. One of their major responsibilities was to perpetuate the beliefs that rank depended on a person's

descent group and that status was hereditary. As in some of the tribal societies, the combination of patriarchy and gerontocracy resulted in cultural hegemony—the imposition of norms, practices, beliefs, and values that reinforced the interests of the upper stratum. This cultural hegemony will become more apparent in the discussion of law and religion in chiefdom societies.

## Slavery

In the next chapter, we will discuss how chiefdoms frequently engaged in systematic, organized warfare. One consequence of this warfare was the taking of captives, who were designated as slaves. Slavery in chiefdoms generally did not have the same meaning or implications that it did in more complex state societies, and it usually did not involve the actual ownership of a human being as private property. In this sense, it was very different from the plantation slavery that developed later in the Americas. With some exceptions, most of the slaves in chiefdoms were absorbed into kin groups through marriage or adoption and performed essentially the same type of labor that most other people did. Nevertheless, in contrast to the more egalitarian band and tribal societies, chiefdom societies did show the beginnings of a slave stratum.

We have already mentioned an example of a chiefdom slave system in our discussion of the Natchez. Recall, however, that upper-ranking members were obliged to marry members of the stinkard stratum; thus, the Natchez did not have a hereditary slave population.

One exception to these generalizations involves some of the Northwest Coast American Indians, who maintained a hereditary slave system. Because marrying a slave was considered debasing, slavery became an inherited status (Kehoe 1995). The children of slaves automatically became slaves, producing a permanent slave stratum. These slaves—most of them war captives—were excluded from ceremonies and on some occasions were killed in human sacrifices. In addition, they were sometimes exchanged, resulting in a kind of commercial traffic of humans. Even in this system, however, slaves who had been captured in warfare could be ransomed by their kinfolk or could purchase their own freedom (Garbarino 1988).

# Social Structure in Agricultural States

**10.5**  Discuss the family, kinship, marriage, gender, and age patterns in agricultural states.

Because agricultural states were more complex and more highly organized than prestate societies, they could not rely solely on kinship for recruitment to different status positions. Land ownership and occupation became more important than kinship in organizing society. In centralized agricultural societies, the state itself replaced kin groups as the major integrating principle in society.

## Kinship and Status

Nevertheless, as in all societies, family and kinship remained an important part of social organization. In elite and royal families, kinship was the basic determination of status. Royal incest in brother-sister marriages by both Egyptian and Incan royalty shows the importance of kinship as a distinctive means of maintaining status in agricultural societies. The typical means of achieving the highest statuses was through family patrimony, or the inheritance of status. Access to the highest ranks was generally closed to those who did not have the proper genealogical relationships with the elite or the nobility.

**The Extended Family**    The extended family was the predominant family form in both urban and rural areas in most agricultural states. Family ties remained critical to most peasants; typically, the members of the peasant extended family held land in common and cooperated in farm labor. To some extent, intensive agricultural production required the presence of a large extended family to provide the necessary labor to plant, cultivate, and harvest crops (Wolf 1966; L. Stone 2005). Large domestic groups had to pool their resources and labor to maintain economic production. To encourage cooperation, generalized reciprocal economic exchanges of foodstuffs, goods, and labor were common in these families.

**Other Kinship Principles**    In a cross-cultural survey of 53 agricultural civilizations, Kay Martin and Barbara Voorhies (1975) found that 45 percent had patrilineal kin groupings, another 45 percent had bilateral groupings, and 9 percent had matrilineal groupings. In some Southeast Asian societies, such as Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, and Cambodia, bilateral descent existed along with kindred groupings. In some circumstances, these kindreds provided domestic labor for agricultural production through reciprocal labor exchanges. Families connected through kindreds would regularly exchange labor for the transplanting or harvesting of rice crops.

**Family Structure among the Nayar**    One matrilineal society, the Nayar in the state of Kerala in southern India, had unusual marriage practices that produced a remarkably different type of family structure. They practiced a visiting ritualized mating system called the *sambandham* (joining together) (Gough 1961; L. Stone 2005). Once every ten years or so, the Nayar would hold this ceremony to "marry" females of one matrilineage to males of another matrilineage. At the ceremony, the male would tie a gold ornament around the neck of his ritual bride. After seclusion for three days, sexual intercourse might or might not take place, depending on the girl's age. After this, the

couple would take a ritual bath to purify themselves of the pollution of this cohabitation. After the ceremony, the male had no rights regarding the female. Later, the female could enter a number of marriages with males of her same caste or usually a higher caste, a marriage practice called *hypergamy*, and have children. Women could not marry men of a lower caste. The Nayar system was unusual because none of the husbands resided with his wife. A husband would visit his wife at night, but did not remain in the household. The matrilineal group assumed the rights over her and her children. Because the females could have more than one spouse, the society was polyandrous; however, because the males could also have more than one spouse, the Nayar were also polygynous. Thus, the household family unit consisted of brothers and sisters, a woman's daughters and granddaughters, and their children. The bride and her children were obliged to perform a ceremony at the death of her "ritual" husband.

From the Western viewpoint, the Nayar marital arrangement might not seem like a family because it does not tie two families together into joint bonds of kinship or even husband-wife bonds. In addition, males had very little biological connection to their children. This system, however, was a response to historical circumstances in southern India. Traditionally, most Nayar males joined the military. In addition, lands owned by the matrilineal groups were worked by lower-caste, landless peasants. Children did not work on their family land. Therefore, young Nayar males had no responsibilities to the matrilineal group and were free to become full-time warriors (L. Stone 2010). Recent ethnographic research on the Nayar has demonstrated that there is little remaining of this unusual marriage system and that the matrilineal system has become increasingly patrilineal, with a shift to a nuclear family and husband-wife monogamy (Menon 1996).

## Marriage

Marriage practices, all of which have economic and political implications, reveal the significance of social ties in agricultural societies. Because marriage had far-reaching outcomes, the selection of marital partners was considered too important to be left to young people. Marriages were usually arranged by parents, sometimes with the aid of brokers, who assessed alliances between extended families with respect to land, wealth, or political connections. This was especially the case among the political elite, such as in Roman society (L. Stone 2005). In some cases (for example, China), arranged marriages were contracted when the children were young (see Chapter 4). As in chiefdom societies, elite marriages were frequently endogamous. Peasants, however, generally married outside their extended families and larger kin groups.

**Dowry and Bridewealth**   Most agricultural states practiced some form of marital exchange involving land, com-

modities, or foodstuffs. In Asia and some parts of Europe, the most common type of exchange was the **dowry**—goods and wealth paid by the bride's family to the groom's family. In this sense, the dowry appears to be the reverse of bridewealth, in which the groom's family exchanges wealth for the bride. The dowry was used as a social and economic exchange between families to arrange a marriage contract. Upon marriage, the bride in an Indian, European, or Chinese family was expected to bring material goods into her marriage.

In a cross-cultural comparison, Jack Goody (1976) found that bridewealth occurs more frequently in horticultural societies, whereas the dowry is found in complex agricultural societies. In Europe and Asia, intensive agriculture was associated with the use of plows and draft animals, high population densities, and a scarcity of land. Goody hypothesized that one result of the dowry system was to consolidate property in the hands of elite groups. As commercial and bureaucratic families expanded their wealth and increased their status, these groups began to move from bridewealth to dowry. As bridewealth was a means of circulating wealth among families by creating alliances between the groom's and bride's families, the dowry served to concentrate property and wealth within the patrilineal line of families. Elites in India, China, and Greece relied on this form of marital exchange.

Although dowry exchanges were most significant in the upper socioeconomic groups, in which wealth and status were of central significance, they were also supposed to be customary among the peasantry. Bridewealth was not unknown in peasant society. In both northern and southern India, bridewealth became more common among the lower socioeconomic classes. In the poorest families, there was little to be inherited anyway, and the actual exchanges were mainly for the costs of the wedding feast and for simple household furnishings.

**Polygyny**   In contrast to prestate societies, polygyny was rare in agricultural states, except among the elite. In some cases, the rulers of these state societies in Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and elsewhere had large harems, in which many different women were attached to one ruler. The royal households of many agricultural states had hundreds or even thousands of women at the disposal of the rulers. China, Japan, Korea, Nepalese, Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, Persia, Mongol Central Asia, Mughal India, Ottoman Turkey, Mayan and Aztec regimes, and the biblical kingdoms among others had royal families with many wives and concubines (Tambiah 1976; Bennett 1983). Many of the European kings had extensive polygynous households, even after Christianity had developed norms against such forms of marriage (Stone 2005). Elite males who were wealthy were able to keep mistresses or concubines in addition to their wives. For example, many elite Chinese males kept concubines or secondary wives, despite laws against this practice.

Other agricultural states had similar polygynous practices for individuals in high-ranking socioeconomic positions. In addition, many of the marriages were endogamous, that is, within the same high-caste or upper-class category, as were those of the chiefdom societies discussed earlier.

For most of the populace, however, monogamy was the primary form of marriage. Economist Ester Boserup (1970) argued that the general absence of polygyny in societies with plow agriculture is due to the lack of land that could be accumulated by adding wives to one's family. Similarly, Goody (1976) hypothesized that in agricultural societies where land is a scarce commodity, peasants could not afford the luxury of polygyny. Obviously, wealth and status influenced the marriage patterns found in agricultural civilizations.

**Divorce**   For the most part, divorce was rare in agricultural civilizations. The corporate nature of the extended family and the need for cooperative agricultural labor among family members usually led to normative constraints against divorce. In addition, marriage was the most important vehicle for the transfer of property and served as the basis for alliances between families and kin groups. Thus, families tended to stay together, and enormous moral, political, and social weight was attached to the marriage bond. In India, marriage was considered sacred, and therefore divorces were not legally permitted. Similar norms were evident in the feudal societies of Europe, where Christianity reinforced the sanctity of the family and the stability of marriage.

For women, however, marriage offered the only respectable career or means of subsistence. Most women faced destitution if a marriage was terminated. Thus, few women wanted to dissolve a marriage, regardless of the internal conflicts or problems. This pattern reflects the unequal status of males and females.

**Gender, Subsistence, and Status**   The transition to intensive agriculture affected the subsistence roles of both males and females. Martin and Voorhies (1975) noted that in agricultural systems, the amount of labor that women contributed to food production declined. For example, the adoption of plow agriculture greatly diminished the need for weeding, a task that was primarily taken care of by women. They hypothesized that as women's role in agriculture decreased, their social status decreased accordingly. Thus, agricultural civilizations were even more patriarchal than were tribes or chiefdoms. Women were viewed as useless in the agricultural economy, and for the most part, they were confined to cooking, raising children, and caring for the domestic animals. They had little contact outside their immediate families.

Martin and Voorhies (1975) emphasized that a definite distinction arose in agricultural states between men's and women's roles. Women were restricted to *inside* (domestic) activities, whereas males were allowed to participate in *outside* (public) activities. In general, women were not allowed to own property, engage in politics, pursue education, or participate in any activity that would take them outside the domestic sphere. Since Martin and Voorhies did their research, a number of feminist anthropologists have questioned the simplistic dichotomy between the domestic and public realms for gender roles. In some cases, the domestic domain encompassed some of the activities of the public sphere and vice versa. However, they have agreed that this distinction has helped analyze gender in most agricultural societies (Lamphere 1997; Ortner 1996). Generally, most studies concur that the female role was restricted in many of these societies.

**Female Seclusion**   The highly restricted female role in many agriculture societies was reflected in a number of cultural practices. For example, China adopted the tradition of foot binding, which involved binding a young female child's feet so her feet would not grow. Although this practice was supposed to produce beautiful feet (in the view of Chinese males), it had the effect of immobilizing women. Although less of a handicap for upper-class females, who did not have to participate in the daily labor requirements of most women and were carried around by servants, foot binding was also practiced by the peasantry during various periods, which meant that peasant women had to work with considerable disabilities.

Similarly, many areas of the Near East, North Africa, and South Asia practiced *purdah*, a system that restricted women to the household. **Purdah** is a Persian word that is translated as "curtain" or "barrier." In this system, women had to obtain permission from their husbands to leave the house to visit families and friends. In some of these regions, a woman had to cover her face with a veil when in public (Beck and Keddie 1978; Fernea and Fernea 1979). Female seclusion was one of the ways in which males tried to control the paternity of the children that they were raising. Segregating females from males was a means of ensuring that wives would not become sexually involved with other men.
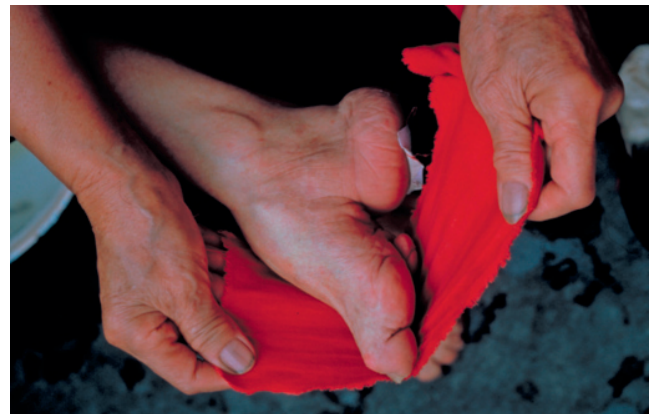


The binding of women's feet in traditional agricultural China led to results shown in this photo

**Patriarchy and Sexism** Sexist ideology developed in agricultural states as a means of reinforcing the seclusion of women. In many agricultural societies, females were viewed as inherently inferior and dependent on males. The so-called natural superiority of males was reinforced in most of the legal, moral, and religious traditions in agricultural states, including Confucianism, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, and Christianity. In the Old Testament there are many references to women as considered the property of the husbands, equivalent to animals and other household property. In Leviticus 27:3–7, women are valued in currency (shekels) much less than males.

The New Testament also supported patriarchal attitudes toward women. In Ephesians (5:22–24), it states, "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands."

Many passages from Islam's Qur'an endorsed patriarchal attitudes and cultural values (as we will see in Chapter 15), as did Hinduism, Buddhism, and other religions developing in the agricultural societies throughout the world. In many of these agricultural societies, males were viewed as more intelligent, stronger, and more emotionally mature. In addition, many of these societies viewed women as sexually dangerous; women caught having premarital or extramarital sex were punished severely. In some cases, they were executed by stoning, as mentioned in Leviticus in the Old Testament and in the Qur'an. In contrast, males were permitted to engage in extramarital affairs or have many wives or mistresses.

**Variations in the Status of Women** The role and status of women in agricultural civilizations varied by region. For example, in some areas where soil conditions were poor, both male and female peasants had to work together in the fields to produce for the household, which tended to create more gender equality. In most Southeast Asian countries, such as Thailand and Cambodia, both males and females worked together in rice cultivation. In some cases, land was divided equally among all children, regardless of gender, indicating that in these societies females had relative equality with males. Although in these countries women were mostly confined to the domestic sphere and to household tasks, they played an important role in decision making and financial matters within the rural communities (Keyes 1995; Van Esterik 1996; Winzeler 1996; Scupin 2006a).

Anthropologists have discovered other exceptions regarding the role and status of peasant women in public in some agricultural civilizations. In China, Mesoamerica, and West Africa, many women participated as sellers in the marketplaces, taking some of the surplus produce or crafts made in the villages. However, this activity was generally restricted to older women whose children were grown. In some cases, the role of a market woman did lead to higher status. Many of these women participated in the public sphere, but were still segregated from male political activities. Moreover, these women had to perform their domestic chores as well as their marketplace activities.



Women play an important role in markets in agricultural societies.

### CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES: Were There Matriarchal States?

Anthropologists have not found any substantive archaeological or ethnographic evidence for the existence of matriarchal societies. There are, of course, societies that have a matrilineal social organization, in which one traces descent through the mother's side of the family. But as we have discussed earlier, matriliny does not translate into a matriarchal society in which women would have economic and political dominance over males. Within societies organized by matrilineal descent, such as the Iroquois Indian peoples mentioned before, males tend to dominate in political and economic affairs. Women may have a more active role in these areas, but patriarchy



The Greek goddess Artemis as expressed in this Roman copied sculpture of Diana of Versaille.

exists as the prevalent gender pattern in these matrilineal societies.

However, the belief that there were once matriarchal societies that were overcome by male-dominated, warlike societies has a long history in the West. For example, after examining Greek and Roman mythology, law, religion, and history, the German lawyer Johann Jacob Bachofen wrote an influential book called *Das Mutterrecht* (*The Mother-Right*), published in 1861. Bachofen suggested that matrilineal kinship combined with matriarchy was the first form of human evolutionary development. He reasoned that since no child could determine its paternity, kinship, descent, and inheritance could be recognized only through women. Bachofen argued that women dominated these early primitive societies both economically and politically. Anthropologist John MacLellan developed this same theme in his book *Primitive Marriage: An Inquiry into the Origin of the Form of Capture in Marriage Ceremonies* (1865). A number of other scenarios of this evolution from matriarchy to patriarchy were published in European books.

Using similar reasoning, Lewis Henry Morgan, an early American anthropologist (see Chapter 6), reinforced this Victorian view of ancient matriarchal societies. Based on his ethnographic study of Iroquois Indian society and other sources, Morgan argued in his famous book *Ancient Society* (1877) that there must have been an early stage of matriarchal society. He studied kinship terms from different areas of the world to substantiate this view. Morgan suggested that a patriarchal stage of evolution replaced an earlier form of matriarchy as more advanced forms of agriculture developed. In his understanding, matriarchal societies were based on the communal ownership of property and polyandry (females married to two or more males). He argued that patriarchy evolved along with the concept of private property and ownership. Morgan suggested that males invented the institution of monogamy in order to ensure the paternity of their children. This enabled them to pass their private property on to their male heirs.

Europeans Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels became enthusiastic about Morgan's ideas in *Ancient Society*. Engels wrote about the connection between the evolution of private property and the emergence of patriarchal societies in his book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* in 1884. This book, along with other writings by Marx and Engels, provided the intellectual foundation of the socialist and communist movement in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Following Morgan, Marx and Engels believed that revolutionary change in the economy, caused by the evolution of advanced forms of agriculture, resulted in men taking control of the politics from women. As men gained control over herd animals and farmland, they also instituted the marriage pattern of monogamy, in which females pledged lifetime fidelity to one man. This institution assured males of the paternity of their own children. Engels referred to this commitment as "the world historical defeat of the female sex." He and Marx argued that the institution of the patriarchal family and monogamy became the basis for treating females as property and commodities, demonstrated in existing rituals such as the "giving away of the bride by the father to the groom" in Western wedding ceremonies. Women became servants of men and provided sustenance to support male authority and wealth accumulation in capitalist societies. Marx and Engels believed that Victorian sexist attitudes and male chauvinism had been developed to assure male authority and paternity. They believed that the global transformation from matrilineal and matriarchal societies into patrilineal and patriarchal societies established one of the integral components resulting in exploitative capitalist societies.

Other important thinkers of the twentieth century, such as Sigmund Freud (see Chapter 4), transmitted these ideas regarding early matriarchal societies. One European archaeologist, the late Maria Gimbutas, proposed that early "matristic" societies were once the predominant form of society in ancient Europe (1982, 1991). She argued that in the period she calls "Old

Europe" (between 6500 and 3500 B.C.), peaceful, sedentary villages existed where men and women formed equal partnerships with one another. Gimbutas drew on a number of types of artifacts to make her case. Based on art, architecture, figurines, ceramic pottery, marble, gold, grave goods, and other artifacts, she suggested that the culture of "Old Europe" was centered on the belief in a Great Mother Goddess and other goddesses. According to Gimbutas, a "queen-priestess" ruled and maintained control over this matrifocused religious tradition. She found no evidence of weapons or warfare from that time period, challenging the assumption that warfare is endemic and universal in human societies. In addition, Gimbutas argued that these societies were completely egalitarian, with no classes, castes, or slaves and, of course, no male rulers.

According to Gimbutas, "Old Europe" was invaded by tribal horse-riding pastoralists known as the Kurgan by 4400 B.C. These Kurgan pastoralists from the Eurasiatic steppes, who were male dominated, were associated with the earliest forms of Indo-European languages, and developed religious traditions and mythologies that reflected a warrior cult. They maintained a pantheon of male gods representing the sun, stars, thunder, and lightning, and they were associated with warrior-like artifacts such as daggers and axes. Eventually, the Kurgan introduced iron plows that were used to cultivate the land. This technological innovation altered forever the relationship between males and females in European society. Males with plows and draft animals supplanted the female-oriented forms of cultivation. As the Kurgan society replaced the "Old Europe," women were relegated to the domestic aspect of subsistence activities. According to Gimbutas, the mythical and ideological culture perpetuated by the Kurgans continued until the beginnings of Christianity in Europe and beyond.

Archaeologist Lynn Meskell (1995) has criticized the picture of Old Europe and the Kurgan culture presented by Maria Gimbutas. Meskell notes that since the nineteenth century, there

has been a recurrent interest in the notion of original, matriarchal Mother Goddess societies. This view has been perpetuated in some of the ecofeminist and "New Age" religious literature. Meskell argues that these New Age feminists utilize Gimbutas to ground their movement in a utopian vision of the past. She suggests that these Mother Goddess "gynocentric" theories of prehistory serve as vehicles for attempting to overturn patriarchal institutions in today's societies. However, Meskell suggests that these gynocentric views are based on inadequate scholarship and actually damage the positive aspects of gender research in anthropology. She and many other archaeologists note that Gimbutas neglected a tremendous amount of data and artifacts that would demonstrate the fallibility of her thesis. Numerous artifacts such as artwork indicating the prevalence of male deity figurines were dismissed in Gimbutas's data collection. Artifacts indicating warfare, human sacrifice, and fortifications are abundant throughout the archaeological record dated within Gimbutas's Old Europe period. And the view of Kurgan patriarchal domination of this once-peaceful matristic society is too simplistic to explain the complexities of European archaeology. Meskell concludes that the belief that there were distinctive stages of matriarchal and patriarchal societies is a remnant of the Victorian past. She argues that these simplistic views do not do justice to interpretations in archaeology or feminist anthropological and gender studies in the twenty-first century.

Of course, there were agricultural societies that worshipped female goddesses and maintained mythologies about matriarchal societies. In fact, there were agricultural societies that had females who held important leadership and political roles, such as the famed Cleopatra. Yet, the evidence from archaeology and ethnography suggests that female political supremacy and domination over the economy did not exist. Despite Cleopatra's political authority, a male elite clearly controlled the economy and politics in ancient Egypt.

As we have seen in this chapter, the status of women in most of the agricultural societies in the past, including the goddess-worshipping ones, was very low. Both males and females have used mythologies and beliefs about early matriarchies throughout history. Nineteenth-century males used these beliefs to justify the status and authority of what they believed to be more evolved and advanced "patriarchal" institutions. Today, some women in the ecofeminist and New Age movements use these myths to perpetuate their vision of a utopian society. Many contemporary anthropologists, both male and female, argue that the terms *patriarchy* and *matriarchy* are too limited as dichotomies to assess the position of women in many societies of the world. For example, in a recent ethnography, *Women at the Center: Life in a Modern Matriarchy* (2002), based on 18 years of study in Minangkabau, Indonesia, anthropologist Peggy Reeves Sanday challenges the framework and stereotype of many Western peoples who believe that the religion of Islam consistently subordinates women with its patriarchal traditions. She finds that in Indonesia, the cultural beliefs about women have always been relatively egalitarian and that these beliefs have resisted any attempt at subordinating women in this society. Anthropologists are working all over the world to refine their approach to gender issues and are investigating various global changes influencing gender change. In addition, one of the major goals of anthropology is to enhance and improve the rights of women and men throughout the world (see Chapter 18). But to do so, we must have an accurate assessment of what the archaeological and ethnographic records tell us. Without this assessment, we can neither further our knowledge of humanity nor aid in the improvement of the human condition.

**Points to Ponder**

1. What kind of data would be needed to infer a true matriarchal society in the past?

2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the belief in an early matriarchal society?

3. Could there ever be a truly matriarchal society? If so, how could one develop?

4. What has this Critical Perspectives box taught you about analyzing anthropological data?

# Social Stratification in Agricultural States

**10.6  Discuss the type of stratification characteristic of agricultural states.**

As previously mentioned, agricultural civilizations were highly stratified, and social mobility was generally restricted to people with elite family or kinship backgrounds. Thus, sometimes anthropologists classify these societies as **closed societies**, in that social status was generally *ascribed*, rather than *achieved*. For example, in traditional Chinese society, people born outside the emperor's family had two paths to upward mobility. One route was to be born into the gentry—the landowning class that made up about 2 percent of Chinese families. The second route was to become a mandarin—a Chinese bureaucrat and scholar—by becoming a student and passing rigorous examinations based on classical Confucian texts. Although in theory this option existed for all males, in fact it was restricted to families or clans that could afford to spend resources for educating a son (DeVoe 2006).

## The Caste System

India and some areas connected with Hindu culture, such as Nepal, developed a much more restrictive form of social inequality known as the caste system. A **caste** is an endogamous social grouping into which a person is born and in which the person remains throughout his or her lifetime.

Thus, an individual's status in a caste system is ascribed, and movement into a different caste is impossible. The Indian caste system evolved from four basic categories, or *varnas*, that were ranked in order from Brahmans (priests) to Ksaitryas (warriors) to Vaisyas (merchants) to Sudras (laborers). Hence, the caste into which a person was born determined that person's occupation. In addition, people were required to marry within their caste. Although contact among members of different castes was generally discouraged, the castes were interrelated through various mutual economic exchanges and obligations known as the *jajmani* system. We discuss how the process of globalization is influencing the caste structure found in India and elsewhere in Chapter 15. However, the process of globalization is influencing the caste structure in India and elsewhere.

**Slavery** Another form of social inequality and ascribed status was slavery. Slavery tends to increase as a society increases its productive technology, as trade expands, and as states become more centrally organized (Goody 1980; Van den Berghe 1981). For example, the Mediterranean empires of the Greeks, Romans, Arabs, and Turks used vast numbers of slaves in galleys, monument construction, irrigation works, plantation agriculture, and major public works projects.

Slave systems differed from one society to another. The Greeks and Romans reduced the status of the slave to a subhuman "thing" that was considered an instrument or tool, differing from inanimate tools only by the faculty of speech (Worsley 1984). Indigenous African kingdoms practiced large-scale slavery in which nobles owned hundreds of slaves (Goody 1980). Most of these slaves worked on plantations or in households, although some became advisors to, and administrators for, nobles. While African slavery involved the capture and sale of human beings, eventually the slaves could be incorporated into the kinship groups.

In a comprehensive review of indigenous Asian and African slavery, anthropologist James Watson (1980) referred to *open* and *closed* forms of slavery. The indigenous African form of slavery was open in that slaves could be incorporated into domestic kinship groups and even become upwardly mobile. In contrast, the slave systems of China, India, Greece, and Rome were closed, with no opportunities for upward mobility or incorporation into kinship groups. The two different types of slavery were correlated with specific demographic conditions and political economies. In societies such as those in Africa or Thailand, where land was relatively abundant and less populated, more open forms of slavery developed (Goody 1971; Turton 1980). In these societies, the key to power and authority was control over people, rather than land. In political economies such as Greece, Rome, China, and India, where land was scarce and populations much more dense, closed forms of slavery emerged. The key to power and wealth in these societies was control over land and labor.

# Social Structure in Industrial and Postindustrial Societies

**10.7** **Discuss the social structure, family, marriage, gender, and age patterns in industrial and postindustrial societies.**

The impact of industrialization on kinship, family, gender, aging, and social status has been just as dramatic as its impact on demography, technology, and economic conditions.

## Kinship

Kinship is less important in industrialized states than in preindustrial societies. New structures and organizations perform many of the functions associated with kinship in preindustrial societies. For example, occupational and economic factors in most cases replace kinship as the primary basis of social status; a person no longer has to be part of an aristocratic or elite family to have access to wealth and political power. Generally, as states industrialized, newly emerging middle-class families began to experience upward economic and social mobility, and economic performance, merit, and personal achievement, rather than *ascribed* kinship relationships or birthright, became the primary basis of social status.

Of course, kinship and family background still have a definite influence on social mobility. Families with wealth, political power, and high social status can ensure that their children will have the best education. In addition, *nepotism*, favoritism for their own kin in small-scale businesses and other enterprises, including the political system in industrial and postindustrial societies, still plays an important role. For example, members of the Roosevelt, Kennedy, and Bush families retain their roles in politics and positions of authority in U.S. society. These families provide their offspring with professional role models and values that emphasize success. They also maintain economic and political connections that enhance their offspring's future opportunities. Hence, their children have a head start over children from lower socioeconomic categories. However, kinship alone is not the fundamental determinant of social status and rank, as it was and still is in preindustrial societies.

## Family

We have discussed the various functions of the family: socializing children, regulating sexual behavior, and providing emotional and economic security. In industrial societies, some of these functions have been transformed in important ways, as seen in the diminishing importance of the extended family and the emergence of the smaller nuclear family. Some basic functions, such as reproduction

and the primary care and socialization of children, are still performed in the nuclear family.

The family's economic role has changed dramatically. In industrial and postindustrial societies, the family is no longer an economic unit linked to production. The prevalence of wage labor in industrial societies has been one of the principal factors leading to the breakdown of the extended family and the emergence of the nuclear family (Wolf 1966; Goody 1976). The extended family in peasant societies worked on the land as a cooperative economic unit. When employers began to hire individual workers for labor in mines, factories, and other industries, the extended family as a corporate unit no longer had any economically productive function.

Another factor leading to the diminishing importance of the extended family has been the high rate of geographical mobility induced by industrialization. Because much of the labor drawn into factories and mines initially came from rural areas, workers had to leave their families and establish their own nuclear families in the cities. Land tenure based on the extended family was no longer the driving force it had been in preindustrial societies. In addition, as manufacturing and service industries expanded, they frequently moved or opened new offices, requiring workers to relocate. The economic requirements of industrializing societies had the effect of dissolving extended family ties that were critical in preindustrial societies.

Historians, sociologists, and anthropologists have studied the disintegration of the extended family in industrial England, Europe, and North America for decades (e.g., Goode 1963, 1976, 1982, L. Stone 2010). Although the large, extended patrilineal group families gradually broke down during the medieval period in Europe, a pattern of smaller kin-group families and bilateral descent (tracing descent through both sides of the family) emerged throughout Europe (Goody 1983, 2000). Although a similar process occurred in Russia and Japan, to some extent it was delayed in those countries. For example, in Russia, the nuclear family began to replace the extended family following the emancipation of the serfs (Kerblay 1983). Yet, anthropologists note that the nuclear family is not the ideal norm in Russian society. Surveys indicate that Russians do not consider it proper for older parents to live alone and that many consider the grandfather to be the head of the family. These ideal norms reflect the older traditions of the extended peasant family in Russia (Dunn and Dunn 1988).

In Japanese society, the traditional family was based upon the *ie* (pronounced like the slang term "yeah" in American English). The *ie* is a patrilineal extended family that had kinship networks based upon blood relations, marriage, and adoption (Befu 1971; Shimizu 1987; McCreery and McCreery 2006; Hendry 2013). The *ie*, an indigenous term, is translated as "house," but more broadly suggests the idea of household continuity. Included in the *ie* are all living and deceased relatives, as well as those as yet unborn, and the relationships in the "house" are characterized by Confucian premises of loyalty and benevolence (Hendry 2013). The *ie* managed its land and property assets as a corporate group and was linked into a hierarchy of other branch *ie* families, forming a *dozoku*. The *dozoku* maintained functions similar to those of the peasant families of other agricultural societies. With industrialization and now postindustrialization in Japan, the rurally based *ie* and *dozoku* began to decline, and urban nuclear families called the *kazoku* began to develop (Befu 1971; Kerbo and McKinstry 1998; McCreery and McCreery 2006). However, Joy Hendry describes how the traditional *ie* continues to be honored in Japan (2013). Hendry indicates that there is some tension in keeping this tradition of *ie* alive, particularly because of the differences in expectations between the younger and older generations (2013). The older generations' focus is on devotion to the ancestors and the notion of being bound to a familial social identity, while the younger generations' focus is on individuality and the emphasis on individual prerogatives and rights. Despite such tension, the success of an individual is still often predicated upon the success of the group or family to which one belongs. Certainly, the principle of *ie*, with its emphasis on the responsibility of an individual to represent his or her family, sharply contrasts with the Western emphasis on the rights of the individual to do essentially as he or she pleases. The shift from the *ie* and *dozuku* to the *kazoku* has been very sudden and recent; many older people in Japan have not really adjusted to this change.

Despite the general tendency toward the breakup of the extended family in industrialized societies, specific groups in these societies may still retain extended family ties. For example, extended, peasant-type families exist in rural regions such as Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, which were formerly part of the Soviet Union (Kerblay 1983). Similar tendencies can be found in rural British, European, and Japanese societies. Even in the urban areas of nations such as the United States and Great Britain, some ethnic groups maintain extended family ties. In the United States, some African-Americans, Hispanic Americans, Arab-Americans, and Asian-Americans enjoy the loyalty and support of extended family ties, enhancing their economic and social organization within the larger society (Stack 1975; Macionis 2014b; S. L. Brown 2012; Bigler 2012; Benson 2012).

## Marriage

One of the major changes in marriage in industrialized societies is that it has become much more individualized; that is, the establishment of the union has come to involve personal considerations more than family arrangements. This individualistic form of marriage is usually based on *romantic love*, which entails a blend of emotional

attachment and physical and strong sexual attraction. Some anthropologists have hypothesized that erotic attraction and romantic love existed in preindustrial societies and were universal (Fisher 1992; Jankowiak and Fischer 1992; Jankowiak 1995, 2008). There are many ethnographic descriptions of couples falling in love in both prestate and agricultural state societies. The classical literature of China, Arabia, India, Greece, and Rome, as well as various religious texts such as the Bible, is filled with stories about romantic love, as are the lore of preindustrial societies such as those of the Ojibway Indians of North America and the San hunting-gathering society discussed earlier. However, these anthropologists find that romantic love sometimes leads to marriage, but often results in premarital or extramarital sexual relationships, or resistance to an arranged marriage. Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet* underscores the conflict between romantic love and the familistic and practical considerations of marriage in Western Europe during the Renaissance. Anthropologist Charles Lindholm did cross-cultural research on this topic and suggests that even though romantic love may have existed in many known cultures, it did not in many others, and that the correlation between romantic love and the reproduction of children is very weak. Lindholm asserts that societies that arrange marriages for economic and political benefit tend to have far higher birth rates than those that do not (2001). Lindholm traces the existence of the courtly ideals and poetic expressions of romantic love to the Islamic world in the medieval period, where it eventually percolated into Renaissance European culture (2001).

William Jankowiak did a much more extensive cross-cultural survey of romantic love, drawing on folklore and interviews with ethnographers from many different areas (2008). In the book *Intimacies: Between Love and Sex*, Jankowiak and Paladino (2008) discuss two distinct types of love—companionship or companionate love (sometimes called comfort love or attachment love) and passionate or romantic love. These two different forms of love have their own logic and endocrinology. Companionate or comfort love involves a deeply emotional affection felt toward those with whom we are intimately involved and whose lives are deeply intertwined with ours. "In contrast, passionate love involves the idealization of another, within an erotic setting, with the presumption that the feeling will last for some time into the future" (Jankowiak and Paladino 2008:5). Although romantic love tends to be more physical, companionate love is more spiritually based. Both kinds of love occur in all cultures.

However, most anthropologists concur that the ideals of romantic love did become more widespread in Europe, resulting in the diffusion of this form of marriage throughout Western culture. The ideals found within the biblical tradition of Jewish *nomos* and expressed later in the Christian concept of *agape* and its devaluation of sexuality

had some cultural effects on the concept of romantic love in marriage (Lindholm 1995; de Munck 1998). Eventually, the Roman Catholic Church in 1439 A.D. defined marriage as based upon the choice of the individuals, and decreed that it was the seventh sacrament and was spiritually based (L. Stone 2010).

Of course, many people within the upper classes persisted in arranged marriages (as described in the novels of the British author Jane Austen). The royal families of Europe arranged the marriages of their children for political alliances, as well as for economic consolidation of property rights. Cousin marriage, as described above, for many forms of society, was maintained in the European upper classes. Many nineteenth-century Victorians, including Charles Darwin and members of upper-class families, such as the famous wealthy banking Rothschild family of Europe, married their cousins on a regular basis, just as the people of the Old Testament and the early Christian and Roman era did in earlier agricultural societies. As mentioned earlier in the textbook, this "inbreeding" does not necessarily lead to harmful genetic results (Conniff 2003).

Anthropologist Jack Goody made a considerable contribution to the study of marriage and family in Europe that has led to a better understanding of the development of Western society (1983, 2000). Goody indicates that the Western European marriage pattern began to diverge from the Mediterranean pattern by the end of the Roman Empire in the 6th century A.D. The Mediterranean and Roman pattern of marriage was strongly patrilineal and usually involved cross-cousin marriage. Women were not allowed to own property or participate in the public sphere, with strong gender segregation. In contrast, the Western European pattern became more bilateral; cousin marriage was banned, exogamy was promoted, and women had greater rights to property. Goody notes that this shift was a result of Roman Catholic Church policies that opposed to cousin marriage, levirate marriages, the adoption of children, and divorce. Goody suggests that the material interests of the Church led to these policies. Cousin marriage, patrilineal descent inheritance, adoption, the levirate, and divorce ensured that property would be retained with families and households. The banning of cousin marriage and patrilineal inheritance practices would redirect wealth and property that widows and other relatives would donate to the Church. As a result of these changes in Church policy, Goody suggests that the social structure of Western Europe was dramatically transformed and influenced the economic and political developments of the Western world (2000).

As we will see in later chapters, cousin marriage is still a major way in which marriage is arranged in many non-Western societies throughout the world. However, the cultural tradition of free marital choice based upon romantic love, especially among the upwardly mobile middle and lower-middle classes in Europe following the Renaissance

and the Industrial Revolution, began to spread throughout the region of Europe and into Western culture. It exists today in the United States and other regions of the world influenced by Western culture and Christianity. As many sociologists, anthropologists, and historians of Europe suggest, industrialization and modernization weakened agricultural-structured property arrangements and extended family and kinship relationships; families became smaller, and geographical mobility increased. This tended to foster more individualism, personal autonomy, choice, new forms of self-cultivation, and romantic love in European societies (L. Stone 2010).

Prior to the industrialization of Europe years ago, however, many families still persisted in trying to have their children married within the same class, ethnic, and religious categories, and children were often married through the intervention of parents, who arranged their relationships. Romantic love may have existed in preindustrial societies (and in many cases, it was the basis for extramarital relationships), but it did not usually become the primary basis of marriage until after the Industrial Revolution. As cultural values became more individualistic, along with the rise of new groups of middle-class families, many couples began to choose their own spouses. As the extended family declined in significance, important decisions such as selection of a marriage partner increasingly were made by individuals, rather than by families.

Although individuals select their own marriage partners in most industrialized societies, the parents within these societies often attempt to enhance marital choices in certain categories. For example, parents of the upper and upper-middle classes often choose certain colleges and universities for their children so that they will meet suitable marriage partners. Many parents sponsor social activities for their children to meet potential marriage partners of their own socioeconomic, ethnic, and religious affiliations. In some areas, such as the southern United States and Quebec, Canada cousin marriage was still practiced until recently to promote the consolidation of property rights and transmit wealth within the families. Nineteen U.S. states permit first-cousin marriage (Conniff 2003; Molloy 1990).

To some extent, even in industrialized societies, individual choice of marriage partners is circumscribed by parental guidance and other cultural norms. However, many people in an industrialized society such as the United States find that because of the breakdown in family and community ties, individuals find it more difficult to meet prospective spouses. Many individuals are from homes where their parents have been divorced at least once, and consequently this reduces the possibility of meeting someone through their family. For that reason, there has been an increase in dating and matchmaking services and computer dating services in postindustrialized

societies such as the United States. Thousands of these dating and matchmaking services, along with Internet Web sites aimed at helping singles find a spouse, have developed within the past decade.

One exception needs to be noted with respect to the relationships between industrialization and commercialization and individualized decision making in the selection of marriage partners. The exception is Japanese marital practices. Courtly love, closely resembling romantic love, was discussed in classical literature such as Lady Murasaki's *Tale of Genji* in the Japanese court of the tenth century. In Japanese society, the most typical, traditional form of marriage was arranged through a go-between, a *nakoda*, who set up a meeting for a man and woman to get to know each other (Hendry 2013). The *nakoda* would establish an alliance between two extended households. This pattern is known as the *samurai* form of marriage because the warrior-scholars practiced it during the Tokugawa period.

With industrialization in Japanese society, romantic love has had an effect on the selection of marriage partners, and currently many Japanese individuals choose their own mates. But anthropologist Joy Hendry (2013) notes that "love marriages" are still suspect and go against the serious practical concerns of marital ties and the traditional obligations felt by people toward their parents. In many cases, *nakoda* are still used to arrange marriages in this highly modern society. Currently, there is a cultural struggle between generations of the young versus the old over what type of marriage and family relationships ought to be maintained in Japanese society (McCreery and McCreery 2006).

Approximately one-third of the marriages in Japan are arranged. A man and woman of marriageable age are brought together in a formal meeting called an *omiai*, arranged by the *nakoda*. "Love marriages" based on romantic love, called *renai kekkon*, may occur, but in most cases, parents still have veto power over their children's marital partners (Kerbo and McKinstry 1998). Marriage in Japan is still very much a family consideration, rather than just an individual's own choice or decision. Yet, some members of the younger generation in Japan are beginning to opt for "romantic love" and personal choice for their marital partners. And one of the signs of this new trend in marriage is that these young Japanese, especially among the middle and upper classes, will have a "Christian-style" wedding, rather than a typical Japanese wedding ceremony, with some of them going to Hawaii for their ceremonies.

**Divorce** All but a few industrialized societies have legalized divorce, and obtaining a divorce has become easier. In general, little social stigma is associated with divorce in industrialized societies (Quale 1988). Divorce rates tend to be higher in industrial societies than in preindustrial societies. Although historians and anthropologists find that

marriages were very unstable even in medieval Europe, most marriages dissolved because of high death rates (L. Stone 2010). Beginning in the fourth century, the Roman Catholic Church in Europe banned divorce. As discussed previously, anthropologists such as Jack Goody attribute these changes in divorce and marriage to the Church's opposition to the breakup of property of the heirs that might have been appropriated by the Church (1983, 2000).

Among the many factors that contribute to high divorce rates in industrialized societies is the dissatisfaction that some people experience in their marital relationships. People who enter a marital bond with the ideals and expectations of romantic love may experience a conflict between those ideals and the actualities of marital life. Women who are more financially independent in industrialized societies are much less likely to remain in bad marriages. In preindustrial societies, in which marriages were actually alliances between corporate kin groups, individuals typically did not have the freedom to dissolve the marital bond. As individualistic decision making increased with the emergence of industrialization, however, partners in an unsatisfying relationship were more willing to consider divorce.

Divorce rates of most Western industrialized societies have ballooned during the last century. For example, the U.S. rate increased tenfold over the past century (Macionis 2014). The same pattern is evident in Russia, where traditional taboos regarding divorce have been replaced by more tolerant attitudes (Kerblay 1983).

In Japan, however, the divorce rate decreased after industrialization (Befu 1971). In contrast to most agricultural societies, Japan had a fairly high divorce rate prior to the Meiji period. This was not due to conflicts between husband and wife; instead, divorce resulted when elders in the husband's family rejected a young bride because she did not conform easily enough to family norms, did not bring enough of a dowry, or for other reasons. The traditional postmarital rule of residence was patrilocal, with the wife moving in with the husband's father's household (Goode 1982). With industrialization and the breakdown of these traditional patterns, the divorce rate began to fall. More recently, however, the divorce rate has begun to increase in Japan, as industrialization creates the tensions experienced in all industrial societies. Yet, the divorce rate in Japan is still only one-fifth that of the United States (Kerbo and McKinstry 1998; Hendry 2013). To some extent, the traditional norms and expectations regarding the female gender role in Japanese society have undoubtedly had an influence on this lower divorce rate. Traditionally, the Japanese woman is not supposed to threaten the primacy of the husband's role as head of the family. She is supposed to dedicate herself to her husband and children. Work outside of the home should be undertaken only to boost family income when it is necessary, and upon having children, the Japanese woman is expected to be a full-time homemaker (Kerbo

and McKinstry 1998). Consequently, many fewer Japanese women have the financial capability to sustain themselves outside of a marriage. Currently, many young people in Japan are contesting the issues of gender and individual choice (McCreery 2007; McCreery and McCreery 2006).

## Gender

Industrialization had a profound impact upon gender relationships, particularly in England, Europe, and North America. The transition from an agricultural economy to an industrial wage economy drew many women from the domestic realm into the workplace. In general, women have become more economically self-sufficient and less dependent on men for support.

**Gender and the Division of Labor**  Although women in Western industrial societies have entered the workforce in considerable numbers in the last several decades, most women work in a small number of occupations within the service economy, especially in underpaid clerical positions. In addition, women in industrial societies perform the majority of domestic tasks, such as household chores and childcare, which are still considered by many the primary responsibility of women. Male occupations and the husband's income are usually considered the primary source of family income. Consequently, women in these societies have a dual burden of combining their domestic role with employment outside the home (Bernard 1981, 1987; Bannister 1991). A similar pattern is seen in Japanese society (McCreery and McCreery 2006).

The gender wage gap highlighting the difference between women and men in U.S. society has been studied thoroughly by sociologists at the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR). In a report issued by the IWPR in 2014, these sociologists found that during 2013, median weekly earnings for female full-time workers were $706, compared with $860 per week for men, a gender-wage ratio of 82.1 percent. In addition, there is a penalty for U.S. women working in predominantly female compared to predominantly male occupations. This penalty is highest for both women and men working in occupations that require at least a four-year college or university degree. Women in highly skilled, predominantly female occupations make only 71 percent of median hourly earnings of women who work in highly skilled, male-dominated occupations, almost $10 less per hour (and $12 less per hour than men working in highly skilled, male-dominated occupations. Lack of equal pay with men at the same general skill level and with the same gender composition of occupation costs women from $3,555 to $17,450 per year for full-time work. Women's median earnings are lower than men's in nearly all occupations, whether they work in occupations predominantly done by women, occupations predominantly done by men, or occupations with a more even mix of men and

women. Also, nearly twice as many women are in poverty compared to men (Hegewisch and Hartmann 2014).

There was more wage disparity for both African-American and Hispanic women compared with white males. Hispanic women have the lowest median earnings at $541 per week (61.2 percent of the median weekly earnings of white men at $884). African-American women have median weekly earnings of $606, or 68.6 percent of the median weekly earnings of white men. (Hegewisch and Hartmann 2014).

**Female Status in Industrial Societies** To some degree, industrialization undermined the traditional form of patriarchy. In most preindustrial societies, males held considerable authority and control over females. This authority diminished in industrial societies as women gained more independence and gender relations became more egalitarian. As we have seen, however, women are still restricted in the workplace and have a dual burden of outside work and domestic chores. This indicates that the cultural legacy of patriarchy still persists in most industrial societies.

As their economic role has changed, women have attempted to gain equal economic and political rights. The call for gender equality began with women from upper- and middle-class families. Unlike working-class women, these early women's rights advocates were financially secure and had much leisure time to devote to political activism. They eventually secured the right to vote in the United States and in other industrialized nations. In addition, with increasing educational levels and economic opportunities, more women entered the workforce. For example, by 1977, nearly 55 percent of all adult females in the United States were in the workforce; by 2012, that number was more than 75 percent, as illustrated in Figure 10.8.

**Feminism** During the 1960s, a combination of economic and social forces fueled the feminist movement in many industrialized societies. During the 1950s, many U.S. women began to question their roles as solitary homemakers, especially after they participated heavily within the workforce during the World War II years. They were not



More than 75 percent of women are participating in the U.S. workforce.

**Figure 10.8** U.S. labor force participation by age and gender: women 25–54. (From Sullivan, David. "Trends in Labor Force Participation" Chicago: Federal Reserve Bank. June 2013.)



Labor Force Participation, by Age/Gender

Women, 25–54 (percent)
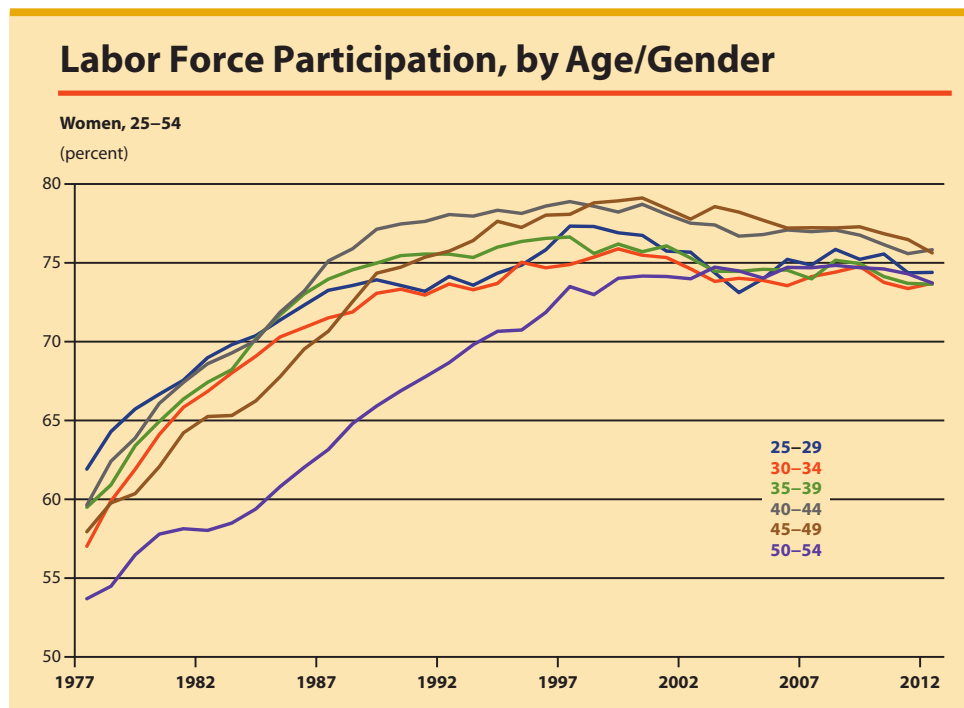
happy with their domestic roles as housewives serving their husbands, on whom they were dependent economically, and they wanted more direct participation in the outside world. **Feminism** is the belief that women are equal to men and should have equal rights and opportunities. The contemporary feminist movement has helped many women discover that they have been denied equal rights and dignity. This movement has a much broader base of support than the early women's rights movement. Among its supporters are career women, high school and college students, homemakers, senior citizens, and many men.

Feminists have secured some concrete gains and helped change certain attitudes in the United States. For example, in a landmark legal decision in 1972, the American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T), the world's largest employer of women, was forced to pay $23 million in immediate pay increases and $15 million in back pay to employees who had suffered sex discrimination. In addition, women have been admitted to many formerly all-male institutions such as the U.S. Military Academy at West Point (Macionis 2014).

Despite these gains, many female workers continue to be segregated into low-paying service occupations. To resolve this and other problems, the feminist movement supported the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the U.S. Constitution to prohibit discrimination because of gender. Although the ERA was supported by almost three-fourths of American adults and passed by Congress in 1972, it failed to win ratification by the states. Apparently, the idea of full equality and equivalent pay for equivalent work has not received the full endorsement of U.S. society. Even in an advanced industrial society, the cultural legacy of patriarchy remains a persistent force.

In Japan, the cultural legacy of patriarchy has retained its grip on the role of women. In newly industrializing Japan, the Meiji Civil Code, promulgated in 1898, granted very few rights to women (McCreery and McCreery 2006). Article 5 in the Police Security Regulations of 1900 explicitly forbade women from joining political organizations or even attending meetings at which political speeches were given. These laws would remain in force in Japan until after World War II.

After the U.S. occupation of Japan following World War II, women's suffrage was approved. Article 14 of the Japanese Constitution proclaimed in 1946, bans discrimination on the basis of race, creed, sex, social status, or family origin. Article 24 explicitly requires the consent of both parties to marriage. The revised Civil Code issued in 1947 abolishes the traditional *ie* corporate family system. The next major change in Japanese women's legal status came in 1985, with the passage of the Equal Opportunities Employment Law. But legal status and social acceptance are two different things, especially when laws like this one contain no penalties for violation.

However, during the 1970s, wives and mothers who moved to the suburbs were the daughters of women accustomed to being stay-at-home wives. Just as in the United States and Europe, more and more Japanese women were entering the workforce. As elsewhere in the industrial world, the cost of educating the children was rising. Some women always had to work simply to make ends meet. Now more looked for work to keep up with the neighbors or to be sure that their families could afford the new consumer goods that everyone wanted. Many young women typically took jobs that lasted only until they married. Then, returning to the labor force after their children started school, they could find only low-paying, part-time work. They could supplement their household's income, but rarely earned enough to be financially independent.

Japanese women were, however, becoming more highly educated. In 1955, only 5 percent of women received postsecondary education, and more than half of those went only to junior college. However, as of 2002, 48.5 percent of Japanese women received some form of postsecondary education, compared to 48.8 percent of men; 33.8 percent of women attended university. Higher education combined with still limited opportunities was a recipe for dissatisfaction—and provided at best temporary relief (McCreery and McCreery 2006).

Yet, even when women are in the workforce in Japanese society, up until recently, they tended to have a second-class status when compared to men. Many college-educated women in offices are expected to wear uniforms and to serve tea and coffee to the men, and they are treated as if they are office servants (Hendry 2013; Kerbo and McKinstry 1998). They are expected to defer to men in the office and present themselves as infantile, which is interpreted as cute and polite. Most men in Japan perform almost no domestic chores and expect to be waited on by their wives. Despite this tradition of patriarchy in Japan, the Japanese woman has a powerful position within the domestic household. She manages the household budget, takes charge of the children's education, and makes long-term financial investments for the family. Thus, the outside-of-the-home and the inside-of-the-home roles for women in Japan are still strongly influenced by patriarchal traditions.

Some women are active in a growing feminist movement in Japan that wants to transform gender roles, but traditional cultural expectations based upon patriarchy are resistant to change (McCreery and McCreery 2006). In both the Western societies and Japan, women are marrying at a much older age than in the past. New reproductive technologies introduced into industrial and postindustrial societies, such as artificial insemination (AI) and in vitro fertilization (IVF), along with perhaps even cloning in some societies in the future, will undoubtedly influence the moral, legal, and social status of gender, marriage, and other issues of males and females in these advanced postindustrial societies.

## Age

Another social consequence of industrialization is the loss experienced by the elderly of traditional status and authority. This trend reflects the changes in the family structure and the nature of cultural knowledge in industrial and postindustrial societies. As the nuclear family replaced the extended family, older people no longer lived with their adult children. Pension plans and government support programs such as Social Security replaced the family as the source of economic support for the elderly. At the same time, exchanges of resources between elders and offspring became less important in industrial societies (Halperin 1987). Thus, elderly family members lost a major source of economic power.

The traditional role of the elderly in retaining and disseminating useful knowledge has also diminished. Sociologist Donald O. Cowgill (1986) hypothesizes that as the rate of technological change accelerates in industrial societies, knowledge quickly becomes obsolete, which has an effect on the status of elderly people. Industrialization promotes expanding profits through new products and innovative services, all of which favor the young, who, through formal education and training, have greater access to technological knowledge. In addition, the amount of cultural and technical information has increased to the point where the elderly can no longer store all of it. Instead, libraries, databases, and formalized educational institutions have become the storehouses of cultural knowledge.

The result of these changes, according to Cowgill, has been the rapid disengagement of the elderly from their roles in industrial societies. Although many elderly people remain active and productive, they no longer possess the economic, political, and social status they did in preindustrial societies. In some cases, the elderly are forced to retire from their jobs in industrial societies to make way for the younger generation. For example, up until recently in industrial Japan, the elderly were forced to retire at the age of 55 and often had difficulties adjusting to their senior years.

The status and roles of the elderly have changed much more dramatically in the West than in Japan. In Japanese society, the tradition of family obligations influenced by Confucian values and ethos serves to foster the veneration of the elderly. In addition, about three-fourths of the elderly reside with their children, which encourages a greater sense of responsibility on the part of children toward their parents. In 2002, official estimates put Japan's total population at 127,435,000. Of that total, 23,628,000 (18.5 percent) were age 65 or older. Only 18,102,000 (14.2 percent) were 14 or younger. In 2001, the life expectancy for Japanese men had risen to 78.07 years. The life expectancy for Japanese women was 84.83 years (McCreery and McCreery 2006).

Theorists such as Cowgill suggest that because Japan or the former Soviet Union had industrialized much later than Western societies, there has been less time to transform family structures and the status of the elderly. This view is supported by a comparison between the most modern industrialized urban sectors of these societies and the rural regions. For example, in the more rural regions in Russia and, until recently, in Japan, the extended family or *ie* was still the norm, and the elderly remained influential and esteemed. Thus, the high status of the aged in Japan and Russia may represent delayed responses to industrialization (Cowgill 1986). However, presently, Japan is undergoing a rapid transformation in these patterns, and as in the United States and Western Europe, older people are becoming much more independent and are enjoying their privacy and lack of dependence on their natal families (McCreery and McCreery 2006; Hendry 2013).

# Social Stratification in Industrial and Postindustrial Societies

**10.8**  **Compare the class structures of Britain, the United States, Japan, and the former Soviet Union.**

We have discussed the type of social stratification that existed in preindustrial societies. Bands and tribes were largely egalitarian, whereas chiefdoms and agricultural states had increased social inequality based on ascribed statuses. Chiefdoms and agricultural states are classified as closed societies because they offer little, if any, opportunity for social mobility. In contrast, industrial states are classified as **open societies** in which social status can be achieved through individual efforts. The achievement of social status is related to the complex division of labor, which is based on specialized occupational differences. Occupation became the most important determinant of status in industrial states. Societal rewards such as income, political power, and prestige all depend on a person's occupation.

This is not to say that industrial states are egalitarian. Rather, like some agricultural states, they have distinctive classes based upon somewhat equivalent social statuses. The gaps among these classes in terms of wealth, power, and status are actually greater in industrial than in preindustrial societies. Thus, although people in industrial states have the opportunity to move into a different class from that into which they were born, the degree of stratification in these societies is much more extreme than it is in preindustrial societies. Let's examine the types of stratification systems found in some industrial states.

## The British Class System

Some industrial states continue to reflect their agricultural past. Great Britain, for example, has a class system that retains some of its feudal-like social patterns. It has a symbolic monarchy and nobility based on ascribed statuses passed down from generation to generation. The monarchy and nobility have titles such as prince, princess, knight, peer, and earl. These individuals have to be addressed with the appropriate form: your royal highness, sir, lord, lady. The British political system reflects its feudal past in the structure of the House of Lords, in which up until 2001 membership was traditionally inherited through family. This contrasts with the House of Commons, to which individuals are freely elected. Although the monarchy and the House of Lords have relatively little power today, they play an important symbolic role in British politics.

Class divisions in modern Britain are similar to those in many other European societies. They include a small upper class, which maintains its position through inheritance laws and the education of children in elite private schools; a larger middle class, which includes physicians, attorneys, businesspeople, and other occupations in the service sector; and a large working class employed in the primary and secondary sectors of the economy. Yet, social mobility in Great Britain is open, and people can move from one class to another.

The degree of social mobility in Great Britain, as well as in other industrial states, is to some extent a result of recent changes in the industrial economy. With advanced industrialization, an increasing percentage of jobs are found in the tertiary (service) sector, whereas the primary and secondary sectors have declined. Therefore, the number of white-collar workers has grown, and the number of

Some postindustrial societies in Europe maintain the vestiges of feudal-like social patterns such as symbolic monarchies. This is a recent photo of Queen Elizabeth of the United Kingdom.

blue-collar workers has decreased. Consequently, many of the sons and daughters of blue-collar workers have a higher social status than do their parents. For example, in Great Britain, approximately 40 percent of the sons of manual workers have moved into the middle class since the 1950s (Robertson 1990; Macionis 2014). Sociologists refer to this as *structural mobility*, a type of social mobility resulting from the restructuring of the postindustrial economy, producing new occupational opportunities. Technological innovations, economic booms or busts, wars, and increasing numbers of jobs in the service-sector, white-collar occupations can affect this mobility from working class to middle class or upper class.

## Class in the United States

Most research demonstrates that the rate of social mobility in the United States is about the same as in other industrial states. Approximately one-third of the children within the working class stay within the same class background during their lives (Macionis 2014). Although the United States differs from Great Britain in that it has never had an official class system with a titled aristocracy, it is not a classless society. The class structure of the United States consists of five categories based upon equivalent social statuses, which are largely determined by occupation, income, and education (see Table 10.1). Although these class boundaries are very "fuzzy" and are not rigid, they continue to influence whether an individual can achieve social mobility.

One of the principal cultural ideals of the United States is that any person can move up the social ladder through effort and motivation. For this reason, upper-class and upper-middle-class Americans tend to believe that economic and social inequalities arise primarily from differences in individual abilities and work habits. Additionally, most individuals in the United States claim that they belong to the middle class in U.S. society, despite the fact that they might not fall into the economic category of that class (Wolfe 1999). Most Americans believe that equal opportunities are available to all individuals based upon personal responsibility, ingenuity, and work habits. These cultural beliefs, therefore, help justify social inequity.

In fact, many factors besides individual efforts—such as family background, race, ethnicity, gender, wealth, property, and assets and the state of the national and world economies—affect a person's location and mobility on the socioeconomic ladder. For example, African-Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanics historically have lower rates of mobility than do Asian-Americans and white, middle-class Americans.

**Table 10. 1** The American Class System in the Twenty-First Century: A Composite Estimate

| Class and Percentage of Total Population | Income | Property | Occupation | Education | Personal and Family Life | Education of Children |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Upper class (1–3%) | Very high income, most of it from wealth | Great wealth Old wealth, control over investment | Managers, professionals, high civil and military officials | Liberal arts education at elite schools | Stable family life Autonomous personality | College education by right for both sexes |
| Upper-middle class (10–15%) | High income | Accumulation of property through Savings | Lowest unemployment | Graduate training | Better physical and mental health and health care | Educational system biased in their favor |
| Lower-middle class (30–35%) | Modest income | Few assets Some savings | Small-business people and farmers, lower professionals, semiprofessionals, sales and clerical workers | Some college High school Some high school | Longer life expectancy Unstable family life | Greater chance of college than working-class children Educational system biased against them |
| Working class (40–45%) | Low income | Few to no assets No savings No assets | Skilled labor Unskilled labor | Grade school | One-parent homes Conformist personality | Tendency toward vocational programs |
| Lower class (20–25%) | Poverty income | No savings | Highest unemployment Surplus labor | Illiteracy, especially functional illiteracy | Poorer physical and mental health Lower life expectancy | Little interest in education, high dropout rates |

**SOURCE:** Adapted from *Social Stratification: The Interplay of Class, Race, and Gender*, 2nd ed., by Daniel W. Rossides, © 1997. Adapted by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, NJ.

## Class in Japan and the Former Soviet Union

Most research indicates that despite the cultural emphasis on group harmony, class divisions and conflicts exist in Japan. Sociologist Rob Steven (1983) has identified five major classes in Japanese society: the bourgeoisie or capitalist class (owners of the major industries), the petty bourgeoisie (small-business owners), the middle class (professional and other service workers), the peasantry (rural farmers), and the working class (industrial laborers). The primary means of social mobility in Japanese society is the educational system, which is highly regimented and rigorous from the elementary years through high school. Higher education is limited to those students who excel on various achievement exams, a system that to some extent reflects class background. As in other industrial societies, middle- and upper-class students have better opportunities. The rate of social mobility in Japan is similar to that of other industrial states (Lipset and Bendix 1967). However, the most current anthropological research demonstrates that a rigid class structure does not dominate Japanese society and that most people believe that through education and their own personal efforts, they can rise to more economically and socially viable positions. Some individuals from lower-class categories, just as in the United States, have risen to the top as celebrities, artists, and CEOs. Thus, the ideal of moving ahead in an increasingly affluent society such as Japan tends to promote more optimism about one's prospects (McCreery and McCreery 2006).

Ever since the Russian Revolution in 1917, the former Soviet Union claimed to be a classless society because its system was not based upon the private ownership of the means of production. In fact, however, it had a stratified class system based upon occupation. Occupations were hierarchically ranked into four major status groups based on income, power, and prestige. The highest-ranking statuses consisted of upper-level government officials, Politburo members who were recruited from the Communist Party. The second tier consisted of professional workers such as engineers, professors, physicians, and scientists, as well as lower-level government workers. The third tier was made up of the manual workers in the industrial economy, and the bottom rung was composed of the rural peasantry (Kerblay 1983; Dunn and Dunn 1988). Most sociologists agree that this hierarchy of statuses reflects a class-based society.

# Summary and Review of Learning Objectives

**10.1**  **Discuss the general components of social structure, including status, the family, marriage, gender, and age.**

Status is a recognized position that a person occupies in society. A person's status determines where he or she fits into society in relationship to everyone else. Status may be based on or accompanied by wealth, power, prestige, or a combination of all of these. All societies recognize both *ascribed* and *achieved* statuses. When an individual occupies a particular status, he or she plays a role based on the norms associated with the status. Anthropologists define the family as a social group of two or more people related by blood, marriage, or adoption who live or reside together for an extended period, sharing economic resources and caring for their young. The two main types of family found throughout the world are the nuclear family and the extended family. Marriage is a social bond sanctioned by society between two or more people that involves economic cooperation, social obligations, rights, duties, and sometimes culturally approved sexual activity. Anthropologists find different patterns of marriage including monogamy and polygamy. Forms of polygamy include polygyny and polyandry. Gender is the culturally based human traits that are assigned to individuals based on their sex (biological traits). Although sex characteristics are biologically determined, gender roles vary in accordance with the technological, economic, and sociocultural conditions of particular types of societies. Age is a universal principle used to prescribe social status in sociocultural systems.

**10.2**  **Describe the social structure, family, marriage, gender, and age in foraging societies.**

The two basic elements of social organization for foraging populations are the nuclear family and the band. The nuclear family is the small family unit associated with procreation: parents and offspring. The nuclear family appears to be most adaptive for hunting-gathering societies because of the flexibility needed for the location and easy distribution and exchange of food resources and the other exigencies of hunting. The most common type of band is made up of a related cluster of nuclear families ranging in size from 20 to 100 individuals.

The most common type of marriage found in foraging societies is monogamy. A common marriage rule found in foraging societies is referred to as *cross-cousin marriage*. A cross-cousin is the offspring of one's father's sister or one's mother's brother. In effect, a cross-cousin marriage means that a male marries a female who is his father's sister's daughter or his mother's brother's daughter.

Cross-cousin marriage creates interband alliances and kin networks for reciprocal exchanges.

Contrary to most stereotypes about the gender-based division of labor in foraging societies with male hunting providing most of the meat and protein for the group, in many cases females provide most of the foodstuffs involving the collection of vegetation. The status of women within band societies is usually fairly equal to men, primarily because males and females both contribute toward provisioning for the families. The elderly have a high status in band societies because of their accumulated store of knowledge and the assistance in childcare and other family responsibilities.

**10.3**  **Describe the social structure, family, marriage, descent groups, gender, and age for tribal societies.**

The most common social grouping among tribal societies is the extended family. Most extended families consist of three generations—grandparents, parents, and children—although they can also contain married siblings with their spouses and children. Aside from extended families, tribes also maintain descent groups in order to trace actual or supposed kinship relationships. One major type of descent group is based on lineage. Anthropologists define lineages as descent groups composed of relatives, all of whom trace their relationship through *consanguineal* (blood) or *affinal* (marriage) relations to an actual, commonly known ancestor. The most common type of descent group is a patrilineal descent group, composed of people who trace their descent through males from a common, known male ancestor. Another form of descent group is the matrilineal descent group, or *matrilineage*, whose members calculate descent through the female line from a commonly known female ancestor. Some tribes have ambilineal descent groups, formed by tracing an individual's choice of descent relationships through either a male or a female line. In other cases, tribes have kindreds based on bilateral descent and consist of relatives on both the father's and mother's lines. Other types of descent groups for tribes include clans, phratries, and moeities that are based on more fictional or spiritual relationships to ancestors or family members.

Marriage in tribal societies involves exogamy, meaning marriage outside of one's family, and descent group or lineage, clan, phratry or moiety. Many tribes practice cross-cousin marriage, but a few have rules of parallel-cousin marriage, where a male marries a female, his father's brother's daughter within his own patrilineal descent group. The most common form of marriage among tribes is polygyny, where a man has more than

one wife. Along with polygyny, a husband's family has to contribute bridewealth, animals or other resources for the bride's family. A few tribes in the Himalayan mountains and South India practice polyandry, where women have more than one husband. Some tribes have the rules of levirate (a widow marries her dead husband's brother) or the sororate (a widower marries his dead sister's sister).

With some exceptions, gender inequality and patriarchy and sexist views towards women are prevalent in tribal societies. However, in matrilineal societies, women have a higher status than men, despite the fact that men still control the political sphere. Respect for the elderly sometime results in gerontocratic rule, where the elderly, mostly males, maintain authority over tribal politics.

### 10.4 Discuss how status differences, the family, gender, and age are related in chiefdom societies.

In contrast to band and tribal societies, chiefdoms have ranked extended families and descent groups in hierarchies within different strata. The various families and descent groups—households, lineages, and clans—have a specific ascribed rank in the society and are accorded certain rights, privileges, and obligations based on that rank. Marriage is usually endogamous in chiefdoms, which entails marriage among people of the same strata. Polygynous marriages were often associated with chiefs who may have many wives. Gender relationships were usually unequal in chiefdoms, with women ranked below men, except for women who were in the chiefly stratum, whose status was very high. The elderly had a relatively high status within chiefdom societies.

### 10.5 Discuss the family, kinship, marriage, gender, and age patterns in agricultural states.

Like tribes and chiefdoms, agricultural state societies maintained the extended family. Extended families were prevalent in both urban and rural areas and had wealth, power, and prestige based on land ownership and their relationship to the elite class. Agricultural societies had descent groups based on patrilineages, matrilineages, or bilateral descent with kindreds. Arranged marriages and cousin marriages prevailed in agricultural societies, with frequent polygyny found among the male elite. Most agricultural societies had dowry rules where the bride's family had to contribute wealth to the husband's family.

With some exceptions in Southeast Asia where bilateral descent was important, patriarchy and excessive sexism was prevalent in agricultural societies resulting in female seclusion and veiling. Patriarchy was the common practices of all of the religious traditions that developed in agricultural states, including Confucianism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

### 10.6 Discuss the type of stratification characteristic of agricultural states.

Agricultural civilizations were highly stratified and social mobility was generally restricted to people with elite family or kinship backgrounds. Thus these societies were closed societies in that social status was generally *ascribed*, rather than *achieved*. In some cases, this resulted in caste systems in India or Nepal. In other cases, slavery became prevalent. Slave systems varied in agricultural societies dependent on local economic and political conditions. The indigenous African form of slavery was open in that slaves could be incorporated into domestic kinship groups and even become upwardly mobile where land was relatively abundant and less populated. In contrast, the slave systems of China, India, Greece, and Rome were closed, with no opportunities for upward mobility or incorporation into kinship groups where land was scarce and populations much more dense, and social mobility was limited for slaves.

### 10.7 Discuss the social structure, family, marriage, gender, and age patterns in industrial and postindustrial societies.

Kinship is less important in industrialized and postindustrial states than in preindustrial societies. New structures and organizations perform many of the functions associated with kinship in preindustrial societies. Occupational and economic factors in most cases replace kinship as the primary basis of social status; a person no longer has to be part of an aristocratic or elite family to have access to wealth and political power. Of course, kinship and family background still have a definite influence on social mobility. Families with wealth, political power, and high social status can ensure that their children will have the best education. The nuclear family becomes the predominant form of family structure in industrial and postindustrial societies. Instead of arranged marriages, marriage in Western industrial and postindustrial societies were based on choice and romantic love, but in Japan the parents are still often involved in marriage choice. Gender relations have become more equal in industrial and postindustrial societies; however, feminist movements have emerged that critique the remaining aspects of patriarchy that still prevail.

Respect for the elderly has declined in most industrial and postindustrial societies as a result of the rapid changes in technology. However, in Japan respect for the elderly has been maintained as an aspect of the Confucian tradition.

### 10.8 Compare the class structures of Britain, the United States, Japan, and the former Soviet Union.

In contrast to the closed societies of chiefdoms or agricultural societies, industrial and postindustrial states are classified as open societies, in which social status can be

achieved through individual efforts. Occupation became the most important determinant of status in industrial and postindustrial states. This is not to say that industrial or postindustrial states are egalitarian. Class structures develop in industrial and postindustrial societies. The British class structure retains some aspects of an agrarian society with a monarchical royal family, and aristocratic titles and statuses for some upper class members. The class structure of the United States consists of categories based upon equivalent social statuses, which are largely determined by occupation, income, and education. Although these class boundaries are very "fuzzy" and are not rigid, they continue to have an influence on whether an individual can achieve social mobility. Recently social mobility has increased in both Britain and the United States because of the rapid transformation of the postindustrial information-based technology and economy.

Although Japan has a class structure similar to that of the United States, most people believe that through education and their own personal efforts, they can rise to more economically and socially viable positions. Ever since the Russian Revolution in 1917, the former Soviet Union claimed to be a classless society, because its system was not based upon the private ownership of the means of production. In fact, however, it had a stratified class system based upon occupation, income, power, and privileges.

# Key Terms

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age stratification, p. 192
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ascribed status, p. 189
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