Kinship and rules of Descent

- Two basic types of descent
  - Unilineal- descent is traced only through one parent
  - Bilateral- descent is traced through both parents

Kinship and rules of Descent - Unilineal Systems

- Three types of unilineal descent
  - Patrilineal- trace through father only
  - Matrilineal- trace through the mother only
  - Ambilineal- trace through one or the other parent depending upon the situation

- Lineage- a unilineal descent group composed of several unilineal, extended families whose members are able to trace their descent through males or females from a common ancestor.
Kinship and rules of Descent - Unilineal Systems

- Clans - a unilineal descent group that traces descent through either the male line (patriclan) or the female line (matriclan) exclusively (i.e. either patrilineal or matrilineal). The common ancestor for a clan is usually some mystical entity that a direct line is only hinted at, that is the direct path to the ancestor is not clear.

Bilateral Descent Systems

- Bilateral kinship traces descent through both the mother’s and father’s side simultaneously and equally.
- Kindred consists of all the people that a specific person recognizes as bilaterally related to himself or herself.

What are the determinants of descent systems?

- Bilateral and Ambilineal descent systems are found in 60% of all foragers, and are almost universal in modern societies.
- Patrilineal descent is found in 75% of all pastoral groups
- Matrilineal descent seems to occur with high levels of intragroup fighting where men are leaving for extended periods of time.
There are two basic types of kin recognized by anthropologists:

- **Affinal kin** are those who are related to you by marriage
- **Consanguineal kin** are those who are related to you by blood

There are numerous systems that cultures use to classify people. We will only consider five such systems. The terms used to designate these systems were developed by Lewis Henry Morgan in 1871, and were named after the first people in which Morgan discovered the system.

The systems we will cover are:
- Eskimo
- Hawaiian
- Omaha
- Crow
- Iroquois
Kinship Systems

- **Eskimo** This is what Americans use. Here biological mother is called mother and biological father is called father.
- Found in bilateral descent systems

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Kinship Systems - Eskimo

![Diagram of Eskimo kinship system]

Note: In some bilateral systems, the cousin term may vary according to sex. Kin types referred to by the same term are marked in the same way.

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Kinship Systems

- **Hawaiian** The simplest system. People only differentiate between gender and generation.
- These societies tend to be bilateral and live in extended families.
**Kinship Systems - Hawaiian**

- Father and father’s brother are both referred to by the same term.
- Mother and mother’s sister are lumped.
- Female members of my mother’s patrilineage of any generation are called the same term. All male members of mother’s patrilineage are also called a single term. Associated with patrilineal descent.

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**Kinship Systems - Omaha**

- Father’s brother and father are both referred to by the same term.
- Mother and mother’s sister are lumped.
- Female members of my mother’s patrilineage of any generation are called the same term. All male members of mother’s patrilineage are also called a single term. Associated with patrilineal descent.
Kinship Systems

- **Crow** is the reverse of the Omaha system. That is, mother's side of the equation is differentiated and father's side is lumped. Crow terminology is associated with matrilineal systems of descent.

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**Kinship Systems - Crow**

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**Iroquois** The term father includes father's brother, but not mother's brother. Mother includes mother's sister, but not father's sister. Uncle is used for only for mother's brother; aunt is used only for father's sister. Cross-cousins are called cousins, but parallel cousins are called siblings. This system is associated with bilateral cross-cousin marriage.
Kinship Systems - Iroquois

Note: Although not shown in this diagram, in the Iroquois system, parallel cousins are sometimes referred to by different terms than one's own brother or sister.