Economic aspects of marriage

- Indirect dowry: the dowry is provided by the bride's family to the bride, but the payments to the bride originate from the groom's family. The groom's family gives the payments to the bride's father who then gives the payments to the bride.
- Example: The Basseri of southern Iran; the payments to the bride's father get translated into household goods for the newly wed couple.

Whom can we marry?

- Two basic rules for whom we can marry:
- Endogamy: a rule prescribing that one must marry within one's own kin group
- Example: Indian Caste system
- Occurs when critical resources need to be kept within the kin group

Whom can we marry?

- Exogamy: rule prescribing marriage outside of one's kin group
- Example: Modern American marriage rules
- Example 2: Tlingit of Alaska and Canada,
  - They have to marry outside of their moiety
  - Moiety: the splitting of a society into halves, you will come across this in the Canela
Whom can we marry?

- Exogamy appears to occur when critical resources need to be accessed across groups.
- Examples of critical resources:
  - Food
  - Fuel
  - Alliances

Whom can we marry?

- Incest refers to sexual relations with a close relative.
  - The incest taboo is a cultural universal.
  - What constitutes incest varies widely from culture to culture.

Incest Taboo: Instinctive Horror

- This theory argues that Homo sapiens are genetically programmed to avoid incest.
- This theory has been refuted.
  - However, cultural universality does not necessarily entail a genetic basis (e.g., fire making).
  - If people really were genetically programmed to avoid incest, a formal incest taboo would be unnecessary.
Incest Taboo: Biological Problems

- This theory argues that the incest taboo developed in response to abnormal offspring born from incestuous unions.
- A decline in fertility and survival does accompany brother-sister mating across several generations.
- However, human marriage patterns are based on specific cultural beliefs rather than universal concerns about biological degeneration several generations in the future.

Incest Taboo: Biological Problems

- Neither instinctive horror nor biological degeneration can explain the very widespread custom of marrying cross cousins.
- Also, fears about degeneration cannot explain why sexual unions between parallel cousins but not cross cousins is so often tabooed.

Incest Taboo: Attempt and Contempt

- Malinowski (and Freud) argued that the incest taboo originated to direct sexual feelings away from one’s family to avoid disrupting the family structure and relations (familiarity increases the chances for attempt).
- The opposite theory argues that people are less likely to be sexually attracted to those with whom they have grown up (familiarity breeds contempt). This is known as the Westermark Effect.
Incest Taboo: Attempt and Contempt

- Westermark effect; there is some evidence from kibbutz studies in Israel
- In a kibbutz all children are cared for communally
- Very low intermarriage rates between members of kibbutzim

Incest Taboo: Marry Out or Die Out

- A more accepted argument is that the taboo originated to ensure exogamy.
- Incest taboos force people to create and maintain wide social networks by extending peaceful relations beyond one’s immediate group.
- By marrying out one increases the number of allies against coalitional violence.

Durable alliances

- The existence of customs such as the **sororate** and the **levirate** indicate the importance of marriage as an alliance between groups.
- **Sororate** marriages involve the widower marrying one of his deceased wife’s sisters.
- **Levirate** marriages involve the widow marrying one of her deceased husband’s brothers.