

Plateau Kinship and Family System

– “One’s Family” - the heart and soul of being Indian, from which one’s identity and purpose evolve, from which the world revolves, to which one gives unselfishly.

– **bilateral kinship and family system** - trace relationship through both sides of their family

– no **marriage** is allowed between any known relative. Marriage could be arranged by the parents or the couple may simply elope. Marriage validated through exchange of goods in a “wedding trade” between the two families. Typically practiced patrilocal residence, though could easily move into bride’s family. Were monogamous, though polygynous marriages accepted. First marriages characteristically unstable, with few people married only once. Divorce was easy, as was re-marriage.

– basic family unit is a non-unilinear descent group or **kindred-based, extended family** made up of relatives from both sides of the family, tracing descent back through either male or female founding ancestor, usually a well-known ancestral chief. Often named, “the children of (name of ancestor)” Besides a name, each extended family associated with a particular location, regarded as “home,” often the site of the winter villages. While born into a particular family, individuals have the option of choosing another family to establish membership within, even within another tribe, i.e., quality of permeability. The extended family provides an individual his/her identity, the nurturing/rites of passage unit, the primary mutual social and economic support and assistance unit, and the right of first use to the roots and berries, and fish and hunting locations within that family’s territory.

– **Kinship Terms** are **bifurcate collateral type** with generation stressed resulting in a Hawaiian cousin system:

– in **your generation**, all family members are classified as **siblings** and only differentiated by **age**, i.e., older or younger, and by **gender**, i.e., brother or sister

– in your **parent’s generation**, parents are classified as distinct from their siblings (mo br, mo si, fa br, fa si, and their cousins) by gender, but all relate to ego as “parents,” i.e., mother and father, uncle and aunt

– in **your grandparent’s generation**, while distinct terms are used to distinguish all four grandparents, all relate to ego as a “grandparent,” calling them “grandpa” or “grandma”

– in your great-grandparent’s generation, all referred to by one term of respect

– joking **reciprocal relationship** exists with one’s father’s sister’s husband, who indulge in licenced joking and making fun freely at each other without taking offense

– **Rules of Hospitality**, derivative of the “ethic of sharing.” This extensive kinship system facilitated extensive hospitality between relatives, i.e., one could calm kinship and thus hospitality with an extremely wide network. Visits are always welcomed. Someone could readily come for a visit to your home, for economic (job), ceremonial (First Salmon Ceremony or Wake) or social reasons (friendship), and take up residence there for a short time, or even evolving into a potentially permanent basis. Example with Rob and Rose.

Young people, especially before marriage, were especially prone to make long visits elsewhere.

This helped promote intermarriage between families of different communities, between Lapwai and Warm Springs, for example.

– All this helps strengthen large intergroup relations, **an expansive “family”** and ease of mobility among its members to effectively participate in economic, social and ceremonial activities **throughout the Plateau**

– **Gender Roles.** The Plateau societies are characterized by a strong gender equality, with men and women equally accessing power, authority, and autonomy in the economic, domestic, political and religious spheres. See Lillian Ackerman

– this system is **shared by both Sahaptian and Salishan peoples throughout the Plateau**