**Mate Selection**

**Sociocultural and Historical Factors**

Taking still another step back from the isolated individual, some researchers have focused on the cultural and historical context of mate choice (e.g., Crook and Crook 1988; Hatfield and Rapson 1996). Adopting this perspective, one can ask both: How do human societies differ with regard to mate choice, and how are they similar? The range of differences is, at first glance, rather dazzling. As Gwen Broude (1994) noted, *exclusive monogamy,* the legally sanctioned form of mating in Europe and North America, is preferred in less than 20 percent of 238 cultures worldwide. *Polygyny* (more than one woman sharing the same husband) is practiced in most of the remainder (over 80%), and *polyandry* (more than one man sharing the same wife) is found in four societies. Although personal choice is emphasized in Western societies, males marry women chosen for them by third parties in 29.3 percent of 157 societies worldwide, and marriages are arranged for females in 44.1 percent of 161 societies (Broude 1994). Furthermore, there are cultural variations in norms about desirable features in mates, including amount of body fat desired, preferred size and shape of breasts, and other overt characteristics such as body markings (Anderson et al. 1992; Ford and Beach 1951; Broude 1994).

Looking across recent history, survey data on mate preferences among North American college students in 1939, 1956, 1967, 1977, 1985, and 1996, reveals regional as well as temporal variations. For example, students in Texas were more interested in chastity, religious background, and neatness than were students in Michigan. Over time, the value placed on chastity by both sexes dropped, and the value placed on mutual attraction and love increased (Buss et al. 2001).

In addition to cultural and historical variations in mate choice, there are many commonalities found across human societies. These range from preferred overt characteristics such as clear skin and lack of disfigurement to personality traits making for good parents and agreeable companions (Broude 1994; Ford and Beach 1951). A general preference for similarity in a mate is also widespread (Botwin, Buss, and Shackelford 1997). Moreover, a number of sex differences found in Western society are found across cultures and time periods, including the tendency to judge men on the basis of physical strength, social position, and economic worth, and to place more emphasis on a woman's physical attractiveness (Broude 1994; Buss 1989). The preference for older versus younger partners across the lifespan is also found across numerous societies and historical time periods (Otta et al. 1999; Harpending 1992; Kenrick and Keefe 1992).

It is sometimes suggested that, in Western societies, the relative emphasis on status and power in men and physical attractiveness in women might be related to women's relatively lower economic status, and that if opportunity and wage disparities were rectified, women would not prefer a man with higher socioeconomic status (Eagly and Wood 1999). Within the United States, however, there is evidence that women who gain social status do not shift to male-like preferences for relative youth and attractiveness, but instead continue to prefer older and higher status partners (Kenrick and Keefe 1992; Townsend 1987).

Due to warfare, migration, and random historical and geographic variations, there are sometimes relatively more available females than males in the pool of eligible mates, or the converse. Marcia Guttentag and Paul Secord (1983) found that a surplus of women (putting men in a "buyers' market") is associated with later marriage, more divorce, and more permissive sexual norms. A surplus of men, on the other hand, is associated with more stable relationships and male willingness to commit to monogamous relationships. Other research suggests that polyandry, though rare, is associated with conditions of extreme resource scarcity (as found in the high Himalayas in Nepal) under which survival rates for children of single males and their wives are low. In Nepal and a few other places, several brothers often combine their resources and marry a single wife, increasing survival rates for resultant children (Crook and Crook 1988). On the other hand, extreme polygyny (harems) is correlated with ecological conditions including a steep social hierarchy, a generally rich environment allowing higher status families to accumulate vast wealth, and occasional famines so lower-status families face possibilities of starvation (Crook and Crook 1988). Under these circumstances, a woman who absorbs the cost of sharing a wealthy husband reaps a survival insurance policy for herself and any resultant children.

**Mate Selection**

There is wide cross-cultural variation in the social rules governing the selection of a partner for marriage. There is wide cross-cultural variation in the social rules that govern the selection of marriage partners. In some communities, partner selection is an individual decision, while in others, it is a collective decision made by the partners’ kin groups. Among different cultures, there is also variation in the rules regulating whom individuals can choose to marry.

**Arranged Marriages**

An arranged marriage is an agreement in which both parties consent to the assistance of their parents or a third party. Arranged marriage has deep roots in the behavior of royal and aristocratic families around the world. Today, arranged marriage is largely practiced in South Asia (India, Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka), Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. To some extent, it also occurs in parts of East Asia.

In many societies, the choice of partner is limited to suitable persons from specific social groups. In some of these societies, individuals are only allowed to select partners from the individual’s social group. This is a practice called endogamy, and is common in many class and casted-based societies, like India. In other societies, on the other hand, partners can be selected from a different social group than one’s own. This is called exogamy, and is common in societies that practice totemic religion, in which society is divided into a number of distinct, exogamous, totemic clans.

In cultures with fewer rules governing mate selection, the process of finding a partner might include courtship. It might also be arranged by an individual’s parent through an outside party, called a matchmaker.

**Forced Marriages**

Forced marriage is a term used to describe a marriage in which one or both parties is married without consent, against his or her will. In a shotgun wedding, a marriage between two people is forced because of an unplanned pregnancy. Some cultures and religions consider it a moral imperative to marry in such a situation. This is based on the reasoning that premarital sex, and out-of-wedlock births, are sinful, and should be outlawed or stigmatized. As the stigma associated with out-of-wedlock births has faded over the years, and the number of such births has increased, shotgun weddings have become less common. They have also become less common because of the increasing availability of birth control, abortions, and welfare support for unwed mothers. Fewer people perceive shotgun weddings to be necessary in order to support the woman and the child.

In some societies, ranging from Central Asia to Africa, the custom of bride kidnapping still exists, in which a woman is captured by a man and his friends. This practice occasionally exists to conceal an elopement, but it also occasionally represents sexual violence.

**Child Rearing**

Child rearing is the process of supporting the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development of a child.

Child rearing is the process of promoting and supporting the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development of a child from infancy to adulthood. Parenting refers to aspects of raising a child aside from the biological relationship. Parenting is usually done by the biological parents of the child in question, with governments and society playing ancillary roles. Orphaned or abandoned children are often reared by non-parent blood relations.

**Parenting Styles**

Developmental psychologist Diana Baumrind identified three main parenting styles in early child development: Authoritative, Authoritarian, and Permissive. These parenting styles were later expanded to four, including an Uninvolved style. They involve combinations of acceptance and responsiveness on the one hand, and demand and control on the other.

Authoritarian parenting is very rigid and strict. Parents who practice it have a set of rules and expectations, and they require rigid obedience. If rules are not followed, punishment is most often used to ensure obedience.

Authoritative parenting relies on positive reinforcement and infrequent use of punishment. These parents are more aware of a child’s feelings and capabilities, and support the development of a child’s autonomy within reasonable limits. There is a give-and-take atmosphere involved in parent-child communication, and both control and support are exercised.

With Permissive or Indulgent parenting, a child’s freedom and autonomy are valued above all.  These parents rarely find fault with their child and when they do, they tend to rely mostly on reasoning and explanation. There are few rules, few consequences, and children are said to be free from external constraints.

In Uninvolved families, parents are often emotionally absent and sometimes even physically absent. Expectations and regular communication are minimal. These parents are not responsive to a child’s needs and do not demand anything of them behaviorally. They provide for basic survival, but offer little to no engagement.

**Parental Roles and Responsibilities**

The ideology of “motherhood” portrays mothers as the ultimate caregivers. They invest copious time in their children, which may affect their job and role in the labor market.  Although stay-at-home moms are less common in today’s economy, women statistically spend more time nurturing children than men do.

However, fathers are beginning to spend more hands-on time with their children as parenting roles evolve.  Couples are now more likely to share household and child-rearing responsibilities, such as bathing, dressing, feeding, changing diapers, and comforting children, along with cooking and cleaning