

Our family relationships are based on three types of kinship connections:

(1) "consanguinal", created by birth and descent

(2) "affinal", created by marriage

(3) "fictive", created by other means:

adopting a child

sponsoring a godchild

taking a mistress

registering a significant other

Consanguinal and affinal relationships are important in all cultures, but these relationships are organized differently in different cultures.

We can easily study the cultural differences by paying attention to the use of special "kin terms" in various languages.

Kin terms are words or phrases which are used to address ("term of address", "form of address) or to refer ("referential term", "descriptive term") to a person's relative:

"Mom"

"Mommy"

"my mother"

"her sister"

"his daughter"