

between a young man (Ego) and his mother's brother, an institution called the avunculate.

The avunculate is a recurrent problem in kinship literature. Kin systems that recognized a special bond between Ego and his maternal uncle—often expressed in a joking relationship—had been interpreted as remnants of matrilineal systems, until they were shown to exist in patrilineal systems as well. Yet the avunculate relationship expresses not only a system of kin terminology but also a system of attitudes, and Lévi-Strauss, following Radcliffe-Brown, argued that the "avunculate covers two antithetical systems of attitudes": one in which the uncle is feared and respected and one in which the relationship is easy and familiar (1963a:40). Further, there is an inverse relationship in the attitudes between Ego and his maternal uncle (mother's brother) and Ego and his father; when the relationship between Ego and mother's brother is familiar, the relationship between Ego and Father is formal, and vice versa.

Even more interesting is that these relationships (Ego:Father and Ego:Mother's Brother) are linked to other relationships, namely between Ego's father and mother or husband and wife (Father:Mother) and between brother and sister, in this case Ego's mother and Ego's mother's brother (Mother:Mother's Brother). The relationship between Ego and his maternal uncle fits into a set of relationships in which (1) the relationships between Ego and Father and Ego and Maternal Uncle are inversely correlated, and (2) the relationships between Father and Mother (or husband and wife) and Mother and Mother's Brother (or brother and sister) also are inversely correlated. This produces the possible arrangements shown in the diagram.

	A	B	C	D
Ego and Father	+	+	-	-
Ego and Mother's Brother	-	-	+	+
Father and Mother	+	-	-	+
Mother and Mother's Brother	-	+	+	-

+ = familiar relationship; - = formal or hostile relationship

The avunculate only makes sense as one relationship within a system, a structure in which there are attitudinal oppositions