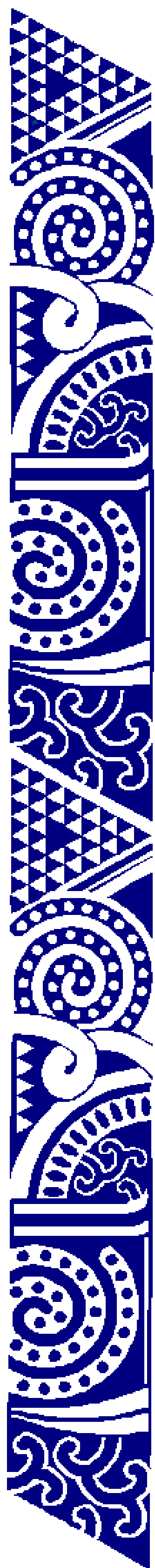

New Zealand
Immigration Service
Te Ratonga Menene

Immigration Research Programme

Family Structures

July 2000

FAMILY STRUCTURES

A REPORT FOR THE
NEW ZEALAND IMMIGRATION SERVICE

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JULY 2000

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The New Zealand Immigration Service (NZIS) is currently undertaking a review of family sponsored immigration policy. One of the key issues to be addressed is what is the appropriate definition of family. To contribute to this work, the Service commissioned a report on this topic. The study seeks to:
   - identify how the concept of 'family' differs for different ethnic groups
   - identify within the different concepts of 'family', the key relationships whereby obligatory ties exist between family members
   - describe the key characteristics of relationships that involve a high level of interdependence.

2. This report is based on a literature review and 15 interviews with people who have migrated to New Zealand from the Pacific, Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe.

3. The report concludes that the basic concepts of nationality, ethnicity and family are complex. Almost all nationalities encompass a range of ethnic groups. Within those ethnic groups, an individual or family's sense of ethnic identity and commitment to cultural values can vary and change over time. Cultural and religious factors also exert a strong influence. Families can incorporate more than one ethnic group and extend across more than one country, while still functioning as a family.

4. All of the cultures studied perceived the family as a social rather than a biological unit and in most cultures, the family is considered more important than the individual.

5. Biological links and descent through the male line are particularly important in countries that follow Confucianism, Hinduism and Islam. These countries include China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and African countries such as Somalia. Other countries, such as Thailand, the Philippines, Samoa and Tonga pay stronger attention to descent from both sides. In almost all cases, authority remains with males, while females provide domestic support and personal care and have responsibility for maintaining cultural and family values.

6. The literature and interviews suggest that close kindred include parents, brothers and sisters and their spouses, first cousins and their spouses and spouses' parents. These family members matter most and are most likely to provide vital assistance in terms of finance, employment, marriage and emigration.

7. Adoption is prevalent in many cultures, usually without the legal formalities common in countries like New Zealand. Adoptees become full members of their adoptive families, even though they may retain their original family name.

8. Family members who may in other circumstances be considered wider or distant kin, become close kin when they take on caring or supportive roles within the family.

9. Families living through radical socio/political change, war or other crises, which often prompt forced or voluntary migration, vary their perceptions of kin relationships according to changing circumstances.

10. The strongest obligations within families are those of care - financial, physical and emotional - both for children and for ageing parents. Adult children provide care for ageing parents. In return the parents provide important household help and care for grandchildren. In this way cultural values and language are maintained. In some cultures, birth order is important in dictating levels of obligation, mirroring hierarchies of responsibility.

11. In many cultures, obligations extend laterally, particularly to siblings and their families but also to wider kin. While obligations to siblings are usually weaker than to parents, they extend to half-brothers and sisters and adopted family members. These relationships are typically characterised by financial obligations, with money shared for business, health care and children's education; provision of emotional support and advice; help with immigration matters and provision of accommodation, either short term or long term.

12. Obligations to wider kin are especially activated in times of crisis or life cycle events such as funerals, marriages and clan, village, and *'aiga* activities. The latter events strengthen and maintain bonds, reinforcing or renewing obligations.

13. While co-residence over some periods of life can reinforce obligations, co-residence is not a key characteristic of highly interdependent relationships. Families attempt to maintain obligations with family either within or between countries and in spite of living apart.

14. The actual provision of money should not be used as the main way of measuring obligation. With adequate resources, obligations to provide economic support can be met from a distance, as can the provision of emotional support although to a far lesser degree. However to provide physical care, family members need to be nearby. If families are not living together, that increases the obligation to visit as often as resources allow. The nature of interdependent relationships can change quite rapidly as a result of crises, with relationships moving from low to high interdependence in a short period of time.

15. Migration brings with it costs as well as opportunities, with some lamenting their inability to fulfill their obligations, especially in the early years. There are indications that the inability to fulfill obligations impacts negatively on people's health and can cause tensions and conflicts. Elderly people are often faced with an invidious choice - living in their home country without the care or company of family members, or living with or near family members and being cared for, away from everything familiar and isolated from wider society through a lack of language and mobility.

16. For some the distance weakens bonds with the family and therefore lessens levels of obligation. However others find the distance increases their levels of affection and feelings of commitment to each other. As well as cost and distance, the nature and application of immigration policies and procedures often detract from hoped for opportunities causing tensions, conflict and anxiety.

I. Introduction

The New Zealand Immigration Service (NZIS) is currently undertaking a review of family sponsored immigration policy. One of the key issues to be addressed is what is the appropriate definition of family. To contribute to this work, the Service commissioned a literature review to explore definitions of family and family obligations among different ethnic groups.

Under the Service's current definition, the spouses/partners, dependent children and in some circumstances, parents, siblings and adult children of New Zealanders may qualify for residence. Other family members may also qualify under the Humanitarian category if serious physical or emotional harm exists.

Given the ethnically diverse nature of New Zealand society, a key review question is whether the definition of family within current policy sufficiently recognises that the concept of 'family' is different across cultural settings.

1.1 Objectives of the research

The objective of this review is to draw together literature relating to concepts of family, focusing on the ethnic groups most commonly migrating to New Zealand. The review seeks to:

- identify how the concept of 'family' differs for different ethnic groups
- identify within the different concepts of 'family', the key relationships whereby obligatory ties exist between family members
- describe the key characteristics of relationships that involve a high level of interdependence.

In particular, the review considers:

- the nature and extent of obligatory ties between family members other than parents and children or spouses/partners
- factors that may be used to identify relationships of interdependence, such as financial commitments, shared residence or kinship
- the effects of migration on family ties.

1.2 Methodology

This report is based on a literature review and 15 interviews with people from different ethnic groups.

The literature was obtained through searches of:

- the Victoria University catalogues and databases
- the Development Resource Centre library
- the Whitireia Community Polytechnic database
- the Department of Labour Information Centre
- the Internet
- bibliographies in relevant articles and books.

Personal contacts including Nancy Pollock and Arvind Zodgekar at Victoria University, and staff at the Pacific Health Research Centre provided additional information.

The review focuses on countries in the Pacific, particularly Samoa and Tonga, Africa, China, South East Asia and India, although information from Africa was very limited. Attempts to obtain information on family structures in the former Yugoslav and Russian Federation were unsuccessful.

The interviewees were contacted through personal networks and most live in Auckland. As requested by NZIS, special effort was made to contact people from cultures for which little other information was available. The researchers also sought inter views with both men and women but were often referred to one of the women in the family. Interviews were completed with migrants from:

- China
- Croatia
- Fiji
- India
- Indonesia (2)
- Korea
- Malaysia
- Philippines
- Russia
- Samoa (2)
- Somalia (2)
- Tonga

Information from the interviews is included in the text where appropriate and the interview guide is included as Appendix 1.

1.3 The review

The review has six parts:

I. Introduction
II. Approaches to defining the family and family obligations
III. Concepts of family for different ethnic groups
IV. Key relationships within families where obligatory ties exist
V. Key characteristics of relationships that involve a high level of interdependence
VI. Discussion and conclusion

Similarities and differences between ethnic groups are noted in each section.

II. Approaches to defining the family and family obligations

2.1 Nationality and ethnicity

This review is based on both nationality and ethnicity. Both concepts are problematic. The design of the report implies that there is some overlap between the two, whereas in fact, many countries contain several ethnic groups with distinct customs, languages and family structures. Indonesia and Malaysia are perhaps the most obvious examples, China is another. An excerpt from an interview with an Indonesian couple makes this point.

> In Indonesia there are many cultures and each has a different philosophy of life, different definitions and approaches to family life. I am Javanese and my husband is Sundanese - a group from West Java. In Javanese cultures, boys and girls are equally valuable but for example in Batak, northern Sumatra, sons are more valuable than daughters are and in the west the opposite is true. The differences are historical rather than religious. 90% of Indonesians are Moslem. But earlier people were Hindu, now in some parts there's a mix. For example, in Lombok they say they are Moslem but they follow Hindu rituals. And in Bali the Hinduism is different again. - *Indonesian couple, in NZ 1½ years*

If using nationality as an approximation of ethnicity is somewhat fraught, the problems are confounded by the fact that the concept of ethnicity is itself coming under increasing scrutiny. Phinney (1996), for example, describes it as 'a complex multidimensional construct that by itself explains little', adding that 'even within an ethnic group whose members share a relatively precise ethnic label, there is tremendous heterogeneity'. In her view, common assumptions about the meaning of ethnicity focus on the cultural characteristics of a particular group, that is, the norms, values, attitudes and behaviours that are typical of an ethnic group and stem from a common culture of origin transmitted across generations. However, there is little reliable research measuring cultural characteristics and what there is does not differentiate among sub groups. Ethnic identity can also vary both qualitatively and quantitatively among ethnic group members, and change over time. She concludes that, while 'ethnic categories will continue to be needed because of the importance of exploring and understanding the many differences associated with ethnicity, they should be used with caution.'

Interviews with women from Russia and Malaysia illustrated this complexity and ambiguity.

> Yes I'm Chinese; I'm proud to be Chinese - *Malaysian Chinese woman, in NZ 13 years*

> I'm from Moscow. My Russian citizen papers give my nationality as Ukrainian as both my parents were born in Ukraine. However they went to university in Moscow and stayed there and I was born there. People looking at my name would think I'm Ukrainian, but I consider myself Russian and I have Russian citizenship. - *Russian woman, in NZ 3 years*

2.2 Definitions of family

The family is not necessarily, or even essentially, a biological unit. It is a social construct. The 'myth' of biological relations has been used in arguments about property and inheritance but has little relation to the way people operate in terms of 'families'. While at a purely biological level, a person is descended from both a father and mother, this fact may or may not be socially acknowledged for the purposes of determining his or her place in society, or in rights of succession and inheritance (Pollock 2000, Uberoi 1993). People from different cultural backgrounds include a different range of people when describing their families, according to the range of relationships that are defined as important (Hartley 1995).

In New Zealand, a variety of definitions of 'family' are in use in policy and everyday conversation. Definitions can be status based (for instance, a particular legal status as through marriage) or functionally based (for instance, a group functions according to what is perceived as a family), or combine elements of both (Henaghan and Atkin, 1992). Some definitions currently in use in policy in New Zealand are broad. The definition in the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act (1989) is an example. It acknowledges both legal and functional relationships and seeks to take account of cultural differences. Under this definition a family is taken to be "a family group, including an extended family, in which there is at least one adult member with whom a child or another adult member has a biological or legal relationship; or to whom the child or other adult member has a significant psychological attachment; or that is the child's or other adult member's whanau or other culturally recognised family group" (CYP&F Act 1989, s2). This definition leaves open the question of how far a culturally recognised group might extend, what criteria for determining family relationships are acceptable or who has authority to speak or make decisions on their own or family members' behalf.

2.3 Family types

A 1992 UNESCO report clarifies various aspects of family and family networks, but is vague about the rights, obligations and duties associated with family membership. The report notes that it is important to distinguish between a *household unit, a family, a lineage* and a *large network of kin* and proposes the following definitions:

> "A *household* is [a] commensal[1] and residential unit, and may consist of not only primary relatives (family of orientation or family of procreation) but also of some distant kin and non-kin.
>
> A *family* is a kinship unit, essentially of primary kin of the household head, but it allows for extension, either patrilineal or matrilineal, both vertical and horizontal. Even when its members do not share a common household, the unit may exist as a sociological reality.
>
> A *lineage or clan* is a much larger entity, consisting of a number of families that claim a common ancestor only a few generations back.
>
> The *large network of kinsmen (*called *kindred)* is not a social group; it is to be regarded as a social category. The network is different for each individual as it

[1] 'commensal' means sharing the same food or eating together

consists of both *consanguineal* and *affinal*[2] relatives of a particular person." (UNESCO, 1992 pp6-7)

Families can be further categorised into five different types:

- A *nuclear family* - a two-generation family consisting of a father and mother and their children or a single, possibly widowed, parent and his/her children.

- A *stem family* - a three-generation family consisting of a father and mother, a married child, their spouse and their children.

In a patriarchal stem family, the aging parents and one or more of their usually married male offspring live together. Unmarried female children also stay in the family until they are married.

In cultures that are not patriarchal, the married child who cares for the parents, either in the parents' or the married child's home, may be either male or female.

- A *lineal family* – this term describes the families of several married siblings who are linked to their common family of orientation, that is, to the family of their parents. Such a family dissolves with the death of the parents and may become a laterally extended family, where links are maintained, or split into individual nuclear families. They do not necessarily live together.

- An *extended or joint family - three* or more generations live together with both vertical and lateral extensions, with a single line of authority, either patrilineal or matrilineal. A patrilineal example of this type of family includes parents, their married sons and their spouses, and the grandchildren. Authority is through the male line. A matrilineal example would include the parents, the married daughters and their spouses and the grandchildren. Authority usually still resides with males.

- A *compound family*, when two families combine after divorce (UNESCO 1992).

Descent may be calculated bilaterally, that is through both parents as is the case with Maori *whakapapa*, or unilineally through males or females. Descent through males is described as patrilineal or agnatic descent. Descent through females is called matrilineal or uterine kinship (Uberoi 1993).

Families also have status vis-a-vis one another based on local principles of hierarchical attributes. These often include birth order, with descendants of the oldest line being senior to descendants of the junior line. Pollock (2000) believes that this factor is particularly evident in matrilineages, which are prevalent in the Pacific, and under recognised within so-called patri-dominated systems (Pollock 2000).

Primary relationships are 'one stage' relationships within a family, for example, between parents, parent and child, husband and wife and between siblings. Secondary relationships include a mother or father and their sister or brother, while an example of a tertiary relationship would be a mother and her sister's son.

[2] 'consanguineal' means related by blood or birth; 'affinal' means related by marriage

However, it would be difficult to categorise all of the families interviewed. Several interviewees were conscious that their families were not typical as the following examples show:

> My family is rather simple in comparison to others; my husband and I have no children, but we have family members living overseas - *Chinese, in NZ 13 years.*
>
> I don't think my family is typical as my parents were divorced. Eventually my mother married again and she and my stepfather had a son, who took preference. I lived with my grandmother. Because I am Serbian and married to a Croatian I had a lot of problems during and after the war. So now I feel we are a small family unit. - *Croatian, in NZ 1 year.*
>
> We're not a model Fijian family, we grew up in the city - *Fijian, in NZ 13 years.*

2.4 Family obligations

Family obligations are poorly defined in the literature, although legislation in some communist or formerly communist countries spells out family responsibilities and obligations. Families in all societies are commonly expected to care for and nurture children, provide financially for their members and transmit cultural and moral traditions and values (Hartley 1995). Obligations are usually 'felt' emotional or cultural expectations rather than legal commitments. The strongest obligations are those of care, both for children and for ageing parents. While obligations are generally hierarchical, in many cultures they extend laterally, particularly to siblings and their families but also to wider kin.

Obligations typically range from the behavioural, such as deference in decision-making and obedience and providing emotional support and protection, to the practical. The latter includes providing money, food, shelter, care and nurturing, help with finding work and education costs, transport and attendance at or contribution to the cost of family events such as births, marriages and funerals.

2.5 Changes in family networks

Several writers note that both immigrant and home country families are fluid and are constantly being negotiated and reconstituted, both spatially and temporally (Creese et al, 1999). Within home countries, urban drift, declining fertility and the increased participation of women in the workforce can affect the size and strength of family networks. Among immigrant families, distance, a lack of a sense of connection to the home family, economic pressures and changed aspirations can reduce their ability and willingness to maintain family networks. As some of the interviews show, distance can also intensify feelings of attachment and commitment to family, especially in the early years of life in New Zealand. As women from China and Russia explained:

> I am still very close to my family, maybe even closer than before because we live far apart. - *Chinese, in NZ 6 years.*

> Being in New Zealand has strengthened the bonds in the family. We are more worried about each other as we can't easily go and rescue each other. - *Russian, in NZ 3 years.*

To offset this trend, some families take advantage of modern technology like telephone, family websites and email contact and exchange videos as well as visits to strengthen a sense of family and cultural identity and keep family networks intact. Some use advances in the banking system and send ATM cards to family members living in large cities abroad. One Somali pointed out:

> Technology helps with the contact, we ring our sister in Somalia often, she has a satellite phone in the house. One of my sisters in Kingsland has a three-party line installed in the house so that two of us can talk to her at once. It's expensive but we need it. - *Somali, in NZ 13 years.*

Both within the home country and internationally, many families rely on members who live away from the traditional home base to remain part of the income-pooling unit and continue to exercise some influence over household dynamics. Pacific families with their high level of overseas remittances are one example. Others include Indian, Latin American, Filipino, and Chinese families, which have a high level of both internal and external migration (Pasikale and George, 1995, Soriano 1995, Blank and Torrecilha 1998, Creese et al, 1999). The term 'transnational' has been coined to define such families. At an extreme level the definition can include kin, friends and contacts, and cover local, national and international networks (Creese et al, 1999).

2.6 Approaches to family networks and migration

Much of the literature on migration focuses on living arrangements, often using one of three approaches to explain family choices:

- The life course approach, which is prevalent among American writers, suggests that living arrangements reflect the varying constraints and needs of life-course events rather than family obligations per se.

- The cultural perspective suggests that residing with extended family reflects traditional family patterns, with immigrants taking those patterns from the home country to their new country of residence.

- The economic resource hypothesis suggests that individuals with the fewest economic resources are the most likely to live in extended family relationships when they emigrate. While family members may be meeting family obligations, the extended family living arrangements also represent a resource generating strategy for caring for young children and older adults (Blank and Torrecilha 1998). The economic hypothesis also applies within countries, where joint households are an adaptive strategy, helping to solve economic problems (Conklin 1988).

All three approaches suggest that practicalities modify traditional obligations. While this may be true, this review indicates that cultural ties remain strong, both between countries and between generations and that they are often intensified by crises in the home country.

III. Concepts of family for different ethnic groups

Both tradition and religion influence concepts of family. Confucianism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism or Christianity overlay traditional family patterns to create a variety of family structures and obligations. This chapter looks at the predominant family structures in Asian, Indian, African and Pacific countries, with brief comment about Eastern European countries. Countries with similar structures have been grouped.

3.1 Asia

In Asia, the predominant family is monogamous, patrilineal and patriarchal (UNESCO 1992) – that is, husband's only have one wife, descent is reckoned only through the male line and authority resides with males. Residence is also patrilocal, with wives moving into their husband's parents' household after marriage, although they may set up a separate household when children are born. Affinal relationships, that is, relationships through marriage, are given far less importance than consanguineal, or blood relationships, and the strongest relationship is between the father and son, followed by mother and son. Korean Civil Law 1958 actually spells this out, specifying that a family consists of the family head, his spouse, his parents and his own or his adopted children. Thus, only parental and consanguineous relatives are recognised as family members. The wife's family is not included. The right to ancestor worship is given only to the eldest son (Chang 1979).

3.1.1 China, Korea, Japan and Taiwan

China, Korea, Japan and Taiwan, with over a quarter of the world's population, constitute a cultural sphere characterised by Confucianism, with its pattern of hierarchical and tightly knit family structures. In a Confucian patriarchal family, the family as an entity takes precedence over its individual members and the family group is inseparably identified with the clan, a kinship group descended from the same male ancestor. Individuals' identities are defined in terms of their roles and interpersonal relationships within the family, rather than by their own sense of self or who they are. Traditionally, important life choices such as vocation or marriage partner are made according to the family's rather than the individual's wishes, although this is changing to some extent (Mak and Chan, 1995). As one Korean man said

> I met my wife in New Zealand and had to go to Christchurch to ask her father's permission to marry her. But he knew I was coming to ask him, as he knew I was her boyfriend. And I knew he wasn't going to say no. - *Korean, in NZ 4½ years*

As noted above, the central familial relationship is not between husband and wife but between parent and child, especially father and son. Relationships between family members are not based on mutual love and equality but on filial piety characterised by benevolence, authority and obedience. Authority rests with the male head of the household and differences in status exist among other family members (Park and Cho, 1995).

In all four countries, the proportion of traditional extended families sharing a single residence has declined, while the proportion of nuclear families has grown. This is attributed in part to 'modernisation' and in part to urbanisation with smaller dwelling units having less space for coresidence (Logan and Bian, 1999). Nevertheless, at around

35%, co-residence is still considerably higher than in Western countries (Cartier 1995), and obligatory ties remain strong. Kim (1993) comments, “Living apart does not necessarily mean autonomy and the independence of a married son and his family from his parents. He and his wife still feel responsible for the parents’ well-being, and provide emotional and material support for them…The ideal autonomy of an independent nuclear family is constantly being contrasted with the realities of extended kin networks, in which resources must be shared and faces saved.”

He adds that in modern Korea, the term ‘family‘ or *chip* has at least two levels of meaning: (1) husband, wife and children who are relatives and should live together, and (2) a more extended network of kin relations that people may activate selectively.

A comment from a Korean man in New Zealand illustrates some of the changes described above.

> Traditionally the family was very vertical, (hierarchical) and rigid, like the army. It’s changing now and friends say you need to be friends with your children but we still think vertically (hierarchically). Families are getting smaller. For example, my mother had seven or eight brothers and sisters; in my generation there are four and in the next generation there are two children. The changes occurred after the Korean War. Some people wanted to have a lot of children as so many were killed in the war; now it’s hard to manage or care for children. The family is guided by Confucianism although a little change has begun. The husband decides what a family can do but this is changing now the wife has more say. My wife has a lot of power. I want to live with my parents when I am old, or have them live here, but my wife has been here longer and thinks we need to support them financially and send them money, but not live with them. This is quite hard to manage. - *Korean, in NZ 4 ½ years*

3.1.2 Indonesia

Family structures in Indonesia depend on the family members’ cultural affiliation and are increasingly influenced by urbanisation. The following extract describes one couple’s view:

> In Jakarta most professional families are more nuclear now but there are variations in small cities and rural areas. Because extended family members live nearby they consider each other’s children as their own. You have to look after each other’s children.
>
> We have equal obligations to both sides of the family, but it depends on the culture. In Batak, the husband’s family dominates. Many Indonesian cultures are patriarchal but in Padang, in west Sumatra, it’s matriarchal.
>
> Birth order is very important in terms of responsibility, even though I am only one year older than my sister and three year’s older than my brother; and my husband is only two years older than his sister; they still ask us for advice. We use Bahasa Indonesian language usually, but in Javanese there are different levels of language that you use. One is used if you are speaking about people older than yourself, another if the person is the same age as you and a third level if you are talking about things that are lower than you, e.g. a cat or plant. Even

> the language shows the importance of age; not as much now as 20 years ago but it's still there. - *Indonesian couple, in NZ 1½ years*

3.1.3 Philippines

Unlike in many other Asian countries, most families in the Philippines continue to be guided by a 'bilaterally extended' kinship inherited from their Malay ancestry. They reckon descent from both male and female lines and marriage is seen as an alliance between two families. Individuals acquire kin by consanguinity, that is, blood relations, and affinity, relations through marriage, as well as through ritual kinship. To a Filipino child, mother's kin are as important as a source of support, security and social control as father's kin. Consanguineal kinship ties on both sides rarely extend beyond third cousins, that is, up to three generations on both sides (Javillonar 1979, Soriano 1995, UNESCO 1992).

Within families, personal interests are subordinate to family interests and family interests take precedence over community ones. The relationship between husband and wife is generally egalitarian and there are no rules of residence for newly married couples. The couple may live with one or other set of parents briefly before setting up a new home. The majority of households are nuclear and couples typically make joint decisions on financial matters, the schooling of children and the social activities of the family. Within families, there is an age-based hierarchy of authority, requiring respect for age and unquestioning obedience to parents as well as to older brothers and sisters. Each spouse is expected to give as much importance to the other's relatives' claims on family attention, time, deference and support as his or her own. However, most would turn to blood relatives first for support (Go 1992, Javillonar 1979, Soriano 1995).

A pattern of assistance to and from relatives outside the nuclear family is common. Family members exchange food and money, cash loans, help with household chores, assistance in times of family emergency and illness and assistance in sending children to school. Assistance is given first to sons and daughters, then to relatives living in same locality, then to relatives elsewhere. Personal compatibility or preferences are also important as are the social positions of the parties involved, blood ties and affinity (Go 1992).

In the Philippines, a ritual or *kumpadre* system operates. Relationships with close friends and neighbours are formalised into kindred-like relationship when they serve as godparents during marriage, baptism or confirmation of children (Soriano 1995). The role is generally limited to gift-giving on special occasions, but they are entitled to the same deference as family members (Javillonar 1979, Go 1992).

3.1.4 Malaysia

The Malaysian constitution defines a Malay as "a person who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language, conforms to Malay customs…" (Malaysia: Federal Constitution, 160(2) in Kling 1995). Kling believes that Islam has functional primacy in Malay society but does not exclude traditional practices known as *'adat'*. In effect, Malays have incorporated patriarchal elements of Islam into their traditional bilateral kinship system. Islamic elements, that is, the patrilineal hierarchy of authority and succession, predominate in areas such as guardianship, property devolution, political leadership and social control. For other purposes, including familial support, the

majority of Malays account kinship bilaterally, under the *adat* system. A small localised group follow a matrilineal system.

The bilateral system is similar to that operating in the Philippines, with a family and kinship network based on linkages through both descent and marriage. Primary kin members include father, mother, elder brother, elder sister, younger siblings and children. Through his wife, a man establishes two sets of family – the family of orientation and the family of procreation, which gives him cross-linkages with a wide range of kin. In fact, the bilateral system seldom specifies the exact boundary at which the family circle ends. However, outside the circle of the immediate family, others are generally classified as 'close kindred', 'almost kindred' and 'distant relatives'. Again, this is similar to the flexible practice in the Philippines.

In both rural and urban areas, nuclear families predominate. Individual families usually constitute a household, which may be slightly modified by the presence of other collateral or adopted members, depending on life cycle stage (Kling 1995). Extended families do occur in both urban and rural areas. In urban areas, limited resources have led to families expanding to accommodate younger families and older members. New households only appear as the younger family acquires the capacity to own property and resources.

The Malaysian family is rather different from East Asian families, in that divorce is relatively prevalent. Kuchiba (1979 in Kling 1995) believes that it is the Malay family structure that contributes to the high level of divorce, rather than the inherent nature of Islamic law, which allows divorce to occur. Because married people retain their natal family status and membership for as long as the family remains intact, they are able to find support and refuge in the family in which they were born in the event of a divorce. Polygamy is possible in Malay society but its prevalence is extremely low.

Small groups of Malays on the central west coast of Peninsular Malaysia follow a matrilineal system. The system is based on clan groups, which consist of male and female members who are connected through a common female member. The clans have a territorial base. The network appears to be rather like a Maori tribal network with sub-clans (equivalent to *hapu*) and minor lineages. Members of particular lineages can trace their kinship relations with each other. The function of the lineage is limited to inheritance of landed property. Marriage is crucial in the organisation of the matrilineal system. Mother's brother is always the figure of authority in his sister's household, which is also his natal household. However, he is an outsider in his wife's natal household, which operates as a counterbalance to power. Sisters potentially protect their brothers in the face of maltreatment by their wives (Kling 1995).

3.1.5 Thailand

The Thai family system is different from that of its Malaysian neighbours. Both central and north-west Thailand are predominantly matrilocal, with the daughter inheriting family property. The most important consanguineal or 'blood' link is between mother and daughter rather than between father and son. Authority remains with men, but passes through the female line from the wife's father to the daughter's husband or from the mother's brother and to the sister's son. This means that although residence in Thai families is often matrilocal, men still hold authority over women. The man is the master of the house, with his wife showing him deference and respect (Limanonda 1995).

A Thai daughter usually lives with her husband in her family for a while after marriage. Her parents then help her to move into a new residence usually in the same compound or on land donated by her father. The youngest daughter lives with her husband in her parent's family and inherits a major share of the property.

Couples in the south are most likely to live with the husband's parents after marriage, reflecting the high proportion of Chinese in the area (Limanonda 1995). There is an increasing trend for couples in urban areas to set up a new residence after marriage for practical reasons.

Through its hierarchical structure, Buddhism plays an important part in Thai attitudes and codes of behaviour at both the society and family level. The young are subordinate to the old, and one of the prime responsibilities placed on children is to take care of their parents in their old age. A quarter of all households are extended vertically – that is, members of three generations live together.

A 1992 UNESCO report notes that Thais can take a minor wife without breaking relations with the legally married spouse. The minor wife lives separately and is financially supported by her visiting husbands. It is not clear how pervasive this custom is.

3.1.6 Vietnam

Vietnamese culture is based on the 'Three Teachings' – Buddhism, Tao and Confucianism – but the family system is similar to that in other countries following Confucian traditions. Three ethical norms, filial piety, respect for the elderly and the spirit of living harmoniously, underlie the spirit of the family (Thu 1990). The husband/father is the provider and participator in social and political activities and the wife/mother is the producer, purveyor and reproducer. The father has authority to decide all matters, while children must obey their parents and look after them unconditionally in old age. The family and village form the centre of Vietnamese social and economic life. The younger generation may leave for work but are expected to return frequently to visit their family and the village or neighbourhood of origin (Nguyen and Ho 1995). While polygamy was very common and was officially recognised in the past, family law now recognises only monogamy. Divorce is still uncommon in Vietnam but is reported to be prevalent among Vietnamese families overseas (Thu 1990).

Thu (1990) notes that when the word 'family' is mentioned, it produces images of family as 'a physical place where the family group consisting of at least three generations – grandparents, parents and children - live together harmoniously'.

3.2 The Indian continent

3.2.1 India, Bangladesh and Pakistan

For the most part, societies on the Indian continent are organised on the principle of patrilinearity and patriarchy. Descent, inheritance, succession, residence and authority flow through the male line. Even in the southern Indian states of Kerala, Karnataka and tribal societies, where families have traditionally been matriarchal and matri-centred, authority still resides primarily with men (Uberoi 1993) and there is a growing trend

towards patriarchy (Mullatti 1995). Conklin (1988) suggests that patterns of family life in India are similar among different castes and religions as well as in different regions.

Under the patriarchal model, all male members of the family, i.e. husband, elder brother and father, perform duties like decision-making for the rest of the family, and provide them with physical and moral protection. In return, women are subservient to men and younger family members must obey their seniors and elders.

The pattern of joint living is customary - brothers live together in their parents' home, sharing a common kitchen, participating in religious services, often working together, aiding one another and bringing their wives to share the same residence (Gupta 1979). Until the sisters of marriageable age are married, brothers usually remain unmarried. Even in urban areas, families often consist of an older brother, all his married brothers, their unmarried children, widowed sisters and old parents (Mullatti 1992*).* Where brothers live separately because of employment, or for other reasons, mutual aid and solidarity continue to be shared by all of them (Gupta 1979). In Derné's 1995 study in Benaras, 80% of participants lived in household with more than one married couple and about half lived in households with three or more married couples. The author notes that most Indians spend much of their lives in families with more than one married couple.

A distinction exists between 'the social demarcation of the joint family, as a collection of kin maintaining a common household (e.g. residence and common cooking) and the legal definition of the Indian joint family as a collection or group of coparceners [having inheritance rights] in landed property' (Fortes cited in Jithoo 1991).

In Bangladesh, a group of households or families may comprise a *gusthi*. All these families or households are male patrilineal descendants of a great grandfather. Hindu women adopt the *gusthi* membership of the husband; Muslim women retain their own membership and acquire membership of their husband's gusthi (Chowdhury 1992).

In Pakistan, the *biraderi* or brotherhood, is an important larger kin group. All men who can trace their relationship to a common male ancestor no matter how remote, belong to the same *biraderi.* Daughters belong to the *biraderi* of their fathers, but after marriage are included in the *biraderi* of their husbands. In urban settings, kin ties are reinforced by regular visits and members of *biraderi* gather for births, marriages and funerals (Korson 1979).

In all three societies, male family members can enlist the support of a relative in the search for work, accommodation or other needs. However, the same does not apply to women. Women's traditional role is one of subservience and deference and affinal relatives receive little mention in the literature. Women's position is inferior to men's in all respects. Women never have first call upon any resources available in the household, including food. When a woman goes to live in her husband's house she has little or no say in decision-making and limited ties with their family of orientation (*Chowdhury 1995*). Derné (1995) notes that men's everyday interactions with their sons, daughters, wives, friends and parents reconstitute a wife's subordination to her husband. Hindu men's attachment to the joint family indicates their fundamental distrust of the individual acting separately from larger social groups. They rely on the family to control their own behaviour and behaviour of their wives and other family members. As in East Asian countries, love is based on a duty owed in a relationship, not on special qualities of the

individual. Love is not exclusive but is expected to extend toward many in a family – brother, sister, mother, wife.

In those parts of India that retain either a full or partial matrilineal system, men can find themselves in conflicting roles. The role of brother can conflict with that of husband, and maternal uncle with that of father, as they seek control over the productive and reproductive capacities of their sisters and sisters' children (members of their own matrilineal descent group) and also over their own wives and children (members of other men's descent groups) (Uberoi 1993).

3.3 Pacific

Some anthropologists argue that the Western concept of the family is not particularly appropriate for the analysis of social relationships in Oceania, where kinship networks are both flexible and extensive (Pollock 2000). In Pacific communities, the term 'extended family' generally refers to family members who are related by blood, marriage, or adoption, who may, but do not necessarily, live in the same dwelling (Pasikale and George 1995). Non-kin or distant kin are often incorporated into the family through informal adoption (Pollock 2000).

In many Pacific countries, families have status vis-a-vis one another based on attributes such as birth order. Descendants of the oldest line are senior to descendants of the junior line. Pollock (2000) believes that this is particularly evident in matrilineages, which are prevalent in the Pacific, and under recognised within so-called patri-dominated systems such as Tonga. There is also a potent ranking system within families, particularly in western Polynesian societies. This is most extreme in Tonga where sisters outrank brothers, and the oldest sister, the *mehekitanga*, is the most honoured member of the family (Pollock 2000).

Within Polynesian families there is a clear hierarchy of responsibility. As noted above, sisters outrank their brothers, but as wives those same sisters should be subservient to their husbands. The parent/child relationship is an enduring one, maintained even after the 'child' marries and moves away from home. Hence 'adult children' are still obliged to 'obey' and respect parents (Pasikale and George 1995). Daughters are expected to care for their mother throughout her lifetime and to carry on the family ethic. One of the brothers acts as a leader of the lineage. Most brothers live with their wives in a different community to their sisters, so they are less important in the family situation, as husbands play a secondary role to brothers in their family of orientation (Pollock 2000).

3.3.1 Fiji

A Fijian woman interviewed for the research described a traditional family in Fiji

> Traditionally the extended family is large, and lives communally.
> a) Males would stay in Fiji and control and monitor family obligations. For example, if there's a funeral, one of the men would call and say, 'You bring a pig', and tell another to 'Bring a beef.' He would also lead decision-making. Mum has 8 sisters and three brothers. The brothers stayed on the land and took all the family decisions.
> b) When a woman married she became part of her husband's family. When my father died, mum's relatives took a whale tooth to his family and asked if we

> could have her back into our family. More often than not they refuse, so they tapped their hand three times indicating that she was to remain married to my father and therefore part of his family. But they were happy for her to live with me. - *Fijian, in NZ 13 years*

3.3.2 Samoa

The ‘*aiga* is the core of Samoan society. It consists of adults and children who are related through descent, marriage, adoption or through friendship or *tautua* (service) and can represent up to 2000 members The ‘*aiga* has links with both parents’ families. After marriage, a woman moves to her husband’s village but retains membership in her natal ‘*aiga* (Hooper 1998).

The various branches of the ‘*aiga* do not necessarily live together. They are usually scattered over Samoa, NZ, Australia, Hawaii and mainland US. The village family is divided into several further families with each family being subject to an elder *matai*. Matai speak on behalf of families, parents and children and *matai,* elders and parents often speak and make decisions on behalf of members of their ‘*aiga* (Mulitalo-Lauta 2000, Pasikale and George 1995).

The ‘*aiga* is a communal unit, pooling resources of both cash and food for allocation by the *matai* according to individual needs for sustenance, clothing and school fees as well as for contributions to village-directed enterprises, the church and ceremonial activities such as weddings, title-bestowals and funerals (Hooper 1998).

Males generally have more power than females. Unmarried men make up the *‘aumaga*, working together on village projects and attending meetings. Unmarried women are ‘*aualuma* and have a higher status than in-marrying women. Girls have more restricted movements than boys and are frequently chaperoned by younger children. After adolescence, brother and sister generally avoid all interactions except those that are strictly necessary. It is the brother’s duty to chaperone his sisters, and protect their virginity being ‘stolen’, as well as looking after the sisters' well being and comfort. This is known as the *feagaiga* relationship. This caring responsibility lasts a lifetime, and is not interrupted by the sister's marriage. Brothers sometimes come to NZ to look after their sisters (Pollock 2000).

3.3.3 Tonga

Tongans identify primarily with kindred, that is, a family or *kainga*, which is ego-centred, bilateral and wide-ranging. The range of kin recognised as ‘family’ has become narrower over time, indicated by the Tonganised English term, *famili.* James (1998) notes that the ideology of ‘caring and sharing’, giving love and help to others, primarily those in the kindred, may mask the intense competition which exists between families and also between smaller nuclear and household units within an extended family. James points out that nowadays, most people live in nuclear families or in households that have attached to them one or two unmarried relatives. The extended family, *kainga,* is important on ceremonial occasions, especially funerals, marriages and birthdays, when particular categories of kin have specific tasks to carry out (James 1998).

As noted above, in Tonga, sisters outrank brothers and the oldest sister, the *mehekitanga*, is the most honoured member of the family. Her brother's children in

particular must respect her, and she has a particularly close relationship with them. She is chief mourner at family funerals. As in Samoa, brothers have major obligations to care for their sisters (Pollock 2000).

> Adopted children are considered part of the family. My husband's family adopted two boys to be brothers to him when he was small. This has created a problem with NZIS. The adopted brothers have no contact with their birth family but they still have the birth family name. NZIS don't accept that they are part of the family[3].
>
> I'm the oldest daughter, so I rank higher than my brothers but this only counts on my mother's side. It counts all through my mother's brothers' families but not through my mother's sisters' families. At special occasions like funerals, I am seated as the highest person in the family, and receive gifts.
>
> I can't just sit there and be bossy though. The most respected person is the one who loves the '*aiga*. If the family doesn't like you they won't support you. You have to reciprocate. Your personality is important. I like the role, the responsibility for other people. - *Tongan, in NZ 19 years*

3.4 Africa

Family systems in Africa are broad. Consanguinity is neither sufficient nor even necessary to the existence of kinship ties (Sow 1985). Kinship can develop through religious and social life, such as the solidarity formed through initiation. Sow points out that in many African languages there is no word to designate the household. Similarly there is no term to distinguish the father from the brothers or the mother from her sisters in their relationship to the child. All the father's brothers are fathers and all the mother's sisters are mothers. The mother's brother and father's sister also have cardinal roles. An interview with an older Somali woman illustrated this well. Her daughter translated for the interview. When she was asked how many children she had, she began

> "Oh roughly, 25 or 30 there are too many to count but they are all family. Those children of my brothers and sisters who died become my responsibility so they are now considered my children. - *Somali, in NZ 3 years*

Hierarchy is also important in Senegal, Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania and northern Nigeria. Relationships within the family are rigidly established according to a hierarchy based on rules defining roles and functions. Criteria are age, sex, kinship ties, degree of alliance and marital status (e.g. marriage rank of wives). Vertical relationships require that younger children respect older ones, young people the elderly, and children their parents, while the older groups assist and protect the younger ones. Peil (1991) reports that the goal for many Nigerians is to build up a large network of dependents who will help them in diverse ways whenever they need it. She adds that 'this is much easier for men than for women, especially in a polygonous society where marriages tend to break up after no more children can be expected'.

In African states, most economic and social responsibilities belong to the household, although with increasing urbanisation and individualisation, lineages can become

[3] In fact, New Zealand immigration policy recognises both legal and customary adoption

disrupted. Nevertheless, family solidarity remains strong. In urban areas, for example, relatives are always given shelter; the successful older man pays for his younger siblings' schooling, sends food and supports his parents financially. Families group together in family, ethnic, cultural or local associations. Attendance at or support for baptisms, weddings and funerals is compulsory (Sow 1985).

Children are valued and couples still have large families. In some countries, if a man's wife is sterile, he takes a second wife. Some states, like the Ivory Coast, have eliminated polygamy. Others like Senegal, Guinea and Mali have altered it somewhat. Senegalese law gives a man two choices, monogamy or polygamy, and whatever his choice, the wife's consent is required to validate it. Malian law follows the Koran's dictates.

Among the Shona-speaking peoples, as elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, traditional marriage involves negotiating and paying bridewealth. Each payment transfers specific rights to the prospective groom including sexual rights in the bride, the right to cohabit with her, and rights to the offspring of the union. However, traditional marriage customs are gradually being abandoned in favour of more informal unions, especially in urban areas and among the better educated. In these cases, bridewealth payments no longer regulate the onset of sexual activity and childbearing. This change has been attributed in part to an erosion of the power of the lineage (Meekers 1994).

A 1995 paper (Kapteijns 1995) describes changes in Somalia as a result of colonisation and the introduction of capitalism. Under the pastoral system, kinship used the idiom of biology (descent, sex, age and marital coupling) to regulate the rights and duties of Somali individuals and groups. After 1960, in the post-colonial era, social relations changed. 'In the towns, livestock, labour, bride wealth were commoditized, and accumulated wealth was stored as money. As a result, an individual's groups became less relevant to maintaining and increasing capital…Urban marriage became more and more a relationship between two individuals and their nuclear families.' The concept of 'clannism' developed in this era. Under clannism, groups are still defined by common descent but, according to Kaptiejns, represent completely new political, social and economic realities, and lack the flexibility and inclusiveness of the pastoral tradition. She does not detail specific differences between clans and earlier kinship groups. Two Somalis described their family affiliations during interviews.

> Somalis are a breed of one. They are Muslim but not Arab, African but don't primarily identify themselves as that. Somaliness always comes first. We have a strong ethnic identity. Our land, language and people are all known as Somali.
>
> You are always known as part of your father's clan, no matter your gender or the clan of your mother. In times of peace, my clan members are like friends but in time of war I'm much closer to them. They become like distant relatives, bound together by circumstances. My clan is the only one left that has not shed blood internally and divided into factions. I don't think this will last. The war in Somalia is now over resources and vendettas rather than a clan-based war. As the clan system can't provide protection to people in many parts of Somalia, it increases our obligations here.
>
> The clan also serves as a system of restorative justice. If your clan member kills someone else your clan must provide 100 camels to the other clan (and a gun if the person was shot.)

The father is the centre of the family and his will unites the family. If your father is married to more than one woman (either at the same time or in a series) you regard all the wives as your mother. Traditionally, and out of respect or duty to your father, you regard them the same, as they are the mother of your brothers and sisters.

Parents and children adore each other. If parents are alive they ensure brothers and sisters don't treat each other badly. If one does treat another poorly they are ostracised until they apologise. I felt equal obligation to both parents, and did for them what I could. In other families, if children don't pull their weight, parents would talk to them and say they need to do so.

A man might have two or more wives, but not usually more than three. The reasons for having more than one wife are

a) if there is only one son in the family (he's called *maadi*), there is a need to carry on the family name. He's required to marry early in life and usually to have two wives.
b) If he's wealthy and there is the tradition in the family i.e. if he can afford to keep the wives.

Somali men are expected to be married, or have a wife. It's part of a man's life. I know it's not fair on women, but choosing celibacy, or not to have a partner is not an option. He must have a wife if he's "healthy". Serial relationships are not uncommon. - *Somali, in NZ 13 years*

The obligation to mother is strongest. This is both cultural and religious. We will go to hell if we don't care for her. The prophet Mohammed taught that "Heaven is under the feet of your mother". He was asked four times who was the most important person to him; three times he answered mother, only on the fourth occasion did he add father. Parents demand great respect - you can't speak loudly to them.

The oldest child in the family has the greatest responsibility and has more obligations. This is especially so when the oldest is female. Women are the backbone of society.
Adult siblings must respect each other, and if one has a better life, economically, then they should help each other. Younger brothers must respect older brothers who must respect parent's advice and decisions.

The obligation is the same to each side of the family. If the wife earns money independently she doesn't need to ask before giving it to her family; if she is not financially independent she will ask her husband, but expect to be given the money.

The sub-tribe and clan are part of the family. They are called on if a family has to pay a debt to another family or tribe. In NZ, if an asylum seeker from the clan or sub-tribe arrives, someone will ring the distant relatives to tell them "one of yours" has arrived. The family will then give money, food, clothes accommodation and household goods until the person has somewhere permanent to stay and receives a benefit. - *Somali, in NZ seven years*

3.5 Eastern Europe

3.5.1 Croatia

While it proved difficult to obtain literature on Croatian families, one Serbian woman, who is married to a Croatian man, was interviewed for this research. She briefly described family structures in Croatia.

> Family structure and obligations differ with level of education, whether families are of mixed nationality, rural or urban. Young educated families live a westernised life in towns. They live independently as their professional jobs allow that. Some young couples and their children live with their parents, as they haven't got any other option. It is difficult to find work in Osjiek [her home town] as all the industry was destroyed. People also lost their jobs if they were Serbian. - *Croatian, in NZ one year*

3.5.2 Russia

It was also difficult to obtain information on Russian families. Russian Family Law adopted in 1995 has a section on family obligations, including the obligations on parents to support minors and on 'grown up children to support and care for their parents if they are unable to provide or care for themselves' (Art.87 Ch.13 Pt.5). Brothers and sisters are also obliged to support minor brothers and sisters, and grandparents are responsible for minor grandchildren if they do not get support from their parents. If a child's parents cannot work, both sets of grandparents have a responsibility to ensure that grandchildren are provided for. If there is no traditional family, children who have been looked after by a family for more than five years are considered their legal responsibility.

An article by Sinelnikov (1999) whose prime focus was the increase in domestic violence in Russia, commented that 'the power relationship of the Russian family was created on the basis of the old patriarchal model of the traditional family'. Under this model, the wife holds responsibility for raising children and doing housework and the husband for earning money and protecting his family.

A Russian woman interviewed for the research made the following comments.

> The social and economic changes occurring since the break up of the Soviet Union work against family formations. For example, previously the state provided housing so it was in the family's interest for the household to be overcrowded as that meant you were more likely to get allocated a flat. However now that housing must be found privately, families are reluctant to have the partner of an adult child living and registered as living in their accommodation, as they will legally be entitled to a share should the relationship break up. Although the situation has changed, the forces for a family staying together and helping each other are very strong. Family members rely on helping each other. - *Russian, in NZ 3 years*

IV. Key relationships within families where obligatory ties exist

It is apparent from the previous discussion that the key relationships within families where obligatory ties exist vary considerably from culture to culture and with individual circumstances. All cultures acknowledge that parents have a responsibility for the care of their own children. In many cultures, adults also have some responsibilities for their brothers' or sisters' children. Most cultures accept that there is an obligation to care for ageing parents but in some, this obligation is confined to or much stronger towards the male's parents than the female's parents. Obligations between adult siblings are strong in many cultures. Other obligatory ties appear to be more flexible, being influenced by location, personal preference and compatibility, circumstances and closeness within the family network.

Uberoi (1993) distinguishes between the 'lineage and kindred of cooperation, meaning those that have a certain level of cooperative interaction with ego, as against the lineage and kindred of mere recognition, who are acknowledged as relatives, but who, being genealogically or territorially distant, have little personal contact.' She suggests that a person's close kindred – parents, brothers and sisters and their spouses, first cousins and their spouses, siblings' spouses and spouse's parents and siblings - matter much more to an individual in an everyday sense than do the more distant members of their descent group. These are the relatives who are most likely to give assistance in such crucial personal matters as employment, marriage, emigration and raising finances.

It is also important to distinguish between economic support and physical care. The former can be provided from a distance, while the latter requires the presence of a care giver (Hao 1997). Emotional support, on the other hand, can be provided both in person and through telephone, letter, email and video contact.

This chapter describes a range of relationships within families where obligatory ties exist.

4.1 Grandparents, parents and children

Most cultures expect younger members of the family to be deferential, obedient and respectful towards their elders and to provide care for parents as they age. In some countries, the parent-child tie is stronger than the tie between husband and wife. A 1992 UNESCO report on the family in Asia notes that most newly weds setting up a new household have a dual orientation - towards the parents of the head of the family in terms of duties, obligations and inheritance rights, and towards the future members of their family of procreation, for whom they will have responsibilities for socialisation (UNESCO 1992). (The report does not mention any obligation towards the wife's parents).

Although the tie of filial duty is particularly strong in Asia, adult children in most cultures feel an obligation towards their ageing parents. A 1999 study of experiences of sponsoring family members (CM Research 1999) found that immigrants from China, the United Kingdom, India, Samoa and South Africa had a strong feeling of moral responsibility to 'look after' their ageing parents. The commitment to doing this derived

from a personal sense of duty as well as from cultural obligation. Chinese, Indian and Samoan parents tended to receive higher levels of ongoing support than did parents from the United Kingdom or South Africa. All those interviewed for this study, regardless of their cultural group, expressed a sense of obligation towards both parents and children.

Parent-child ties are often two-way, with grandparents providing support for their children and grandchildren as well as receiving support themselves as they age. The extent to which elders are obliged to provide such care is not always clear. In some circumstances, it appears adult children have an obligation to the will or wishes of parents even after their death, as the following interviews show.

> The largest share of the land went to the sister who remained in the Philippines and looked after my parents. She will now remain in the Philippines, as my parents did not want the land sold. - *Filippina, in NZ 12 years.*
>
> Siblings are bound by their surname and the father's wish in the will. The wishes in the will are very strong and obligatory. Even if circumstances change in a way not envisaged by the father, the family will try and carry out the will and have great misgivings if they have to deal with things in another way. - *Somali, in NZ 13 years*

4.1.1 China, Korea, Taiwan and Japan

In East Asian countries, the traditional value of respecting seniors is derived from Confucian principles, which define authority within the family according to the seniority (determined at birth by generation, birth order and gender) of the members. Younger women are equal to younger men in the sense that both have to show filial piety to older members of their family. Older women assume the same power as (or sometimes even more power than) older men over younger women and men. Mothers build loyalty in their son and a mother-in-law exercises power over her daughter-in-law and the rest of her family members. There is a strong emphasis on specific familial roles and the proper relationships among incumbents of these ascribed roles (Kim 1996, Mak and Chan 1995, Park and Cho 1995).

The father is expected to be the family's head and provider. He has authority within the household. Women are expected to defer to their husband in decision-making and put their husband's career development ahead of their own needs. They are also expected to be responsible for all the household chores, to nurture and care for their children and to look after elderly parents (Mak and Chan 1995, Park and Cho 1995). In Korea, the family has the duty of maintaining its honour, reputation and status vis-a-vis the outside world. The wife is the family manager and reminds her husband of his responsibilities as a son. As the financial manager she decides what to offer her husband's parents and when and how often to visit them (Kim 1996). Her relationship with her own family of birth receives no mention in the literature.

In all East Asian countries, filial piety includes providing financial support, care giving, respect, obedience and emotional and social support for older family members (Ng 1999, Kim 1996). In China, the state has officially assigned responsibility for the elderly to their adult children. Only in rare cases are public funds used to house or to care for older people. The health care system for the frail elderly is poorly developed and family

members are required to support their elders who are financially unable to provide for themselves (Logan and Bian 1999, Ng 1999). Although family coresidence is declining as urbanisation increases, commentators note that married sons and their wives still feel responsible for their parents' well-being, and provide them with emotional and practical support (Chang 1979, Kim 1996, Logan and Bian 1999). The sense of filial responsibility revives and social pressure remains strong when one parent falls ill or dies. In these cases, it is becoming increasingly common for the son to invite the widowed parent into his household rather than vice versa (Kim 1996).

Mothers and mothers-in-law provide support and supervision after childbirth, while grandparents, aunts, uncles and in-laws share in teaching and discipline. Preschool children are often left in the care of their grandmothers when both parents work. Disabled children can expect to be looked after by other family members (Mak and Chan 1995).

A Chinese woman described reciprocal obligations between the generations in China.

> The nature of obligations is to visit and care as often as possible. L. visits China every year or two and writes every two weeks to her parents and parents-in-law and phones every two weeks for 10 minutes. As all the family members are away from China, they all feel obliged to help in some way. They can't help every day, but at times of illness they really want to help. Adult children with their parents living in New Zealand are obliged to drive their parents to various places, Chinese Community clubs, church, English classes.
>
> Grandparents have an obligation to care for their children's children. Her parents in China are caring for L's twin niece and nephew as her brother and sister-in-law are too busy studying and working just now. The parents employ an *aiyi* (aunty) to do the actual work. Her brother and sister-in-law offered the grandparents money; but they are happy to do this. If grandparents are in NZ they usually live with their children, cook for the family, and teach the children Chinese. In some cases, if it's hard to get on together, they live separately. - *Chinese, in New Zealand 13 years*

A Korean interviewed expects his obligations to increase in the future.

> There are more obligations to the male side of the family than the female side.
>
> Obligations to parents are to give respect to them. For example, to ask parents for the name of your child. To ask advice about family events. C's parents are still working and are sending help here but he should support them when they are old.
>
> It's very hard to get divorced in a Korean family. It creates a lot of talk. It's easier now but was almost impossible for my parents' generation. If a couple get divorced they don't generally remarry. They go to live with their children.
> - *Korean, in NZ 4 ½ years*

4.1.2 Philippines

The Civil Code of the Philippines provides the opportunity for grandparents to be consulted by all members of the family on 'important family questions'. Unlike in East Asia where the primary responsibility for care of ageing parents falls primarily on the oldest son, in the Philippines, responsibility for care is spread evenly among siblings.

Along with other family members, grandparents often provide childcare.

Families in the Philippines are generally egalitarian with distinct roles. Men earn the money, and women manage it, along with managing the household and providing most of the childcares (Javillonar 1979).

A Filipina woman in New Zealand described her family's obligations to their parents.

> In our family, as the parents spent their savings on ensuring all the children had a university education, the children had an obligation to support our parents when they were old. This was never made explicit, but everyone understood it. In some families this is spelled out explicitly. Money was sent to parents regularly, but the amount depended on what the family felt they could give, without jeopardising their own needs.
>
> However if a parent or sibling is in hospital, money has to be sent immediately, 'even if you have to ask your husband for it'.
>
> One sister looked after mother when father died. This was because economically it was too expensive for mother to go into a home and also because 'Mum had to stay with a family member or she would have died of loneliness'.
>
> The two adult children who were in the Philippines inherited some of the family land; those who had moved overseas relinquished their claim on the land. The largest share of the land went to the sister who remained in the Philippines and looked after her parents. She will remain in the Philippines, as the parents did not want the land sold. - *Filipina, in NZ 12 years*

4.1.3 Thailand

Vertical social relationships are also strong in Thailand, with the young being subordinate to the old, and women being subordinate to men. The elderly are awarded the highest status and provide advice and consultation on family matters. One of the prime responsibilities placed on children is to take care of their parents in their old age, but unlike in East Asia, the responsibility for doing so usually falls to a daughter rather than a son. While a son can earn merit by becoming a monk for a period, a daughter can only repay her parents by working for them, looking after them, supporting them financially, marrying a man who possesses resources which may be used to support them, or obtaining a brideprice which is valued. Thus the burden upon daughters is much greater than on sons (Limanonda 1995).

4.1.4 Indonesia

A 1992 study of ageing in Indonesia (Phillips 1992), reported a gradual change from an extended family in which primary responsibilities and relationships were towards one's

parents, to a nuclear family in which relationships with a spouse and children assume much greater significance. One Indonesian couple explained

> When we got married we decided we wanted to be anew kind of family, and make decisions based on our own opinion. We listen to the opinions of other family members, but make our own decisions. So we would say that the family is our two children and us. - *Indonesian couple, in NZ 1½years.*

Nevertheless, obligations to care for parents remain strong. As the following comments illustrate, economic circumstances affect the nature and timing of financial contributions.

> Father is head of the family, he runs the business and makes the money and mother looks after the children. Our obligations are to listen to our parents' advice and to succeed.
>
> We feel a responsibility to listen to them. They still take care of us. We listen to their advice. They worked hard to ensure we could get an education overseas and we saw how tired they looked, so we have to listen to them, work hard and want to succeed. Our family was poorer than my uncles' families and they looked down on us, so my mother worked hard to ensure we got an opportunity.
>
> The oldest child has the duty of caring for parents when they are old. In the future my parents will depend on my older brother in Indonesia. - *Indonesian Chinese, in NZ 6 years*

> When parents are old or retired you have to try and look after them, but it depends on how wealthy they are. My father is quite wealthy. He's a retired banker so we have no financial responsibility for him. But my mother-in-law is a widow and my father-in-law worked in the private sector so he didn't have any pension, so we contribute financially. - *Indonesian couple, in NZ 1½ years*

4.1.5 Vietnam

In Vietnam the responsibility for caring for parents falls to the children, without distinction as to gender (Thu 1990).

4.1.6 India, Bangladesh and Pakistan

Responsibility for parents is a key component of family systems on the Indian continent, with sons being responsible for their ageing parents and daughters-in-law providing most of the care. Some reciprocal support is provided across the generations, with grandparents supporting adult children through participating in running a household or caring for young children (Creese et al 1999).

A woman who has been in New Zealand for 50 years still feels the same obligation.

> If your parents aren't with you, say they're in India, then you have to send money to them. And you have to go back and sort out their care and pay someone to ensure they are looked after. You might ask an aunt who is a neighbour to supervise the care. In return you have to look after her in her old age. Or if they weren't well off, you may pay for a son to go overseas so he could send back money to care for his mother. You try and visit parents when they are older.

> When my husband had an operation 3 years ago, my older daughter came home from the States. But the younger one couldn't because she was pregnant.
>
> Now I look after my 97 year-old mother in law in the weekends. Now she bosses us from the bed. She lived with us until three years ago when my husband had an operation. Then she went to live with my husband's sister so we only care for her in the weekends. - *Indian, Gujarati, in NZ 50 years*

4.1.7 Pacific

Obligations within Pacific families are extensive. Obligations are not enforced commitments, but the importance of family solidarity is constantly stressed, and a number of informal sanctions and pressures can be brought to bear on persons who attempt to avoid their financial responsibilities to their kin group. Adult children in Samoa, Tonga and other Pacific countries are expected to support their parents. Conversely, grandparents are expected to care for their grandchildren, and earning children are expected to meet their own needs as well as contribute to nuclear and extended family commitments. Adult children, especially those with an income, contribute to the family's economic resources, whether they live at home or not and regardless of marital status and their own family commitments. Older children not living within the households give money to parents or household heads either on a one-off as requested basis or regularly, for family activities. They also share labour, food, and clothing (Pasikale and George 1995, CM Research 1999.)

A Fijian woman had a strong relationship with both her own mother and her mother-in law.

> Normally would have a reciprocal relationship whereby husband and wife have an equal obligation to each side of the family. Even if a husband dies, a wife will look after his parents if they want to visit. But in my case my obligation is stronger to my side; probably because of work. In my case, it is an individual matter; I am closer to mum than to my husband's family. She lives with us and I care for her. She does little things around the house. I send money to my mother-in-law and share her airfare with my sister in law when she visits. And from time to time we send her a box of groceries; e.g. peanut butter. - *Fijian, in NZ 13 years*

Two Samoan women described their obligations to their parents.

> When my parents were in Samoa I regularly sent money and clothes as well as phoning every week. In some ways I put my parents ahead of my husband. It's about the Samoan belief that the daughter has the main responsibility for care. My sister and her husband paid for our parents to come out, so they are living with them. I'll have to contribute to the health costs. I'm not looking forward to those bills! Contributions are shared. - *Samoan, 10 years in NZ*
>
> We have a house in Samoa. We use the rent from that to support my parents. There is an expectation that a male will stay in the family home to look after the parents. My youngest brother does this but a distant cousin of my mother's provides the actual care. - *Samoan, 31 years in NZ*

4.1.9 Africa

Recent studies note that the number of people over 65 is increasing rapidly in most African countries. As life expectancy rises, young couples are more likely to be called on to provide for elderly parents than their parents were at the same stage of the life cycle (Peil 1991). Support may be in the form of gifts such as cash or goods, which depend on resources, need and circumstances, or services such as housing, food, nursing and childcare. Peil points out that 'services require propinquity, whereas, gifts can be sent or given in person'. The relationship is often one of exchange with older people providing services like childcare in exchange for support. Visits between children and their parents are also important as a means of showing concern for one's parents. One interview with a Somali woman illustrated the high level of commitment to parents.

> Mum abandoned us for her mother! Everyone in the family, except my father, fled to the south of Somalia. The situation there also became volatile but it was too difficult for my grandmother to travel further because she was too old. Mum sent all of us, under my care, onto Kenya by ship. She stayed behind for four years until the old woman died; only then she travelled onto Kenya. It was then imperative to get her to New Zealand as soon as possible.
> - *Somali, in NZ 7 years.*

4.1.10 Russia

While Russian law specifies responsibilities for care, these are also culturally accepted, as indicated by this interview.

> It is especially important that children take care of older members of the family. It is common, if the situation allows it, for elderly parents to live together with their children. If this is not possible, another way of helping them is found. It is important in these cases for children to visit as often as possible. For example, both O's grandparents died when she was very young, but her mother had a strong connection with an aunt, who had no children and lived in the south of Russia. As she got older, the aunt came to Moscow and stayed with the family during the winter. During these months she cooked and did other household tasks. Later when she was in her 70s, the family arranged to exchange her flat for one in Moscow so that she could be closer to the family. During these years O was at university, and visited her every week. Once she became too frail to live by herself she moved to O's parent's flat where she stayed until she died.
>
> There is no obligation on any particular child to care for parents, usually the care is given by the child/ren closest to them. In O's family she will provide the care, even though she is the youngest but she is closer to her parents. There are now a few rest-homes in the Former Soviet Union, but families still feel obliged to provide care for their parents as the standard of care in the state homes is not good enough.
>
> Traditionally, if a family is intact, there is an obligation to both sides of the family. Women seem to feel a strong obligation to their parents-in-law. - *Russian, in NZ 3 years.*

4.2 Sibling ties

Obligations between siblings are generally weaker than obligations towards parents, but obligations between adult siblings in particular are still very important in many cultures. Obligations take two forms - reciprocal or hierarchical arrangements among siblings, and siblings' mutual obligations towards others, particularly their parents.

4.2.1 East Asia

In most East Asian countries, parents and siblings may feel obliged to lend money to an individual in financial trouble (Mak and Chan 1995). Older siblings may also provide financial support to younger siblings for education, home purchases or other needs. The literature suggests that a male sibling gives this aid to his own siblings ahead of his wife's siblings.

Increasingly, responsibilities that were once restricted to the eldest son are now being spread among siblings. In Korea, for example, siblings constantly negotiate with each other in terms of who contributes how much to their parents. Traditionally, the eldest son has had that responsibility, but Chang (1979) notes that increasingly the hierarchy based on birth order is coming into conflict with the modern hierarchy based on education and wealth. All brothers are now likely to contribute to supporting older parents, rather than just the oldest brother.

A Korean man explained his situation.

> If my brothers are in a bad situation I will help them, but they are fine now. In general there is a stronger relationship between brothers and sisters than New Zealanders have.
>
> In general you have more obligations to your father's side of the family than to your mother's. Women have more obligations to her husband's family than to her own. For example, my father has one brother who ran quite a large business in Korea. About 10 years ago he went bankrupt. My mother gave him money without even mentioning it to her husband. Thus a wife will help her brother-in-law ahead of her own brothers and sisters. I help my sister-in-law studying at Auckland University if she needs it, buying books etc. She lives with us. - *Korean, in NZ 4 ½ years*

4.2.2 South East Asia

Family obligations in the Philippines and Vietnam are extensive, with older siblings being expected to provide financial support for younger siblings and their accompanying dependants e.g. nieces and nephews. Filipinos rely on immediate family for financial, emotional and practical help (Soriano 1995, Nguyen and Ho 1995). In Thailand, the status of siblings depends on their birth order and each of them will have duties and obligations within the family. However, reciprocal obligations and expectations are flexible rather than regimented (Limanonda 1995).

A Filipino woman described the strong obligations between siblings in the Philippines.

> Those overseas have financial responsibilities when adult siblings are sick. When the older brother of the family was dying of cancer, the sister in Australia set up a

special account for him in an Australian bank. All family members outside the Philippines sent money to the account. At that stage, D. was living in PNG and it was cheaper to send money to Australia than to the Philippines. D. sent money every 15 days when she got paid. The family gave the brother an ATM card so he could withdraw money when he needed it for chemotherapy. This was cheaper for the family than transferring the money to the bank in the Philippines.

Brothers and sisters provide each other with moral and emotional support, ringing each often as often as necessary, so there are very large phone bills. In some families if someone is going abroad they are asked to find a job for their brother or sister. It's such a great expectation that it becomes an obligation. The obligations are not only to brothers and sisters but also to their children. If you can afford it, you contribute to your siblings' children's university education.
- *Filipina, in NZ 12 years*

Malaysia is an example of a culture with strong sibling obligations. The father is empowered by Islam to look after his domestic family and at the same time he is the mother's brother who is empowered by *adat* to protect his sister's family. Islamic codes tend to take precedence over *adat* when there is conflict (Kling 1995).

This did not apply to the Malaysian Chinese family interviewed for the study. Among the Chinese community, the pattern of obligations is closer to that found in China than to Malay traditions.

The oldest sibling has the greatest responsibility by right. Because TG is the oldest in his family, his brothers and sisters always ring him for advice or money. 'They don't ask for money directly, just say, "Oh, mum's sick…."'.

You have obligations if they have financial difficulties, or because they have cashflow problems in a business. You lend them money and they pay you back, plus interest at the bank rate.

Brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law are not as close as brothers and sisters. You only approach them if you have a great problem. Unmarried aunts give money to nieces and nephews. - *Malaysian Chinese, in NZ 13 years*

A similar pattern can be found in Indonesia, with Indonesian Chinese following Chinese customs and others meeting their own culture's obligations. The following excerpts from interviews show that in both cases, obligations between siblings are strong.

In NZ R. has obligations to her sisters (they all live together). Parents pay money into R's bank account and she has the responsibility of paying the household bills. Although the sisters live together they are quite flexible in their relationship.

If a woman marries she will go to her husband's family and have her major obligations to them. But this is changing and R. will always feel part of her own family. For example, R. is trying to apply for permanent residence in New Zealand, but finds it very difficult to deal with the authorities in Indonesia (and here). She needs to get a police clearance. Her sister-in-law is doing that for her. If there's a family matter, she discusses it with siblings, and then makes a compromise. Her older brother doesn't insist on his opinion. - *Indonesian Chinese in NZ 6 years*

> If my brother or sister died we would adopt their young children. As the oldest (we are both the oldest in our families), we feel responsibility to give advice but they don't have to take it. Here we give advice by email, but at home they'd come to the house. - *Indonesian couple, in NZ 1½ years*

4.2.3 India

In India, kinship obligations by blood are more important than obligations through marriage. Not only parents but also uncles and aunts look after the well being of their nieces and nephews. As in Malaysia, the maternal uncle has particular responsibilities for his niece. Relations between siblings are also strong with brothers and sisters providing each other with financial support where they are able (Mullatti 1992).

The strength of the obligation to the husband's is explained below.

> Usually you have more obligations to your husband's side of the family than to your own. In India you would live with them. I moved to Auckland to my husband's family when I married, but most of my relatives are in Wellington. Obligations are ongoing through the generations, but others have obligations to you so it balances out. But nothing is private.
>
> Obligations to and from the husband's side of the family include:
>
> a) Your husband's nieces and nephews call you mum and dad. If you are older than their parents, they will show you more respect than they do to their own parents. But it's reciprocal. Your husband's brother's children have to look after you.
>
> b) You have an obligation to protect your husband's sister and her family. You have to ensure their education, job and living and finances are looked after.
>
> *c)* As a young daughter-in-law, when I was living with my husband's family, I looked after the younger children and the household. You show them the same care as you do your own children. When my parents-in-law went overseas they left the kids with us. - *Indian, Gujarati, in NZ 50 years*

4.2.4 Pacific

In the Pacific, the brother-sister relationship remains the key to much extended family life. In both Samoa and Tonga, the brother should serve his sister and he and his family should support her and her children.

In Samoa, *feagaiga* is a code that binds a Samoan male to his sister and carries the obligation to care for her wellbeing and the welfare of her children. By implication, Samoan males are expected to hold the same respect to all Samoan women (Mulitalo-Lauta 2000). However, the respect is personal rather than being associated with privilege. Males continue to hold titles, senior offices and positions of authority. Women are clearly divided into sisters and wives. Customarily, a sister is deferred to, but a wife is subordinate to her husband's authority. In some cases, wives are treated harshly, in others, women's brothers are (James 1998).

As noted above, in Tonga, sisters are accorded social precedence over their brothers, although brothers ideally have authority over their sisters. The father's senior sister is held to have particularly strong moral suasion over her brother and his children. Loving

cooperation between brother and sister is the ideal but not necessarily the reality (James 1998).

Obligations within extended families include individual members contributing to miscellaneous expenses incurred by their brothers and sisters and providing accommodation, emotional support and help with finding employment (Pasikale and George 1995).

A Samoan woman describes her links with her siblings.

> Apart from one sister, my brothers and sisters and their children are now all in NZ. I feel much closer to my own family than to my husband's family. One sister-in-law comes round every week expecting food and so on.
>
> We provide financial support to my husband's sisters in Samoa, as well as giving money to his aunts and uncles and their children. And we provide food, money and transport for my husband's brother who we live with. - *Samoan, in NZ 10 years*

Distance affected a Fijian woman's closeness to her brother:

> I should communicate more with my brothers and write to them about mum, but because of the distance I don't. We're not as close as we should be. They are too far away to keep up the rapport. But we use email quite often. If I had money I would pay for my brother's children to come and study. But I'd pay is they wanted to come for a holiday. When my brother-in-law wanted to come to NZ to visit for 6 months we paid for him. - *Fijian, in NZ 13 years*

4.2.5 Africa

Peil's 1991 study in Nigeria found that exchanges between siblings tend to be quite balanced for men under 75, whereas women are twice as likely to receive as to give to siblings, and older people are increasingly receivers. Sibling exchange usually involves irregular small gifts, which are 'useful in maintaining bonds, symbolizing the continuance of the relationship, though occasionally a sibling is housed and fed.' Visits among siblings are less in terms of social expectations and more dependent on personal relationships.

Sibling relationships are particularly strong in Somalia, as a Somali interviewed for the research describes.

> The words for half-brother or half-sister we only learned in NZ. Although we have separate words for sons and daughters of different mothers, the level of obligation is the same to all.
>
> During the time brothers are alive, they are the second level of responsibility for sisters; psychologically I feel I have to provide for them. Their husbands have the first responsibility but brothers are second.
>
> Single siblings feel one step closer to me than the married ones, as they don't have their own family yet, so they're not yet very responsible.
>
> In the event of a brother or half brother dying, you have responsibility for his wife and are obliged to provide for her if she's poor, no matter what her clan. If your

brother is divorced you still feel bound religiously and in terms of duty to provide for his wife and children if you can afford it, because they are your brother's children. - *Somali, in NZ 13 years*

4.2.6 Eastern Europe - Croatia

A recent arrival in New Zealand described her obligations to other family members.

> To my stepbrother to try and help him if possible as the situation isn't good in Serbia. We would like to give him access to more opportunities, including financial help, but not only that. But only if it's possible.
>
> To my auntie's daughter, but only after some time, to try and give her some opportunity.
>
> In a friend's family they felt they had an obligation to help the wife's brother and mother emigrate and find him a job. Her brother was in Serbia during the war and was in a very difficult situation as was her mother. This family wants to live together in one house and expects to do this. But my family wouldn't like that. We would like to live closer to each other, but not together. - *Croatian, in NZ one year*

4.3 Wider kinship ties

The strength of ties to larger kin networks tends to vary according to proximity, economic status and personal preference. However such ties remain an important link that may be called on in time of crisis. Chang (1979) describes these ties as 'the lifelines that simultaneously hold together and sustain individuals in a certain social status. A continuous sharing of reproduction costs is demanded in extended kin networks where resources are invested in individual members for economic success and social status.'

In the Philippines, for example, once recognised, the consanguineal relationship carries far-reaching mutual obligations and responsibilities, including assistance in carrying out numerous social, economic and religious commitments, support with crises and in meeting the exigencies of daily life. Even relatives far removed may be taken into the household as members of the family when circumstances require it, such as rural relatives coming to town (Go 1992).

A Filipino woman explains:

> If someone has a serious problem, a family meeting will be called to discuss the issue. If they have problems at home, they ring and ask for advice in making decisions affecting the family. For example, family property, whether they should sell it or make changes to the title, or advice about working abroad, and asking what the chances are of finding work. - *Filipina, in NZ 12 years*

In India, family rituals such as first pregnancy, naming of the child, marriage and death are important occasions, which family members have to attend, travelling from foreign countries if necessary. Being together at the life cycle rituals is considered very important for promoting family unity and stability and as a sign of respect for family traditions and family elders and love for the individual involved (Mullatti 1995).

In Pacific cultures too, obligations to family and community take priority over personal needs. Community commitments are a major consideration in family expenditure. These

include contributions to weddings and funerals (either by providing food, labour and/or money) and support of extended family members through remittances overseas, care of relations other than dependent parents, and paying travel costs to send someone to or bring someone from the islands (Pasikale and George 1995).

In a study of changes in Samoan migrants' remittances to Samoa (Macpherson 1994), the author found that decisions were shaped by the perceived needs of their families in the islands. Most remittances were made to non-migrant kin who determined how they were used. Parents expect to provide for their own offspring and their own parents as well as cousins, nieces and nephews, and any other members of their extended family (Pasikale and George 1995). The cost of belonging to the kinship network can be high but, as one Samoan woman put it: 'In our culture you give and give until it is your turn to receive.' She added:

> There seem to have been a lot of funerals lately – one a month. My mother will ring and say, 'Go and take what you can'. I go to represent the family even if I didn't actually know the person who died very well. You give a gift but you never go away empty-handed. At any Samoan funeral, the amount of money people give is more than enough to meet the costs. The family can redistribute the remainder or use it to meet other costs. At one funeral I went to people donated $34000. - *Samoan, in NZ 31 years*

Among Somali immigrants to Britain, expectations are based on traditional lineage affiliations, and obligations are met within the financial limits dictated by circumstances. In the absence of close kin, the newcomers' expectations of support are extended outwards to the next relevant kin circle based on sub-clan affiliations, followed, as necessary, by a widening of the circle to expectations based on clan membership. Clan membership has obligations to pay for funeral costs and welfare needs (El-Solh 1993).

Two Somali described obligations in their families.

> Obligations are to give care (which is mainly the responsibility of women), Counselling and advice, especially men in resolving family disputes and money. You give money:
>
> 1. When a family member is sick
> 2. For funerals - currently the whole community (from all tribes) gives $30-$50 for each funeral, depending on how many people in the household are working. The money is used to buy a grave. Any left over is given to the family.
> 3. When family members need it.
>
> You also give food at times of a funeral. In Somalia one goat a day is given for six days and on the seventh day a camel. In NZ that is not possible so onions, sugar and other foodstuff are given. In NZ the wider tribe is very important at this time, as people are lonely and couldn't cope without them. Women also give help in the household. Obligations in order of strength, are to sister and cousin then the wider tribe. - *Somali, in NZ 7 years*

> Family obligation is very strong; it will be a long time before someone in a family unit would say "I don't get on with x or y", although we are individuals.

> Obligation is based on need not on affection. If someone is in need, regardless of who they are, you are obliged to help if you are able. The war changed the level of obligation as so many were killed.
>
> You give everything; money, labour and advice and get people to New Zealand - this is an absolute duty and has to be done. - *Somali, in NZ 13 years*

4.4 Other ties

In several cultures, including India, Samoa and Vietnam, common village origin or region can have associated obligations (Creese et al, Macpherson 1994). However, family members seem to have flexibility over the extent to which they accept these obligations and the form in which they contribute.

These comments are from an Indian and a Samoan.

> You have an obligation to your village, especially if you come from a poor village. You send money for education. Make sure the children of the village are settled; make sure the girls get married well and if a girl isn't well off, ensure her children have enough clothes and money for general living. My father-in-law had a university education, as did his 5 brothers. They all lived together in India. The family ensured the girls married well and that the children were looked after. By married well, I mean living at the same level as the family was accustomed to. Our obligation is still there, but our family has all managed well so we don't have much of a financial obligation.
>
> We still go to the family land in India. When my mum was alive we went every year. - *Indian, Gujarati, In NZ 50 years*

> You can also have obligations to people from the same village. Sometimes they claim 'kinship' or support when the ties aren't that strong. I don't go to 'village' functions in NZ. Once you get involved you're in for life. - *Samoan, in NZ 10 years*

In Fiji, families also have obligations to the Confederacy, as a Fijian woman explained:

> People here also raise money for their Confederacy at home; to buy a boat or build a church. The country is divided into 3 Confederacies and they are reflected in the community here with people feeling more obligations to their Confederacy than the wider community. The Association deals with crime, social welfare and immigration issues, but when it comes to fund raising it divides into the 3 Confederacies. - *Fijian, in NZ 13 years*

V. Key characteristics of relationships that involve a high level of interdependence

- Relationships that involve the highest level of interdependence are characterised by regular exchanges of economic support and/or physical care, sustained by a strong sense of duty, deference and respect. These are typically relationships between parents and children, including adopted children, and may or may not involve coresidence.

- Relationships that involve a moderate level of interdependence are also characterised by exchanges of money, and/or physical care, but to a lesser extent or on a less regular basis than those at the highest level. They may also involve exchanges of labour and food, temporary provision of shelter and other forms of practical support such as help with finding employment. These relationships are typically between siblings and siblings' children.

- Relationships that typically involve a fair level of interdependence are also characterised by exchanges of money, and/or physical care, but to a lesser extent or on a less regular basis than those at the moderate level. They may also involve exchanges of labour and food, temporary provision of shelter and other forms of practical support such as help with finding employment on an 'as needs' basis. These relationships are typically between cousins or aunts and uncles and nephews and nieces.

- Relationships involving a low level of interdependence are characterised by intermittent exchanges of money or practical support on an 'as needs' basis or for special occasions, such as commemorations of births, marriages or deaths.

Financial support in itself is not an adequate indication of a high level of interdependence. In most cultures, family members give money to a wide range of kin, at different times and for different purposes. Some may wish to give money but be unable to do so.

Neither is biological relationship an adequate indicator of interdependence. In many cultures, families adopt additional members without the legal formalities usual in western countries. Adoptees are full family members with all the associated obligations that go with that status.

Nor does interdependence depend on closeness within the family. Distant kin who perform tasks or play roles within the family can be entitled to the same status as close members of the family.

Some of these issues are discussed in more depth below.

5.1 Location and coresidence

None of the obligations that involve interdependence depend on coresidence. Creese et al (1999) note that families are fluid and constantly being negotiated and reconstituted both spatially and temporally. Families may extend beyond a village, city or country yet

still continue to meet at least financial obligations of care. That was apparent in the interviews where family members from all cultures sought to meet their obligations to family in their home countries. One Somali woman summarised these sentiments by saying:

> No matter where they are they are considered equal members of the family.
> *- Somali, in NZ 7 years.*

Spatial factors are important to the extent that they facilitate family maintenance without coresidence. In East Asian countries, where modernisation and urbanisation have limited both the opportunity and the desire for coresidence, many older people engage in meaningful interactions with the children they live with and maintain frequent contact with the children who live apart. They exchange gifts of money, provide childcare, including caring for children who come to live with them, and share meals regularly. Older parents are still more likely to live with the oldest son and to provide for needy sons ahead of a needy daughter (Creese et al 1999, Logan and Bian 1999, Unger 1993). Families also maintain much closer ties with the husband's than with the wife's family (Weinstein et al 1990).

Logan and Bian (1999) investigated parents' preferences for coresidence with their children in China and found a mix of traditional and modern views. A majority preferred to live separately from their married son, but more than a third were unable to realise their stated preference. Their reasons for coresidence were often practical. They were able to both get and give economic support and care and provide household help and, often most importantly, had no suitable alternative. The reasons for not coresiding were also practical, although a number rejected traditional beliefs, saying that they believed that children should live independently after marriage. These same families, however, maintained strong ties through visits, exchanges of money, gifts and other forms of support.

In Korea, one study (Kim 1996). found that parents are aware that aging does not bring a rise in kinship status for women or men in a rapidly industrialising society and many postpone the idea of coresidence with young couples. Again, the ideological basis of patriarchy is maintained through frequent mutual visits, gift exchanges and participation in various family rituals among the husband's (but not the wife's) kin. The availability of convenient transportation and telephone systems helps mitigate physical distance

In India, too, families often functionally jointly even if they live separately. For example, many businesses are family-owned and younger married brothers may come and join other family members in the city for job purposes (Mullatti 1995).

Separation can have negative effects on family cohesion. Sung-Joo (1999) notes that the family is the Filipino's motive for survival and development. However, there are indications that the family as an institution is increasingly beleaguered. For example, a 1994 study found that only two-thirds of 12-21 year olds in Manila lived with both parents as a result of marital splits and the feminisation of migrant labour, while a 1995 survey found that 15% of households have family members temporarily abroad.

5.2 Strength of affiliation

Blood ties through the male line are important in East Asia and the countries of the Indian continent in relationships with a high level of interdependence. In Malaysia, the Philippines and the Pacific, links through marriage are as important as blood ties. People who become family members through formal or informal adoption are treated as full family members.

Relationships that have a moderate or low level of interdependence are characterised by a shared lineage or common descent, sometimes some distance back, membership of the same initiation group, residence in the same village or sometimes, in African countries, through shared religious affiliation.

Johnson (1993) found that many Chinese people living overseas are deeply conscious of their membership in elaborate kin groups and have remained fiercely loyal to their ancestral points of origin. The closeness of relationships determines the amount of support that relatives abroad will provide, as well as the likelihood of obtaining an immigration visa and thus the possibility of joining kinsmen abroad. Those without close relatives may seek to marry into the families with close relatives abroad so that the entire household can be sponsored and take up residence abroad.

Indian immigrants to the United States can also sponsor relatives, including brothers and sisters. Many seek to maintain contact with extended family through videos, letters, telephone calls, visits and email. Although the provision of financial support can usually be settled, conflict remains over how to maintain family connections and values across the generations and between two countries (Pettys and Balgopal 1998).

5.3 Personal compatibility

In a number of countries such as the Philippines and Samoa, the boundaries of kinship are sometimes vague. Interactions that involve reciprocal duties and obligations are determined by such factors as personal compatibility and preferences, the social positions of the parties concerned or combinations of these (Javillonar 1979, Pasikale and George 1995). This was confirmed by interviewees:

> Obligations wider out from your family depend on the personal relationship. You can also shrink obligations by distance, saying they are 'too far' and too demanding. Obligations towards people who are near by tend to be stronger.
>
> *- Samoan, in NZ 10 years*

However, if family members are in dire circumstances, their level of need often overrides personal feelings of affinity. One Somali man explained it like this.

> There's only one relative I want to help because I like her more than because it's expected. My younger stepmother's brother died. His wife and I are of a similar age and were friends before they married. She's half-Yemeni, so fled there during the war. Now I'd like to help her come here. But even though I am fond of her, my older sister started saying I should do something so I acted. On dad's side we have one uncle and one aunty alive. In the past she hasn't been a "good" woman; she only looked after her own family and ignored others, and she's not a nice person. However her need has overridden that and we support her because

> she's dad's sister, she's old and her children aren't in a position to support her. - *Somali, in NZ 13 years*

5.4 Family closeness and status

The increasing number of NZ-born Pacific Islands people tends to have weaker or no links with their parent country and this factor has a significant impact on the maintenance of links with parent countries. They do not maintain kinship and family values and networks to the same extent as the island-born population. Several studies have found that the practice of overseas remittances was more common with migrant households than NZ-born households (Macpherson 1994, Fitzgerald 1988 and Loomis 1992 cited in Pasikale and George 1995) and second generation ties are much looser still. Larner (1990 in Pasikale and George 1995) found that while adult single women helped their parents financially, married women concentrated on supporting their immediate household. Fuka (1985 in Pasikale and George 1995) studied overseas remittance patterns in the Tongan community and found that women were more frequent remitters and contributed higher amounts than men.

Among Pacific people, the amount of time, financial support and interaction that are given to individuals will depend on the relative status of the two families. The kin groups and villages often referred to as a person's strong side, *itu malosi,* receive the largest shares of migrants' remittances. Lesser amounts are sent to kin groups and villages with whom the family member has weaker connections – the weak side, *ituvaivai.* Remittances depend on a person's capacity to remit, the distribution of the family, especially parents and siblings, a spouse's attitude to remittances and the migrant's own aspirations (Pasikale and George 1995, Macpherson 1994).

Pattern of remittances and support changes when parents and other family members come to New Zealand. As long as parents and siblings remain in the village, some part of remittances will continue to enter the village economy. In New Zealand, an individual's links with the village may become attenuated. Few migrant village associations have a long, stable existence. In Macpherson's study (1994) remittances were not seen as a personal choice. Individuals were chosen by their families to go to New Zealand to work. They saw this as no less than the service, *tautua*, that young, single people are expected to provide for their families. Physical distance between migrants and the family was of limited significance, they are simply serving the family in a different location.

A Samoan woman described the importance of location, birth order and status in her family.

> Birth order is not as important in Samoa as in Tonga but everyone knows his or her place in the family. People who are earners contribute. The members of my family who are in Samoa do most of the *fa'asamoa* contributions, I do the NZ bit. In return, I get the benefits from the NZ community and my brothers in Samoa get the benefits there.
>
> Part of the obligations to do with the matai role depend on whose family is having the event. If it's my sister's family holding an event (she is a titleholder) then she will contribute more than her share and she will speak. My brother is also a titleholder and if it's his family holding the event he will speak and give more.
>
> *- Samoan, in NZ 31 years*

5.5 Financial constraints

Financial constraints often limit what family members are able to give. Javillonar (1979), suggests that in the Philippines, economic factors have affected family patterns. She notes that the strongly cohesive extended family applies more frequently among the upper and middle classes than the lower because of financial pressures. Poorer people cannot extend financial and material help to the same extent. In Pacific cultures, those with more resources are expected to contribute more than those who have less. A Samoan woman made this point:

> I'm not the oldest but I'm the main contact for the family – the best educated, among the highest paid. Obligation is not necessarily to do with age or birth order – it's more to do with how much support you can provide. It can also depend on who the spouse is in the relationship, particularly whether or not s/he is Samoan. Some families favour going through the male line (for support) but I'm much stronger on my own line. We've also got more resources. - *Samoan, in NZ 10 years*

A Fijian woman put it this way:

> We can't keep up with all the obligations and work takes up most of my time. So our family doesn't keep obligations as much here, but in some other families it's the same as in Fiji, particularly if the family is in a strong financial position and can afford to do so. - *Fijian, in NZ 13 years*

In some cases, families in the home country can have unreasonable expectations of their kin in New Zealand. A Somali woman had this experience:

> The family here is struggling to get ahead. Most of us are students, yet the children of the uncles who have died ring from Kenya and expect to be sent money or for them to be able to come here. It is difficult to study and meet those obligations and I argue with mum about it. However in Kenya everyone lived together as one family and I feel I have an obligation to bring my cousins here. The obligation is made stronger because of their level of need. In Somalia they lived in separate households, but the war changed everything. - *Somali, in NZ 13 years*

5.6 Major events and times of crisis

Most cultures recognise the importance of major events such as marriages and funerals as a time when the family will be expected to gather or contribute as much as they are able. The sentiment in the following comment was repeated by interviewees from other cultures.

> If someone dies it is imperative that you go home and share the grief and say goodbye. At this time even distant relatives come together to discuss family problems and catch up during the vigil. - *Filipina, in NZ 12 years*

Where life in the home country is disrupted by war, civil unrest or a natural disaster, distant or weakened kinship ties may be reactivated. Interviewees from Somalia, Croatia and India gave examples of such situations.

My son-in-law from Fiji now has an obligation to find a way for his family to go to the States from Fiji and live with them. The situation there will be hopeless now and everyone will leave. They will have to wind up their business and go. My son-in-law's sister went to the States after the first coup in 1987. It was her obligation to help her brother get a Green Card. Now it's his turn. - *Indian, Gujarati, in NZ 50 years*

My friend's family felt they had an obligation to help the wife's brother and mother emigrate and to find him a job. Her brother was in Serbia during the war and was in a very difficult situation as was her mother. This family wants to live together in one house and expects to do this. But my family wouldn't like that. We would like to live closer to each other, but not together. - *Croatian, in NZ one year*

5.7 Barriers to meeting obligations in New Zealand

The information in this section comes from the interviews. Respondents from all cultures described problems associated with:

- distance, particularly the inability to visit with family members as often as they would like, or to personally provide care
- the cost of sending money overseas
- being in a mixed marriage
- the cost of travel and phone calls
- immigration policies and procedures
- lack of employment and therefore financial security.

For most families distance is a great barrier to fulfilling family obligations. For elderly immigrants it adds to a feeling of isolation and loneliness. A woman from China describes the problems associated with distance:

The main barrier is distance. Parents would love to see their children more often, and when parents are sick the children would like to visit them, but this is not possible. In the future, they know they will have to look after parents, but are not sure how. It's not an urgent issue yet but something that will have to be dealt with when it comes up. It's difficult to plan for, as you don't know what will happen. Will they have a short illness or a long protracted illness; or live healthily for a long time? But everyone deals with it, so I am sure I can.

My husband is an only child so we have thought of asking his parents to come and live with us. We haven't done anything yet as we're not sure if my parents-in-law want to live in New Zealand. We're also unsure if we are 100% financially secure and able to support elderly parents.

Many of the older generation come to be with their children and grand children in NZ but they are not settled into society. They feel cut off and need more information about what's happening around them and at home. Some say they feel disabled – 'No legs as they can't drive; dumb as they can't speak English, deaf because they can't understand. They love the environment but they have sacrificed a lot; their friendships, their homes and cultural activities.'

Some of the older generation go home and come back again later. They stay here long enough to get a returning residence permit; they don't want New

Zealand citizenship. Initially the cost of international phone calls was prohibitive; but it's manageable now. - *Chinese, in New Zealand 13 years*

A Russian woman gave another example, which illustrates the importance of family members being able to visit before they decide to migrate:

> It is difficult for old people once they get here. There is only a small Russian diaspora here so they feel isolated. They lack English skills and don't feel at home in the wider society beyond their family. In Russia people help each other beyond their family a lot. They ring and share information such as where to get cheaper food. The isolation here encourages some older people to leave and go back to Russia. I met one single woman from Wellington whose mother came to stay with her for six months. But the older woman felt too isolated and lonely when her daughter was at work. She said, "Although my life will be more difficult, and the days will be filled with worry; at least the days will not be empty.
> - *Russian, in NZ 3 years*

A Filipina woman discussed the effects of being in a mixed marriage.

> I spelled out what joining my family meant to my husband before we got married. I said, "You can't separate me from my family - you have to accept them".
>
> However there are many problems in most mixed marriages with husbands saying, "I married you and not your family". "Why do you have to send money? It's not your obligation?" But they do marry the family. In these situations it is common for the wife to begin to tell lies and hide the amount she is sending. Then there is an even bigger problem when the husband finds out she has been lying.
>
> Many Filipinas in NZ don't have supportive husbands. Even those who do have a supportive family and in-laws, struggle to find the words in English to explain or express deep feelings, so it is difficult to hold family meetings here. - *Filipina, in NZ 12 years*

An Indonesian couple was unable to visit their family on an important occasion:

> At the end of Ramadan people like to visit their parents and ask for forgiveness directly. It's not the same doing it over the phone; so people don't feel complete if they don't see their parents face to face. So people here usually go home at Eidd. They go even if the airfare is higher than any other time in the year. It's a very strong custom on Java Island where we come from. When we were away from Java living elsewhere in Indonesia we tried to explain to our parents that it would be difficult to visit them then. But they asked us to try our best to visit. Here we phoned before and after they prayed. But this sort of custom makes it hard for Indonesians to live away from their country. - *Indonesian couple, in NZ 1½ years*

Immigration policies were a major barrier to fulfilling family obligations in some cases:

> A distant cousin, a third cousin on my mother's side, cares for my parents. When I want to bring her to NZ for a break, NZIS don't agree. They decline because she doesn't appear to be part of the family yet she is the main caregiver and the arrangement needs to be reciprocal. Sometimes she needs to travel with my

parents because they are old and frail but NZIS still turn her down. - *Samoan, in NZ 31 years*

Money was a barrier for many migrants, who had to find money for phone calls, family events, support for family members, and airfares.

> The biggest barrier was paying for everyone to come here. The first time I went to the bank was in 1989 and I was a student at Auckland University. I wanted to borrow $1,500 (I'd saved $3,500) and the bank manager couldn't understand why I'd do it.
>
> Then when my first brother's family came I had to borrow $25,000 for 12 fares. The bank was incredulous, and asked "Why do you have to do this? Will your brother pay the money back? Why can't he pay it himself? - *Somali, in NZ 13 years*
>
> The greatest barrier to everything, not only to family obligations, was having to pay $20,000 to sit the English exams[4]. Because of the situation in Osjiek we only got that amount for our flat, so we had to borrow money from friends. We lost $6,000 because J only passed on the second attempt. It was a waste. - *Croatian, in NZ one year*

5.8 Changes in New Zealand

Literature on the experiences of immigrants and immigrant families focuses on the variety of migrant experiences and describes strategies families adopt both to maintain cultural links and adapt to their new situation. The process is rarely straightforward and Creese et al (1999) argue that 'depictions in most texts of the immigrant family are strangely silent on the permeable nature of families as they experience dislocation and resettlement.' Their research found 'complex and changing forms of dependence and renegotiations of family life that may also include conflict and anxiety.' Conflict and anxiety are highlighted in several reports looking at the experiences of Indian, Korean and Somali migrants (Balgopal 1998, Dasgupta 1998, El-Solh 1993, Min 1999). Not all are prepared to deal with the effects of 'strained marital and parent-child relationships, disrupted gender roles and family patterns, cultural clashes, unrealistic expectations for themselves and their children, status anxiety and monotonous work lives' (Min 1999).

Studies of Indian migrant families in the United States (Balgopal 1998, Dasgupta 1998) found that the extended family was a source of resources and strength as well as a source of conflicts. Some immigrant parents attempt to ensure transmission of cultural/ethnic values to the next generation to reinforce the family's sense of identity, while at the same time recognising the need to fit into the dominant western model (Dasgupta 1998). The impact of change is particularly significant for women, with western ideals of equality being at odds with traditional patterns. Stopes-Roe and Cochrane (1989) argue that families in a more extensive and well-established community may be in a better position and under more pressure to rear their young in traditional patterns. Being under less economic stress can be a relevant factor since this can leave women free to fill established traditional roles.

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[4] The previous policy requirement for some migrants to pay a refundable English Language Bond was discontinued in 1998.

The experiences of migrants to New Zealand appear to vary. Research shows that an increasing number of NZ-born Pacific Islands people have weaker or no links with their parent country. They do not maintain kinship and family values and networks to the same extent as the island-born population. Several studies have found that the practice of overseas remittances was more common with migrant households than NZ-born households (Macpherson 1994, Fitzgerald 1988 and Loomis 1992 cited in Pasikale and George 1995) and second generation ties are much looser still. The Pacific family members interviewed stressed the importance of maintaining contact through visits to keep cultural links strong. They were, however, resigned to some change.

> I think the family is defined the same in Samoa as it is here but because I was born in Samoa I've still got a strong affiliation with it and a sense of responsibility towards her family. NZ-born Samoans are different. I don't think they'll be so willing to accept family obligations over time. - *Samoan, in NZ 10 years*

> Many 'second generation' NZ-born children in the family don't understand the hierarchy of authority. The system depends on everyone knowing their responsibilities. Many families do weaken when they come here. I make a real effort to keep the links going. The children have been to Tonga many times. You can't tell the children about it, they have to feel it. - *Tongan, in NZ 19 years.*

Families for other ethnic groups also sought to maintain family values. A Malaysian Chinese woman, in New Zealand for 13 years, said that she and her husband 'have taught the children Chinese family values so in the future they will look after their parents as they have seen us look after our parents.' These excerpts from interviews with Chinese, Filipino and Somali migrant described the tensions and pressures associated with living in two cultures.

> The view of NZ born Chinese changes depending on how many generations have been born in NZ. In some ways NZ born Chinese are more traditional than I am. This is often the case if their parents come from a small village. They eat local food, do traditional things like practising martial arts. But they are more Western than me in the way they think because they went to school here; how they mix with local people, their language ability. - *Chinese, in NZ 13 years*

> If there is a mixed marriage and the couple has family born here, there are many problems. Mainly because many of the women are poor and were working as prostitutes when they met their husbands. For them, one of the main reasons for coming was to get a better life for themselves and to help their family. However they often don't explain their culture to their Kiwi husbands because:
>
> - they aren't aware of the depth of difference at the time they get married
> - they are uneducated
> - they don't have enough language to explain fully
> - they are too embarrassed to spell out all the obligations.
>
> In these circumstances the Kiwi father is often not keen on a child being raised in another culture and the culture is lost if the mother doesn't assert herself, if she is uneducated or subjugated to her husband. Some Kiwi husbands don't even like their wives meeting other Filipinas, they don't like the language and they don't like the people. Their kids are lost and don't feel any obligation to their grandparents. This happens quite quickly in New Zealand.

Sometimes these families break up as the love for the family at home is greater than that of the family here and the women can't remain here. In some families there is a denial about the situation at home. They are away from the family and they want to forget it all. If you have a successful marriage once you are here, it can renew or strengthen your relationship with your family. But there are many obstacles to bringing them here. - *Filipina, in NZ 12 years*

Some family systems are breaking down. Mum gets upset, as even the youngest of her sons (at 18) doesn't ask her advice or permission to do things. He informs mum and just does them. Here family members are more independent as they all earn money or receive a benefit. In Somalia unmarried children give their income to their parents. - *Somali, in NZ 3 years*

The family structure is beginning to soften in New Zealand, but every time it seems to be looser, some event here or in Somalia occurs and this triggers a closing of the ranks again; including clannism. Religion will also hold the families together. [Most children now attend Koranic schools in the afternoons as parents realised the children were losing religion and language]. And the language holds people together, although parents have to ensure their children can speak Somali.

In NZ 15 to 18 year-olds are becoming more independent and rebellious, but it seems they all end up coming home as they are lonely and miss their brothers and sister. - *Somali, in NZ 13 years*

Because I was born and brought up in Samoa my values are very strong. NZ-born aren't so likely to follow the same steps. However, the extended family is still strong in NZ.

My oldest son (12) notices that some Samoan people can come and go and others can't. The children know we give money to my parents but not to their other grandparents. We explain to them that Samoan and *palagi* customs are not the same. They've been to Samoa and the oldest have represented the family on occasions so they understand *fa'asamoa* very well. They know about hosting guests and taking responsibility. - *Samoan, in NZ 31 years*

VI. Discussion and conclusion

This research set out to explore how the concept of ‘family’ differs for different ethnic groups in New Zealand and to identify the extent and nature of obligatory ties between family members. The research used a literature review and interviews to gather information and it quickly became apparent that the basic concepts of nationality, ethnicity and family are extremely complex. Almost all nationalities encompass a range of ethnic groups. Within those ethnic groups, an individual or family’s sense of ethnic identity and commitment to cultural values can vary and change over time. Although important for some, nationality and ethnicity were not the only factors determining notions of family. Cultural and religious factors in countries of origin exerted a strong influence, often showing resilience to change over a chain of migrations across a number of generations and countries, as the Chinese and Indian examples show. Families themselves tend to be social rather than legal or biological units, and the social composition will again vary depending on personal and social circumstances. Families can incorporate more than one ethnic group and extend across more than one country, while still functioning as a family.

6.1 Concepts of ‘family’

The first aim of this research was to explore concepts of ‘family’. All of the cultures studied perceived the family as a social rather than a biological unit and in most cultures, the family is considered more important than the individual. However, it was difficult to categorise families according to any theoretical type or to generalise across or within cultures.

Biological links and descent through the male line are particularly important in countries that follow Confucianism, Hinduism and Islam. These countries include China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and African countries such as Somalia. Other countries, such as Thailand, the Philippines, Samoa and Tonga pay stronger attention to descent from both sides. In almost all cases, authority remains with males, while females provide domestic support and personal care and have responsibility for maintaining cultural and family values.

The literature suggests that close kindred include parents, brothers and sisters and their spouses, first cousins and their spouses and spouses’ parents. These are the family members who matter most and are most likely to provide vital assistance in terms of finance, employment, marriage and emigration. This was also borne out in the interviews. When asked to describe their families, most interviewees began by describing their nuclear family as close kin but quickly moved onto a much wider grouping, with variations over time as circumstances changed.

The size of the group which different ethnic groups define as ‘close kin’, ‘wider kin’ and ‘distant kin’ depends not only on biological descent and marriage ties. Adoption is prevalent in many cultures, usually without the legal formalities common in countries like New Zealand. Adoptees become full members of their adoptive families, even though they may retain their original family name. They are unquestionably ‘close kin’.

Family members, who may in other circumstances be considered wider or distant kin, become close kin when they take on caring or supportive roles within the family. For

example, kin who provide personal care or relatives who give each other significant mutual support can be counted as part of an individual's close family.

Similarly families living through radical socio/political change, war or other crises, which often prompt forced or voluntary migration, vary their perceptions of kin relationships according to changing circumstances.

6.2 Key relationships whereby obligatory ties exist between family members

6.2.1 Parents and children

The key family relationships whereby obligations exist vary between cultures. They are influenced by individual circumstances, and to some extent, by personal preference. Family obligations are not usually subject to legislation. They are generally emotional and cultural expectations, albeit subject to a range of societal sanctions it they are not met. The strongest obligations are those of care - financial, physical and emotional - both for children and for ageing parents. In this study, the assumption that minor children would be cared for and provided with the best possible education was so strong it was mentioned only in passing.

In some cultures (e.g. Indonesian, Chinese, Korean, Somali and Tongan) birth order is particularly important in dictating levels of obligation, mirroring hierarchies of responsibility. Oldest children frequently bear the greatest responsibility for caring for parents and for providing a range of support to siblings and their children.

In some cultures, the parent-child relationship is at least equal to, and in some cases stronger, than the tie between husband and wife. For some, that means that strong parental wishes are carried out after the parents' death, with children becoming anxious if circumstances change so that this is not possible.

Frequently parent-child obligations are two-way, covering three generations. While adult children provide care for ageing parents, the parents provide important household help and care for grandchildren. In this way cultural values and language are also maintained.

6.2.2 Siblings

None of the cultures studied limited obligations to the parent-child relationship. While obligations are generally hierarchical, in many cultures they extend laterally, particularly to siblings and their families but also to wider kin.

Although obligations to siblings are usually weaker than to parents, they are very important in most cultures, fully extending to half-brothers and sisters and adopted family members. Sibling obligations are generally two-fold, that is, between siblings and towards others, especially parents. These relationships are typically characterised by financial obligations, with money shared for business, health care and children's education; provision of emotional support and advice; help with immigration matters and provision of accommodation, either short term or long term. In a range of cultures e.g. the Philippines, Vietnam, China and Somalia, greatest responsibility falls on older siblings although there seems to be an increasing tendency for responsibilities to be shared.

Obligations through blood families are often stronger than through marriage, with adult siblings being put ahead of ageing parents-in-law. This especially seems to be the case with couples in mixed marriages. However, a biological connection is not necessary for family membership in any culture. Adopted family members are accorded full family membership and therefore expect, and are expected, to play a full part in reciprocal family obligations.

6.2.3 Wider kin

Obligations to wider kin are especially activated in times of crisis or life cycle events such as funerals, marriages and clan, village, and *'aiga* activities. The latter events strengthen and maintain bonds, reinforcing or renewing obligations.

Thus the trend towards more nuclear families is not necessarily accompanied by a weakening of family ties. There are still expectations to provide financial support for parents, siblings and their families, aunts, uncles and cousins, arrange for care, and visit if possible, especially for significant family events. The strength of these obligations tends to be dependent upon proximity, economic status, physical security and to a certain extent personal affinity or preference.

6.3 Key characteristics of relationships that involve a high level of interdependence

Family relationships are usually complex and multidimensional and dependent on a number of circumstances. Although the literature often focuses on family living arrangements, the study concludes that family membership includes obligations across and between generations, no matter where family members are living. While co-residence over some periods of life can reinforce obligations, evidence indicates that co-residence is not a key characteristic of highly interdependent relationships. Families attempt to maintain obligations with family either within or between countries and in spite of living apart.

Relationships that involve the highest level of interdependence are characterised by regular exchanges of economic support and/or physical care, sustained by a strong sense of duty, deference and respect. These are typically relationships between parents and children (especially widowed parents), including adopted children, and may or may not involve co-residence.

Relationships involving a moderate level of interdependence are also characterised by exchanges of money, and/or physical care, but to a lesser extent or on a less regular basis than those at the highest level. They may also involve exchanges of labour and food, temporary provision of shelter and other forms of practical support such as help with finding employment. These relationships are typically between siblings and siblings' children.

Relationships that typically involve a fair level of interdependence are also characterised by exchanges of money, and/or physical care, but to a lesser extent or on a less regular basis than those at the moderate level. They may also involve exchanges of labour and food, temporary provision of shelter and other forms of practical support such as help with finding employment on an 'as needs' basis. These relationships are typically between cousins or aunts and uncles and nephews and nieces.

Relationships involving a low level of interdependence are characterised by intermittent exchanges of money or practical support on an 'as needs' basis or for special occasions, such as commemorations of births, marriages or deaths. They are also influenced by complex and often interrelated patterns of descent over a number of generations although in these relationships there is some scope for personal preference.

The actual provision of money should not be used as the main way of measuring obligation. Some of those interviewed felt that they should provide more for family members but were unable to do so. Further, obligations to provide economic support can be met from a distance, as can the provision of emotional support although to a far lesser degree. However to provide physical care, family members need to be nearby. If families are not living together, that increases the obligation to visit as often as resources allow.

The nature of interdependent relationships can change quite rapidly as a result of crises, with relationships moving from low to high interdependence in a short period of time.

6.4 The effects of migration on family ties

Migrant families, in common with those in the home country, are fluid and constantly changing. Migration brings with it costs as well as opportunities, with some lamenting their inability to fulfill their obligations, especially in the early years. There are indications that the inability to fulfill obligations impacts negatively on people's health and can cause tensions and conflicts. Elderly people are often faced with an invidious choice - living in their home country without the care or company of family members, or living with or near family members and being cared for, away from everything familiar and isolated from wider society through a lack of language and mobility.

Most migrant families notice the effects of distance in a number of ways. As they can't visit regularly they have to spend more money on keeping in touch with the costs causing anxiety. However many find innovative ways of using modern technology to overcome the distance.

For some the distance weakens bonds with the family and therefore lessens levels of obligation. However others find the distance increases their levels of affection and feelings of commitment to each other.

As well as cost and distance, the nature and application of immigration policies and procedures often detract from hoped for opportunities causing tensions, conflict and anxiety.

6.5 Conclusion

Family identity and wellbeing is complex. The 'family' is best seen as a fabric made of intermeshed relationships and interdependent obligations. Family membership is not an individual matter, nor restricted to a nuclear family definition or even co-residence. Furthermore, family membership and obligations are subjective and can only be fully understood from the perspective of the family concerned, as it changes over time. At a minimum, definitions of families in the cultures studied include parents, grandparents, adopted members and siblings, and, depending on circumstances, can extend beyond that to clan, tribal or village associates.

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APPENDIX 1 FAMILY STRUCTURES RESEARCH

INTERVIEW GUIDE

NOTE: This is an interview guide. We expect the interview will be conversational. We will construct diagrams of typical families. The diagrams can also be used to identify obligations and interdependence. Recording will be through written notes and information on large sheets.

Possible introduction:

We are doing some research for the NZ Immigration Service. The Service knows that people from different cultural groups have different ideas of what a family is – that is, who belongs to it and what being a family member means. The Service is doing this research as part of a review of family sponsored immigration to New Zealand.

What you say will be confidential – we're not going to use your name anywhere in the report.

Background information

Gender: Ethnicity: Country born in:

Length of time in NZ:

Use a large sheet to construct a family diagram (genogram – use triangles for males, circles for females)

1. Let's start with you and draw in the members of your family.

   Record whether parents, siblings, etc are in NZ or in home country
   Record adoptions; note people counted as family who do not appear to be related by blood or marriage

2. In the family do any family members have particular obligations to any other family members? E.g. husbands and wives/partners, parents and children, brothers or sisters, anyone else, like cousins, people who live in the same village

   Use diagram to go through different relationships. Record who has obligations to who

   Note any comments on the strength of obligations, are they 'compulsory', by choice, affection, custom etc. Note particularly any differences in strength of obligation to one side of the family rather than another, or one gender, or one relationship

3. What kind of obligations do they have? How does that work? E.g. Gifts of money, food etc, shared labour, child care, other practical support, emotional support, transport etc

4. What happens when some of the family emigrate, say to New Zealand – what happens to family relationships then? How do you meet your obligations when you live apart from family members? Any barriers or difficulties in trying to continue family relationships?

   Discuss any changes in definitions of family, changes in obligations, attitudes – can be reduction in strength, shrinking of family

5. Does the way you define yourself as a family shift over time – the longer you spend in NZ? Any differences between NZ and overseas born? Expect that in the future?

6. Is there anything else you want to say about …… families?

Thank you