Families & Cultural Diversity in Australia

EDITED BY ROBYN HARTLEY
FAMILIES AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY
IN AUSTRALIA
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Contents

Foreword ix
Acknowledgments xi
Contributors xiii

1 FAMILIES, VALUES AND CHANGE: SETTING THE SCENE 1
   Robyn Hartley
   Culture and ethnicity 2
   Describing families 4
   Families and the state 6
   Religion and families 7
   Values and families 8
   Migration and families 10
   Composition of the Australian population 13
   Changing families, changing values 15
   Methodology 18
   Chapter themes 19
   Commonalities and differences 20

2 AUSTRALIAN FAMILIES: VALUES AND BEHAVIOUR 25
   Peter McDonald
   The European origins of westernisation 26
   Australian family values: 1830–1940 28
   A framework for considering contemporary family values 31
   The era of familism: 1940–70 31
   Feminism and western family change 35
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VI FAMILIES AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intimate relationships 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing roles within relationships 39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship breakdown 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The place of children 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people and families 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intergenerational relationships and extended family 44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion 46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3 ABORIGINAL FAMILIES IN AUSTRALIA 48</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eleanor Bourke and Colin Bourke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistical profile of Aboriginal families 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy and family 52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional society and family 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonisation 58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal families today 62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal family values under threat 65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion 68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4 CHINESE FAMILY VALUES IN AUSTRALIA 70</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anita S. Mak and Helen Chan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese settlement since the 1970s 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family structure 72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional family values 72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forming and re-forming families 76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childbirth and child rearing 82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescence 86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family interviews in Melbourne 88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old age 90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues and opportunities 91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion 94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5 FILIPINO FAMILIES IN AUSTRALIA 96</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grace Soriano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino migration to Australia 96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Filipino community 98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino values 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino families 102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children and child rearing 107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescence and young adulthood 111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing old 112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas family responsibilities and obligations 114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social networks 115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural marriage pressures 116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging issues for families 118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion 119</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## CONTENTS

6 **GREEK-AUSTRALIAN FAMILIES**

*Georgina Tsolidis*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The traditional Greek family</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic identification</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The diaspora, the community and the family</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek cultural identity and the family</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migration and the Greek family</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek women</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An ageing community</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Greek-Australian family</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7 **THE ITALIAN-AUSTRALIAN FAMILY: TRANSFORMATIONS AND CONTINUITIES**

*Ellie Vasta*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Families and social change</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work and the Italian-Australian family</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration policies and the Italian family</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual, family and community</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women and the Italian-Australian family</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Italian aged</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting and the second generation</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage and sexual relationships</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion: family, community and identity</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8 **LATIN AMERICAN FAMILIES IN AUSTRALIA**

*Lily Amézquita, Rocio Amézquita and Renzo Vittorino*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Latin American migration to Australia</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical background</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin American families</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin American families in Australia</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family values in Australia</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family adjustment</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older people</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugee families</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9 **LEBANESE-AUSTRALIAN FAMILIES**

*Trevor Batrouney*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lebanese migration to Australia</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lebanese population in Australia</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanese-Australian families</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family values</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family values associated with the life cycle</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10 VIETNAMESE-AUSTRALIAN FAMILIES 216

Vuong Nguyen and Mai Ho

Migration and its impact on families 217
Traditional family values 220
Vietnamese families in Australia 224
Family roles and status 227
Important life stages 231
Conclusion 238

Bibliography 241
Index 265
Families and Cultural Diversity in Australia is an edited volume of original chapters devoted to the exploration of the diversity of values by which Australian families, in all their cultural variety and richness, are living their lives towards the end of the twentieth century. It was conceived as a project for the International Year of the Family and coordinated by Robyn Hartley, until recently a senior member of the research staff of the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Ten years ago the Institute published a seminal volume entitled Ethnic Family Values in Australia (Storer 1985). The book fulfilled an important function in providing a highly readable and accessible account of the diversity of families in Australia, their structure and cultural backgrounds and the values of family members. It continues to be widely quoted.

Although many of the issues it raised are still relevant, during the decade that has passed since Storer's volume was first issued much has changed in Australia. The children and grandchildren of earlier immigrants have themselves established families, and the second and third generations face different challenges from those of their forebears; new cultural communities have been established; there has been increased recognition of the traditions of the indigenous peoples of Australia, and Aboriginal family values are being reasserted. At the same time, cultural boundaries are becoming blurred and increasing numbers of Australians are defining themselves as 'bicultural'.
It is against this background that the book’s editor, Robyn Hartley, and her colleagues embarked on the project that has culminated in the publication of *Families and Cultural Diversity in Australia*. This new volume builds on the achievements of the Storer book. But it extends and updates them and thereby contributes to a better understanding of the diversity of cultural values that underlie the lives of families in contemporary Australia.

*Families and Cultural Diversity in Australia* is essentially about change and the processes of change. Following introductory overviews by Hartley and by McDonald, the volume comprises a series of chapters written by authors who are themselves members of the communities about which they write. The book as a whole provides informed, comparative, research-based accounts of family values from a range of ‘insider’ perspectives while avoiding the pitfall of characterising diversity as merely different from so-called ‘mainstream Australian society’; for in contemporary Australia, diversity is the mainstream. Together, the team of contributors, under Hartley’s editorship, has created an account of cultural diversity in Australia that adds significantly to our knowledge and understanding of the values which impact on the lives of families in this country and that highlights key issues of concern now and for the future.

It is fitting that *Families and Cultural Diversity in Australia*, written largely during the International Year of the Family, has been published during the International Year of Tolerance. Contemporary Australia bears testimony to how possible it is for peoples and families from many different backgrounds to work together towards living peaceably, relatively free from intercultural tension and disharmony, infrequently confronted by encounters with overt intolerance. By its contribution towards a greater understanding of cultural diversity, this book has the potential to contribute also to the greater growth of tolerance in Australia.

*Harry McGurk*

Director, Australian Institute of Family Studies
Many people have contributed to this book. Our thanks go to those from various communities who commented on the proposal and the framework of the project in the planning stages. We particularly appreciate the contribution of Hurriyet Babacan, Stephen Castles, Joy Elley, Beryl Langer, PooKong Kee and Des Storer, members of the project's Advisory Committee, whose interest and critical comments so helped to refine the underlying themes. Several members of this Committee also commented on chapter drafts and the completed manuscript, and we extend special thanks to Joy Elley and Hurriyet Babacan for their assistance and overall observations in this regard. Thanks are also extended to Peter McDonald, formerly of the Australian Institute of Family Studies, and Helen Glezer, of the Institute, both of whom had a critical input at various stages of the project.

The contributors undertook with diligence and interest the often difficult task of describing families. Their cooperation, patience and careful attention through all stages of the project have been greatly appreciated. Discussion at two meetings of contributors produced some especially helpful ideas for all. The particular expertise of readers for each chapter assisted with the final content of the book.

Meredith Michie, the Institute's editor, was a continuing source of encouragement and advice. Elizabeth Weiss, of Allen & Unwin, supported the project from the outset and her calm belief that a book would indeed eventuate helped at some difficult points.
Finally, our thanks go to the many people from various communities who took part in focus groups, interviews and/or discussions with contributors. Their willingness to talk about their family experiences has enhanced the discussion of family issues in these pages.
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RENZO VITTORINO arrived in Australia in 1992. He is a registered psychologist from Uruguay, with a postgraduate qualification in mental health studies from the University of Uruguay. He was previously a clinical psychologist in a public hospital and in the National Institute of Minors in Uruguay, working with children, youth and families; for five years he was a Senior Lecturer at the
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Australia has a unique history, important elements of which are an indigenous population, a British colonial past and recent extensive immigration of people from many different countries and cultures. This has resulted in one of the most ethnically diverse populations in the world, with over 100 birthplace groups identified in the 1991 census. Each of these ‘birthplace groups’ has its own considerable cultural diversity as a result of history, regional differences and internal and external population movements, as well as variations related to key factors such as class, gender and urban and rural environments.

Cultural diversity, including the resurgence of a strong Aborig­inal presence and identity, presents challenging issues for Australia: what it means to be an Australian; the relationship between national and personal identities; identifying and working in both the cohesive and divisive forces in a multicultural society; and the form and flavour of a future republic. None of these issues is new, yet all are of immediate concern, and the symbolic importance of the approach of the twenty-first century invests them with partic­ular meaning.

Despite demographic changes, the major institutions in Aus­tralia and the political, legal, administrative and communication systems remain predominantly Anglo-Celtic. Families and family life are therefore important arenas for the expression of cultural diversity. The purpose of this book is to give a picture of the diversity of families and family values in Australia. The overall emphasis is on continuity and change and on present and future
issues for families. Included are chapters on Aboriginal families, families formed by people who have emigrated to Australia in the past and in relatively recent times, and Australian families in general. In this chapter and those which follow, it will become evident that simple categories such as these are merely starting points for describing the rich, diverse, multifaceted and interacting pattern of family values in Australia.

The task of describing families and cultural diversity raises complex issues which will remain the subject of continuing debate. Some of these issues are concerned with the institution of the family—relationships between the state and the family and between social change and family change, the impact of the feminist movement on families and society, and links between religion and family values, structure and functioning.

Others are concerned with culture and ethnicity. How valid is it to talk about ‘Greek families’ or ‘Vietnamese families’ in Australia? What is implied by the terms ‘Chinese-Australian’ families or ‘Italian-Australian’ families? Can discussion be usefully organised around such notions when individual experiences and values vary significantly according to class and gender and a multitude of other factors? What constitutes ethnic identification? Are there specific meanings attached to the term in Australia? Of relevance also are concepts of westernisation and globalisation. What impact is widespread immigration and intermixing of cultures having on families in Australia? How can we adequately convey the commonalities shared by families from different cultural backgrounds, as well as their uniqueness?

This chapter outlines key concepts in the framework for the book, discusses aspects of the relationship between families, society and migration, and identifies common themes and differences drawn from the chapters which follow.

Culture and ethnicity

The organisation of the book assumes that it is both legitimate and meaningful to talk about the cultural values underlying, for example, Filipino families, Chinese families, Aboriginal families and Latin American families in Australia, despite the diversity within these cultures.

Culture includes institutions, manners, habits of thought, intentions and ways of life (Williams 1960). It encompasses the complex web of meanings which underlie everyday life and behaviour—the understandings and expectations which guide our actions and interactions with others. The aspects of culture which are
taken for granted are especially relevant in exploring family life and relationships. The familiar ‘everyday’ nature of much of family life makes it particularly likely that it is seen as ‘given’, rather than resulting from a set of cultural meanings. For example, definitions of and expectations about age-related stages of life, such as adolescence, adulthood and middle age, are culturally determined and surrounded by a set of beliefs, attitudes and practices which, like so many aspects of culture, are often largely unexamined and taken for granted by people until they are confronted by something different. Even the meanings attached to play in childhood are culturally determined and contribute to the ways in which parents interact with children. Since culture is concerned with meaning, there is of course a very close relationship between culture and language, through which kin relationships, obligations and duties are expressed and appropriate behaviour defined.

Two main strands of thought exist in discussions concerning ethnicity in Australia (Wong 1992). One highlights descent, or common origin, as a potentially binding force for people. The other regards ethnicity as a social construction which can be expected to vary over time and according to circumstances, and is epitomised by Martin’s (1978) view of ethnicity as ‘interest groups’ rather than as an aspect of culture. A major concern expressed by a number of writers is that the focus on ethnic groups and ethnicity in Australia has masked class interests and structural inequalities (see for example Bottomley and de Lepervanche 1984). Ethnicity has become associated in Australia with immigrants from a non-Anglo background, with ‘difference’ from the mainstream and with inequality. Nevertheless, ethnicity may often be a strong element of self-identification. Georgina Tsolidis in Chapter 6 suggests also that a ‘sense of difference’ has potentially positive connotations of resistance and agency.

The ways in which people identify themselves at different times and in different environments may not always be consistent. The focus for a sense of belonging may be on common physical characteristics, the possession of a distinct language or dialect, a particular religion, a sense of geographical and historical continuity through living in a particular place, or a distinct lifestyle (Price 1988). To this list we could add a common written or oral tradition.

Sometimes, one or other of these factors predominates; sometimes the factors coalesce to form a shared cultural background for large numbers of people. Country of birth is significant because it quite often coincides with some or all of the factors mentioned but this clearly need not be the case. People may be born outside
a country or a nation-state yet still identify with it; boundaries and borders change. The world history of migration and the general movement of peoples have made any simple approach to culture and to ethnic identification not possible or viable. Individuals identify multiple ancestries, as evidenced by responses to the ‘ancestry’ question included in the 1986 national census; the ‘cultural background’ of many people is diverse. To take one example, there are people in Australia who were born in Eastern Europe, emigrated with their families to Central America when they were children, and then emigrated to Australia as adults with children of their own.

A book of this nature cannot hope to capture all of the complexities of the relationship between culture and families, or the full extent of family diversity in Australia. However, the framework used provides an opportunity to illustrate both diversity within and commonalities across communities, and to avoid overgeneralisation. Differences which are important to people’s identity and sense of cultural history are able to be recognised.

All the contributors were relatively at ease with the task of describing family values from the perspective of a particular culture, although capturing the unique elements as well as the variety and richness is not always easy. There was some lively discussion among contributors about the most appropriate way to title the chapters in this book. There are subtle nuances of meaning between, for example, ‘Lebanese-Australian’, ‘Lebanese in Australia’, ‘Australian-Lebanese’, ‘Australian of Lebanese background’, ‘third-generation Lebanese-Australian’ and, simply, ‘Australian’; and preference is often a matter of individual interpretation.

Describing families

We turn now to families, the focus of this book. Patterns of parenting, marriage, kin relationships and responsibilities vary across cultures and societies, as does the nature of family life, child rearing and care of the aged. Historically, there have been considerable and continuing changes in each of these areas; whatever shifts in family formation and family life we can identify at present in Australia, and world-wide, are part of an ongoing process.

Just as there is no universal and enduring form of the family, there is no single way of defining family. Rather, there are perspectives related to different disciplines of thought: for example, in broad terms sociologists see families as primary agencies for
socialisation, social control and transmission of cultural values; economists see families (partly) as units of consumption; and psychologists see families as primary units in which children are reared and individual personalities develop. Nevertheless, families in all societies are commonly expected to care for and nurture children, to provide financially for their members and to transmit cultural and moral traditions and values.

In describing and defining their own families, people use a variety of criteria for different purposes, including cultural norms, personal circumstances, co-residence, the nature and closeness of relationships, a sense of obligation, and occasion (McDonald 1995). People from different cultural backgrounds may include a different range of people when describing their families, according to the range of relationships which are defined as important. However, within any cultural group, individual circumstances such as births, deaths and repartnerings in the family change the potential list of people who may be included. Sometimes non-kin are included, either on the basis of a well-defined social relationship such as godparent, or because they are perceived as close and caring and ‘like family’. The extent to which individuals are able to ‘construct’ their own families is greater in societies where kin relationships and obligations are less tightly structured and more open to individual choice.

Families respond to and reflect general social change. They are often the site of change—the arena in which shifts occur through changes in the behaviour of individuals, particularly in the area of intimate relationships between family members. The composition of families is subject to constant change through events which mark transitions in individual lives—births, partnering, divorce, repartnering, death—and less predictable events such as migration, wars, political upheaval and general geographic mobility, which are part of the experience of many of the families discussed in this book. Family mobility has a central place in world history. Settles (1993) suggests that while there is a tendency to emphasise stability as a ‘moral good and characteristic of family life in general’ the reality is that movement (within and outside national boundaries) and change in family life is more the typical experience than the exception.

The boundaries for describing families are, therefore, varied and flexible. Yet because individual experiences of family are so fundamental in fashioning people’s lives, it is often difficult to see beyond our own notions of what family is and should be. Both lack of awareness and ethnocentrism—the tendency to believe that one’s own group is superior to others—tend to cloud our view of families other than our own. So too do stereotypes about gender
roles—fixed notions about the roles of females and males. One of the underlying aims of this book is to contribute to a better understanding of both the diversity of family values in Australia and the commonalities among families from different backgrounds.

Families and the state

Families are located across both the so-called 'private' and 'public' realms of life. The emphasis on personal autonomy in Australian society perhaps helps to create an illusion of personal choice in relation to family matters and in particular, the nature of intimate relationships. In reality, it is difficult to think of an area of government legislation or regulation which does not affect families and family life. Laws which govern marriage and divorce have a direct impact on families. So too does Australia's signing of international convention statements—for example, those setting out children's rights and the rights of workers with family responsibilities and a range of legislation which supports greater equality for women and the extension of their roles beyond the family. In Chapter 2, Peter McDonald lists many of these provisions. In addition, taxation law, environmental control, economic policies, social welfare policies and the provision of local government services are some of the many other areas which affect the day-to-day life of families. Nor does a deliberate policy of non-intervention necessarily mean that an area of behaviour is uncontrolled.

Within this picture of state intervention and regulation, however, there is scope for considerable diversity. For example, although Australia has a single legal system of marriage and divorce, in reality systems of marriage and divorce include those 'sanctioned or authorised by the formal legal system, those in accordance with religious laws or customary laws and also informal marriage-like relationships which are recognised by the law for certain purposes, for example in regard to parental rights, for immigration, and in some States for property division' (Evatt 1993).

The Law Reform Commission in Australia has tackled the question of how a single legal system can make appropriate accommodation for different cultural values related to family law, including Aboriginal customary law (Law Reform Commission 1992). In areas where there are clear cultural and value divisions, Australia's signing of various international conventions which outline individual rights has guided some of its recommendations.
All societies have assumptions about 'private' matters within the family which should not be subject to state control or intervention. Relationships between men and women, the rights and responsibilities of parents and children and the issue of sexuality are often highly contested areas. As a result of the feminist movement and the greater focus on the rights of individuals in Australia, violence in families—predominantly male violence against women and children—has become much more a 'public' issue and a matter where the state intervenes.

The impact of government policies has been particularly strong and very direct for many of the families who are the focus of this book; the state has been crucial in the migration experience and in the experience of Aboriginal families. The structure and composition of immigrant families are determined to a significant extent by regulations governing entry into Australia—initial entry of individuals and family units and then entry of other family members. Assistance with settlement, including the provision of English language classes, regulation of employment and access to and appropriateness of services are also crucial in determining the experience of families.

Bottomley’s (1991) analysis of the intersection of gender, ethnicity and class in Australia illustrates some of the interconnections. Writing specifically of Greek-Australians, she describes how opportunities have been structured by the economic situation, the working conditions, and the location of employment in Australia at the time of immigration, with direct impacts on health, happiness and the structure of family life. Her comments are reflected in many of the chapters in this book. Indeed, the structure and conditions of employment loom large as critical factors fashioning experiences and affecting values.

The effect of direct state intervention is strikingly evident in relation to Aboriginal families. In Chapter 3, Eleanor and Colin Bourke explain the many ways in which previous family structures and lifestyles in Aboriginal society have been disrupted and in some cases destroyed by past government policies.

Religion and families

At a structural level, there are strong connections between religious institutions and family life. All religions include and incorporate a set of beliefs which have direct relevance for family life and relationships between family members. Religion operates to validate general notions of good and evil, the roles of men and women, and concepts of morality which impinge directly on family
structures and experience. The patriarchal nature of most religions has served to justify and support, in particular, traditional roles for men and women. Furthermore, religious affiliation is a strong factor in definitions of 'in group' and 'out group' for marriage purposes and may override cultural background in determining who is an acceptable marriage partner.

Religions span national, geographic, cultural and ethnic boundaries and may be the focus of individual (and family) identification. Participation in familiar religious observances and rituals in a new country may operate as an integrating and connecting force, even when the rituals are practised differently and the language used is unfamiliar. Onley (1990) found that women of Lebanese background in Australia identified as Catholic in a culturally diverse community, even though they were very aware of the cultural differences.

In some immigrant communities, religious institutions have played a very important role in catering not only for people's spiritual needs but also for their social, psychological and cultural needs.

Religions vary in the extent to which they accept behaviour which is contrary to moral tradition, and so too does the strength with which people hold religious views. Where the family system is strongly reinforced by religious morality, the degree of variation or deviation from the ideal is not likely to be great. For example, only a small proportion of those identifying with the Greek Orthodox, Muslim and Jewish faiths in Australia are involved in de facto relationships (Gariano 1994). In the Australian population in general, commitment to religious views tends to be associated with other views which bear directly on family life. Those who hold strong religious views are less likely to engage in premarital sex or de facto relationships, or to divorce (Glezer, Edgar and Prolisko 1992). There is, however, evidence that attitudes within religious sub-groups tend to shift over time in the same direction as attitudes across society as a whole, although not to the same degree (Glezer 1993c).

Values and families

The broad focus of the book is values which impact on families, family life and family relationships. Despite the various meanings which the term 'values' has in the social sciences, there is general agreement that it refers to beliefs which are enduring, which transcend specific objects and situations (and are therefore much broader than attitudes), and which are common to a group of
people. Values are seen as a major source of control over social conduct, although there are often great discrepancies between the verbal expression of a value and actual behaviour.

McDonald (1994) suggests that an ‘idealised family morality’ is a fundamental component of all societies, and the degree to which deviation from the ideal is permissible varies. Where the family system is reinforced by the morality of society, there will be little variation from the ideal; variation will be illegal, anti-social or contrary to the teachings of the prevailing religion and this will be policed by the strong, formal institutions of the society.

Values can be discussed at different levels. The broadest level includes statements like those made by Doherty (1992) in tracing the recent history of American families. He has identified a change from the institutional family, whose chief and defining value was responsibility, to the psychological family, whose chief value was satisfaction, to the new post-modern family whose chief value is flexibility. McDonald in Chapter 2 discusses some values in Australian society at this level of abstraction.

However, most chapters focus on issues related to ‘middle-level’ values: what constitutes a ‘family matter’ as opposed to a government, community or public matter; how families are defined (nuclear, extended, narrowly, broadly); how the roles of women and men (wives and husbands, daughters and sons) are viewed; and family obligations within and beyond the nuclear family. Also discussed are values surrounding child rearing, young people leaving home, settlement of disputes in marriage, the place of older people in families, and the interrelationship of family, work and education.

A ‘life course’ approach

Families include people of all ages—the young, the old and all those in between. Any discussion of family values needs to encompass different age groups. Key points of the family life cycle are therefore included in the framework. However, we cannot say that family life-cycle stages are universal or that families and individuals go through stages in a particular sequence. They clearly do not. Concepts of adolescence, youth, marriage, motherhood, fatherhood and old age are all dynamic and subject to readjustment and reinterpretation as social and cultural circumstances alter. Nevertheless, the following age-related stages provide a useful starting point around which to organise a discussion of values: birth; childhood and child-rearing practices; the adolescent/teenage years and socialisation into adult roles; forming a family—including marriage and cohabitation, marital relationships
and attitudes towards divorce and remarriage; middle age—including intergenerational obligations, expectations and relationships; and old age, death and bereavement.

**Migration and families**

The majority of chapters in this book are concerned with families, most of which (but not all) comprise people who have emigrated to Australia since the Second World War, or who are their descendants. Major factors which contribute to the impact of migration on families and family values are: the complex set of values, attitudes, behaviours and life experiences which people bring with them (their 'cultural background'); the circumstances of migration; the impact of migration itself, which involves leaving behind an environment that is familiar and usually integral to how people define themselves; and Australian social and economic conditions on and following arrival. Cultural background, migration, settlement and adjustment from various perspectives are discussed in some detail in many of the following chapters. This section provides a context for those discussions by outlining recent demographic trends in Australia and briefly tracing the development of immigration and settlement policies, together with the broad implications for families.

Three elements of recent immigration history and settlement policies have particular relevance for the overall picture of family values in Australia. They are the source countries from which settlers have come, the circumstances under which they arrived and the impact of settlement policies on ethnic identity. In addition, economic circumstances in Australia are a major determinant of immigration policies and have been crucial to the experience of families on their arrival.

Until the large-scale immigration programs following the Second World War, Australia was to a large extent socially and culturally homogeneous. There were settlers from other than Anglo-Celtic backgrounds, but in such small numbers that immediately after the war only 3 per cent of Australia's population had been born in places other than Britain or Ireland (Storer 1985). Australia's indigenous people were not officially included in the Australian population until the 1971 census (the first since the 1967 referendum to include Aboriginal people in population counts). The Commonwealth *Immigration Restriction Act* of 1901 and the language test which supported it severely restricted settlers from Asia until the 'White Australia Policy' was removed in 1973,
although significant moves to modify the policy began in the 1960s.

Between 1947 and 1991 the overseas-born population in Australia increased from 10 per cent to 23 per cent, with the largest increase occurring during the early post-war period. During the 1950s and 1960s large numbers of settlers arrived from the United Kingdom, Ireland and continental Europe, particularly Greece, Italy, Germany and Holland. Immigration was the 'motor of post-war expansion' (Castles 1988) and recruitment of labour was the predominant concern from the end of the Second World War until the beginning of the recession period in the 1970s.

In the immediate post-war years, the rationale for intakes of immigrant families had much more to do with increasing the pool of workers and consumers than in promoting family life. Although there was considerable rhetoric in the 1950s and 1960s about the desirability of family migration to Australia, racial preferences determined immigration policies and resulted in British and Northern European migrants being favoured over Southern Europeans. It was only when British migrants were not available in sufficient numbers that unassisted young non-Anglo-Saxon males were allowed to enter Australia (Storer 1985). After a period of work, they were able to sponsor other family members but not always under conditions of equality with British migrants. Kunek (1993) has outlined the conditions of the Dependents’ Nomination Scheme which were much more restrictive for women from Greece and Italy than for those from Northern European countries. When large groups of single men began to be seen as a ‘problem’, immigration of single females from Southern Europe was promoted. The fact that the situation had been created by a specific policy of gender and race selection was not often acknowledged.

During this period both immigration policies and administrative procedures reflected quite different views of male and female immigrants. Males were fit, able-bodied workers; women were ‘married’, ‘single’, ‘divorced’ or ‘unaccompanied’—categories which clearly defined them in relation to their marital status and relationship to a male immigrant (Fincher, Foster and Wilmot 1994). The assumption was that women would be dependent. In fact, many entered the workforce and contributed greatly to household income.

Many settlers who arrived during the first decades after the Second World War are now part of third and sometimes fourth generation families in Australia. Their family and individual experiences have begun to be recorded in literature as well as in non-fictional accounts of the post-war years and in academic research. They arrived in Australia in the era of 'familism',
described by McDonald in Chapter 2 as characterised by a strong emphasis on the nuclear family, which consisted of a breadwinner husband, a wife who was not employed and whose life was ordered around home and family, and their children. Settlement policy was based on assimilation; it was assumed that new settlers would eventually adopt Australian ways and that their separate ethnic identities would not persist for long (Castles 1988).

Complete cultural assimilation did not take place. However, the predominance of Anglo-Celtic values, in all Australian institutions but particularly in the workplace and the schools, often placed great pressures on immigrant families, created conflict between family members and sometimes threatened positive identification with their own cultures. It was not until the 1970s that any significant change occurred in official policies although the pressure for change was apparent earlier. The failure of cultural assimilation, the threat to Australian living standards with the onset of the recession and world economic restructuring, and social segmentation linked to gender, ethnicity and race led to a new national approach to diversity and to the development of policies based on the principle of multiculturalism (Castles 1988). Multiculturalism as a national ideology, and multicultural policies which promoted the maintenance of ethnic identity and cultural integrity, in many ways provided a quite different environment for immigrant families than that which the immediate post-war settlers encountered.

The 1980s saw a major change in the composition of Australia’s immigrant population with the rapid increase in numbers of arrivals from Asia and Africa, particularly from China, Hong Kong and Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia, Cambodia, Vietnam, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. Between 1981 and 1991 most birthplace groups from Asia, and those from Africa and Central and South America, showed increases of more than 30 per cent. In contrast, there was a decline or very little change in the number of new settlers born in Europe, except for Portugal and the countries which made up the former Republic of Yugoslavia. (Shu, Khoo, Struik and McKenzie 1994).

The political basis of immigration, with its associated eligibility categories for admission, determines the composition of the immigrant population and has an impact on family structure and functioning. During the 1970s and early 1980s, the earlier emphasis on labour recruitment shifted to a much greater consideration of humanitarian and family reunion factors, although economic factors remained important. In 1979 a numerical assessment was introduced, whereby immigrants were selected on the basis of weightings which reflected economic and settlement factors. With
economic recession in the early 1980s, there were cutbacks in the number of skilled workers admitted. Family immigration regulations have been modified several times and at present include ‘preferential’ and ‘concessional’ categories which are largely consistent with Anglo-Saxon notions of important relationships beyond the immediate family. In recent years, family reunion has been the largest immigration category in each year’s intake as far as the number of visas issued is concerned (BIPR 1994f).

Women and men are not evenly distributed across the four major categories of eligibility (family, skill, humanitarian and special). For example, in 1989–90, female settlers were more likely to come under family immigration arrangements than under other categories; more men than women arrived under the skill category and more women than men under the family immigration category; and men were more likely than women to arrive under the humanitarian category, consistent with the vanguard of male refugees from certain countries arriving before females. As in earlier times, women are frequently defined in terms of someone else rather than according to their own skills and capabilities because they are much less likely than men to be the ‘principal applicant’ in a family or group on whom eligibility is determined (Madden and Young 1993).

There are some strong relationships between country of birth, decade(s) of arrival and eligibility category (consistent with the notion that there are ‘waves’ of immigration at certain times), and such associations have major implications for families. However, it is important not to generalise too much from these associations. Individuals and families from most countries have arrived over extended periods of time; the experience of early arrivals is often quite different from that of later arrivals, who come to an established community. People arriving at different times confront very different economic conditions, and changing settlement and ‘ethnic affairs’ policies have provided for different experiences of cultural validation. The experiences of refugees and voluntary immigrants from the same area are very different, although broad family values are likely to be similar.

Composition of the Australian population

Census information about birthplace, language spoken at home and religion provides an overall, but incomplete, picture of cultural diversity in Australia. In 1991, 76 per cent of the population was born in Australia, and 22 per cent overseas (2 per cent did not state country of birth). The largest overseas-born group was
from the United Kingdom (7 per cent); those born in Europe made up 6 per cent and those born in Asia were 4 per cent (BIPR 1993a). Those identifying as Aboriginal made up 1.6 per cent of the total population (ABS 1993a).

When we include Australian-born residents whose parents were born overseas, with those who were born overseas, we get a better idea of ethnic origin, although only of first and second generation settlers. Since one-quarter of all Australian-born people at the 1991 census had one or both parents born overseas, the proportion of the total population who were either first or second generation immigrants was 41 per cent, an increase of 2 per cent since the 1986 census (Shu, Khoo, Struik and McKenzie 1994).

By far the largest group within the 41 per cent of the population who are first and second generation settlers comes from the United Kingdom. The largest groups with non-English-speaking background come from Italy, Greece, the countries of the former Republic of Yugoslavia, Vietnam, Germany, The Netherlands and Lebanon. Within each of these groups the proportion of people born overseas, and those born in Australia with parents born overseas, varies according to the pattern of migration. For example, the Greek-Australian and Italian-Australian populations have large proportions of both second and first generation residents, as do some other Southern European groups, Poles, the Lebanese and the Dutch, because a substantial part of immigration from these countries took place in the 1950s and 1960s and the rate has declined in recent years. By contrast, more recent arrivals, for example settlers from the Philippines, Malaysia and Hong Kong, are predominantly first generation (that is, born overseas) with a relatively small proportion of Australian-born children (second generation) (Shu, Khoo, Struik and McKenzie 1994).

Families in Australia

Variation in profiles of Australian families is associated with cultural background; however, although some differences are no doubt related to cultural and family values, arrival patterns of immigrants and age distributions of populations also have a significant effect. For example, recent immigrant groups with a younger age structure are more likely than older immigrant populations to have a larger proportion of families with young, dependent children. Care must also be taken in comparing populations: for example, marriage and divorce patterns are determined to some extent by the proportion of males and females of marriageable age in each population.

Nevertheless, census statistics indicate some differences among
cultural groups; the values underlying these differences are apparent in the chapters which follow. Family households with a reference person (person 1 on the census form) of non-English-speaking background tend to have more people on average than those where the reference person is of English-speaking background; Lebanese, Cambodian, Vietnamese and Laotian families have the highest proportion of families with six or more people. A larger family household may include more children and/or more other relatives. Families with parents born in Lebanon, Indo-China and El Salvador have a larger number of dependent and non-dependent offspring living with them than other families (BIPR 1994f).

In Australia the overwhelming majority of family households consist of only one family, although the proportion of multi-family households to all households is significantly higher for those born in Cambodia, Laos, Lebanon, Turkey, Vietnam and the Philippines (BIPR 1994f), and for Aboriginal people (ABS 1993a). Families whose reference person was born in Indo-China or the Philippines are much more likely than other families to have a parent, brother, sister or other relative living with them. The proportion of one-parent families tends to be lower among many immigrant groups than the Australian-born. This is not the case for family households with reference persons born in Cambodia, Vietnam, El Salvador, the Philippines and Taiwan (BIPR 1994f).

Changing families, changing values

A strong sense of change and movement is apparent in the chapters in this book. This section briefly discusses three factors which contribute to change in all families to varying degrees—values associated with westernisation, generational shifts and inter-marriage.

Westernisation

In Chapter 2, McDonald traces the influence on families of westernisation and the impact of its associated values of autonomy, intimacy, aspiration and acceptance. Overall, family trends in Australia mirror those found in other industrialised nations—later age at first marriage, a higher percentage who do not marry at all, first births at later ages, a drop in total fertility rates, increased rates of divorce, and an increase in the percentage of people who ‘cohabit’ or are in de facto relationships (McDonald 1995). Australia is about in the middle of a large number of
western countries as far as indices of such shifts are concerned. McDonald suggests that gender relationships, the rights of children and attitudes towards marriage are at present in a state of transition.

Clearly, there is no homogeneity of values in regard to aspects of family and family life in Australia, even among the numerically dominant 'mainstream', which has its origins in Britain and the countries of Western and Northern Europe. Class, gender, levels of education, religious and ideological differences and rural and urban environments make for some tensions. While there have been quite significant shifts in values, such as greater acceptance of young people cohabiting before marriage and greater recognition of women's roles beyond the family, other issues such as abortion, homosexuality and, indeed, many areas associated with gender roles are still the subject of sometimes hotly contested views. Despite the changes, some values associated with families and family life endure. The majority of people still marry; the majority of children are valued and loved; and families are expected to be the chief nurturing and socialising influences for children, the site for satisfying and intimate relationships for adults and children, and a major support network throughout life.

While there is no doubt that westernisation and western values have had an impact, the relationship between family structure and industrialisation is complex and there is considerable variation in contemporary family forms. Tepperman and Wilson (1993) conclude that there is no evidence of a single evolutionary path in family life, and that no simple conclusions can be drawn about 'family life and its relationship to major forces of social change like industrialisation, urbanisation, and even education' (p. 27).

Further, the spread of western values may not be the only initiator of family change. For example, the 'demographic transition' in a number of countries in Asia, characterised by falling birthrates (and related to factors such as better health care and greater emphasis on education), is associated with changes in family relationships, including the roles of women and of young people. The extension of education contributes to the extension of socially defined periods of youth and dependency, a trend we are familiar with in Australia. Poverty too plays a part and often forces adaptation and modification of traditional family patterns and forms.

Generational change

The situation of children and young people is critical in family change. They are the carriers of both continuities and discontinuit-
ies in society; they are often the focus of contrasting forces for change and stability. Young people grow up in a world which to a greater or lesser extent is different from that of their parents, so they face and therefore have to respond to a different set of circumstances. They accept some of their parents' (and society's) values, and often challenge or reject others. This does not have to be a conscious act of 'rebellion' or confrontation with parental values (although it may be). Sometimes it is merely because, as society changes, the general nature and context of growing up is different for each generation. Change of some sort is almost inevitable, but it is greatly exacerbated for young people in families which migrate.

A substantial proportion of longer settled immigrant groups in Australia are second and third generation. They are an important focus of this book, particularly in the discussion of Greek-Australian, Lebanese-Australian and Italian-Australian families. Vasta (1994) discusses the difficulties of defining the term 'second generation' and analyses the complex interactions between age, age on arrival in Australia, immigrant status and ethnic identity. She distinguishes between a statistical definition of the second generation as the Australian-born children of overseas-born parents and a socio-political definition which includes, in addition, children of overseas-born parents who arrive in infancy or childhood. Most authors in this volume adopt the second definition. Second-generation issues are, of course, not necessarily those concerned with young people; in the longer established immigrant groups, the second generation are people in their early and mid adulthood who have already formed new families of their own.

**Interrmarriage**

Interrmarriage has an especially important place in the pattern of value shifts in Australia. New forms of family patterns, child rearing and other practices are likely to result from intermarriage, to a greater or lesser degree. 'Interrmarriage' may refer to unions which cross barriers of class, language and caste, but, in general, partners differ according to race, religion, nationality or ethnicity (Cahill 1990, p. 4). To some extent, what constitutes intermarriage for those involved is determined by the socially meaningful commonalities and differences which they perceive.

Price (1993) predicts that by the turn of the century well over 40 per cent of Australia's population will be ethnically 'mixed'. 'Outmarriage' (marrying outside one's group) tends to occur less in some cultural groups than others—for example, half or more of second-generation brides of Greek, Italian, Lebanese and
Turkish origin were, in the period 1987-90, marrying within their own ethnic community, compared with less than 10 per cent of brides of Western European origin and about one-quarter of those of Chinese and Maltese origin (Price 1993).

The fact of intermixing tells us little about the adaptation and adjustments which couples and their children are required to make and the processes which occur when values are in conflict. More research is needed in the area of intermarriage and intercultural parenting. Bourke and Bourke in Chapter 3 remark on the relative ease with which some Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal couples adjust, partly because of the strength of Aboriginal family ties. Grace Soriano discusses the research on intermarriages between Filipino women and non-Filipino men in Chapter 5.

Methodology

A major aim of the book is to reflect the rich cultural diversity of Australia’s population. As noted earlier, chapters describe Aboriginal families, immigrant families from most of the main geographical source areas, and the general amalgam which can only be described as ‘Australian families’. Cultural difference, or perceived difference, from the mainstream is reflected.

Because variations in the migration experience itself affect values, directly and indirectly, different group patterns of settlement are represented. Long established and more recently arrived groups are included, as well as communities with substantial numbers in the second and third generations, and those which are predominantly first generation. Consideration is also given to immigrant populations of varying size, different demographic profiles and different motivations for settling in Australia.

Within the broad guidelines set, a good case could well be made for a different selection of chapters, and readers are bound to have varying reactions to the decisions made. It is important to emphasise that no group included is representative of any other cultural, religious or ethnic group and should not be regarded as such. For example, religion is a powerful and cohesive force, making for some similarities across different countries, but the particular historical, political, cultural and social circumstances of individual countries cannot be ignored. Countries may share a common religion but there are significant differences in the way in which religion manifests itself in different societies, and in its implications for family life and family relationships, because of diverse cultural underpinnings and political realities.

Each of the chapters is written by an author or authors from
the cultural background which is the focus of the chapter. There are advantages and disadvantages of 'insider' as opposed to 'outsider' views. However, in planning for the book, the Australian Institute of Family Studies had a strong belief that the contributors should be 'insiders'. The authors have different academic backgrounds; they come to the task with a variety of perspectives; they have very diverse life experiences. During the course of the project, they met twice as a group to discuss the aims, scope and themes of the book.

Within this broad framework, contributors were given scope to develop themes in their own way. This was thought to be essential given the diversity of the communities included, in terms of their size, demographic profile, historical and cultural background, and, for immigrant communities, their length of time in Australia and the period in which they arrived. For the same reasons, a single structure was not imposed on each chapter, nor was there an attempt to ensure theoretical consistency across all chapters. Each chapter was read for accuracy and appropriateness by one or more persons from the appropriate cultural background.

Chapters are based primarily on existing research. However, the authors' experience as researchers, writers and/or workers within their communities has added considerably to the chapters. So too has information from group discussions and/or informal consultations held, as part of the project of compiling the book, within the communities described.

Chapter themes

Because of the different starting points, each chapter makes a special contribution to the discussion of families and cultural diversity. Peter McDonald outlines the historical background of 'western' values; Eleanor Bourke and Colin Bourke discuss the unique characteristics of Aboriginal populations—the fact that they are indigenous, their special relationship with the land, their suffering as colonised peoples and the resurgence of Aboriginal nationhood and identity. In relation to two widely flung 'diasporic' populations represented in Australia—the Chinese and the Greek—Anita Mak and Helen Chan describe cultural aspects which underlie Chinese family organisation and life, and Georgina Tsolidis explores the family and cultural elements which constitute a sense of 'Greekness'.

In her chapter on Italian-Australian families, Ellie Vasta writes of continuities and transformations across generations, the different impacts of policies of assimilation and of multiculturalism on
families, and issues facing the second generation. Central themes in Trevor Batrouney's chapter on Lebanese-Australian families are generational change and the impact of varying work and education experiences on families arriving in Australia at different times. Grace Soriano discusses issues for Filipino families in Australia, in a community which is relatively youthful and which, until recently, has been characterised by a high rate of intermarriage between Filipino women and Australian and European men. Lily Amézquita, Rocio Amézquita and Renzo Vittorino emphasise the pressures for sometimes rapid change in family relationships following migration, particularly in female–male relationships. Central to Vuong Nguyen and Mai Ho's chapter on Vietnamese families is the long-term impact of the refugee experience on family and household structure and on relationships within families; they write, too, of social and cultural forces towards gradual adaptation.

Commonalities and differences

One of the most striking things to emerge from the chapters is the similarity and consistency of some family-related values across the various groups. There is strong attachment to family (both extended and nuclear); children are regarded as especially important; expectations of strong family support and cohesiveness are common; community and neighbourhood networks are highly valued; age and the elderly are frequently given special respect. In some cultures, there is a strong tradition whereby forms of social interaction and appropriate behaviour are regulated according to age. Notions of honour and shame and the importance of women in relation to these are also evident in a number of groups. In cultures as diverse as Aboriginal, Greek and Chinese, the connections between family and cultural identity are particularly strong. Although Aboriginal families are undoubtedly set apart by the nature of the dispossession and disruption experienced in the past 200 years, and by their status as an indigenous people, core values, such as attachment to extended family and respect for elders, are not dissimilar to those of some immigrant groups.

Strong attachments to family and the crucial nature of family support are manifested in many ways. The Latin American authors outline the part played by extended family members in helping to maintain family cohesion during settlement; Nguyen and Ho in Chapter 10 and Soriano in Chapter 5 write of the crucial support which families provide for newly arrived relatives who are trying to establish themselves. Nguyen and Ho also remind us that the
arrival of new settlers tends to reinforce 'Vietnamese' values, but at the same time those new arrivals tend to be more rapidly socialised into 'Australian' ways. Bourke and Bourke suggest that cultural preference (as well as financial pressure) play a part in Aboriginal families living in multi-family households.

Maintaining connections with family members overseas (sometimes scattered in a number of countries) is a common theme for families of immigrant background; so too is sponsorship of family members and financial assistance to those left behind. For some, family business connections are maintained. Close neighbourhood support networks traditionally serve to extend family support in some communities. Vietnamese families in Australia try to duplicate this pattern in some ways by living near other Vietnamese families.

Batrouney, in discussing Lebanese families, shows us that values related to work, such as diligence and thrift, may be closely related to family life, relationships and cohesiveness. The high value placed on education in most immigrant communities serves to provide opportunities for upward social mobility and financial stability. Anita Mak and Helen Chan describe how, for Chinese families, educational achievement also contributes to family honour and status.

There are common pressure points which have significant implications for family relationships and which may lead to gradual value shifts. Families of immigrant background, Aboriginal families and the 'mainstream amalgam' share at least some of these pressures. Separation from close kin and the need to adapt to life in an urban setting disrupt previous patterns of family support. Extended family networks and the close and supportive ties which they provide have been significantly modified for many immigrant families and (for different reasons) Aboriginal families. Often, kin are not available for practical support and advice with a resulting shift in family patterns and relationships. The absence of older family and community members may leave a gap which is hard to fill within communities where authority is vested in the aged and the older generation represents stability and cultural continuity. Aboriginal people have been separated from close kin and supportive family and social networks as a result of past government policies.

Not surprisingly, tensions created by conflicting and/or shifting values are most evident in key family relationships—between husbands and wives (and men and women in general), parents and adolescent children, and older people and their adult offspring. The roles of men and women and relationships between them are contested to a greater or lesser extent in all groups; the effects
are particularly evident in some recently arrived immigrant communities. Women's entry into the workforce is widely perceived as crucial in the changing position of women.

Unemployment has had widespread impacts on families, and has contributed to changing roles and relationships in both long settled and recently arrived immigrant groups, particularly where women become sole breadwinners and men are unable to find work. Vietnamese and Lebanese families, who have very high rates of unemployment, are particularly affected.

Rearing children in a new or an alien society presents families with dilemmas. The lack of English proficiency of parents and the increasing English proficiency of their children changes the relationship between parents and children. Parents' concern to ensure validation of their own culture, while acknowledging that some adjustments have to be made, is a common theme. For example, Nguyen and Ho describe a variety of ways in which Vietnamese parents try to handle the potential conflicts. Vasta discusses the importance of cultural validation for young Italians and the effect of racism and assimilationist policies on the experiences of those who grew up in the 1960s and 1970s. Bourke and Bourke refer to the importance of cultural validation for young Aboriginal people. Tensions are caused by older people finding that they no longer exercise the cultural authority they once did. Strongly held values about responsibility for parents and general respect for the aged come into conflict with the reality of families' limited time and resources.

Underlying many of these pressure points is the conflict which arises for families from collectivist-oriented cultures when confronted with the individualism which predominates in Australia. This is perhaps most clearly articulated in the chapters discussing Chinese and Vietnamese families, but has echoes in most other chapters. Mak and Chan suggest that achieving security and prosperity may be the only fundamental Chinese family value that has not been weakened in Australia, because western societies also value achievement.

Language plays a crucial part in the ethnic identity of many communities, although its importance in this regard seems to vary across cultures (Clyne 1991b). In diasporic communities, such as the Chinese, it has served to unite people from very different countries (Ho and Kee 1988a). Maintaining the first language and the learning of English have key roles in settlement, family experience and acculturation of immigrant groups.

While common pressures on families are relatively easy to identify, families from different cultural backgrounds tend to respond in different ways; and while there are unquestionably
tensions for families, the overall picture is not simply one of conflict. Several contributors remind us that families and individuals have very different resources, react in different ways and therefore adjust to the tensions to a greater or lesser degree. Even when cultural values are very different from those of the mainstream, the outcomes for families can be quite positive.

Of interest also are indications that the numerically dominant mainstream is often perceived as more homogenous than it really is, no doubt reflecting, in part, restricted points of contact between different cultural groups.

There is a strong sense of change over generations and variability within communities in most of the chapters in this book. In some, there is evidence that separate cultural identities are becoming blurred; bicultural, or even multicultural, identities are emerging. Again, both the process and the expression of biculturalism varies according to the particular cultural background. Batrouney outlines the accommodation of different generations and cultures in Lebanese families. Tsolidis describes the many faces of Greeks in Australia and the complex ways in which individual Greek identities are expressed as a result of interaction, not only with 'mainstream' Australian values but also with those of other 'immigrant' cultures. Nguyen and Ho identify the beginnings of biculturalism in the Vietnamese community. Vasta describes the changes wrought in both 'mainstream' and 'immigrant' people by the intermixture of values and behaviours. At the same time, she identifies a 'return' on the part of second-generation Italians to some elements of Italian culture and identity, albeit expressed in different ways from those of their parents.

Large gaps are apparent in the research on families and issues pertaining to family values, certainly in relation to recently arrived communities such as those from Latin America, but also in respect of longer established immigrant communities and Aboriginal families. More research, particularly into second-generation issues, young people and their families, intermarriage and the adjustment of older people would contribute to a greater understanding of changing values.

Together, the chapters portray in part the broad commonalities and differences between cultures as they relate to families. Each presents something of both the idealised value systems which guide family life in different cultures and the actual day-to-day issues which families face. Research findings and important emerging issues for families are discussed. Overall, the book presents a background picture against which individual families and the experience of people within them can be examined. Above all, it reflects the centrality of families—as a point of reference for
individual behaviour, as an institution in which major contemporary social issues and relationships are played out, and as a site for social change.

Chapter note

On a point of style, we have chosen to refer to people born in a particular country using the adjectival form of the country's name rather than the name of the country itself. Thus we use, for example, 'Italian-born people' rather than 'Italy-born people', 'Chinese-born immigrants' rather than 'China-born immigrants', and 'Greek-born residents' rather than 'Greece-born residents'. While our usage differs from the style adopted in reporting census statistics and perhaps lacks that style's precision, we believe our approach more closely reflects everyday usage.
The values and behaviour of the broad community of all Australians are properly described as ‘Australian’. They are an amalgam of the values which different communities in Australia have brought to the national scene over long periods of time; nevertheless the predominance of ‘western’ family values is undeniable. This chapter traces the western historical roots of family values in Australia and explores the main trends in family values in the broad Australian community.

The diversity of family values in Australia includes the values of all the groups described in other chapters of this book, but it also includes the values of all other Australians. The numerically dominant people among all other Australians are those of Western and Northern European origin, sometimes described as ‘Anglo-Australian’. This term is quite inaccurate in a literal sense but relatively indicative in a cultural sense. It is inaccurate because it would be foolish to attempt to isolate those Australians of English origin and describe their values and behaviour; it is relatively indicative, however, because the demography of Australian families has always been very similar to that in England (McDonald 1974), and the legal system, the ultimate expression of values, is a derivative of the English legal system.

Through extensive intermarriage over the past 200 years, the main groups that have come to Australia from Northern and Western Europe (the English, Irish, Scottish, Welsh, German, Dutch and Scandinavian) are largely indistinguishable from each other in terms of family values. McConville (1985) and Hellier
26 FAMILIES AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

(1985) describe how Irish and Scottish Highlanders in colonial Australia intermarried extensively with the English, to the extent that their particular ethnic groups failed to stay together as families. McEwen (1985) concluded on this evidence that inter-marriage explains the all-pervading Englishness of Australian culture until 1946. Added to this, there is now a very substantial group among the non-Aboriginal population who recognise little origin other than Australia. In total, this numerically dominant group could be described as having western family values in the general or international sense.

Studies of changing demographic behaviour in relation to family life show that western societies have very similar patterns and that shifts in behaviour have occurred roughly simultaneously in all western societies (van de Kaa 1987). Movements in the timing of marriage over the past century provide an outstanding example of the similarity of family-related behaviour across western societies. This is not to say that family values and behaviour in western societies are mirror images of each other; there are differences for example in the forms of contraception used and the incidence of ex-nuptial births, and differences in the timing of the adoption of new values and behaviour. Some commentators prefer to emphasise the differences, for example Lestaeghe and Surkyn's (1994) notion of 'heteropraxis', or the coexistence of a plurality of values, while others emphasise the similarities, for example van de Kaa's second European demographic transition. All agree, however, that in broad terms western family values are moving in the same general direction. In terms of comparison, McNicoll (1990) says that Australia is not in the forefront of family change but follows along.

It is important, therefore, to consider 'western' family values in contrast to the values described in other chapters in this book which refer to groups who are 'non-western' in origin. This approach recognises the significance of the international influence of westernisation. Numerically smaller cultures in Australia are not simply dealing with differences between their own culture and the dominant Australian culture; they are dealing with global changes which are influencing family behaviour in Australia and in their countries of origin.

The European origins of westernisation

In its archetypal form, westernisation can be defined as the extension of rights to individuals as opposed to the limitation of those rights in the collective interest. In contrast, eastern philos-
philosophies such as Confucianism place more importance on the collective interest of social units, especially the family, as opposed to the interests of the individual. This tension between the individual and the collective good was the problem that exercised the minds of the Enlightenment philosophers: how to reconcile the goal of personal autonomy with the conviction that humankind is irreducibly social. Kant defined personal autonomy as the individual's capacity for self-direction (Hawthorn 1987). The opposite extreme is prescription, where an individual's actions are very largely prescribed by their place in the social structure. The Enlightenment was a reaction to such prescription, based on beliefs that an individual's situation was not immutable, nor predetermined by the collective interest.

Much of the early energy in the Enlightenment movement was directed to the political and economic spheres and to the public world, predominantly a male sphere, rather than the private world of the family. At the time, economic and political structures in Western and Northern Europe were not contingent upon family organisation, as they were and still are in many other societies. Contrary to popular myth and sociological theory, the extended family household was not dominant in these countries prior to the onset of the Industrial Revolution. Rather, careful reconstructions of past populations in Western and Northern Europe reveal the predominance of the nuclear family household centuries before the onset of the Industrial Revolution (Laslett and Wall 1972).

It is now postulated by this school of thought that the nuclear family household in England has its origins as far back as the Christian revolution in the fourth century (Goldthorpe 1987). It was from about that time that the Church introduced restrictions on marriage and inheritance which had the effect of increasing its own wealth while weakening links in the wider kin network. It promoted a change in land tenure from 'folkland', land held in customary tenure by a kin group, to 'bookland', land held by an individual or individuals under a written title deed and subject to the written will of the landholder (Goody 1983). From this point of view, the origins of western individualism in Europe can be traced back to the actions of the Christian Church some 16 centuries ago.

Thus, because the tribal or clan form of family organisation was not part of the political structure in Western and Northern Europe at the time of the Enlightenment, everyday life operated in two spheres, the public and the private. Political and economic autonomy could be pursued in the public sphere without affecting the structural aspects of the private sphere of family life. Autonomy and social mobility were pursued through such mechanisms
as democracy, free competition, freedom of religious practice, and ownership of property. The separation of the public and the private spheres meant that the autonomy of members of a family was embodied in the autonomy of the household head. Indeed, one of the earliest English laws dealing with the family, the *Marriage Act 1753*, prevented children under the age of majority (defined for the first time by this Act as 21 years) from marrying without their father’s permission. The purpose was to protect the father’s property. The private sphere was also protected by the absence of laws in respect of divorce. Most eastern cultures, in contrast, have had legal provisions for divorce but, because the family is an integral part of the socio-economic structure, extreme social pressure has been used to prevent divorce (McDonald 1985).

By the time the western New World was born, the ideas of the freer pursuit of personal autonomy, social mobility and equality had already been unleashed in the Old World. Therefore, especially in the United States and to a lesser extent in the Australian colonies, the ideas of the Enlightenment could be set in operation away from the rigidities of the Old World class system.

**Australian family values: 1830–1940**

Historical studies of English towns and villages have shown that before and after the Industrial Revolution young couples were expected to set up their own separate households and, indeed, that older persons were also expected, very largely, to live separately from their children (Laslett 1989). If industrialisation had any impact on family structure, it was to increase the incidence of extended family households among working people in towns and cities where there was a severe housing shortage (Anderson 1971). This would have been the situation in the towns and cities of the Australian colonies in the mid-nineteenth century.

By the late nineteenth century, however, with increased prosperity, the spread of railway lines, suburbanisation of the middle class, the extension of credit to working families and the building of urban workers’ cottages (Cannon 1966; Davison 1978), extended families in the central city would have declined in significance and the nuclear family household would again have predominated. The infrequency of extended family households has been confirmed by studies of the late nineteenth century in Australia (McDonald and Quiggin 1985; McEwen 1985).

The fact is sometimes overlooked that, because of high rates of spousal mortality, for both husbands (occupational accidents) and for wives (deaths in childbirth), around 17 per cent of all
families with children in 1891 were one-parent families, the same level as today (McDonald 1993). Indeed, despite the currently high divorce rates, marriages today are more likely to be still intact after 30 years than were marriages 100 years ago.

The nineteenth century is marked by the extension of the value of personal autonomy into the private sphere of the family. The main features of this were the establishment of laws relating to divorce and the payment of child maintenance, married women's rights to own property, compulsory schooling, child labour laws, women's suffrage and, most significantly, the spread of birth control methods. Noting that the decline in the birth rate in the late nineteenth century was achieved through methods which required the cooperation of husbands and wives, Quiggin (1988) suggested that this indicated 'a changing attitude to women, including a belief that they should not be subjected to an unremitting cycle of pregnancy, childbirth and lactation', a cycle which not uncommonly ended in death. Quiggin concluded that 'the use of fertility control was a logical approach to [a woman] maintaining some freedom and control over her life'.

Although, following English law, divorce provisions in the Australian colonies were not equal for men and women, legislators in the late nineteenth century argued that deserted wives should be allowed the freedom to remarry, rather than being forced to seek support for themselves and their children on the streets.

This movement to provide a greater level of autonomy to women and children within the family setting did not proceed without opposition. The chapter dealing with this period in Landmarks in Australian Population History (Australian Population Association 1988) is appropriately titled 'The selfishness of women', as conservatives saw increasing autonomy for women, particularly control over their own fertility, as undermining the family and the future of the new nation.

Another feature of the late nineteenth century in western societies was the growth of the middle class and of middle class values in relation to the family. Foremost among these were the values of prudence, aspiration and social acceptance. These are epitomised by the emergence of discussion about the proper time to marry. This debate of the 1860s and 1870s in England was prominent in the colonies by the 1880s. It was considered improper to marry until a couple were able to live at a respectable standard. Business houses, for example, prevented their clerks from marrying until they had reached an age and salary at which they could maintain a family at a level appropriate to the standing of the firm. Middle-class values were extended into the working class in the prosperous 1880s with the reward for prudence being
access to a worker's cottage. As a consequence, marriages occurred at relatively late ages and a relatively high proportion of people, around 15 per cent, did not marry at all. Some thought that this prudence went too far; the issue of ‘Why won't our young men marry?’ was debated in the middle class press of the time (McDon­ald 1974).

The long period of relative prosperity ended in Australia with the collapse of the 1880s property boom and the severe depression in the 1890s. Better economic times did not return until the 1920s. As a consequence of the depression and the First World War, the liberalising of personal and family values largely stalled, although the birth rate continued to decline throughout this period. Again, the values of aspiration and acceptance flourished, marked in the arena of family values by the emergence of ‘scientific parenting’ or the science of being a good wife and mother. A mother was to be judged on and held responsible for the successful development of her children and for her husband’s happiness.

The era witnessed the emergence of the ‘traditional’ family in which a woman devoted all of her time to the care of her husband and children. So that her children would be successful, a wife and mother placed emphasis on the quality of children as distinct from their quantity (Reiger 1985). In Australia, the Harvester Judgement in 1906 entrenched the notion of the traditional family through the creation of the basic wage—the foundation of wage-setting policy until the 1970s. The basic wage was an amount considered sufficient for a man to support a wife and three children at a basic level. For many years, arguments against the basic wage system revolved around the fact that it was paid to men who did not have families, not the fact that it was paid to men whose wives also worked.

During the 1920s, with the return of economic prosperity, a relatively new aspect of personal autonomy became more widely accepted. This involved a sexual revolution especially centred on the culture of young single people. Intimacy and the quality of relationships were promoted. The new medium of film helped to market such a perspective.

The birth rate continued to decline and, with the onset of economic depression in the 1930s, fell to levels below long-term replacement. Marriage was also delayed to very late ages in the 1930s. Again, the liberalising of personal values stalled while people dealt with the economic imperative of unemployment. The attention of social reformers was concentrated on the public sphere rather than the private, especially on the relief of unem­ployment.
A framework for considering contemporary family values

The preceding discussion has identified four broad value orientations within which western and Australian family values changed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They are autonomy, intimacy, aspiration and acceptance. **Autonomy** is the individual's capacity for self-direction; that is, the extent to which they are able to determine their own patterns of behaviour and their life paths. Individuals have a strong need for **intimacy** with others and, especially, one particular other. As social beings, they have a need for love, affection, familiarity, friendship and sexual intimacy. Individuals have **aspirations** for success and achievement, both for themselves and for their children. Aspirations can vary widely but commonly include education, occupation, housing, both economic and personal security, and having a family and children. Individuals seek **social acceptance** for the paths that they choose. Most important is acceptance from the immediate circle of family and friends, but acceptance in terms of the broader values or morality of the society or sub-culture is also important.

These value orientations are all expressed as individual needs as distinct from communal needs. In the following discussion, changes in family and relationship behaviour in the West and in Australia in the past 50 years are seen as 'explorations' in which societies have attempted to reconcile the conflicting needs of individuals for personal autonomy, intimacy, aspiration and acceptance without moving too far or too quickly from the prevailing social and economic structure or the prevailing idealised family morality (or ideology). Changing behaviours are described as exploratory because it is evident from the perspective of historical hindsight that some attempts at compromise between the liberal and the conservative have failed and new directions have been sought.

In this framework, social structures or institutions are primarily elements of conservatism, while individual needs are primarily elements of liberalism. The term 'liberal' is used in preference to 'progressive', as applied by van de Kaa (1987), because 'liberal' better conveys the notion that future directions will be the result of exploratory processes rather than a predetermined path. 'Liberal' also better accommodates the coexistence of a plurality of values within the same society.

The era of familism: 1940–70

At the end of the 1930s couples married at relatively late ages; a
high proportion, around 15 per cent of people, did not marry at all; the divorce rate was low; the birth rate was low; and most married women were not in paid employment. In 1933, for example, the labour force participation rate for married women of working age was only 5 per cent.

With the onset of the Second World War the youth culture that had surfaced in the 1920s re-emerged, seemingly fostered by the emphasis on youth that the war itself provided. The younger generation had a greater freedom to socialise with each other. The need for intimacy, the thought that someone cared especially about you, was stimulated by the prevailing uncertainty. This, combined with the wartime sense of ‘now or never’, led to a sharp drop in the age at which people married. Most contemporary observers considered that this was a passing phenomenon stimulated by the social disruption of the war. A return to a more prudent approach was predicted for the post-war years (McDonald 1974).

Instead of a return to former patterns of behaviour, however, the war ushered in a new era of familism in which people married at unprecedentedly early ages and the proportion who married rose almost to levels which applied in eastern countries. The marriage boom stimulated the well-known post-war baby boom. While the baby boom was largely the result of the shift to early marriage, women during this era had more children than did their predecessors in the 1930s and 1940s. Divorce rates actually fell during the 1950s from the somewhat higher levels that applied in the immediate post-war years.

Marriage in these years was the rite of passage which signified independence from the parent generation. Thus young people saw early marriage as their path to autonomy from parents. At the same time, it met their needs for sexual intimacy in the only way that was then socially acceptable. Economic conditions were such that occupational aspirations for men could be pursued and economic security seemed assured for the family as a whole. In the early years of this trend there was a housing shortage, which meant that many young couples began their marriages by sharing their housing with other family members, but most saw this, correctly, as a temporary situation. Societal values were also adjusted to provide approval for the new pattern of behaviour. Ehrenreich (1983), for example, reports that academic psychologists in the 1950s defined people as deviant if they did not want to marry and have children, or if they wanted to divorce. Thus not only was early marriage acceptable behaviour, it also became desirable behaviour. This was also the time at which attachment theory came to prominence (Bowlby 1952). Mirroring Freud's theory of maternal deprivation, Bowlby stated that the significant
other to whom a child related could only be the child’s mother (or mother substitute). The father’s role in the child’s life was to be the breadwinner and to keep the mother in a ‘harmonious, contented mood’.

To the structural-functional sociologists of the 1950s the modern nuclear family of father, mother and children, with the mother not in paid employment, was better equipped than other family forms to operate in the modern economy which revolved around individual achievement and social and geographic mobility. This family type was seen to have emerged through a process of differentiation as social units became more specialised in modernising societies (Parsons and Bales 1955). Thus the ideal of the breadwinner model of the family was reaffirmed.

The reasons for this new era of familism are a matter of speculation, but it is evident that early family formation was supported by a sustained period of economic growth. In this climate there was less need for young people to be cautious about the future. With a low rate of unemployment and low interest rates, housing affordability was generally not a problem for most young people. Large-scale industry moved to the edges of the major cities and working class people moved to the fringes of the city as new housing spread across the paddocks and market gardens. One of the most important of all Australian family values, that of owning a detached house with its own backyard, was greatly reinforced during this era.

There may also have been psychological dimensions to the era of familism. Perhaps, after several decades of war and economic depression, there was a sense of wishing to ‘perfect’ the private sphere of life, to live out the idealised morality of the nuclear family (McDonald 1974). For the individual, the emphasis was on aspiration and acceptance, but early marriage was also seen as providing autonomy and intimacy.

The period following the Second World War was also marked by a change in the composition of immigration to Australia. Very large numbers of people arrived from non-English-speaking European countries, initially from Eastern Europe and later from Southern Europe. These people brought with them family values and structures which were different from those of Britain and Western Europe. Hajnal (1965), for example, has shown that family behaviour east of a line drawn from Leningrad to Trieste was different from that to the west of this line. To the east, people married at much younger ages and often lived in extended family households. The new western marriage pattern was therefore not so new to those from the east.

The movement from Eastern Europe contained a considerable
excess of single men, and many of these men married Australian women of British origin. The ensuing ‘shortage’ of single women led to very high rates of marriage for women. Less than 5 per cent of women in this generation never married compared to around 9 per cent of men (McDonald 1974). The ‘shortage’ also promoted somewhat earlier marriage among Australian women.

It is arguable that the extended family patterns brought by the new immigrants may have stimulated a stronger sense of value attached to the extended family more generally. There was an ambivalence in the way that some Australians of western origin viewed the extended family patterns of the new immigrants. On the one hand they were opposed to interference in the affairs of young couples by the older generation; on the other, they admired and envied the caring and support that was provided through extended families, and the strong sense of family that the new immigrants had.

However, there was also a lack of tolerance or understanding for ‘unusual’ family arrangements which had arisen through the disruption of the lives of many Eastern European immigrants and for the many men who remained single.

The pattern of early family formation and low divorce rates continued through most of the 1960s. By 1971, almost one-third of all Australian women had married in their teenage years. Early marriage, at the time, was associated with a strong likelihood of the woman being pregnant at the time of the marriage. In the latter part of the 1960s, about one-quarter of all women marrying for the first time were pregnant at the time of their marriage (McDonald 1988). The total fertility rate (average number of births per woman based on the age-specific birth rates of a given year) was still close to three births per woman in 1971. The breadwinner model of the family was supported by the continuance of the system of the basic wage and, until 1966, women, on marriage, were still required to resign from the Australian Public Service.

But the seeds of change were already evident as early as the 1950s. Although many women had worked during the war, most were obliged to return to their homes afterwards to free their jobs for men. Nevertheless, the labour force participation rate for Australian women in the prime working ages increased during the 1950s from around 8 per cent to around 20 per cent. The wartime experience of paid employment for women seems to have had a more lasting impact. The trend to higher labour force participation was led by women from Eastern and Southern Europe who, as the 1961 census showed, were much more likely to be in the workforce than women of western origin (CBCS 1967, p.268).
This may be another instance where the behaviour of the new immigrants had a more general impact. In relation to men, Ehrenreich (1983) has described the beginnings in the 1950s of a flight from commitment, made manifest in the so-called ‘beat’ generation.

A surge of expression for personal autonomy then burst out in the 1960s, particularly among the younger generation. This initially found expression in many public causes such as nuclear disarmament, resistance to the war in Vietnam, civil rights in the United States, opposition to apartheid and the more general promotion of human rights. However, almost simultaneously, demands arose for greater personal autonomy for individuals in the private sphere. This included access to abortion and contraception, no-fault divorce, decriminalisation of homosexual relationships, the lifting of employment restrictions on married women, changes in the philosophy of education towards creative thinking by the individual, and parenting which provided a right for the child to be heard.

The 1960s were the time of debate, the 1970s the time of widespread implementation of new individual rights. From the perspective of values, this shift has been described by some observers as a shift to selfish individualism or narcissism and its proponents have been labelled as the ‘me generation’ (for example, Lasch 1980). While it is true that greater personal autonomy provides more scope for the moral value of ‘selfish’ individualism to apply, it is important to point out that the concept of autonomy refers only to the individual having the capacity for self-direction. From this perspective, the idealistic aim of the reformers of the 1960s and 1970s was to achieve ‘selfless’ individualism; that is, to produce a world of competent, autonomous individuals who would relate to each other, not in prescribed ways, but through negotiation and respect for each other’s humanity.

**Feminism and western family change**

While the value shift towards greater personal autonomy in the 1960s and 1970s can be seen in general terms, its most important expression has been in the form of the continuing feminist movement. Feminism, in this instance defined simply as equal rights for women, has had profound effects on families in western countries in the past 30 years. It is associated with the shift to much later ages at marriage, greater access to reliable means of control over fertility for all women, declines in birth rates, alternative living arrangements, increases in divorce rates, shifts in public policy to
support the labour force participation of women, increased educational opportunities for women, and redefinition of the respective roles of men and women.

In Australia there have been a number of major milestones in the feminist movement: the setting up of the Women's Bureau by the Federal Government (1963); the ending of the requirement that married women resign from public sector employment on marriage (1966); the decriminalisation of abortion (Victoria in 1969, New South Wales in 1971); the introduction of equal pay and the abolition of the basic wage system (1972); the passage of the Child Care Act (1972); the introduction of the supporting mother's benefit (1973); the introduction of paid maternity leave in the public sector (1973); the appointment of the first women's adviser to the Prime Minister (1973); the Family Law Act (1975); the extension of maternity leave to private sector workers (1979); the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1983); sex discrimination legislation (1984); the introduction of Child Care Assistance (1984); affirmative action and equal employment opportunity legislation (1986); the introduction of the Child Support Scheme (1989); the introduction of parental leave (1991); the ratification of ILO Convention 156 on workers with family responsibilities (1991). Income support for families with children was increased during this period and there has been a shift towards support through periodic cash payments to the principal carer rather than tax rebates or deductions which conventionally benefit the father.

These formal changes have been accompanied by considerable changes in women's lives. In the prime working ages, labour force participation rates of married women increased from around 20 per cent in 1961 to 60–70 per cent in 1991. Wages of women employed full-time have risen, on average, to 80 per cent of those for men employed full-time. Education levels for women have risen to the extent that women are now more likely than men to complete secondary school and to enter university. For example, among those aged 15–19 years at the 1991 census, 69 per cent of girls and 62 per cent of boys were in full-time education. For those aged 20–24, the percentages were 14 per cent for males and 16 per cent for females. In 1961, 24 per cent of females aged 15–19 and 1 per cent of females aged 20–24 were in full-time education. A recent study found that parents, particularly working class parents, have higher educational aspirations for their daughters than for their sons (McDonald, Brownlee and Greenblat 1993).

There has been an enormous shift in the ways in which women
define their life roles. In 1971, almost 80 per cent of young married women agreed that motherhood was their most important role in life, a view held by only just over 30 per cent by 1991. Also by 1991, only some 10 per cent of young married women agreed that a woman is really fulfilled only when she becomes a mother, or that important decisions should be made by the husband (Edgar and Glezer 1992). The 1970s picture of the young mother isolated without transport in the outer suburbs was turned on its head in the 1980s as women in the suburbs went out to work and obtained their own driving licences and their own cars. For example, in five outer suburban areas included in the Australian Living Standards Study conducted by the Australian Institute of Family Studies, only 14 per cent of mothers whose husbands worked were left at home without a car during the day. Sixty per cent of these families had two cars and more than 90 per cent of mothers had driver's licences (unpublished data).

Nevertheless, women are still much more likely to be employed part-time than men and this reflects a preference on the part of women for part-time employment when their children are young (VandenHeuvel 1991a). On the other hand a majority of prime age men (those aged 25-54) who are employed part-time would prefer to work full-time but are unable to find full-time work (ABS 1994a). Furthermore, a study of the effects on young people of the unemployment of their parents shows that there is a significant negative impact only when the father is unemployed (Weston 1993). Thus, despite changes in the definition of women's roles and the extension of various rights to women, gender role differences within a family context are still evident.

Intimate relationships

The focus of this section is on the formation and nature of heterosexual relationships. There has been very little research into same-sex relationships in Australia; even the incidence is unknown. It is apparent, however, that Australians are now much more open about same-sex relationships and more tolerant of them than was the case prior to the 1970s. The incidence of same-sex relationships will be measured by the 1996 census. Nevertheless, for most legal purposes, same-sex relationships do not have the same level of recognition as heterosexual relationships.

The pattern of unprecedented low ages at first marriage, which applied in Australia from the 1940s through the 1960s, was dramatically reversed from the mid-1970s onwards. Between 1972 and 1991 the percentage of women married by their twentieth
birthday fell from 33 per cent to 5 per cent and the percentage married by their twenty-fifth birthday fell from 83 per cent to 47 per cent (McDonald 1991b). Similar trends are evident in all other western countries.

The experiment with early marriage in the 1940–70 period proved to be an almost complete failure. The breakup rate for early marriages was very high, being two-thirds for those who married as teenagers. Early marriage and childbearing were seen to be antithetical to women's rising aspirations. The vulnerable position of women who had not developed an earning capacity was evident from the poverty rates among sole-parent mothers. Furthermore, economic insecurity in the 1970s meant that economic aspirations were put at risk by early childbearing. The social acceptance of early marriage collapsed in a very short period. Today, Australians marry at later ages than they have ever done before.

It can be argued that the revolution in the technology of contraception in the 1960s had a great deal to do with facilitating this change. The early marriage experiment was a compromise reached in the context of a fear of pregnancy and the shame attached to having an 'illegitimate' child. During this era babies born outside marriage were adopted out, often without the mother even seeing the child. The technological changes of the 1960s, together with liberalisation of the restrictions on abortion, gave women control, for the first time, over their own fertility without male cooperation.

From the 1970s it has become increasingly acceptable for couples to live together without being married. For example, in 1975, 16 per cent of all couples marrying had lived together beforehand; by 1992, this percentage had risen to 56 per cent (ABS 1994a). Living together, or cohabiting relationships, provide young people with autonomy from parents and the intimacy that early marriage had previously provided and, through the use of effective contraception, enable both partners to pursue work and other opportunities without the responsibilities of children.

Of course, early marriage with contraception would provide the same results and this option was experimented with for a very short period at the end of the 1960s. However, living together is also seen as providing more individual autonomy within the relationship than is the case with marriage. Indeed, research has shown that there is generally more 'separateness' in cohabiting relationships than there is in marriages, especially in respect of the organisation of finances. Those who have cohabited score more highly on a measure of individualism in relationships. Cohabiting is also associated with not being religious, with higher
educational levels and with being ‘western’ in origin (Glezer 1993a and 1993b). By the end of the 1980s it had become the majority view in Australia that couples should live together for a time before marrying (VandenHeuvel 1991a).

Relationships, whether marriage or cohabitation, are expected to be exclusive. The idea of ‘open marriage’ received some currency in the 1970s, but has been largely dismissed as an affront to the ideal of intimacy in committed relationships.

Changing roles within relationships

The role of the wife and mother as principal keeper of the home and nurturer of the family, which came to prominence in the era of scientific parenting and became entrenched in the post-war era of familism, has remained. In most couple relationships the male is the principal breadwinner and the wife’s income is seen as supplementary. A majority of mothers still prefer to work part-time. In the late 1980s about half of all men and women agreed that ‘family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job’ (Glezer 1991a; VandenHeuvel 1991b). As a consequence, women tend to have interrupted working careers and consequently lower earning power than their male partners (Beggs and Chapman 1988). In a choice between whose career will be favoured, the man’s or the woman’s, the man’s will usually be preferred.

A traditional division of domestic tasks is still largely in place. Wives continue to do the lion’s share of tasks such as laundry, cleaning the bathroom, vacuuming, cooking, grocery shopping and the dishes, while lawn mowing and household repairs are men’s activities. Mothers also predominate in looking after the children, for example in caring for sick children or taking children to activities or appointments. Less traditional arrangements are more likely where the wife works full-time, and in cohabiting relationships and second marriages (Glezer 1991a; Glezer 1993a; Weston and McDonald 1991).

However, the roles of men and women are gradually changing with each successive generation. Only 20–30 per cent of men and women now support very traditional precepts such as ‘a husband’s job is to earn money, a wife’s to look after the home and family’ or ‘a married woman should not attach much importance to career’ (VandenHeuvel 1991b).

In the next generation (those now younger than 25 years), gender roles are likely to become much more mixed. The next generation of young women have grown up in a milieu in which their future education and career prospects have received equal
attention to those of their brothers. Indeed, young women, on average, have moved in the direction of even higher qualifications than young men and, in many ways, they are being better equipped for the future labour market than some of their male counterparts. The next trend is for women to move away from the secondary-earner role and to become an equal earner or, in many cases, the primary earner. This is already observed in professional couples living in the gentrified inner suburbs of major cities.

Higher wage rates for women in the future imply adjustment in relationships. There will be many more cases where the wife will attract a higher wage than the husband and hence, where accommodation of one to the other is required, the economically rational decision will be to invest in the wife's career rather than the husband's. Rather than gender roles per se, the inequality between men and women, whatever the direction, will be the problem of the future.

An important point to be made is that attitudes about the nature of relationships in western societies are becoming increasingly pluralistic. That is, there is an extent to which couples are now able to choose their own form of relationship to suit their own particular circumstances or values.

Relationship breakdown

One of the most important manifestations of the pursuit of autonomy and intimacy for individuals has been the greater frequency and greater social acceptance of divorce. The divorce rate throughout the 1950s and most of the 1960s was fixed at around 10 per cent of marriages ending in divorce. The rate began to rise from about 1968 and, in response to the demand for a freer approach, the law was liberalised in 1975 to permit unilateral divorce following a one-year separation period. All divorces, from the perspective of the law, were to be 'no fault' divorces. In less than a decade from the point at which the divorce rate began to rise, a new threshold of around 35-40 per cent of marriages ending in divorce was established. The sudden rise obviously reflected a pent-up demand for easier access to divorce, an eventuality which had been held in check by social attitudes during the era of familism (Carmichael and McDonald 1986).

Concomitant with the changes in the law of divorce, a new supporting mother's benefit was introduced in 1973, which provided basic income support to mothers who wished to leave an unsatisfactory relationship. Before this, women who did not have access to a basic income did not have the same opportunity as
most men to leave a marriage. The decision to end the marriage is now taken unilaterally by the wife in over 50 per cent of cases, compared with only about 20 per cent of unilateral decisions by the husband, with the remaining decisions being jointly made (Harrison 1986). The children live with their mother following about 85 per cent of cases of marriage breakdown.

The legal and administrative changes have involved a loss of control by husbands over wives, a situation which has not been easily accepted by males in general and in particular by those for whom male honour is a central feature of family and social life (McDonald 1991a). As there is essentially no legal appeal against divorce and no attribution of blame, vindication is often sought through the ancillary matters—the division of property and the living arrangements and support of children. The direction of law reform at present is to 'take the heat' out of these areas of negotiation, either by making them more precisely determined (the Child Support Scheme) or by making them less adversarial (agreements about children's living arrangements).

Except for temporary rises during periods of recession the rate of divorce has remained stable since the mid-1970s. Divorce rates tend to be considerably lower for Australians of Mediterranean origin (McDonald 1991a). The importance of acceptance of or social attitudes towards divorce is evidenced by the fact that divorce occurs more commonly among those who do not practise a religion or whose parents had more liberal attitudes. Divorce is also more common among those whose parents had divorced (Glezer, Edgar and Prolisko 1992).

It seems from the little evidence available that the rate of breakdown of cohabiting relationships is very high. In a study of parents whose children were born in 1984, 20 per cent of those who were in a cohabiting relationship at the time of the birth of the child had separated within 18 months of the birth (Khoo and McDonald 1988). It is not unusual for young people today to have a series of intimate relationships of duration 12 months or more.

The place of children

Over the past 200 years there has been an extension of the period of financial dependency of children on their parents. In the early tradition of the English working class, children were sent out into service when they were nine or ten years old. As the Industrial Revolution progressed, they were exploited in sweatshops and sent down the mines. This changed in the latter part of the nineteenth
century with the introduction of child labour laws and compulsory education, eventually extended and policed to age 15 years. The trend towards a longer education period has received its latest boost in recent years with an increased emphasis on the completion of secondary schooling and tertiary qualifications.

In Australia, the Year 12 retention rate rose from 41 per cent in 1983 to 77 per cent in 1992 and the increase shows little sign of stopping. Retention is as high as 97 per cent in the Australian Capital Territory and 93 per cent in South Australia (DEET 1993). The expectation must be that this trend will continue to the point where education to Year 12 is near to universal. Children will thus remain children for a longer period than ever before.

While it may have been appropriate during the eras of scientific parenting and familism to refer to the rise of the 'child-king' (Aries 1962), the call for greater personal autonomy over the past 30 years has been adult-centred. Indeed, many of the changes that have taken place have involved greater autonomy from the restrictions of the parenthood roles prescribed during the era of familism. These changes include control over fertility, employment of mothers outside the home, financial assistance for non-parental child care and easier access to divorce.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the current emphasis is on the rights of the child. For conservatives, assertion of the rights of the child means a rolling-back of the rights extended to parents in recent times. In particular, this is embodied in a call for higher levels of financial support for families who are following the traditional or breadwinner model. For liberals, assertion of child rights means extending individual rights to children, especially those in undesirable parental situations. In particular, this means providing child-related benefits which support parents in their pursuit of the opportunities that have opened up for them in the liberal reforms of the past 30 years. Both groups recognise that the increased autonomy provided to adults has caused difficulties for some children. For example, research suggests that divorce law reform has done more for parents than it has for children (Funder, forthcoming).

The child's right to be heard is at the forefront of the liberal agenda on children's rights. This refers more particularly to the right of children to be heard in legal proceedings which affect them, such as in divorce or cases of child abuse (Rayner 1992; Funder 1992), but extends also to the right of children to be heard in family decision making. This conflicts with more strongly patriarchal approaches to child rearing and child discipline. As discussed in the following section, the extension of these rights to
children is also somewhat in conflict with the continued extension of financial dependency of children on their parents.

Reform necessarily focuses on the worst cases. It would not be correct in this section to provide an impression that, in general, relations between parents and children are not good in Australian families. For example, Weston and Millward (1992) report that, even for the problematic adolescent group, relations between parents and children are usually very good with low levels of tension. Also, despite the high rate of relationship breakdown, at some point in time, some 75 per cent of children are living with both their natural parents.

Young people and families

Although in the 1970s the age of full adulthood for various purposes (voting, marriage, contracts) was lowered from 21 years to 18 years, since that time full adulthood has increasingly become a financially impossible option for young people aged less than 21 years.

Governments have encouraged this trend by having two levels of social security payments below the full adult rates—a low level when the child is aged less than 18 years and an intermediate level when the child is aged less than 21 years (22 years in the case of the student Austudy allowance). Government policy now aims to have all young people aged less than 20 years in some form of training. Government allowances for young unemployed people, Austudy, apprenticeships, traineeships and even full-time youth award wages all provide support which is below the poverty line for a single person so that young people are unable to support themselves independently.

The dominant trend in the education and parenting of today's young people has been the encouragement of intellectual and social independence. This runs completely counter to the increasing financial dependency of young people on their parents (Hartley and Wolcott 1994). The situation is now extending beyond age 21. The proportion of young people aged 20–24 living with their parents increased between 1981 and 1991 from 34 per cent to 40 per cent. Even 13 per cent of young adults aged 25–29 are still at home with parents. Living at home is associated with student status; 53 per cent of students aged 20–24 are still at home compared with 37 per cent of those who are not studying.

Increased dependency on parents has also delayed the commencement of cohabiting relationships for young people. In 1971, 64 per cent of women aged 20–24 had married; in 1991, only 30
per cent were in either a marriage or a cohabiting relationship (ABS 1994a).

These changes have given rise to a new experiment in relationship formation. A small study of 23-year-olds found that the most common form of relationship for the group was to have an exclusive and intimate relationship, but not to be living with the partner (as opposed to being married, being in a cohabiting relationship or not being in a relationship at all). A majority of these young people had had sex with their partner in their parents' home with their parents' knowledge. Despite this, the same study concluded that sexual behaviour remains a very private affair and something which parents and young people are often not at ease in talking about (Hartley 1993). It seems that sex in the parents' home is accepted or tolerated where the relationship is seen to be a committed one. Parents are generally much less tolerant of casual sex. However, there is always the first time and there are many definitions of 'committed', so the potential for difficulty for young people and parents in this area is evident. Nevertheless, many parents also recognise that the greater openness associated with these relationships contrasts favourably with the more surreptitious approach they had used themselves.

Intergenerational relationships and extended family

In Australia, family is something which is owned and defined by each individual. To give a simple but common example, a child whose parents have divorced, when asked to describe his or her family, will normally include natural parents, siblings, step-parents, step-siblings and half-siblings, even though these people may live in two or more different households. The group described by the child is 'family' for that child and not for anyone else. Furthermore, the individual will define families differently for different purposes. In the simplest terms, the narrowest conception of family is that of a group of related people who live in the same household; that is, the household family. Next, there is what might be termed the sharing or supporting family. This is a group of related people who provide support to each other, whether it be practical, financial or emotional. Conventionally, in Australia, the sharing family extends across more than one household and so could be termed the extended family. Finally, there is what might be called the festive family, the wider group of family members who gather together for weddings or other festive occasions (McDonald 1995).

The great myth about Australian families is that the extended
family does not exist, that we are a land of isolated nuclear families living in our separate suburban houses cut off from all other family relationships (McDonald 1992). While it is true that Australians rarely live in extended family households, over the past ten years or so research of family support networks in Australia has shown over and over again that the extended family is a very active and important force in the lives of most Australians (Kendig 1986; McCaughey 1987; d'Abbs 1991; Millward 1992).

Extended family networks in Australia are active in several spheres. Extended families commonly provide financial support for housing or other services that their members require. For example, Glezer (1991b) has observed that in the Family Formation Survey conducted by the Australian Institute of Family Studies 33 per cent of young people had received help from parents or parents-in-law with the deposit for a flat or house at the time the young people were getting established. In the same study 75 per cent of the respondents agreed with the statement that children should provide financial help to ageing parents when their parents are having financial difficulty.

In addition, the extended family may provide support in the form of house maintenance or other activities which sustain the family member in his or her housing. This is commonly the case with aged persons who wish to remain living separately but require assistance with some of the heavier maintenance tasks. Indeed, the Australian ideal seems to be for family members of different generations to live separately but relatively close to each other. For example, in the Australian Living Standards Study half of all surveyed families stated that moving away from extended family was an obstacle to moving to a new locality in order to improve employment circumstances (Brownlee 1994).

The University of Melbourne Carers Project interviewed people who had the main caring responsibility for someone who was aged or had a long-term illness, disability or other problem. Almost half the carers did not live with the person requiring care and in a quarter of cases the person requiring care lived alone. The relationship of the care-giver to the cared-for was dominated by the three basic family relationships: adult child (41%), parent (26%) and spouse (19%). Other relatives or friends made up just 14 per cent of the care-givers. The study shows the importance of both extended family and co-resident family members in the provision of care. In order of frequency, care-givers provided the following forms of assistance: organising appointments, taking the person out, managing money, administering medication/changing dressings, bathing, dressing, assistance with incontinence, help
with moving about the house, and help with eating (Schofield and Herrman 1993).

A longitudinal study of the experiences of a sample of Adelaide women pregnant for the first time concluded that throughout the pregnancy and after the birth of the child new parents had received considerable support from their own families, particularly their mothers (Baum 1990).

The extended family is also extremely active in the provision of child care. Grandparents are the most common source of child care while parents are at work and by far the most common source of child care when parents wish to go out at night or on weekends. Again, this is made possible by the generation with young children choosing to live relatively close to the grandparent generation. Interestingly, and contrary to popular belief, the pattern of child care support being provided by grandparents is even more common in the outer areas of our cities than in the inner and middle areas. Research has shown that young couples settling on the fringes of the city have, in fact, simply moved out one or two suburbs from where they grew up. This again underlines the importance that people attach to the maintenance of family support networks (Millward and Matches 1994).

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to describe the pathways along which Australian society has travelled in reaching its present patterns of family values and behaviours. The pathways are not dissimilar to those followed by other western societies. In broad terms, today's family values reflect the continued extension of individual rights to adults, including the right to determine the ways in which they live their lives. As a result there is a plurality of family values in Australia, ranging from the conservative to the liberal. Unquestionably, however, the general trend has been in the direction of liberalisation; that is, the emphasis has been on the rights of the individual family member rather than on the rights of the family as a group unit.

Australia's many immigrant groups fit at various points along this line from conservatism to liberalism. Immigrants from western countries such as Britain, New Zealand, Germany and the Netherlands, in general, have been in the forefront of the liberal trend. Those from Italy and Greece, on the other hand, have been much slower to adopt the new patterns of behaviour. These latter two groups have much lower divorce rates and earlier marriages, and their young people are more likely to stay at home until they are
married. Nevertheless, liberalisation has been the direction for all groups.

Four individual values have been at the forefront of change. These are the values of autonomy, intimacy, aspiration and acceptance. Observed trends can be viewed as explorations in which society attempts to provide its members with a desirable balance between these often conflicting values. Change has been driven by a desire to extend the rights of adults and it is only more recently that attention has shifted to the rights of children and young people within the family context.

For adults in heterosexual relationships a relative degree of stability is apparent. Birth rates and divorce rates have been almost constant for 20 years, while almost all women now spend some time in the paid labour force after they marry or have children. Cohabiting relationships have achieved such a high degree of acceptability that they are now considered by a majority to be a preferred option prior to marriage. Marriage and childbearing are occurring later and later, but most young Australians (about 80 per cent) see themselves marrying and having children at some time. For the future, the major change is likely to be fewer gender-specific roles within couple relationships. While those in homosexual relationships do not face the same threat from the law which applied 20 years ago, social acceptance of homosexuality remains somewhat ambivalent.

This outline of values and behaviour in respect of Australian families indicates the existence of a pluralistic system of family values. With some exceptions, such as the practice of female genital mutilation and arranged marriages of young people, the values of most communities are broadly acceptable within this pluralism of values. Difficulties may arise, however, particularly for settlers of non-western origin, as the following chapters show in some detail.
Aboriginal families in Australia

Eleanor Bourke and Colin Bourke

‘When we are together we are happy.’

Geraldine Briggs in The Wailing (Rintoul 1993)

All aspects of Aboriginal society have been directly affected by British colonisation. Land use, law, spiritual beliefs and ways of life have been traumatised. Aboriginal society has felt the full force of the invasion and it is arguable that traditional Aboriginal family life and the supporting kinship structures have taken the maximum disruptive impact, especially in areas of greatest non-Aboriginal population density. This is particularly evident in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania, where some groups have disappeared completely and others have been dislocated and no longer use their languages.

We argue strongly that contemporary Aboriginal family values can be understood only by reference to the social organisation of and the beliefs which guided pre-colonial Aboriginal communities, and to the traumatic impact of European invasion and subsequent government policies.

Aboriginal family life has been irreversibly changed in most of Australia. Many of the changes have come about merely by the presence of Europeans; others are attributable directly to the colonisers’ actions, which were aimed at taking control of the land, thus destroying family life as it existed in pre-colonial Aboriginal society.

Despite this history, Aboriginal kinship and family structures remain cohesive forces which bind Aboriginal people together in
all parts of Australia. They provide psychological and emotional support to Aboriginal people, even though they cause concern among some non-Aboriginal people who would prefer Aborigines to follow European social preferences for nuclear families with few kinship responsibilities. Aboriginal family obligations are often seen as nepotism by other Australians. The reality is that they are based on cultural values and issues involving kinship responsibilities which have to be met.

Many writers discuss the family but do not define it, and it is hard to find a definition to cover all groupings in Australia referred to as families. It is perhaps easier to say what a family ought to be, rather than what it is. Families by any definition are not static. As Greer (1984) notes:

... almost all discussions of the family founder because of the
difficulty in deciding what the family is, as distinct from what it
was or will be, because families are always building up and
breaking down, acquiring new members by marriage and
procreation and losing them by estrangement and death. (p. 222)

The definition of family for the national census is 'two or more
persons, at least one of whom should be a person aged 15 years
and over, who are related by blood, marriage, adoption or foster-
ing, and who are usually resident in the same household'. Such a
definition does not fit the much more extensive Aboriginal concept
of family. Lantz and Snyder's (1969) definition is more appropri-
ate:

The family is a group of people who are related through marriage,
blood or adoption; [are] involved with one another in their
designated roles of husband, wife, father, mother, son, daughter,
brother, sister, uncle, aunt, cousin, grandparent, and create and
maintain a common sub-culture. (pp. 21-2)

This definition includes the nuclear family, which is invariably
part of the broader extended family, and around which Aboriginal
society, pre-European contact, was organised via the kinship
system. Many Aboriginal families include non-Aboriginal spouses;
this requires an accommodation by other family members. Such
unions must have an effect on Aboriginal family values; however,
in most cases, the non-Aboriginal spouse appears to accept Aborigi-

nal family structures, while the strength of family ties enables
such a spouse to be accommodated within the family.

Reid and Trompf (1991) note that 'the most outstanding aspect
of Aboriginal kinship systems was, and in many places still is, the
existence of whole classes of people identified by an Aboriginal
person as his or her "brothers", "fathers", "sisters", "others",
“husbands”, “wives”, or the various other classes of affines’ (p. 82). These classificatory relationships, or variations of them, continue to govern Aboriginal social interactions. In addition, the authors noted that marriage in many Aboriginal societies permitted polygyny (multiple wives) and encouraged the levirate (remarriage of a widow to her husband’s natural brother).

The report of the Aboriginal Women’s Task Force entitled *Women’s Business* (Daylight and Johnstone 1986) notes that:

> Aboriginal values, beliefs, identity and language are developed and nurtured within the family. Keeping the family strong and healthy, both physically and spiritually, is vitally important to the continuance of Aboriginal society. Children learn early that to refer to their ‘family’ is to refer to the extended family. A typical Aboriginal family might include mother, father, several children, numerous aunts, uncles and cousins, a number of grandparents and several grandchildren. These family members are both real and classificatory. Kinship ties dictate a person’s behaviour, rights and obligations. (p. 45)

Gray (1984), in a discussion of Aboriginal family formation and fertility, concluded that ‘it can be readily agreed ... that disorder in contemporary Aboriginal families is indeed a myth’. In addition he suggested that Aboriginal family formation was in itself an institutional prop for Aboriginal youth, particularly young Aboriginal women.

All members of a family undoubtedly have a different view of the family, depending on their age, their relationships with other families and their place in the family hierarchy. Despite this, each person can usually define the parameters of his or her family group (the size of which may vary) and this ability may directly reflect that individual’s strength of identity as a family member.

**Statistical profile of Aboriginal families**

Figures from the 1991 census indicate that Aboriginal families are readily distinguishable from other Australian families on some census measures:

- nearly one-quarter of Aboriginal families are one-parent families compared with 9 per cent of non-Aboriginal families
- almost 12 per cent of indigenous people live in a multi-family household compared with 1 per cent of non-Aboriginal families
- indigenous people (those of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent) are less likely to live alone (3 per cent compared with some 7 per cent of the rest of the population)
ABORIGINAL FAMILIES IN AUSTRALIA

- less than 77 per cent of Aboriginal people live in private dwellings or flats compared with 97 per cent of all Australians
- nearly 20 per cent of indigenous people live in caravans or improvised homes, or camp out, compared with 2 per cent of all Australians
- while 28 per cent of Aboriginal people living in private dwellings are home owners or purchasers, this is less than half the national average of 67 per cent
- over 30 per cent of Aboriginal private dwellings are rented from public or community housing authorities, compared with around 2.5 per cent for Australia as a whole
- indigenous households average 4.6 persons, almost twice the Australian average of 2.5 persons

Some of the differences between Aboriginal families and other Australian families are clearly attributable to poverty, for example the type and standard of housing. However, other indicators may reflect a different set of values rather than a lack of financial resources. The definite tendencies of Aboriginal people towards multi-family households and more persons per household may well be based on more positive factors than poverty. For example, extended families living together increase numbers per household. The significant differences in the percentages of people from both groups—Aboriginal and other Australian—who live alone may also have a cultural foundation. Those indigenous Australians (nearly 20 per cent) living in caravans or impoverished homes or camping out may reflect a desire to be more closely allied to family and place, as much as lack of money.

Aboriginal families show a distinct contrast with mainstream Australia on other indices also. The 1991 census figures showed that the Aboriginal population, since the previous census, had increased at double the rate of the overall Australian population, was more youthful than the overall Australian population (the median age being 20 years) and had higher birth rates and lower life expectancy than the overall population (ATSIC 1994).

Again, socio-economic factors and the contact history which Aboriginal people have experienced are partly responsible. However, it is likely that many of the differences have their origins in different cultural backgrounds, beliefs, philosophy, kinship, social organisation and childhood experiences which are still relevant today. The population increase reflects both higher birth rates and an increased willingness to identify as Aboriginal.
Philosophy and family

It is now well recorded (Berndt and Berndt 1988) that prior to the arrival of Europeans Aboriginal people lived in large extended families based on kinship, which provided for all aspects of social being and defined a network of interpersonal relationships with a behavioural code which enabled people to live in relative harmony with one another. Underlying the kinship system was a philosophy which sought balance between all things.

Every person’s clan membership and place in the kinship system was determined at birth. This set obligations and codes of behaviour which were expected to be followed. Cultural, linguistic and physical boundaries linked the people into groups and it was kinship that allowed them to live in harmony. For Aboriginal people the whole of Australia was, and is, a vibrant spiritual landscape, albeit the responsibility of and belonging to various groups. This landscape was peopled in spirit form by the ancestors who had originated in the Dreaming. The Dreaming is not only a cosmology, an account of creation; it is also a cosmography, a description of how what was created became an ordered system or, more accurately, a moral system.

The stories of the Dreaming are, in a symbolic and somewhat poetic way, a philosophy in the guise of oral literature—a philosophy with unique morals and values. The stories set out rules of traditional kinship. The principles of reciprocity and responsibility are central and are the bases of interlocking life spaces. Each person is connected to everyone else in the group by a range of responsibilities and obligations which lock them together as a social unit.

Aboriginal kinship systems are varied and complex. The values that regulate the systems relate to ancestry, marriage, generations, personal relationships and other categories which continue to place the individual in society. In all aspects of life, kinship determines rights and obligations and much of a person’s behaviour in a variety of circumstances. Kinship is a social grid that defines people’s identity in relation to one another, and to outsiders. Social groupings and divisions provide the framework for action in almost any circumstance.

Aboriginal values reflect all that has happened in the past. They evolved over thousands of years of traditional life. After two centuries of colonisation, many Aboriginal people continue to discuss their lives in terms of Aboriginal values, past shared experiences and obligations to the land.

Aboriginal history is based on the group and its continuity rather than on individuals. This was clearly demonstrated in
traditional Aboriginal life where society had no hierarchy based on office, resulting in a lack of conflict over power. The great European contests for office and power had no parallels in Aboriginal life. This single fact resulted in a lifestyle in which stability was not rent by the thrust for power. The concept of a formal chief or authority figure ruling over others did not and does not fit with Aboriginal social organisation. There were no offices with power to stimulate ambition; no material rewards to generate greed. Among the rules of life laid down by the Dreaming were the ceremonies and rituals to be observed in order to maintain life on the land to which a person was born.

There was, however, respect for age. This was noted by white commentators: “Respect for old age”, says Sir Thomas Mitchell, “is universal amongst the Aborigines”; ‘The Aborigines everywhere, and on all occasions, pay great respect to old persons . . . Amongst the Murray blacks it is considered a very great fault to say anything disrespectful to an old person. It is deemed a serious thing to say, Kur-o-pither-a-ka-wirto (you gray haired old man)” (Brough Smyth 1876, p. 137).

The first principle of Aboriginal societies was the preservation of balance, and arching over it all was the Dreaming. Aboriginal societies were based on the primary virtues of generosity and fair dealing. Nearly all social occasions involving goods—food, marriage, payments, intergroup trade—were based on reciprocity as a moral obligation and policies of equivalence and egalitarianism. There were times when food was scarce but Aborigines rarely went hungry. What food was available was always shared.

Aboriginal life stressed harmony and balance with the natural world. The antithetical approach of ‘man versus nature’ which has characterised European notions of progress has caused cultural discontinuities for Aboriginal people. Meaningful discussion has been difficult because of the philosophical and cultural differences between the two groups. Aboriginal communication and terms of reference lose much of their meaning when translated into English; nevertheless, they are very different, and include values and attitudes regarding the conduct of life.

Aboriginal philosophy appears to have had remarkable consistency with life as it was lived. The ideal and the real were practically identical in Aboriginal society. Conflicts between liberty and freedom, wealth and poverty, morality and amorality, class disputations and discontent with life were not part of traditional Aboriginal life. In common with other societies, traditional Aboriginal societies were based on a set of values which were not always articulated. Values, however, can be recognised by consistent actions or behaviours. Human behaviour is not mechanical;
it incorporates a range of behaviours which reflects the society's base values. These styles of behaviour are manifested in many ways but they are shown in child rearing, economic activities and the methods of achieving social roles.

Strehlow (1956, p. 11) supported earlier observations of Aboriginal groups when he wrote that 'among the strangest ideals which sustained [them] were the principles of cooperation, not subordination; of differentiation, without inequality; of tolerance for the customs of other people in their country'.

*Traditional values*

Aboriginal spirituality is the pervading force in all Aboriginal life; it is everywhere oriented towards the basic issue of survival—spiritual and physical—as an Aboriginal Australian (Berndt 1974). Survival is a driving force in all societies and shapes most human activity; it is an implicit value. Non-Aboriginals rarely see the spiritual and physical survival that Aboriginal Australians seek as different from what they seek themselves, but it is different. For Aboriginal people, survival is inextricably linked with Aboriginality and Aboriginal identity. Family affiliations are an important feature of such identity.

Another Aboriginal value which is slowly becoming more appreciated by other Australians concerns the land. Aborigines throughout Australia have taken their relationships to the land very seriously. Their feelings and responsibilities toward it are highlighted through ceremony, the protection of sacred sites or their demonstrating for land rights.

Many anthropologists have reported that central to Aboriginal life is a respect for the dignity of people as human beings (see, for example, Strehlow 1956, pp. 6-11). In traditional Aboriginal society, people who show respect for others are considered to be mature adults. Behaviour is defined by kinship roles but in general the people who are quietly confident and sensitive are highly respected. Uncontrolled behaviour is not welcomed nor are critical comments of a personal nature.

Such societies are open societies, all conversations being carried out with visual contact. Where verbal behaviour is restricted, body language is used to give non-verbal cues as part of communication. Being based on kinship, these societies have a range of social mechanisms which involve rights and obligations for all. People's behaviour is defined in the group and the expectation is that people will behave towards one another in the prescribed manner.

Maintaining relationships within the kinship system depends to a large extent on reciprocity. Berndt and Berndt (1988, p. 121)
discuss reciprocity from an economic perspective and note that it has often been referred to as ‘primitive communism’. Some non-Aboriginal people claim that Aboriginal people have no sense of ownership. The comment ‘Give them something, and you’ll see someone else with it next day’ reflects a lack of knowledge of social obligations and responsibilities within Aboriginal community life.

Aboriginal people do know quite well what ownership by an individual means. There are many items which are personally owned and treated as such by the owner and others in the community. At Aurukun in 1978, Francis Yunkaporta was showing one of the authors, an urban Aboriginal person, around the community when they came upon a sugar-bag lying on the ground; on it were some paints and brushes. Francis explained that these objects were owned by his brother who had been painting there recently but had left to visit another community for a few days. The bag, brushes and paints would stay in this position until the painter returned; they were his and no one else would dare touch them.

It is true, however, that Aboriginal people do not value material possessions as much as do non-Aboriginal Australians. In all communities there is an arrangement of obligations, duties, debits and credits which results in all adults having commitments of one kind or another. Most of these are based on kinship. All gifts and actions are linked by reciprocity. Everything must be repaid in kind or equivalent.

Traditional society and family

The strength and associated obligations of kinship ties were central to Aboriginal life. In western societies the structures of social interaction and obligations change as individuals move out from the family into the wider society. Traditional Aboriginal society’s family structures and the rights and obligations underlying them extended to the whole society. The relationship terms which applied in the individual’s immediate family were used to identify all other members of the local group and even the total linguistic group.

Family and kinship

The kinship system was based on the equivalence of same-sex siblings. Using this principle, people who were siblings of the same sex were regarded as being basically the same. Two sisters were
considered to be equal, so a child of one would have two mothers; and, similarly, with males, a child would regard both his biological father and each of his father’s brothers as his father (Bourke, Bourke and Edwards 1994). Consequently, the children of either brother were identified as brothers and sisters rather than cousins. As all the members of the group were classified under the relationship terms, anthropologists have called the system the classificatory system of kinship.

In many Aboriginal societies personal names were rarely used. People were addressed by kinship terms. Some were referred to as being someone else’s son or daughter. In such societies personal names were seen as being part of that person and were used with discretion. This was often manifested by a deceased person’s personal name being removed from that language for some considerable time. Most languages had a word meaning ‘no name’ which was used to refer to those persons who had the same name as a recently deceased person. This practice is still prevalent in many Aboriginal societies today.

As indicated earlier, traditional societies did not have a system of powerful positions of office: There were powerful people but they did not hold office in the western sense with the wide powers afforded by that office. Instead, kinship was the factor which maintained harmony and resolved conflict. When an individual erred, his or her actions were considered by the group. Certain members, because of their kinship relationship, would then be responsible for administering the punishment agreed on.

The importance of the kinship system was probably most visible in the manner in which it prescribed for people their choice of marriage partners. In some groups the most favoured wife for a man was a cross-cousin, namely a daughter of his mother’s brother or father’s sister. In other groups the cross-cousin’s daughter was the most desired partner.

Each individual in traditional societies knew his or her kinship relationships. The teaching of these and the associated behaviour was a fundamental element of the education of Aboriginal children. The kinship system not only set out rights and obligations but provided individuals with a guide to their own behaviour. It also gave them confidence because the likely behaviour of others whom they might meet was also predictable.

*Social organisation*

In addition to the kinship system, Aboriginal societies also had a system of sections or sub-sections which compartmentalised the society further. These sections and sub-sections did not make social
life more difficult as might be expected. They actually eased problems of social interaction by establishing rules which set down quite formally what was expected from one set of kin to another.

The basic division in Aboriginal societies was between two halves or moieties (Berndt and Berndt 1978). This division was significant in ritual, marriage and social interaction. Marriage partners had to be chosen from the opposite moiety. In some regions people divided the whole of life (themselves and the plants and animals of the area) into two categories. In addition, some Aboriginal groups were further divided into another four or even eight categories. All members belonged to one of these categories depending on their generation and descent. The categories or sub-sections had specific names and were widely known as sub-section systems. Such systems enabled people to identify each other's place in society. Maddock (1974) saw the systems as Aboriginal attempts to give order to the world: 'The classifications made by Aborigines appear rather to manifest a passion for order that has driven them to apply to the whole world a single system' (p. 5).

Aboriginal kinship and social systems were complex, and they varied in different parts of Australia. They provided the base setting, the larger context, in which the self could achieve an existential reality. They accommodated the Dreaming and were seen as a legacy of the ancestral beings. They provided a code of conduct which was taught to the children as part of everyday living.

**Childhood**

The rules of behaviour for the Aboriginal child were largely the rules of kinship. Kinship recognition was introduced at an early age but in a deceptively casual teaching process. A baby was always in the company of other people, namely parents, grandparents, older siblings or other close relatives. Even before they could sit up, children were handled and talked to, using kin terms, so that they could learn to identify themselves and others nearby.

Other features of the child's environment were treated in the same way, with those around children pointing to specific objects and repeating the appropriate words. By the time children could walk they were expected to have a vocabulary of basic everyday words and be able to apply the main kin terms to the people they saw regularly. Mistakes were not directly corrected nor was the child punished for making them. The adult simply repeated words, phrases and the kin terms in the proper way, confident that they would be imitated. Both biological parents contributed to the
child's growth from the very beginning of life but in different ways, with the mother dominant in the early years.

Aboriginal children were highly valued by their parents and the group. They were indulged and petted; Aboriginal parents usually found it impossible to deny children anything they wanted even if they should not have it. They adopted the easy approach, as people still do today, of keeping things they did not want touched away from their children. In return, the children were expected to respect, help and support parents in old age. In a non-materialistic society the acquisitiveness that complicates relationships between the old and the young in a wealth-oriented society do not appear.

Aboriginal children's education was predicated on their learning, by close attentive observation and continuous practice, the activities and rites of conduct which they would later follow as adults. In early childhood children also learned about their 'country', the land to which they belonged—their relationship with it, how to nurture and seek sustenance from it and, most importantly, how to interpret it. However, they did not learn everything about the land. Part of that knowledge was sacred and was learned as people moved through the rites of passage decided by those who controlled the knowledge.

As the family group moved about the land, its features, names and the people's role in the mythology of their country were told to the children and they learned those places which were safe. In this way they came to know the limits of their country and their right of access to land owned by others.

The core of the child's social existence was the family. It was the nucleus around which the larger kinship was built. The family gave children their early education. This stressed the need to know oneself, one's country and all aspects of the environment, who were kin, and the rights and obligations which arose from this knowledge. Human relationships were of the utmost importance, and orientation with people was more important than information.

Colonisation

On 26 January 1788 the Aboriginal world, which had successfully developed a way of life based on the family, both nuclear and extended, was invaded. Most of Australia was colonised and the indigenous inhabitants dispossessed before Federation in 1901. However, it was not until the 1930s that the last Aboriginal groups were finally enmeshed with non-Aboriginal society. The effects on Aboriginal family life cannot be overemphasised.
Since the beginnings of alien settlement in the country, Aborigines have been subjected to experiences that have overwhelmed them or left them stranded as isolated persons and groups within the wider society. Only a minority were able to remain in their own home territories, more or less intact traditionally. (Berndt and Berndt 1988, p. viii)

Colonisation took away the land and changed the roles of Aboriginal men and women. New laws, values and beliefs were introduced and enforced. An education program tried to instil Christianity. Self-reliance and self-esteem were destroyed as Aboriginal society disintegrated and traditional family life was no longer viable. The introduced diseases, alcohol, the abuse of women and the debasement of men left family life in tatters. The birth of mixed-race children was evidence of the breakdown of Aboriginal families. The imposition of Christian values and the deliberate removal of children from their parents ensured that Aboriginal families would never again be what they were.

In the 1850s and 1860s it was generally considered that Aborigines were dying out. However, by the 1880s it was apparent that the numbers of Aborigines of mixed descent were increasing and were regarded as a nuisance by non-Aboriginal people. So began nearly a century of persecution of Aboriginal people in the name of the state. State Protection Boards set about removing children from their parents so that they could be resocialised. The policy of protection also removed Aboriginal people from their land.

As described earlier, Aboriginal families saw their lands as a rich and symbolic spiritual world. Its loss was shattering to Aboriginal societies.

These were not simply rocks, trees and waterholes, but places which the great ancestors had created and where they still lived.

The ancestors were the rocks, trees and waterholes, into which they had formed themselves after the creative period. (Broome 1982, p. 14)

The Aboriginal view of the world was that of a hunter-gatherer people deeply interested in the forces of fertility, which ensured their food supply and thus their survival. Each adult (men especially) after initiation had to perform 'increase' ceremonies each year at the sacred site of his or her totem to enable the life force to be released to ensure the perpetuation of the particular species of which he or she was part (Broome 1982). (The sacred place was determined by where a person's mother was impregnated by a spirit child of the particular ancestor of that place.)

After colonisation Aboriginal families lost their economic base
but, even more importantly, their spiritual life was tragically broken and disconnected. No longer could people be comforted by the knowledge that their relatives assisted the great spirits in maintaining the creation of life.

The introduction of diseases and alcohol ravaged Aboriginal families. Broome (1982, p. 55) noted: 'Generally alcohol had disastrous effects on tribal family life, and led to ill health and death. One-third of the Port Phillip Native Police were reported to have died from the effects of drunkenness. All European observers rated it high on the list of things leading to the destruction of the Aborigines'. However, in recording 120 deaths among the Bangerong people on the Murray, Curr (1883) attributed the destruction of Aborigines to disease. No deaths were attributed to alcohol.

It is uncertain how many people died from introduced diseases, but smallpox, venereal disease, respiratory and other infectious diseases combined with low birth rates to drastically reduce the indigenous population. The so-called childhood diseases of Europeans (whooping cough, measles and mumps) and influenza proved to be potent killers of Aboriginal people of all ages. Butlin (1993, p. 128) has developed projections of the effects of smallpox and venereal disease which indicate that by 1850 the indigenous population had decreased by between two-thirds and five-sixths of what it had been in 1788.

The loss of one or both parents was a great trauma for children. Butlin’s projections indicate that possibly only a few members of an extended family would survive, to find themselves suddenly bereft and, through the actions of colonisers, without land. Aboriginal family life in such circumstances was reduced to a desperate struggle for survival. The feeling of security was gone. Stories could no longer be told around the campfire at night after a day’s hunting, which itself had become a dangerous occupation. Instead, many of the adults who survived were destitute and their cultural traditions threatened with extinction. Blaskett (1979) reported that, such was the impact of colonisation on Aboriginal groups in Victoria, the Aboriginal population may have declined by 80 per cent in merely 18 years. Such decimation wiped out entire families and left others in disarray with their land gone, their customs and ways of life attacked, their beliefs ridiculed and their self-esteem shattered.

The ultimate attack on the family in Aboriginal society was the removal of children by Church and state. The separation of Aboriginal children from their families occurred in the nineteenth century but it was in the twentieth century that it became so destructive of family life. All the Protection Acts gave a ‘Protector’
the power to remove Aboriginal children from their parents, and took away parents' responsibility for their own lives.

The Acts of Parliament in three different States give an indication of the assault on Aboriginal family life under so-called 'protection':

- The *Aborigines Protection Act 1869*, Victoria, gave protectors or guardians the power to govern over residence, contracts of employment and care, custody and education of the children of Aboriginals.

- The *Aborigines Act 1905*, Western Australia, gave the Chief Protector the power to be the 'legal guardian of every Aboriginal and half-caste child until that child attain[ed] 16 years'. The Chief Protector could manage the property of Aborigines with their consent or without it 'to provide for the due preservation of such property', and no weddings of female Aborigines to non-Aborigines were permitted without written permission of the Chief Protector.

- In New South Wales the *Aborigines Protection Act 1909* made the Board for the Protection of Aborigines responsible for, *inter alia*, custody, maintenance and education of children of Aborigines.

The 1911 report of the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board clearly enunciated the intention of the state:

The Board recognises that the only chance these children have is to be taken away from their present environment and properly trained by earnest workers being apprenticed out, and having once left the Aborigines reserves they should never be allowed to return to them permanently. (Edwards and Read 1989, p. xiv)

The officers of the Protection Boards had almost unlimited powers. Aboriginal parents had no redress against a bureaucracy which could remove children in the interests of their moral or physical welfare. Negative attitudes towards Aborigines were so entrenched that by the 1940s children who were light-skinned enough to pass as white were sent to the ordinary child welfare homes and orphanages. Young Aboriginal unmarried mothers were usually pressured into having their babies adopted.

So successful was the policy to remove Aboriginal children from their families that Coral Edwards and Peter Read, in their research for *The Lost Children*, estimated that 'if Europeans one hundred years ago had accepted the right of Aboriginal parents to raise their children as they wished another one hundred thousand people would be identifying as Aboriginal citizens of Australia' (Edwards and Read 1989, p. xvii). They believe that
between one-third and one-quarter of Aboriginal people had their identity destroyed by the state. At the 'Coming Home' Conference, held in Darwin in 1994, a brother and sister were identified who had been separated as children and reunited in old age. One was raised as Aboriginal, the other as a white Australian.

The Aboriginal families of Australia are still trying to recover from this policy. The severance of the link between grandparents, parents and children broke the Aboriginal education chain and destroyed Aboriginal cultural continuity. Being unable to keep their children broke the hearts of many Aboriginal mothers, further lowered their self-esteem and left whole families bereft, helpless and inadequate in the new society. Families were left empty and emotionally shattered. The changes that have occurred since European settlement have affected 'the size and structure of the Aboriginal population, the places and ways in which they live, their economy, their health and their relationships within the family' (Daylight and Johnstone 1986, p. 1).

Eversley (1990) observed that 'with the inclusion of the “half-caste” in the definition of the Aborigine, the status of Aboriginal families began to decline' and that this situation continued for almost a century (p. 35). Eversley noted also the negative responses to the change in the definition of 'Aborigine', such as ineligibility for family services and welfare provisions which were available to the rest of the community.

Aboriginal families today

Aboriginal family life today is considerably diverse. However, this diversity is often simply a starting point, as more Aboriginal people now tend to end up in similar places—that is, in urban Australia.

Ruby Hunter was taken from her parents at four years of age. Ruby was born on the banks of a billabong in the spring of 1955. Her father was a Ngarrindjeri man from the South Australian Riverland and her mother a Pitjantjatjara woman. Ruby spent her childhood in a succession of foster homes and institutions. 'From the first day I was registered I became Government property.' She did not know she was Aboriginal until it was raised in a history class when she was 10 or 12.

She ended up on the streets of Adelaide hiding out on the banks of the Torrens. She took up drinking, moved to Melbourne and remembers spending her twenty-first birthday in the Fitzroy lock-up with her partner Archie Roach. Ruby regards herself as
ABORIGINAL FAMILIES IN AUSTRALIA

'one of the last great survivors'. She uses music and song to tell of her life experiences.

Ruby's priority is family. She and Archie have four sons, a daughter and two grandchildren. Some are biological kin, some are not. 'We don't look at ourselves as fosters and halfs, we look at ourselves as a family... just husband and wife. When Archie's sons were born, I said: "Archie, these are your sons, the Roach boys." I said: "We may never get married but at least they've got your name. That's good enough."

Ruby has released an album called Thoughts from Within, which includes a song called Modern Day Girl which goes like this: What she remembers as a child, she kept hidden deep inside, for she's spiritual and she'll always be, she'll never lose her identity. She's a modern day girl in a modern day world, and all she can do is dream about her Dreamtime World. (Cossar 1994)

After 200 years of colonisation it is reasonable to question whether traditional Aboriginal values have survived. The question is particularly pertinent given that many Aborigines are married to non-Aborigines and that increasing numbers of people in 'settled' Australia who identify as Aboriginal speak varieties of English as their first language. The fact that such people speak little or none of their Aboriginal language is often used by non-Aboriginal people as evidence that they are not 'really Aborigines' (Eades 1988, p. 23). Similarly, the fact that some people have relatively light-coloured skin and are similar to non-Aboriginal Australians in dress, housing and employment is used to challenge Aboriginal identity and deny any existence of a distinctive Aboriginality and spirituality.

Aboriginal families today are strongly influenced by their pre-colonial traditions and by Aboriginal people's experiences over the last 200 years. Despite the tremendous pressures to assimilate they have in many ways resisted and are still unique. Census figures quoted earlier indicate differences from other Australian families. More importantly, however, Aboriginal families assert that they are different because of their values and beliefs. Despite coming from disparate backgrounds there is a common feeling of pan-Aboriginality within which Aborigines in Australia identify with each other.

Barwick (1988, p. 27) believes that 'for Aborigines the basic sub-cultural ties are those of locality and family'. Aborigines identify or place one another not by asking 'What work do you do?' but rather 'Which place do you come from?', 'Who is your family?'. This sub-culture emphasises allegiance and its members share a strong attachment to a particular place, to the 'home place' or region surrounding the Aboriginal reserves where their
forebears lived, worked and are buried. Refusal ‘to be ashamed of our blood and our people’ is an explicit demonstration of allegiance to a small community bonded by shared experience, common memories and inherited legends of oppression as a despised indigenous minority.

Schwab (1988, p. 77) observed that ‘the majority of Aboriginal people today reside in “settled” Australia, descendants of the people who experienced the most severe cultural disruption. While some might consider it remarkable that Aborigines survive at all in settled Australia, what is truly extraordinary is that among these people there remains a culture which is distinctly Aboriginal’.

Aboriginal culture in ‘settled’ Australia exists and is manifested in sometimes subtle and localised symbolic forms. Eades (1988, p. 93) found that in southeast Queensland almost all Aboriginal people are of mixed descent and ‘non-Aboriginal people frequently fail to see beyond the skin colour and superficial aspects of lifestyle (including those of language), and hence mistakenly assume that Aboriginal identity in areas like southeast Queensland is largely tokenistic’. Although a few people have found it necessary to deny their Aboriginal identity and origins publicly in order to escape anti-Aboriginal discrimination, it is rare for Aboriginal people to renounce their responsibilities and rights in Aboriginal society.

Barwick (1974, p. 154) summarised this desire to identify as Aboriginal: ‘To be Aboriginal is to be born to, belong to, to be loyal to a family’. When discussing Aboriginality, family relationships are invariably raised. Kin includes a wide network of people, many of whom are only distant relatives in non-Aboriginal terms. Both Barwick and Eades describe the Aboriginal family as the nucleus around which travel, social and economic activities and personal loyalties revolve.

In present-day urban Australia, Aboriginal families vary widely in the degree to which they retain the kinship of their ancestors. Many Aboriginal people have non-Aboriginal spouses and appear to be economically and socially embedded in non-Aboriginal society. The family situations and structures of rural and urban Aborigines differ from more traditionally oriented groups living in the more remote Aboriginal settlements or homeland centres.

Most urban Aborigines are mixed race people and have had long experience in non-Aboriginal society. Nevertheless, they are an identifiable and separate cultural group. Aboriginal families in urban and rural areas have a developed network of family, community and organisational structures which provide psychological and physical support and a sense of security. Much of this security arises from the knowledge that urban Aboriginal people can rely
on their own group support and do not have to rely on non-Aborigines.

In all parts of Australia, Aboriginal people identify as a cultural group and exhibit growing pride in their Aboriginality. This increasing pride is being recognised by other Australians. At the 1994 University of South Australia graduation ceremony Associate Professor Eve Fesl, a Gabi Gabi woman from Queensland, was applauded by the 1000 people present when she acknowledged in her address that the ceremony was taking place on the land of the Kaurna people. This incident signified Eve’s pride in being Aboriginal and was a recognition and acceptance of Aboriginality by the gathering of mainly non-Aboriginal students and their families and friends. Today it is common throughout Australia to hear of Kooris, Nungas, Nyoongahs, Anangu and Yolngu, among many other Aboriginal localised names, depending on location.

The Aboriginal family is central to the survival of Aboriginal culture. The values, structures and practices can be based on traditional kinship systems or the extended family, kin ties and locality allegiances of rural and urban Aboriginal people. The family is the best environment for the development of Aboriginal beliefs, values and identity. Yet most of Australia’s institutions and programs are still as destructive of Aboriginal families as they have been in the past.

Aboriginal family values under threat

‘People say that our language is lost, our culture is lost, but our culture is not lost, it is we who are lost.’

Douglas Abbot in *The Wailing* (Rintoul 1993)

Aboriginal Child Care Agencies were established in the 1970s to prevent the continuing removal of Aboriginal children from their families. They have attracted Federal Government funding and have the following aims:

- the preservation of Aboriginal families and the prevention of institutionalisation
- the relocation of siblings in institutions and the reuniting of families
- the development of self-help programs and the provision of resources which are supportive of Aboriginal families, within both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities
- the development of culturally relevant policies for Aboriginal child and family welfare services
These agencies try to place Aboriginal children within their extended family. If this is not possible, attempts are made to ensure that children stay near their own community.

In Women's Business (Daylight and Johnstone 1986, p. 7) it was reported that 'the care of children is of major importance to Aboriginal women' and that Aboriginal women’s roles include those of 'mother, grandmother, sister and aunt'. Further, to be brought up by a member of the extended family is a common occurrence among Aboriginal families. Aboriginal women also identified some major concerns in relation to the raising of children. Those Aboriginal women who still speak their own language and continue traditional practices are concerned that their children are losing traditional skills and language. There was a belief that Aboriginal values and ways of doing things should continue despite changes to the family unit, and that convenient, inexpensive and culturally appropriate child care centres are needed.

Women's Business noted the need for Aboriginal women to be better informed about sex education and venereal diseases. The report also indicated that the rape of Aboriginal women in their own communities, incest and alcohol abuse were issues that needed to be dealt with by Aboriginal society and its organisations. It is certainly true that domestic violence against Aboriginal women has recently become more public. The way in which these problems are dealt with is in itself a major issue for Aboriginal communities. If each of these concerns is treated as separate, it will erode Aboriginal family life. Aboriginal women must be informed and represented throughout all echelons of the new structures to ensure that a more holistic family approach is taken. Such an approach would be more in keeping with sustaining Aboriginal families.

Large families have been a part of Aboriginal life for a long time but as families become smaller there is less support available to them. Families are under stress. The pattern of obligations and responsibilities can no longer be met. The situation is similar for Aboriginal families moving from a camp situation to a country town or city, and for urban families trying to become part of modern Australian society. However, there is one place in our largest city where this may not be the case. Shane Phillips is a district officer for young offenders with the Redfern Aboriginal Corporation and this is how he recalls his growing up (in Rintoul 1993, p. 326):

I count myself as a Redfern boy. My father is a Bundjalung man from the North Coast. There is Kitabal and Minjenbal, which is part of the Bundjalung nation. But through my mother I believe I
am around the seventh generation of people from this area here. My mother is a Redfern lady, she’s been born and bred in Redfern. I’ve lived in every street around here. I have never lived in a posh house, I’ve never lived in a house with nice furniture. We have always had to struggle . . . but I have a rich family background in the way of love and understanding, compassion and growing up together. They call it ‘the black heart of Australia’. Two hundred years down the track all we’ve got is one little community. We’re stuck in our own little area and there are no extravagant houses down there. People see it as a ghetto, but I love the place. There might be some derelict houses around the place, but in those old houses we’ve got some great people around here that care for each other. It someone dies, people will take a collection up to try and help pay for the funeral and they will support the family. I feel proud of the people here because they care for each other, and that’s the main thing in life: people have got to care.

It is this great sense of ‘peoplehood’, expressed with pride and dignity by Aboriginal people, that will survive in the Aboriginal family. Some Aboriginal people can draw strength from their traditional culture; they can still practise their ceremonies, songs and dances and speak the language of the group to which they belong. Others do not have such ready access to, and may not know, their language group, cultural traditions or family history.

Generally, the more urbanised Aboriginal people have not lost their sense of Aboriginality, as demonstrated by Shane Phillips of Redfern—or by Buster Turner, an Aboriginal community worker, who has lived in her Adelaide suburb for over 30 years:

It was barren but for a few houses . . . I live in my own house that is being bought through ATSIC. I am married with three children, two boys and one girl. In my childhood I lived with another Aboriginal girl. We were fostered out together. We were the first in the area, but several other people have also lived around here for about 30 years.

It took four or five years before our neighbours said hullo. Only two families acknowledged us but we’ve never been in their homes—that’s as close as we’ve come. Racism now seems stronger in my neighbourhood—I won’t let my youngest go down to the skate-board ramp unattended by older kids. Someone is usually there waiting to put them down, ‘boong-bashing’. Sometimes there’s even a black car without number plates that deliberately sets out to intimidate and to be violent—same as in Riverton. I’ve lived in Darwin, Canberra, Alice, most of South Australia, and I still like this place the best.

I’ve been fostered since nine months old—I maintain my relationship with my grandmother and sister. I know my heritage and yet I also know how to relate in the white world as well.

(Turner 1994)
In a study of Aboriginal people in southwest Western Australia, Palmer and Collard (1993) found that young Nyungar people resented the fact that they were seen to have 'lost their culture'. They observed that the literature indicates contemporary Nyungar language, knowledge and culture are alive and are a significant influence in the shaping of the lives of Nyungar youth.

While Nyungar young people and non-Aboriginal youth had considerable contact and shared interests (and perhaps faced similar obstacles), some Nyungar young people talked about fundamental differences between the two groups and the importance of a distinctly Nyungar 'life'.

When asked by the Nyungar researcher about her Wetjella (non-Aboriginal) friends, a Nyungar young woman replied: 'Oh, they're pretty good you know, but they're still a bit, I dunno, just don't feel right hanging around Wetjella kids. Because they have just different lifestyles, you know'. She went on to explain:

Ah, just like they're completely different people even though they get pissed and get chased by the cops. Nyungar, I can relate to them. Like I'm half white and half Nyungar so I can relate to both sides but still when I relate to Nyungar kids they can sort of talk to me and sort of communicate with me but the Wetjella kids, it's oh . . . I dunno they haven't got the Nyungar family tradition.

(Palmer and Collard 1993, p. 17)

Conclusion

From these different Aboriginal perspectives come some observations about modern Aboriginal family life. The number of Aboriginal families is increasing. Aboriginal identity has been sustained through family life; family affiliations are of fundamental importance to Aboriginal people and to their Aboriginal identity. Aboriginal people continue to marry other Aboriginal people, using newly developed networks, for example through various State and national gatherings. Most families are extended and include many cousins, aunts, uncles and grandparents.

Child rearing is at the core of Aboriginal social structure and families have continued traditional ways of child care. Aboriginal people want knowledge of their culture, beliefs, understandings and practices to be passed on to the younger generation. However, child care is a major concern as more Aboriginal women enter the workforce and/or seek an education in the cities and larger towns. Some children's upbringing can be shared with, or largely
be the responsibility of, the maternal grandmother as it was traditionally.

Aboriginal people’s mobility, often for reasons of health, education, employment or housing, sometimes has adverse effects on family life, for example when families or individuals leave the security of kinship networks. However, despite this mobility, many do maintain links with their place of origin and go ‘home’ to see their family. The attachment to ‘home’ is illustrated by the frequent trips which people make to their own country.

Some young Aboriginal people with a non-Aboriginal parent may feel torn between their loyalty to Aboriginal family ideals and their love for a non-Aboriginal parent. Young Aboriginal people are inevitably influenced by elements of non-Aboriginal society, such as television. However, there are indications that the converse is also true and that young non-Aboriginal people are influenced by Aboriginal youth (Palmer and Collard 1993).

Many Aboriginal ceremonial practices have ceased but many cultural practices have changed very little. Aboriginal women have become crucial to the survival of Aboriginal society. They are concerned that Aboriginal culture and identity be maintained.

A constant for Aboriginal people is that non-Aboriginal systems and institutions do not recognise Aboriginal structures and ways of doing things. There is much rhetoric from non-Aboriginal Australians about being culturally aware. Such awareness on its own is no longer acceptable. Aboriginal social structures and codes of behaviour need to be formally acknowledged. For example Aboriginal marriage negotiations are not very different from what they were before the Europeans came; however, European laws have changed considerably in how they deal with Aboriginal people and how they interpret Aboriginal behaviour. Aboriginal marriage practices are seen as ‘traditional’ in remote Aboriginal communities and ‘de facto’ in urban settings.

Aboriginal people express and identify themselves as Aboriginal Australians. Their identification does not necessarily depend on skin colour or physical features; rather it has to do with shared experiences, a large kin system sometimes spanning the continent, stories passed on through an oral tradition and a common family background.

Such a heritage provides most Aboriginal people with a sense of belonging and comfort and a pride in the knowledge of being part of an ancient heritage, whether they live in major urban centres, country towns, town camps, cattle stations, Aboriginal townships or on homeland centres. Most Aboriginal families want to continue their traditions and beliefs in the context of modern Australian life. Aboriginality depends on their existence.
Chinese settlement in Australia has a long history, beginning soon after the discovery of gold in Australia in 1851. Large numbers of men from China came to work in the goldfields in Victoria, hoping to return to their homeland when they had made enough money (Wang 1988). Some eventually stayed and had children with Australian women. Over time, the presence of a sizeable number of Chinese gold-diggers led to tension and hostility against them. In 1901 the Immigration Restriction Act was passed in the newly set up Federal Parliament, effectively closing Australia's doors to immigrants from non-European backgrounds (Yuan 1988). It was not until the formal adoption of a non-discriminatory immigration policy in 1973 by the Whitlam Labour Government that significant numbers of Chinese, from various parts of Asia, migrated to Australia (Chan, H.M.H. 1988).

Chinese settlement since the 1970s

Most of the Chinese settlers in Australia arrived post-1973; they are concentrated in the urban areas of New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. Malaysia, with its sizeable proportion of ethnic Chinese, became one of the ten top source countries for immigration to Australia in the 1970s. Vietnam, again with a substantial proportion of ethnic Chinese, joined the top ten in the early 1980s. During the 1980s the most dramatic rate of growth in immigration to Australia came from those born in Taiwan (Khoo et al. 1993).
From the mid-1980s to 1993 Hong Kong and China were among the top ten source countries. In the four year period from 1989 to 1993 Hong Kong was second only to the United Kingdom as a source of immigrants (see also BIR 1992b).

The significant increase in ethnic Chinese immigrants in Australia was reflected in 1991 census figures (BIPR 1993b; Ho 1994), which ranked China as the ninth most common place of birth for Australians (0.5 per cent of the population) and Hong Kong the fifteenth place (0.3 per cent of the population). Cantonese—the dialect spoken by Hong Kong Chinese and those from the Guandong Province in China—was the third most commonly spoken community language in Australia, while Mandarin, the official Chinese language, was the twelfth most commonly spoken (BIPR 1993b).

As the census did not include a question on ancestral or ethnic identification, it is not possible to accurately determine the number of people of Chinese ancestry in Australia. Nevertheless, Kee (1992) estimated that it would probably be around 300 000 in 1992, a significant 50 per cent increase from the 1986 census estimate of just over 200 000 Australians claiming primary or secondary Chinese ancestry.

The Chinese in Australia are diverse in their countries of origin, socio-economic backgrounds and religious affiliations (Ho and Kee 1988b; Kee 1988; Kee 1992). The 1986 census listed a dozen countries which contributed more than a hundred Chinese immigrants to Australia, making the Chinese community the most diverse in their countries of origin of all immigrant communities in Australia (Kee 1992). Kee’s analysis further indicated a bimodal distribution in the socio-economic profile of the Chinese in Australia. Many Chinese who arrived as refugees, and others who arrived under the family reunion program, tended to have considerable English language difficulties and experienced a high rate of unemployment. In stark contrast, a substantial number of Chinese came as professional and business migrants, bringing with them great skills and wealth. Many of the immigrant Chinese to Australia and their descendants profess no particular religion, but there are also substantial numbers of Buddhists, Catholics and Anglicans (Kee 1992). Large numbers of Buddhists and those professing no religion may practise ancestor worship at home in the Buddhist or Confucian tradition (VICSEG 1993). This chapter discusses Chinese family values in general but with some emphasis on more recently arrived Hong Kong Chinese families.
Family structure

Patterns of Chinese family structure in Australia are diverse, and are often in contrast to the traditional ideal of extended, multi-generational families with large numbers of children. The structure and size of Chinese families in Australia tend to be more in line with the trend in contemporary urban Chinese societies, for example Hong Kong, China, Singapore and Taiwan, which favour small nuclear families (Da 1993; Tanphanich 1988; Duan-Mu 1994; Wong 1975). Some Chinese families in Australia may have elderly grandparents living under the same roof, but it is relatively uncommon for adult siblings with offspring to share the same dwelling. Recent settlers from China are now freed from the one-child policy in place in their homeland since 1979, and some have chosen to have more than one child, or more children until the arrival of a son.

Traditionally, divorce and having children outside wedlock are frowned on. There are relatively few single-parent and blended families in both contemporary overseas Chinese communities and Australian-Chinese communities. However, a recent phenomenon in Australia is an increasing number of ‘split’ Chinese families from Hong Kong and Taiwan, coinciding with Australia’s economic recession in the early 1990s (Wong 1993; Kee and Skeldon, in press). These are families where one or both parents, usually only the father, continues to work in Hong Kong or Taiwan, where thriving economies have generated attractive business opportunities and employment prospects. The absent parents are referred to as ‘astronauts’ who spend much time travelling between their family home in Australia and their business or employment overseas (Mak 1991; Tsang 1990). Where both parents have returned to work in their original countries, the teenage children left behind to attend school in Australia are referred to as ‘parachute children’.

Traditional family values

Despite the diversity of their countries of origin and socio-economic backgrounds, Chinese families in Australia share, to varying degrees, a heritage of traditional Chinese values handed down through the generations (Chu and Carew 1990). Arguably, Chinese culture may be specified as the culture of the family. Hierarchical and tightly knit family structures in the Confucian tradition have for centuries provided the Chinese with a stable environment for the fulfilment of a whole spectrum of human existence needs (Yee
Indeed, all the core Chinese family values serve to ensure the family's stability and cohesion.

**Importance of the family**

A fundamental Chinese value is the importance of the family unit. Traditional Chinese society has a collectivist orientation that endorses the family, not the individual, as the major unit of society (Lee 1982). 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 (Hsu 1971). Individuals also identify closely with their family's fortune, striving to preserve and further it, not so much for themselves as for their families (Yee 1989). Family prosperity brings 'face' or acclaim to family members, whereas its demise bestows shame. Responsibility to the family transcends individuals' personal concerns (Shon and Ja 1982).

Preserving the family as a unit also means the continuation of the family throughout the generations. Thus, traditional Chinese families favour having a large number of children. Sons are preferred to daughters because the former carry the family name.

Individual matters are often treated as family matters. Traditionally, important life choices are usually made according to the family's wishes. For example, the family decides, or at least has a major input into, grown-up children's choices of vocations and marriage partners. On the other hand, individual members in need can count on other family members for aid. Parents and siblings may feel obliged to lend money to an individual in financial trouble. Pre-school children are often left in the care of their grandmothers when both parents work. Disabled children and ailing elderly grandparents can expect to be looked after by other family members.

Chinese families are proud to be self-sufficient as a unit and will attempt to muster all their resources to cope with difficulties. The Chinese are often hesitant to bring their own and other family members' problems to outsiders' attention. This would violate the Chinese motto of 'keeping family disgrace from outsiders' and cause family members to lose face. As a result, families in need are often reluctant to seek social security and welfare assistance.

Chinese families tend to associate mental illness with great guilt and shame for the entire family and are particularly unwilling to make it known outside the family (Lin and Lin 1981). When disturbed behaviours have persisted despite intense intrafamilial coping effort, the family is likely to present the problems as physical health concerns and seek help from a general practitioner.
By the time psychiatric treatment is sought, the patients' symptoms tend to be more severe than Caucasian patients' (Tsai, Teng and Sue 1981).

As a general principle, one way to avoid seeking outside help is to minimise the potential for family conflicts through adopting a hierarchical family structure in which individuals are expected to obey senior members.

Respect and filial piety

The traditional Chinese 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. There is a strong emphasis on specific familial roles and the proper relationships among incumbents of these ascribed roles (Shon and Ja 1982). Children are taught to respect and defer to their parents, grandparents and older siblings. Women are expected to defer to their husbands and parents-in-law. Most importantly, individuals (including adults) are expected to show respect for their parents by observing filial piety through unquestioning obedience to their parents (Hsieh 1967).

Traditionally, dead parents, grandparents or great grandparents are believed to continue to live, albeit in another world, and therefore should continue to be respected. Ancestors are often remembered and their human needs tended to by their descendants through offerings of food, flowers, burning incense and candles in small altars set up at home, in practices known as ancestor worship (VICSEG 1993). The descendants pray for protection from their dead ancestors.

Respect for members higher up in the family hierarchy preserves order and dictates proper behaviours, maintaining the status quo in family relationships. Individuals seen to be challenging this hierarchy are severely criticised for their impropriety. Members at a higher level of seniority are accorded both higher status and greater responsibilities. The father is thus expected to be the family's head and provider. The eldest son is often under a great deal of pressure to achieve academic success so as to set a good example for younger siblings.

Harmony

Another cluster of traditional family values that serve to stabilise family structure and functioning is the maintenance of harmony within the family. This is often achieved through deliberate avoidance of conflicts and confrontation. Self-restraint, agreeableness
and moderation are hailed as virtues to be espoused. The non-confrontational tactics ensure the protection of face (King and Bond 1985). Compromises, hints, intermediaries, flexibility and other face-saving ploys are preferred to confrontation as strategies for conflict management (Bond and Hwang 1986).

Harmony within the family is intertwined with other family values. The hierarchical nature of familial roles and relationships often spells out the demeanour and behaviour expected in interactions between family members, thus minimising the potential for ambiguities and interpersonal conflict. Harmony within the family is frequently attained at some cost to individual members, who are expected to suppress their own views or put the family's interests ahead of their own when occasions arise. The Chinese further believe that harmony within the family brings prosperity in all its endeavours, while a family's demise is marked by constant squabbling.

Achieving security and prosperity

Financial security and prosperity are valued as a yardstick of the family's success (Redding 1990). Outstanding achievements are cherished because they often bring wealth and acclaim, and therefore honour and 'face' to the family or even to the entire clan, including ancestors. Accruing human capital in the form of qualifications and skills is highly regarded because these accomplishments are associated with improved prospects for monetary gains. For this reason the Chinese are eager to seek education and training, especially in areas associated with financially rewarding prospects such as business and the professions. A popular Chinese saying promises that 'gold is to be found in books'. By comparison, individual pursuits for excellence in sports and the arts, which in most cases cannot be translated into financial gains, tend to receive little encouragement from traditional families.

The Chinese are pragmatic and cautious, believing in investing in property and being careful to save for rainy days. The tragic circumstances that China has faced in the past two centuries— invasions by foreign countries, internal uprisings and civil war, the Cultural Revolution and numerous natural disasters—have taught the Chinese to anticipate times of turmoil and deprivation. Family prosperity means that there will be enough wealth to tide members over any unforeseen circumstances, increasing the family's chances of survival in difficult times.
Role of family values

The core family values discussed above are central to Chinese cultural identity and serve an important protective function. In every phase of the life cycle, the Chinese family unit is assumed to be of central importance in providing the necessary resources for growth and the definition of social expectations and responsibilities (Lee 1982). In dealing with adjustment difficulties in the initial period of settlement, Chinese immigrants can derive great strength from the traditional values of sacrificing self and working hard to provide for the family.

However, the traditional importance of the family, relative to the individual, may have been undermined by processes associated with modernisation and migration. Chinese-Australians may find that their ethnic cultural values sometimes conflict with mainstream Australian values. Differences between values at home and those transmitted by peer groups, schools and the mass media may cause second-generation immigrants considerable confusion and frustration.

A question thus arises as to whether the Chinese family unit in Australia has continued to be of central importance in providing the necessary resources for growth in every phase of the life cycle (Lee 1982). Does it meet the ideal image of providing a strong, tightly knit family structure that fulfils the whole spectrum of human existence from cradle to afterlife? (Yee 1989.) In the following sections the experiences and expressed values of Chinese families in Australia will be discussed in the context of different stages of the life cycle—the formation and breakup of families, childbirth and child rearing, adolescence and old age.

Forming and re-forming families

To the Chinese, getting married and starting a family are two of the most important transitions in life. Traditional Chinese families cherish stable marriages and believe that separation and divorce epitomise violation of harmony within the family.

Marriage

Adult children who put off marriage and having children are likely to cause their parents great concern and, in traditional families, they may be criticised as unfilial. Parents with bachelor sons are often anxious to see them marry, so parents can enjoy a special cup of *xin bao cha* or ‘daughter-in-law’ tea at the marriage
ceremony. They hope that this will soon be followed by news of the daughter-in-law’s pregnancy when the parents can look forward to bao sun or cuddling grandchildren. Parents with unmarried older adult daughters may experience a loss of face in failing to marry daughters off, and often feel sorry for them.

The positive attitudes towards marriage are consistent with Ho’s (1994) findings from the 1991 Australian census. Sixty-five per cent of Chinese-born people in Australia (aged 15 and over) were married, compared with 56 per cent of the total Australian population. There were 22 per cent of ‘never married’ among the Chinese-born, compared with 28 per cent among the Australian population. The percentage of ‘never married’ was particularly low (only 18 per cent) among Chinese-born females over the age of 15 years.

Concern about finding compatible partners is noticeable among unmarried ethnic Chinese adults in Australia. A substantial number of classified advertisements in Chinese daily newspapers published in Australia are routinely devoted to those seeking marriage partners. According to community informants, while many single adult immigrants would prefer ethnic Chinese partners from similar backgrounds, others are open to dating non-Chinese people and would consider intermarriage.

Intermarriage

Traditionally, China as a nation has tended to be shy in its interactions with foreigners, and Chinese people have generally found marriages to non-Chinese partners to be an unattractive proposition. In reality, patterns of Chinese marrying those of non-Chinese backgrounds in Australia have been influenced by the sex ratio of the Chinese in Australia. Early Chinese settlers in Australia were predominantly men. In 1901, there were just under 30,000 full Chinese in Australia, of whom fewer than 500 were female (Crissman, Beattie and Selby 1985). Many Chinese men who chose to stay and raise their families in Australia married non-Chinese women, and had children with them. Chin (1988) reported that in 1947 there were 9144 full-blood and 2950 mixed-blood Chinese people in Australia.

The sex imbalance of the Chinese in Australia remained a problem in the 1950s and 1960s, and contributed to marriages with those from non-Chinese backgrounds and to international marriages. Inglis (1972) reported that in Darwin, from 1946 to 1966, 35 out of 80 marriages involving Chinese people were with non-Chinese spouses. Choi (1972) revealed that in Melbourne 32.5 per cent of Chinese immigrant males who were unmarried upon
arrival, and half of the Australian-born Chinese males, had married non-Chinese wives. By 1968 family reunion had become easier and some Chinese people had returned to China or Hong Kong for marriage, resulting in a more balanced sex ratio (Chin 1988). Nevertheless, Shum (1988) noted that marriages with those of non-Chinese background were still common in New South Wales in the 1960s and early 1970s. May (1988) pointed out that in Queensland Chinese women have come to Australia in order to marry Australian-born Chinese men. There is also recent evidence that some ethnic Chinese men in Australia, who themselves were not born in China, have sponsored women born in China to join them as wives or fiancées (Brown 1994).

Recently a much larger ethnic Chinese population and a more balanced sex ratio in Australia have resulted in a trend towards higher rates of in-group marriage. This is evident in Price’s (1993) analyses of second-generation in-group marriage percentages for Australian-born brides and grooms with mothers born in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore. He found that in the years 1965–72 in-group marriage rates were a low 11 per cent for brides and 10 per cent for grooms. By 1987–90 the corresponding figures had increased to 23 per cent and 21 per cent respectively. Shum (1988) observed that the tendency towards intermarriage was particularly strong among part-Chinese families.

In the early 1960s most Chinese parents in New South Wales were still very traditional in their outlook towards intermarriage. However, there are indications that second-generation Chinese-Australians’ attitudes are more liberal than those of their parents (Tan and Chiu 1988).

**Sex roles in marriage and family life**

According to community informants, parents are concerned about intermarriages because non-Chinese sons- and daughters-in-law have little understanding of the proper behaviour (in the Confucian tradition) expected of individuals in an ideal Chinese family. It is often believed that such ignorance of Chinese proprieties leads to marital discord and intergenerational conflict, and so compromises the harmony of the family.

Stable family life in traditional Chinese families is maintained by women adopting a submissive role in relating to their husbands, and a nurturant role within the family. This is derived from Confucian principles dictating that girls be educated not in books, but in ‘three obediences’—obedience to the father at home, obedience to the husband after getting married, and obedience to the eldest son after the husband’s death. Women are expected to defer
to their husbands in decision making, to put their husbands' career development ahead of their own needs, to be responsible for all the household chores, to nurture and care for their children and to look after elderly parents.

In contemporary Chinese societies, substantial changes to the position of women have occurred in recent decades but much is yet to be attained. Lin (1993) has pointed out that the prominence of suicide as a major cause of death among women in China aged 15–45 might reflect their lower levels of well-being. In Hong Kong and Taiwan, many middle class families can afford to hire domestic help for child care and housework. Men may also share household responsibilities to some extent, but it remains the wives' main responsibility to organise and coordinate these activities, including the supervision of the maids. As regards women's submission to their husbands, paternalism remains the more typical pattern of behaviour in families in contemporary Hong Kong (Yee 1989). While some women may claim and obtain shared and differential powers in the family, they are likely to defer to their husbands when the occasion arises.

The authors' observations as participants in both Australian and overseas Chinese societies suggest that hired domestic help is much less accessible in Australia than in contemporary Chinese societies, so that many men in dual-income families have to help, to varying degrees, in child care and household chores. In addition, like many men in Australia, Chinese men are expected to be responsible for gardening and tasks associated with the maintenance of the house. As a result, they often find themselves playing a much more active role in family and house-related responsibilities than in their country of origin. This increased involvement can be a source of new-found pleasure for some men as they develop new life skills and spend more time at home with their families. For others, the new responsibilities are time-consuming, burdensome and a source of marital conflict.

Some immigrant women without adequate access to community services and support from their husbands may get trapped in their care-giving roles at home, looking after both the elderly and children (McCallum 1992). They are often expected to take on the intricate task of mediating conflicts between the older and younger generations.

In the case of 'astronaut' immigrant families described earlier, where one parent (usually the father) works in Hong Kong or Taiwan and returns to Australia for rather frequent but short visits, sex-role dynamics within the family can be a real issue. The wives in Australia have to cope with raising a family in a foreign culture without domestic help and the support of their husbands.
and extended families. They often have to make decisions on their own about themselves, their children and their dwellings. This reversal in sex roles pertaining to decision making, coupled with the difficulties of cross-cultural transition and frequent separations from their husbands, can place great strain on women and their marriages (Lau 1991).

Real or threatened reversal in sex roles may also occur in cases where women have little trouble obtaining employment, whereas their husbands remain unemployed for long periods. Unfortunately, prolonged unemployment is a realistic prospect for newcomers from non-English-speaking backgrounds in the Australian workplace, especially in times of economic recession (Mitchell et al. 1990). Some immigrant men with jobs experience underemployment (DEET 1989; Miller 1987). Men brought up to believe they are their family's chief breadwinner may feel very uncomfortable with this shift in the source of the family's income and the accompanying threat to customary sex roles. As well, the frustration of unemployment and underemployment are likely to cause considerable personal, marital and family stress.

**Divorce and remarriage**

In traditional Chinese families marital discord tends to be minimised through avoidance of conflicts, with women deferring to men within the patriarchal tradition (for example, wives turning a blind eye to their husbands' infidelities). As marital problems escalate, they may be discussed with senior members of the families of the husband and the wife with a view to resolving the conflicts within the extended family network; for example, through mediation by trusted family members. Marriage problems are considered a disgrace to the family and it is best that people outside the extended family know nothing about them. Unhappily married couples often choose to remain married so that their children can live in an intact family. Where remarriages occur, children from a previous marriage are sometimes subject to social stigma and consequently suffer from low self-esteem. Women often perceive a loss of face when their failed marriage is made known to the public through a divorce. According to traditional Chinese customs, women who remarry can expect social disapproval from having lost their chastity, whereas widows who refuse to remarry are likely to be praised for their chastity.

In contemporary Chinese societies, urbanisation and industrialisation have led to more relaxed attitudes regarding divorce and remarriage in recent years. According to a report by Duan-Mu (1994) in the *Australian Chinese Daily*, the divorce rate
in Taiwan increased from 0.5 per cent in 1976 to 17.2 per cent in 1991. The report also noted that more than half of the Taiwanese women surveyed in a recent study approved of separation or divorce in circumstances where a marriage was no longer working. Attention has been drawn recently to the dramatic increase in divorces filed in China—a jump from 287,000 couples filing for divorce in 1989 to 909,000 in 1993 (Sing Tao newspaper, Australian edition, 14 May 1994, p. 7). The main reasons for divorces in China were thought to be conflict over financial matters, extramarital affairs and quarrels over domestic matters. It may be the case that traditional family values are being eroded, and that the gap between Chinese and western divorce rates is closing.

It is conceivable that the divorce rate for Chinese-Australians may begin to approximate that of the Australian population for a variety of social and demographic reasons. There are social support benefits for single parents, little social stigma attached to divorce in Australia and a substantial proportion of intermarriages. However, Ho’s (1994) analysis of the 1991 census data shows that only 5 per cent of Chinese-born people (15 years old and over) were separated or divorced, which was relatively low compared with 8 per cent of the general Australian population. Nevertheless, divorce trends among Chinese-born people in Australia reveal that the number of divorces has increased dramatically in recent years. In 1985, 84 divorces for Chinese-born husbands and 84 divorces for Chinese-born wives were filed in Australia (ABS 1986), whereas the corresponding figures were 542 and 592 in 1992 (ABS 1993b). This was disproportional to the increase of Chinese-born immigrants during that period (their numbers had approximately doubled), but coincided with the significant increase in divorce rates in contemporary China. By comparison, the increase in divorces among the Hong Kong-born in Australia was less dramatic. In 1985 there were 63 divorces for Hong Kong-born husbands and 57 for Hong Kong-born wives, while the corresponding figures were 153 and 145 in 1992.

Chinese-Australians’ reasons for and experience with divorce are little understood because of a lack of reported research in the area. Anecdotal evidence from Chinese-language interpreters suggests that couples from China seeking divorce-related property settlement and custody of children in Australia’s Family Law Court tend to find these processes particularly traumatic because of their unfamiliarity with the western legal system (see Nan 1988). This adds to the stress that families undergo during their breakup.

Statistics on remarriages due to the death of a spouse or a previous divorce are unavailable. However, Ho (1994) reported 7
per cent of 'widowed' among the Chinese-born immigrants in the 1991 Australian census, which was somewhat higher than the corresponding figure of 5.2 per cent for the Australian population.

Childbirth and child rearing

An ideal Chinese marriage is expected to produce healthy and well-disciplined children. Traditional practices have been handed down to ensure that the foetus is well nourished and that the mother will recover quickly after childbirth to perform her maternal role. Confucianism has had a tremendous impact on traditional child rearing and education. It stipulates that early education of the child should start from pregnancy. It is believed that if the mother is healthy, calm and in good spirits, her infant will also be the same. Consequently, great care and support are given to the mother during and after her pregnancy to secure the well-being and healthy development of the infant.

Reproductive and post-partum practices

According to traditional beliefs, the pregnant woman is in a delicate transitional state and it is vital for her to observe physical and dietary restrictions to safeguard both the foetus and herself. She is advised to observe physical restrictions, such as not carrying heavy objects, to ensure the safety of the foetus. She should also avoid eating food that is of an extreme yin nature (very bitter, salty or sour foods that are raw, steamed or boiled) or of an extreme yang nature (very sweet, spicy and fatty foods that are baked, roasted or fried) (Chu 1993).

The month after childbirth is regarded as an important period in Chinese culture and is termed \text{zuo yue} or 'to sit the month' (Chu 1993). This is a time for a woman to take proper care of herself, otherwise she may suffer long-term health problems. Mothers and mothers-in-law often provide support and supervision to make certain that proper conduct is observed. Special herbs such as \text{dang gui} and food such as a tonic of pork and ginger are consumed to dissolve blood clots, replenish the blood and energy, improve circulation and provide warmth. The woman is confined to complete rest and is advised to avoid coming into contact with elements considered to have yin qualities, such as cold water and wind. There are also beliefs that men can contract specific serious disease from women during the period immediately following childbirth (Topley 1970). Many of these dietary and physical
restrictions and zuo yue are still observed by contemporary Chinese women (Chu 1993; Pillsbury 1982).

In Australia, many Chinese immigrant women have difficulty in observing dietary and physical restrictions during pregnancy and after childbirth. Loss of support from extended family members and lack of culturally sensitive maternal and child care services often lead to frustration and anxiety. Many are concerned that their health will be adversely affected due to their inability to follow traditional practices.

**Growth and development of children**

Traditionally, Chinese parents do not have exclusive control over their children. Grandparents, aunts, uncles and in-laws share in teaching and discipline. It is believed that a child should be a passive recipient of adult teachings, should be inculcated with moral values and shaped into a traditional Chinese personality (Hsu 1981; Ho 1981)—a personality which Mickle (1985) describes as ‘non-expressive emotionally, strongly reliant on “will power”, more society-centred, more authoritarian, more accepting of authority and less verbal’ (p. 97). However, before children are taught discipline and self-control they enjoy a period of freedom, leniency, indulgence and protection (Bunzel 1950; Hsu 1967; Li 1970; Wolf 1970). Strict bedtimes are rarely implemented, and weaning and toilet training are mild (Sollenberger 1968; Wu 1966). Children eat and sleep according to their needs and not according to a set schedule (Bunzel 1950).

When children reach the age of ‘understanding’ or ‘reason’, at about age 4–6, parents (and teachers) begin to inculcate important Chinese family values—the primacy of the family, respect for parents and seniors, harmony within the family and achieving security and prosperity.

For many centuries Chinese children were instructed by tales such as ‘The twenty-four examples of filial piety’, stories which dramatised the most significant cultural ideals of the Chinese, namely that support of one’s parents comes before all other obligations and that this obligation must be fulfilled even at one’s own expense. In the past, Chinese children were taught from an early age that they must try to satisfy their parents’ wishes and look after their well-being in all circumstances. It was believed that ‘in the service of the elders, no effort was too extraordinary or too great’ (Hsu 1981, p. 81). Although the importance of this virtue has gradually eroded with time, filial piety still occupies a key position in present-day Chinese values. In her study of 237 Chinese senior students in Melbourne, Chan (1987) found that an
overwhelming majority (79 per cent) still felt that filial piety was either important or very important to them.

Traditionally, Chinese parents are also very concerned about their children's ability to control impulse, a concern which is grounded in the Confucian ethic of filial piety (Ho and Kang 1984). Children are encouraged to suppress aggression and to avoid activities which will involve risk of physical injury to themselves or others. Exposing oneself to danger is contrary to the Confucian injunction: 'The body with its hair and skin is received from parents; do not cause it harm'. For parents in Hong Kong, attitudes towards filial piety correlate with a strong emphasis on strictness of discipline and proper behaviour, and much less emphasis on the child's expression of opinions, creativity, self-mastery, independence and all-round personal development (Ho and Kang 1984).

Since preserving the family harmony is a major concern, any expression of aggression, especially physical aggression, is often prohibited. Children are taught positive values of endurance, gentleness, unselfishness and non-competitiveness. Parish and Whyte (1978) found that in rural Guangdong Province fighting and stealing were most feared because such misconduct threatened harmonious relations between families. Ryback et al. (1980) compared university students' responses in six cultures (Ethiopia, Israel, India, Taiwan, Thailand and the United States) and reported that the Chinese ranked third on not allowing children to express aggression and on not encouraging aggressive behaviour. Chan (1987) found that 60 per cent of her sample of Chinese senior students in Melbourne regarded the ideal of endurance as either important or very important to them.

In recent years there have been some changes in the way Chinese children are raised, due to western influence and population control. Ho (1986) observed that in present-day Taiwan some efforts are directed towards training children to become more active, self-reliant, competent, intellectually critical and achievement-oriented. In China the one-child policy has given rise to changes in child-rearing practices. Chinese parents pay more attention to the physical and intellectual development of their 'onlies' and are less concerned about disciplining them (Da 1993). Da believes that these 'onlies' are given too much care and attention by their parents and grandparents and are spoilt like 'little emperors' because they have become so precious to their parents.

Traditional child-rearing practices undergo more changes when Chinese parents have to raise their children in a western society. Assertiveness, independence and individualism taught at school may not be compatible with teachings at home, such as
conformity, humility and obedience. Chinese children are often confused about what values to adopt and their parents are concerned about their children's loss of Chinese identity and values. Da (1994) found some one-child Chinese-Australian families were worried that their children had too easy a life in Australia and would not be equipped to deal with later life in a complex and competitive society. Morrissey, Mitchell and Rutherford (1991) found that 74 per cent of their Chinese-Australian sample (predominantly immigrants from Hong Kong) felt that children in Australia were less respectful towards adults; 84 per cent wanted to preserve Chinese culture and language in Australia.

Culture and language maintenance

The extent of Chinese-language maintenance varies considerably among the ethnic Chinese in Australia. An analysis based on the 1986 census revealed that language maintenance was almost universal among the Chinese born in Timor, followed closely by those from Hong Kong and China. Chinese was used at home by 80 per cent of Malaysian-born Chinese, 70 per cent of the Singaporeans, 37 per cent of Thai and Filipino Chinese, and 22 per cent of Indonesian Chinese (Kee 1992).

Chinese immigrants in Australia have tried to maintain their language and culture by speaking Chinese at home, sending their children to Chinese weekend schools, frequenting or living in Chinatown where there are Chinese restaurants and bookshops, and supporting Chinese newspapers, television and radio programs (Yee 1981; Chan 1987). They also form and support Chinese associations which organise cultural activities and celebrate major Chinese festivals such as the Chinese New Year.

Despite the effort made to maintain language and culture, the use of Chinese at home decreases with the second and third generations. Analysis of 1986 census data showed that, even though 81 per cent of the single-ancestry Chinese immigrant generation spoke Chinese at home, the level of maintenance dropped to about 66 per cent in the second generation and 16 per cent in the third and later generations. Among those with mixed ancestry the use of Chinese at home was greatly reduced, falling to 1 per cent by the third generation (Kee 1992).

The decline in the use of Chinese at home may be due to a number of factors. Yee (1981) found that parents with higher academic and occupational status tended to be more fluent in English and to use predominantly English, or both English and Chinese, at home. Fluent English was also seen as an important force in upward mobility while the Chinese language did not seem
to have any useful function outside the home. It was, therefore, not surprising that even though most parents interviewed acknowledged the value of Chinese only half of them sent their children to the weekend schools.

Adolescence

As the child from a Chinese family becomes an adolescent, he or she is made more aware of the importance of bringing honour to the family by behaving in a socially accepted manner, and of helping the family achieve security and prosperity. Above all, parents have high expectations for their children to achieve academically so that they can be successful in later life.

Academic achievement

As indicated earlier, the Chinese value education as the best way to achieve security and prosperity, and parents and children share high academic aspirations. Parents usually hope that their children will become professionals with high incomes and social status; children regard high academic achievement as one of the main ways to express filial piety and to repay the many sacrifices of parents in providing for their education.

High aspirations are often matched by high academic achievement. H.K.Y. Chan (1988) reported that her sample of Chinese students in Melbourne performed very well in their Higher School Certificate (HSC) examination, with most belonging to the top 20 per cent of all candidates and about 24 per cent among the top 5 per cent of all candidates. Among the top 500 scorers at the New South Wales HSC examination in 1989, 88 (17.6 per cent) were of ethnic Chinese origin (Australian Chinese Daily, 15 January 1990, p. 1).

Reasons for high academic achievement are varied. Research into Chinese children in the United States showed that the children often modelled their parents’ conscientiousness and concern for good work performance; children were goaded to success by parental demands and high expectations; and Chinese parents compared the achievement of their children with that of their relatives’ children (Sue, Zane and Lim 1984). Consequently, Chinese children felt the pressure to perform well in order to give their families ‘good name’, and usually felt worthless or rebellious when they failed to bring honour to their families.

The above research also suggested that academic success was due to Chinese children’s ability to use a bicultural adaptation
strategy, involving capitalising on strengths, reducing limitations and seizing on opportunities presented to them (Sue, Zane and Lim 1984). Such strategies can include preferring to study subjects that demand fewer English skills, and opting for science and mathematics majors. Sometimes students who do not have the aptitude to succeed in such majors choose them against the advice of teachers because the subjects are associated with university entry into prestigious degree courses and subsequent professions.

Cultural identity and life satisfaction

Problems of culture conflict, identity and the 'generation gap' between parents and children usually become intensified when children reach adolescence. However, a number of studies of Chinese-Australian adolescents suggest that most have high academic achievement and a fairly high sense of well-being (Chan 1987; Chiu and Tan 1986; Fan 1993; Rosenthal and Feldman 1989; Wong 1985). Only a small group of adolescents who have been caught between two cultures suffer a high level of stress.

A study of 237 Chinese Year 12 students in Melbourne (Chan 1987) indicated that those who adapted well had been in Australia for a longer period of time, had weaker Chinese affiliations, higher ability to communicate in English and better relationships with their teachers. The majority said they were satisfied with their lives in Australia. Those most satisfied tended to have a stronger sense of filial piety and respect for authority, better relationships with their teachers, better command of spoken English and no experience of discrimination by their peers. There is also evidence that the length of exposure to Australian values and the loss of Chinese cultural values, especially those relating to education, have a negative effect on aspirations and application.

Rosenthal and Feldman (1989) compared perceptions of family environment among first- and second-generation adolescents of Chinese descent in Australia and the United States, adolescents from the host culture in the two countries and adolescents from Hong Kong. There was evidence that the Chinese immigrant families showed some accommodation to the autonomy-promoting norms of their new cultural environment. Adolescents from Chinese immigrant families perceived their families as more controlling and as placing greater emphasis on achievement than did adolescents from the host culture and from Hong Kong.

Fan's (1993) study of 154 Chinese-speaking girls attending Years 8 to 10 in various State, Catholic and independent schools in Melbourne suggested five patterns of cultural identity. 'Chauvinistic' girls identified very strongly and closely with the
Chinese culture and made friends mainly with Asians. 'Ethnic-bicultural' girls identified with the Chinese culture but their interpersonal relationships were more flexible. 'Anglo-bicultural' girls were more mixed in their ethnic identification, with some identification with Australian culture and some identification with Chinese culture. 'Passing' girls identified as Australian to some extent and did not mix with Asian friends. 'Marginal' girls also identified to some extent as Australian, mixed mainly with non-Asian friends and claimed to be influenced more by their friends than by their parents. Those caught between two cultures (the 'Anglo-bicultural' and 'ethnic-bicultural' girls) suffered a higher level of stress than those girls who had a firm sense of cultural identity (the 'chauvinistic' and 'passing' girls). The 'marginal' girls experienced a high level of stress too because they rejected their Chinese identity and yet were not accepted by their Australian peers (Fan 1993).

Family interviews in Melbourne

To supplement the above studies one of the authors interviewed 14 Chinese-Australian families from Hong Kong about their family values. The families had been resident in Australia for an average of nine years, with a minimum of six months and a maximum of fifteen years, and were of mixed educational and occupational status. Their offspring ranged in age from 7 to 22 years. With the exception of two families with grandparents living under the same roof, all parents indicated that their own parents and siblings were in Hong Kong or Canada.

The parents indicated that the values of filial piety, respect for authority, harmony within the family and achieving security and prosperity were important but that there were difficulties in upholding and transmitting these values to the next generation. It seems that bringing up children in a western society demands compromise and changes to basic Chinese values. Values compatible with western values, such as achieving security and prosperity, are readily accepted by the younger generation. Values less compatible with the mainstream Australian culture, such as respect for authority, are less well received by the offspring. Harmony within the family is sometimes disrupted by intergenerational conflicts.

Parents’ comments suggested other changes to traditional Chinese family values. The ideals of preserving the family as a unit and subjugating the wishes of individuals are being challenged by an increasing number of ‘split’ Chinese families (where family
members live separately in different cities). ‘Astronaut’ parents (usually fathers) who travel frequently between Hong Kong and Australia for business and personal reasons have much less time to spend with their families. There are indications that ‘split’ families have high incidences of marital discord, divorce, parent-child conflicts and behavioural problems of children (Mak 1991).

The value of achieving security and prosperity also takes on new dimensions. In the past the Chinese saw conscientiousness and frugality as means of achieving security and prosperity. In present-day China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, financial prosperity is still an overriding yardstick for measuring the success of a family, but frugality is no longer a cherished ideal. Money earned is often spent lavishly on famous-brand clothes, expensive cars, banquets, electronic equipment and overseas holidays. Parents try to instil in their children the importance of building wealth and then using it for the enjoyment of their lives. The traditional concept of passing on wealth to the next generation seems no longer to be important. All parents interviewed wanted their children to become financially independent by having highly paid and high status jobs. Some parents mentioned that their children had already acquired ‘expensive’ tastes and preferred famous-brand clothing and shoes. Older adolescents liked to drive parents’ luxury cars to impress their peers.

Harmony within the family is still much valued by the Chinese, but many Chinese-Australian parents have to compromise traditional parenting methods in order to achieve accord with their children. Some Chinese parents interviewed coped by becoming more flexible themselves. Instead of expecting submission, they reasoned with their offspring and respected their opinions, especially those who were young adults and older adolescents. Others, however, refused to compromise because they firmly believed in maintaining a hierarchical pattern within the family. These parents produced what Fan (1993) termed ‘chauvinistic’ offspring, namely obedient children who identified very strongly with the Chinese culture.

Although the concept of filial piety remains important, the parents interviewed did not expect their children to provide for them materially because they had invested in superannuation or other financial plans to secure their livelihood in old age. They did, however, expect emotional support, love and respect from their children.

The importance of filial piety was evidenced by the sadness expressed when elderly parents were mentioned. Interviewees regretted that their parents were far away in Hong Kong or Canada and that they could only express their love and concern
by correspondence and long-distance phone calls. They regularly send gifts and money to their parents; four travelled at least once a year to visit their parents in Hong Kong.

Old age

There are few studies focused on the adaptation and family life of elderly Chinese-Australians. According to Legge and Westbrook (1993), health-care workers in Sydney indicated that many aged Chinese provided practical help to their families, but relationships with family members were not very affectionate and harmonious. The elderly Chinese depended on their family members to provide transport for them, to act as interpreters, to assist with shopping and to accompany them when they visited their doctors. Two studies (Legge and Westbrook 1991; Westbrook and Legge 1990) showed that Chinese patients were favoured by the staff of nursing homes in Sydney because many of their illness behaviours can be accommodated comfortably by people with Anglo-Australian values. Compared with Greek and Italian patients, Chinese patients caused less tension at meals and when they were in pain.

McCallum's (1989) survey on the retirement adjustment of Australian immigrants indicated that retirees from China (along with those from Greece and the former Yugoslavia) seemed to have extra adjustment difficulties. The author found that those who were sheltered in an ethnic enclave during their working life and who retained preferences for practices and customs which were not part of the Australian mainstream had more adjustment difficulties after retirement.

A report by the Victorian Elderly Chinese Welfare Society (1984) identified some of the problems encountered by elderly Chinese. Almost 70 per cent of the 632 surveyed lived with their children. With the gradual erosion of the traditional Chinese respect for the elderly, many aged parents found it difficult to accept their total dependence on their children and the lack of reverence paid to them by their children and grandchildren. Even if family relationships were harmonious, the aged parents suffered from intense isolation because they spent most of their time on child care and housekeeping. Little time could be devoted to leisure activities and meeting friends. Their inability to speak adequate English and their dependence on public transport were great obstacles to social contacts with Australians.

The study also found that financial insecurity was a major problem for some, especially those who were single or widowed. Being unemployed and not eligible for the aged pension, many
had to depend on their children for maintenance. If their children could not or would not provide for them, life was little more than a hand-to-mouth existence. The elderly were also concerned about buying burial plots so that their Chinese burial customs and traditions could be observed. Since the publication of the above report, significant changes have occurred to improve the quality of life of the elderly Chinese in Victoria, including the establishment of senior citizens clubs in nearly every suburb to lessen their isolation.

There are indications that family conflict is the major problem for the elderly Chinese. They usually come to Australia late in their lives and after their children have been in the country for a substantial period of time. While their children have become 'westernised' and have accepted Australian cultural values, the elderly retain many of the traditional Chinese values. There is consequently conflict over child rearing, control and authority. The problems are often compounded by communication difficulties. Sometimes their children’s spouses and grandchildren speak only English while they speak only one of the Chinese dialects. Many Chinese children would like to care for their parents, but have neither the time nor the energy after work to do so. While it is economically viable in many parts of Asia to employ a domestic helper to look after the elderly, it is regarded as too expensive for ordinary people in Australia. Traditionally, Chinese parents live with their sons. As a result, the carer may be a daughter-in-law who has only a limited emotional attachment to her spouse’s parents. Reports of verbal abuse and physical violence between parents and daughters-in-law are, therefore, not uncommon. Those who can live harmoniously with their children tend to be more tolerant and flexible in their approach.

Issues and opportunities

Important issues in the future for Chinese families in Australia include adequate care and other services for elderly Chinese, questions concerning cultural identity of children and adolescents, the impact of the recession on recently arrived families, problems faced by scattered or ‘split’ families, and the provision of culturally appropriate mental health services for families.

Services for the elderly

Despite the improvements mentioned above, the inadequacy of community and health services for elderly Chinese migrants is one
of the emerging issues facing the Chinese-Australian community. Currently, many of the elderly are not receiving culturally appropriate health and social services, and have difficulties accessing recreational activities. Daughters and daughters-in-law often have to shoulder the burden of looking after the frail elderly at home with little support from existing health and social programs. On the other hand, with the significant recent increase of Chinese professional immigrants in Australia, including more Cantonese- and Mandarin-speaking health care and social service providers, there will be more personnel available to provide ethno-specific services for the elderly and support services for the care-givers.

### Cultural identity of children and adolescents

Cultural identity problems faced by many children and adolescents are exacerbated by language difficulties in their first few years of settlement. Many have experienced racial discrimination and in some cases marginalisation in schools. Perhaps, in the longer term, multicultural education conducted in Australian schools can alleviate these problems and make it easier for children and adolescents to be proud of their bicultural identity. In recognition of Australia's increased trade and cultural links with countries in the Asia-Pacific region, a federal language policy has recently been put in place to include Mandarin as a priority second language to be taught in Australian schools. At last there is a policy that endorses the value of acquiring and maintaining competencies in the Chinese language and culture. This will serve to make biculturalism a valued option of cross-cultural adaptation and increase children's motivation to learn and use Chinese.

### Recent immigrants

New immigrants inevitably experience varying degrees of acculturative stress. However, the large numbers of recent ethnic-Chinese immigrants who have arrived in times of economic recession face particular challenges. Those regarded as elites in their home countries because of their qualifications and successes as professionals and administrators are faced with multiple losses in the initial period of rebuilding their careers in Australia (Mak 1991). For many families the challenges of cultural adjustment have been compounded by poor employment prospects during the recession.

Ho's (1994) analysis of 1991 census data has revealed a relatively high level of underemployment among Chinese-born migrants. Although 13.8 per cent of them had a bachelor degree
or higher, compared with 7.7 per cent among the Australian population, the Chinese-born were concentrated in lower skilled or unskilled occupations in labouring and factory jobs, and were underrepresented in professional, administrative and clerical work. According to community informants, some ethnic-Chinese business people have exploited the labour of new co-ethnic settlers by hiring them at low wages to work in their restaurants, retail outlets and factories.

At the same time, the new arrivals include a large number of highly educated professionals and wealthy business people, whose presence in the Chinese community has raised the social image of the Chinese in Australia. The large increase in Chinese immigrants has also given rise to a much more vibrant Chinese community in the metropolitan areas, especially Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, in recent years. Along with an increase in the number of Chinese community organisations there is now a greater variety of community language classes, radio and television (including a pay television station featuring programs produced in Hong Kong), newspapers and other periodicals vital to the validation and maintenance of the Chinese language and culture.

Scattered families

As noted earlier, among the new settlers from Hong Kong and Taiwan are wives and children of 'astronaut' immigrants. Being a split nuclear family and having scattered extended families can threaten the integrity of the family unit by causing marital problems and reducing family cohesion. Moreover, these situations can weaken such families' determination to develop their roots in Australia. Some recent business and professional immigrants have become 'mobile' family members, moving to and fro between Hong Kong, Australia and Canada (which is the biggest receiving country of Hong Kong emigrants in recent years). This is in part a reflection of a global trend towards increased international mobility. On a positive note, the existence of scattered extended families has provided excellent trade opportunities, linking Australia to Hong Kong and China (Kee 1994; Tracy and Ip 1990).

Mental health services

A final emerging issue relates to the provision of culturally appropriate marriage counselling and mental health services. For some new settlers aspects of the immigration experience, such as cultural conflict, perceptions of discrimination, separation from spouses, unemployment and underemployment, and cross-cultural
differences in the workplace, are likely to generate a great deal of marital and personal stress (Hofstede 1980; Mak 1991; Mak, Westwood and Ishiyama 1994). Unfortunately, as noted earlier, Chinese families tend to associate marital and mental health problems with guilt and shame; generally sceptical of the effectiveness of western psychotherapy, they tend to postpone seeking counselling and psychiatric treatment until the problems are too severe to contain within the family. When that occurs, the first professional likely to be contacted tends to be a general practitioner rather than a mental health professional.

T.Y. and M.C. Lin (1981) have noted a growing acceptance of psychiatry among western-educated and second-generation Chinese-Americans. Nevertheless, the importance of developing general and mental health services with greater cultural sensitivity (in this case an awareness of the Chinese tendency to somatise their psychiatric problems and to delay seeking psychiatric treatment) cannot be overemphasised. The challenge remains for mental health professionals to develop psychotherapeutic approaches effective in working with the Chinese. Problem-solving and other directive approaches are more congruent with Chinese cultural beliefs than non-directive, insight-oriented therapy methods and so may be more acceptable to Chinese patients (Exum and Lau 1988; Tsai, Teng and Sue 1981). Bilingual and bicultural health professionals have an especially valuable role to play in the prevention and early detection of psychiatric problems and in early intervention.

Conclusion

Despite their diverse countries of origin and socio-economic backgrounds, Chinese immigrant families generally retain many of their original cultural beliefs. However, many parents find it difficult to insist that their offspring also maintain the Chinese culture and language in Australia. Achieving security and prosperity may be the only fundamental Chinese family value that has not been weakened in Australia, because western societies also value achievement. However, the traditional emphasis on the importance of the family has been undermined by western values of individualism. Respect for the elderly, filial piety, patriarchal authority and emphasis on harmony within the family are being eroded in the face of Australian values of egalitarianism, independence and assertiveness.

In order that family members in different phases of the life cycle can attain optimum development and be adequately looked
after, Chinese-Australian families will at times need to seek and accept help from mainstream and ethno-specific services. The Chinese community’s needs for welfare provision and mental health services remain largely unknown to the mainstream society. Chu and Carew (1990) attribute this in part to the law-abiding image and low profile of the Chinese in Australia. Australian research is greatly needed to identify the settlement needs of different groups of ethnic Chinese immigrants and to develop a variety of family services that are congruent with Chinese cultural beliefs.
The presence of Filipinos in Australia can be traced back to the early 1900s, when some 700 were known to be working in the pearling industry and on trading ships (Coughlan 1992). Most Filipinos, however, have arrived since the beginning of the 1980s. In 1987-88 the Philippines was the third largest source of immigrants after the two traditional sources—the United Kingdom and New Zealand. Since then Filipinos have been one of the fastest growing ethnic minority populations in Australia, with an increase of 118 per cent between the 1986 and 1991 censuses (Shu et al. 1994).

Filipino migration to Australia

Migration has been a traditional response to the many social and economic pressures existing in the Philippines. For Filipinos the ‘push’ factors of migration—for example, unemployment and underemployment, graft and corruption, high population density, pollution and a perceived unpromising future for children—seem to be stronger motivating factors than the ‘pull’ factors of economic advancement and opportunity to join relatives.

Three recent waves of Filipino emigration to Australia can be identified. The first, in the late 1960s, included Filipinos of Spanish descent, who came with the cautious opening of Australia’s doors to immigrants who did not differ markedly from the white population. The formal lifting of the White Australia
policy in 1973 encouraged the emigration of a wider group of Filipinos, most of whom were wealthy and/or highly qualified, including a number of nurses and teachers who were responding to the shortage in these professions (Balaba and Roca 1992).

The phenomenon of Filipino-Australian marriages began in the 1960s but emigration of Filipino women for marriage ballooned in the late 1970s, marking the second major immigration wave (Jackson and Flores 1989). The dramatic increase in the Filipino population in Australia has been attributed largely to intercultural marriages. From an estimated 700 Filipino women with non-Filipino husbands in 1976, the figure increased threefold to 2200 in just ten years (Balaba and Roca 1992). Between 1982 and 1989, 41.4 per cent of all female Filipino settlers entering under the family migration category came as spouses of non-Filipinos and another 31.8 per cent as fiancées. In comparison, only 18.4 per cent of males came as spouses or fiancés, yet even this figure is 4 percentage points higher than for any other immigrant group (Hugo 1992). By 1989 the Philippines was the largest single source of spouse/fiancé(e) sponsorships (Birrell 1990).

The rapid increase in intercultural marriages satisfied reciprocal needs in both countries. Women of marriageable age outnumbered men in the Philippines while the opposite was true in Australia, particularly in the 1970s. Intermarriage opened up what was previously a very tight marriage market for men living in remote mining areas like those in the Northern Territory (Cahill 1990). In addition, the tendency of divorced men to remarry younger women created a relative shortage of marriageable Australian women in their twenties (Chuah et al. 1987). On the other hand, in the Philippines, women who delay marriage in order to fulfil family obligations, pursue further studies or follow a career encounter difficulties in finding a marriage partner. In a status-conscious society such as the Philippines, men are reluctant to marry women who are older, better educated or who have a better paying job, or who are widowed or separated. Because of the high expectation in the Philippines for women to marry (and marry 'well') and to have children, one possible way out of the dilemma is to marry a foreigner (Channell 1986).

The third wave of migration has flowed from the second, and includes children, siblings and parents who have been sponsored by kin already in Australia. Analysis of sponsorship patterns shows that most of the incoming siblings have been sponsored by Filipino women married to Australian men (Birrell 1990). The increasing proportion of Filipinos likely to enter via this scheme will contribute to a more balanced Filipino-Australian population in terms
of gender and age than exists at present (Hugo and Channell 1986).

Although considerable attention has been given by the media to the special issues and problems arising out of the migration-for-marriage phenomenon, there are many families in Australia where both partners are Philippine-born or of Filipino origin. The needs and concerns of the two types of families are often very different; both types are discussed in this chapter.

The Filipino community

The Philippine-born population in Australia has more than doubled every five years for the past 30 years. From 430 in 1961 it rose to 33,724 in 1986 and to 73,673 in 1991, and at present is roughly 0.4 per cent of the total Australian population (BIPR 1994d). There are several particular features of the Filipino immigration pattern. Most notably, females far outnumber males overall (two-thirds of the Philippine-born are females) and outnumber them in the marriageable age categories. In 1991, 66 per cent of those aged 15–34 and 71 per cent of those in the 30–54 age group were females (BIPR 1994d).

The Philippine-born in Australia are a young population; 57 per cent are under 35 years and 85 per cent are under 45 years (BIPR 1994d). The youthfulness relates not only to the migration-for-marriage phenomenon but also to the sponsoring of siblings under the Family Reunion Scheme, which emphasises youth and suitability for employment as major selection criteria. No other ethnic group of a similar size depends on the Family Reunion Scheme as much as do Filipinos, very few of whom enter as independent migrants and even fewer as business migrants (Jackson and Flores 1989).

Another distinguishing feature of Filipino immigration is the pattern of geographic settlement. Most Filipinos live in major urban areas (with more than half living in New South Wales), but there are pockets of Filipinos outside major urban centres, particularly in mining towns (Jackson and Flores 1989, p. 22). There are also indications that Filipinos are less likely than some other immigrants to encounter housing problems because friends and family accommodate the newly arrived until they become established (Brown 1993; Morrissey, Pickersgill and Priestley 1986).

Employment and education profile

In 1991, 63 per cent of Philippine-born males and 56 per cent of
Philippine-born females aged 15 years and over had either an educational or occupational qualification, compared with 39 per cent of the total Australian population. About one-third of both males and females had post-secondary educational qualifications, compared with 13 per cent of the total Australian population (BIPR 1994d). However, several studies have affirmed that there is a high rate of part-recognition or non-recognition of Filipino qualifications, attributed largely to the fact that Filipino secondary schools have a ten-year rather than a twelve-year system as in Australia. Morrissey, Mitchell and Rutherford (1991) found that, compared with Latin American, English, Chinese and Khmer respondents, Filipinos had the highest level of formal education and also the highest rate of non-recognition of their qualifications.

Lack of recognition of qualifications contributes to ‘skidding’ or the downgrading of employment status from pre-migration level. There are indications that only about one-quarter of those employed as professionals in the Philippines find a similar job in Australia, while most move into clerical, service sector and labouring positions (Hugo and Channell 1986; Morrissey, Mitchell and Rutherford 1991). Males display a more even distribution across the occupational groups than do females; more men than women are employed as professionals (11.5 per cent compared to 7.1 per cent) (BIPR 1994d). According to Paganoni (1986), some professionals do not mind taking on a lowlier job because the economic rewards compensate for the disappointment: ‘A year of hard labour in the Philippines can be matched by two months of work in Australia’ (p. 8).

At the 1991 census the unemployment rate among the Philippine-born (16.7 per cent) was considerably higher than the rate for the total Australian population (11.6 per cent) but almost the same as that for all immigrants from non-English-speaking countries (16.8 per cent) (BIPR 1994d).

In 1991 the labour force participation rate for Philippine-born women was 59 per cent (BIPR 1994d). The unemployment rate for Filipino women in the labour force was 19 per cent, less than for some other Asian communities in Australia but much higher than the rate for Australian-born women (9.5 per cent) (Moss 1993, p. 24). Apart from difficulty in finding suitable employment, reasons for the low participation of Filipino women in the workforce identified in a number of studies include family commitments (such as looking after children or an invalid husband), opposition of the husband to a working wife, and existing financial security (Balaba and Roca 1992; Hugo and Channell 1986; Jackson and Flores 1989).
Filipino values

In Filipino society the importance of relationships, and the values which reinforce them, set the framework for acceptable individual action in society. From early childhood Filipinos are taught about the importance and precedence of groups, in contrast to the emphasis given to the individual in many western countries. Filipinos are therefore defined by, and linked to, the identity of various groups. A high value is placed on human interaction and relationships.

'Fellowship', family and neighbourhood

A core concept that explains Filipinos' interpersonal behaviour is kapwa, which can be translated as 'fellowship' (D'Mello, in progress). Psychologically, kapwa can be seen as a 'shared identity' because it is the unifying thread that binds the self to others. While the level and mode of social interaction will vary depending on whether the parties involved are part of an in-group (one of us) or an out-group (outsider or others), treating the other as an equal, a fellow human being and a fellow Filipino, is integral to any relationship (Enriquez 1994). To be branded as not having any kapwa is the worst insult a Filipino can receive because it means that the person has 'reached rock bottom, he is the worst' (Enriquez 1994).

The family is the primary circle of association for the Filipino, the integral unit in the 'one of us' category. Personal interests are subordinate to family interests; family interests take precedence over community ones. Familial obligations and responsibilities, as well as loyalties and allegiances, are inculcated early in life.

Industrialisation, modernisation and urbanisation have led to the predominance in the Philippines of nuclear families living in separate households from those of the extended family; however, there is general recognition that extended families continue to function strongly. Thus the nuclear core extends by affinity and consanguinity to include up to three generations on both sides (D'Mello 1988). The place of a child in relation to both nuclear and extended family members is defined by a generational and genealogical hierarchy.

Very early on, children are taught their place in the hierarchy and the accompanying status, power, responsibilities and obligations that come with their position. A powerful value is recognition of and strict adherence to the generation- and age-based hierarchy, which calls for automatic deference and obedience to older family members by younger ones. This is manifested in
various ways, such as using respectful forms of address and communicating and behaving in the proper way in the presence of someone older or in authority. Inequalities based on hereditary status or special privilege are considered normal and acceptable (Andres and Ilada-Andres 1987).

The web of kinship is further expanded with the practice of ritual kinship called, as in Latin American countries, the *com­padrazgo* system. Relationships with close friends and neighbours are formalised into a kindred-like relationship when they serve as godparents during marriage, baptism or confirmation of children. Godparents are expected to provide advice to the godchild and extend support and assistance in spiritual, moral and financial matters. Because of this, godparents are chosen from either the same socio-economic class or, if possible, the next higher class (Mendez et al. 1984).

The concept of *kapit-bahay* (neighbour), which is basic to the Filipino way of life, is another mechanism for expanding the individual’s circle of association. Neighbours are expected to help one another in time of need: they can be depended upon to look after one’s house if one is away; they can be turned to for emergency food supplies (a cupful of rice, sugar or vinegar); they help out, especially with child minding. Filipinos expect their friends to lend them money when necessary, to act as intermediaries in delicate matters, to provide social and emotional support and to assist them in decision making (Gochenour 1990).

The obligations and responsibilities which one must extend towards kin, ritual kin, neighbours and friends are reciprocal and not parasitic in nature. People are expected to return favours in either tangible or intangible form.

Mendez and Jocano (1991) cite rules of conduct that guide the preservation of equality and harmony in any social interaction. One of these is *pakikisama* (to go along with), a supportive norm which makes it possible for people to work together without much conflict. This may mean having to accede to consensual group action despite how one feels personally; this is the price one pays for acceptance by another person or the group (Gorospe 1988 in D’Mello, in progress).

*The importance of feelings*

*Damdamin*, or feelings, guides all social relations. Generally speaking, Filipinos are said to act with their feelings (D’Mello, in progress). Mendez and Jocano (1991) suggest that 95 per cent of Filipinos’ decisions are governed by subjectivity. There are rules
of conduct to ensure that other people's feelings, as well as one's own, are taken into consideration at all times.

Social acceptance and harmony in interpersonal relations must be carefully balanced with the need to protect and enhance one's self-esteem (both 'face' and 'pride') in day-to-day interaction. To achieve this balance Filipinos consciously work towards maintaining harmony and overt conviviality in order not to threaten their own and other people's self-esteem. There are many socially approved mechanisms to avoid slighting a person when delivering unpleasant truths, including the use of euphemisms, teasing or using a go-between or mediator.

The Filipinos' 'shame' culture (the need to maintain face) acts as a potent social control; when an individual commits a mistake 'it is the honour of the family that is conceived to be at stake rather than the erring member' (Mendez et al. 1984, p. vi). Thus the sanctions of shame, dishonour and ridicule are used to impart the message that what is detrimental to one is detrimental to others (Enriquez 1994). The implicit sanctions play an important 'policing' role in the maintenance of peace and order in society.

Religion

Religion provides the Filipino people with the inner strength to cope with life's hardships. The risk-taking behaviour of Filipinos displayed in the bahala na (come what may) attitude is a combination of fatalism, determination and courage, which stems from their deep belief that God is guiding them and that whatever happens is part of God's will. This attitude was illustrated by the comments of a Filipino woman married to an Anglo-Australian, referred to in Paganoni's (1986) case study—she did not have fears or doubts about her new life in a foreign country because her relationship, future plans and priorities were committed and entrusted to God. Filipinos display a high attendance at places of worship in Australia (Morrissey, Mitchell and Rutherford 1991).

In summary, family ties and obligations, fellowship, harmonious relationships, respect for authority and religious beliefs are major themes in the Filipino culture. How are these themes reflected in Filipino family life in Australia?

Filipino families

The relatively recent arrival in Australia of significant numbers of Filipinos may account for the dearth of literature and research
about the community, and particularly about its family life. For
the preparation of this chapter two focus-group discussions were
held in Melbourne to augment the available research and to gain
indications of emerging issues for families. Overall, the groups
included three Filipino couples, eleven Filipino women (six of
whom were married to non-Filipinos) and five first-generation
Filipino children (most of whom came to Australia before they
were ten years old and who are now in their teens). The families
cannot be considered representative of Filipino families in Aus­
tralia; nevertheless, they came from diverse backgrounds and their
comments on a range of family matters are likely to indicate the
concerns of a wider group.

The overall pattern of Filipino families tends to reflect the
relatively young age structure of the Filipino population in Aus­
tralia. Filipino-Australians have a higher proportion of two-parent
families with dependent children, and a lower proportion with
non-dependent children living with them, than the Australian
average. Of all families in Australia with offspring, 10.7 per cent
of those with at least one Philippine-born parent were one-parent
families, compared with 13.3 per cent for families with at least
one parent born overseas, and 18.8 per cent for families with at
least one parent Australian-born (BIPR 1994d). Of the total
number of couples, only one-third had both partners born in the
Philippines.

The pattern of strong family support is reflected in the rela­
tively high proportion (6.3 per cent) of Filipino households which
include more than one family; nearly one-third of these are
families of brothers and sisters (BIPR 1994a). It is likely that, for
many, this is only a temporary arrangement until they can move
to their own accommodation.

Courtship, marriage and separation

Filipino courtship patterns have changed with the times. Trad­
tional courtship involved a male suitor, accompanied by his closest
friends, wooing the woman with a serenade on a clear night or
the exchange of love letters through a common friend. Nowadays,
particularly in urban areas, couples go on dates, for example to
a film or to eat out. Premarital chastity for women is still
considered an important virtue; men do not have the same restric­
tions on their sexual behaviour.

In the courtship patterns of Filipinos married to foreign nation­
als, correspondence plays a key role. According to Channell’s
(1986) study, nearly all Filipino men married to Australian women
met their wives while they were temporarily in Australia on a
work permit or as a crew member on a ship, in contrast to the vast majority of Filipino women married to Australian men who had not been to Australia prior to their marriage or engagement. The term 'mail-order bride' became popular because the contact by letter became a vital avenue for meeting prospective spouses. Interested parties were supplied with catalogues by agencies who made all the arrangements necessary to initiate an introduction. The practice has been drastically curtailed with the passing of Republic Act 6955 (Philippines) which makes it unlawful to match Filipino women for marriage to foreign nationals on a mail-order basis.

While there is relative freedom in the choice of a mate in the Philippines, parental approval is still considered important and necessary (Medina 1991). Young men and women are consciously or subconsciously aware of the boundaries within which to seek marriage partners (Boer 1988); for example, they look for compatibility according to education, occupation and socio-economic class. This is because marriage is viewed as an alliance between two families. In-laws serve as mediators when conflict occurs in the marriage, and the parents' family home provides a welcome refuge from marital problems. A family grows through marriage because one does not only marry the person but the whole family. Familial ties, and consequently the obligations, loyalties and affection of married people towards their birth families, remain as strong as before the marriage. These ties cannot be ruptured by distance or time.

Because marriage is an important family milestone Filipino weddings are lavish occasions, involving family and relatives as well as close friends and neighbours. It is for this reason that at least 45 per cent of Filipino-Australian marriages occur in the Philippines (Smith and Kaminskas 1992). Ideally, weddings are solemnised by a priest, minister or religious leader. Civil weddings are generally frowned on if they are not followed by a religious ceremony. They are usually resorted to by couples who have eloped and who do not have the blessing of parents, or when one partner is separated or divorced. Wedding expenses have traditionally been met by the parents of the bridegroom with assistance from relatives.

Intercultural marriages

Many studies attribute the growth of intercultural marriages to the prevailing economic situation in the Philippines—growing unemployment, widespread poverty and a decline in real wages—which drives women to seek a better life elsewhere (Medina 1991;
Birrell 1990). However, as mentioned earlier, customary marriage practices in the Philippines are important contributing factors as well, with women feeling the pressure to ensure they make a good marriage. According to Cooke (1986), 'the endogamous practice of marrying someone from the same or even better social and economic background, together with the colonial mentality ingrained deep in our psyche that anything foreign is better, add to this pressure'. Even if their husbands are not equipped with commensurate education or work qualifications, the move to Australia is still considered a 'step up' for Filipino women because it provides potential opportunities (Brown 1993).

In tables provided by the Commission for Filipinos Overseas (CFO), Manila, 'love' was the foremost reason mentioned by both Filipino and foreign spouses for marrying, while the second most frequently cited reasons were 'economic stability' for women and 'exemplary domestic service' for men. According to feedback forms returned to the CFO after the arrival of Filipino marriage partners in Australia, the following factors have contributed to successful relationships: 'mutual love and respect for each other's dignity; no hidden conditions in the relationship, effective communication, counselling sought when problems arose, supportive Filipino friends and Australian friends' (Vogels 1987, p. 29). Increased marital happiness is directly related to the woman finding support from her new extended family (husband’s parents and siblings) and maintaining links with her own relatives in Australia and in the Philippines (Cahill 1992). Difficulties in intercultural marriages are discussed later in this chapter.

Household responsibilities

There is general agreement in the literature that the Filipino family is basically egalitarian, despite clear role differences between members. The husband is expected to fulfil more of the task of income provision while the wife and mother fulfil the emotional task of looking after the well-being of the family, as well as carrying out household responsibilities. Women's roles are seen as complementary, and not subordinate, to men's roles. Women have been considered 'the power behind the throne' because of the tremendous influence they wield within the domestic sphere.

There are limits to the type of tasks and the amount of time which men spend on household responsibilities, lest they be branded by their mates as ander di saya ('underneath the wife's long skirt'; 'henpecked'). While increasing numbers of women are taking on paying jobs, both as a career choice and to augment
family income, women are ultimately judged by the community according to their success as homemaker, mother and wife.

A typical Filipino husband is expected to hand over his pay packet to his wife, who in turn manages the family funds. While it might be thought that the practice could cause friction in intercultural marriages, Jackson and Flores (1989) and Ungson (1982) did not find any evidence of this. However, there is insufficient research on the issue and it is likely that some men do not agree with the practice. A comment from a participant in the focus-group discussions revealed an interesting sidelight on the matter. A woman who was upset that her husband did not hand over his pay packet as expected requested her friends to serve as go-between and enlighten her husband about this Filipino cultural practice. Her husband was more than happy to accede to the request, but was concerned that she had not spoken directly to him about it.

Decision making on day-to-day matters, important family issues and the discipline of children is undertaken jointly by the husband and wife. The New Civil Code of the Philippines also provides the opportunity for grandparents to be consulted by all members of the family on ‘important family questions’. All children are expected to seek advice from parents on matters concerned with their future (Mendez et al. 1984).

In Australia, focus-group participants were united in agreeing that household tasks increased with the absence of grandparents, relatives and household help. Rivera (1994b) found that husbands now play a more active role in caring for children. Women in the focus groups agreed that Filipino husbands are more involved in household tasks in Australia than in the Philippines where household help is available, although the tasks the men perform are predominantly the ‘masculine’ and/or ‘dirty’ ones. Male children, too, said they are lumbered with the ‘masculine’ tasks of vacuuming, putting out the rubbish and gardening. (Vacuuming may be seen as a ‘male’ task because it is ‘heavier’ work than sweeping, normally a female task in the Philippines.) Some women in the focus groups commented favourably on the greater degree of closeness among family members in Australia than in the Philippines, for example: ‘In the Philippines my husband regularly went out with his office mates or close male neighbours for a drink. Here in Australia, he comes home straight from work because he knows he has other household responsibilities to attend to’.

*Family breakdown*

In the Philippines, state law (the Civil Code of the Philippines)
and the Catholic Church strongly support the maintenance of marriages. Marriages in the Philippines are highly stable with 95.5 per cent of ever-married women having married only once (Medina 1991, p. 182). Filipinos argue that even the unhappiest marriage should be kept intact for the sake of the children (Watkins 1982, p. 77). Separation is allowed under the Legal Code of the Philippines but only in cases where the wife commits adultery, where the husband takes on a concubine, or where one spouse attempts to take the life of the other (Rivera 1994a). Because the stigma of marriage breakup (as well as the time and costs involved in seeking legal separation) discourages couples from formalising their separation, no accurate figures on the numbers of separated couples exist. In Australia, cultural and religious pressures contribute to the difficulty of providing a true picture of divorce and separation. For many Filipino women divorce is not an option.

Children and child rearing

The birth of a child heralds the creation of a new family and the formal binding of ties between the families of the conjugal partners. Because children are considered to be God’s blessing on the marriage, childless couples are looked on with much sympathy; Filipinos are never lacking in advice on how to have children, which frequently includes dancing and praying to Santa Clara (St Claire), known in the Philippines as the patron saint of fertility. ‘Masculinity’, which is highly valued in Filipino culture, is measured by the number of children sired, and ‘complete womanhood’ is achieved with the birth of a child (Medina 1991). The sex of a first-born child may not be particularly important, but a son is still desired to perpetuate the lineage and continue the family name. The Filipino couples in the focus groups preferred to have children of both sexes, to provide balance in the family.

Filipino children are highly valued, loved and treated with great affection. At the same time, in poor families, they are often regarded as economic investments and it is not unusual to hear parents say that they are wealthy because they have many children. Children are also the major source of social security for old age.

In the mid-1980s Philippine-born women in Australia had one of the highest fertility levels, second only to that of Lebanese-born women among the larger overseas-born populations (Hugo 1992). However, there is generally a convergence towards the Anglo-Australian fertility pattern with longer periods of residence and also in the second generation. In common with several other immigrant communities the peak fertility for mothers born in the Philippines
occurs between ages 30–34, compared with 25–29 years for Australian-born mothers (ABS 1994b). Of the 110 Filipino families in Rivera’s (1994b) study, the majority fitted the Australian norm of two children per couple, although 30 per cent of the families had more than two children.

Although child-rearing practices among Filipinos are nurturant, affectionate, indulgent and supportive, the strongly supportive family group means that early self-reliance and independence of children are not emphasised. There is a tendency for adults to be overprotective, which may be due to their great love and concern for the health and safety of their children (Medina 1991). Until weaning, at approximately two-and-a-half years, the infant commands and receives the family’s attention, sleeps with parents or in the same room, is constantly touched and held by family members, and has every whim and desire catered to.

In the Philippines, child rearing does not present a problem even if the mother is engaged in full-time work. Apart from the availability of grandparents, relatives and neighbours, even average income earners can afford to pay for live-in household help to take care of the children. In Australia, however, a number of studies underscore the concern for child care in the Filipino community. In a study of settlement issues it was found that less than 20 per cent of newly arrived Chinese, Latin American, English and Khmer settlers mentioned child care as a major problem, compared with 57 per cent of Filipinos; and 46 per cent of Filipinos, compared with less than 20 per cent of the other immigrant groups, received regular help from relatives for child minding (Morrissey, Mitchell and Rutherford 1991).

Reluctance to use child care facilities stems partly from inaccurate and inadequate information about services, according to D’Mello and Esmaquel (1990). In their study mothers had concerns about child care such as ‘children are given sleeping tablets, children are left to cry all day, are often hungry and nappies [are] not changed immediately’ (p. 21). The overprotectiveness of parents translates into a lack of trust in other people watching over their children. Formal child care is a last resort. One mother in the focus groups said: ‘It was very difficult for me; I felt my child becoming a part of the “rat race” because she was taken to and brought home from the centre in accordance with our work schedule’.

In some instances parents have rearranged their lifestyle according to their perception of the appropriate way to bring up a child—for example, forgoing outside and/or full-time employment to stay home with the child, taking on shift work, and using older children, grandparents, relatives and friends to care for
children (D'Mello and Esmaquel 1990). Bringing out parents from the Philippines on a visitors visa to help with child care was an option more likely to be used by Filipino couples than those in mixed marriages (Ungson 1982). One focus group participant said that she chose to work as a night nurse because she could take her child with her and breastfeed the baby. A 14-year-old described it as his duty to take his 5-year-old brother to before- and after-school care. He was aware that taking care of his younger brother was one of his primary household responsibilities.

The Filipino women married to non-Filipinos in D'Mello and Esmaquel's (1990) study affirmed that not being in the workforce provided them with the opportunity to raise their children in accordance with their values and traditions. On the other hand, services involving both parents and grandparents have been initiated at the local community level to address the need of culture-specific child-rearing practices (Rivera 1992).

**Generational authority and respect**

An individual's age and generational position determine rights and responsibilities in the family as well as the relationship to kin on both sides of the family. As indicated earlier, younger people are expected to obey and respect those older or in authority. There are recognised forms of address to be used, even if a person is totally unrelated to the family. The great majority (84 per cent) of Filipinos in the study by Morrissey, Mitchell and Rutherford (1991) strongly agree that children in Australia are less respectful towards adults. Filipino parents still consider it the height of rudeness and disrespect for children to call them or anyone older (even neighbours!) by their first names. If there is one Filipino core value that is strictly adhered to and ingrained in children, despite the egalitarian culture that exists in Australia, it is the practice of generational respect. All the parents in the focus groups, including those married to non-Filipinos, encourage their children to use the various forms of respectful address. Comments included: ‘My youngest son thinks his older brother’s name is kuya’ (the term for older brother). Another participant said: ‘Unless my neighbours say that they would prefer to be called by their first names, I encourage my children to address older neighbours as uncle and auntie’. And one teenager said: ‘My mum always reminds me not to scream at my brother but to talk to him in a more respectful way because he is older than me’.

Even as a person grows older and marries, this relationship will not change, as Gochenour (1990) succinctly describes: ‘The father may be the final arbiter and authority in a household, but
may still be on the receiving end of advice and direction from an older sibling down the block. Authority is always presumed to be present and individuals seldom claim for themselves full authority on any matter’ (p. 21).

**Discipline**

‘For as long as my children live under my roof they will have to follow what I say.’ This summarises the view of some parents in the focus groups. Filipino parents have been described as authoritarian in their upbringing of children in the sense that they expect unquestioned obedience and respect. Parents’ expectations are firmly grounded in both religious precepts (both Christian and Muslim) and legal precepts embodied in the Civil Code of the Philippines, which require children to obey their parents as long as they are under parental power (Mendez et al. 1984).

The child becomes liable for punishment soon after weaning. Corporal punishment, such as spanking, is usually carried out by the father but used only after a child has ignored repeated requests or warnings. Other disciplinary measures include scolding, shouting (like an Armalite rifle, is how one child described her mother’s barrage of words), pinching, ear-pulling, withdrawal of privileges or being grounded. Older siblings’ responsibility for younger brothers and sisters also includes the authority to impose discipline and mild punishment.

A woman in the focus group married to a non-Filipino spoke for others when she said that ‘my children think I am too strict so they run to their father for guidance’. Women in the group married to non-Filipinos generally admitted that their husbands are kinder to and more understanding of their children than they themselves are, and grant them more freedom. Filipino parents in Australia are beginning to realise that their authority over their children, which they very much take for granted, is slowly being eroded. Parents feel that they constantly have to reason with their children before their requests are obeyed: ‘Children do not just follow, you have to justify what you are asking them to do’.

Parents in the focus groups expressed concern that the concept of discipline which they grew up with is separated only by a very thin line from actions which are considered as child abuse in Australian society: ‘You can be sued for pinching your child’s ear or smacking them on the bottom if they misbehave!’. Parents are coming to terms with the fact that other forms of discipline have to be used despite their own beliefs. As one father said, ‘If you do not let your children cry when they are young, they will make you cry in your old age’.
Some Filipino parents in Australia say they tend to be overprotective, particularly of daughters and younger children; for example, a mother in one of the focus groups observed: ‘I think I have been overprotective and this has made my daughter shy, she is very much into herself’. In turn, children agree that their parents are too protective, with one young man in a focus group saying that he felt ‘overloved’ because ‘parents follow you wherever you go’.

A major issue in the households of the focus-group participants was the ‘sleep-over’. Women with either Filipino or non-Filipino husbands did not agree with their children ‘sleeping over’ at someone else’s house. Parents were concerned that they would not be able to keep an eye on their children, that often they did not know their children’s friends or their parents, and that children would be left on their own to watch ‘undesirable’ videos. While some mothers have never allowed their children to sleep over (‘not until my son turns 18’) others have opted for a compromise. For example, one father allows his daughter to attend the activities but comes to take her home at midnight; one mother has the sleep-overs at her home, saying: ‘The price of a pizza and a video is a small price to pay for the peace of mind I get’.

Adolescence and young adulthood

The 1991 census showed that the total number of second-generation Filipinos who have one or both parents born in the Philippines was 22,587 (Caruana 1993). Ninety-three per cent of the second generation were under 15 years and 63 per cent were under five years. The concentration of second-generation Filipinos in the younger age groups is due to the low levels of Philippine-born immigrants arriving before 1971.

Significant issues emerging from a youth camp conducted for Filipino-Australian youth in Brisbane in 1993 included ‘identity crisis’, delinquency, racism, intergenerational conflict, peer pressure and the problem of handling two cultures (Pe-Pua 1993, pp. 4–18). Other problems highlighted by young people included dealing with the authoritative attitude of parents, particularly in relation to their going out with friends, curfews, career decisions and high expectations of academic performance. The concerns do not seem to differ from those raised by young people from other ethnic communities (Cahill and Ewen 1987), except perhaps in the greater emphasis placed by Filipino youth on the importance of family matters and work/career considerations.

Belonging to a peer group is an essential part of a Filipino
adolescent’s life (Roces and Roces 1992). Filipino young people have identified problems with fitting in and feeling accepted by peers, and a tendency to succumb to negative peer pressure. Such activities as drinking, smoking, taking drugs and cutting classes become a source of conflict with parents (Pe-Pua 1993; FILCCA 1990).

Education is a major key to a better life and tertiary education is desired by parents for males and females equally because it is seen as an insurance for the family’s future. Parents are expected to sacrifice a great deal for their children’s education. In the Philippines, it is not unusual to mortgage land, which may be a major source of livelihood, in order to send a son or daughter to university. The tertiary-educated child is expected to support other siblings after having found gainful employment.

In Australia, Filipino parents continue to hold high educational aspirations for both sons and daughters. Truanting is considered disgraceful and, according to the parents in Caruana’s (1993) study, can become a major family issue. Previous figures from the 1986 census show that in Sydney no other ethnic group had such a high retention rate at Year 12 as Filipinos had (Caruana 1993). However, a major concern highlighted during a leadership seminar organised by the Filipino Coordinating Council of Victoria (the umbrella organisation of all Filipino organisations in the State) was young people’s waning interest in going to university and the very high expectation of parents that they would.

It is not expected that young people will leave home before marriage. As Licuanan notes, ‘You are always a parent’s child and you can always be protected. There is no symbolic value in breaking away’ (Licuanan, undated, quoted in Cruz 1990). A Filipino couple in the focus group said that they constantly reassure their children that they can stay at home for as long as they like.

The acquisition of new sets of roles and the development of new components of identity are part of the process of migration. Pe-Pua (1993) suggests the possibility of cultural coexistence where Filipino-Australian adolescents choose from a number of cultural options (particularly those which instil affirmative attitudes). This could enable them to construct a dual system of values.

Growing old

Traditionally, in Filipino society, it is the filial obligation of children to care for parents in their old age by taking them into
their custody. Cultural prescriptions on care of the aged are more potent than the law but, unlike some other Asian countries where this responsibility falls heavily on one child, in the Philippines it is spread more broadly among siblings. Parents in the Philippines expect that they will live with their children when they are older. As in most Asian countries, institutionalisation of the aged is uncommon in the Philippines. To institutionalise a parent would be to commit possibly the greatest sin in the eyes of Philippine society, and the person doing so would certainly be labelled an ingrate (Roces and Roces 1992).

However, the Filipino couples in the focus groups did not expect their children to follow the customary practice. This may be because of an expressed desire to return to the Philippines when their children are grown up and married. One participant said: ‘After my husband and I finish with our obligation towards our children, I would like to go home to the Philippines’. This sentiment is shared by respondents in Channell’s (1986) study who were eager to return to the Philippines when they were older. Filipino women in intercultural marriages expressed fears of growing old in Australia because they felt that respect for the aged was missing (Ungson 1982). Morrissey, Mitchell and Rutherford (1991) found that a greater number of Filipinos than Khmer, English, Chinese and Latin American settlers agreed that old people are lonelier in Australia than in the home country.

Elderly Filipinos have particular problems associated with being in younger families in a new environment (Morrissey, Pickersgill and Priestley 1986). Isolation, which was mentioned as the main problem of the Filipino elderly, goes hand in hand with language difficulties. Elderly parents feel isolated, especially when their adult children are at work, because they cannot leave the house on their own. Interaction with the general community is hampered by limited English language skills. A seminar sponsored by the Filipino Coordinating Council of Victoria identified the following problems among the elderly: loss of authority, concerns about accommodation if they became senile, lack of social activities and financial problems.

Death

Unlike westerners, who traditionally treat death with silence and repressed feelings, the Catholic orientation of many Filipinos enables them to view death not as a tragic event but rather as a part of everyday life (Andres and Ilada-Andres 1987). Wakes in the Philippines are not sorrowful occasions but rather opportunities for family reunions. Food and drinks are offered to visiting
sympathisers and people play card games during the vigil to keep them awake all night. Because death is seen as the end of physical existence only, the relationship between the living and the dead is not considered broken. Visits to the grave and/or a commemorative mass take place on the birthdays of the dead, and a national holiday of obligation is observed on All Souls’ Day (1 November) to commemorate the dead. On this day family and relatives pay their respects to loved ones who have passed away, take the opportunity to clean the grave sites and hold a family picnic in the cemetery to demonstrate the strong ties of affection between the living and the dead. In Australia the focus-group participants maintain this respect for tradition by lighting candles in their family religious altars and by going to mass to remember those who have passed away.

Overseas family responsibilities and obligations

There is a common belief in the Philippines that, for good luck to continue, good fortune must be shared (Castillo 1979, quoted by Medina 1991). This stems from the ‘reflexive quality’ of the core value of kapwa, which implies that ‘what is good for one is shared and is good for the other’ (Enriquez 1994). This is why it can be emotionally distressing for some Filipino women in intercultural marriages to be denied the opportunity to send money home (Caruana 1993). Likewise, in D’Mello and Esmaquel’s (1990) study, women who stayed at home to care for their children expressed regret that they did not have an independent disposable income to provide financial assistance to parents and younger siblings in the Philippines.

While some non-Filipino husbands in Australia do not understand this cultural obligation and may consider it a form of ‘bludging’, others recognise and support their wife’s obligations. For example, the husband of a focus-group participant reminded her it was time to send money to her parents. Jackson and Flores (1989) found that remittances to the Philippines ranged from an average of $511 per year for Filipino households to $610 per year for mixed households. Based on 1986 census figures, these remittances amount to approximately $10 million per year. This is a strong and concrete sign of the continuing sense of obligation felt by Filipino-Australians towards their families in the Philippines.

Sponsorship is another way of fulfilling strong expectations of mutual support among family members. From being a minor contributor in 1983–84 the Philippines became the largest single source of sponsorship of siblings (and accompanying dependants)
in 1987–88, surpassing family intakes from the United Kingdom and Ireland (Birrell 1990). Expansion of the primary circle of association in Australia through family re-formation, and provision of a better future for other family members, are overriding concerns for Filipinos sponsoring relatives (Morrissey, Mitchell and Rutherford 1991). Filipino women in intercultural marriages show a greater propensity to sponsor relatives than do Filipino families (Jackson and Flores 1989). In fact, Cooke (1986, p. 20) remarked that 'one definite plan the Filipino woman harbours has to do with helping her family situation by sending money or by sponsoring the migration of family members'. Non-Filipino husbands generally support the sponsorship applications of their wives because their parents-in-law can help with child rearing, work and alleviating their wives’ isolation (Birrell 1990).

Fifteen per cent of respondents in Channell’s (1986) study signified intent to bring nephews and nieces to Australia, an action which may entail adoption. This was seen as a way of providing a brighter future for children than if they were to stay with parents in the Philippines.

Social networks

Filipino families do not readily seek outside assistance for family problems, perhaps because Filipinos believe it is their birthright to receive as well as to extend assistance and support within one’s family group. This strong reliance on family members and relatives (including those external to the household) continues in Australia.

Various studies show that Filipino people rely on their immediate family for help with financial, emotional and marital problems (Jackson and Flores 1989; Morrissey, Mitchell and Rutherford 1991; Meemeduma and Moraes-Gorecki 1990; Meemeduma in press). Compared with English, Khmer, Latin American and Chinese families, Filipinos depend much more on relatives (both in Australia and overseas) for advice regarding difficulties in relationships, credit and hire-purchase matters, behavioural difficulties with children and care for the sick (Morrissey, Mitchell and Rutherford 1991). The same study found that 67 per cent of Filipinos met with relatives at least once a week compared with 18 per cent of English settlers, 30 per cent of Khmer settlers and 42 per cent of Latin American settlers. Filipinos are more likely than other birthplace groups to turn to friends and their local religious leader for both financial and emotional help, and least likely to use social and community workers.

An Adelaide study found that close to half the respondents
found their present employment through informal networks of employed friends and family, while only one-quarter found their jobs through the Commonwealth Employment Service or newspaper advertisements (Channell 1986).

The practice of providing accommodation to distressed friends (instead of referring them to the appropriate service) has been cited as one of the major impediments to our forming an accurate picture of Filipino women in situations of domestic violence (Ramilo and Droescher 1992). Studies in New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia point to the need of women for information about services—particularly women who live in isolated and rural areas, who are most disadvantaged in terms of access and availability. For such women, marriage shapes their support experiences. Filipino women in intercultural marriages express heavy reliance on their husbands for all types of support (Meemeduma, in press; Meemeduma and Moraes-Gorecki 1990; Jackson and Flores 1989).

The Filipinos' strong need for affiliation is evident in the number of Filipino organisations in Australia. Most organisations provide social support; some also provide cultural, welfare, political and religious support. Focus-group participants agreed that the particular association to which most belonged provided them with the opportunity to socialise, served as a break from family routine, and was a source of advice and support.

**Intercultural marriage pressures**

Many intermarriages are no doubt successful; however, a number of sources of conflict in marriage between Filipinos and non-Filipinos have been identified. They include differing expectations of marriage, particularly with regard to the role of the family and the extended family, value and role conflicts over child rearing, disputes over financial assistance provided to family overseas, geographical isolation in the outback, displaying of affection, religious practice, food, money management and employment (Boer 1988; Wall, undated; Jackson and Flores 1989; Cahill 1990). Other factors which can contribute to marriage breakdown include the Filipino spouse not being accepted by the non-Filipino family, an unequal relationship between husband and wife, physical violence on the part of the husband, the husband's relationship with an ex-wife, financial problems and cultural differences (Vogels 1987).

Divorce rates are not an accurate indicator of problems in mixed marriages (Boer 1988). There are considerable pressures for
Filipino women to remain married to non-Filipino husbands. Since some have gone against the courtship tradition by marrying someone the family has never (closely) known, they have to ensure that the marriage will work or they will be shamed (Boer 1988). An additional problem in presenting an accurate picture of divorce is that available statistics relate only to marriages celebrated in Australia whereas the majority of Filipino-Australian marriages occur in the Philippines. However, it has been reported that separation for Filipino women is 60 per cent higher than the national rate (Jackson and Flores 1989).

Confronting the issue of domestic violence

Filipino women in intercultural marriages appear to be especially vulnerable to domestic violence because of the way their marriages have been contracted. Vulnerability may also result from preconceived ideas about Filipino women's submissiveness, compliance and infinite tolerance which continue to exist among some sections of the Australian community (South Australia Department for Community Welfare 1988). To date, eleven Filipino women are reported to have died from domestic violence and in most cases the Australian husband has been convicted of murder (Ramilo and Droesch 1992). In 1987 refuge workers in Adelaide estimated that the number of Filipino women approaching the refuge for assistance was 5.5 per cent of the State's Filipino women, compared with 1–2 per cent of all women in the State (Watson 1987). An analysis made in 1989–90 of calls about domestic violence to the Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs (DILGEA) Telephone Interpreter Service revealed that 1.8 per cent were in Tagalog (the Filipino language), which is well above the national mean of 1.2 per cent (Smith and Kaminskas 1992). In Melbourne domestic violence was given as the third most frequent reason why Filipino women approached their community’s social worker (Mahle 1990).

Women tolerate violence because they are economically dependent on their husbands; isolation and strong traditional values about marriage and family life also contribute to Filipino women’s reluctance to leave a violent relationship (Mahle 1990; Dela Cerna 1992). Moreover, women hesitate to approach relevant government services for assistance because of their lack of knowledge of available resources and their lack of adequate English language skills (Brown and Pak 1991). Some women are reluctant to use refuges which they see as ‘linguistically and culturally inappropriate’ (Smith and Kaminskas 1992).

Filipino cultural norms such as hiya (loss of face) may deter
women from seeking the support of friends and family, while fear of being the object of gossip (an important social control mechanism) deters them from opening up the family boundaries to external assistance.

The literature identifies community education about legal rights, information dissemination (on community and legal services) and outreach activities to women living in isolated communities as necessary initiatives to empower Filipino women to overcome their vulnerability (Dela Cerna 1992; Ramilo and Droescher 1992).

Emerging issues for families

With the entry of siblings and their accompanying dependants in the most recent wave of immigrants, the number of Filipino families in Australia will increase. However, for a time there will continue to be two major immigrant groups—Filipino households and households based on Filipino women married to non-Filipinos. Research cannot ignore the differences between the two groups and the special needs of each.

Intermarriages will continue to be a major source of immigrants from the Philippines. In contrast to the ‘mail-order bride’ phenomenon of the 1970s and early 1980s, personal introductions by friends and relatives already in Australia will be the main avenue for meeting future marriage partners. Women in intermarriages have unique needs, particularly when they are isolated, lonely and have limited access to familiar support networks, services and employment opportunities. Strong reliance on their non-Filipino husbands for all types of support greatly limits their options.

Meemeduma (in press) coined the term ‘double dislocation’ to describe the situation of women emigrating to another country and then moving to rural and isolated areas. Policies need to be developed which provide sustenance to women living in far-flung areas who are socially impoverished, who are isolated from extended kin and who lack informal networks. Community education could focus on how to handle relationship issues, domestic violence and parent–child interaction.

In the years to come there will be a burgeoning number of young Filipino-Australians. A wide disparity exists between Filipino parents’ perceptions of child rearing and discipline and prevailing Australian mores. Children and young people are grappling with conflicting views and values and are trying to maintain a balance between the two cultures. Substantive research has still
to be undertaken to provide a more accurate picture of the adaptation and effects on self-identity of the emerging first generation of young people and second-generation children. Some specific concerns are intergenerational conflict, dealing with racism and handling peer pressure.

Existing studies and the focus-group discussions show that while parents are keen to inculcate an appreciation of the Filipino culture in their children, children also realise the advantages of living within two cultures (Swords 1992). Services to maintain an appreciation of Filipino culture could be extended by Filipino organisations and local community services with assistance from government. The cultural enrichment would help to expand the worldview of young people, who are vital assets for the future.

Filipino families in Australia have created an apparent extensive safety net. When they emigrate Filipinos take with them strong beliefs about reliance on informal networks for information and advice and for emotional and social support. Studies undertaken in Australia indicate that they retain this reliance and that their knowledge of local government and community services is limited. There are numerous existing community resources and facilities which could assist Filipino families in their daily lives. Access to support services may not be as immediate a problem as educating the community—by reaching out through local organisations, ethnic workers and the ethnic media to encourage Filipinos to use formal and institutional support systems and services beyond a ‘one-off, specific need-orientated’ approach.

It is highly likely that the Filipino population in Australia will continue to increase rapidly in the future. Services to assist the settlement process of the continuing inflow of immigrants need to be strengthened, so that integration is facilitated and immigrants’ skills and talents quickly tapped. A post-arrival orientation program being conducted by a Filipino social worker in Melbourne in conjunction with the Commission on Filipinos Overseas is a positive step in that direction.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to provide a general picture of the Filipino family in Australia and its structure, relationships and values. Because of their recent arrival and the nature of their migration pattern, first-generation Filipino settlers carry with them strong values and beliefs which determine to a large extent the way they think and behave in their new environment. The Filipinos are known to be flexible, resilient and adaptable. It is evident that
Filipino parents are trying as best they can to inculcate in their children the more important family values they themselves grew up with—the importance of the family as a support unit, harmonious relationships, respect for authority, discipline and the importance of education. Parents are making an effort to forge compromises between their values and the prevailing Australian mores.

There are several questions to be answered in the future. How will the attitudes and values of Filipino parents change over time? To what extent will Filipino parents allow compromises in the way they bring up their children? As children from Filipino households and those from intercultural marriages will be differently affected, to what extent will the children adapt, assimilate and integrate both oriental and occidental values into their lives? These questions bring to the fore the need for further research if we are to increase our understanding of a unique, and expanding, community in Australia.
Through the family, each generation negotiates old and new understandings of work, success, education, gender roles and ‘family’ itself. For Greeks in Australia this process takes place in the context of experiences of migration. As a result, definitions of what it means to be Greek in Australia are becoming increasingly varied. The Greek presence has a long history, being first recorded in 1829 (Gilchrist 1993); there is now reference to a ‘third generation’ in relation to post-war migration. This presence over a long period, and slowly increasing rates of intermarriage, make it increasingly inappropriate to state with certainty what ‘the Greek family’ is. No longer can we measure levels of assimilation by an understanding of the traditional Greek family as disrupted. Instead, our task is to consider the various understandings of the Greek family in Australia, as well as the diverse meanings of family that exist in Australia, to which the Greek presence has contributed.

While it is important to acknowledge that there is no essential ‘Greekness’, the very exercise of attempting to describe ‘the Greek family’ assumes a certain degree of sameness. The task is marked by a tension between difference and sameness. There is immense diversity of ‘Greekness’ in Australia—in relation to what Greeks came, where from, why and when, and what became of people when they arrived in Australia. Yet, while an essence may not exist, there is a sense that the Greek family is characterised by a particular flavour.

The Greek family is traditionally described as collectivist rather
than oriented towards individualism. As in an intricate mosaic the individual is part of the family and the family unit is part of the community, so that the smaller units, while indispensable to the whole, are also somewhat subsumed by it (Hearst 1985; Bottomley 1979; Smolicz 1988). The challenge is to understand the variations on this theme and the role played by migration in relation to them, and to explore understandings of the family that have helped Greeks establish themselves and their community in Australia.

Ethnic identifications, both attributed and self-selected, and the character of Australia they contribute towards shaping, form a fundamental backdrop to discussions of the family. The family of the nation has been a metaphor for Australian multiculturalism. Equally, understandings of multiculturalism are a necessary consideration in relation to the family in Australia.

The traditional Greek family

'The family is so significant, in fact, that a discussion of kinship will inevitably include reference to many of the other elements of the cultural model' (Bottomley 1979, p. 79). It is clear from such a comment that the family is of utmost importance in Greek society and culture.

Traditionally, in Greek society there is an emphasis on family unity. Because the family is collectivist in nature, family resources are communal; everyone contributes and everyone receives both financially and socially. The Greek family is centred on the husband and wife and their unmarried children. While there are obligations to the family of origin, priorities are oriented to the future social and economic well-being of the next generation. The traditional Greek family is patriarchal in the strict sense of the word in that young men, as well as women, pay respect to the father. The main concern is to provide for the next generation's establishment through marriage and economic well-being. Traditionally this has been accomplished through arranged marriages and dowries.

Marriage arrangements involve the family unit, not just the individuals concerned. The extent of this family involvement is illustrated by the custom of brothers not marrying until all sisters are married. Thus brothers are able to contribute to their sisters' dowries prior to establishing their own families. The families of the groom and the bride contribute their respective social and economic status to each new family unit. In this way the traditional Greek family is bilateral in nature.

The collectivist basis of the Greek family means that the family
as a whole gains or suffers from the repercussions of individual members' behaviour. Traditional understandings of honour are sex-segregated and linked to manliness \textit{(andrismos)} for men and shame \textit{(drope)} for women. The love of honour \textit{(phi/otimo)}, particularly relevant to men, provides an incentive to act according to expectations of courageous and assertive behaviour. For women the notion of \textit{drope} acts to discourage inappropriate behaviour. Family honour has a clear link to the sexual behaviour of family members; the sexual double standard which operates often means that honour will be judged by women's chastity and men's capacities to ensure this.

While such traditional views are changing, there are nonetheless indications that many young Greek-Australians are still having to contend with these attitudes (Strinzos 1984; Bottomley 1984). A girl's reputation and her brother's involvement in maintaining it can help determine where adolescents socialise and with whom. Often parental requirements for girls to go out chaperoned by brothers or other male family members stem from concerns about the daughters' reputations and the family honour. Many of these requirements relate to what Bottomley (1979) refers to as 'impression management'. While they may place additional restrictions on Greek-Australian adolescents, many young people also enjoy the sense of security they can provide (Tsolidayis 1986).

The traditional family is described as firmly androcentric; however, there is also a need to acknowledge the power which women have within it. This power is brought about through a variety of forces. The dowry (traditionally presented as land, but increasingly diversified to include money or the education and career costs of the bride) makes women co-owners and co-workers. This ensures their involvement in economic decisions within the family unit, including those related to their children's future and inheritance. In addition, women's central role within the household also ensures their authority. Traditionally the household is the focus for social, religious and economic life. In this sphere women not only manage the house but maintain family relations. They have responsibility for a range of religious and cultural rituals. With regard to children, they are understood as the moral guardians and take responsibility for their education. Changes to the traditional roles of women in both Greece and Australia need to be considered in the light of the informal power that women have had traditionally. There are indications that modern shifts in women's status may in fact reduce this informal power (Bottomley 1979).

Traditionally, Greek child-rearing responsibilities are situated firmly within the female sphere; nonetheless fathers and other male
relatives are wholeheartedly involved. Young Greek children may seem overindulged by mainstream Australian standards. There is an emphasis on participation by all family members in social events and this often means that young children accompany their parents on outings, even in the evenings. Caring for children is tantamount to caring for the future and parents will go to great lengths to provide social and economic security for them. One pertinent illustration of this in the Australian context is the emphasis placed on education. For Greeks education is valuable in its own right, but it is also seen as a means of providing economic security, social status and honour for the individual, his or her family and the community.

For the individual the gaining of honour is linked to membership of a group, primarily the family but also the community. This has clear applicability in the context of migration where membership of the Greek community has often worked to bond individuals across various social divisions. Another expression of this sense of honour relates to the notion of hospitality (*philoxenia*). A more adequate translation of *philoxenia* is ‘love of strangers’ and it is another criterion by which individuals earn respect or honour for families and community. This concept has a particular poignancy with regard to migration, as many Greeks rely on the *philoxenia* of their compatriots.

The traditional Greek family, as characterised here, has been modified by changes in Greece, as well as by migration. However, some studies suggest that the values which underpin the traditional Greek family remain, even though specific patterns of behaviour may change (Rosenthal, Bell, Demetriou and Efklides 1989). In this context a critical understanding in relation to the Greek family is that responsibility is to the group (the family, the community and the nation) and that it is regulated through notions of honour and shame. This is quite different from the emphasis on the individual which underlies mainstream Australian society and which is mediated through self-regulation and notions of guilt.

**Ethnic identification**

Ethnicity is commonly linked to shared factors which bind a group of people together and give them a sense of belonging. Language, system of beliefs, religion, history, customs, values and traditions are considered important. Increasingly, particularly in relation to migration, ethnic identification also relates to understandings of not belonging, and to a minority status which brings with it connotations of inequality and discrimination. From this point of
view, what provides people with a sense of belonging to each other is their sense of not belonging to the mainstream—their status as ‘Other’ (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1983, 1992). Such affiliation results as much from self-identification as from attribution by others. However, an understanding of ethnic identification bound to notions of ‘Other’ can also connote resistance and agency, leading to a politics of difference, rather than an image of outsiders who wallow in their helplessness.

Ethnicity has a clear relationship with a range of factors, most importantly with socio-economic status and gender. The meaning of Greekness varies dramatically with wealth and with whether one is a woman or a man (Tsolidis 1993). Similarly, political identifications overlap with ethnic ones and in Australia there are strong associations between Greeks and politics (Theophanous 1988; Dollis 1993; Forbes 1994). Yet it would be misleading to imply that ethnicity merely functions as a political rallying point.

Much of the process of ethnic identification happens through the family. Because women have a strong association with the family, it is often they who are at the cutting edge of new and old ethnic identifications. Understanding the family requires an exploration of the ways in which Greek women function within Australian society, after migration and as a result of the many changes which are part of this process.

To summarise, in the context of migration the Greek family functions as a membrane between Greek and Australian, old and new identifications, attribution and self-identification, and staying the same and changing.

The diaspora, the community and the family

The Greek diaspora represents a Greek presence outside Greece. Asia Minor, Egypt, Russia, America, Australia, Canada and England are readily recognised as places where there are Greek communities, but Greeks also live in Zimbabwe, Finland, Thailand and Latin America. Authors write unselfconsciously about the Greeks from Cyprus who live in London; the Greeks who left Egypt in 1952 to settle in Melbourne; the Greeks who left Castellorizo, went to Port Said and ended up in Sydney (Anthias 1992; Gilchrist 1993; Murphy 1993; Hawthorne 1988).

Much has been made of the Greek ability to maintain language, culture and religion over numerous generations in countries such as Australia. This ability to sustain Greek culture is reflected in Greek communities across the world, which are linked not only by a common language, culture, religion and history, but also by
common interests in politics, sports and the arts. While separate, such communities also have a sense of 'belonging'—to Greece and each other—because of their emotional ties and the constant contact and interactions between them. These bind the diaspora to Greece, Greece to the diaspora and diasporic communities to each other.

The diaspora is ingrained in the Greek psyche to the extent that it is quite normal for Greeks to talk of the number of their compatriots living beyond the shores of Greece almost as though Greek communities in other countries were outposts of Greece. It is a romantic vision of Greek communities dotted throughout the world as bastions of an ancient and revered civilisation. So classical Hellenism connects with Alexandria, Chicago or Melbourne in living and creative ways. It is a vision which connects the old and the new through language, culture and religion and also through a love of politics, education, the arts and understandings of civic duty.

The Ellenismos, the sense of Greekness, implicit in the diaspora, fractures into myriad realities, not only with regard to destinations but also with regard to the places where migration began and the reasons which stimulated it in the first (or second) place. Yet, despite this, there is a persistent feeling that the differences are bound by similarities. There exists an assumption about sameness; a Greekness in places far from Greece (Bottomley 1979; Papageorgopoulos 1981; Hellenic Studies Forum Inc. 1993).

**Establishing the community**

To what extent does this vision of the Greek diaspora match the reality in Australia? It can be gauged by looking at the various stages in which the Greek community establishes itself in a new country. The embryonic Greek community first establishes its church, a church which may display the Greek national flag. Next to the church is a room in which the children learn the Greek language, history, dances and the scriptures; possibly in that order. As the community establishes itself the organisations evolve: the club rooms, women's groups, welfare organisations, political organisations and professional groups. There may be a Greek-language press, Greek theatre groups, Greek day schools and Greek homes for the elderly. A distinct Greek presence in mainstream organisations such as (in Australia) the Scouts, the RSL (Returned Services League), the ALP (Australian Labor Party) and the Freemasons may evolve. For many, both Greek and non-Greek, it is this type of activity which delineates diasporic Greekness.

In a city like Melbourne, particularly in some suburbs, there
are clear indications of the Greek presence. This goes beyond the shop fronts and the languages heard spoken on the streets. Festivals, cultural events and community institutions which celebrate Australian *Ellenismos* are also celebrations of new cultural forms.

**The family**

Permeating these activities, institutions and ways of functioning is an understanding of the family. However, describing the role of the family *vis-à-vis* the community and notions of Greek identity, is akin to untangling the Gordian knot; short of attempting to sever the connections, one has to bear with the interconnected complications.

Bottomley (1992) cautions against interpreting the Greek family from a perspective which accepts the nuclear family as the norm. She outlines the inappropriateness of models in which neat divisions are made between the public and private spheres in relation to the family, which in Greece functions as a cornerstone in both business and politics. Bottomley argues that in Greece the family 'is a kind of corporate enterprise for which everyone, even a small child, bears some responsibility' (p. 114). While this is relevant to Greek families in Australia, we need to consider the interrelationship between family, identity and migration in the context of changes within Greece, the Greek community in Australia, and those occurring in Australian society generally. In this way the dynamism and fluidity which exists within and between cultures can be recognised.

A range of people associated with the Greek community were interviewed for this chapter (see Chapter Note below). Many commented on how the Greek-Australian family not only combined Greek and Australian elements and perspectives but was also changing definitions of what is Greek and what is Australian. Some mentioned direct or indirect experience of Greek families into which non-Greeks had married. It was often these *xeni* or 'outsiders' who most enthusiastically embraced those communitarian aspects of the family associated with being Greek.

While intermarriage provides the most obvious illustration of two-way change and accommodation between cultures, there are other ways in which this occurs: through the primary school children who understand who *Yia Yia* (Grandmother) is because she comes to pick up their classmate at the end of each day; the workmates who understand what a *koumbaro* (best man) is because they were invited to the wedding; or the neighbours who understand what a *nonna* (godmother) is because they went to the baptism. These are not just Greek words for particular people;
they indicate a whole other way of ‘doing’ family. For many Greeks *Yia Yia* rears grandchildren; she does not simply babysit. Becoming a *koumbaro* or *nonna* is significant not only for religious reasons but because it represents a rite of passage into the inner sanctum of the family.

Terminology tells a story. During discussions exploring the Greek-Australian family, those interviewed often used the term ‘Greek’ as synonymous with Greek-Australian, while the term ‘Greeks in Greece’ was reserved for those in the homeland. There was only one person with Greek ancestry who did not primarily identify as Greek and who queried the *raison d’être* of a project based on definitions of Greekness in an Australian context. For the others there was a total lack of awareness that they could begin the discussion by questioning whether the enterprise itself was meaningful.

It is this comfort Greek-Australians have with being unselfconsciously Greek while not necessarily wanting to live in Greece, juxtaposed with outsiders’ views of their national chauvinism and their cultural and linguistic loyalties, that in many ways characterises what it is to be Greek in Australia. The role the family plays in transferring this feeling of comfort between the generations is an important one to examine, because for many Greeks the relationship between the family and Greek identity is indissoluble and because diasporic existence is so much a part of Greek identity. It is not by chance that, when those interviewed were asked to discuss the Greek family in Australia, the majority talked at great length about what it means to be Greek in Australia, and then considered the role of the family in relation to the maintenance of this identity.

Greek cultural identity and the family

Many of those interviewed felt comfortable nominating some bottom-line requirements for Greekness—Greek language, Greek culture, Greek Orthodoxy and a Greek sense of family. These elements merge into each other and the lines are indistinct between family, religion, tradition and culture. The family is important because through it children learn the language and culture; language is important because without it children would not be able to communicate with their grandparents and thus the family structures would be threatened. For many it is *Yia Yia* who introduces the Greek stories, rhymes and history in childhood; it is the godparents who present their godchildren with *lambathes*
(candles) to carry during the Easter procession; and it is extended family members who visit in order to celebrate a name-day.

_Ta ethima mas_, ‘our culture and traditions’, becomes a common articulation for the amalgam which blurs the lines between traditions, culture, values, religion, nationalism and a sense of history. In Australia the blurring is intensified for the children of each subsequent generation, particularly if they do not access more formal teachings of Greek language, history and culture. Delineations between history and mythology, for example, become more complicated. Is the Odyssean story of Penelope and her unravelled tapestry—told by _Yia Yia_ to her three-year-old granddaughter in Australia almost as oral history—a fairytale or a story of mythic proportions transferred through the ages as testimony to a surviving sense of Hellenism?

Such blurring surrounds the telling of many stories: the tale of the men with big moustaches who cooked their lamb in underground pits so as not to be detected in their mountain refuges as they struggled against Ottoman rule; the story of the women who held hands and danced in a circle and one by one threw themselves off a cliff rather than be taken into Ottoman harems; the stories about the _megali catastrophe_ (the Asia Minor catastrophe) and the _andartes_ (the resistance fighters). And perhaps most important of all, the story related to migration: the story of the Greek condition which leads so many to distant shores, be they German, American or Australian: _Ti na kanoume emis i Elines affou i patritha mas then bori na mas thosi psomi_ (‘What can we Greeks do, given that our homeland cannot provide us with bread?’).

Migration and the Greek family

In Australia there have been Greek men accused of piracy, Greek women who arrived on brideships after the Second World War, Greeks who were born here to parents who fled the Junta, and parents who left a remote village to make a better life for their children. In today’s community there are Peloponnesian Greeks, Macedonian Greeks, Pontian Greeks, Greeks from Asia Minor, Greeks from Egypt, and Greek Cypriots. People who identify as Greek live in all parts of Australia. They may work in factories in Broadmeadows, grow grapes in Mildura, run successful law firms in Perth, represent constituencies in parliaments in Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney or Perth, or represent Australia in overseas tennis tournaments. They may have established business empires through oyster or pearl farming, run restaurants, or experienced little or great social mobility. Many have intermarried—with
indigenous Australians or with those who have ancestral links with Ireland, England or Italy (Price 1975; Gilchrist 1993; Alexakis and Janiszewski 1989; Kapardis and Tamis 1988; Kunek 1993). The grandchildren of the post-war Greek immigrants and the children of the intermarriages are only just beginning to tell their stories.

Unlike Greek migration to America, which was of a collective nature and was founded on a colony of over 1000 people in Florida, ‘early Greek migration to Australia was the sum of action by individual adventurers’ (Gilchrist 1993, p. 71). Needless to say, the overwhelming majority of individual adventurers were men, seeking fortunes to take back to their families in Greece.

While most Greek migration to Australia is associated with the period following the Second World War, Greeks arrived in Australia in small numbers prior to the gold rushes of the 1850s and in significant numbers during the rushes. In the early 1900s chain-migration patterns resulted in large numbers coming from Kythera, Ithaca and Castellorizo. By the end of the nineteenth century the Greek communities of Sydney and Melbourne were well established (BIPR 1994a). The immigrants were still overwhelmingly male, although family groups were beginning to emigrate (Gilchrist 1993). Greek immigration during this period is associated with shopkeeping and cafés in particular. Once established, these ventures became a base on which other immigrants built. Family members arrived in Australia to work in these enterprises or to establish partnerships. By 1947 the census noted 12,000 people among the population who were born in Greece.

After the Second World War the Australian need for labour dovetailed with the emphasis which war-ravaged European countries were placing on emigration as a solution to problems of unemployment and poverty. Approximately 250,000 Greeks entered Australia between 1947 and the early 1980s; 1971 represents the peak year, with 160,000 Greeks arriving. By the mid-1970s Greek immigration had begun to decline and in the decade between 1982 and 1991 it decreased to less than 750 people per year (BIPR 1994a).

The Greeks who arrived became one of the most highly urbanised immigrant groups in Australia. Almost half took up residence in Melbourne, contributing to the notion that this city is possibly the second or third largest ‘Greek city’ in the world after Athens and before or after Thessaloniki. Furthermore, this settlement was concentrated in particular suburbs. In 1991 some suburbs in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide recorded Greek populations of between 4 and 12 per cent (BIPR 1994a).

Post-war immigration embedded Greek families in Australian
society. However, government policy relating to family migration was somewhat ambivalent. The immediate post-war aim was a rapidly increased and flexible workforce which would support infrastructure development. In the case of the non-British assisted-passage program, priority was given to single males who could be moved around during the two-year labour contract which was part of the program. In 1952, when Greeks became eligible for the assisted-passage program, families had limited access; in 1958 Greek families were excluded altogether (Kunek 1993).

In 1956 an immigration program for single Greek women was established. The aim was to train women in Athens for domestic work in Australia by teaching them basic English-language and household skills. On arrival they were contracted to the Australian Commonwealth Employment Service for two years. This program allowed single women to emigrate to Australia independently of husbands or male relatives. The reasons for these women entering the scheme were mostly financial. They could support themselves and send money back to their families in Greece. Moreover, they could sponsor family members to come to Australia. An additional incentive was that the scheme provided a means of escaping the dowry system (Kunek 1993).

It has been argued that while, in fact, the government preferred single male immigrants, it produced a rhetoric related to the need to balance the sexes in its immigration program. Preferential selection of single males had created an imbalance which was seen as undesirable for a range of reasons. Single men were understood to pose a threat to the social order generally and to Australian womanhood specifically. Moreover, balanced immigration was seen to have the added advantage of establishing household consumer units which increased demand and productivity (Martin 1986).

While post-war immigration policy was at best ambivalent towards family immigration, and while family units that did emigrate experienced additional upheaval with husbands being separated from wives for lengthy periods, overall it served to even up the ratio of males to females. In 1901 the ratio was 1206:100 in favour of males; in 1947 it was 287:100; and by 1981 it was 106:100 (BIPR 1994a).

The post-war period of Greek immigration altered previous patterns. There was greater diversity of places from which settlers came. Many now arrived from the Peloponnese, Epirus, Macedonia, Crete and Lesbos as well as from Cyprus and Egypt. Pre-war patterns of employment and aspirations were altered. While those who had established themselves in small businesses prior to the war had emphasised ownership of property as a means of upward
social mobility, the predominantly unskilled and uneducated immigrants who swelled the factories after the war placed an emphasis on education (Kringas 1988). Possibly this change was related to the war experience, which so poignantly illustrated the transient nature of property. While a business may be devastated, a qualification stays with you for life (Tsolidis 1986). The importance of education is reflected in the disproportionate number of children of these immigrants who have completed post-secondary education (BIPR 1994a).

Definitions of family

Definitions of family and the assumptions made within mainstream Australian society as to what was appropriate behaviour for families were not always relevant or meaningful for Greek immigrants. Extended families living in one house, for example, were as much a result of financial need as an expression of philoxenia and the functioning of families as communitarian units. Living with one's parents, siblings, cousins or in-laws was a means of providing mutual support in uncertain times. When the younger couples were out at work, the parents or parents-in-law provided the domestic support and child care. Children had the responsibility of becoming educated and, in this way, each family member contributed to the well-being of both the individuals who made up the unit and the unit itself.

Communitarian understandings of family underlie the many stories of Greek migration in the early and post-war periods. Many of the sacrifices made by new arrivals in order to sponsor and support members of their extended family in their transition from their homeland to Australia were and have been carried out with the express aim of keeping the family together (Gilchrist 1993; Hawthorne 1988; Murphy 1993; Brunswick Oral History Project 1985).

Through business enterprise or support for members' education, the family is understood as the vehicle which provides individuals with support to fulfil communal aspirations. (In a similar way, as noted earlier, the family itself becomes the smaller unit in relation to community aspirations.) There is reciprocity in this arrangement, which is mediated through notions of shame and honour rather than material checks and balances; thus there is a difference between helping your children so that you can bask in the glory of their success, and helping them in order to provide economic security for your old age. In fact, it appears that many of the immigrants who arrived in the 1950s and 1960s have provided for their children and are also insisting on self-sufficiency
and independence in their old age. Moreover, they are using their retirement years as an opportunity to continue their contribution to the family unit by looking after their grandchildren.

One aspect of the notion of family which is intrinsic to a diasporic existence is that linked to spiritual, cultural and linguistic nurturance, which breeds difference from the mainstream and at the same time provides warmth, protection and sustenance, a buffer between the 'us' and the 'them', for whom this difference is somehow threatening. An important aspect of this nurturance is the corollary of migration, the return trip 'home'—the desire to meet one's relatives who stayed behind in Greece or to visit the village, town or island where one's parents or grandparents grew up. Alternatively, there is a desire to meet one's uncle and cousins who left Greece and opted for America or England instead of Australia.

There are similar stories which tell of Greek-Australian children who resent their parents and who smart at being defined as different in the Australian context, and then discover themselves through glimpses of their parents in situ when they return home (Tsolidis 1986). With the tourist snapshots of family and the memorabilia comes, almost by osmosis, an understanding of the link between how things are done here and how they are done there. This creates more than nostalgia; it creates the courage to take pride in one's ethnographic history and to explore the benefits it affords both the individual and Australian nationhood. In this way family becomes the lifeblood of ethnic identification and ethnic identification becomes the lifeblood of family.

**Greek women**

Greek women have made a major contribution in this country, both in family life and in the wider Australian society.

**Participation in the labour force**

The post-war period in Australia was marked by rapid economic growth and population increase, industrialisation and suburban development. Between 1954 and 1966 the number of women in the labour force increased by 70 per cent and, by 1974, 65 per cent of women in the labour force were married. A significant reason for the increase was the number of immigrant women who had joined the Australian labour force, with a participation rate of 49.3 per cent for those who were married (Women's Bureau, Department of Employment and Youth Affairs 1981).
Relative to other women, more women from southern Europe were concentrated in labouring and process work (Women's Bureau 1981). During the period from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s, 56 per cent of women born in Greece worked in these areas compared with 9.2 per cent of Australian-born women. Early research has highlighted the dirty and often heavy and poorly paid work they did, the lack of adequate child care, the women's need for English-language tuition, their neglect by unions and their intense dislike of the poor conditions and humiliating treatment they experienced (Storer 1976). Yet the women endured poorly paid, repetitive work for reasons of economic survival and in anticipation of providing their children with better opportunities.

In the mid-1990s the picture which emerged in the mid-1970s of immigrant women being one of the most disadvantaged sections of the Australian labour force has altered little. Moreover, the long-term effects have emerged (Halvatzis 1986; Ioannidis 1988). Although women from southern Europe come to Australia with better health than that of Australian-born women and those born in English-speaking countries, their health has declined with Australian residency, independently of factors related to ageing. They have higher rates of work-related illness and injuries and a greater incidence of conditions associated with poor mental and emotional health. While health deterioration is linked to their work history, it also results from pressures which arise as a consequence of migration: the added responsibility of caring for family members, the women's isolation from familiar networks, and their alienation within Australian society (Alcorso and Schofield 1991).

Census figures for 1991 indicate that the cycle described here will continue for Greek-born women. Just over 30 per cent are employed in the category of labourers and related workers, compared with 11.2 per cent for women in the total Australian population and 23.4 per cent for Greek-born men. The other main employment categories for women are salespersons and personal service workers (15.7 per cent) and plant and machine operators and drivers (13.4 per cent). Sixty per cent of employed women born in Greece are represented in these three categories (BIPR 1994a).

As the Greek-Australian community ages it is the present generation of employed women and their daughters who will shoulder the responsibility of caring for the aged. Compared with the Chinese, Arabic, German and Italian communities, and with Anglo-Australians, Greek-Australians are likely to experience more difficulties in adjusting to retirement, are less likely to use institutional care and are more likely to rely on women within the
A wider contribution

Despite the above, Greek-Australian women have made a contribution beyond the factories and beyond families. They are involved in the community, schools, literature and the arts, politics, unions and the professions (Fincher, Foster and Wilmot 1994). The stereotype of the Greek patriarch has been accompanied by an image of the Greek woman as lacking in agency. This is promulgated through images of Yia Yia dressed in black, with head bowed to tradition and superstition; images of women who work in factories as docile; and images of comedian Mark Mitchell's Marika and her daughters, a seemingly indistinguishable mass of Roulas, Toulas and Voulas.

The emerging reality for the Greek-Australian woman is one which denotes professionalism, activism and an ability to shift boundaries. This is taking what it means to be a Greek woman into the realms of Australian politics, literature, academe, business, feminism and the arts. Within the family it is also propelling women to the forefront in the exercise of negotiating what it means to be Greek in contemporary Australia.

An ageing community

The current population profile of the Greek-Australian community reflects the post-war influx and subsequent decline in immigration. Currently, 85.8 per cent of the Greek-born population is aged 35 years or over, compared with 45.7 per cent of the total Australian population (BIPR 1994a).

A further consequence of the Greek-born population's pattern of immigration (and relatively older age profile) is a significantly lower labour-force participation rate than that of the Australian-born population. In 1991 the overall participation rate was around 60 per cent compared with 63.9 per cent for the Australian-born population. Those working remain disproportionately clustered in occupations described as labourers and related workers (26 per cent), plant and machine operators and drivers (14 per cent) and tradespersons (14.4 per cent). They remain underrepresented in the professional and paraprofessional categories, with only 6.2 per cent of the Greek-born employed in such positions compared with 19.2 per cent of the Australian-born population (BIPR 1994a).

These figures reflect the influx of immigrants into the inner-city...
suburbs of Melbourne and Sydney and their employment in the factories of post-war industrialisation. These are the immigrants with aspirations for a higher standard of living and upward social mobility for their children. Behind the figures are stories of families often separated by great distances—geographic, social, linguistic and cultural—with the so-called second-generation immigrants, the grown-up children, under great strain, trying to maintain contact with their parents and provide support. Other stories are of the ageing immigrants themselves who, with the benefit of hindsight, reflect on whether there have been more pluses or minuses in the outcomes of their migration.

Given the rapid ageing of the Greek community, younger members within it are placed in a position of having to work, care for the aged and also support young families. This requires varied and creative solutions through appropriate support structures. There is a need for ethno-specific, bilingual and mainstream services to dovetail and function in parallel ways. Some of those interviewed were adamant that there is a need for governments to formulate appropriate policy and provide funding so that such services can be created and sustained.

The Greek-Australian family

The picture of the traditional Greek family provided earlier in this chapter needs to be considered in relation to life in Australia. While the diversity among Greeks which occurs because of regional, socio-economic, generational and gender differences has been pointed out, figures nonetheless indicate that Greek families in Australia conform, to some extent, to the characteristics described in the traditional picture. In general, the Greek family still revolves around the wife, husband and unmarried children. Relative to the Australian-born, the Greek-born are less likely to be living in group households and less likely to be living in a one-person household. Their households are more likely to include non-dependent (non-student) children. There are fewer single-parent households than average, and where these do exist there is a greater likelihood that non-dependent (non-student) children will be included. Multi-family households are not common among the Greek-born; however, where they do exist, nine out of ten are likely to be generational—that is, grandparents living with the core family unit (BIPR 1994f).
Marriage and sexual relationships

Marriage is still significant, with a low number of Greek-born never marrying compared with the population as a whole. While divorce rates among the Greek-born are increasing, they seem to be lower than for other groups (Kapardis and Tamis 1988). The trend towards outmarriage is understood to be increasing; however, it is difficult to discern patterns from the figures, which relate to place of birth rather than ethnicity. In many cases the Greek-born are marrying Australian-born partners who are ethnically Greek. There are, however, indications that the children of immigrants are intermarrying across ethnic groups and that marriage between Italian-Australians and Greek-Australians is particularly common.

Similarly, there are indications that cohabitation prior to marriage is increasingly tolerated. It should be noted that, traditionally, in some regions of Greece, it is not uncommon for couples to cohabit prior to marriage, but only after a betrothal or engagement conducted by the Church. There is, nonetheless, a consistently strong sanction among Greeks against children being born out of wedlock. However, the emphasis on women’s premarital virginity is waning. This is particularly so among younger Greeks, particularly in relation to couples who have entered long-term relationships. However, on this issue Greek women still have relatively more conservative views than those of their Australian-born peers and Greek men still adhere to the double standard, being more inclined to expect virginity and faithfulness of their partners but not of themselves (New Generation, ‘Neos Cosmos’ Supplement, 10 January 1994).

Family support

Those interviewed described the support provided by their family. Mothers of young children commented on how their parents and parents-in-law helped with child care and housework or gave financial assistance which enabled them to pursue their careers or their studies. Many of the same people commented on how they intended to support their parents in later years. Moreover, it was this understanding of family, and the support it offered, which was being embedded in their children’s lives.

However, it was not an uncritical transplantation of one generation’s understanding of the family to the next. The next generation will not be faced with the harsh conditions associated with immigration; on the contrary, some may benefit from the flexibility of higher income which professional work often affords.
This brings the possibility of new understandings of gender roles and new aspirations for children. Many commented that these options had grown out of their parents’ labours. A poignant example was provided of how young mothers are watching their retired fathers develop a relationship with their grandchildren that was not possible for the fathers to develop with their own children. Because these retirees are now free from the pressures involved in establishing themselves in a new land, they can spend time rearing their grandchildren.

Many of those interviewed were concerned about the continuing capacity of the family to provide support for its members. The concern arose from both professional and personal considerations. Many were providing ageing parents with support, some had very young children and were balancing parenting and work, and others were concerned with these issues as professionals working at the juncture between the Greek community and mainstream Australian institutional practice. Factors identified as increasing pressures on families included a deterioration in the economic climate, the ageing of the Greek community, and a range of social factors which were understood as consequences of diasporic existence. Some of those interviewed explored factors such as unemployment, underemployment and the implications of such pressures for the family. Rising unemployment was increasing the appeal of return-migration, an experience which can destabilise the family whether the return is permanent or not.

Some interviewees commented that within the Greek community there is increasing polarisation between those living in poverty and those earning high incomes, which is leading to different definitions of the family. While a couple may have migrated with one set of beliefs and values about the family, they face life in Australia needing a new set. In Australia increasing numbers of women, while working in the paid workforce, are having to care for the elderly and often the grandchildren; men may be facing retrenchment. For both women and men familiar support structures, extended family networks and cultural contexts may be lacking. In these circumstances couples are having to negotiate and create new understandings of the family.

Even for couples who have negotiated new relationships within the family, implementing them in a society which may not share their priorities gives rise to a range of difficulties. This was exemplified by the comments of one couple interviewed. The woman had recently resigned from a professional position because of the stress involved in trying to maintain what she wanted from family life in the context of employment in Australia. She commented that unless she went to the pub with her colleagues after
work she would exist on the periphery of workplace politics. Yet, for her, the ritual of a family eating a home-cooked meal together was crucial in family life. She argued that such a priority was understood in quite different ways by mainstream society. She felt that it was seen as a lack of ambition or a product of patriarchy. The couple had gone to great lengths to create an intimate family life which stressed communal activities around music, theatre, the sharing of domestic duties, studies and intellectual activities. Both partners made professional and personal sacrifices so that they could enact their definition of family. However, they argued that this was difficult to maintain, given the way career and family are understood in mainstream Australian society.

_Hellenism in transition_

Greeks in Australia have one of the highest rates of language maintenance relative to other ethnic groups (Clyne 1991a). The 1991 census identified over 95 per cent of the Greek-born over the age of five as speakers of Greek at home. Only 4.4 per cent of those born in Greece reported speaking only English at home. For those born in other non-English-speaking countries the rate was 21.9 per cent. Among the second generation 74.1 per cent reported that they spoke Greek at home and 21.1 per cent that they spoke only English at home (BIPR 1994a).

In the group interviewed for this book, parents had made efforts to bring up their children as speakers of Greek. This was the case regardless of the parents' birthplace, and even when one parent was non-Greek or was not a Greek speaker. For most of the parents the desire for their children to speak Greek was so natural and so taken for granted that it begged explanation. Explicit reasons given were to communicate with grandparents and overseas relatives and, most commonly, to maintain a heritage of which the Greek language is a crucial component.

Most of those interviewed voiced a deep identification with Hellenism. Yet the Hellenism they referred to was not understood as straightforwardly Greek. Most envisaged a Greek-Australian cultural form. Others had an additional vision which included Greek-Australian interventions in the mainstream. In this context the family becomes a focal point for linguistic and cultural maintenance and dissemination.

_Intergenerational issues_

Intergenerational communication is an issue of particular significance. Many of those interviewed were the children of those who
emigrated in the 1950s and 1960s—a generation now sandwiched between their parents, immigrants with a sense of Greekness sometimes caught in the time warp of the way things were done before migration, and their children, the so-called third generation. For some, this third generation was the product of a 'mixed marriage'. Such factors served to complicate the way things were done rather than change the overall aim. All wanted their children to grow up with a sense of being Greek; the road travelled in this journey, however, would be different from the path in the past.

Within this 'sandwich generation' some felt residual pain as a result of their parents' migration experience and the effect of this on their own lives. Some spoke of a lost communication with parents. Yet these same people were greatly optimistic that the pain would be healed and would, moreover, produce creative outcomes through communication between the first and third generations. Some spoke of the choice they had made to have their children minded by their parents, not only to maintain language and traditions but also because it provided a lived experience of the importance placed on family.

**Gender relations**

The importance of gender relations with regard to ethnic identification was either clearly expressed or intimated in the comments of many who were interviewed. Some suggested that, among women in the Greek community, there was a reaction against what they understood as entrenched patriarchal ways of doing things. This, they argued, was why many Greek women were actively choosing to marry non-Greek men. They believed that Greek women were making a conscious decision not to marry Greek men because they saw the men as having outdated, narrow and restrictive notions of masculinity and femininity.

The same sentiments emerged when people commented that intermarriages were more successful when Greek women married out than when Greek men did. They suggested that this was because Greek men defined women's roles in such narrow ways that non-Greek women, less familiar with these understandings, found it more difficult to challenge and negotiate gender-appropriate behaviour, with the result that the marriage broke down.

Women identified the privileged position of the Greek male within the family as the cause of the problems they were describing. This was attributed to the sexual double standard and the double workload expected of women. While mothers had not demanded domestic responsibilities of their sons, wives were doing so of their husbands and this was contributing to disharmony,
sometimes to the point of divorce. Young women who were married to Greek men and who saw their households as representing the next generation of Greek family—a generation which was contesting the old ways of doing things—also complained. They described how their husbands expected them to carry a disproportionate burden of household responsibilities in situations where both partners were employed. In families with children this was a particular concern.

Some women indicated that women of their mothers' generation had high expectations for their daughters and were intolerant of sons-in-law who inhibited their daughters' capacities to live their own lives. Some described situations where this was so extreme that mothers had counselled their daughters to leave their husbands.

However, there were others interviewed who argued that the view of the Greek family as particularly patriarchal was a product of stereotyping and prejudice. They described Greek men as vulnerable because of the myth of the macho Mediterranean male. Some men and women described their upbringing and their current family life as egalitarian; others described situations where men were more 'domesticated' than women. Some referred to the authority the Greek woman has within the family. Many described the Greek family as similar to most others on this issue because women's contestation of patriarchal gender relations was understood as an ongoing, cross-cultural phenomenon.

Conclusion

As described earlier, the Greek family functions like a membrane, which filters various understandings between groups rather than acting as an impenetrable boundary which cordons off various cultural and ethnic understandings. While those on either side of the membrane maintain elements which distinguish each from the other, there is also a growing familiarity between them.

Through the family, new, evolving and exciting expressions of Ellenismos are starting to emerge, reflecting the desire of many people in the Greek community to express themselves as Greek-Australians, rather than as Greeks in Australia or as Australians with an association with Greece. In particular, it is the second and third generations and intermarriages which are creating a fluidity between the 'foreigner' and the 'local', the 'Greek' and the 'Australian' that is leading to the blurring of insider/outsider visions of Australian Greekness.

Perhaps nowhere is this blurring more apparent than in
literature. Here the possibilities implicit in the diaspora are evident. Much of the literature presents the viewpoints of those who have created new personal and cultural spaces for themselves, beyond the dissonance associated with the early years of migration. The writings which come to us from authors like Tess Lyssiotis (1990), Gillian Bouras (1990, 1991 and 1994), Antigone Kefala (1984a, 1984b, 1992) and George Papaelinas (1986, 1991) have in common stories of migration and Australian-Greekness, be they from the standpoint of the Greek immigrant in Australia, the Australian immigrant in Greece, the child of the immigrant, the wife of the immigrant, or the mother of the Greek-Australian child regardless of whether this mother is 'Greek' or 'Australian'.

The children and grandchildren of the Greek-born are not content to occupy the peripheral ground often afforded minorities. Yet there is an unwillingness on their part to gain a foothold on new ground if this requires them to relinquish their heritage. For example, in relation to the arts, they do not want to be 'ethnic' writers, playwrights, poets, actors or painters. Instead they want to be Australian artists who express themselves biculturally or bilingually. There is a desire to contribute to mainstream Australian social and cultural institutions in ways which extend these beyond existing understandings of what it is to be ‘Australian’. The family is crucial in this process, not only because of its function as a cultural ‘clearing house’ but also because of the character it adopts for itself.

The diasporic existence destabilises crisp, clean demarcations between Greek and Australian. The insights, the literature and the dynamic view of culture grow out of the borderlands (Anzaldua 1987) where the combination of two creates something new which belongs to both. It is these borderland cultures which increasingly complicate the migration histories which draw safety from the ability to trace what happens to those born elsewhere. How do we trace those born to those born elsewhere, or those born to parents one of whom was born ‘here’ and one of whom was born ‘there’?

Instead of mourning the loss of clear delineations, we must learn to celebrate hybridity and the fact that it can only exist with the continuation of difference. Hybridity stands in opposition to sameness, be it the ‘sameness’ implicit in the yearning for the homeland of a bygone era as it is trapped in the mind’s eye or the ‘sameness’ implicit in assimilation. If the Greeks who have populated Australia had also assimilated, the possibility of being Greek-Australian would not exist.

The Greek-Australian family, as it extends to the second and third generations, is becoming the site where new forms of ‘Greek’
and 'Australian' are being created, blending new images and comprehensions related to factors such as feminism, youth culture and work as these evolve at a national and international level. In Australia understandings about families are permeated with the hybridity which results from diasporic existences. Not only do these cut across what it means to be Greek-Australian; increasingly they cut across what it means to be Italian-Greek-Australian or Greek-Irish-Australian. The cultural ameliorations and complicated identifications which are the precious and enduring outcomes of the diasporic existence belong equally to the mainstream and to the minorities. And equally it is the responsibility of both groups to protect them.

It is through the family that language, culture and religion are evolving new meanings for Greek-Australians. But, perhaps more importantly, it is through the practice of the family that Greek-Australians are recognising why Greek understandings of the family are so crucial in their particular identification.

Chapter Note

Fourteen people were interviewed to assist with the writing of this chapter. They included a spread of ages, birthplace and experience. Most were born overseas, although many arrived in Australia at a young age. Those born overseas came from Greece and places associated with the Greek diaspora. One person was not of Greek background but was married to a Greek and had a strong association with Greek language, culture and community. Nine of the interviewees were women and five were men; most were between the ages of 30 and 50. The chapter also draws on the author's research experience with Greek secondary school students, their parents and communities, as well as her personal experience with the Greek community in Melbourne.
The Italian-Australian family: transformations and continuities

Ellie Vasta

The Italian family in Australia is an 'immigrant' family and will remain so for the next few generations. This means that, even though a large number of Italian-Australians were born in Australia, they still have links with parents, grandparents and other family members who originally emigrated to Australia between the mid-1940s and the early 1970s, when the majority of Italians arrived. The Italian-Australian family is not a fixed entity. In the post-war years through to the 1980s it was simple enough to identify the nuclear and the extended Italian family because the majority of adults in those families had emigrated to Australia. Nowadays, in line with the changes which have occurred within families nationally, the Italian-Australian family is diverse and conforms to a variety of family types such as nuclear, extended, single-parent and dual-career. There are socio-economic and urban/rural differences (Bertelli 1985; Castles et al. 1992) in relation to the Italian villages and cities which immigrants came from, and these differences also exist in Australia (Cresciani 1983; Kelly 1983; Andreoni 1983). Regional differences are fairly evident among Italians, though in Australia they are not as consequential as prior to emigration. Class differences within Italian communities are more evident among the second generation than the first, of whom the majority remain in the working class.
Families and social change

While differences between groups are an important analytical feature of family research, the central focus of this chapter rests on the process of social change. Although there are numerous sociological theories of change, for the purpose of this chapter it is necessary to consider change as a social-structural process. This means that we understand society in terms of structures of ideologies and practices, forces, long-term processes and projects, and action.

Within this framework, notions of the 'family' over the past 30 years have become less certain and more ambiguous. No longer is the family seen as the unified and unproblematic haven of yesteryear. The family today is controversial and full of contradictions and ambiguities. Childbearing, child rearing, the construction of gender, allocation of resources, mating and marriage, sexuality and ageing all fit into our idea of family (Gittins 1985, p. 70). Yet these practices and beliefs change over time and vary across cultures and between groups. Donzelot (1979) argues that families should be perceived as far more flexible than is often the case. He suggests that the family should be seen ‘not as a point of departure, as a manifest reality, but as a moving resultant, an uncertain form whose intelligibility can only come from studying the system of relations it maintains with the socio-political level’ (p. xxv). The family, then, is intrinsically involved in the process of change, as both perpetuator and creator of changing social and structural relations.

The dynamics of social change which have occurred within Italian-Australian families can be explained in terms of four substantial themes.

First, a major transformation occurred for the first generation of Italian immigrants with their shift from a peasant to an industrial society. This created dramatic changes in their work lives, as well as in their cultural milieu and family relations. In addition, the past 50 years have seen massive demographic and technological changes which have led some to insist that western societies have become post-industrial; that is, they have shifted away from manufacturing-based production towards knowledge-based production (Touraine 1981). Technological changes and changes in ideologies and institutions have had significant impacts on the Italian-Australian family.

A second theme relates to the changes in Australian government settlement policies. These policies have provided a basis for the state to maintain some control over families or, as Donzelot (1979) so aptly put it, the policies have operated through the
government of families. The majority of Italian immigrants arrived in Australia while a policy of assimilation was firmly entrenched. The policy and ideology of assimilation created many conflicts and struggles between parents and children who felt they were caught between the ideological and political demands of two cultures. The change to multiculturalism has provided immigrants with a basis for ethno-specific services and a platform for action but, as will be noted below, it also functions as a process of normalisation or social control.

A third significant level of change relates to the position of women in the family and to their child-rearing practices. The women's movement, better educational facilities, upward social mobility and better knowledge of Australian institutions have contributed to women's improved situation in the family. These developments have also altered women's relationships with their elderly parents and have modified their child-rearing practices.

An associated and notable factor is the generational change which has taken place in the Italian-Australian family. Although there have been generational changes in Australian society generally and changes in family patterns, the particular form they have taken in the Italian-Australian family provides an analytic basis for this chapter. Given that the majority of Italian-Australians now belong to a longstanding immigrant community, for ease of analysis I shall make a distinction between first- and second-generation Italian-Australian families.

The first-generation family comprises adult immigrants and their children during the first three to four post-war decades of immigration. The category is very fluid and also includes families which were formed before the war as well as those in which one partner is Australian-born. The second-generation family consists of those Italian-Australians who were born, or grew up, in Australia and whose children belong to the third generation. This category is more likely to contain a blend of first and second generation adults. The adult age cohort is between 20 and 50 years. Again, the boundaries are flexible and the distinction between the two types of families is not simply one of time of arrival and age. Indeed, one major characteristic relates to differences between the generations of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s and those of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

For this chapter, interviews were conducted with Italian-Australians, mostly of the second generation, from two communities. Given the diversity of families within the Italian-Australian community today, the interviews cannot claim to be representative of the views and characteristics of all Italian-Australian families. Nevertheless, together with the research outlined in this chapter,
they are likely to indicate tendencies within Italian-Australian families and communities, and important issues for the future.

Work and the Italian-Australian family

An issue common to all Italian-Australians is the world of work. The first generation came to Australia to work and to provide their children with better life chances than they themselves had experienced. The majority of Italians who arrived in Australia in the post-war years came from rural areas or from small towns. During Australia's post-war reconstruction and modernisation the men began to work as unskilled construction and factory workers while the women worked in unskilled manufacturing jobs. Italian-born immigrants were often assigned to heavy, dirty and dangerous jobs, with a good deal of overtime. Segmentation meant that workers entered at the lowest point of the labour market and, since the jobs were defined as unskilled, upward mobility was very difficult (Panucci, Kelly and Castles 1992). Consequently, many Italian immigrants formed part of what became known as the 'Southern European occupational ghetto' (Lever-Tracy and Quinlan 1988, p. 82).

Earlier, in the 1940s, many Italians were employers, since pre-war settlers were often small farmers and shopkeepers. But by 1986, 67 per cent of Italian men were employees, only 10 per cent were employers and 17 per cent were self-employed. Of the women, 72 per cent were employees, 7 per cent employers and 13 per cent self-employed. Among Italians the rate of self-employment is higher than the Australian average (Collins 1989).

First-generation Italian women frequently worked long hours and would carry out their second shift at home where there was often a clear division of labour. Typically they experienced the discrimination of the heavily gender-segmented Australian labour market. Not only were they discriminated against by employers, often they experienced racism from their fellow workers. Some felt humiliated because they did not understand what was being said or because they were called derogatory names. Reports of sexual harassment at work are not uncommon. In order to care for their children at home, Italian women often interrupted their employment or took up outwork (Alcorso and Harrison 1993; Fincher, Webber and Campbell 1989; Pesman Cooper 1993).

In Australia the Italian-born have historically had one of the lowest rates of unemployment. In 1989, for instance, Italians had a 3 per cent unemployment rate compared with 6 per cent for all Australian-born people in the labour force (ABS Queensland 1990,
However, the rate varies; in areas with a high immigrant population, such as the Illawarra, immigrant unemployment is higher than the national average.

High levels of retrenchment and occupational injury have placed a strain on the first-generation Italian family. Retrenched Italian men aged between 40 and 50 years are often unable to find new jobs due to lack of sufficient English or training (Morrissey, Dibden and Mitchell 1992). This has meant that some Italian women have now become the chief carers of unemployed and depressed husbands and have lost previously gained independence. Other women have become the sole breadwinner in the family.

An analysis of 1991 census figures on level of qualifications and occupational status shows that many of the second generation have become upwardly mobile. For example, the proportion of second-generation Italians with skilled or basic vocational qualifications (16.5 per cent) was higher than for the total Australian-born population (13.9 per cent) and for people born in Italy (11.7 per cent). On the other hand, 37 per cent of the second generation had obtained some form of educational or occupational qualifications. This figure is slightly below that for the total Australian population (38.8 per cent) though considerably higher than for the Italian-born (25.5 per cent). The proportion of the second generation who have post-secondary educational qualifications is 11.8 per cent compared with 12.8 per cent for the total Australian population. The proportion of the Italian-born in this category was substantially lower (3.3 per cent) (BIPR 1994b, p. 44).

Thus, while the upward mobility of Italian-Australians is clear from these figures, the second generation lags slightly behind when compared with the total Australian population (Vasta 1992). It is worth noting that approximately 60 per cent of second-generation Italian-Australians and 60 per cent of the total Australian population are categorised as having 'no qualifications'. (The category includes persons still at school, aged 15 years and over, and instances where qualifications are not stated.)

The statistics also reveal gender differences. For example, the percentage of second-generation Italian females with no qualifications (including those still at school and in the 'unstated' category) is higher (67.1 per cent) than that of second-generation Italian males with no qualifications (58.9 per cent) (BIPR 1994b, p. 45). Of 241,563 second-generation Italian-Australians aged 15 years and over, 601 males (0.5 per cent) and 215 females (0.3 per cent) have higher degrees while 7.0 per cent of males and 5.8 per cent of females have bachelor's degrees. However, the proportion of
second-generation females who have completed post-secondary qualifications (12.3 per cent) is higher than that of males (11.3 per cent) but lower than that of all Australian-born females (13.5 per cent) (BIPR 1994b, p. 44). On the other hand, 20.5 per cent of males and only 4.5 per cent of females are in the skilled vocational category (p. 45).

Changes in women's labour market participation and work experiences have also occurred from the first to the second generation. As Gittins (1985) explains:

Market relations and labour contracts are as much a part of family households as they are of the formal economy, and are implicit in the marriage contract and legislation affecting families. Work is just as much an integral part of families as it is of formal organisations, with the crucial difference that it is neither formally paid nor formally acknowledged as work. (p. 166)

Although both generations of women have worked the 'two shifts', changes in gender relations, as well as the changed economic circumstances of the past 15 years, reveal different experiences of labour market conditions. Through to the mid-1970s many Italian women worked in unskilled manufacturing jobs. Due to lack of appropriate child care they slipped in and out of the paid labour market according to their child-rearing needs. Many took on outwork because other female family members were also in paid work. Nowadays it appears that many second-generation women do paid work while their children are still in their pre-school years and, due to the high unemployment rate, they tend to hang on to their jobs. While their children are still young, many have also taken on training and retraining by doing TAFE and other courses, typically unavailable to their mothers. Unlike their mothers before them, they can choose to have their mothers or other family members look after their children rather than place them in child care centres.

The family is also changing through an ideological shift from the family as a collective to the centrality of individuals within the family unit. For example, whereas in the first-generation family financial arrangements were more tightly controlled by the parents for the benefit of the whole unit, the second-generation family now allows children more freedom to deal with their own money. Although there are still families which will attempt to buy each child a block of land, many now take the position that children have to take their own responsibility in this regard. As one man interviewed stated:

They have to pay for their own things. I might help. In my day, Dad used to give me everything. They used to do everything for
the kids. Now, a lot of parents have changed to make sure their kids learn how to be responsible. Today, kids don’t appreciate money like we used to. So they have to learn to pay their own way.

Apart from teaching children responsibility, second-generation Italian families live more middle-class, consumer-oriented and expensive lifestyles than did their parents. Their general standard of living has risen. Whereas the first generation rarely took holidays, the younger generation do, sometimes travelling extensively overseas. They are also more likely to buy expensive clothes and pay more for entertainment.

It should be noted, however, that there are numerous cases of children’s unemployment being absorbed by parents. In dire circumstances the family will pull together and parents and extended family will employ out-of-work family members. Some parents have been known to buy a small business for their unemployed children who may have trained in an area that yields few employment prospects. Also, many Italian parents will insist that their children take any work available, even if they cannot find a job in the area in which they trained.

Immigration policies and the Italian family

Typically, immigration entrance and settlement policies have had contradictory effects on immigrants and their families. The relationship between the state and families is important and is particularly significant for women (de Lepervanche 1991). Families and women have an ambivalent relationship with the state. On the one hand, the welfare state is premised on the assumption that women are dependent on the state and on men (Hartmann 1979). On the other hand, women have relied on and expected state action on such issues as free contraception and child care facilities. Further, the state relies on women’s unpaid work to carry out necessary welfare services.

During the 1950s, although many Italians arrived in family units, a large number of married men came without their families in the hope of finding work and paving the way before sending for family members. Many single men arrived on two-year contracts, under the auspices of the Commonwealth Government. This led to an imbalance of the sexes within the community. The problem was exacerbated by the insularity of the Anglo-Australian community and the antipathy of Anglo-Australian young women towards Southern European men. The chaperone system for Italian girls and the fact that Italians also preferred to ‘marry their own
kind' led to various socio-cultural outcomes. One practice was that men returned to their villages, married and then came back to Australia with their new families. In other cases, they would remain in Australia and arrange a proxy wedding, often because they feared they would lose their work here if they returned to Italy, or because they simply could not afford to return.

The Australian state supported the ideology of patriarchal family relations. The proxy marriage played a significant part in the way women were positioned within the Italian family. During the 1950s and 1960s, the patriarchal ideology that women were the possession of their men meant that, in marriage, responsibility for women was passed on from father to husband. A woman's virginity was of paramount importance in the transaction since the husband had to be assured that his new wife had not been 'used' by another man. Although it is not the place here to analyse the historical and complex patriarchal and economic bases of these customs, it can be said that women were constructed as madonnas or whores who were expected by the Australian Government to come out and contain the unruly Italian male who had fallen into a disruptive 'espresso-bar' lifestyle (Vasta 1993). Basically, assimilationist ideology held that families should be encouraged because it was thought that immigrants would assimilate most successfully through families, and particularly through the women.

For the Italians, the situation was rather more complex and contradictory. While the women had to be patriarchally 'pure' in order to be accepted by their husbands in Australia, a woman's 'purity' was also seen as an important foundation for her authority in her new family and in her new community. There was also a pragmatic reason for proxy brides to marry before they came to Australia. By legitimising the union before they came to an unknown country, and often unknown husbands, the women at least gave themselves some assured status by arriving as wives rather than as fiancées who could be more easily dumped on arrival, as some were.

Italian families have also been affected by policies concerning family reunion. In the early post-war years especially, the 'family reunion' immigration category was often controlled to allay fears of too high an immigrant intake. An extended family for immigrants, particularly in the early years of immigration, is a basic social need and immigrants have had to struggle to extend the family reunion category to include siblings.

From the 1950s through to the 1970s, the maintenance of culture and the formation of community played a major role in helping people deal with the consequences of assimilationist attitudes and policies. It was the Italian family which provided
the basis for continuity in cultural and community activities. Official immigration discourse during the assimilationist years claimed that immigrants would be assimilated if they learned to speak English, but very little was done to help them achieve this. Language classes were too few and often ran at unsuitable times, especially for women. Despite the belief that immigrant women should assimilate, surprisingly little was done to help them do so. The English-language attainment of Italian women was always lower than that of their menfolk (Vasta 1991).

Assimilation policy had other notable effects on the Italian-Australian family. By its very nature, the policy was racist in that it devalued other cultures by officially stating that immigrants were to become like Anglo-Australians and should discard their language and traditions in favour of the Anglo-Australian way of life (see CIAC (Dovey Report) 1960). One of the consequences of assimilationist ideology was that the problem was seen to lie in the deficiency of minority individuals, their families and their cultures, rather than in the racism arising out of the interests, attitudes and practices of the dominant culture.

Assimilationist strategies often had destructive effects in Italian-Australian families. Whereas parents resisted dominant Anglo child-rearing practices by demanding that their children speak their mother tongue at home, and by continuing many of their native cultural traditions, their children often interpreted their actions as authoritarian behaviour. Indeed, this was a common interpretation by researchers as well (Cronin 1970). In fact, what was often perceived to be the authoritarian Italian family structure can be regarded rather differently—as a set of family strategies used to deal with an alien cultural environment and with the racism of assimilationist policy. Ultimately this policy helped strengthen Italian family unity.

In some of the earlier research, which used a 'culture conflict' model to explain the problems experienced by the second generation, it was clear that the teenagers were using a similar model to explain their own problems with their parents. The second generation were made to feel ashamed of their home culture as the following statement suggests (Vasta 1978):

I don't talk to my parents much because they don't understand how I feel. I don't befriend Australians because I feel ashamed to tell them that I've been nowhere during the weekend. They used to ask me if I'd been let out of prison. That really hurt me [15-year-old girl]. (p. 193)

The statement implies that the parent's ethnic minority culture is deficient and something to be ashamed of whereas, in reality,
racist attitudes in Australia contributed significantly to that shame (see Vasta 1994 for a discussion of the ‘culture conflict’ model). The second generation of the 1960s and 1970s thus often blamed their parents for many of their child-socialisation practices because they were seen as a deficient aspect of a disrespected culture. For second- and third-generation teenage girls of the 1980s and 1990s, multiculturalism has contributed to a different relationship with parents (see below), who are more confident and better informed about the culture in which their children are growing up, and who thus have relationships with their children which are more understanding and open to negotiation.

To be effective, however, multicultural policies and practices need to take account of the changing needs of different cohorts of immigrant children. Some parents complain that their children are put into English as a Second Language (ESL) classes when they do not really need them because the parents are second generation, they speak English at home and English is the children's first language. Some second-generation Italian parents interviewed for this project claim that teachers do not distinguish between their children and recent arrivals; they simply distinguish the children by their surnames. Multicultural education has an important impact on immigrant children and their families. Kalantzis and Cope (1987) suggest that:

...multicultural education needs to be strengthened to include a more powerful equity component... Equitable multiculturalism would require both the mainstreaming of multiculturalism through all traditional curriculum areas and differential educational strategies to singular social ends; participation and access for all students... Thus multiculturalism should: 1) aim at social equity through multicultural curriculum strategies and 2) tackle the pressing problem of racism directly. (pp. 19-20)

Multiculturalism has also changed the way in which social services are delivered—with contradictory effects for Italian families. The ethnic group model of the 1970s gave an important role to ethno-specific services, often delivered through community organisations such as COASIT (Italian Association of Assistance) and FILEF (Federation of Italian Immigrant Workers Families), and supported by grants-in-aid from the government. Access to services in this period depended partly on the presence of community organisations in a specific area, which in turn reflected the size and coherence of the community. The idea of ethno-specific services often meant welfare on the cheap and de facto marginalisation from normal government service provision (Jakubowicz, Morrissey and Palser 1984).
The trend towards 'mainstreaming' since the mid-1980s has implied that all government services (both Commonwealth and State) should become sensitive to the diverse needs of all ethnic groups. 'Access and equity' and 'social justice' policies are meant to ensure this. Ethno-specific workers find their role reduced to one referring people to mainstream services. While the theory sounds fine, in practice it has often meant a lack of accessible and appropriate services for certain groups. Italians in particular have been told that as a well-established community they no longer need grant-in-aid workers. For instance, in the Illawarra in 1994, at the time when this chapter was being written, funding for the Italian grant-in-aid risked being withdrawn on the grounds that Italians could easily access mainstream services. This would have serious effects for aged people who for linguistic and cultural reasons feel very isolated in normal day care or nursing homes.

Location is also an issue: distribution of funds seems to depend on the political clout of a local community. Community workers in Fairfield, Sydney, with its large component of Italian aged, argue that the area is severely underfunded compared with more affluent parts of the city (Rasoni 1993b). All this will impact seriously on the aged themselves, on the second-generation family and the women in particular, since they do most of the caring in contemporary society (Finch and Groves 1983). Language, ageing and industrial and health issues are long-term concerns which have been persistent barriers to equal and full participation for women. However, funding for ethno-specific services or for measures to improve accessibility is invariably ad hoc, short-term and precarious.

Despite the limitations outlined, multiculturalism, as a societal philosophy which promotes acceptance of cultural diversity, has had a positive effect on the Italian-Australian family. Many will claim not only that the Italian community has challenged Anglo-Australian insularity but also that there is more diversity within the Italian community today than existed during the early post-war years; this they suggest is due to multiculturalism. One notable effect is that young Italian-Australians have friends of different ethnic backgrounds, and they intermarry with people from other cultures. Many of the second generation feel they are truly bicultural, which they see as preferable to being monocultural. Nevertheless, there have been numerous changes within the Italian family and the Italian community which has meant that the relationship between the two has also changed significantly over the years.
Individual, family and community

For Italians there is still a strong belief in the sanctity of the family. To some extent this is reinforced by religious beliefs, although the Catholic Church today has a diminishing presence for and influence over the second generation. In the early post-war years, the first generation of Italian immigrants fostered an extended family network for economic and social reasons. Siblings and parents often pooled their resources in order to buy their own housing and businesses. They did so because many came from rural areas where the extended family unit operated as a source of economic and political organisation against the exploitation of the landowner. In Australia this practice was continued because it was seen as a speedy way of gaining economic security and was a necessary response to the barriers which the immigrants faced.

Immigrants from non-English-speaking backgrounds were often discriminated against by banks and the legal system when they applied for loans, and were frequently ignorant of their rights and lacked the information required to deal with these institutions. Consequently, they started businesses with very little information and few resources. Many succeeded despite their lack of knowledge of Australian culture and the English language. Often Italian parents relied on their young children to act as their interpreters and translators. Much as the children resented this practice, it promoted a sense of family unity for the children and helped maintain a distinction between the public and the private face of the family.

First-generation parents would often say to their children that the family’s problems had to remain within and be resolved within the family. This was often explained in terms of la bella figura (to the public one should always present an image of well-being and success despite the likelihood of a different reality in the private sphere; that is, within the family unit). In rural Italy this behaviour served peasant communities well as a means of survival against exploitative landlords and other families with whom they competed. La bella figura was a sure way of saving face against extreme poverty.

In the early years of settlement family unity was important for economic and social survival within an alien environment. Today in Australia this notion of the Italian family unit has changed. With the second generation reaching adulthood and setting up their own families, the needs of the individual have taken prominence. A major reason for the shift is that the needs and location of various members of the family have changed significantly (Hartmann 1981). The altered position of women in the division
of labour and in society generally has brought about significant transformations within the family unit. Second-generation Italian families no longer have as important an economic function as families had for the first generation even though, as Hampel (1984) shows in his study of second-generation Italians, they successfully incorporate family-oriented culture with the individualism of Australian capitalist society. The following statement from a parent interviewed in preparing this chapter encapsulates the change: ‘Before, family unity was important. Now the individual is—kids are doing good for themselves’. This does not mean that the family has lost its importance to Italian-Australians. The relationship between the family and the individual fits comfortably with current ideologies concerning the parent-child relationship and with the upward mobility of the second generation. Nowadays, as members of a longstanding community, Italian-Australians (excluding the elderly) have bicultural and multicultural skills which help them deal differently with socio-cultural and political problems (Rando 1992).

Changes within the Italian family have meant significant shifts within the Italian community. In the course of the interviews conducted for this book one recurring question was: ‘Can we speak of an Italian community? Does an Italian community still exist or is it simply an imagined community?’. Everyone replied, ‘Yes, there is an Italian community’, but all were quick to add that it has changed. In the past the Italian community was more cohesive. Because of a lack of English proficiency people supported each other more. For example, in the early days (the 1950s to 1970s) there were fewer community organisations and events, and people socialised in their homes with extended family and friends. Parents ‘kept a tighter rein’ on their children and families often socialised together. Nowadays, children go out and organise their own entertainment, socialising far less with their parents than did the youth of the earlier immigration period.

In the early post-war years the Catholic Church was a strong and cohesive force in the community (Pittarello 1980; Gucciardo and Bertelli 1987). Today, some believe that too many people have strayed away from the Church. Although many of the second generation still attend Sunday mass, the Church does not have the same function of bringing people together in a social sense as it did for the first generation. The second-generation family has a different socialising pattern and it does not require the Church to undertake a social coordination role. Nevertheless, feast days and religious icons remain important to Italian-Australians (Pittarello 1990). There are mixed ideas about the importance of a Catholic education for children. In the interviews some mentioned the
importance of a moral education for their children, others felt this could still be achieved in the family. All stressed that there is a new approach to child rearing (discussed below) which emphasises different issues from those that were seen to be important during their own childhood.

The advent of television has brought about changes within the Italian community, as it has for all other communities. Many claim that when they did not have television they visited family and friends more. The widespread use of the telephone has also brought about similar changes; now people will often phone each other rather than pay a visit. Many insist that the community still exists because it continues to organise and celebrate important functions. However, entertainment now occurs outside the family—at clubs and festi (celebrations). Thus the ‘community’ has become more impersonal. This does not necessarily mean that ties have weakened, as will be seen below in regard to community issues concerning the needs of the elderly.

There are a number of explanations for the changes within the Italian family and community. One has to do with modernisation. The majority of Italians who emigrated to Australia came from rural areas and they continued many of their timeworn cultural traditions when they moved to an urban setting in Australia. For example, while the structure of their lives changed in Australia, reliance on the extended family, which they knew they would need in order to survive in an industrial society, was maintained. In contrast, the standard of living and way of life of the second generation is different from that of their parents. Those of the second generation rely more on television for entertainment; unlike their parents, they use the telephone for socialising purposes; their child-rearing practices are different; and they have gained the necessary knowledge and skills to deal with Anglo-Australian institutions.

In addition, the second generation have become the cultural brokers for their communities. There is strong evidence of this in several Italian communities where the second generation work with the first to maintain welfare service provision for older Italians. In Fairfield, Sydney, a committee consisting of first- and second-generation Italians was established to help the community become better serviced. This working class community had for years resourced itself through the help and under the auspices of organisations such as the Marconi Club. Local community workers argued that the area was not receiving an appropriate share of government funding channelled through established non-government organisations such as COASIT (Rasoni 1993a). In the Illawarra the second generation are joining the first in the political
arena to continue the work of the Italian Social Welfare Organisa-
tion, previously managed by first-generation Italians alone.

Women and the Italian-Australian family

The position of women and child-rearing practices have changed
from the first to the second generation of Italian-Australian fam-
ilies. Unequal power relations continue in the second-generation
family, but they appear to be better negotiated between family
members than they were in the first-generation family where
women and children were compelled to find workable strategies
to deal with authoritarian husbands and fathers. Many of the
second-generation women interviewed believe that paid employ-
ment has made them more independent than their mothers, who
did not work outside the home. Similarly, many first-generation
women who were employed outside the home gained more inde-
pendence than did their friends who worked only at home. The
second-generation women interviewed claimed that their mothers
were the focal point of the family, and that both parents took
part in important family decisions. However, younger women
appear to make more decisions than did older women; their
relationships are far more equal than those of their parents.
Women consider themselves to be more independent because, as
one women put it: ‘Women are more knowledgeable. Women now
know more’.

The implication is that women are now more aware of their
rights. They are less likely to accept domestic violence passively,
as they know which avenues to pursue if necessary. Although it
is difficult to determine the incidence of domestic violence in
Italian-Australian families, it is fair to assume that it would be
similar to the national average. Second-generation women will be
better able to deal with the problem than their mothers were. The
effects of the women’s movement have reached younger English-
speaking women, and second-generation women, having grown up
in Australia, are better equipped than those of their mother’s age
group to deal with Australian institutions.

Although divorce rates rose in the 1960s and 1970s in Aus-
tralia, they have remained consistent around a figure of 40 per
cent since the early 1980s (McDonald 1993). Italians have had
one of the lowest rates of divorce, and this may be largely
explained by the Catholic Church’s resistance to divorce (Bertelli
1985). The divorce rate may be higher for second-generation
marriages than for those of the first generation, though this is
difficult to ascertain from current statistics. Nevertheless, Hartley
(1994, p. 4) concludes: ‘Divorce rates, the proportion of de facto relationships, sole parent rates, and birth rates outside of marriage are lower for the non-English-speaking-background population than the general population, and for the overseas-born compared with the general population’.

Although many second-generation women insist that there is now more of an equal division of labour at home, this is usually talked about in terms of ‘men now do more around the house’ and ‘men do help a lot now’, indicating that women continue to take chief responsibility for home management, housework and child rearing. The situation is similar to that in the average Australian home (Bittman 1992). Gittins (1985) maintains that although ‘patriarchal values arise in, and are inculcated in, families ... they are not specific to families. They permeate and influence society at all levels: political, economic, ideological and familial’ (p. 58). Thus, under patriarchal capitalism, the second-generation Italian-Australian family is likely to be as patriarchal as the average Australian family. Most of the women interviewed believe they have acceptable levels of contact with their families because parents and aunts care for their children during the day. However, contact which is focused on children and child care is viewed as different from ‘socialising time’, and often leaves less time for general social interaction with their families. Because they work outside the home and have less free time to socialise, second-generation women feel they are losing many traditions, including the Sunday family lunch.

The first generation of Italian immigrant women have been the ‘cultural custodians’ of Italian culture and tradition in Australia. The older generation had more contact with the extended family and there was more community involvement than there is nowadays. As a result of the changing role of women in the labour market and in the home there is a sense of tradition being lost. This loss is bemoaned by some.

The loss of tradition, however, needs to be analysed more closely. What is being lost is the Italian traditions of the 1950s and 1960s, many of which no longer exist in Italy today. Culture is a living process. The second generation have combined traditional Italian culture with current-day Australian and Italian cultures and those of other ethnic groups they have experienced in multicultural Australia. Many are more attuned with present-day Italy because they have travelled, and because communication channels between Italy and Australia are more extensive. Because of their Australian experience the second generation are more likely to have a multicultural cuisine than were their mothers, who adhered mostly to Italian-style cooking and recipes.
The impact of modernity on families creates concern among many people who feel that economic, cultural and global changes affect all traditional practices and lead to strong feelings of uncertainty (Cheal 1991). Among second-generation Italian-Australians one senses a note of ambivalence of the kind expressed by Berman (1982): 'To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world—and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are' (p. 82).

**The Italian aged**

The changes which are occurring in families in longstanding 'immigrant' communities are nowhere more evident than in the issue of how to care for the elderly. One of the biggest problems for aged Italians is the prospect of being placed in an old people's home when they are no longer able to care for themselves. For many second-generation families with both partners working, this is often the only option. The elderly are resisting, often through moral pressure, because as many children admit, Italian parents give an inordinate amount of help to their children. Many families feel they do not have the choice. Nevertheless, as one woman interviewed for this project said:

I can't imagine putting my parents and parents-in-law into an old people's home. Our parents have done so much for us. They are looking after my children so that I can go to work. One day I will look after them just as they have looked after my children.

This implies that if daughters and daughters-in-law are able to stay home to look after their children then the elderly will have their wishes to be cared for fulfilled. If daughters have to do paid work, the problem is not easily resolved. A number of Italian communities are providing 'Italian' care for the elderly. For example, in 1988 the Marco Polo Association in the Illawarra, after years of fundraising, built the Unanderra Nursing Home in conjunction with the Uniting Church. The nursing home provides bilingual staff for the aged. Other Italian communities are beginning to look to culturally appropriate ways to extend current provisions generally provided by the Catholic Church.

There is a contradiction in the issue of how best to care for the Italian aged. Many parents have taught their children to seek wealth and be independent of them. In time, as standards of living have arisen, the importance has shifted from the extended family
to the nuclear family. As a result, caring for the aged has become a major source of conflict within the Italian-Australian family. Such conflict arises in a society which structures its time (work and leisure) around the needs of capital, not around the needs of non-workers such as the young and the elderly.

The extended family network which reaches out to family and relatives in the native villages and towns of Italy is important for older Italian-Australians. Families have maintained close links with relatives in Italy and many have inherited houses and tracts of land. In recent years there has emerged the phenomenon of 'commuting grandparents'. Elderly Italian-Australians often have children living in Italy and in Australia and so divide their time between them. Others travel to Italy because they prefer the village life they left behind and an environment where they can speak their mother tongue, but commute because they find it very difficult to be separated from their children and grandchildren in Australia. The ability to commute is made possible by Commonwealth Government arrangements by which pensions may be sent to recipients in Italy.

Parenting and the second generation

Second-generation Italian-Australian parents perceive themselves to be far less strict with their children than were first-generation parents. Because the community is not as close-knit, younger parents do not feel the same moral pressure from the community as did the older parents. The old adage 'What will the neighbours say?' and the importance of *la bella figura* are well remembered by the second generation as a source of conflict during their childhood. Second-generation parents see that many other parents like them are easier on their children. For the second generation there is not the insecurity and the pressure to survive economically as there was for the first generation. Some parents interviewed mentioned that parenting is made easier now because there are many cultures in Australia with a variety of child-rearing practices, and there is not the pressure for everyone to conform to the same practices.

Although the Italian-Australian family generally has been child-centred (Cronin 1970), the second-generation family is more concerned with individual rights. As one parent interviewed stated:

The main reason is that our children are more aware of their rights. They are more aware and better informed. They know if parents abuse their rights. If, for example, you say to your kids,
'Have you seen your grandparents?', they don't like it. We can't force them like our parents did. They have a lot of pressure to deal with two cultures.

Many interviewees agreed that, compared with their own upbringing, parents now explain more to their children, they have better communication with them and there is a desire to treat children as individuals. Others agreed that they did not know their rights as they were growing up because of the influence of an authoritarian Church and authoritarian parents. Many concluded that their parents had come to a new culture which they did not understand or trust and so clung to their old and trusted ways. At that time the Church, the community and the family combined to put moral pressure on children to stay within the family. The second generation have grown up in Australia; they feel more comfortable operating in a multicultural society and so are able to accommodate more than one culture in their lives.

One of the most significant changes within the Italian-Australian family is the freedom gained by girls. Parents are as concerned about the education and future job prospects of their daughters as they are about their sons' and, unlike the period in which the second generation grew up, many daughters are allowed out unchaperoned. Younger daughters are usually allowed out only in groups and others are not allowed out until they are 18 years old. Many parents worry when their daughters are out with boyfriends. They claim it is very difficult to let go of daughters even though many agreed that young women can often look after themselves better than young men can. In any case, all groups of parents interviewed claimed they simply had to let go of their children at a certain age, even if only to allow them to make their own mistakes. Second-generation parents of southern Italian background are still probably stricter with their children than those from the north. However, gone are the days of the proxy brides and chaperoned girls. In addition, thanks to the effects of the women's movement and changes brought about by multiculturalism, Italian-Australian girls have a slightly better chance of receiving a higher education than their mothers had.

Marriage and sexual relationships

Although they would still prefer their children to marry partners of Italian background, second-generation parents claim that they do not mind if their children marry people from other ethnic groups. In this regard they perceive themselves to be far more
tolerant than their parents were. It should be remembered, though, that their parents were dealing with people from unknown cultural backgrounds. Now, whereas the older members of the second generation married more across regions, the younger second generation and the third generation are marrying more across ethnic groups. With multiculturalism, the second and third generation believe they have a far better understanding of people from other cultures and so fear less the idea of intermarriage.

Many of the second generation believe, however, that marrying someone from another religion is more problematic, though one way around the wedding impasse is to have two religious ceremonies. This does not solve the problem of which religion the children should be raised in.

Greater tolerance for difference does not seem to extend to children who may be lesbian or gay. Many of the interviewees claim they would still accept their homosexual children but would prefer they were heterosexual. Homosexuality is not a widely discussed topic in the second-generation family. The situation has been examined by Pallotta-Chiarolli, who claims that Italian lesbian women do not 'come out' on account of the racism they experience in the wider society, and do not 'come out' at home for fear of double rejection (Pallotta-Chiarolli 1992).

Premarital cohabitation does exist among Italian-Australians but continues to be frowned on by the community. This is due to particular aspects of the parent–child relationship as well as the position of children in the Italian family. Gucciardo and Romanin (1988) remark: 'This ideology is based on the understanding that children are an integral part of the family unit until they marry . . . “Leaving home” before marriage is also condemned because it implies some intrafamilial conflict; it throws doubt on the parents’ ability to guide and educate their children’ (p. 29). Leaving home and premarital cohabitation are proportionately lower for Italians and other Southern Europeans than for the general population (McDonald 1991a).

A tradition which has changed is that of mothers providing their daughters with a ‘glory box’, often collected over the daughter’s lifetime. Many second-generation daughters today have linen stacked away which they vow they will never use because they do not like it. Second-generation mothers, in particular those from southern Italy, will buy their daughters only a small amount of linen at the time of the wedding so that the daughter can enjoy using something she likes. Italian weddings have also changed. They are now smaller and more stylish rather than big and ostentatious. The second generation do not have to display their success as did the first generation. As a result, the whole commu-
nity is no longer invited to such events as they were in earlier days.

Finally, some parents are concerned about the racism experienced by their children. They believe that the Italian language is dying with the third generation because children are made to feel different. Many believe that racism is more damaging to children than it is to adults. Those interviewed also commented on racism in the labour market (how it relates to who gets jobs and how people are treated on the job) and racism (that is, name-calling) between northern and southern Italians. Such name-calling often occurs in a lighthearted way and it was believed that it would not stop the younger generation from intermarrying.

Conclusion: family, community and identity

Currently, the second-generation Italian-Australian family is the torchbearer of a transformed Italian culture in Australia. Although it is true that, during adolescence, many of the second generation rejected their parents' language and culture, this rejection, though often seen in personal terms, had several complex causes. These included the vulnerability of adolescents, embarrassment caused by racism, and recognition that the adoption of middle-class Anglo norms would lead to educational and occupational success. However, it would appear that, as adults, many of the second generation are highly involved with their Italian heritage and operate comfortably with a bicultural ethnic identity. Unlike the situation in the United States, where the second generation rejected their parents' culture and the third generation returned to it, in Australia there is often a return to Italian culture and identity within the one generation. The second generation have reconstructed the Italian-Australian family, thus changing the Italian community and providing links between the Italian, the Anglo-Australian and the other ethnic communities.

Immigrant cultures and identities are historically and politically constructed. Ethnicity is continually negotiated and is a constant source of transformation for people of immigrant background. If Italian-Australians continue to associate, both through family and cultural practices and (politically) through cooperation to secure welfare provisions, then Italian-Australian identity will continue. However, as the experience of each generation changes in relation to immigration, class position and the politics of the dominant group, identity and welfare needs will also change.

With third- and fourth-generation Italian-Australians reaching adulthood and starting their own families, there are likely to be
more changes. Italian identity will mean less to these generations than to previous ones. It is here that the question of ethnic and national identity becomes highly relevant. As we move towards the millennium, Australians are questioning their national identity through the debate on becoming a republic. Australia is still a country dominated by Anglo-Australian institutions and culture, which discriminate against both Australia’s indigenous people and immigrants of non-English-speaking backgrounds. Multiculturalism has provided a new model for accepting diversity, but it is still at an embryonic stage. There is a continuing need for reflection, and for an understanding of the relationship between ethnic and multicultural identities and how they work within and across family and national boundaries.

Notes

1 Throughout this chapter the terms Italian and Italian-Australian are used interchangeably, since they are used interchangeably in the vernacular. If the term Italian is used to refer to Italians in Italy or elsewhere this is clearly apparent from the context.

2 There are two broad definitions which form the basis of what is commonly understood as ‘the second generation’. The first is a statistical definition, which refers to the Australian-born children of overseas-born parents. The second is a socio-political definition, which includes people born in Australia of overseas-born parents and people who arrived in Australia during infancy or early childhood. For a more detailed definition, see my chapter on the second generation in Castles et al. (eds) 1992.

3 These socio-political periods are arbitrary in a sense because they could be explained according to any number of changing socio-cultural and political characteristics rather than to any specific time frame. In this chapter I am more concerned with the effects of socio-political changes on the first- and second-generation Italian-Australian family over the past 50 years.

4 About 30 women and men were interviewed. I would like to thank those people from the two communities of Wollongong and Fairfield, Sydney, and Franca Cortese in particular, who gave generously of their time for interviews with me about the Italian-Australian family. Apart from the research cited in this chapter, much of my analysis is based on these interviews and on my own observations and informal interviews within these two communities since 1988.

5 It is still difficult to obtain a broad range of statistical data about the second generation, i.e. those of non-English-speaking background born in Australia, as opposed to those born overseas. Often the second generation are included in an ‘Australian-born’ category, thus removing the ability to differentiate ethnic background data.
There is still very little specific research on third-generation Italians. There are fears that this generation is 'losing' the Italian language (see Clyne 1991a), but little is really known about their educational/employment achievements and the ethnic identity issues that may concern them.
Latin America is considered to stretch from Mexico to Chile, and includes Caribbean islands with populations of Spanish-speaking background. The region comprises twenty different nations, all sharing a common heritage but each having followed a different historical path. The term ‘Latin America’ was created by the French to define the regions conquered by Spain and Portugal at a time when France was trying to reinstate its influence and legitimise French domination of the region. The term is also a reference to Spanish and Portuguese, the main languages spoken in the region, which share common roots in the Latin language.

There are differences between and within the various Latin American countries, which relate to geographic setting, history, race, ethnicity, economic structure, general education levels and social class composition. Nevertheless, Latin American countries share some common organisational patterns which become evident in the settlement process in Australia. They have similar social and political structures, as well as legal systems which are based on Roman law. The majority of countries have a dominant class which holds political and economic power and which creates and reinforces the values imposed in each country. All dominant classes share similar social and cultural values.

Latin American migration to Australia

Latin American people have come to Australia under various
immigration categories—refugee and humanitarian, family reunion, independent, and ‘special’—in two major migration ‘waves’. The first was in the 1970s when people came mainly from Chile, Uruguay and Argentina because of the financial and political problems in those countries. Most from Chile came under the refugee and humanitarian programs. The composition of this first wave was heterogeneous in terms of skills and levels of education.

The second wave arrived during the 1980s, predominantly from El Salvador and other Central American countries where there was civil war and general political unrest; the majority came under the refugee and humanitarian programs. The second wave was more diverse than the first, as people from all walks of life were displaced by the internal political situation in their countries of origin. The percentage of peasants was higher in this group than in the first wave. Since the 1980s other Latin American settlers from varied backgrounds have arrived in Australia as independent immigrants or under the family reunion program. The largest numbers of Latin Americans in Australia come from Chile, El Salvador, Argentina and Uruguay.

This chapter first briefly outlines key factors in the historical background of Latin America and identifies traditional family values and structures. Latin American families in Australia are then examined. Finally, the particular situations of refugee families are discussed.

Historical background

In order to understand families from Latin America it is necessary to consider the historical background and development of the region from which they come. After the ‘New Continent’ was ‘discovered’ by the Spaniards in 1492, it was invaded by people from a number of powerful empires including the Spanish, the British, the French and the Portuguese. History shows how the predominant customs and values in Latin America today have their origin in values which were imposed by Spain and Portugal in an effort to establish unity. Such values include a patriarchal and authoritarian family structure; pride, dignity and honour within the family; values related to Catholicism; and a ‘double standard’ of sexual morality for men and women. Shared customs relate to food, language and literature. The ‘imposition’ of values was facilitated through institutions holding power in the past—specifically, the various European empires and the Catholic Church.

The people of Latin America are descendants of three main racial groups—indigenous or Amerindian, European and African.
The intermixture of Europeans and indigenous people has been a characteristic of the region since the European invasion, resulting in the mainly *mestizo* population of today. Historically, this intermixture is based on the fact that women were taken by powerful men as their concubines. In countries such as Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia, the main population is of indigenous descent, as it is also in Panama, Colombia and Venezuela, although these latter three countries have a lower percentage of people of indigenous descent. In contrast, the populations of Costa Rica, Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay are mainly of European descent. Brazil, Panama, Santo Domingo and Cuba and some regions of Venezuela and Colombia have a high percentage of people of African descent.

The imposition of social and cultural values by the Spanish and Portuguese on the original cultures was extensive. The Spanish Empire, represented by the conquerors of the 'new land', used violence to enforce strict rules. Foreign values blended with indigenous and African cultural values, creating the base of the 'new societies'. The conquerors held powerful positions in the social and political structures and became a dominant class whose purpose was to maintain, transmit and impose its own values and cultural patterns on the pre-existing cultures. However, despite this, there remain indigenous and African cultural influences which contribute to the area’s heterogeneity.

The Catholic Church has also been an important instrument in the imposition and maintenance of values and customs. Its influence was present in every aspect of the invasion, conquest and subsequent settlement. 'In the name of God' the Catholic Church provided education to 'the ignorant indigenous', through *las misiones* (the missions), which were established to evangelise indigenous people, and *cofradias* (brotherhood), which was created in order to integrate the community into the Church by promoting community and cult activities. The Church attempted to organise the social life of the community by regulating three areas in particular: marriage, family relationships and sexuality.

Nevertheless, as Willems (1975) argues, the Catholic Church could not abolish some indigenous and African practices:

> Apparently the supernatural world of the Indian and African did not automatically succumb to the Catholic officialdom of the colonial city. After all, it was in the cities rather than in the countryside that the African deities and African cult forms survived. There are many indications that in the cities of Spanish America, too, the lower classes retained forms of witchcraft and magic of mixed Iberian, indigenous and sometimes African origin.

(p. 71)
The fundamental cultural and social patterns which were forced on the indigenous population were based on Roman law, the beliefs of the Catholic Church, and existing practices in Spain and Portugal. The clash between 'new values' and 'old values', especially the relationship between men and women, created and reinforced some new beliefs. One was the concept that women were 'less than men'. This idea was compounded by the belief of the conquerors that indigenous people were naturally inferior. It created a clear division between two categories of women: those who must be kept pure and chaste for marriage, and those whose purpose was to satisfy men's sexual desires. This established a moral double standard, the impact of which is explored later.

Three important factors influenced the construction of family organisation and patterns in the new land. They were the absence of Spanish women among the invaders (unlike invasions from many other countries, colonisation was not a family enterprise); the rape and concubinage of indigenous women, which led to the establishment of the mestizo population; and the existence of a very rigid social class system. There was often official denial of relationships between European men and indigenous and African women, and social stigma was attached to such relationships despite the fact that the practice was widespread.

Patriarchal structures and the sexual double standard (with its associated male jealousy) were sustained during the period of the institutionalisation of the invasion. Not until after industrialisation (occurring at different times in different countries) and considerable social change did these family patterns and values begin to alter. The influx of immigrants from European countries (including Italy, Germany and England) after the Second World War and the arrival in particular areas of settlers from such countries as Lebanon, Japan and China have contributed to gradual change. Internal migration from rural to urban areas, access of the middle and upper classes to mass media influences and the general dynamics of urban life have all contributed to changes in women's roles and their dependency on marriage.

Latin American families

The family is seen as the basis of Latin American society. However, there is extreme variation of structure, organisation and behaviour, not only from country to country but also between regions within the same country. Therefore, while generalisations and descriptions of the values and cultural patterns of Latin American families presented in this chapter are useful in a broad context of analysis,
the particular circumstances of each country and each family must be taken into account for a more detailed understanding of individual families.

Family patterns and values are different in rural and urban areas, and across both areas there are differences between upper, middle and lower class families within each country. In addition, there are differences related to political circumstances, educational and social levels and geographic setting between and within countries. However, in theory, it is possible to assert that rural and working class family lifestyle is organised in a similar manner, and that this is different from the organisation of middle and upper class families. This means, for example, that there are similarities in upper class families, whether they live in urban or rural areas. What is outlined here are dominant cultural and social patterns and values of the ‘ideal typical’ Latin American family.

**Nuclear and extended families**

Both extended and nuclear family structures are common to all Latin American countries. It is difficult to establish clear boundaries between the two. Even though they commonly live in separate houses or even in different cities, nuclear families share many family concerns with extended kin such as aunts, uncles and cousins from both sides of the family. Therefore, nuclear and extended family characteristics coexist.

Cohesion and hierarchical organisation are characteristics of traditional Latin American families. Families tend to be organised around four main values: *respeto* (respect) for parental authority, *cohesion* (cohesiveness), *honestidad* (honesty) and *dignidad* (dignity) for individual achievements (Falicov 1982). Family structure is authoritarian and has clear internal differentiation of roles and forms of communication. Roles are directly related to gender images. The father is the head of the family and his authority is considered a natural and unquestionable right; his wife and children have to unconditionally obey and respect his authority. The mother, who is usually subordinated in every sense to her husband’s desires, is placed in the ‘middle’ of the hierarchy. She is very important in communication between father and children.

Women are responsible for looking after and educating their children and for providing emotional support to other family members. Often working class women provide income for the family by washing clothes and ironing for others, cleaning houses, or working as domestic servants in wealthy people’s homes. In rural areas they usually maintain a vegetable garden and keep chickens, pigs and cows which provide eggs, meat and milk for
the family. Women’s financial responsibilities include distributing the husband’s wage within the family.

The definition of roles helps to develop within the family a sub-system of mother and children, which reinforces the authoritarian image of the father and the protected image of the mother. For example, a mother sometimes breaks rules which have been established jointly with her husband but asks her children to keep this a secret. Mothers may threaten children with their father’s authority by saying, for example, ‘Wait till your father gets home’, as a means of controlling the children’s behaviour. Because of the bond between mother and children, mothers tend to be supported by their children during conflicts between husbands and wives.

**Paternal line of descent**

With the exception of Brazil, the use of names in Latin American countries tends to be patrilineal. In the majority of Latin American societies people assume the father’s surname as the first surname and the mother’s surname as the last surname (Bridges 1980). Married and single people possess both paternal and maternal surnames at all times. However, women and men are treated differently in relation to the use of both surnames. Men retain both throughout their life while, in some countries, women lose their mother’s surname after marriage and add the paternal surname of the husband’s family along with their paternal surname and the word ‘de’ (of), for example, Maria Perez de Gonzalez.

In relation to first names, there are similar rules for men and women. Usually the first son is given the same name as his father and, if a boy has two names, the second one can be decided arbitrarily or may come from the father’s or mother’s oldest brother’s name. For example, Juan (father’s name) in combination with Pedro (mother’s oldest brother’s name) becomes Juan Pedro (child’s name). In the case of daughters, one or two names can be chosen from either side of the family; generally the first name is the same as the grandmother’s on the father’s side. This was very common among the grandparents and parents of today’s children and adolescents, although there is a tendency among young couples to do away with the custom.

**Family support and control**

Families both provide security and support for their members and operate as an important means of control on individuals. The degree of control may be authoritarian or much more flexible. The control exercised by parents, and usually by other family
members and neighbours, is not necessarily negative and is considered essential because it gives a sense of security. An example of family control was the system which developed around relationships between unmarried men and women whereby the *chaperona* (chaperone), an adult usually older than the couple, always accompanied them whether they were at home or out. This system of control was aimed at supporting and assuring the dignity of women. Today, control is expressed in other ways; for example, parents usually drop off their daughters at parties and pick them up. (This can be understood as a measure of protection as well as control.)

Family support can take different expressions depending on the social and financial background of the family. In well-off families support may help to maintain the family’s political and financial status; for example, family members may participate in building up and developing a family business. Support in poor families takes place mainly at the level of basic needs and centres on exchange of services such as child care, care for ill family members, food exchanges, the sharing of goods such as electrical appliances and helping with payment of household bills and rent. Support is commonly extended to the neighbourhood level and strong networks are developed which provide for the emotional and financial needs of families.

*Relationships outside the family*

The relationship called *compadrazgo* (godparenthood) is an extension of the structure of family and neighbourhood support. Willems (1975) observes: ‘Godparenthood or ritual kinship is an institution designed either to extend a family beyond the confines of consanguinity and affinity or to reinforce existent kinship ties’ (p. 62). The *compadrazgo* establishes a set of permanent relationships between parents, godparents and godchild, whereby the godparents become the ‘second parents’ and are responsible for the child’s religious education and for helping parents at all times.

In some areas it is common to find this sort of relationship between peasants who offer their child to their landowner or patron. In others, however, it is considered dishonourable for a person who is in a good financial position or belongs to a high social class to become godparent to a child whose parents are from a lower social class. Traditionally, godparents provide money and important gifts for children. Nowadays, practices surrounding *compadrazgo*, such as providing gifts and money, tend not to be followed, and a lot of the formality and obligation associated with *compadrazgo* has been lost; however, it still operates as an
important principle of social organisation (Cubbit 1988). Godparents may be chosen from relatives or friends; in the latter case kinship ties are extended even further. The ‘godparents’ of a wedding (the best man and maid of honour) have similar responsibilities and obligations to ordinary godparents but, rather than assisting the child, they support the husband and wife.

**Sex roles**

It has been well documented (Willems 1953, Staycos 1955 and Lewis 1950, cited in Bermudez 1955) that sex roles in Latin America have been organised around the ‘virility and virginity complex’ or *machismo*-*hembrismo*. This is still largely the case. Throughout their lives women are usually under the control of men—first their fathers, then their brothers and their husbands, and finally their sons. This kind of control is supported by the typical social gender relationships as expressed in *machismo* and *marianismo*. *Machismo* had its origin in Europe, becoming stronger in Latin America as a result of Iberian men assuming dominance over indigenous and African women. *Machismo* is defined by Cubbit (1988) as ‘an exaggerated cult of virility which expresses itself in male assertions of superiority over females, and competition between men. To fulfil macho behaviour patterns, a man must show no fear, demonstrate sexual prowess, father many children and exercise tight control over female kind’ (p. 103).

The concept of *marianismo* reinforces and maintains male behaviour. Moraes-Gorecki (1988) describes it as ‘an archaic stereotype relating to Latin American woman’s moral virtue and chastity and her ability to endure material and spiritual hardships. The behavioural attributes of humility, serenity, tolerance and submissiveness are perceived as necessary requisites for the ideal Latin American woman in her relations with men’ (p. 26).

*Machismo* and *marianismo* have contributed to the ‘sexual double standard’ for women and men. Men’s extramarital relationships are tolerated; women are expected to be faithful to one man. Traditionally, the strong sexual desires of men have to be directed towards prostitutes or a lover, as opposed to a wife, who is associated with the ‘Virgin Mary’ and who, after marry ing, becomes the mother of a man’s children.

**Marriage and divorce**

Marriage is one of the most important events in the lives of Latin Americans. Before the gradual separation of Church and state (which in most but certainly not all countries occurred in the late
the only legally acceptable marriage was a religious one. Now, in the majority of Latin American countries, the only officially recognised marriage is one registered with civil authorities. However, many people perceive the religious ceremony as important and they marry in church. There is a tendency for middle and working class families to consider the religious ceremony as a generator of social prestige.

According to Das and Jesser (1980), people from a higher socio-economic background are more likely to legally marry, while consensual unions are more likely to be acceptable in those from a lower socio-economic background. Age at the time of marriage tends to vary according to social class, being lower for working class young people and those in rural areas, and higher for the middle and upper classes. There are negative attitudes toward divorce in Latin America. The Catholic Church does not recognise separation or divorce and divorced people cannot be remarried by a priest. In some countries, where separation of Church and state has occurred, the state recognises divorce. Statistical information concerning divorce has to be used with care, as there are technical and political difficulties in obtaining accurate statistics. The existence of a large number of consensual unions in Latin America must also be considered (as they are not recorded as divorces if the couple separates). Nevertheless, statistics suggest that the number of divorces has slightly increased in Latin American countries in the last few decades (Das and Jesser 1980; Goode 1993). However, there is still a series of social taboos, as noted by McDonald (1989); under the ‘masculine’ conception of the family, divorce ‘leaves the woman without an acceptable role in society’ (p. 43).

Children in Latin American families

Within all social classes in Latin American societies motherhood, which is associated with the concept of the ‘Virgin Mary’, is considered to be one of most important events in the life of a woman. In upper and middle class families various practices are developed around the pregnant woman, aimed at taking care of her and providing anything she requires. The mother usually takes an important period of rest and spends her time looking after the baby. Mothers and grandmothers of the new mother are close by, supporting and helping her during the early stages of the child’s life. In poor families, the new mother may also be well supported; however, childbirth is considered a very natural process and, because of financial necessity, mothers usually return to work a few days after giving birth.
Children's informal education starts from the very early stages of life. As children (especially boys) grow older, some aspects of their education are gradually transferred from the mother to the father or substitute father, for example the grandfather, godfather, uncles or cousins. The degree of control tends to vary depending on whether children live in the city or the country, and according to the socio-economic status of the family. For example, control and education of working class children tend to be less rigid than in upper class families. Parents in poor families usually spend many hours in the workplace and children grow up without close parental supervision. In general, however, control increases considerably when children start school. Both family and teachers are responsible for creating a 'well-educated person' and introducing children to the norms and rules of the society.

At home and at school, children's education is based on the previously described clear differentiation of sex roles. Girls are taught to do the general housework, such as cleaning, cooking and sewing. Boys are taught and encouraged to do 'hard work', such as mechanical jobs and handiwork like carpentry, and are prepared for jobs in industry. Once the child becomes an adolescent the differentiation of sex roles is intensified. Males are allowed more freedom; females become more dependent on their family and more involved with housework. It is commonly recognised throughout the Latin American community that 'women have to be in the home or kitchen and men in the street'.

Furthermore, children are taught differently with respect to their feelings. The ideal for boys is characterised by control of emotions, coolness, aloofness and strength, epitomised by the belief that 'men must not cry'. Girls are brought up in a sensitive manner and encouraged to show their feelings. Parents also show their feelings differently towards sons and daughters. Mothers generally express affection towards girls and boys equally, whereas fathers generally express affection towards daughters only.

In low-income families adolescents sometimes take over the financial responsibilities of the family, which usually results in a premature abandonment of schooling. However, where children are able to continue their education, parents have high academic expectations of them. Generally speaking, the middle, upper-middle and upper classes in Latin America encourage their children to enter prestigious professions, such as medicine, dentistry and law, as a means of obtaining security and prosperity. Parents often say: 'You have to study. We have no money to leave you; all we can leave you with is a good education'. Sometimes the emphasis on achievement can be a source of conflict within the family and adolescents rebel against the pressure. The value placed on
education is related to financial and social mobility. When children obtain a degree their parents experience pride and the achievement brings honour to the family. Both parents and children consider educational achievements a passport to wealth, with the possibility of moving to a higher social class.

Illegitimate children are those born outside a legal union. When the father does not accept his responsibility for the child, it is usually brought up in the mother's family. The child is treated with affection and is cared for as any other child would be. Nevertheless, there is still some social stigma attaching to children born out of wedlock and they have some legal disadvantages; for example, in some countries there may be restrictions on inheritance from the father.

Growing old

Grandparents occupy an important role in families. They are seen as a source of knowledge and are respected by their families and the community in general. Grandparents are responsible for transmitting traditional cultural values and behaviours to their grandchildren. They are generally close to their grandchildren, developing an unconscious link with them against the parents' authority. It is commonly said that 'grandparents tend to spoil their grandchildren and parents must educate them; grandparents enjoy their grandchildren and parents must regulate them'. This may contribute to the competitiveness which usually exists between grandparents and parents. Usually grandmothers become more involved than grandfathers do in family matters. Consequently, especially if they are no longer contributing financially to the family, grandfathers sometimes feel they no longer command authority within the family.

When parents grow old and are unable to maintain themselves it is expected that their children will contribute to their support. If they need physical care or accommodation they often live with one of their children, usually the oldest daughter (Falicov 1982).

Latin American families in Australia

Little research has been conducted into Latin American families in Australia. It is often difficult to find detailed statistical information about Latin American people as a group, as birthplace is not always identified in sufficient detail in census and other data. The following outline is based on data from the 1991 census,
research findings, and discussions with professional workers in and members of the Latin American community.

The 1991 Australian census estimated that 71,957 people had been born in South and Central America and the Caribbean (ABS 1993a). Most had come here under either the refugee or the family reunion program. In the period 1990–91 those coming as refugees made up 41 per cent of arrivals; 39 per cent came in the family reunion category; 17.6 per cent were classified as independent arrivals; and smaller numbers came under special conditions. The majority of Latin Americans have settled in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, usually in the urban areas.

Data from the census indicate that most of those born in Latin America lived in a nuclear family structure of parents and children—approximately two-thirds lived in a two-parent family household and almost 9 per cent in a one-parent household. Most others lived with a partner or another related individual, or alone. The great majority of those aged 15–24 were living with their parents. Approximately one-quarter of those over 65 were couples without offspring living with them, and almost 30 per cent were categorised as ‘other relatives’ in a two- or one-parent family. It is likely that most were living with their adult children. Approximately 14 per cent lived alone. (Data provided by the ABS.)

Latin American families in Australia reflect many of the patterns of relatively recently arrived immigrant groups, the result of a younger age structure with fewer older people. The proportion of families with dependent children is higher than the average for the whole of Australia and the proportion of families with only older children at home is lower. Family households in which the reference person for the 1991 census was born in Argentina, Chile or Uruguay tended to consist of two or more family units more frequently than did households in which the reference person was Australian-born, but the overall percentages were very small (1.7 per cent compared with 0.5 per cent).

Families from El Salvador also reflect some characteristics of refugee families in census statistics. In more than 20 per cent of two-parent families with dependent children, one or both parents were unemployed (compared with 7 per cent of all two-parent families with dependent children). Also, probably as a reflection of their refugee status, Salvadoreans had a higher percentage of sole-parent families than did those from other Latin American countries (BIPR 1994f).

There is a common belief in the Latin American community in Australia that the frequency of divorce among Latin Americans is greater in Australia than in Latin America. Existing divorce statistics make it difficult to determine whether this is true or not,
but there are no strong indicators that it is so. Chileans began to be identified as a separate birthplace group in the annual divorce statistics for 1990 (ABS 1991).

Family values in Australia

The immigration and settlement process may bring changes in values, in family structures and functioning and in communication in families, especially between males and females. Previous patterns may become more rigid or more flexible. In the Latin American community some cultural patterns and values have been maintained, while others have already changed or are in process of changing. Latin American families see themselves as choosing to change in some cases and being forced to in others, sometimes in order to keep families together. For a recently arrived immigrant community, changes in some areas have been rapid.

Family cohesion and support are still strong in Latin American families in Australia. Cohesion is defined as an internal unity based on close contact between family members. This allows many families to handle the stresses of migration. Traditionally, families helped each other to migrate from rural to metropolitan areas in their country of origin. Now families help each other in coming to Australia, particularly through family sponsorship. A study undertaken by Morrissey, Mitchell and Rutherford (1991) showed that important reasons for sponsoring family members were ‘to provide . . . relatives with a better material life’ and ‘to rescue [them] from war or civil disturbance’. Once they are in Australia, family members outside the nuclear family are an important support network and are called on to resolve conflicts, help in disciplining children and act as interpreters.

While family cohesion and support are generally maintained, gender roles and traditional social and cultural patterns surrounding communication between males and females are changing. The degree of change in these areas varies across families. Only changes which have become evident in the settlement process and are a source of confrontation between generations are discussed below.

What causes shifts in family values and patterns? The reasons are complex and are rooted in the interaction of particular characteristics of Latin American and Australian society. The socio-economic situation in Australia is a significant contributing factor. Families come with expectations of financial security and improvements to the life they left behind. While unfulfilled financial expectations do not always lead to changes in family values
and patterns, high unemployment and job insecurity in Australia have had a major impact on family relationships. In addition, the loss of the extended family support system, lack of English-language skills, prior family history of domestic conflict and the growing emphasis on individual freedom also contribute. These factors need to be taken into account in any analysis of specific changes, such as shifts in images of women, male power, parental authority, relationships with children, the place of the extended family and the role of the elderly.

**Changing gender roles**

Today, *machismo* and *marianismo* are openly criticized by many people but some (both men and women) still maintain such roles in their private lives. At present there is a general tendency in the Latin American community to perceive Australian culture as allowing women too much power and allowing men to lose power. There are conflicts between the expectations of the ‘new’ society and the ‘old’ society. Some Latin American men believe that women are offered facilities and advantages which may give them ‘too much’ freedom. This conflicts with what is considered to be the natural and unquestionable hierarchical order within the family. These men think that life for women is very easy in the new society and that women are freed from many of their household responsibilities.

Men argue that the many regulations in place to protect women allow women freedom to go out, thus avoiding household work, while they, the men, are working to provide money to meet the family’s needs. This ‘freedom’ is often linked to the existence of electrical appliances at home that make housework ‘easier’. In a critical reading of this situation Moraes-Gorecki (1991) argues that ‘the acquisition of modern household appliances has helped to emphasise rather than reduce [women’s] so-called feminine domestic tasks’ (p. 178). There are also more possibilities in Australia for women to work outside the home and have a different style of life which includes access to child care. Latin American women are dealing with the changes to their lives in different ways; some feel comfortable, others are finding it difficult to adjust.

Men’s roles in families are changing. Men are losing their traditional power, and parental authority within the family is affected. Unemployment and lack of proficiency in English are playing a major part in the shifts. The Latin American community is one of the minority groups most affected by high rates of unemployment in Australia. When a Latin American man is
unemployed he loses his traditional position as the breadwinner in the family. Sometimes this role is taken on by women in the family; otherwise families live on unemployment benefits. In either situation there are high levels of stress for men and an increasing loss of self-esteem and status within the family. Morrissey, Mitchell and Rutherford (1991) note that Latin Americans often suffer dramatic changes in the type of employment they gain on arrival in Australia. Many have been professionals, technicians or managers in their country of origin, but in Australia they are working in unskilled jobs. This affects their experience of settlement and their self-esteem.

Parents’ lack of English skills also alters the typical dynamic in a family. Communication with teachers, landlords and institutions outside the family is considered to be primarily the father’s responsibility. However, children tend to adapt and to learn English more quickly than their parents do because of their daily integration in schooling and general community activities. Often parents come to depend on children for translation. As a result, children mediate between their parents and the world outside the family, changing the relationship between parents and children. The potential for conflict in this situation may be larger when the parents have left their country for reasons other than by choice.

Employment and families

According to a recent statistical report (BIR 1992a), most Latin Americans who arrived between 1982 and 1991, and who were categorised as being in the workforce, were skilled workers (69 per cent of the total in this period). Almost one-quarter (22.7 per cent) were semi-skilled workers and 8.0 per cent were unskilled workers. A little over one-third of total arrivals, (38.6 per cent) were not in the workforce, a percentage which included dependent children and spouses. However, in a high percentage of instances level of skill was not stated.

After emigrating to Australia the overwhelming majority of Latin American married women enter the labour force; sometimes as a result of agreement between a married couple before they arrive, sometimes because of the family’s financial needs in Australia. A study of Spanish-speaking women in the workforce (DIEA 1987) showed that they were heavily concentrated in semi-skilled and service occupations, and particularly in manufacturing. The women’s paid workforce participation was higher in Australia than in the home countries and there had been a drift from clerical, administrative or commercial jobs and from professional and technical work into semi-skilled and service occupations (p. 18).
Previous skills were lost or underutilised. The same study showed that 50 per cent of women interviewed were working to provide money for essential bills and/or to help with home mortgages; other reasons given were ‘saving for a house’, ‘a better future for the children’ and personal satisfaction.

In Latin American families a woman’s wage is generally considered to complement that of her husband. Paid work does not relieve women from domestic duties; on the contrary it is an additional responsibility (Moraes-Gorecki 1991). Women therefore undertake a ‘double shift’—in the home and in paid work. Changes in women’s traditional role have produced conflicting feelings for men, particularly middle class men. For financial reasons men must allow their wives to go out to work, but this is totally contrary to the attitudes they have grown up with. The fact that women’s incomes are generally seen to ‘complement’ men’s is an expression of the hierarchical and *machista* family organisation, where a woman may go to work as long as her husband ‘allows’ her to do so.

*Extended family*

The lack of extended family and friends in a new country cuts families and individuals off from an important source of social contact, gives rise to anxiety and stress and makes it difficult to cope with the process of adaptation. Latin American families usually do not expect to meet all the family’s needs by themselves (Garcia-Preto 1982). It is expected that some will be met by cooperation between the nuclear family and extended family members, for example when godparents or grandparents help parents with the discipline and education of children.

Many families have strong ties with their country of origin, sending money to or supporting the extended family at home in other ways. Moreover, it is not unusual for Latin American families to re-create the extended family in the new land by assisting parents, brothers and sisters to come to Australia. Once in Australia grandparents can be a considerable help, for example by looking after grandchildren while parents go to work. In times of crisis, help from grandmothers, cousins, aunts and other relatives can become a major cohesive element which holds the family together.

However, sometimes there is conflict between parents and grandparents in Australia. Grandparents may feel they have lost authority because they are no longer head of the family. Parents of younger children expect that they will receive help from grandparents (*their* parents) as was the custom in their country of origin,
but older grandparents may be unable to give this because of their age limitations. In Australia such conflict may indeed end up with the grandparents moving out of the family home, a situation which would be extremely unlikely in their country of origin.

**Parents and children**

Latin American families consider that the child's education is the decision of the parents. Most parents regard the discipline of children as a private matter, and they reserve the right to punish their children as they consider appropriate. Sometimes they use physical or psychological methods of correction, giving ownership of children as their reason. A father expressed his feelings to one of the authors this way: 'My children are mine . . . I know what is the best for them, I want them to finish high school and then go to university'. When he was asked about his children's opinions about the future, he replied: 'I came to Australia to give them the opportunities which I did not have . . . they must finish their studies; they are my children so that I can make future decisions for them and nobody can interfere with my decisions'.

There is little research on Latin American adolescents in Australia. But informal evidence and the authors' experience suggest that some of the issues identified in research relating to immigrant young people in general are relevant. For example, some have difficulty dealing with differences between the values of their parents and those of their peers at school. There are conflicts with parents, particularly when parents try to exercise rigid control. In general, Latin American parents in Australia try to maintain family cohesion and preserve the honour of their family by instilling values and correct behaviour in their children, even though sometimes these patterns may have already changed in their country of origin. Some parents have high academic expectations of their children, and children find it difficult to live up to them.

Some parents do not encourage their children to take on part-time or casual work while they are still studying. They would prefer young people to devote themselves full time to study, and they are concerned and sometimes afraid that the money their children earn allows them to go out instead of studying.

Problems such as drinking and violence in the Latin American adolescent community reflect problems in the general Australian adolescent community. The authors' experience is that adolescents identify various sorts of behaviours, such as heavy drinking, as being related to their parents 'not understanding them' or to pressure to achieve from parents or the educational system.

Love is regarded as a prerequisite for marriage and parents do
not take part in the selection of children’s partners. Intermarriage is not strongly opposed by parents or by the Latin American community in general. Nevertheless, parents often express the hope that at least one of their children will marry a Spanish speaker because this would make communication easier and because it would be more likely that Latin American traditions would be continued.

Religion

Some Latin Americans are closely involved in their religion, and religious celebrations and observances are an important part of their lives. Some people find mass in English difficult and would prefer to have it said in Spanish. There are Spanish-speaking priests in suburbs with a significant Spanish-speaking population.

For some Latin Americans religious practices offer a way to cope with and overcome settlement problems. Moreover, religion plays an important role for the faithful in providing social networks and support and the possibility of re-creating lost extended family. Most Latin Americans in Australia were originally Roman Catholics. Some have since joined other Christian groups in Australia, in part because these groups offer much needed material and spiritual support for new arrivals. In some cases strong attachments to the new religious groups may lead to conflicts within families and, in extreme cases, to family separation or to major difficulties in communication between parents and children.

Family adjustment

It is possible to enumerate some common problems of adjustment among Latin American families in Australia, such as learning a new language, understanding new social, economic and political systems, and becoming part of the labour force. The authors’ experience is that Spanish-speaking Latin American families cope with the new environment in Australia in very different ways. Many families remain together; some couples separate; other families have problems but stay intact for financial reasons or to maintain social prestige.

Some families who separate do so as a result of inability to cope with the stresses of immigration and settlement, but quite often it is a case of previous marital problems being exacerbated by immigration. The authors’ experience suggests that it is common for family members to see the immigration process as responsible for family separation, sometimes without their
recognising pre-existing difficulties in the family or the marriage. The pressures of settlement may be 'the last straw'. Experiences such as the following are relatively common. A woman who had been married for 20 years was abandoned by her husband after three years in Australia. She argued that the immigration process was the reason for the family breakup, saying: 'We were a happy family when we were living in our country. We loved each other and our children'. However, some time later she admitted: 'We had some problems because his family did not accept me and he never protected me. One day I found a letter from his lover'. In other situations family members recognise that their family breakup is a consequence of one or both of the partners being unable to cope with the pressure of immigration and settlement. In such cases individual difficulties are emphasised.

Some families remain together in the same household under conditions of chronic conflict and stress. They share bills, general duties and education of the children but have no emotional commitment. Despite this, such relationships may help people to deal with the process of adaptation. As noted above, a couple may also maintain the facade of a functioning family for purely practical reasons, such as financial necessity, or because neither one of the couple has extended family members in Australia who can offer support.

Studies suggest that families who successfully adapt have generally been through various stages. Many studies have shown that cohesive forces, for example respect, emotional support and reciprocal protection among family members, usually increase the possibility of successful coping. Berry (1990) suggests that there are different degrees of behavioural change in the process of successful coping, with specific outcomes and a particular internal dynamic. They are: rejection of the new society's values and an acceptance of the old ones which, he says, leads to separation from the mainstream; rejection of the old values and acceptance of the new, leading to assimilation; adaptation of the new values into the old ones, resulting in integration; and rejection of both the new values and the old, leading to marginalisation in the society.

The experiences of a family which emigrated to Australia in the early 1970s illustrate 'separation from the mainstream'. The family has lived in the same suburb since its arrival and is involved in many Latin American community activities. The parents have a poor command of English and an unhappy relationship with Australian society. Their style of life is quite separate from the mainstream. Their child has a very negative perception of Australian society, and questions why he should have to study things
which are not useful. He is experiencing learning difficulties and is having problems adapting to the Australian education system.

Two issues currently receiving attention in Australia—domestic violence and incest—are considered very private matters in Latin American families. Many women endure domestic violence because they consider it shameful to speak about it outside the family; they usually feel that it is their fault and that therefore they have to accept the ‘punishment’. Some do not know about the support which is available in Australia; others do not have a concept of seeking help or do not see the possibility of doing anything about domestic violence. Others stay in marriages because they hear that women’s refuges do not provide appropriate support for Latin American women.

Older people

Little attention has been paid to the problems of older people in the Latin American community in Australia. The number of elderly Latin Americans grew considerably during the last wave of immigration. Older people in the community have commonly arrived in Australia later in life and under the family reunion program. They, especially the Spanish-speaking, are likely to be at risk because they have recently arrived or because they are refugees. As people grow older they normally face changes in social, family and cognitive status and in routine activities such as work. These can become more acute with immigration (Minas, Klimidis and Stuart 1993). Social networks are lost because friends and relatives are in the country of origin. Because of English-language difficulties older people may be isolated and lack contact with the new society. Minas, Klimidis and Stuart also argue that normal intergenerational conflict between younger and ageing people becomes more evident because of the combination of the elderly cutting their ties with the country of origin together with failed expectations after immigration.

Older persons’ experiences differ according to whether they came to Australia for economic or political reasons, whether or not they are refugees and at what stage of their life they arrived in Australia. Some who have grown old in Australia have developed a social life here. Those who left for political reasons when they were older have experienced aggression in their own countries towards themselves or towards family members, and may have been living in fear and uncertainty for a long period. Despite different experiences, elderly people tend to face similar problems. Generally they are isolated from Australian society; they speak
little or no English, and are usually confined to home, looking after their grandchildren or doing housework. Poor English skills can have a severely isolating effect. A lack or inadequate command of English may result from people having to join the workforce soon after arrival in Australia and hence not having access to classes, from not having time to learn the new language or from difficulties in learning a new language because of problems of motivation or reduced cognitive function.

Often the structure of the older person's family has undergone profound changes—children have grown up or have moved out of home, or the older person may have become widowed. The Victorian Transcultural Psychiatric Service has reported that elderly people of Spanish-speaking background have said that lack of finances and political power have prevented them from creating a 'healthier environment' for themselves. Depressive reactions and anxiety conditions are not uncommon in this group (Minas, Klimidis and Stuart 1993).

Attendance at social and sporting clubs varies. However, club de abuelos (grandparents' clubs) provide a very valuable network for older people. These have their own management committees and work to meet the needs of the elderly. The clubs are one of the most active parts of the community and have clear ideas about old people's needs and rights. Grandparents' clubs have an impact on the individual and the society. When people become more involved in social and cultural life they gain a sense of satisfaction and self-esteem. This is reflected in their participation in a variety of recreational activities and situations where they share or exchange experiences with other people who 'can understand them'.

Refugee families

There is insufficient information available about Latin American refugee families in Australia to allow us to make more than general comments about the realities faced by such families. While the refugee experience profoundly affects all family members, women and children are considered particularly at risk.

In the great majority of refugee families at least one member has endured traumatic experiences, such as torture (physical and emotional), rape or witnessing a family member being raped, and separation from other family members who were killed or who disappeared. Many refugees lived in war zones where they suffered harassment by military forces and could not trust anyone. Thus they had to leave their countries against their wishes, sometimes
alone or accompanied by only a few members of their family. In addition, they were unable to bring material possessions, and were perhaps unable even to say goodbye to family and friends.

Besides these traumatic experiences, refugees have to contend with difficult aspects associated with immigration. For example, some have both left their country and begun to live in an urban area for the first time. Most are also confronted with learning English and understanding new political and social systems (Langer 1990). Studies indicate that refugee women are particularly at risk. Often women whose husbands have been killed or have disappeared become the head of the family, a new woman's role which produces serious conflicts with old values (Ferris 1989; Pittaway 1991). Women have to join the workforce and find alternative care for their children, so traditional child-rearing patterns have to be changed; this has the potential for creating guilt in women. Discipline of children can be a problem because of the lack of the father, who traditionally imposes discipline and instils respect for the family.

Pittaway (1991) argues that many children are traumatised by their experiences during war and civil strife and they do not have adequate help:

> It is . . . known that many of the children of refugee women have experienced severe trauma, such as having watched the death, sexual assault or brutalisation and/or humiliation of one of their close family members. Many have also suffered from the effects of split families, often without communication and for prolonged periods. There is no specialised counselling services for those children. At best there are *ad hoc* services for those lucky enough to be identified as needing help. (p. 28)

As well, most of these children have a poor level of education because they have not had access to the education system. Refugee children in Australia have to join an unfamiliar educational system without an adequate command of the English language. As a result they may have problems in adapting to school. Difficulties in adaptation may result in family conflicts and may increase inter-generational differences. Sometimes parents punish their children in an attempt to control the conflict.

Although the pre-arrival and settlement experiences of refugee and non-refugee Latin American families are often very different, it is not possible to identify clear differences between non-refugee and refugee families as far as changes in values and cultural patterns are concerned. Nevertheless, it is possible to recognise some issues, described below, which occur repeatedly in the experiences of refugees and are widespread among the refugee
community. Such experiences make settlement and adjustment extremely difficult.

As a result of experiences with the government in their country of origin, refugee settlers have often completely lost trust in any government service. For them, going to the Department of Social Security in Australia and being questioned by staff about their personal details may feel like being interrogated by the police or the military in their country of origin. They may also fear that the information given could be used against them.

Alcoholism has been identified as an increasing problem among refugees. Research on the adaptation of Salvadorean refugees in Canada shows that alcoholism is a serious problem, especially among men (Sehl and Naidoo 1985). In Australia, refugees have been identified as at risk because of their previous traumatic experiences (Romios and Ross 1993).

Organisation of the refugee family’s social life serves to protect the family from outside influences which could disrupt the security of individual members. Generalised fear and lack of trust are the principal elements which contribute to the development of an abnormal social life. Refugee families tend to be closer as a result of not having much contact with the rest of the community. For example, young Salvadorean widows are likely to be isolated; they do not look for community support because some community organisations are run by men and the women fear sexual exploitation and gossip among the community. In addition, people fear that others may send information back to El Salvador which could create problems for their families there (Langer 1990, p. 78). Isolation often affects mental health, the ability to obtain and hold down a job and the ability to participate in political life.

There may also be increased potential for conflict between parents and children in refugee families. Such families often leave their country without preparation; on arrival, they find many things strange and threatening. Parents may restrict normal activities in which children generally take part. As a consequence of their inability to understand and relate to the world outside, parents may be very fearful and express this through lack of trust in their children and excessive control over their possessions and over all members of the family.

Conclusion

Latin American families in Australia are dynamic units. Families have been changing in Latin America as well as in Australia, reflecting general shifts in both societies. The historical
background and traditional origins of the Latin American people provide a context in which family changes can be understood. For example, intermarriage is an important characteristic of the Latin American community in Australia, which probably stems from the widespread incidence of ‘mixed’ relationships and the general tolerance of intermarriage throughout Latin American history. In spite of the differences between Latin American families, it is possible to identify common patterns and values evident during the settlement process in Australia.

Latin American family values and traditional family structure are changing in Australia and the changes are linked to aspects of the Australian economic and social systems. Specific changes relate to gender expectations, the role of men and women, intergenerational communication, child rearing and family decision making. There are fundamental differences between the traditional Latin American family perspective and the perspective found in Australian society; family dynamics are altered as a result of the immigration process. The increased daily contact which mothers and children have with the world outside the family is an important contributor to change. For children, schooling and peer group contact are important; for women, their incorporation into the labour force is the key factor. On the other hand, some values, such as family support and cohesion, have been reinforced, helping families to deal successfully with adaptation to the new land and compensating for the lack of an extended family.

Studies show that among the Latin American community in Australia there are several groups with special needs, especially refugees who have been victims of torture and/or violence in their country of origin. Because of the traumatic experiences they have faced they respond to the immigration process in different ways, and their adjustment to the new situation is often much more difficult.

A major aim of this chapter has been to explore ideas about both the shared cultural background and the heterogeneity of Latin Americans of Spanish-speaking background. Preparing the chapter has revealed the dearth of research on this community and reinforced the importance of carrying out detailed studies of Latin American families in Australia. We have attempted to provide relevant information which we hope will permit a more accurate description of such families in the future and possibly highlight the similarities and the differences between them.
This chapter first provides a brief overview of Lebanese immigration and settlement in Australia and a statistical picture of Australia’s current Lebanese population. It then examines the variety of Lebanese families in Australia in terms of origin, status and structures. The final section focuses on Lebanese family values, distinguishing between values associated with social activities and with different stages in the life cycle. Throughout the chapter, distinctions are made between traditional and emergent family values which may be found in both Lebanon and Australia. The former are typically embedded in the long-established customs and codes of behaviour of families in Lebanon and in the first generation of Lebanese families in Australia. Emergent family values are those which are developing in response to the economic, political, social and cultural changes taking place in both Lebanese and Australian societies. The information in this chapter is derived from secondary sources, focus group discussions and the writer’s direct involvement as a member of a family of Lebanese origin.

Lebanese migration to Australia

Lebanese migration to Australia has taken place in three major waves: the first from around 1880 to 1947, the second from 1947 to 1975, and the third from 1975. Each is distinctive in terms of the backgrounds, numbers and characteristics of Lebanese
immigrants, as well as the social and economic conditions of Australia at the time.

*From stranger to settler, 1880–1947*

Until the First World War the area now known as Lebanon was part of the Ottoman or Turkish Empire. Despite calling themselves and being known as Syrians, the first immigrants from the area were classified by the Australian Government as Turks. This created a problem for the small Lebanese communities in Sydney and Melbourne during the First World War when Turkey was an enemy of the British Empire of which Australia was then a proud member. While some young Lebanese men fought for Australia, other members of the Lebanese community were required to report weekly to police stations to be checked as enemy aliens.

After the French mandate over Syria was established in 1920 immigration officials began to recognise the Lebanese as a distinctive group, but it was only when Lebanon achieved semi-autonomous statehood in 1926 that immigrants began arriving with Lebanese passports. Not until 1954 did Australia classify Lebanese and Syrian immigrants in separate categories.

The pioneer immigrants of the first wave came from various parts of Lebanon, with the largest numbers coming from Tripoli and its surrounding villages in north Lebanon, and from Beirut and its surrounding districts. The great majority were Maronite, Melkite and Orthodox Christians. Most were from farming stock who gave their loyalty first to their extended family and second to other members of their village, who typically shared their religion. Unlike many other immigrants from Asia and Europe during this period, the Lebanese quickly brought out their families and made an early commitment to settle.

Almost all early Lebanese immigrants became hawkers soon after their arrival. They would purchase goods from merchants in Sydney and Melbourne and peddle their wares predominantly in the country areas of New South Wales and Victoria. After years of hawking many would open drapery shops in country towns and later in the capital cities.

Small communities of ‘Syrians’ (as they were then known) lived in the Redfern area in Sydney and in the *Khara*, an area bounded by Lonsdale Street, La Trobe Street and the Exhibition Gardens in the inner-city area of Melbourne. They lived in relative isolation from the mainstream Australian community, preserving their religion through the establishment of a small number of churches, and maintaining their culture and cuisine in their homes.

The descendants of first-wave Lebanese settlers now extend to
five and six generations and, in general, there has been a significant decline in traditional Lebanese values and practices during the 100 or so years of their settlement in Australia.

The new Lebanese, 1947–75

In the three decades after the Second World War—the period of the most sustained migrant intake in Australia’s history—Lebanese immigration was at first quite small and then grew rapidly. The years 1947–61 saw a net gain of about 400 Lebanese settlers a year and 1961–66 about 800 a year. Following the 1967 Arab–Israeli war and continuing conflict in Lebanon, this figure increased to 3000 per year during 1966–71, declining a little during 1971–76. By 1976 the number of Lebanese-born people in Australia was 33,424 (Batrouney 1992, pp. 427–8).

These newly arrived Lebanese were mainly Christians and nearly all had received some formal education in Lebanon. They emigrated to improve their standard of living. The few churches and other community organisations already in existence were strengthened by the new arrivals, and other Christian churches in addition to Sunni Islamic mosques were established in both Sydney and Melbourne.

During this period most Lebanese, both men and women, found their first jobs in the manufacturing industries which had sprung up in the post-war years. Many then entered small businesses such as milkbars, coffee lounges and taxi-driving. Previous developments, such as Lebanon gaining semi-autonomous statehood in 1926 and the achievement of Lebanese independence in 1943, meant that those emigrating in the post-war years clearly identified themselves as Lebanese. Second-wave Lebanese-Australian families now include at least three generations and their settlement in Australia covers a period of about 40 years.

A people divided, 1975–

The third period of immigration was ushered in by the outbreak of civil war in Lebanon in late 1975. Between 1976 and 1981 more than 16,000 Lebanese arrived, contributing to a Lebanese-born population of 51,371 in 1981 which, by 1986, had grown to 56,337 (Batrouney and Batrouney 1985, p. 85). The third wave included more Muslims than Catholics (Maronite and Melkite) and Orthodox believers. The effect was to challenge the Christian (mainly Maronite) dominance of the Lebanese-Australian community and, at the same time, to identify Lebanese Muslims as a
significant Muslim group in Australia, second only to the Turkish Muslims (Batrouney 1992).

The economic conditions in Australia which greeted the immigrants were more difficult than those experienced by earlier Lebanese settlers. The new arrivals suffered very high rates of unemployment. Third-wave Lebanese-Australian families typically include only two generations and their settlement in Australia covers less than 20 years.

The Lebanese population in Australia

At the 1991 census the number of Lebanese-born in Australia had reached 68,787, an increase of 19,400 or 39 per cent over the decade 1981–91; 52.5 per cent were males and 47.5 per cent were females. The author estimates that the total number of Lebanese-born and people of Lebanese descent is almost 200,000 or 1.2 per cent of the Australian population. Around 75 per cent of the Lebanese-born live in New South Wales and 20 per cent in Victoria, with much smaller numbers in the other States. The great majority of Lebanese-Australians live in the capital cities.

In the early years of the civil war, immigration from Lebanon constituted as much as 4.3 per cent of Australia’s total immigration. However, in recent years settler arrivals from Lebanon slowed, decreasing to 1.4 per cent of all arrivals in 1992–93. At the same time, largely due to the cessation of hostilities in Lebanon and the continuing high unemployment levels in Australia, departures of Lebanese settlers from Australia reached 0.3 per cent of all departures in 1990–91, 0.7 per cent in 1991–92 and 0.5 per cent in 1992–93 (BIPR 1993c, p. 22 and p. 27).

The religious affiliations of the Lebanese-born in Australia are: Catholic (40 per cent), Muslim (37 per cent) and Orthodox (13 per cent) (BIPR 1994c). Over three-quarters of the Catholics belong to the Maronite eastern-rite sect, which is found only in Lebanon and the diaspora, while a smaller proportion belong to the Melkite sect, which shares similar forms of worship and religious practices with the Orthodox church but has given allegiance to the Roman Catholic Pope since the eighteenth century. The great majority of the Orthodox are members of the Antiochian Orthodox Church, which is identical in faith to the other Orthodox churches such as the Greek, Russian, Serbian and Romanian. The Antiochian Orthodox are to be found mainly in Lebanon, Syria and the diaspora. There are also much smaller groups of Christians such as the Oriental Orthodox (around 2 per cent) whose faith and worship is similar to the Antiochian
Orthodox but who come under different jurisdictions. Small numbers of Protestants are also to be found in Lebanon and the diaspora.

The majority of Muslims in Australia adhere to the Sunni sect (around 33 per cent of the total Lebanese-born) while much smaller numbers are adherents of the Alawite sect (around 2 per cent) and the Shiite sect (around 1 per cent). The Druse account for 1.2 per cent of the Lebanese-born in Australia. The Sunnis believe that after the death of Muhammad the leadership of the Islamic community passed to a succession of caliphs, elected by the community from the Quraish, the tribe of the Prophet. Both the Shiites and Alawites believe that on the death of Muhammad the spiritual leadership of Islam passed to a line of imams descended from the Prophet through his son-in-law and cousin, Ali. The distinction between these two sects lies in the special reverence which the Alawites accord Ali.

In terms of households, of over 30 000 Lebanese-born people in Australia in 1991 the great majority (94.3 per cent) lived in the following family groupings: couples without children (12.2 per cent), two-parent families with children (73.6 per cent) and one-parent families (8.5 per cent). Only 4.7 per cent lived in a single-person household (1991 census, table provided by ABS). The relatively large number of one-parent families is a legacy of the deaths and social dislocation caused by the civil war.

A major characteristic of the Lebanese-born in Australia over the last decade has been the high unemployment rate, which reached 33.7 per cent in 1991 (33.8 per cent for males, 31.3 per cent for married females and 38.9 per cent for other females) (BIPR 1994c). Among the factors which could account for these unemployment figures are: lack of English language proficiency; relatively recent arrival in Australia; disruption to education and work experience caused by the civil war and consequent lack of educational qualifications and references; the decline in the number of jobs in manufacturing industries, which had traditionally provided the first jobs for both first- and second-wave Lebanese immigrants; and discrimination in recruitment by Australian employers.

Lebanese-Australian families

Lebanese-Australian families are very diverse. As noted earlier, some are the descendants of the first wave of Lebanese immigration and extend now to the fifth and sixth generations. There is a significant decline in traditional values and practices among this
group, with perhaps a certain degree of family cohesion, and Lebanese cuisine, being the only surviving remnants of Lebanese traditions. Families established by second-wave immigrants are now into their third and, in some cases, fourth generations. Given the larger numbers in this group and the more established Lebanese communities to which they belong, there is some retention of Lebanese values in these families. The third major wave of immigrants from Lebanon, including humanitarian entrants, typically consists of no more than two generations. Traditional Lebanese values are more strongly maintained by members of this group for a variety of reasons, such as their forced departure from Lebanon, relatively short time in Australia, and return visits to Lebanon. This maintenance of Lebanese values has also been aided by improved transport and communication systems such as air travel, long-distance telephone calls, newspapers, videotapes and films, all of which have reduced for this group the social and cultural isolation from their homeland experienced by first- and second-wave settlers.

As illustrated above, Lebanese-Australian families differ in their religious affiliations. While religious affiliation has obvious relevance for religious faith and practices, perhaps its major importance in Australia is that it provides a means of identifying the sector of the Lebanese community to which a family belongs or used to belong. Religious affiliation, family membership and village or town of origin constitute the major means of social identification among Lebanese-Australians. Among the descendants of both the first and second waves of immigration, religious participation is declining and affiliation to the faith their families brought with them from Lebanon is becoming attenuated. For example, many Lebanese Catholics of second and later generations are deserting their eastern rites and attending Roman Catholic churches, while some former Antiochian Orthodox are to be found attending Anglican, Catholic and other churches.

Apart from religion Lebanese-Australian families also vary in terms of their rural or urban origin. While this is no longer an issue for those families which have been in Australia for a number of generations, it is an important differentiating factor among more recently arrived families. Urban families are likely to be less traditional and more inclined to accept emergent values than are families from a rural background.

Some families remain attached to the Lebanese community through their attendance at Lebanese churches and mosques, and by sending their children to Saturday Arabic-language schools or to Lebanese day schools and child care centres. Others, often living
in outer suburban areas, mix less with other Lebanese-Australians and integrate more quickly with the wider Australian community.

The occupations, educational levels and socio-economic status of family members are also important variants among families. Over time these constitute the most powerful determinants of the values held by Lebanese-Australian families.

Lebanese family structures

Given the variations outlined above, it is to be expected that Lebanese-Australian family structures will vary. Extended families consist of parents and children, grandparents and possibly one or more unmarried uncles or aunts. Over time the typical family pattern becomes that of a nuclear family, with parents and children living in the one household. A common variant is a modified extended family in which married children live near their parents to enable frequent interaction of extended family members for visiting and babysitting purposes, and so that grandchildren can stay with grandparents. This family structure provides for a degree of independence for the different generations, as well as much mutual assistance, support and conviviality.

Another important structural factor is the extent to which family members are separated from loved ones in Lebanon. The separation of families leads to a greater number of return visits to Lebanon, with consequent strengthening of ties and retention of Lebanese values. Sometimes families are spread over two or three continents. In these instances it is common to arrange a reunion of all family members in Lebanon, again strengthening ties and sustaining values. However, the retention of traditional values is no simple matter in either Lebanon or Australia, as both societies are subject to a pervasive western popular culture which appears to be challenging traditional values as much in Lebanon as in Australia.

Lebanese-Australian families can also vary in terms of whether they are patriarchal, whereby men hold well-established formal positions of authority, or modified patriarchal, whereby patriarchal norms have been modified by egalitarian norms in the upper strata of society so that authority is associated with education and income. These two would be the more common Lebanese family types in Australia. Some second and later generation Lebanese families approximate the Australian norm of transitional egalitarian families where men achieve power and esteem through educational, occupational and income channels and not simply by tradition. Some later generation Lebanese-Australian families may have reached a situation of egalitarianism marked by a high level
of power-sharing between husband and wife (Brown 1994). These variations both express and determine different family values.

The size and cohesiveness of families impact on the extent of family members' interactions within or outside the family. In general, larger and more cohesive families provide greater opportunities for interaction with other family members than do smaller, less cohesive families. This, in turn, has a direct effect on the importance of the family as a socialisation agent of Lebanese values.

In all families Lebanese women have played a key role. As wives, mothers and grandmothers, women have helped to maintain unity within their own families and to form links between families in the community. The contribution of women has been expressed through traditional activities such as care for their children and grandchildren, the preparation of food and nurture of the sick.

At the same time, many Lebanese women have been active participants in the workforce in a variety of jobs, depending on their educational level, socio-economic status and occupational opportunities. Over the three immigration waves Lebanese women have been partners in family businesses, process workers in factories, and semi-professional and professional workers. While their role as working women may have increased their influence within family decision making, they have in general continued to assume the major responsibility for domestic chores (Batrouney and Batrouney 1985, p. 43).

Despite the great variety of Lebanese-Australian families, researchers and the Lebanese themselves agree that the family is the single most important institution to which they belong. McKay (1989), in his study of three generations of Lebanese Christians in Australia, found that the family was the most enduring of the institutions the Lebanese brought with them, and that family factors were the main reason why the second and third generation felt Lebanese even if they could not speak Arabic and had never been to a Lebanese church. For this group of Lebanese, ethnic identity was highly privatised in the family and did not extend to other institutions such as work, religion and politics.

This pervasive familism extends across the three immigration waves and all Lebanese social and religious groups. For example, Humphrey (1984b) found that concern with family values and reliance on family members were strong among both Christian and Muslim respondents. The importance of the family was seen in the sponsorship of relatives, arranged marriages, assistance of all forms given to new arrivals, child care arrangements and household composition. It is in this context that certain family values are now examined.
Family values

The range of values held by Lebanese-Australian families can best be understood by seeking to locate them along a continuum ranging from traditional to emergent. Accordingly, traditional family values and the ways in which they are being retained and/or changed in Australia will be discussed.

Work

A traditional Lebanese proverb advises: 'Work until you are exhausted rather than be humiliated'. This suggests that work is to be valued not only as a means of earning a living but also as a means of establishing one's honour and standing in a community; failure to work is shameful. In rural Lebanon the family constituted an economic unit with all members involved in a range of agricultural and/or domestic activities. Women did the domestic work and helped with the growing and processing of food crops. It is acceptable for Lebanese women in the cities, especially if they are educated, to work for a living.

The lives of many first- and second-wave Lebanese immigrants exemplified values such as diligence, thrift and abstemiousness. Many first-wave immigrants and their descendants undertook a sequential range of occupations from hawking to shopkeeping to work in manufacturing industries and finally to professional and managerial occupations (Batrouney 1979, pp. 309-20). Second-wave immigrants moved from working in manufacturing industries to ownership of small businesses to working in larger businesses in the service sector. The occupational pathway of second-wave immigrants has been shorter than that of first-wave settlers, with some members of the second and third generations gaining access to professional and managerial positions. Significant unemployment experienced by third-wave immigrants is denying them access to upward occupational mobility and even, in some cases, to the dignity of work itself. Unemployment also places considerable stress on family relationships. Men's lack of access to productive work threatens their traditional role in the family, particularly if women become the sole breadwinner. Community workers report that the stresses of unemployment for Lebanese males have contributed to the incidence of marriage breakdown, domestic violence and child abuse in some Lebanese families. In addition, high rates of unemployment have meant that third-wave families and religious institutions such as churches and mosques have not been able to carry out their traditional role of finding jobs for their members.
In each wave of immigration women have worked alongside their husbands and children. For some first-wave women this involved accompanying their hawker husbands, or sewing clothes or softgoods for them to sell. Second- and third-wave Lebanese women have worked in factories and later in family milkbars, restaurants and other service industries.

This analysis illustrates the value accorded entrepreneurial activity, typically undertaken by the family as a unit, or by two or more members of a family. Entrepreneurial activity has been made possible by a combination of family cohesion and patriarchal control. The former provides the strength and cooperation of the group and the latter an unchallenged unity of purpose and direction. In pursuit of the goal of owning their own businesses, Lebanese-Australians have travelled extensively, separated themselves from their families, taken great financial risks and abandoned educational aspirations. However, the value of entrepreneurship found stronger expression in the lives of the first and second generations, rather than subsequent generations, of Lebanese settlers. Thus there is a discernible movement from traditional to emergent values in relation to work as a result of immigration. For example, second- and third-generation Lebanese are moving away from entrepreneurial activities in small service businesses to employment in larger companies in the tertiary sector. This has the effect over time of reducing the cohesiveness and shared values of Lebanese-Australian families.

Education

'Step by step the ladder is ascended.' If entrepreneurial business activity is one means of upward social mobility, another is educational achievement. Lebanese families typically have an instrumental view of education, strongly encouraging their children to achieve educational success so they may become well-paid and prestigious professionals. This aspiration is accompanied by a traditional view of education based on transmission of facts, respect for teachers as learned persons, and a strict morality. Lebanese parents tend to be sceptical of the value of social education, discovery learning and some leisure activities. Some parents feel that education and teachers are too intrusive in areas which are properly the domain of the family. Examples cited in focus-group discussions included the conduct of sex education classes at school; teachers enquiring of children whether they were being physically abused at home; teachers reporting cases of suspected physical violence to the police; and teachers offering
advice to students on Austudy to seek an allowance that would enable them to live away from home.

Many Lebanese, both in Lebanon and in Australia, retain a traditional view of education. However, there is evidence among Lebanese-Australians of emergent values that are more congruent with economic and social conditions in Australia. One example is to be found in a study of Lebanese post-primary students in Victoria in which parents expressed aspirations for their children which were realistic in terms of the families' socio-economic and cultural backgrounds (Batrouney 1991). A second example is the view, which emerged in group discussions, that girls should be given the same educational opportunities as boys ('We want the girls to learn like the boys . . . they can use their education like a weapon'). This is contrasted with the situation in Lebanon where education is costly and where, if choices have to be made, preference is given to all or some of the boys in a family. This belief in the ameliorative value of education is illustrated in a study which found that most Lebanese women respondents believed their lives would be improved if they had access to adult education. The major reasons given were a desire for greater independence and better quality of life; a wish to improve friendships and social life; an opportunity to learn new skills; and a chance to get a job (Faour and Elalfy 1986).

There is also evidence that, by the third generation, Australians of Lebanese ancestry, both men and women, aged 18-34 years, are achieving tertiary qualifications at a rate higher than almost all other ancestry groups (Jones 1991, tables C. 6 and C. 7). This suggests that the educational achievement values of Lebanese families, which enable them to succeed in the Australian education system, have not found full realisation until the third generation.

Religion

As has been indicated, religion represents a major form of social identity for Lebanese people, both in Lebanon and Australia. Lebanon consists of a mosaic of religious faiths: Muslim, Christian and Druse, each divided into a number of sects and each forming its own community. This is reflected in Lebanese constitutional arrangements which recognise 17 different religious communities and allocate positions in the government in accordance with their size and significance. The dominant role of religion in Lebanon derives from the Ottoman control of the region in which the country was divided into millets or communities of religious believers. Each millet was a self-governing entity with its own laws which overrode local laws, giving both spiritual and temporal
powers to the traditional religious leaders. This form of control continued under the French mandate (from 1920 to 1943) and hindered the development of Lebanon as a unified nation.

The first community organisations which Lebanese immigrants established in Australia were churches and mosques, and religious leaders were the most important community leaders, providing a focal point for religious, social and cultural activities. As the community became more established other organisations, such as village organisations, welfare bodies and formal Lebanese associations, began to appear and the dominant role of religious organisations and their leaders declined over time.

One study found that 78 per cent of Lebanese respondents, compared with 48 per cent of Maltese and 42 per cent of Vietnamese respondents (McAllister 1991, p. 40), thought religion was very important. The importance of religion as a form of exclusive social identity was illustrated in the focus-group discussions where all the women said they preferred their children to marry a person of their faith, even if they were not Lebanese.

The picture of continuity and change in religious values was evident in a study of Lebanese Catholic women's experiences of First Communion in Maronite or Melkite Catholic churches in Lebanon and in Roman Catholic churches in Australia (Onley 1990). In this study it was found that the atmosphere and impact of First Communion in the more cohesive, mono-religious communities of Lebanon had a more lasting effect on participants than did the same ceremony in Australia. The women, who had a strong tradition of family devotional customs in Lebanon, maintained these in Australia, including regular attendance at Sunday worship. Thus there was continuity in their faith values even though the women were clearly aware of the different socio-religious environment in Australia. Migration to a multi-faith or secular society such as Australia meant that the women relied even more on the extended family for rearing their children religiously. Thus religious belief and practice became more a private and family matter than one which involved the community at large.

Family values associated with religion are concerned with maintaining one's affiliation to the religion of the family, engaging in worship and other forms of religious practices and, in the case of Muslims, observing codes of behaviour and dress required by their faith. Religion is also an important source of values associated with social activities and stages in the life cycle, as discussed below.
Humphrey (1984a) identified a conflict between values expressed by the Lebanese Muslim immigrant family and community on the one hand and Australian courts on the other. In the resolution of disputes the dominant Lebanese value is that of honour, which refers to sum'a (individual honour) or sharaf (family honour); these are interdependent concepts in that a matter of individual honour can quickly become a matter of family honour. The concept of honour helps to maintain social order in the face of the alien and threatening social and economic structures of Australian society. The four main areas in which disputes may be expressed in terms of honour are conflict over women, economic transactions, community politics and official intervention in family or community affairs (Humphrey 1984a, pp. 54–6), all of which are subject to Australian laws and government action. Disputes related to conflicts over women and official intervention in family affairs reflect, in particular, Lebanese family values.

Because family honour is located in, among other areas, the behaviour of women, women are seen to be vulnerable targets in need of protection by the males in the family. Perceived failure to protect women, or loss of control over women in the family, reflects on the reputation of the head of the household in the community (Humphrey 1984a, p. 56). This is illustrated by a case which involved a daughter of a Lebanese family who eloped with a young man from another Lebanese family. The couple were discovered, meetings were held between the two families, the priest and other mediators, and the marriage did not take place. This episode appeared to be a major factor in the decline of the young woman's family's involvement in church and community activities and its return to Lebanon.

In Lebanon this episode would have been regarded as a typical elopement, the marriage would have taken place and the father of the young woman would have been reconciled to the marriage and given his retrospective blessing. In Australia, however, the episode revealed a clash of values between the traditional views of the parents of the young man, who wanted the marriage to go ahead, and those of the young woman’s family, who opposed the marriage on a number of grounds, including the fact that their daughter was under age and because their educational and social aspirations for her would not have been achieved had the marriage gone ahead.

The other important area in which male authority and honour are threatened is that of official intervention in family relations. The intrusion of government officials or police into the domestic
arena is seen as undermining the social position and honour of the male head of the household (Humphrey 1984a, p. 58). The following example, concerning the eldest son of a Lebanese family caught shoplifting by the police, reveals something of the clash of values in this area. When the police brought the boy home the father paid the $50 fine and then physically disciplined his son by beating him. The son's teacher, who became aware that the boy had been beaten, reported the incident to the police who again approached the father. The father told the police that he hit his son to stop him stealing. After the boy had been caught shoplifting a second time and the police took the boy home, the father's response was: 'I will pay the fine and another fine for hitting my child but if you want to control my son you can take him. I will go back to Lebanon'. This case clearly illustrates the father's patriarchal values in relation to the control and disciplining of his son vis-à-vis the involvement of state authorities, as represented by the police and the teacher acting to protect the child. It thus depicts the clash of traditional Lebanese family values with the interventionist values of the modern democratic state.

Other social values

The Lebanese espouse a cluster of traditional values associated with family hospitality and entertainment. The extent to which a family can entertain and the status of those it entertains are measures of the family's reputation and standing in the community. Hospitality is accompanied by the important custom of visiting other family members and friends in the community. Visits are typically unannounced and require the host family to offer hospitality in the form of drinks, sweets, coffee and fruit which, after repeated offerings, the guests are expected to accept. Extending and receiving hospitality is reciprocal and provides for interaction and cohesion in the Lebanese community.

A related value is family conviviality in which family gatherings and celebrations, including those celebrating births, baptisms (in Christian families), engagements and marriages, provide the most important and enjoyable social activities. These family social gatherings not only span the generations but also include two value systems: a traditional one from the old country, espoused by the older members of the family, and an emergent one derived from younger family members. Thus the one function may have traditional Lebanese food and dancing as well as modern dancing and entertainment.

This traditional picture of family visiting, entertainment and conviviality has undergone substantial change under the impact of
Australian social and economic conditions, as illustrated in a case study of a first-wave Lebanese family. For its first 30 years in Australia the family fitted the picture of traditional family solidarity and cohesion identified above, as family members worked, played and prayed together. However, with the third and later generations the family became geographically, occupationally and socially diverse, changing over time from an extended family to a modified extended family, until now it consists of a cluster of nuclear families. The family’s social values have also changed so that, now, they are largely indistinguishable from Australian social values (Batrouney, Mansour and Batrouney 1989).

Family values associated with the life cycle

While it is acknowledged that religious beliefs are at the centre of life for traditional Lebanese families both Muslim and Christian, the two religious communities do not have significantly different attitudes to the basic human situations of marriage, childbirth, child rearing, sickness, death and bereavement. Apart from the strictly religious rituals and regulations, such family occasions and practices bear witness to values which are common to Christian and Muslim alike (Shboul 1985, p. 20).

Family size

In 1986 Lebanese-born women had the highest birth rate of any ethnic group in Australia, 4.3 children per family (Hugo 1993, p. 3). This is one indication of the importance of children in the Lebanese family and culture. The Lebanese have a saying: ‘Every child comes with its own fortune’. In a study of antenatal care for Muslim Lebanese women, children were seen by the respondents as a fundamental good, important in Lebanese tradition and part of the definition of a happy and meaningful life and marriage. Women said that, although men often hoped to have sons to ensure the continuation of the family name, girls also had an important place in the family, especially for mothers (Hickey, Trompf and Reid 1991). The traditional preference for boys continues in more muted and ambivalent form in Australia, as revealed in one woman’s comments: ‘Our people love boys. To me, they’re all the same, but men, they love boys. I think he doesn’t mind girls really’ (p. 10).

In one study it is claimed that having large families might become an important element in Lebanese Muslim identity in Australia, in that it could reinforce values surrounding women
remaining in the home and the traditional sexual division of labour, and could help promote a sense of family identity and belonging (Humphrey 1984b, p. 46). A large family can certainly provide a sense of security and identity for newly arrived Lebanese immigrants in Australia. On the other hand, it is likely that a set of countervailing factors in Australia will make for smaller families over time. Such factors include: a strong desire to achieve the security of purchasing and paying off a home; a growing individualism as parents’ choices begin to be less constrained by the expectations of the extended family and community; and greater awareness of modern forms of contraception. These factors may account for the fact that Lebanese Christian families, resident in Australia for a longer period, are generally smaller than Lebanese Muslim families.

**Childbirth**

The information available shows that there is a great variety of Lebanese family values associated with pregnancy and childbirth, ranging from traditional values typically associated with rural life in Lebanon to a cluster of emergent values which approximate the views of Australian women as a whole. Service providers present an account of traditional Lebanese women resisting the use of antenatal services until late in pregnancy, possessing a degree of ignorance about health risks and ideal health behaviours during pregnancy, deferring to the authority of the husband in decision making about most family matters including when and whether to seek care (Hassan, Healy and McKenna 1985); together with the husband’s lack of involvement in the pregnancy by not assisting with housework or attending the birth. Earlier studies reported by Hickey, Trompf and Reid (1991) also identified Muslim Lebanese women’s aversion to pelvic examinations and their firm preference for female doctors, as well as their reservations about the cross-cultural sensitivity of health care providers and the public clinic environment.

Among other traditional Muslim Lebanese practices is the need for a woman to rest in bed for a week after giving birth and to remain at home for 40 days, during which time she receives the assistance of family members and accepts their congratulations and gifts. During this time, too, the woman is exempt from all religious duties. The traditional preference is to have boys rather than girls and the first son is special because it is through him that the family name will be passed on. The parents of a first son are referred to as the mother of (son’s name) or the father of (son’s name) and the first son is normally given his paternal
grandfather's name. In accordance with their religion Muslim boys are normally circumcised during their first year.

While there is little doubt that traditional practices such as these are still to be found among some Muslim Lebanese families, there is also evidence of emergent practices among the women. Hickey, Trompf and Reid (1991) found that Muslim Lebanese women were no less concerned about and aware of beneficial health practices in pregnancy than many other Australian women. However, those without extended family in Australia missed the support and guidance of extended family members. Comments about their husbands' contributions to the household were very varied and did not support the stereotype of strictly differentiated roles in the home. Almost all of the women had chosen to see their local doctor early in their pregnancy, delaying their contact with the hospital until later. Most reported that they did not mind seeing a male doctor for obstetric care, pointing out that almost all doctors in Lebanon were males. The exception was younger women pregnant for the first time who preferred to see a female doctor (Hickey, Trompf and Reid 1991, pp. 19-22). In short, the major finding of the study was the great range of responses regarding particular customs and values.

Childhood and adolescence

A host of traditional values underpin the upbringing of children in Lebanese families. Given the patriarchal nature of the traditional family, there is a clear sex-role differentiation in child rearing. For example, boys are dressed in masculine clothes and are allowed to behave aggressively and play roughly. They are not expected to help in the house but there is great pressure on them to do well at school. Girls are dressed in feminine clothes, are not permitted to be rough or to show their bodies, and are expected to help with the household chores and the care of their younger siblings. They are more strictly supervised than boys and are expected to be virgins when they marry (Semaan and Stambouliah 1981, p. 143).

The focus-group discussions generally supported a degree of sex-role differentiation. For example, in response to a question about why boys are allowed to go out unattended and girls are not, the following responses were made: 'The girl goes out with her mother . . . not alone'; 'I am afraid for her virginity; the son doesn't bring shame but the girl brings shame'; 'I'm scared for the girls here . . . maybe the girls are not straight here . . . my daughter here is an angel but I don't know what she does'. The
fears expressed relate to loss of virginity, shame on the family and reduced prospects of marriage.

A number of responses also indicated concern for sons, with fears being expressed that the son would become attached to an Australian girl or get involved in drug use. The responses suggested that family conflicts over the degree of freedom for young people were more likely to occur in relation to sons than to daughters. One woman recounted the story of her son, who left home after being locked out of the house by his father for repeatedly staying out late. She related what happened after she discovered where her son was staying: ‘I cried and kissed his feet to come back home . . . he came with me and we sent him to Lebanon where he became engaged and, after one year and seven months, he returned home . . . I won my child’.

This case reveals the conflict for some Lebanese adolescents between traditional family values and Australian peer group values. It also illustrates the common parental solution of sending children to Lebanon to strengthen their ties with relatives, to reinforce Lebanese family values and, in the process, to find a marriage partner approved by the parents.

The family is the major socialisation agent of core values of honour and shame. These practices have both a private and a public face as indicated by the common parental injunction to children: ‘What will people say about us if they see you doing that?’. Thus the behaviour of individuals has a direct bearing on the community’s perceptions of the honour (or shame) which attaches to the family. Some of the honourable practices which keep the family in good standing are: being respectful to elders; obedience to parents at all stages of life; generosity to those in need; being hospitable to guests and strangers; remaining close to family through visits, letters and telephone calls; supporting the family through work and participation in family celebrations; striving for a good education; upholding the traditions of the family; being involved in community affairs; and performing religious and social duties within the community.

Some of the things that bring shame are: disrespect to the family; single children moving away from home; daughters going out at night unchaperoned, with the attendant risks of loss of virginity and pregnancy; being involved in crime; not showing respect or extending hospitality; marrying outside one’s religion or without parental consent; men and women living together outside marriage; and not performing one’s duties towards parents, especially when they are old (Fakhri 1987, p. 4).

It must be remembered that the above represent family values of the ideal typical traditional Lebanese family and that in both
Lebanon and Australia the impact of modernisation and western culture, especially popular culture, are eroding these values. Traditional values are more likely to be found in the first generation of each of the immigration waves and to erode with each succeeding generation and immigrant wave. For example, third-wave immigrants, who have been subjected to the political and social turmoil of the Lebanese civil war and in many cases to unemployment in Australia, appear to adhere to these values less than did the earlier immigrants. For some of the third-wave group the values associated with work are not able to be realised, leading to a heavy dependence on social security benefits with a consequent loss of independence, incentive and ambition.

A comparison of a sample of Lebanese-born mothers with Australian-born mothers reveals some interesting differences in their expectations of children’s educational development. The findings suggest that the Lebanese mothers showed a strong achievement orientation, valuing straight success with little subtlety and/or differentiation on their part—with a few face-saving notions about children trying or doing their best. Australian-born parents revealed a greater knowledge of the school system and a correspondingly more differentiated definition of success, stipulating, for example, the desirability of success in certain key subjects (Goodnow and Cashmore 1985, p. 235).

This study also found that the Lebanese-born mothers had a more relaxed timetable than the Australian-born mothers did in relation to their children acquiring adult skills and values, in particular verbal assertiveness and social skills with peers. The attitude to verbal assertiveness is probably related to the fact that Lebanese children are expected to adopt a more deferential attitude to parents and other adults than are Australian children. The attitude to social skills reflects the different orientation towards families and peer groups of Lebanese and Australian families, with the Lebanese traditionally seeking deeper and closer links within the family and Australians seeing the family as providing a launching pad into the wider society (Goodnow and Cashmore 1985, p. 237).

Furthermore, Australian-born mothers were more inclined to favour invisible pedagogy, believing in the educative value of play and the role of informal learning inside and outside the classroom. Lebanese mothers were more oriented towards visible pedagogy and formal teaching (p. 238). This may relate to the latter’s own experiences of classroom teaching, and to their inability to assist their children in Australia, thereby having to rely on the more formal setting of the school.
Marriage

The traditional Lebanese injunction to 'marry your own kind' carries with it a number of key values associated with marriage. The first is the importance of marrying a Lebanese person from one's own religious community and preferably from one's own village or town. A male Lebanese immigrant commonly returns to his village, marries and then brings his wife to Australia. The value of endogamy (marrying within one's community) was strongly endorsed by participants in the focus-group discussions. Comments included: 'You can only trust someone from your own religion, village and country'; 'The Lebanese woman bears more ... she will be more patient'. These comments were accompanied by stories of Lebanese men being left by their Australian wives, who take custody of the children and keep the property—stories which serve to strengthen the value of endogamy among the Lebanese community.

Traditionally, there is a preference for relatively early marriages—14 years and over for women and 17 years and over for men. If a woman is not married by around 25 years her chances of finding a suitable marriage partner are much reduced. In fact, marriages in which the males are considerably older than the females are common, especially where the men have emigrated and where they wait until their return to Lebanon before marrying. The typical pattern is for sons and daughters to continue to live in the parental home until they marry.

Given the importance of marriage, parents traditionally have a major role in the selection of a marriage partner, varying from the parents actually selecting the partner and arranging the marriage to the increasingly common situation where young people meet and decide to marry but require first the parents' consent (Semaan and Stambouliah 1981, p. 141). While parental consent is normal, written consent is required in the case of minors (under 18 years for males and under 16 years for females). Consent is an absolute requirement for daughters for whom the issue of parental permission is based not so much on the daughter's juvenile status but on the family's honour (Humphrey 1981, p. 11). For a Muslim couple the drawing up of the marriage contract is the official marriage, but the marriage is not consummated until the marriage celebration takes place, sometimes days later.

There is no legal or customary prohibition against Lebanese Muslims marrying blood relatives such as cousins, including first cousins. For example, of 32 Lebanese Muslim women who attended an antenatal clinic twelve reported that they were related
to their husbands, with marriages being to first, second, third or distant cousins or other relatives (Hickey, Trompf and Reid 1991, pp. 3–4). Consanguinity in marriage relationships may occur for many reasons, including meeting familial obligations, gaining compatible marriage partners and strengthening bonds within the extended family. Marriage between blood relatives also occurs among Christians but it normally requires religious absolution and permission.

Under Shari’a law (Muslim religious law) the groom pays a marriage price or maher to the bride or the bride’s father to assist with the establishment of the home. The smaller part of the maher, known as the moukaddam, is paid at the khoutubah or engagement and the larger part is paid as mouakhar or delayed dowry if the husband divorces his wife. This delayed dowry, the larger sum, provides a degree of financial security for the wife against the husband’s traditional right of repudiation. Although the dowry is announced in the marriage ceremony by the officiating imam, it is not enforceable in Australian law. This is overcome by the groom writing a note of indebtedness to the bride, which is held in trust by a solicitor. In this way both Australian family law and Shari’a law can enforce the payment of a dowry in Australia and in Lebanon (Humphrey 1981, p. 13). A Christian marriage does not normally entail a dowry but rather an agreed social custom whereby the husband provides a house with furniture while the wife provides all the furnishings for the main bedroom including her trousseau. The furnishings and trousseau are known as al-bayad, meaning white-coloured, which symbolises the purity of the bride (Semaan and Stambouliah 1981, p. 141).

As marriage involves the establishment of new relationships between families, when a marriage begins to break down attempts at mediation are made by influential members of the family or the community to preserve the marriage and the family relationships. For Muslim Lebanese in Australia divorce or dissolution of marriages provides a clear clash of values. In Lebanon, under Shari’a law, the male has a unilateral right of divorce and the right of custody of male children older than seven years and female children older than nine years. If a wife were to leave home with her children, or if a husband believed his wife had committed adultery, he could exercise his traditional paternal rights by immediate repudiation, which involves the thrice-repeated ‘I divorce you’. However, Shari’a law imposes a number of costs and conditions upon the husband before the immediate repudiation becomes the final act of divorce. The husband believes that in following Shari’a law he is exercising his natural religious rights. However, in Australia the application of the Family Law Act
deprives the Muslim male of his privileged rights under Shari'a law. While application to the imam for a Shari'a divorce can be made, such a divorce cannot settle matters of property, maintenance or custody (Humphrey 1981, p. 14). In these matters Australian family law, with its emphasis on the welfare and protection of the child and on the rights of both husband and wife, conflicts with the values underpinning Shari'a law.

In two other areas there is a distinction between what may be permissible under Shari'a law and what occurs in practice in both Lebanon and Australia. Under Shari'a law the wife can gain a judicial divorce from her husband under certain conditions but, in doing so, she forfeits her *moukhar* or late dowry, thus making it very difficult for her to actually take such action. Given the availability of pensions and welfare services in Australia and the possibility of recourse to family law, there are fewer barriers to a woman divorcing in Australia than there are in Lebanon. Furthermore, in Australia a woman may experience less family and community pressure to remain in an unhappy marriage.

The second area is polygamy which, although permitted under certain circumstances by Shari'a law, is not customarily practised in Lebanon and is prohibited in Australia. However, it can sometimes occur when a man takes a second wife after divorcing his first wife according to Shari'a law but not Australian law.

The issue of divorce for Lebanese Christians is not unlike that for Australian Christians. Divorce is generally forbidden for Lebanese Catholics but marriages can be annulled under certain circumstances. For Orthodox Christians the law regarding divorce is similar to that for Catholics but, in practice, it is easier to obtain, requiring a letter from the Patriarch or from the regional bishop. Thus Lebanese Christians, as well as being subject to Australian law, must also conform to the law of their Church.

The traditional values associated with marriage and divorce are subject to change in the Australian context. Perhaps the major means has been through intermarriage. In his study of first-wave Lebanese Christians, McKay (1989) found that 97 per cent of the first generation married Lebanese; in addition, 67 per cent of the second generation and 50 per cent of the third generation who had two Lebanese parents married Lebanese. However, of those who had only one Lebanese parent only 11 per cent of the second generation and 15 per cent of the third generation married Lebanese (p. 72). This general picture of an increase in intermarriage across the generations is also found in a history of a Lebanese family where the rate of marriage to Lebanese declined from 100 per cent for the first generation to 70 per cent for the second
The rate of in-group marriages differs for brides and grooms. In the period 1987–90 second-generation in-group marriages of brides was 65 per cent and those of grooms 50 per cent (Price 1993, p. 6). These figures reflect the difference in parental control and supervision over Lebanese daughters and sons. However, it is important to note that in-group marriage rates for both Lebanese brides and grooms are among the highest for any country-of-origin group. This suggests that, while recognising that changes in family values will take place in marriages between Lebanese partners, and between Lebanese and non-Lebanese partners, the relatively high level of in-group marriages will ensure a slower rate of change than for other country-of-origin groups with lower rates.

Old age

Respect and care for older family members is of great importance in Lebanese families. Two major aspects are parental expectations and filial obligation. A common household pattern in Lebanon, and a somewhat less common pattern in Australia, is for one or both parents to live with their married son in an extended family household. This has a number of advantages for both generations in terms of sharing domestic tasks, child care and mutual support. However, in Australia it is also fraught with increasing problems, especially in households experiencing unemployment and financial problems. Married children are sometimes unable to support their elderly parents, notwithstanding their undertaking of an Assurance of Support to allow the emigration of their parents to Australia. This leads to tensions and, in some cases, family conflict and the return of one or more parents to Lebanon. Another source of tension lies in the communication and cultural gap between grandparents and their grandchildren, with the former speaking Arabic and typically favouring the retention of traditional values, while the grandchildren speak English as their first language and are busily acquiring the values and practices of Australian young people (Batrouney 1989).

These dilemmas are reflected in the comments of focus-group members, who compared life for the elderly in Lebanon and in Australia. The dominant response was that, despite any problems that may occur, it was better to be where your family was. (‘Your home is where your children are.’) One woman spoke of how she looked after her grandchildren even more than she did her children when she was in Lebanon and, although she loves her grandchildren here, they are not as loving or caring: ‘They have a more
soft heart in Lebanon than in Australia’. On the other hand, a number of people spoke appreciatively of the better and cheaper health care in Australia—‘In Lebanon they want money to look after you . . . here you can get help’—and of the security of a regular pension in Australia. The general picture is highly variable, with most respondents torn between life in Lebanon and life in Australia.

Death and bereavement

Traditionally, Lebanese families share their bereavement not only with all members of their extended family but with the whole community. It is regarded as a duty to visit the house of mourning and extend one’s condolences to the bereaved family. In villages in Lebanon and in the immigrant communities in Australia this obligation extends across religious boundaries. While both Christian and Muslim express a degree of fatalism in the face of death and a belief in the sharing of bereavement, each religious group has different beliefs and practices. Lebanese Christians experience no problems in carrying out their traditional practices in Australia, in that services for the dead are similar to those in Australian churches, and cemeteries have sections set aside for the major Christian denominations, which are used by the Lebanese.

An important part of the preparation for an Islamic burial is the ritual bathing of the body, which should be carried out immediately before burial. After bathing, the body is taken to the mosque where prayers are said and a procession, comprising men only, proceeds to the cemetery. The Muslim requirement of bathing the body immediately before burial has not always been possible in Australia, especially when an autopsy has been required. However, a number of mosques now have facilities which allow for this ritual, preceded by any other legal or medical procedure required. In the belief that for a good person the grave represents Paradise, Muslims prefer to bury their dead in larger graves than are normally provided in Australia.

Conclusion

Lebanese families in Australia present a picture of great variability in terms of immigration waves and length of time in Australia, as well as differences in structure, socio-economic status and religious affiliation. Notwithstanding these differences, the family is identified as the major social institution to which the Lebanese belong. Family values related to social activities and stages in the life cycle
are seen as ranging on a continuum from traditional to emergent, with immigration and modernisation appearing to produce a movement away from the more traditional values. However, any such movement is neither uniform nor inevitable, and it is important that we don’t make easy assumptions about the values held by Lebanese families. The information in this chapter should be used, rather, as a guide to the values which Lebanese families might possibly hold.
The Vietnamese community in Australia had its 'beginnings after the fall of the South Vietnamese government in April 1975. The circumstances of the mass exodus from Vietnam and subsequent admission to Australia have had long-lasting impacts on the people's settlement in general and their family structure in particular. Vietnamese people, arriving either from refugee camps or direct from Vietnam, expected that Australia would provide a more favourable political and economic framework in which their families could grow. However, the majority were not fully aware of the acute socio-economic and cultural differences between their homeland and the society to which they were emigrating.

Once in Australia, Vietnamese people wanted to be part of the host society, but they also wanted to maintain their cultural identity. The integration process of immigrants includes some reaction to acculturative pressures and some adjustments on their part (Berry 1991). The process and rate of acculturation are not the same for all, even for members of the same family. It depends on an individual's age at the time of arrival, his or her sex, the period of settlement, contact with the wider community, skills in making use of host institutions, and other background attributes. For individuals it is a process of trial and error, of continuous changes that are affected by personal, familial and societal factors. There is great variation in the nature and degree of individual change.

This chapter explores the impact of the migration-integration process on Vietnamese family life in Australia. It is based on
studies of the Vietnamese and Indochinese (sometimes called Southeast Asian) refugee/immigrant population in Australia, relevant studies in the United States and Canada, and the authors' personal observations and work experiences in the community. The discussion is most relevant to ethnic Vietnamese families; however, to some extent both ethnic Vietnamese and ethnic Chinese from Vietnam share similar experiences.

Migration and its impact on families

The Vietnamese-born population in Australia at the 1991 census was 121,813 (BIPR 1994e), a substantial increase from the few hundred Vietnamese students and professionals who were resident in Australia prior to April 1975. The major buildup of the community followed the mass exodus of Vietnamese refugees after the political events in their homeland in that year. Although the flow of Vietnamese boat people has been reduced substantially in recent years, their acceptance from refugee camps in Southeast Asian countries for resettlement in Australia continues. In addition, since 1986 there has been a substantial increase in the number of Vietnamese people—partners, dependent children, middle-aged or elderly parents and close relatives of the refugee group—who have been admitted directly from Vietnam for permanent settlement in Australia under the Family Reunion Program.

As a result, the Vietnamese-born population in Australia includes some people who have been here for almost twenty years and some who have just arrived, together with the Australian-born children of early and later arrivals. The latter group numbered 25,151 at the 1991 census; they are the second generation of the community, the overwhelming majority of whom are under 15 years of age (BIPR 1994e). Their impact has not yet been studied. They are included here with children and adolescents born overseas, although there are some differences between the two groups.

Until 1991 almost 80 per cent of arrivals were from refugee camps; they came in large numbers between 1981 and 1986 (Viviani, Coughlan and Rowland 1993). The predominance of refugees and family members of refugees means that the present community sees itself as possessing all the characteristics of a refugee rather than an immigrant community, one which has been established in a little more than a decade.

At the 1991 census about 27 per cent of the Vietnamese-born population were of Chinese background (BIPR 1994e). Their acculturation differs from that of the ethnic Vietnamese. They tend
to show higher levels of psychological adjustment as they are able to identify and connect with an already established group of Chinese immigrants in Australia (Berry and Blondel 1982, in Thomas and Balnaves 1993, p. 5) and because their experience of living as a minority in Vietnam helps them to build a ‘collective wisdom and know-how’ in their integration into Australian society (Nguyen 1986, p. 10).

While earlier Vietnamese settlers have had some time to adapt, recently arrived people have not. Many previously separated (nuclear) families suddenly have one or more newly arrived members. Their arrival appears to reinforce traditional cultural values in the community and in individual families; however, new arrivals are likely to be assisted by earlier settlers to adapt more quickly.

There have been several ‘waves’ of Vietnamese refugees, who differ according to their reasons for leaving their homeland, their occupational skills, their social class and their ethnic composition. Political factors dominated the 1975 and 1976 refugee exodus (Viviani 1984). By 1978 the reasons stressed by those leaving Vietnam were economic losses as a result of the Communist Government’s policies, a general decline in economic prospects, political re-education, racial discrimination against the ethnic Chinese, and fear of war (between Vietnam and China and between Vietnam and Cambodia).

Vietnamese migration to Australia has been characterised by traumatic experiences of escape and living in refugee camps, a moderate to serious imbalance of age groups and gender, and a substantial number of family separations, lone minors and unmarried adults in the early settlement years (Viviani, Coughlan and Rowland 1993). During the escape trips and in the camps many refugees, particularly women and children, were subjected to violence (Hitchcox 1993). Cox (1986) summarises their experiences:

Clearly many of the refugees experienced trauma, or severe emotional shocks, in the often difficult period preceding their arrival in Australia. Such experiences can leave profound marks on the lives of people and affect the ways in which they later adapt to a new environment. Refugee camps so often generate apathy and dependency. An increase in isolation, self accusation and doubts can kill off a person’s initiative and ability for self-defence and independence. (p. 6)

The 1991 census showed that Vietnamese-born males outnumbered females, with the greatest imbalance in the 15–29 age group (BIPR 1994e). There are various reasons for this. For example, in the patriarchal family system young males are more
likely to have the necessary skills and personal resources to establish themselves in a foreign country before sponsoring other family members (Brown 1993; Thomas and Balnaves 1993). In addition, more males arrived because they were soldiers, army officers, public servants, business people, landowners and their sons—that is, those most directly affected and endangered by the change of political regime in Vietnam and therefore needing to escape.

Many married men could escape only by leaving behind wives and families. In contrast, some women who lost their husbands in the war before 1975 or in the new regime’s re-education camps felt threatened by the government, so decided to escape with their children. There were also cases in which family members left Vietnam at different times, were accepted for resettlement by different countries or were dispersed in different parts of the same receiving country (Viviani 1984).

Among the refugees there was also a substantial number of teenagers and young adults whose parents had arranged for their escape with either relatives or neighbours (Le 1986; Lim 1979). These groups of young siblings travelled together, each group led by the oldest member. For the majority it was the first time they had been away from the family and had had to look after themselves.

Family separation and the consequences of broken family structures have been widely reported as the most serious concern among Vietnamese refugees world-wide (Viviani 1984; Lewins and Ly 1985). The reunited family has to resolve problems caused by family members’ different expectations. For example, Le (1986) reports children’s difficulties in attempting to readjust to a two-parent family and the ‘intense sibling rivalry, dissatisfaction and even hatred’ between children who came to Australia first and those who came later (p. 8).

Most refugees were not able to plan their escape in detail, let alone prepare for settlement in another country. ‘Culture shock’ has been widely reported among these settlers. There is enough evidence to suggest that most Vietnamese refugees arrived in Australia with very few material possessions (Nguyen 1994). Those who came to join them later, including elderly parents, left behind all their land, home and property. Starting a new life was very difficult, especially if they arrived during the recession. Because of economic necessity many Vietnamese women for the first time had to commit themselves to the labour market as seriously as their husbands did. This brought various changes to their role and status within the family. In other families both parents could find no work and they lived in poverty.
Refugees and their families have also been affected by settlement policies in Australia. Hostels, where many relevant services are provided, are very helpful in the early settlement period. Although there have been efforts to disperse refugees widely through the Community Refugees Settlement Scheme, in general people have not been impeded in their desire to live close together for mutual support. The residential concentrations of Vietnamese, although criticised (Birrell 1993), have served them well in the transition period, providing economic and emotional support and access to information. In areas with large numbers of Vietnamese people families find a neighbourhood where interaction is quite close.

But all in all, most Vietnamese people, while appreciating the need to adjust to their new environment, find that hardship and the unfavourable circumstances of their actual migration have made adjustment quite difficult.

Traditional family values

In Vietnam, family and village form the centre of Vietnamese social and economic life (Bong Nguyen 1979, in Chan and Lam 1987, p. 15), but family is the fundamental unit of the society. Social order and functions rely most importantly on family education, a concept which is very popular and is always seen as complementary to school education. Vietnamese family life and education reflect religious beliefs, the immediate social environment of the family and the ever-changing general economic conditions.

Religion

The main religions currently practised in Vietnam are Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Christianity and two indigenous sects, Cao Dai and Hoa Hao (Hassan, Healy, McKenna and Hearst 1985). Vietnamese culture was traditionally based on the ‘Three Teachings’ (Tam Giáo) in which Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism are intertwined and applied to all aspects of life and death. These forms of religious belief were introduced to the Vietnamese people by the Chinese during their one-thousand-year rule over the country from 111 BC to AD 939.

Buddhism emphasises self-restriction of worldly desires so that one is satisfied with what one has, particularly material possessions. People believe that their present fate has its cause in past
generations and that they can practise good deeds to leave 'merit' to their descendants (đã đức lại cho con).

Taoism originated in China as a contemplative philosophy which advocates the cultivation of inner strength, selflessness, spontaneity, and harmony with nature and humankind. ‘Taoism was ultimately transformed from an elite philosophy to an elaborate religion. [It] further evolved into superstition, magic, divination, and sorcery’ (Chan 1992, pp. 187-8). This evolution has occurred in Vietnam as well as in China. For example, Vietnamese people feel secure when they worship and pray daily for protection from their ancestors' spirits.

Confucianism is a 'philosophy of social order that venerates status, age, obedience (to the emperor, superiors, parents, husbands) and virtue' (Hassan, Healy, McKenna and Hearst 1985, p. 267). Through education one improves oneself to achieve filial piety, respect for the aged and other persons of higher status, and the virtues. Whether wealthy or not, educated persons belong to a respectable social class; education has an intrinsic value. Through education and academic achievements people could also achieve a better occupation to secure their own and their family's life in material terms. According to Confucianism, men's second task, after improving themselves, is 'to keep their house in order'. The Confucian patriarchy differentiates the role and status of family members on the basis of sex, age and generation. The purpose of family education is to ensure that each member acts competently and according to his or her defined role and status. The family is assisted by the neighbourhood and larger society in emphasising conformity and punishing deviation.

The division of labour in the family is based on the concept of the husband/father as the provider and participator in social and political activities and the wife/mother as producer/purveyor/reproducer (Hassan, Healy, McKenna and Hearst 1985). The husband/father is culturally required to provide for his family. He is its head and has the authority to decide all matters, particularly those regarded as of great importance. The wife serves as the 'minister of the interior' and is primarily responsible for what happens inside the house, including raising and educating the children and taking care of financial matters (Tran 1984). The parent–child relationship is based on the principle that pious children must obey their parents and look after them unconditionally in their old age.

Child-rearing practices are different for sons and daughters. Sons are encouraged to pursue their education to further their father's social position and career and to maintain and bring glory
to the lineage, while daughters are carefully prepared to be married out to other families. They are taught about *tam tòng tử đức* (three obediences and four virtues). ‘The three obediences are to the father when still unmarried, to the husband when married, and to the eldest son in widowhood’ (Nguyen 1992, p. 46). ‘The four virtues are *công* (proper work), *dung* (proper demeanor), *ngôn* (proper speech) and *hạnh* (proper manners)’ (Nguyen 1990, p. 34). The whole point of a girl’s family education is to prepare her for a woman’s role in housekeeping and in helping her husband and sons to gain success and honour in society.

The elderly are respected for their wisdom and life experiences. Gratitude is owed to them for their past contribution to the family, the community and society in general. In the extended families of three or more generations the elderly must be treated with full respect.

Confucianism also demands that family members live harmoniously together whether they are in the same household or living in different places. Younger siblings have to obey older siblings and older siblings have to love and care for younger ones. In general, ‘the strength of each family consists in the capacity of each family member knowing how to make concessions to each other for the family’s ultimate goal of happiness’ (Nguyen 1990, p. 33). Indeed, the interest of the family has to be considered before any personal interest, as this is integral to the principle of family harmony.

Closely related to the ‘Three Teachings’ is the cult of the ancestors, or ancestor worship:

The cult of ancestors, which has no connection with religious faith, exerts a profound influence on the daily life of the Vietnamese people. The recollection of the ancestors, the fear of offending them or soiling their reputations, coupled with the desire to please them, are sources of inspiration, which guide the actions of the descendants. (Tran van Do 1967, in Hassan, Healy, McKenna and Hearst 1985, p. 268)

The cult has its origin in China (Nguyen 1988). It demands that members of a family commit themselves to the perpetuation of their ancestral lineage by unconditionally assisting existing members and reproducing new members to carry on the lineage. As a result, families’ long-term goals are considered as important as, or more important than, short-term ones. The concept of the family extending over time is clearly expressed in the statement that:
... the solid core structure of the family ... owes its cohesion to the religious nature of the relationship between the living and the dead. Indeed, the Vietnamese family consists not only of the living—father, as head of the family, grandparents, the mother and children, the sons and daughters-in-law—but also of all the spirits of the dead as well as those not yet born. (Phung thi Hanh 1979, in Hassan, Healy, McKenna and Hearst 1985, p. 269)

Although Christianity was introduced into Vietnam in the sixteenth century by Catholic missionaries from France, Spain and Portugal, Christian families have retained most of the traditional precepts of family duty (Hassan, Healy, McKenna and Hearst 1985). Some aspects of family relationships are formulated as religious rules, for example the forbidding of divorce.

The social environment

Vietnamese families in the countryside live in villages; in large cities like Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) and Hanoi they live within their neighbourhood. Adults and children spend a lot of time with their neighbours. Neighbours cooperate in tasks to ensure the welfare of the whole community, for example by taking measures to prevent floods in their cultivated rice fields or to control fires in densely populated urban areas. They help one another in cultivating and harvesting rice and house-building in the countryside, and in looking after each other's children in the neighbourhood. Doors are open for neighbours; the village and the neighbourhood become part of a person's lifestyle because moving house is a rare occasion. The younger generation may have to leave their birthplace to look for work, but they are expected to return frequently to visit their family and the village or neighbourhood of origin.

In general, issues of concern to one's family are seen as very private matters in which outsiders should not interfere and in which the authorities are reluctant to be involved. However, the attitude of neighbourhood closeness and mutual assistance allows people to intervene to some extent in the family matters of neighbours. They do not hesitate to criticise any wrongdoing nor to apply the abovementioned cultural and family values as standards. Thus the surrounding environment strongly reinforces traditional family roles and relationship rules.

Economic conditions

Until recently Vietnam's economy relied mainly on its agricultural activities, and the majority of the population lived in the countryside. The country's culture was considered a 'rice culture' in
which almost everyone, and every activity, was geared to the work of producing rice (Nguyen 1988). Urbanisation, and the influence of western cultures and values (particularly French and American), have contributed to many changes. An educated urban middle class has gained status; many more women participate in paid employment; and new political and legal systems have forced modifications in traditional family organisation.

In Vietnam, by the 1970s, young couples in the cities tended to live in nuclear families in western-style houses. Nevertheless the links with family members, especially with their families of origin in the countryside, were substantial enough for them to maintain common interests and interaction, and obligations to the family were still the first to be fulfilled before community and political interests (Kim 1979, in Hassan, Healy, McKenna and Hearst 1985, p. 270).

Family size had begun to decrease in order to ensure educational opportunities and success for all offspring and to allow wives and mothers some time for activities outside the family, such as social obligations and, particularly, earning of extra income. Among a small number of young couples the woman’s role was slowly changing towards one of equal provider with her husband. The authority of aged parents and grandparents was limited to important matters or even to ritual formality, while the daily affairs of making friends, mate selection or career decision were in the hands of young people. Indications of family conflict across generations were revealed publicly to a limited extent.

The debate on traditional cultural values and family lifestyle versus western values had begun in the South before 1975. However, the so-called western ideas of city dwellers were not accepted by the country’s larger rural population.

Vietnamese families who left their native country after 1975 took with them the influences and experiences of this diverse and changing background.

Vietnamese families in Australia

Vietnamese families begin the process of integration into Australian society from different bases of comprehension and face difficulties of varying nature and degree. As a system, the family may resolve the stress of adaptation to a new environment by regulating its goals and/or its structure (Broderick 1993). These self-regulating acts, result in a variety of Vietnamese family life patterns.
Changing family structures

The composition of Vietnamese families has been most affected by the impact of migration and immigration. The circumstances of their arrival has meant that refugees have been deprived of their traditional extended family structure; members of nuclear families have been separated and family reunions may not have occurred until months or years later; many teenagers or young adults have had to escape alone. These experiences have affected the composition of their households in Australia. The high cost of housing in Australia also affects household composition, particularly in the early period of settlement. In addition, the increasing number of marriage breakdowns in recent times has led to the formation of single-parent families. It is a new experience for Vietnamese people to witness such a range of family structures, some of which are not yet generally accepted by the community.

In Australia a limited extended family household of three generations may be found but it is not as common as in Vietnam. Thomas and Balnaves (1993) found in their study that 68 per cent of the elderly Vietnamese and Vietnamese of Chinese background who were sponsored by their adult children to come to Australia lived with the sponsoring couple and the grandchildren. However, these families did not usually function in accordance with traditional ways. The elderly no longer had the role of overseeing the family’s affairs. Rather, they perceived themselves as dependent. Therefore the traditional strength of the three-generation family should not be taken for granted in Australia. The changed role of elderly members caused much stress for them and for the whole family structure.

Overcrowding also contributes to intergenerational conflict (Tran 1991). As a result, some elderly Vietnamese choose to live independently of sponsors—either individually or in couples. Some of these old people are still supported by and in close contact with their adult children and some are not, depending on their reasons for living separately. Of the elderly participants in Thomas and Balnaves’ (1993) study 4 per cent lived by themselves. They found it an unfortunate development; for the first time they had to rely almost totally on support from social services in order to conduct their daily lives.

A modified structure of the extended family, stretching across a number of households located in the same area or in nearby suburbs, is more commonly found in the community. Families tend to live close to other Vietnamese families or households, which can create a neighbourhood environment for mutual support. This contributes to the formation of residential concentrations or ethnic
enclaves such as those identified in Melbourne’s Springvale and Sydney’s Cabramatta (Birrell 1993). This tendency towards residential concentration has also been observed in the United States (Montero 1979) and in Canada (Van Esterik and Van Esterik 1988).

Family links extend to many relatives in Vietnam. There is a commitment to giving financial support to family members in the homeland in the spirit of the traditional extended family.

The nuclear family household of parents and dependent children is now more common in the Vietnamese community in Australia. People from both rural and city backgrounds in Vietnam appear to accept it as a standard of living to be aimed at, although their links with other related families are quite strong. However, in comparison with Australian nuclear families, Vietnamese family households tend to include more young adults, both students and those not yet married.

Variations of the above household types are often dictated by economic factors in early settlement. McDonald (1991a) suggests that, according to 1981 census figures, comparatively large numbers of Vietnamese live with non-relatives, and the incidence of ‘secondary family units’ in households (more than one family living together) was at that time higher than for any other birthplace group. It is not uncommon to find newly arrived brothers, sisters or friends and newly wedded children attaching to a nuclear family for a time. Another phenomenon is an increasing number of families with dual-career couples, where family functions have to be adjusted to achieve economic goals.

In the early 1980s one-third of families in which the family head was born in Vietnam were either single-parent families or family forms other than those headed by a married couple (Bui and Bertelli 1990). At the 1991 census 13 per cent of families whose reference person was born in Vietnam consisted of a single-parent and his or her offspring; a further 4 per cent consisted of a single-parent, his or her offspring and others. This is much higher than the proportion of single-parent families in immigrant communities generally but is consistent with other refugee communities (BIPR 1994b). The high number of Vietnamese single-parent families is the result of the loss of partners during the migration process and, more recently, marriage breakdown in Australia. Such families are usually disadvantaged economically, socially and emotionally. Households headed by females frequently have the least resources and are the most distressed; they are often quite isolated from mainstream society and from other Vietnamese (Lin, Masuda and Tazuma 1982).

The Vietnamese community sees the single-parent family as less
than ideal for bringing up children. It is widely believed that mothers feel insecure without a man, and that a single-parent household without a male head is an unsatisfactory environment for educating children because a father's disciplinary assertiveness is lacking; male single-parents are believed to feel their household lacks a woman’s love and closeness to young children. Single-parent families resulting from marriage breakdown are seen as part of the damaging effect of migration and the community is usually not sympathetic.

Sibling group families consist of groups of brothers and/or sisters who escaped Vietnam together or one after the other, and were later accepted for resettlement in Australia. Traditionally, if parents die early the eldest child is responsible for looking after younger family members. However, young Vietnamese people in Australia have not been prepared for this change in role and they lack the supporting network of relatives and/or neighbours. There are many cases in which siblings live together in the same house but rarely communicate with one another. For example, a 16-year-old student living with his older brother, who works afternoon shift, said:

Even though we are living in the same house, I do not see my brother very often or spend time with him, except on the weekends... Only occasionally, my brother takes me to the beach for fishing, or we go to see a film together, and only then do I feel he is still my big brother, like he always was in Vietnam. (Nguyen 1991, p. 37)

In summary, the variety of Vietnamese families found in Australia clearly shows the effect of migration. Some groupings, which were rarely found in Vietnam, such as young sibling groups, households of single young men or women, families headed by divorced females, and elderly couples or individuals living by themselves, are now more common. Generally, these families are more vulnerable because their members are least prepared for changes in roles and status. The tendency for Vietnamese people to live close together in Australian capital cities reflects their need for support in the early stage of settlement, the cultural characteristics of the extended family structure across households, and the neighbourhood mentality.

Family roles and status

Vietnamese people would like to see, and indeed expect, some stability in traditional family patterns. However, inevitable
changes, such as those in family composition, have led to other shifts in roles and status. Socio-economic factors, such as the participation of married women in the labour market and the economic marginality of the husband/father, and also the rapid socialisation of children into Australian social values and norms, contribute to further changes in the traditional hierarchy of family relations (Chan and Lam 1987).

The impact of socio-economic factors needs to be evaluated in the context of differences between the individualist ideology found in Australian society and the traditional collectivist values, rooted in the 'Three Teachings', found in Vietnamese and other Asian cultures (Chan 1992). This cultural clash seems to manifest itself particularly strongly among young Vietnamese and their parents, and it threatens their relationships and the rules which govern them.

Husbands and wives

The traditional division of labour between husband and wife is affected when the wife has to work for an income. At the 1991 census 68 per cent of Vietnamese-born married women were in the labour force (that is, either employed or seeking work), of whom 59 per cent were employed (BIPR 1994e). Until recently Vietnamese women were found in large numbers in unskilled occupations in the clothing, footwear and other manufacturing industries (Madden and Young 1993). The independent wage labour performed by women has a strong impact on negotiation of power within the domestic sphere, on traditional family patterns (Bachu, in Bujis 1993, p. 11) and on roles and status within the family (Gold 1993; Matsuoka 1990 and Tran 1988).

In order to achieve smooth functioning within a Vietnamese family where the wife or mother is involved in paid employment, other members must accommodate to the change. For the changes to be sustained men, particularly, need to see the value of their participation in child rearing and household responsibilities (Matsuoka, 1990). This is often a slow process, because the perception that the main responsibility of a good wife and mother is to care adequately for her husband, children and home is strongly held by both men and women.

It is not uncommon in many Vietnamese families that, ‘even though both husband and wife work full time, the wife is expected to cook, clean the house, and take care of the children’ (Tran 1988, p. 292). Nevertheless, with perseverance and effective communication, Vietnamese working women can change their husbands’ attitudes to helping run the household, and train them
in the required skills. Once the new pattern of a less sharp division of labour emerges, it promotes other changes in the relative status and power of husband and wife. However, this does not lead easily to equality. The majority of Vietnamese married women still defer to their husband's authority in social and many family matters, such as the discipline and education of children.

In families in which husbands resist change, Vietnamese working women find it almost impossible to break through old patterns. Not only does the woman suffer but the man's position as family head becomes very vulnerable and his life stressful, particularly when he has been unemployed or cannot earn as much as his wife. The husband's resistance often results from his background as rigid family patriarch, his resentment at losing face, and the few chances he has of contact with mainstream Australian society and a better appreciation of women's role.

When women are not employed, traditional sex roles and status may continue unchanged. If the wife is socially isolated because of language and/or having no extended family network, her position can be undermined further by dependence on her husband and children. Surrounded by a strange environment, she may withdraw deeper into her inward-oriented role. Often, she can free herself and 'discover' previously untapped abilities to deal with the present and plan for the future only after separation from her husband (Sluzki 1979). Losing a male partner demands that women change their role and status in families. However, they need support to cope with the loss and to gradually learn new roles and responsibilities.

Although the actual incidence of domestic violence in the Vietnamese-born community in Australia is not known, it is now seen as a serious problem (Nguyen 1991). A study of attitudes towards family violence and child sexual abuse in the Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian and Chinese communities in Melbourne found that only 8 per cent of the respondents approved the use of physical force against female partners. This is very low when compared with the 19 per cent of the general population in an Australia-wide survey in 1988 who approved of a man using physical force against his wife. Indochinese respondents also placed clear limitations on the circumstances in which physical force could be used and on the degree of force acceptable (Seitz and Kaufman 1993).

The discrepancy between the above-reported attitudes and the reality of the increasingly serious problem of violence against female partners has been explained as the result of unemployment, dissatisfaction, loneliness and stress caused by husbands' hard work, drinking, jealousy and adjustment to the new environment
The concept of a husband's authority is considered an underlying factor in violence against female partners.

*Parents and children*

Relationships between Vietnamese parents and their children often reflect the conflict between the values underlying the traditional family hierarchy and the children's extrafamilial socialisation. The former emphasises the child as dependent and as submissive receiver; the latter encourages assertiveness and independence.

Many Vietnamese parents take initiatives to help all family members adjust to the new social-cultural environment within an orderly framework. Their understanding helps to resolve the value collision, or to reduce it to a tolerable level for both parents and children, and the parent-child relationship gains new strength which is conducive to the children's success in Australia.

Some Vietnamese parents cannot perform aspects of their parental role because they lack English-language skills and knowledge of the new country. When children have to assist their parents with translating, interpreting, dealing with institutions and other areas of the family's social functioning, they gain unprecedented power and parents' status and power may be diminished.

Children and young people often have more opportunities than their parents do to be involved in the host society through education, recreation and peer group activities, and their socialisation into mainstream Australian social values and norms is accelerated. Young adults who receive government allowances (unemployment payments or Austudy) or who work part-time have some financial independence, which also supports more rapid socialisation.

These circumstances may cause parents distress, and evoke resentment of their children and of the social agencies which they perceive as responsible. If the conflict becomes too severe, young people may decide to leave home. This is possibly the most traumatic experience for Vietnamese parents because they come to Australia with a strong desire to provide a better future for their children. They may also fear for the safety and the future of their children without family support and guidance.

*Elderly parents and adult children*

The role of older Vietnamese people in Australia differs from traditional expectations because of the inversion of the priority of kinship relations. One-quarter of the elderly participants in Thomas and Balnaves' (1993) study said they had no authority
over their children, grandchildren and sons- and daughters-in-law: 'It's sad to see that I was a “boss” in the family back home and now I have to depend totally on the children'; ‘The old time is gone. My daughter is now the “boss” because she feeds me. To her I am worthless’. The general effect of role reversal and status loss is a major stress on elderly Vietnamese in western countries; in turn it has weakened the traditional extended family structure.

Members of new family forms in Australia have to rely on Australian role models because there is no comparable situation on such a scale in Vietnam. Many are vulnerable and in need of income support and other welfare provisions. The generational change is illustrated by Thomas and Balnaves' (1993) comment that ‘[y]ounger Vietnamese in Australia did not appear to hold obligations to Vietnamese family to be unconditional, but rather subject to strategic and situational concerns’.

The maintenance of functioning and affectionate family relationships is very important for the survival of family units among the Vietnamese community in Australia.

Important life stages

This section discusses Vietnamese people’s attempts to come to terms with the new context in Australia at different stages of the life cycle.

Having children

Generally speaking, Vietnamese people see children as an integral part of marriage, with a couple usually having their first child early in the marriage. There is an implied duty to their extended family. However, educated and/or working couples may plan when to have their first child, and the number of children they will have, so that they can enjoy and cope best with them, given work and other commitments. Coming from a society in which the number of children a couple have averages between six and seven (Nguyen 1990), Vietnamese women in Australia tend to have relatively large families. Among the Vietnamese-born parents with offspring in 1991, 38.8 per cent had three or more children. This is significantly higher than the percentages for both the total overseas-born population (24.7) and the total Australian population (25.1) (BIPR 1994e). Day (1993) suggests that the old norms may be reinforced through return visits to the homeland and through the arrival of new immigrants of similar background.

During pregnancy and after giving birth young Vietnamese
women tend to follow a mixture of traditional and western approaches in caring for the foetus, looking after their babies’ physical and mental development, and in caring for themselves. Older women who give birth in Australia, while appreciating the modern facilities of Australian hospitals, tend to follow traditional ideas and practices. For example, mothers about to give birth follow a very strict diet, eating very salty foods with almost no fresh fruit, as to eat anything ‘sour’ or ‘cold’—that is, fruit or raw vegetables—may provoke further bleeding (Tran 1980). The need to keep the body warm before and after birth also demands wearing warm clothes, covering the head and ears, and minimising the use of water (for example, not showering or bathing after labour). Practices may differ according to the woman’s educational background.

The task of bringing up children is considered by Vietnamese parents one of great responsibility and some anxiety. In Australia they find the task even more difficult because the environment is unfamiliar, and the child’s success is their most important goal. Their purpose of integrating into Australian society demands that they work out a framework to incorporate both traditional family values and host society values at every stage of the child’s development. Although most Vietnamese would not distinguish in clear terms the child’s developmental stages, as is done in western societies, different approaches are taken when the child is young and when he or she grows older.

Family education of children

In infancy and early childhood, children are perceived as being relatively helpless and not responsible for their actions. They are seen as too young to understand or to be ready for discipline and serious teaching (Matsuoka 1990). Parents are thus very tolerant and permissive and they immediately gratify the infant’s needs (Chan 1992). The care of infants and young children is mostly in the hands of mothers, but fathers, older siblings and other members in the household are expected to help (Nguyen 1991).

The traditionally delicate balance between a ‘severe father’ (nghiêm phu) and a ‘tender mother’ (tu mâu) for child rearing and the family education of children is still considered as ideal because it represents ‘both characteristics, hard and soft, [which] are extremely necessary in teaching children to become pious members of the family and good citizens of society’ (Nguyen 1990, p. 34).

The goal of family education is to ‘form’ a child into both a
pious family member and a good and successful citizen. Vietnamese parents make every effort to inculcate in their children traditional values and customs, and demand that they work hard for success in school and in the wider society.

Many Vietnamese parents have made special efforts to maintain traditional values: for example, by sending children to Vietnamese or Chinese classes; preferring their children to speak in their native tongue at home; showing children how they (the parents) work hard for the whole family’s livelihood; reminding children of their Vietnamese/Chinese culture and how to appreciate their family values; talking about the success of other family members and friends in Australia and other western countries, and if possible facilitating their chances of meeting them; taking children to Vietnamese/Chinese community cultural festivals or religious activities; facilitating contact with extended family in Australia and in Vietnam.

Parents may also try to limit their children’s involvement with peer groups. They are always concerned, sometimes quite overtly, about the ‘inappropriate morals’ introduced to their children by peer groups in the wider community. In extreme cases parents may be very negative about all aspects of the host culture and demand their children’s obedience.

On the other hand, some parents initiate the family’s involvement in the wider society through visiting their children’s schools, taking part in community activities, inviting home their own or their children’s Australian friends, and taking holidays together in other parts of the country. However, these attempts are very much dependent on the parents’ language and social skills and their economic circumstances.

Most young people are capable of developing bilingual and bicultural skills and are at ease in both settings. Their parents may not be as bicultural but some understand their children’s socialisation process and tolerate or encourage their pursuit of independence. However, parents’ approaches vary with the child’s age and gender.

Adolescent/teenage children

With the onset of adolescence, the previous permissive approach to child rearing changes to a stricter set of expectations and family education of older children is intensified. Gender roles are different: ‘[G]irls are expected to manifest modesty, obedience, and chastity. Boys are expected to exhibit adult male behaviour’ (Matsuoka 1990, p. 342).

The adolescent is expected to work for success in school
education because of its intrinsic value in Vietnamese society. In a new country education is expected to bring success in a career and in life. Many Vietnamese parents work long hours in order to give their children the best education they can (Hartley and Maas 1987). Others maintain a lower standard of living in order to save for their children's education.

In general, Vietnamese adolescents, especially those approaching young adulthood, share their parents' high educational aspirations for them (Hartley and Maas 1987). Two Vietnamese tertiary students recently wrote:

As a kid, one clearly recognises the sacrifices that are often made to ensure that there is an environment conducive to study . . . The whole culture transported through the parents is very much one which places tremendous importance on education. (Vu and Le 1992, p. 53)

As a result, there are outstanding performances reported of Vietnamese youth within the Australian education system, although this experience should not be generalised to the whole population (Viviani 1993, in Birrell 1993).

Although Vietnamese parents encourage both sons and daughters to succeed academically, in difficult times for the family the daughter's educational interests might be sacrificed. For example, girls may be required to leave school to help with home businesses, or to take time off to look after younger siblings and carry out general household responsibilities (Hartley and Maas 1987).

Not all Vietnamese children realise their parents' educational expectations for them. Indeed, some parents' aspirations for their children are unrealistic given the children's previously disrupted education, the parents' own lack of English skills and of knowledge of the education system, poor family living conditions such as overcrowded housing, and financial difficulties. Unrealistic expectations may put young people under a great deal of pressure (Hartley and Maas 1987).

Young people's assertive attitude at home is a common cause of tension between parents and children. Frequently, parents complain that their children receive too much 'freedom' as they are influenced by school and peer groups; parents are treated less respectfully and they gradually lose control. Young people complain of parents' rigid relationship rules. Among Vietnamese youth, 'many are turned off their own culture because the picture they get of it is quite negative. It consists of a list of prohibitions and operates as a “fetter on their growth”' (Vu and Le 1992, p. 56). In extreme cases Vietnamese young people may feel marginalised in both cultures.
Some Vietnamese-born parents do not have enough opportunity or confidence to become involved in mainstream Australian society. They feel uncomfortable or fearful and try to limit outside influences; teenagers are left to deal with the world beyond the family with little help or guidance from their parents in these circumstances.

Due to economic conditions in Australia many Vietnamese live in poverty because parents are unemployed long-term or are on a single, low income. The unemployment rate for Vietnamese-born workers in September 1994 was 30 per cent (ABS 1994c). Unemployment of parents contributes to disadvantage for their children in terms of poor access to services (such as child care and child development programs), educational disadvantage, low health status, crowded housing, lack of recreational activities, and experiences of prejudice (Taylor and MacDonald 1992).

Finally, there are adolescents who came to Australia after spending most of their childhood in an overcrowded refugee camp. Some carry with them horrific experiences of the family escape trip, which may lead them to behave aggressively (Le 1986).

Adolescents are very vulnerable to life disruption and cultural discontinuity (Matsuoka 1990). For normal development they need to establish their identity firmly in both the family and the social environment. Failure to recognise this may result in a situation such as the following, describing Vietnamese families in the United States:

Many Vietnamese families discovered with horror and often too late, that their children, instead of being the model students of the usual refugee's success stories, are now living their life in the fast lane, using drugs, playing truant, skipping classes, dropping out from school, running away from home and into trouble, sometimes ending in jail for having associated themselves with a bunch of older troubled kids. (Tran 1990, p. 23)

Such situations are unfortunately occurring in a number of Vietnamese/Indochinese families of every social group, as observed by Tran and by the authors in Australia. The general literature and personal experience also suggest that children (adolescents in particular) from disrupted homes show relatively more evidence of disturbed behaviour and psychiatric disturbance (Eversley and Bonnerjea 1983).

Marriage, cohabitation and divorce

In general, Vietnamese young people delay marriage until they can afford it. In most cases they make their own decisions and arrangements about marriage. The family, however, still exercises
an important influence, although parents’ power is no longer absolute.

Because of a serious gender imbalance among the Vietnamese-born population in Australia in the 15–29 age group (there are more males than females), quite a few young men have returned to their country of origin to seek prospective partners and then sponsored them to come to Australia. Parents or extended family members both here and in Vietnam assist by, for example, introducing the young couple.

In contrast to much wider general acceptance of cohabitation before marriage in Australia (McDonald 1993), the majority of Vietnamese young people still defer to parents’ wishes that they live together only after they are formally married. Although more young Vietnamese are experimenting with sexual freedom, having premarital sex and practising birth control (Tran 1988), the discussion of these subjects is still largely taboo in their community.

In 1990 over 90 per cent of ethnic Vietnamese immigrants marrying in Australia married ethnic Vietnamese partners. The marriage pattern of the second generation (the Australian-born) is too new to assess (Price 1993). Parents want to see their children wed in accordance with traditional ceremony. After marriage Vietnamese young couples try to live separately from their parents, so that they can follow the western idea of enjoying their marital relationship as ‘social companionship’ (Ballard 1982).

In general, the Vietnamese community in Australia has negative attitudes towards separation and divorce, because it values family and marriage as ‘sacred institutions’ which have dignity and operate primarily on the premise of collective rather than individual rights (Chan and Lam 1987). Therefore it is very stressful for Vietnamese women to resolve conflict-ridden marriages. In a strange environment they must also think very carefully about their own future and that of their children. However, ABS divorce statistics over the past decade or so suggest an increase in the number of divorces among Vietnamese-born couples.

Lien (1991) has suggested that there are many reasons for marriage breakdown, most of them residual effects of unhappy marriages arranged as an escape from strict parents or contracted because of personal loneliness, the woman’s insecurity in being alone in Australia, or loss of virginity. Other reasons include lack of sensitivity and understanding between the couple, and failure of the husband to share household and financial responsibilities. Domestic violence often occurs before separation. The availability of government financial support is crucial for women making a decision to leave the marriage.
Middle age

In one sense it is those Vietnamese-born people now in the middle age group who have been most affected by the political upheaval in their homeland and by migration. Within a relatively short time their previously stable personal and family life was disrupted psychologically, socially and economically. They have had to re-establish what has been lost. In the process some have been more ambitious than others, but the majority settle for less because what they look for most is stability for themselves and their family:

In a wider sense the priorities of the Vietnamese have been set by their predominant refugee status. Settlement has therefore meant the opportunity to rebuild their lives, and reconstruct family and community life in a peaceful environment. (Tran and Holton 1991, p. 172)

As a group the Vietnamese middle-aged are preoccupied with looking for work, working hard to maintain a job, reuniting with other family members, and securing housing, children’s education and many other practical matters—all aimed at having their families settled in Australia. Settling into their own house (an cù) and having a stable job for regular income (lạc nghiệp) are the two highest priorities for a Vietnamese family. Once achieved, they give the middle-aged some comfort in life but, more importantly, they are perceived as creating a suitable base from which their children can work towards their own future. If parents are not successful in their own lives, they tend to channel their expectations into their children.

The distinction between the middle and older stages of a person’s life in the Vietnamese culture is not strictly related to age, but is subject also to the person’s life experience. An accumulation of unhappy life events can demoralise people and those in their middle-to-late fifties can perceive themselves as old and give up motivation and hope for their future.

Old age

Vietnamese people expect their life to be settled in their old age and to enjoy ‘retirement’. In Australia two groups of elderly Vietnamese can be identified. The first are those who arrived in Australia as refugees and heads of families, who had to work hard for their family’s resettlement. The second group were sponsored by their adult children under the Family Reunion Program. In relative terms the first group can, over time, achieve an independent status both economically and mentally. The latter are prone
to social isolation because of their perceived dependence on their children and their lack of financial capacity (Thomas and Balnaves 1993).

Lack of English skills and inadequate knowledge of Australian society and its institutions reduces this group's social mobility; they become more dependent on their children and experience feelings of homesickness. The majority turn to religion and/or their social clubs for emotional and social support. Social clubs for the elderly can be a means of their regaining something of what they miss in family life.

In general, it can be said that older Vietnamese immigrants approach death and bereavement philosophically, in accordance with religious beliefs such as fate, karma, and returning to the earth. In Vietnam, funerals take place in private homes. In Australia, Vietnamese families accept that funerals are often conducted in funeral service premises but they ask that some of the old rites be included so that the ceremony can be performed in a traditional and religious way. In Melbourne, many families prefer to conduct funerals in a Vietnamese Buddhist temple, where family members, relatives and friends are able to spend a longer time for condolences. The traditional custom of commemorating the anniversaries of the deaths of family members—normally parents, grandparents and children—is still widely observed by Vietnamese families in Australia.

In summary, this discussion of important life stages indicates that both acculturative adjustment and the persistence of traditional cultural values in family life are present but vary at each stage of the person's life. At each stage the combination of new and old values also varies with personal and family background. For example, a general trend is that the older immigrants are when they arrive the harder they find it to adjust to a new society (Tran 1988). The relatively independent status of young couples after forming their own families facilitates further changes in family life patterns.

Conclusion

In the twenty years since the first wave of Vietnamese refugees arrived in Australia, the Vietnamese population has grown remarkably in terms of its numbers and its activities. The presence of the Vietnamese is generally accepted within the political framework of Australian multiculturalism. The question discussed in this chapter is how the community has, so far, been integrated into
the many aspects of Australian society. The role of the family, the community and specific cultural background are all important in shaping individual adaptation.

Because of the predominant role of the family in Vietnamese culture and its effect on the individual, it is necessary to discuss the integration of the family as a unit. Most literature on refugees in general, and the Indochinese in particular, suggests that their difficulties in adapting to a new socio-economic and cultural environment are tremendous and multifaceted (Lin, Masuda and Tazuma 1982; Viviani 1984; Cox 1986; Coughlan 1994). Adaptation is therefore expected to be a gradual process.

We have noted changes in Vietnamese family structure. The nuclear family is accepted widely as a norm but in the spirit of a modified extended family network. The increasing number of married women and younger (unmarried) women joining the Australian workforce has upset traditional sex roles, and husbands and wives have had to adjust. The results have been that Vietnamese women hold more power in family decision making and families have become smaller. Some Vietnamese women are more confident, and some are likely to resolve unhappy marriages through separation and divorce.

Younger Vietnamese people have moved a long way in adapting to the host society in order to succeed in the new environment. To some extent this adaptation has been supported by their parents and other older people, even in the case of girls (Nguyen 1992), as a matter of survival in a new situation (Tran 1988).

There are many examples in which the family has expanded its framework to encompass new values, while adjusting its own rules. For example, parents might use their influence to set general directions within which children take their own initiatives. In this shift young people may seek to reform, modify or rework their parents’ cultural heritage (Ballard 1982). With newly learnt communication skills, young people seek parents’ opinions in matters such as career paths, mate selection and marriage.

McDonald (1991a) suggests that in areas directly related to economic pressure immigrants are more inclined to adapt to Australian patterns of behaviour. In other areas which are less directly under economic pressure immigrants’ values remain more stable.

Although it varies in degree, acculturative stress affects every refugee/immigrant family. In order to resolve acculturative stress Vietnamese families adopt a variety of approaches.

Some families maintain only the minimal contact with mainstream society required for survival. However, these families still rely on their ethnic community and friends. They may be
functioning 'normally' in the short term; yet in the long run, with their children growing up, conflict between the host culture and Vietnamese family values seems inevitable. This segregation is caused by parents’ misunderstanding of the Australian culture and by social isolation resulting from long-term unemployment. Because of negative experiences and difficulties in settlement, they may think of the host culture as a homogeneous entity which they perceive as alien and threatening. Isolated in their residential concentrations, they have no significant opportunities to make contact with the host society. Indeed, such families withdraw to avoid stress and appear to live a life marginalised in relation to the wider community.

On the other hand, a small number of Vietnamese families with professional or business backgrounds are quite highly integrated into the host society.

A more general picture is that on the whole families move in varying degrees towards becoming 'bicultural', adapting to the economic, social and cultural conditions of life in Australia while maintaining to some extent their own culture. It is important that future research look at factors in the immigration-integration process which affect the direction and the degree of adaptation of Vietnamese families in Australia. Only with such knowledge can families be assisted to realise their wish for meaningful integration into Australian society.
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Aboriginal families, 48-69; Aboriginal philosophy, 52-5; demography, 14, 50-1; diversity of, 62; excluded from census until 1971, 10; government child care agencies, 65-6; group basis of, 52-3; impact of alcohol, 60; impact of British colonisation, 48, 58-62; introduced diseases, 60; kinship system, 48-50, 52, 54-8, 64; marriage, 56, 57, 69; mobility of, 69; non-Aboriginal spouses in, 49, 64; old age, 53; place of children in, 57-8, 68-9; relation to social organisation, 56-7; relation to the land, 54, 58, 59; removal of children from parents, 21, 59, 60-2; sense of identity, 63-5, 66-9; structure, 48-50, 62-5; urban Aborigines, 64-5, 66-7; values, 20, 54-5, 65-8
Aboriginal Protection Boards, 58-61
Aborigines Act 1905 (WA), 61
Aborigines Protection Act 1869 (Vic), 61
Aborigines Protection Act 1909 (NSW), 61
abortion, decriminalisation of, 36
adolescence: Australian families, 43-4; Chinese families, 86-8, 92; concept of, 9; Filipino families, 111-12, 118-19; Latin American families, 183; Lebanese families, 208; Vietnamese families, 233-5; youth culture (1940- ), 32
affirmative action, 36
Africa, migration from, 12
aged persons: Aboriginal families, 53; Australian families, 45-6; Chinese families, 90-2; concept of old age, 9, 10; Filipino families, 112-14; Greek families, 135-6, 138; Italian families, 154, 160-1; Latin American families, 177, 186-7; Lebanese families, 213-14; respect for, in Confucianism, 222; Vietnamese families, 225,
230–1, 237–8; see also retirement
Alawite Muslims, 195
alcoholism: among Aborigines, 60; among refugees, 189
ancestor worship, 71, 74, 221, 222–3
Anglo-Celtic culture, 1, 12
Antiochian Orthodox Church, 194
arranged marriage, Greek families, 122
Asia, migration from, 12, 14, 15
assimilation, 12, 146, 151–2
'astronauts', 72, 79–80, 89, 93
attachment theory, 32–3
Australia, composition of population, 13–15
Australian families, 25–47;
adolescence, 43–4; changing roles within, 39–40;
contemporary values, 31;
divorce, 40–1; extended families, 44–6; familism (1940–70), 31–5; feminism and family change, 35–7;
tergenerational relationships, 44–6; intimate relationships, 37–9, 44; place of children in, 41–3, 47; values (1830–1940), 28–30
authoritarianism: Italian families, 158; Latin American families, 171, 172, 180–1, 182, 183
basic wage, 30, 34, 36
birth control, 29, 38
birth rates: Aboriginal families, 51; Australian families, 29, 30, 34, 47; Lebanese families, 205; Vietnamese families, 231
boat people, 217
Buddhism, 71, 220–1
burial customs see death and bereavement
Cantonese, 71
Cao Dai, 220
care givers, 45–6
Catholic Church: impact on
Italian families, 156, 158, 162; impact on Latin American families, 168, 169–70, 175, 184; impact on Lebanese families, 202
Central America, migration from, 12, 167–8
chaperons, 123, 162, 173, 208
child care: Australian families, 123, 162, 173, 208
child care: Chinese families, 82–3; Lebanese families, 206–7; Vietnamese families, 231–2
China: child-rearing, 84; divorce in, 81; immigration from, 71
Chinese families, 70–95;
acculturative stress, 92–3;
adolescence, 86–8, 92; attitude towards mental illness, 73–4, 93–4; childbirth, 82–3; conflict with mainstream values, 76; consumerism in, 89; diversity of, 71; divorce, 72, 80–2;
maintenance of language and culture, 85–6, 92, 93, 94; marriage, 76–8; old age, 90–2; place of children in, 83–6; population in Australia, 71; remarriage, 80–2; sense of
identity, 73, 87–8, 89, 92;
settlement since the 1970s, 70–1; structure, 72, 74;
traditional ‘Chinese personality’, 83; values, 72–6, 83–5, 88–90; see also filial piety and responsibility

Christianity: Chinese families, 71; imposition on Aboriginal society, 59; Lebanese families, 193, 194–5, 201–2, 211, 212, 214; Vietnamese families, 220, 223; see also Catholic Church; Maronite Christians; Melkite Christians

class differences: colonial Latin America, 170; Italian families, 144

classificatory system, of kinship, 56

COASIT, 153, 157
cohabitation, 8, 16, 38–9, 41, 47, 137, 159, 163, 236

community organisations: Italian, 153, 157, 160; Latin American, 187; Lebanese, 202; Vietnamese, 238

Confucianism: Chinese families, 71, 72, 74, 78, 82, 84; emphasis on collective interest, 27; Vietnamese families, 220, 221–2

consensus, Filipino families, 101

contraception see birth control
courtship patterns: Filipino families, 103–4; Italian families, 150–1
cultural diversity, 1
culture and ethnicity, 2–4
culture conflict model, 152–3
culture shock, Vietnamese migrants, 219
de facto relationships see cohabitation
dead and bereavement: Chinese families, 91; Filipino families, 113–14; Lebanese families, 214; Vietnamese families, 238
demography: Aborigines, 50–1;

Australian population, 13–15;
Chinese in Australia, 71;
Filipinos in Australia, 97, 98–9; Greeks in Australia, 130, 135; immigration history, 10–13; Lebanese in Australia, 194–5; Vietnamese in Australia, 217, 218–19

Dependants’ Nomination Scheme, 11
dispute resolution, in Chinese families, 74–5, 80, 91
divorce: Australian marriages, 40–1, 47; Chinese marriages, 72, 80–2; concept of, 10; Filipino marriages, 106–7, 116–17; Greek marriages, 137, 141; Italian marriages, 158–9; Latin American marriages, 175, 178–9; Lebanese marriages, 211–12; provisions for, 19th century Australia, 29; social pressure against, 28; systems of, 6; Vietnamese marriages, 223, 226, 227, 236
domestic help: in Chinese families, 79, 91; in Filipino families, 106, 108
domestic violence: Aboriginal families, 66; exposure in public arena, 7; Filipino families, 116, 117–18; Italian families, 158; Latin American families, 186; Lebanese families, 199; Vietnamese families, 229–30, 236
double dislocation, 118
dowries: Greek families, 122, 123, 131; Lebanese families, 211

Dreaming, 52, 53

Druse Muslims, 195

education, 36; Aboriginal children, 58; Confucian view of, 221; family education, Vietnamese families, 220, 232–3; high regard for, by Chinese, 21, 75, 86–7; high regard for, by Filipinos, 112;
high regard for, by Greeks, 124, 132; high regard for, by Vietnamese, 233–4; instrumental view of, by Lebanese, 21, 200–1, 209; Latin American families, 176–7, 183; multicultural, 153; of women, 36, 40; profile of Filipino migrants, 98–9; refugee children, 188; retention rates, 42; second-generation Italians, 148–9

Edwards, Coral, 61

employment: Greek migrants, 133–4, 135; Italian migrants, 147–50; Latin American migrants, 181–2; Lebanese migrants, 192, 193, 199–200; see also unemployment

endogamy: in the Lebanese community, 210, 213; in the Vietnamese community, 236

English as a Second Language classes, 153

English language proficiency, 22, 181, 187, 195, 230, 238

English values, in Australian families, 25–6

Enlightenment, 27

equal opportunity legislation, 36

equal pay, 36

ethnicity: features which comprise, 3; relation to culture, 2–4; social construction of, 3

Europe, migration from, 11, 12, 14, 33–4

extended families: Aboriginal, 48–50, 51, 66, 68; Australian, 44–6; Chinese, 72, 83; European migrants, 33–4; Filipino, 100; Greek, 132; Italian, 151, 155, 157, 161; Latin American, 171–2, 182–3; Lebanese, 197, 205, 213; Vietnamese, 225

‘face’: in Chinese families, 73, 75, 77; in Filipino families, 102, 117–18; in Italian families, 155; in Lebanese families, 208; see also honour; shame

families: change within, 5; conflict within, 21–2; cross-cultural similarities, 20–4; defined, 4–5, 9, 44, 49, 145; describing, 4–6; effect of the state on, 6–7; experience of migration, 10–13; life cycle, 9–10; religious affiliation, 7–8; see also extended families; family reunion; family structure; family values; nuclear families; one-parent families; sibling group families; specific ethnic groups; split families

familism, 11–12, 198

Family Law Act 1975, 36

family reunion: Filipino families, 97–8, 114–15; Greek families, 131, 133; immigration policy, 12–13; Italian families, 151; Latin American families, 178, 179, 182; Vietnamese families, 21, 217, 225, 237–8

family sponsorship see family reunion

family structure: Chinese, 72, 74; cultural determinants, 14–15; Filipino, 103; Greek, 136; Latin American, 171, 190; Lebanese, 197–8; relation to industrialisation, 16, 28; Vietnamese, 239

family values: Australian, 28–31; Chinese, 72–6, 83–5, 88–90; defined, 8–9; effect of intermarriage, 17–18; Filipino, 100–2; generational change, 16–17; Greek, 128–9; Italian, 155–8; Latin American, 171, 179–84, 190; Lebanese, 199–205; liberalisation of, 46–7; life course approach, 9–10; Vietnamese, 220–4, 239; westernisation of, 15–16
fatherhood, concept of, 9
feelings: in Filipino families, 101-2; in Latin American families, 176
fellowship, in Filipino families, 100
feminism, 35-7
Fesl, Eve, 65
FILEF, 153
filial piety and responsibility:
Chinese families, 74, 83-4, 88, 89-90; Filipino families, 113; Lebanese families, 213
Filipino families, 96-120; adolescence, 111-12, 118-19; courtship patterns, 103-4; decision-making within, 106; demography of, 98; discipline within, 110-11; divorce, 106-7, 116-17; history of migration to Australia, 96-8; kinship systems, 101; maintenance of Filipino culture, 119; marriage, 104, 106-7; old age, 112-14; overseas family responsibilities, 114-15; place of children in, 107-9, 110-11, 118-19; religion, 102; respect for seniority, 100-1, 109-10; sense of identity, 118-19; social networks, 115-16, 119; structure, 103; values, 100-2; see also intermarriage
financial prosperity, in Chinese families, 22, 75, 86, 88-9
Four Virtues, 222
gender see sex roles
generational change see intergenerational issues
godparents: Filipino families, 101; Latin American families, 173-4
goldrush (1850s), 70
grant-in-aid workers, 153, 154
Greek families, 121-43; collectivist nature, 121-2; definitions, 132-3; diaspora, 125-8, 142, 143; divorce, 137, 141; experience of migration, 129-33, 142; maintenance of language and culture, 125-7, 128-9, 139, 140; marriage, 127, 137; membership of community, 124, 126-7; old age, 135-6, 138; place of children in, 123-4; sense of identity, 124-6, 128-9, 133; structure, 136; support network, 137-9; traditional family, 122-4; values, 128-9
harmony: Chinese families, 74-5, 83, 84, 88, 89; Filipino families, 102; in Confucianism, 222
heteropraxis, 26
Hoa Hao, 220
homosexual relationships, 37, 47, 163
Hong Kong, immigration from, 71
honour: Australian families, 41; Greek families, 123, 124; Latin American families, 168, 177; Lebanese families, 203-4, 208; notion of, 20; see also 'face'; shame
hospitality, among Greeks, 124
identity: Aboriginal families, 63-5, 66-9; Chinese families, 73, 87-8, 89, 92; Filipino families, 118-19; Greek families, 124-6, 128-9, 133; Italian families, 156-7, 164-5; Lebanese families, 196, 198, 201, 202, 206
illegitimate children, 177
immigration: families' experience of, 10-13; see also specific ethnic groups
immigration policy: as a determinant of family structure, 7; gender differences, 13; Greek families, 131; introduction of numerical assessment, 12-13; Italian
families, 145–6, 150–4; post-1973, 12–13; pre-1973, 10–12, 70; White Australia Policy, 10–11, 96–7

Immigration Restriction Act 1901, 10, 70

individualism, 22, 35, 73; see also personal autonomy

industrialisation, 16, 28

intercultural marriage see intermarriage

intergenerational issues:
Australian families, 44–6; cultural identity, 23; effect of change on family values, 16–17; Greek families, 139–40; Italian families, 146, 147–9, 150, 152, 155, 156, 159–60, 162; Lebanese families, 213; refugee families, 189; second generation, defined, 17, 165n; Vietnamese families, 225

intermarriage: Chinese families, 77–8; effect on family values, 17–18; Filipino families, 97–8, 104–6, 109, 110, 113–18; Greek families, 127, 140; Italian families, 154, 162–3; Latin American families, 184, 190; Lebanese families, 212–13

international conventions, 6

intimate relationships, Australian families, 37–9, 44

Islam, 193–5, 202, 205–6, 207, 210–11, 214

Italian families, 144–66;
commuting grandparents, 161; diversity of, 144; divorce, 158–9; experience of migration, 147, 150–2, 155; finances within, 149–50; increased freedom for girls in, 162; maintenance of language and culture, 151, 152, 159; marriage, 151, 162–4; old age, 154, 160–1; place of children in, 161–2; sense of identity, 156–7, 164–5; shift from peasant to industrial society, 143, 147, 157; social change, 145–7; values, 155–8

juvenile delinquency, Vietnamese families, 235

Kant, Immanuel, 27

kapwa, 100, 114

kinship see Aboriginal families; Filipino families

labour market see employment; unemployment; women in the workforce

language, and ethnic identity, 22, 85–6, 92

language classes, for immigrants, 151

Latin America, colonial history of, 168–70

Latin American families, 167–90; adjustment problems, 184–6; adolescence, 183; discipline within, 172–3, 183; display of feelings, 176; diversity of, 170–1; divorce, 175, 178–9; history of migration, 167–8; marriage, 174–5, 183–4; old age, 177, 186–7; paternal line of descent, 172; place of children in, 175–7, 181, 183; role of grandparents, 177, 182–3, 187; structure, 190; support network, 172–3, 179, 182–3, 185; use of names, 172; values, 171, 179–84, 190

law, and the family, 6–7, 203–4, 211–12

Law Reform Commission, 6

Lebanese families, 191–215; acquisition of social skills, 209; adolescence, 208; conflict between law and religion, 211–12; conflict between law and social values, 203–4; discipline within, 203–4; diversity of, 195–6; divorce, 211–12; history of migration, 191–4; maintenance of language and culture, 196–7;
marriage, 210–13; old age, 213–14; place of children in, 205–9; sense of identity, 196, 198, 201, 202, 206; separation from kin, 197; size, 205–6; structure, 197–8; traditional hospitality, 204; traditional preference for boys, 205, 206; values, 199–205

levirate, 50

life stages, 3

The Lost Children, 61

machismo, 174, 180

‘mail-order brides’, 104, 118

Malaysia, immigration from, 70

Mandarin, 71, 92

Marco Polo Association, 160

Marconi Club, 157

marianismo, 174, 180

Maronite Christians, 193, 194, 202

marriage: Aboriginal families, 56, 57, 69; Australian families, 29–30, 32, 34, 37–8; Chinese families, 76–7; concept of, 9–10; English laws on, 28; Filipino families, 104, 106–7; Greek families, 137; Italian families, 151, 162–4; Latin American families, 174–5, 183–4; Lebanese families, 210–13; post-war Australia, 32–4; religious affiliation, 8; systems of, 6; Vietnamese families, 235–6; see also arranged marriage; intermarriage; open marriage; proxy marriage

Marriage Act 1753, 28

masculinity: Filipino culture, 107; Greek culture, 123, 141; Latin American culture, 174

maternity leave, 36

‘me generation’, 35

Melkite Christians, 194, 202

men’s role see masculinity; patriarchy; sex roles; sexual morality

mental illness: among refugees, 189; Chinese attitude towards, 73–4, 93–4

mestizo population, Latin America, 169, 170

methodology, 18–19

middle class, growth of, 19th century, 29–30

migration see immigration

Mitchell, Sir Thomas, 53

moieties, in Aboriginal society, 57

morality, 8, 9

motherhood: concept of, 9; women’s perception of, 37

multi-family households, 15, 51

multiculturalism, 12, 146, 153, 154, 163, 165

Muslim Lebanese, 193–5, 202, 205–6, 207, 210–11, 214

nuclear families: Australian, 45; Chinese, 72; emphasis on, in familism, 12; Filipino, 100; Latin American, 171–2, 178; Lebanese, 197; origins, 27; post-war Australia, 33; Vietnamese, 224, 226

Nyungar people, 68

old age see aged persons

one-parent families: Aboriginal, 50; Australian, 28–9; Filipino, 103; immigrants compared to Australian-born, 15; Italian, 159; Latin American, 178; Lebanese, 195; Vietnamese, 225, 226–7

open marriage, 39

outmarriage see intermarriage

ownership, Aboriginal concept of, 55

‘parachute children’, 72

part-time employment, 37

patriarchy: Australian state ideology of, 151; Greek families, 122, 140–1; in Confucianism, 221; Italian families, 158, 159; Latin American families, 168, 170, 171, 180–1; Lebanese families,
197, 204; Vietnamese families, 228-9
peer pressure, Filipino adolescents, 111-12
personal autonomy: Australian families, 27, 29, 31, 32, 35, 38, 42; see also individualism
personal names: Aboriginal society, 56; Latin American society, 172
Phillips, Shane, 66-7
polygamy, 50, 212
poverty, and Aboriginal families, 51
pregnancy see childbirth
premarital sex, 8
privacy, within families, 7
proxy marriage, 151
public and private spheres, 27-8
qualification recognition, Filipino migrants, 99
racial discrimination: against Chinese adolescents, 92; against Italians, 147, 164; assimilation policy, 151-2
Read, Peter, 61
reciprocity: Aboriginal families, 55; Filipino families, 101; Greek families, 132; Latin American families, 185
Redfern Aboriginal Corporation, 66-7
refugees: Chinese, 71; Latin American, 168, 178, 187-9, 190; Vietnamese, 217-20, 235, 238-9
religion: Chinese families, 71; Filipino families, 102; Latin American families, 184; Lebanese families, 194-5, 196, 201-2; role of in families, 7-8; Vietnamese families, 220-3; see also ancestor worship; Buddhism; Cao Dai; Christianity; Hoa Hao; Islam
remarriage: 19th century Australia, 29; Chinese families, 80-2; concept of, 10; Latin American countries, 175
retirement: for Greeks, 133, 134-5; for the Chinese, 190-2
retrenchment, in Italian families, 148
scientific parenting, 30
second generation see intergenerational issues
self-employment, Italian families, 147
separation: Filipino marriages, 107, 117; Latin American marriages, 184-5; Vietnamese marriages, 236; see also divorce
settlement assistance, 7
sex discrimination legislation, 36
sex roles: Aboriginal families, 66; attachment theory, 32-3; Australian families, 39-40; Chinese families, 78-80; Filipino families, 105-6; Greek families, 123, 140-1; in Confucianism, 221-2; Italian families, 146, 158-60; Latin American families, 170, 171-2, 174, 176, 180-1, 182, 190; Lebanese families, 197-8, 206, 207-8; patriarchal religion, 8; relation to unemployment, 22; relation to values, 9; Vietnamese families, 224, 227-30, 233, 239;
westernisation, 16; women refugees, 188
sexual morality, double standard of: Filipino men, 103; Greek men, 137; Latin American men, 168, 170, 174; Lebanese men, 207
sexuality, 1920s, 30
shame: Filipino families, 102, 117; Greek families, 123; Lebanese families, 207, 208; notion of, 20; see also 'face'; honour
Shiite Muslims, 195
sibling group families, 227
single parent families see one-parent families
'sleep-overs', 111
social services, provision of, 153-4, 157-8, 160-1
South America, migration from, 12, 167-8
split families, 72, 88-9, 93
the state, and families, 6-7
suicide, of Chinese women, 79
Sunni Muslims, 195
support networks, 20-1; see also specific ethnic groups
supporting mother's benefit, 36, 40-1
Taiwan: child-rearing, 84; divorce, 81; immigration from, 70
Taoism, 220, 221
Three Obediences, 78, 222
Three Teachings, 220, 228
torture victims, Latin American, 187-8, 190
Turner, Buster, 67
unemployment: Chinese migrants, 80, 92-3; Filipino migrants, 99; Greek migrants, 138; Italian migrants, 147-8, 150; Latin American migrants, 178, 180-1; Lebanese migrants, 22, 194, 195, 199, 209; relation to gender, 37; Vietnamese migrants, 22, 229, 235; see also employment
United Kingdom, migration from, 14
values see family values
Vietnam: economic conditions, 223-4; immigration from, 70
Vietnamese families, 216-40; acculturation, 216, 239-40; adolescence, 233-5; diversity of household types, 226-7; divorce, 223, 236; ethnic Chinese, 217-18; family separation, 219, 225; history of migration, 217-20; maintenance of language and culture, 233; marriage, 235-6; middle age, 237; old age, 225, 230-1, 237-8; parent-child relationships, 230, 234; place of children in, 230, 231-3; residential concentration, 220, 225-6; size, 224; social interaction, 223; structure, 225-7, 239; support networks, 226; values, 239
welfare state, 150
westernisation: Chinese families, 91; defined, 26; effect on family values, 15-16; European origins of, 26-8; Lebanese families, 197
White Australia Policy, 10-11, 96-7
Whitlam Labor government, 70
women: conflict between law and social values, 203; education of, 36, 40; gender stereotyping, 11, 13, 135; health deterioration in Greek women, 134; immigration program for single Greek women, 131; see also sex roles; women in the workforce
women in the workforce: Australians, 32, 34, 36-7, 39-40; Filipinos, 99; Greeks, 133-5, 138-9; Italians, 148, 149, 155-6, 158; Latin American, 181-2; Lebanese, 22, 198, 200; Vietnamese, 22, 219, 228-9, 239
Women's Bureau, 36
Women's Business, 50, 66
youth see adolescence
The Australian population is drawn from over 100 different countries, making for great diversity in family life: in patterns of parenting, marriage, kin relationships and responsibilities, child rearing and the part played by older people in families.

What are the critical issues facing these families today? How are family relationships affected?

*Families and Cultural Diversity in Australia* surveys the characteristics of family life of key groups: Aboriginal, Anglo-Celtic, Chinese, Filipino, Greek, Italian, Latin American, Lebanese and Vietnamese. It examines the differences between recent and older immigrant groups, the choices families are making in response to changing social and economic environments and how this affects relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children, older people and their adult children.

*Families and Cultural Diversity in Australia* is an essential reference for anyone working with people from different backgrounds in fields such as Social Work, Health, Education, Law and Government.