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GRANDFATHERS – THEIR CHANGING FAMILY ROLES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

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1.0   INTRODUCTION

Families, both in New Zealand and worldwide, are undergoing processes of transformation and redefinition, becoming more heterogeneous in size and structure. Increasing life expectancy, decreasing fertility, changing gender roles, evolving patterns of work, marriage and divorce, all influence family structure including grandparenthood. Grandparents can range in age from under 30 to over 110 and grandchildren from newborns to retirees (Hagestad 1985). Contact between grandparents and grandchildren has been identified in the literature as an integral part of family life. Grandparents play key roles within families by promoting wide family cohesion and by transmitting knowledge and wisdom over the generations.[1] The importance of the grandparent role within families, to provide nurture to other family members, has been recognised in some countries such as the United States, where legislators have adopted laws regarding grandparent visitation rights for their grandchildren (McKay and Caverly 2004).

Thus it is surprising that the contributions which older people make within families have been neglected, and research has instead tended to focus on informal care of older people by family members (Harper 2004). This ignores the complexity of older people's lives and their interactions within families. The roles, experiences and expectations of grandparents have not been fully explored, and this is especially the case for grandfathers. Research on grandparents, as individuals and as part of families, has concentrated almost exclusively on grandmothers and overlooked the role of men as grandfathers. This role is significant for families in the context of social and economic change, and is related to wider issues of male identity and the roles which older men can play in families.

This paper seeks to redress a gap in our understanding by exploring issues related to grandfathering, and draws on a wide range of published source material. Very little of this relates specifically to New Zealand, so the paper also includes some ideas for groundbreaking research relevant to the local situation.

The objectives of the paper are:

> to examine the situation of grandfathers in New Zealand in the context of social and family change
> to explore the actual and potential roles of older men as grandfathers, within families
> to make comparisons between New Zealand and other comparable countries with respect to grandfathers and grandfathering.

The following section outlines how demographic trends shape the experience of grandparenthood, which applies to both grandfathers and grandmothers.

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1   Grandparents can also play a role in intergenerational conflict but this issue is not addressed in this paper.

2.0 DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AND GRANDPARENTHOOD

Demographic and social changes have altered the experience of grandparenthood. These changes, especially increased longevity, mean that many more individuals will experience grandparenthood, and for longer periods than was previously the case. Grandparenthood constitutes what Szinovacz calls a counter-transition – a transition determined not only by the older generation's characteristics and life choices but also by those of their children, grandchildren and even great-grandchildren (Szinovacz 1998). Therefore the experience of grandparenthood reflects not only population trends in at least two generations, but complex generational and intrafamilial behavioural patterns that cannot easily be identified using traditional sources of data such as population censuses. However, as an example of what can be done, Szinovacz (1998) uses a nationally representative sample of the US population to reveal the demographic profile of grandparents. The characteristics identified by Szinovacz and comments on their relevance for New Zealand are listed below.

> Grandparenthood is a common experience and most grandparents have multiple grandchildren.

The New Zealand Census does not indicate whether people ever had children and there are no published statistics on age of mother at first birth. However, some information is available from the *Living Standards of Older New Zealanders* study, which covers a representative sample of 3,060 people aged 65 and over (Fergusson, Hong, Horwood, Jensen and Travers 2001). Table 1 shows that over 90 percent of older people have raised children, about half of them having had families of two or three. Respondents aged 85 and over were less likely to have had large families. People in their late eighties and nineties in 2001 were in the child-bearing ages during the 1930s, when birth rates were low, whereas people aged around 70 in 2001 are the parents of the 'baby boom' era. The likelihood of having grandchildren relates, as already noted, to fertility rates in two generations, to life expectancy and to parental age when children are born.

Table 1: Number of children raised – by age of respondent
(Figures are column percentages)

Number of children	65-74 years	75-84 years	85+ years
0	7.7	9.1	9.2
1	3.7	7.6	14.1
2	23.1	25.0	27.8
3	26.5	24.0	28.1
4	18.3	16.9	9.6
5	9.7	8.0	7.7
More than 5	11.0	9.5	3.5
	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Living Standards of Older New Zealanders consent database

> Grandparenthood is generally a mid-life transition. However, the age at which people become grandparents may differ by ethnicity.

Taking the whole New Zealand population in the last few decades, and making assumptions based on averages, it is estimated that people become grandparents in their early fifties and this is consistent with overseas literature. For example, if a non-Māori woman born in 1945 gave birth to her first child at the median age of 24, this would have been in 1969.[2] If her daughter, born in the same year, gave birth to her first child at the median age for her cohort (27), this would be in 1996, and her mother would become a grandmother at age 51. Her husband would, again on average, be three years older and would become a grandfather at age 54. For a Māori woman, the same scenario suggests that she would become a grandmother at age 44, and her husband a grandfather at 47, taking into account earlier childbearing. These assumptions may not apply to re-partnered grandparents where different age patterns may be evident. However, these are only estimates based on averages, and much better information is needed for adequate analysis.

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2   Information based on Table 3.2 in Pool and Johnstone (1999).

Given such estimates, the following four points, made by Szinovacz, are likely to be the case in New Zealand.

> At the onset of grandparenthood, grandparents are typically married and employed, therefore have competing roles. They are likely to experience retirement from employment and death of a spouse after becoming a grandparent.

> Grandparents, particularly those with young grandchildren, are likely to have living parents and therefore may have to balance elder-care and grandchild-care responsibilities, even if for a short period of time.

> The intervals between the births of the first and last grandchild are quite long, therefore grandchildren's contact with grandparents varies according to the cumulative effects of the grandchildren's birth order and the grandparent's gender and ethnicity.

> Nearly two-thirds of women experience the birth of great-grandchildren but men are unlikely to survive to their grandchildren's adulthood. While the majority of families will experience four living generations at some point, the duration of four-generation families is quite short for most families.

In New Zealand average life expectancy at age 65 has grown significantly for both men and women in the last 50 years (Table 2). Working with the estimates and averages cited above, non-Māori men can expect to be grandparents for 28 years and Māori men for 31 years. The comparable figures for women are non-Māori 34 and Māori 36, so that more women will see their great-grandchildren. Despite lower life expectancy, earlier child-bearing means that Māori are as likely, if not a little more likely, to see their great-grandchildren, but again Māori women have a better chance than Māori men.

Table 2: Life expectancy at age 65, by sex, Māori and non-Māori

Date		Life expectancy (years)		Average date of death	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
1950-52	Total	12.8	14.8	77.8	79.8
	Māori	10.5	12.5	75.5	77.5
2000-02	Total	16.7	20.0	81.7	85.0
	Māori	12.7	15.1	77.7	80.1

Source: Demographic Trends 2004, Statistics New Zealand, Table 4.11

While grandparenthood may well be a near universal experience for those with adult children, the experience itself is varied, depending on the age of the grandparent at the birth of their first (and last) grandchild, their gender, ethnicity and other roles. Zodgekar (2000: 100) identified that increased life expectancy and growing numbers of older people in the family have produced the "two generation

geriatric family" – that is, children reaching old age while their parents are still alive. The emergence of two generations of older people within a family will cause changes in the network of mutual support among family members. At present around 92 percent of older people live in the community, many with informal family support (Zodgekar 2000). Traditionally, women have provided this informal care, but their increased labour force participation signals that the ability to provide this is being reduced. In addition, although the decline in mortality will increase the number of living generations within a family (beanpole family structure) the long-term decline in fertility reduces the number of living children and grandchildren available to provide support for older generations. Kemp (2003: 208) suggests that, as the average size of families is decreasing (in terms of numbers of children), "grandchildren may emerge as potentially more important sources of emotional meaning and practical support for grandparents than in the past". And grandparents may also become more involved in providing support and care to grandchildren.

Of particular relevance to New Zealand is how ethnicity mediates the experience of grandparenting. Māori have larger numbers of children than Pākehā (although differences in Māori and non-Māori fertility rates are reducing) and have them at earlier ages, which impacts upon the age of first-time grandparenthood and the duration of the role (mediated through life expectancy). Māori have higher rates of teenage parenthood which means that Māori grandparents may have both grandchildren and dependent children at the same time. Another consequence of higher rates of teen-parenthood is the increased likelihood of grandparents becoming surrogate parents for their grandchildren. Cultural practices of whāngai[3] and the central role of whānau are also important in relation to the experiences of grandparenthood for Māori.

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3   An informal fostering or adoption of a young person (http://nzhistory.net.nz/Gallery/tereo/words.htm [8/8/05]) however, there is little research on this practice.

2.1 HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION – THREE GENERATION FAMILIES

Only a small proportion of New Zealanders in the age groups likely to be grandparents live with family members other than their spouses or their children (Table 3). However, this varies by ethnicity. While the proportion of Māori living in multiple family households remains under a quarter from age 40 onwards, the proportion increases with age for Pacific and Asian people, rising to over half from age 60 onwards. Thus in these communities grandparents are frequently living in households with their grandchildren, but this is rare for Pākehā. It is not known what impact living in a multi-generational household has on grandparent involvement with grandchildren.

Table 3: Usual household composition, 2001, by ethnicity
Percentage living in multiple family households by age

Age group (years)	Māori	Pacific	Asian	Pākehā	Total
40-59	24	39	27	9	12
60-74	23	52	52	8	9
75 and over	22	61	57	5	6

Source: Davey (2003a)

3.0 GRANDPARENTS – ROLES, IDENTITY AND IMPORTANCE FOR FAMILIES

In this section several points must be borne in mind. Firstly, because of the lack of information specifically on grandfathers, much of the discussion relates to grandparents in generic terms. Secondly, the majority of the research on grandparents comes from the US, with some from the United Kingdom.[4] While there may be similarities to the New Zealand context, local research is essential to address and reflect the specifics of this society. For example, the Māori concepts of kinship and whānau are important in examining the role of grandparents and grandfathers in New Zealand.

A third factor that needs to be taken into account is the academic discipline base of the research reviewed.[5] Most of the work on grandparenting comes from social psychology, although there are several perspectives within this; for example, child development and life stage development. A common method employed in this discipline is to examine levels of satisfaction with the grandparent role and grandparent/grandchild relationships. This involves administering psychological instruments and measures to participants and subjecting the results to statistical analysis to test hypotheses (see, for example, Thomas 1986a,b; Radin, Oyserman and Benn 1991). This approach has the effect of isolating grandparenting experiences from the wider social context. Studies which employ a qualitative and contextual approach (for example, Waldrop, Weber, Herald, Pruett, Cooper and Juozapavicius 1999; Roberto, Allen and Blieszner 2001; Bullock 2005) position grandparenting within wider family and societal structures. This gives a 'real world' viewpoint, but does not have the same statistical rigour and replicability. Both types of studies are covered in the following discussion.

3.1 THE ROLES OF GRANDPARENTS

Despite the relatively young age at which adults may become grandparents, the grandparent role is often associated with norms for old age that are inappropriate given the age range and diversity of grandparents as noted above (Gauthier 2002). Clavan (cited in Hanks 2001: 656) suggests that grandparent is an ideological rather than a real role in that there is a relationship by kinship "but there are no normative rights and obligations attached to it". Therefore grandparents must construct the role for themselves. Silverstein and Marenco (2001: 493-4) add that, as the grandparent role lacks explicit expectations about how it can be performed, it is difficult to "fully understand the multi-dimensional and fluid nature of this complex family role". This suggests that a multi-disciplinary approach is needed in examining grandparenthood.

Some studies of grandparenthood have taken the perspective of the grandparents themselves, examining the meaning of the role to their personal identities. From this viewpoint Kivnick's study (1982), which involved 286 grandparents, identified five dimensions:

> Centrality – the degree to which the role of grandparent was central to their life.

> Valued elder – a traditional concept of the wise and esteemed elder.

> Indulgence – an attitude of lenience and tolerance towards grandchildren.

> Immortality – feelings of immortality through descendants.

> Re-involvement with the past – grandparenthood as a means of life review.

More commonly, the analysis has identified the grandparent role from a family standpoint. Bengston (1985) identified four symbolic roles of grandparenthood. These are:

> being there

> the national guard or family watchdog

> arbitrators

> active participants in the family's social construction of its history.

4　Unless otherwise stated the studies cited come from the USA.
5　See Appendix One for comments on the process of literature search and the methods used.

The role of 'being there' has two parts. The first suggests that the presence of grandparents serves to maintain the identity of the family and provides a buffer which stands between the next generation and their mortality. Secondly, the presence of grandparents during transitions such as divorce and first childbirth provides an anchor of stability and an expression of family continuity.

The symbolic role of 'national guard' or 'family watchdog' involves grandparents in the role of providing help, support and protection if needed.

Seeing grandparents as arbitrators reflects a change in focus from transmission to negotiation in intergenerational relationships. Grandparents may negotiate between parents and children concerning values and behaviour.

The final symbolic role suggests that grandparents play an important role in building connections between the past, present and future and in shaping family identity and history. In the New Zealand context many Māori writers, for example Durie (2001), have identified the role that older Māori perform in maintaining cultural identity within the family and wider Māori society. Ra (2002) suggests that it is through the knowledge and wisdom of older people that young Māori can learn the true meanings and values of being Māori. Intergenerational family identity has been positively related to wellbeing in some studies (Reitzes 2004), further emphasising the beneficial contribution that grandparents can make within families.[6]

Taking the perspective of grandchildren, Kornhaber and Woodward (1981, cited in Block 2000) listed numerous roles for grandparents:

> *Historians:* giving a sense of family history for grandchildren.

> *Mentors:* providing knowledge and wisdom.

> *Role models:* who help to socialise grandchildren.

> *Wizards:* grandparents who use their imaginations to amuse grandchildren.

> *Nurturers:* grandparents who become an integral part of grandchildren's social support system.

Again examining the role from the grandchildren's perspective, several studies have focused on the style of grandparenting, ie, how grandparents behave towards their grandchildren. Neugarten and Weinstein (1964) developed a typology of grandparenting styles, based on a sample size of 140 grandparent couples, which is still cited in more recent research. This included five distinct styles and the researchers were able to measure their incidence as between grandmothers and grandfathers:

> *Formal:* where the grandparent follows prescribed roles and maintains clear lines between parenting and grandparenting (33 percent of grandfathers had this style compared with 31 percent of grandmothers).

> *Fun-seeker:* the grandparent has an informal style of playful companionship for the mutual benefit of grandparent and grandchild (24 percent of grandfathers and 29 percent of grandmothers).

> *Surrogate parent:* the grandparent takes on caretaking responsibilities for their grandchildren (none of the grandfathers but 14 percent of grandmothers).

> *Reservoir of family wisdom:* the grandparent as the source of knowledge and special skills (6 percent of grandfathers and only 1 percent of grandmothers).

> *Distant figure:* the grandparent has little emotional or social investment in their grandchildren (29 percent of grandfathers had this style of grandparenting compared to 19 percent of grandmothers).

This now classic study depicts grandfathers as more likely to be formal and distant in their behaviour towards their grandchildren, and grandmothers to be more nurturing and informal. However, all five styles, apart from the surrogate parent role, are found among grandparents of both sexes.[7]

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6   This study, from the discipline of social psychology, evaluated wellbeing by employing rating scales designed to measure self-esteem and depressive symptoms.
7   It is worth noting that grandparents who are distant and/or cut off from family members are unlikely to volunteer to participate in studies on grandparenthood, therefore the role these grandparents play in families and the impact of this is under-researched.

3.2   GRANDFATHERS AND GRANDMOTHERS

Most of what we know about grandparenting is based on women's experiences. Studies that have included men present grandfathers within a generic context of grandparenthood. Thus research on grandparenthood is filtered through a feminised lens that may ignore and/or conceal the experiences of grandfathering (Roberto et al 2001). Waldrop and colleagues suggested three reasons for this gender bias: women are traditionally more willing to participate in research, grandmothers demonstrate greater interaction with their grandchildren, and women have a longer life expectancy (Waldrop et al 1999). Fingerman (2004) makes the point that much of the early research on grandparenting focused on lineage through the matrilineal line, from mother to daughter and so on. This was based on the assumption that women are the main facilitators of intergenerational ties and therefore grandchildren have a much closer relationship with maternal grandparents in general and maternal grandmothers in particular. Somary and Stricker (1998: 54) suggest that the special role of the maternal grandmother is an offshoot of the strong mother-daughter bond, and that the transition to motherhood strengthens the closeness and harmony between new mothers and their own mothers, but increases the tension between new mothers and their mothers-in-law.

As a result of these biases and assumptions, much of the information on grandfathering must be sought in comparisons between grandmothers and grandfathers. In addition to developing the categorisation noted above, Neugarten and Weinstein (1964) interviewed grandparent couples about satisfaction with the grandparenting role and their 'style' of grandparenting. They found that grandfathers were less likely than grandmothers to find significance in grandchildren as a source of biological renewal (perhaps because the majority were maternal grandparents). One of the major findings (and surprises) of this research was that 29 percent of grandfathers and 36 percent of grandmothers derived no real satisfaction from being a grandparent, describing the role as difficult and unpleasant (Neugarten and Weinstein 1964). This lack of satisfaction was not a result of geographical separation, as the selection criteria required grandparents to live only a short distance from at least one set of grandchildren. Neugarten and Weinstein concluded that many of the grandparents who expressed dissatisfaction might have idealised the role, then found the reality different from their expectations.

Later studies (examined here in chronological order) comparing the levels of satisfaction of grandmothers and grandfathers have shown different results. Thomas (1986b) found that grandmothers expressed higher levels of satisfaction than grandfathers. These may reflect continuity in the grandmother's role from earlier family experiences of childcare and assistance in the home, which are likely to be areas of female competency. Exercising these functions might bring satisfaction based on a sense of mastery. However, the grandfathers in Thomas's research were more satisfied than those in earlier studies, suggesting cohort differences in perceptions of the role. In another study, Thomas (1986a) found that grandfathers agreed that part of their role was to have some responsibility for the care of grandchildren. The author points out that this does not imply that grandfathers did take more responsibility than grandmothers, only that they believed it was appropriate to do so.

Somary and Stricker (1998) investigated differences between men and women in their expectations before becoming grandparents and compared this with their actual experiences by interviewing 152 individuals. Women expected greater satisfaction from the grandparenting role than men, were more likely to emphasise how helpful they wanted to be to the grandchild, and to expect the grandchild to have a central role in their lives. In terms of the actual experience of grandparenthood, women again experienced higher levels of satisfaction than men. However, the grandmothers and grandfathers did not differ in the amount of interaction with their grandchild, suggesting that they operate as a team during the pre-school years. All the participants reported higher levels of satisfaction with the grandparent role than they had expected before the child's birth. Gender differences in expectations that the grandchild would play a central role in their lives also disappeared after the grandchildren were born.

High levels of satisfaction were also found in Peterson's (1999) study of Australian grandparents. These were linked to frequent contact with their grandchildren rather than the sex of the grandparent. Another Australian study found that grandmothers saw at least one of their grandchildren considerably more often than grandfathers did, but there was no significant difference between grandmothers and grandfathers in how often they looked after a grandchild (Millward 1997). However, none of the grandfathers in the study said that they took the primary responsibility for the grandchild. This was rather the role of their spouse, perhaps reflecting the age of the grandchildren (not mentioned in the study report). Another finding was that grandmothers saw more of their daughters' children than their sons' children, but for grandfathers there was no such difference.

Reitzes and Mutran (2004) compared grandmothers and grandfathers when examining how measures of self and grandparent identity impacted on the frequency of contact between grandparent and grandchildren. The study found that grandmothers had more contact with their grandchildren and that this is linked to gendered responsibilities, in particular, the norm for women to be 'kin-keepers' and for this to be a central part of their identity. The authors suggest that this norm makes grandmothers' contact with grandchildren the 'right and proper' behaviour for women, whereas for grandfathers, contact can be viewed as voluntary (Reitzes and Mutran 2004). Thus while satisfaction with grandparenthood for women may be based on gendered self-identity, for men it may involve other factors, such as positive feelings about the grandparent role and how central the role is to their personal identity.

These studies suggest that views about age and gender-appropriate behaviour within families have evolved since Neugarten and Weinstein's 1964 study. In more recent times grandparents may actively seek to be involved in their grandchildren's upbringing and greater informality within families may have developed, which may have contributed to higher levels of satisfaction with the grandparenting role. Given different contexts, methods and viewpoints in the various studies, no firm conclusions on trends can be reached. Nevertheless, it is clear that gender expectations and stereotypes have changed over time in society as a whole, and that these are influential with respect to the roles of grandmothers and grandfathers.

3.3   NEW ZEALAND INFORMATION ON GRANDPARENTS

While some interest in grandparenthood has been shown by the voluntary and public sectors, there is little academic literature on the topic in New Zealand. In the mid-1990s, Age Concern called for research on understanding the roles of grandparents and how these impact on families and society (Age Concern New Zealand 1997). The 1997 Prime Ministerial Taskforce on Positive Ageing pointed out the lack of contact between older and younger members of society and saw grandparenting as one of the key societal investments for the future (TPA 1997: 74-79). The 1999 International Year of Older People stimulated programmes in schools encouraging intergenerational links, and such programmes have become part of the Positive Ageing Strategy Action Plans (Davey and Wilton 2005a). The Positive Ageing Strategy itself strongly encourages community and family involvement by older people (Dalziel 2001).

More recently the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Charitable Trust has advocated for grandparents with caring responsibilities. The personal experiences of being a grandparent have also been explored by 10 New Zealand writers, male and female, of different ethnicities (Else 2000).

As was found in the international context, New Zealand research tends to focus on the experiences of grandparents in general, or specifically on grandmothers. The small body of academic research on grandparenting in New Zealand includes the work of the Intergenerational Relations and Positive Ageing programme at Victoria University of Wellington[8], and several theses, some still in progress.

Bulic's (2004) Masters' thesis in Psychology, examined the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren. She found that proximity was a factor in promoting contact, that grandmothers have more contact with their grandchildren than grandfathers, and that both grandmothers and grandfathers felt that they had a close relationship with their grandchildren. Another finding was that during times of family transition and/or crisis, such as parents' divorce or separation, grandparents wanted to provide stability for the family in general and grandchildren in particular.[9] This is consistent with Bengston's 'being there' role and theories about the stabilising role of grandparents (Bengston 1985).

In her sociology masterate, Missen (2002) applied Bengston's categorisation to the Pākehā grandparents in her focus groups. The roles included:

> Negotiators – building friendly relationships between the generations, with their child's partner and with the other set of grandparents.

> Family stabilisers – being there in times of need and crisis, which can involve taking primary care of grandchildren.

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8   Publications related to this programme are listed in Davey and Wilton (2005b), including several papers on intergenerational relations in the New Zealand Chinese community.

9   It is possible that grandparents can also be barriers to stability in times of family transition/crisis; however, there is little research on this aspect.

> Supporters and listeners for both parents and grandchildren.

> Confidants for grandchildren.

> Role models.

The research also identified important gender differences, consistent with the international literature. Maternal grandmothers often maintained close connections with their grandchildren after parental divorce or separation, but paternal grandfathers and grandmothers reported less, or a loss, of contact with their grandchildren. Another gendered aspect of the grandparent role, noted by Missen, is that women often act as proxy or 'fictive' grandmothers to children who are not their kin. However, older men's contact with children outside the family structure (and sometimes even within it) is constrained by concerns about vulnerability to accusations of sexual abuse and being perceived as 'dirty old men'. This is an important issue for older men which deserves closer scrutiny, and which may constrain how they relate to children in general.

Armstrong, working in New Zealand from a US base, examined whether the role of grandmother is associated with social age (Armstrong 2003). She examined the perspectives of New Zealand grandmothers from four ethnic groups and found that for the 30 women interviewed, becoming a grandmother was a central marker in their definitions of 'old'.

An emerging issue for grandparents, identified in New Zealand as well as overseas, is the increasing number of grandparents having primary responsibility for raising grandchildren, where parents are absent or unwilling/unable do so. The Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Trust has been active in advocating for this group and has produced a handbook providing information about the financial help and support services which are available, how to manage family relationships, and legal issues surrounding custody and access (Worrall 2001). The most recent report from the Trust cites that statistics from the 2001 Census reveal that over 4,000 children are being parented by their grandparents, and cites overseas evidence demonstrating that the number of grandparents raising grandchildren has significantly increased (Worrall 2005). In a study of 323 kin caregivers (including but not exclusively grandparents) the reasons given for assuming care of grandchildren were due to neglect, drug and/or alcohol abuse, child abuse, mental illness, domestic violence, imprisonment of parent, parent illness, abandonment or death of a parent (Worrall 2005).

Some further information on grandparents can be found within the wider context of research on New Zealand families. For example, Metge's (1995) ethnographic account of modern Māori families demonstrates the dominance of grandmothers in grandparent/grandchild relationships. Another relevant piece of work is the *Transactions in the Mid-Life Family monograph* (Koopman Boyden et al 2000). This concentrates on individuals in mid-life (40-54 years), a life stage where first-time grandparenthood is relatively common. Information on grandparents is limited to the receipt of care by mid-life individuals (see chapter by Mitchell and Hendy). However, as the monograph investigates the nature and extent of family transactions that occur between those in mid-life and others, it may shed light on the competing roles (family, work and leisure) experienced by first-time grandparents.

4.0 GRANDFATHERS – PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL CONCEPTS

4.1 OLDER MEN AND GENDER ROLES

Despite growing academic interest in the topic of ageing, the lives, concerns and issues of older men have not been extensively researched.[10] Thompson (1994: 5) suggests that the fact that women significantly outnumber men among older people has led to a 'feminisation' of older people. Thus issues surrounding ageing have been studied and theorised mainly in relation to the experiences of women. He further suggests that older men are defined by an assumption that they have experienced significant losses: their occupational role, their livelihood, their community of co-workers and their health and independence. These then lead to a perception of diminished masculinity (Thompson 1994).

Another reason for the lack of research on the social lives of older men is the failure to theorise older people in terms of socially constructed gender. The literature focuses on the biological differences between older men and women rather than differentiating older men and women from other groups in society by their cohort-specific gendered social lives. Research on masculinities as a way to examine men's social lives is a relatively recent area of social theory (Connell 1995). This research has tended to concentrate on young to middle-aged men, marginalising the experiences of older men. A clear example of this is the *Journal of Men's Studies*. This was first published in 1992, but (up to mid-2005) has very few articles on the gendered experiences of older men and none on grandfathering.

The role of older men within families may also have been neglected because 'prototype masculinity' or 'hegemonic masculinity' has been defined by paid work (Connell 1995). Men and male roles have been measured against the historical prototype of the "white, heterosexual, middle-aged, married, good provider" (Gradman 1994: 105). This remains a powerful, dominant script against which the self and others are evaluated, even though it does not reflect the reality for many groups of men, including retired men (Thompson and Whearty 2004). Until recently male and female roles, in society and in the family, were clearly defined. To be a man meant to be in paid work, to share the community of other men and to support a family (Gradman 1994). Despite changing roles, for example, the increased labour force participation of women and the expectation that men provide more than a solely financial role within the family, Gradman's (1994) study reveals that men's occupational role is still used to negotiate family, leisure and community identities.

A study of masculine identity and older men in Scotland by Emslie, Hunt and O'Brien (2004) examined their attitudes towards gender roles and role reversal. All of the men emphasised the importance of paid work as part of the identity of being a man. The researchers found that the majority supported the notion of the traditional male breadwinner role within their families, even when circumstances such as illness and divorce meant that some role reversal occurred.

For older men, the loss of paid work through retirement[11] or redundancy[12] can threaten self-identity, particularly as they may perceive this as entering the feminine world of the household and family. Current cohorts of older men may retain beliefs about manhood centred on the work ethic and stereotypical understandings of the appropriate roles for men and women. These may influence their view of grandfatherhood, and the roles they adopt towards their grandchildren and within their extended families. However, there is likely to be change based on cohort effects. Many studies of the transition from paid work have concentrated on the cohort of men who were young before the growth of feminism and the changes that that growth heralded (Gradman 1994). Younger cohorts of men may have very different attitudes towards their roles, identity and behaviour in relation to employment and family commitments. This is clearly another area calling out for focused research.

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10   See, for example, *Changing Worlds and the Ageing Subject* (Öberg, Närvänen, Näsman and Olsson 2004), which has a chapter on older women and identity but not one on older men.

11   It is important to note that much of the literature cited in this paper has been produced in countries which have compulsory retirement ages, unlike New Zealand.

12   Illustrated in studies such as Maule, Cliff and Taylor (1996), Couch (1998) and Davey (2003b).

4.2   LIFE COURSE DEVELOPMENT

Theories of psychological development over the human life course suggest that intimate family ties become more salient in late old age. Erikson's model links eight life course stages to different developmental tasks and goals (cited in Sinnott and Shifren 2001). According to this theory, in later life people are addressing the psychological conflicts between generativity and stagnation, and between integrity and despair. The concept of generativity is of special interest when discussing grandparenthood, as it may be defined as an altruistic interest in succeeding generations. Generativity can also be expressed in wider society through activities such as volunteering and mentoring, but in the realm of the family through intimate relationships with an eye towards future generations. Erikson identified generativity as an important psychological quality for mid-life adults, who at this stage seek to ensure the wellbeing of their children and the next generation (McAdams and Logan 2004). According to the theory of generativity in this phase of life, older men may shift their focus towards intimate family relationships rather than superficial role-driven relationships, such as may characterise the workplace.

Gutmann (1994) takes the life course development approach further by suggesting that for both men and women later life is a period of "reclaimed powers". Based on the premise that parenthood is a key identity for adults, Gutmann suggests that the gendered aspects of the parenting role help shape role and identity in later life. He argues that the parenting role for women links them to the interior sphere of the family with a focus on relationships and nurturing, while the role for men links them to the exterior world of resource acquisition and defending the family. Therefore, according to this theoretical approach, during the parenting phase of the life cycle women give up their assertiveness in order to maintain the family structure, whereas men give up their nurturing traits. However, once the parenting role has been completed, older men and women can reclaim aspects of themselves and a 'sex-role turnover' takes place. Older men are able to rework the more aggressive personality style of their youth and reclaim aspects of themselves that are associated with feminine traits, maternal tendencies and nurture (Gutmann 1994: 203). Suggesting that older men become more 'feminine' in their behaviours and areas of interest situates ageing as a 'negation of masculinity' (Thompson 1994: 13). This links with the earlier point that ageing is feminised and research on ageing tends to focus on the gendered experiences of women.

However, rather than labelling emotional connectedness as a feminine quality it may be more useful to examine how gender-appropriate behaviour is continually changing through the life course and for different cohorts.

4.3   THE EXPERIENCE OF GRANDFATHERHOOD

As already noted, very few studies have focused exclusively on grandfatherhood – its meaning, its roles and how it is experienced. The conventional view portrays grandfathers as having "peripheral, distant, or limited involvement with their grandchildren, usually offering only economic and instrumental support" (Waldrop et al 1999: 35). However, some studies challenge this view.

Cunningham-Burley's (1984) groundbreaking work in the UK illustrates some methodological and gender-based issues. In this study 18 couples were interviewed, once before they became grandparents and twice after the birth of their first grandchild, with the purpose of understanding how grandparents constructed an 'appropriate grandparent role' and the meanings they attached to this. Cunningham-Burley found that it was difficult to get the men to contribute and women dominated the process – from the initial contact through to the actual interview. The women talked more and seemed to display their feelings more openly. However, grandfathers did talk at length once a topic of their choice was introduced (mainly issues unrelated to the subject of the interview). The grandfathers' responses to questions during the interviews tended to be generalised statements rather than talk about personal experiences. Grandfathers were more likely to respond to questions with one or two word answers and/or to agree with their wives' comments.[13] Cunningham-Burley (1984: 327) makes the point that participation in an interview depends on the salience of the topics being considered and in her study the grandfathers seemed distanced from the questions. She suggests this may be a result of gendered assumptions, on the part of the participants and the interviewer, about the appropriate roles for men and women within families.

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13   These points contradict previous research (for example Spender 1985), which reports that, in mix-gender verbal encounters, men dominate the discussion in terms of topics and amount of talk.

Despite this reticence, some valuable points arose in the study. Firstly, talking about family matters outside the family was seen as an activity for women but not for men, and the same applied to discussing grandparenthood (Cunningham-Burley 1984). Secondly, the age of the grandchild was an important factor. Both men and women suggested that while the grandchild was young was a time for grandmothers (particularly in helping the new parents), but as the grandchild grew older grandfathers would 'come into their own'. Cunningham-Burley concludes by suggesting that what are considered appropriate behaviours and reactions can limit grandfathers' portrayal of their experiences. But this does not imply that grandparenthood is less significant to them or that they do not attach meaning to this role. Another conclusion, which has significance for future research, is that she and the grandmothers employed different concepts and meanings surrounding grandparenthood. An example she provides is the initial telephone contact. If it was a grandfather who first answered the telephone call, then upon hearing what the topic was they always handed over the conversation to the grandmother. At the time this did not appear to the researcher, or the grandmother or grandfather, to be remarkable because "it was as if the grandfathers' involvement was considered incidental by both grandparents" (Cunningham-Burly 1984: 327). These findings clearly need to be borne in mind in the design and conduct of research examining grandfatherhood and how it is perceived.

Tinsley and Parke (1988) investigated how the age of the grandfather related to his role in the socialisation of young grandchildren. Grandfathers, grandmothers, fathers and mothers were observed playing with infant children/grandchildren. They found that infants responded more positively with mothers, fathers and grandmothers than with grandfathers. However, when the grandfathers were divided into age groups – 36-49, 50-57 and 58-68 – they found that the middle age group responded most positively to their infant grandchildren. This observation led the researchers to conclude that there is an "optimal match between grandfather age and grandchild age that offsets the fact the grandfathers have fewer contact opportunities with infants" (Tinsley and Parke 1988: 245). Quite where this finding leads is a matter of debate, but replication of the study might throw some light on contextual and behavioural factors.

The focus on expressive fatherhood – fathers becoming more nurturing towards their children – is relatively recent (see, for example, Lewis and Salt 1986; Hanson and Bozett 1991). The recent emphasis on gender equality, which has increased awareness of the importance of fathering, may also have an impact on grandfathering (Block 2000). Russell (1986) suggests grandfatherhood may give older men an opportunity to express feelings of nurturing by becoming involved with their grandchildren. Russell's study compared maternal and paternal grandparents from the same family, with a focus on grandfathers. Grandfathers reported spending less time with grandchildren than grandmothers, but 75 percent of grandfathers had regular weekly contact. The types of activities grandfathers engaged in with their grandchildren included having a cuddle, sitting and talking/listening, playing with their grandchildren, reading a book and playing rough and tumble games. The men rated the quality of their relationship with their grandchildren as being an important aspect of the grandparent role and were just as likely as grandmothers to describe their grandparent/grandchild relationships as warm and close.

4.4   GRANDFATHERS AS SURROGATE PARENTS

The number of grandparents who take on the primary responsibility for raising their grandchildren has increased due to demographic, social, economic and political changes. Several studies have focused on grandmothers in this situation and the concomitant risks of stress, health problems, social isolation and inadequate resources (Edwards 2003). Little is known about custodial grandfathers, because women are perceived to be the main caregivers. Bullock's study (2005) focusing on the experiences of US rural grandfathers raising grandchildren, mostly with a spouse present, is significant because both grandfathering and the rural experience are neglected topics. The grandfathers interviewed experienced feelings of powerlessness during the transition from grandparent to custodial (grand) parent. They were concerned about daily caregiving activities and their perceived ability to continue providing long-term care for the grandchild (Bullock 2005). The feeling of powerlessness was linked to a lack of control which grandparents have in circumstances that result in their acting as custodial parents.

The positive contributions grandfathers can make to pre-school children have been examined in a study that focuses on the relationship between grandfathers, teenage mothers and young grandchildren (Radin et al 1991). Based upon the assumption that children of teenagers experience

intellectual and adaptive deficits, grandfathers who act as surrogate parents can have a role in preventing some of these developing, particularly where the teenage father is not an active parent (Radin et al 1991). Using a psychological child development model, the researchers theorised that if a grandfather had more and better quality involvement with a grandchild with teenage parents, this would lead to higher levels of cognitive development for the grandchild. They found that grandfathers did exert a positive influence on the children of their teenage daughters who lived at home, by acting as a role model.

This aspect of grandfathering leads into areas related to family policy, and a note of caution needs to be sounded. It cannot be assumed that biological (or adoptive) kinship of itself means that people are able or willing to take on high levels of caring responsibility. Beck-Gernsheim (1998) suggests that the family is becoming more of an 'elective' relationship – an association of individuals who each bring to it their own interests, experiences and plans, and who are each subjected to different controls, risks and constraints. These may run counter to traditional assumptions about caring roles.

4.5 ETHNIC DIFFERENCES

The meaning attached to the role of grandfather is socially and culturally mediated in several ways. One of these is through ethnicity.[14] Kivett (1991) compared African American and Caucasian men's experiences of grandfatherhood in a rural setting in the US. This study assumes that African American family structures should be understood as culturally distinct patterns rather than deviations from the norm (Kivett 1991: S251). Acknowledgement of ethnic differences in family type and structures, and the meanings attributed to these, is an important point to note in the New Zealand context.

Kivett's study identified several differences in relation to grandfathering between the two ethnic groups. Compared with Caucasian grandfathers, African American grandfathers showed greater heterogeneity in their role in terms of numbers of grandchildren and the types of support given and received. Both groups saw the grandfather role as more affectionate than functional, with expressions of closeness, 'getting along' and consensus. However, the grandfather role had a greater centrality for African American men's identity than for Caucasian men.[15] This illustrates different meanings attached to families and family structures, particularly in relation to intergenerational sharing (Kivett 1991: S256).

4.6 GRANDFATHERS AND INTERGENERATIONAL FACTORS

In line with other research, Russell (1986) found that paternal grandfathers had less interaction with their grandchildren than maternal grandfathers. In addition, paternal grandfathers were more likely to be traditional in their interactions with grandchildren and adult children when compared with grandmothers, seeing their role as to advise and support their families. The fathers in Russell's study reported that they were more involved with their children than their own fathers had been with them, and the grandfathers reported that they regretted not spending more time with their children. Russell suggests that many of the grandfathers enjoyed being with their grandchildren as a way of making up for the opportunities that they felt they had missed with their own children.

Waldrop and colleagues (1999) interviewed grandfathers about the processes of value transmission and teaching life lessons to their grandchildren. The grandfathers suggested that they were influenced by their own fathers in how they learned about being a grandfather. Either they copied their own fathers' grandparenting style or they did the opposite. The grandfathers expressed the desire to demonstrate a "combination of both instrumental and expressive abilities for their grandchildren" (Waldrop et al 1999: 42). They reported strong emotional commitment and a desire for ongoing involvement with their grandchildren. They valued the ability to transfer family heritage, religious education and work values and respect for others to their grandchildren. In this way they were modelling the behaviours and values they believed were important. Both generations can benefit from this interaction:

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14   This was the only study found that addresses issues of ethnicity in relation to the experiences of grandfatherhood.
15   Kivett determined the centrality of the role of grandfather by examining six dimensions of the role: household structure, amount of association, help given and received, feelings of closeness and getting along with the grandchild, consensus and grand-filial expectations. These were measured by rating scales.

> Acknowledging the aging process allows the grandfather to share past experiences and impart successful strategies for a healthy and happy life for their grandchildren. Through this sharing, grandfathers who are mentors can arrive at a sense of peace and contentment that facilitates a feeling of fulfilment beneficial to his [sic] own healthy aging process, while contributing to a child's healthy development (Waldrop et al 1999: 44).

With increasing life expectancy many grandfathers have long-term relationships with their grandchildren, stretching well into their adulthood. The literature suggests that the degree of grandparent involvement during childhood predicts the quality of the relationship between adult grandchildren and grandparents. Roberto and colleagues (2001) investigated grandfathers' perceptions and expectations of relationships with their adult grandchildren and identified three interrelated themes.

Firstly, geographical proximity influenced the quality of the relationship only in combination with previous and current actions and interactions. Secondly, changes in structure impacted upon grandfather/grandchild relationships. Sometimes such changes, either in the grandfathers' or the children's lives, created opportunities for enhanced relationships with the grandchildren. For example, children's divorce and grandfather's widowhood may increase the opportunities for contact and involvement. However, for some grandfathers, family changes lead to reduced involvement. One example was divorce between the grandparents. The eventual re-marriage of the grandfather led to him having less contact with the grandchildren from his first marriage. But it provided him with the opportunity to become an involved step-grandfather (Roberto et al 2001). Thirdly, grandfathers play a variety of traditional and non-traditional roles in the lives of their adult grandchildren. Many of the men interviewed cited traditional male family roles of an instrumental nature (providing services and support rather than affection). However they left this script behind in their actual behaviour, as they expressed love and affection for the grandchildren. The authors conclude that most of the grandfathers demonstrated a complex mixture of obligation, connection and closeness with their adult grandchildren. Moreover:

> Their relationships with their grandchildren were not distant or stagnant but were continually reshaped as both the men and their family members proceeded through the life course (Roberto et al 2001: 423).

5.0 CONCLUSION

As this paper has shown, specific research on the role, experiences and contribution of grandfathers to families and wider society is seriously lacking. What research does exist comes predominantly from the US. Tinsley and Parke (1988) offer an explanation as to why such research has been neglected. Adopting a developmental psychology perspective, they suggest that assumptions about the primacy of the mother-child dyad lead to underestimation of the influence of other agents such as grandparents. However, it is also the case that older men in general have been neglected in social science research. If male identity is firmly attached to the paid worker and provider roles then, in retirement and old age, men may indeed become 'invisible'. Differences in male and female life expectancies are not the only factors, as grandparenthood can begin in mid-life. Perhaps, as the baby boom generation moves through mid- into later life, more attention will be applied to the important roles that older men can play in families and in society.

In New Zealand there is an almost complete absence of research on grandfathering, but some useful pointers can be gleaned from the small amount of international work undertaken. The grandfathering role is one of complexity, which is mediated by the age and health of the grandfather and the ages of the grandchildren. An individual grandfather may have significantly different relationships with his first and last grandchild, and with the same grandchild as he or she moves from early childhood to adulthood. Overseas research shows that lineage is a factor (maternal grandparents tend to have more contact with their grandchildren) and also accessibility, which does not only mean geographical proximity. The grandfather role is dependent upon the extent to which parents facilitate access between grandchildren and grandfathers. Parents act as mediators in this relationship, particularly for young grandchildren, as they decide the form and frequency of contact, its location and the types of activities which take place.

Moreover, the relationship between a grandfather and his grandchildren is largely dependent upon the relationships between the grandfather and other family members. Divorce of the grandparents can limit the contact between grandfather and grandchild, as can divorce of the parents. However, for some grandfathers, divorce within the parental generation can lead to an increased role. Grandfathers can provide support (financial and emotional) at times of family crisis and can act as surrogate male parents where fathers are absent, thereby providing family stability. Acting as a male role model for grandchildren is not confined to the grandfather whose family has undergone a crisis. Grandfathers report that modelling behaviour for their grandchildren is an integral part of being a grandparent and one of the key areas in which they gain high levels of satisfaction in their role.

The satisfaction expressed by grandfathers in their interactions with their grandchildren links to the notion that for older men this life stage is a time in which they can be more nurturing and emotionally expressive. Grandfatherhood may offer men more emotional fulfilment in terms of nurturing the younger generation, than they had when they were fathers (when they were preoccupied with supporting the family in material ways). However, recent shifts in social expectations and some degree of role reversal between parents, especially in relation to paid work and 'providing', are allowing contemporary fathers to be more emotionally expressive and available to their children. In time this may alter how we view grandfatherhood and how grandfathers view themselves.

5.1 FURTHER RESEARCH

The analysis of literature on grandfatherhood raises a myriad of questions, to which there are few answers in the international arena, and almost none relating to New Zealand specifically. Appendix Two lists a selection of these questions, and the following summarises the main areas for further research which have been identified.

> The demographic and socio-economic profile of New Zealand grandfathers and how it is changing.

> The contributions of grandfathers to New Zealand families and how this differs by ethnicity.

> The meanings of grandfathering in New Zealand from the perspectives of grandfathers, parents and grandchildren.

> The extent to which grandfathers can provide male role models for grandchildren, particularly in families where such a role model is absent.

> The role and contribution of grandfathers in blended, same-sex and de facto families and other developing family types.

> The role which grandfatherhood can play in defining roles for older men in an ageing society.

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APPENDIX ONE: METHODOLOGY

The literature used in this scoping paper was obtained through a wide range of bibliographic searches. Firstly, because the focus was on New Zealand literature, the *Index New Zealand* database of the National Library of New Zealand was searched using the terms 'grandfather' and 'grandparent', which yielded very little. The search was then extended to international sources, making use of the licensed database *socINDEX*, which covers all sub-disciplines of sociology and includes articles and book chapters from the disciplines of anthropology, criminology, cultural sociology, demography, ethnic and racial studies, gender studies, marriage and family (to name the most relevant), using the same search terms. This was supplemented by searches of the licensed database *Sociological Abstracts* and *Anthropology Plus*.

The search for relevant literature was then widened to take account of grandfathering links to wider family structure. Edited book chapters on the topic of fatherhood and men's issues were searched for through university library databases and these occasionally had a chapter on grandfatherhood. However, in most of the texts on families in general the experiences, roles and importance of grandparenthood are neglected topics.

APPENDIX TWO: RESEARCH QUESTIONS ARISING FROM THE SCOPING PAPER

> Will longer life expectancy provide greater opportunities for men to develop relationships with their grandchildren and great-grandchildren?

> What is the effect of there being fewer grandchildren, but potentially more adults in the grandparenting role?

> How does the experience of grandfatherhood differ between men who are still active in the labour force and those who are retired or semi-retired?

> How do conceptions and patterns of grandfathering vary between ethnic and cultural groups?

> How does co-residence affect the role and experience of grandfathering, especially in Māori, Pacific and Asian communities?

> How do men see themselves as grandparents in a situation of growing family fragmentation and mobility?

> How will the higher incidence of step, de facto and elective kinship affect the role of grandfathers within families?

> What part do grandfathers play in caring for grandchildren and in becoming substitute custodial parents?

> Could grandfathers (real or fictive) play a part in socialising boys living with sole mothers?

> Who initiates, controls and decides on how grandfather-grandchild interactions will take place and develop?

> How will younger men brought up in a more permissive era with less gender differentiation perform as grandfathers?

> What is the effect of changing expectations of men as providers? How do changes in gender-appropriate behaviour affect the conception and practice of grandfatherhood?

> How are expectations of men as grandfathers changing? How do styles of grandfathering differ between the current generation and their own fathers'?

> How do expectations of grandfatherhood differ from the reality?

> How useful is the concept of generativity when examining grandparenthood and how it is changing?

> Can grandfatherhood allow men the opportunity for emotional self-fulfilment, which they did not have as fathers?

> Is fear of being suspected of sexual abuse limiting men's ability to express affection towards young children?

> There is tension between traditional roles and the reality of working grandmothers. What does this mean for grandfathers?

> How are people fitting grandparenting into other parts of their lives, including paid work, community involvement, and networking with people of their own age?

> How does grandfatherhood relate to policy initiatives to increase intergenerational contact and understanding (for example through the Positive Ageing Strategy)?

> How can discussion around the grandparenting role be encouraged? What resources or education do people need?

> Blue Skies Research

Both sexes view their relative contributions as unfair; 60% of women report doing more than their fair share (compared with just 10% of men), while 37% of men report doing less than their fair share (compared with just 6% of women). NatCen Social Research. Our chapter builds on a wealth of literature about family and gender role change, providing an up-to-date picture of Britain today. Given some suggestion of a more recent retreat from gender egalitarianism because of concerns voiced about potential conflicts between maternal employment and family wellbeing, especially for families with young children (Scott, 2010), we look for any changes to earlier findings about public support for mothers' dual paid work and family roles (Witherspoon and Prior, 1991; Scott et al., 1996). "The single-parent family carried all sorts of social and moral judgments back then [in 1971]. That is just not the case any more. "The couple who do not get married is now socially acceptable in a way that it never was before." In 2008, 29 per cent of men under the age of 34 lived at home with their parents, up from 27 per cent seven years earlier. The ONS said the Divorce Reform Act of 1969, which made it easier to dissolve a marriage, was one of the main causes for the radical change in families. Critics of the Government point out that the tax system has also been altered to the advantage of unmarried couples. It is Government's role to support families in all shapes and sizes, which is why our policies are aimed at empowering and advising parents to make the best choices for their children.