CHAPTER XV

FAMILY STRUCTURE AND THE PROCESS OF SOCIALIZATION

After having dealt with the various aspects of child care, the focus of this chapter will be placed on the family, since in the study of socialisation it is an institution of paramount importance. Socialisation is also the principal means by which an individual's motivation for an enduring commitment to family culture is achieved. Furthermore,

"the transmission of family culture requires at least two things - first, a certain degree of commitment on the part of the individual to subscribe and conform to the elements of family culture, and second the development of a minimum level of motivation among the individuals for such a commitment" (Bamu 1977: 129).

Additionally, in our society,

"inspite of the considerable volume of available research on the family, the diversity that characterises this institution at different levels of our society is not sufficiently understood. The image of the family and particularly of women's role in the family that dominates the thinking of the intelligentsia is mainly that of the middle class. It is imperative for us to know the differences in patterns of family organisation with consequent variations in the norms governing the lives of men and women and the bringing up of children of both sexes....In the absence of such understanding, development programmes, particularly those relating to education and family welfare, are sometimes responsible for reinforcement of traditional middle class stereotypes in sex roles and values governing the behaviour of men and women" (ICSSR 1977: 13-14).

Keeping these priority areas in mind this chapter discusses the influence of family forms on interaction.
Influence of Family Forms on Interaction

Presently we will discuss the relationship between family structure of the different occupational groups and the nature and quality of social interaction within each of the family structures. The authority structure, the role patterns, the traditional orientation, the ritual and economic content of socialisation, responsibility training etc., are discussed subsequent to this. All these aspects are analyzed in a comparative perspective in regard to the three occupational groups. Further the study does not discern only the modes of socialisation preferred but when and why one or another method is used. Unfortunately to date this area of study has been completely neglected by the sociological analysts in our country.

It is known that the type of family structure to a great extent influences socialisation practices, and the present chapter shows how different types of family structures were associated with the three occupational groups under study and consequently their influence on various areas of socialisation. The nuclear family for our purpose can be defined as the unit of husband, wife and their children together. The joint family can be defined as the unit which also includes relatives such as grandparents, brothers, their wives cousins and others.

The emphasis here is not just to specify which members live in the same household; this is correlated in terms of the significant
others who influence the child's social environment. Table 15 shows the family forms present in the different occupational categories.

Table 15: FAMILY FORMS IN THE DIFFERENT OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS

(Figures are given in percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family forms</th>
<th>Clerks N=50</th>
<th>Traders N=50</th>
<th>Sailors N=50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joint</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint/Nuclear</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The term joint/nuclear is used either when the families were living for some periods of time in joint family structures and have lately become nuclear or as in the case of sailors the family alternates between joint and nuclear forms. (This pattern is discussed in detail later).

In the case of clerks the nuclear family form dominates (80%) with a variety of relationships existing with their parental families depending on their residence, in the same town or outside of it. The daily routine and the general picture of the pattern of interaction is that the father helps in looking after the children and home in the morning, goes to work for fixed hours and comes back home in the evening. The father is generally tired after the day's work.
and the dinner is an early meal between 7 and 8 P.M. The family
does not sit together to eat their meals. The mother cooks the
food usually and the children sometimes take it with the father
or he eats alone. Since the space available is limited they
usually eat in kitchen or in the verandah outside the kitchen.
After having fed the children, the mother eats, sometimes, the
husband and wife may eat together.

In the evenings usually after dinner the husband and wife
may go for a walk leaving the children at home. This is usually
the only time when the husband and wife are together alone. The
show of affection according to the traditional culture, are not
considered quite proper in the presence of elders or growing child-
ren. Their freedom is further constricted because the whole family
shares the same room.

Leisure activities of the families may be visiting relatives,
or going for a movie once in a month or even less frequently. The
entry of television has also provided some entertainment to the
families. Sometimes they observe some programmes. Another leisure
activity of the women is to attend religious functions 'kirtana'
which are usually held in the afternoons once a week or twice a week,
(refer to section on religious socialisation) in the colony itself.
Though the task of shopping was usually done by the husbands at
times the women liked to go themselves after finishing the morning
chores, or in the evening.

The families of clerks were not always nuclear in form but
a few (125) of them were living as joint families, from where they
had shifted 4-6 years ago. They are shown in the table under the caption Joint/Nuclear.

Living in joint families was not always viewed with favour by clerks' wives. For example Mrs. A, Case 5 (clerks) voiced a multitude of grievances of her experiences of joint family living. This respondent was dead against the joint family norms and the reasons for this were manifold. When the family was interviewed it was nuclear in form, but for the previous 10-12 years the family had been residing with the parents of the husband. The wife believed that all the problems in their life, like lack of adjustment between husband and wife, arose primarily due to this reason.

The family structure according to Mrs. A, was such that the husband-wife relationship could not develop. The in-laws of Mrs. A, had a hypercritical attitude towards all her ideas and values in life. Her husband was so influenced by the mother and his brothers that this critical attitude towards her continued. When the husband was interviewed he criticised his wife. This was an instance where adjustments between the spouses had been affected by the joint family structure.

Another case of maladjustment was that of Mrs. S.N., Case 3 (clerks), the only instance in the entire sample which had an inter-regional marriage, and who lived in joint family. The wife was 20 and her husband was 24 at the time of study. The daughter-in-law was not very well accepted into the family, but it was not shown outwardly. On visits to the family, it was realised that there was an undercurrent of tension between the daughter-in-law and other members of the family.
An important point which was realised was that due to problems of adjustment, the thoughts, ideas and aspirations associated with child rearing had not fully crystallised. Furthermore it showed that in the urban set up, a girl is not properly and adequately equipped to cope with the strains of becoming a parent or playing the role of a wife, and a daughter-in-law. This was very obvious in the case of Mrs. S.N. who could not answer any of the questions. Mr. S.N. too could not respond to many of the questions, not only due to immaturity of age, but also due to immaturity of mind. Mrs. S.N. was studying for her graduation in a nearby college. Inspite of being a full time student it was solely her responsibility to look after the child, even large amount of housework was performed by her in the mornings.

The case under discussion clearly points to the fact that due to young age of both the spouses, the ideas in many spheres had not crystallised. Not only this, the suppression of the wife by the elders was to such an extent, that she was only trying to adjust to the family situation. Of course, the problems were not voiced all the time. Since they were living in a joint family the husband was not giving his due to his wife. Further, every action of the husband was critically assessed by other members of the family.

This case brings to light certain pertinent points:

(a) the age at marriage although is higher among clerks, this couple was young. Though the couples among the sailors and traders were usually of this age, the ideas and attitudes towards many aspects of family life and child rearing were developed and crystallised among them.
(b) The parents are quite hostile regarding inter-regional marriages. Only one such case was located. It points to the strict upbringing of the daughters in the family and also on the strict prohibition of hetero-sexual friendships. In spite of the restrictions being less on the boys developing friendships with members of the opposite sex, it definitely causes alarm.

The urban family does not provide enough conscious or unconscious training to perform the mother's role. In the rural set up the daughter does not spend large amount of time on education or attending school and therefore the anticipatory and unconscious training to perform the above role begins earlier.

In the case of traders the family form is often of a joint, extended kind - married brothers, their wives, children and aged parents living in one house. But in this group patterns of interaction between spouses on the one hand and between parents and children are affected by other factors which are discussed below. The following combinations were located:

(a) Family form joint and place of work adjoining or nearby.
(b) Family form joint but place of work at a distance.
(c) Family form nuclear and place of work adjoining or nearby.
(d) Family form nuclear and place of work at a distance.

The discussion which follows shows the effects of these various combinations. Illustrations are provided through cases from the sample.

In cases where the families are joint the children interact with their parents and with their aged grand parents, their cousins,
their paternal uncles and aunts and therefore the set of influences on the child are much wider as compared to that of clerks, who usually live in nuclear families. In a large number of families where the place of residence and the place of work are very near the children get a chance of meeting their father during the lunch hour or in the afternoons or often the children may be sent on an errand to the shop in the way of carrying a message or helping the mother to buy something for the home. The interaction however is more in the case of the sons who after the age of 10 and 11 start helping in the shop. The son’s school work is also performed with the help of the father. As the son gets older occupational training, conscious and unconscious, is provided by the father himself. One of the fathers opined that in this way "The adolescent sons are kept out of mischief, their peer interaction also minimises, which according to the parent minimises the negative influences of the peer group" (Mr. B.D., Case 5, traders).

Regarding the husband and wife eating together or going out together none of the patterns observed among clerks and sailors are observed, because the working hours maintained by the husbands were usually unduly long. Even in the case of those, where the residence and place of work were adjoining, or at a short distance the working hours were too long.

Those families which were joint in form the daughter-in-law was usually under the control of the other members of the family. It is often found that close relationship is maintained between the women folk at home, though with internal conflicts and tensions, which get resolved on their own accord.
In Case 5, Mr. B.D., where the son was grown up and used to help in the shop, the shop and the place of work were co-terminus and sometimes the son and at other times the wife would go and buy the daily consumption items like vegetables. Other dry rations would be available from the shop itself. In this case all the married brothers were living together, but each one was running a different kitchen. In the case of the younger brother in the same family, since the children were young, the wife would herself try and find time to buy vegetables and the dry rations would be sent from the shop itself. Or sometimes when the wife was too busy with the household routines, the husband would buy the vegetables and the son would go and fetch them.

In situation (b) "Family form joint but place of work at a distance", the interaction patterns become a little different. In such families, as in Case 2, Mr. K.S., the place of work and place of residence were about 18-20 km apart, but all the brothers who were in different businesses were living together. The young children could hardly interact with the father.

This was so because the father would leave home early in the morning, come back late usually after eight P.M., physically not in a position to supervise any of the children's activities. Though it was often made quite clear that the mothers could adequately take care of the daughters' activities, it was the boys/sons who needed the supervision of the father. Mr. K.S. Case 2, (traders) desired very much that his wife could be educated. He felt "at least she would be able to meaningfully supervise the activities of
the children, especially that of growing boys, help them in their studies." Contrary to what was desired the wives in this group had attained a minimum of education. Further no substantial effort was made by the parents to educate their daughters to be adequately equipped to play their future roles as mothers. However the sons interaction with the father increases as he grows up because he starts getting some of his anticipatory occupational training during the school vacations by helping the father in running the business.

In situation (c), 'Family form nuclear but place of work adjoining', the pattern of interaction is not comparable to the nuclear families of clerks. Here, the husband-wife, the father and children are constantly interacting with each other, helping in the shop. In case 6, traders, Mr. & Mrs. M.B. were always working together, the sons were constantly in and out of the shop. The grown up son helped his father after attending school and helped his mother in shopping dry and wet rations for the daily consumption. But the daughter who was also an adolescent was never expected to help in the shop. This was true also of case 5, Mr. B.D. where the daughter never helped in the shop.

Thus when the place of residence and the place of work are nearby or adjoining the interaction between husband and wife, father and son is high whether the family is nuclear or joint.

In case the family is nuclear the husband-wife interaction becomes quite high because the wife gives constant help in looking after the shop. This was also observed in case 1, Mr. S.B., who was running a book shop at the time of the study, though earlier he had tried his luck in running a tea shop, and an electrical goods
business. His wife was his constant helper. They had two children, one was school going and the other was one year old. During the visit to the shop Mrs. S.B. would be sitting in the shop and the small boy would be lying nearby on a charpoy (cot) just outside in the shade. On questioning she answered that this was the usual pattern of help rendered by her. She would come here everyday after finishing the morning household routine and help her husband. She further believed that as her son grew up he would take over some of her responsibilities.

In order to illustrate situation (d) Family form nuclear and place of work at a distance, Case 7, Mr. R.P. (traders) may be cited. In this case the place of work and residence were about 20 Km apart. In this family it was the mother who performed all the work in addition to holding the full responsibility for looking after the needs of the children.

A very interesting point to be noted however is that the formation of nuclear families in this group was not due to the same factors operating in the clerks. Here nuclear families were present either because the parents were not alive, or they were living in some other city or in a few of the families trading and business were first generation occupations. This was true of Case 7 and 1. For example Case 1, Mr. S.B. was the son of a clerk, Case 7, Mr. R.P. had taken to business after leaving the services, where age of retirement is earlier than the clerks. In such cases value orientation too were quite different. Some of these are discussed below.

In case 7 (traders), Mr. & Mrs. R.P. were very keen to educate their son and daughter. In this case the father tried as far as
possible to supervise the child's work and progress in school. Both the children were studying in a public, English medium school. Unlike others in the group he felt that education was essential for sons as well as daughters and similar treatment should be accorded to them. He further believed that wives should have an equal role in decision making and this she could do only if she had taken up some education. He keenly felt that he would try and provide equal opportunities for his daughter to attain the best possible education.

In the sailors the family form was both nuclear and joint. These were temporary forms for, when the sailors went on sea families shifted to husbands' parental homes located in villages which was usually joint including brothers, their wives and sometimes some other relatives. With the return of husbands the family assumes the nuclear form and even in the city the nuclear family is not an isolated one, but maintains constant ties horizontally and vertically with kin through frequent return trips to the rural areas. These ties are not only important to the women who remain at home, but also to the men who have left their homes to take up a career in the services. Whenever the families are together (in their husbands station of posting) they visit their homes at least once a year. While they desire to go more often, financial constraints hinder them. In some years the number of trips may increase if there is a marriage, or death in the family or some other special occasion.

In this group therefore the child lives with both the parents at certain periods of time. During this time the father takes care
of the child's studies and personal supervision is considered important for the proper development of the child. The studies are supervised by the father because the mothers in the sample are hardly educated and even if the education has been pursued, it is never above the level of matriculation. The peer group with whom the child interacts are children of his father's colleagues since this group usually resides in the same special cantonment areas. The pattern of interaction is quite similar to that of clerks since the father is out to work only for a stipulated period. But this is only a temporary phase.

In the evening the husband and wife would go together to buy the daily consumption items. The young children would be left in the care of the elder siblings whenever present, or if too young they would be accompanying the parents. This was the evening walk as well as the "leisure activity".

This similarity among clerks and sailors was observed because during the period when the father was not away at sea, or on a non-family station, the husband maintains almost fixed working hours when evenings are usually free. Occasionally due to special work the men in both these occupational groups may be kept away from the family in the evenings. Then the women may go themselves for shopping etc.

In the evenings the whole family is usually together. The fixed working hours of the father usually contribute to this reunion of the family in the evenings.

The wives of sailors were trained also in weaving 'durries' on the handloom. Some of them during the time of the visit also
showed me some of their handwork. In the village during their free time in the afternoon they would often busy themselves in weaving these. But when the wives are moving around with their husbands to different stations they usually pass their afternoon in learning embroidery and stitching from their friends. If they already know the art of embroidery, crochet work and stitching then the women usually pass their afternoon in making some embroidery on a tablecloth, frock etc.

In the sailors cases a welfare centre for the women had been opened in their colony and here they were taught several crafts. The teacher Mrs. H.V. (Case 2 sailors) was paid Rs.200/- per month and she used to teach the women from 10 O'clock in the morning to 12 O'clock. She had been doing this for the last three years.

Due to the exigencies of the occupation, the father cannot always remain with his family so during this period mothers along with their children move to the husband's parental homes usually situated in the villages of the Punjab. Thus the physical and social environment of the child change quite often when the child is young. However in later years when the children are grown up and school going the families remain at the station even when the father is posted away.

A large (90%) sample of the sailors families has been placed in the category of Joint/Nuclear because for the members of this group the family form is constantly changing with re-arrangements on all the members. In the village, the father's place was taken by the other male relatives in the family, though they would not take
interest in the child to the same extent; they would nevertheless provide adequate male role models. The responsibility pattern of the mother also undergoes a complete change. The same mother who would often visit the neighbours, or go out to the markets would no longer be going out as often, she would be busy in the household work. Even spending too much time on the children's dress, cleanliness etc., is frowned upon. However, it is not that these things are not valued but extreme fussing is not liked by the elders of the family. Another simple reason is that time binds the mothers to other work like cooking for the entire family, looking after the cows and buffaloes. The mother who would just cook for the nuclear family would now be helping her other relatives in making joint meals, feeding the animals etc.¹

The child's peer group undergoes a change. He plays with the village children, attends the village school, learns some of the ways of the village children. In this context these children who were 'City Bred' thought themselves to be superior to their counter-parts of the village. Most of the parents opined that the children took less interest in their studies since the atmosphere was not one of high competition.

For the present purpose it may be noted that the father's absence does not affect the child adversely except that the people with whom he is interacting, his whole cultural milieu, undergoes a

¹ Most of the families in the sample had a few buffaloes, and cows, who were useful for providing milk and milk product. Dairy animals were usually kept because the emphasis of milk, ghee, curd etc., is high in the dietary pattern of Punjabis.
drastic change. Furthermore, the other males in the family take the place of the father in his absence. Therefore the children do not experience emotional and social problems. The mother also does not get socially isolated from contact for she is close to her relatives and some times she may even go to her parents place for long or short periods of time. The mother becomes responsible for disciplining the children and also for providing them constant emotional support.

Therefore, if there are any pervasive effects of father's absence, they are largely dependent on the psychological strength, interest, talents and skills of the mother.

As far as the factor of over-protectiveness is concerned it was not observed in the cases studied. This could again be attributed to other possibilities open to the mother. Even though anxiety might have been felt, the busy schedule in which she was kept occupied does not give an occasion to express anxiety. The absentee father is very much the man of the family, since the family situation is extremely patriarchal in its organisation. The father figures in the children's imagination as an object of their idealisation, and affection.

The father figure was substituted in the village homes. The grandfather become the major figures of authority and the major decision maker but whether these father figures could properly discipline the child is slightly questionable. It is well known that the relationships between alternate generations is one of affection.
In other cases and in the later years when the family did not migrate to the parental home and stayed away in the city in order not to disrupt the children’s education, a different pattern emerged. It is at this stage that role responsibilities undergo other types of change for long or short periods of time, depending on the period of time that the father is absent.

In one of the families studied Mr. H.V., Case 2 (sailors), the sons at the time of study were college-going, recalled that sometimes when they were younger they all would move into their father’s village, but as they grew up they would start living where the father was posted so as not to disturb their education. In this case the eldest son took up the duties his father used to perform e.g., shopping for the family, sometimes disciplining the younger siblings, teaching them, helping the younger siblings in their studies.

The mother’s role also undergoes a change. The task of disciplining, rule enforcing becomes largely hers, other household jobs which the husband shared become solely hers. This means additional responsibility for the mother and consequently greater tensions and reasons for anxiety which were previously shared by the father. The mother’s status becomes that of a dominant member, the decision maker and the holder of the family purse strings.

Since the mother becomes the decision maker and the figure of authority, she is more respected by the children. This change in status sometimes creates problems, and the family atmosphere can become tense since the matriarchal tendencies of the mother get curbed with the coming of the absentee father. This factor is
of the utmost importance for us, for it sheds great light on the socialisation of the female members. The female members in all these highly traditional patriarchal families are socialised right from the first years of life to be submissive, less aggressive, to learn to submit to the authority of the males - the father, brothers, the husband, so that they may become ideal Hindu wives. The role models provided to them are of their mothers, who are constantly pleasing the father, husband and son of the family. Even the literary texts - the traditional texts, the fables, myths offer models of complete servility, the model of the 'Sati Savitri' wife and the 'Sita', the ever sacrificing wife. In this occupational group, even education beyond the school level is considered discrediting to the perfect role model of the wife. In the course of the interviews it was opined that education starts making her feel superior, to the extent that she starts asking 'why'? She starts to question authority whether this authority be of the father, brother or after marriage, of the husband. Due to the socialisation training she gets throughout her life, it is quite easy for her to switch back to her earlier role, and position in the family.

However, the way she undertakes her responsibility in his absence is largely dependent on the personality of the mother, her maturity of mind, her ability and capacity to cope up with various crisis. These crisis as the mothers could recall could be of various types viz. the child falling down to hurt himself seriously, dealing with acts of misbehaviour, to look into the child's academic standards or his peer group. These were the various situations about which the mothers were questioned. They solved certain problems by an
appeal to the absent father, for even if the father was away his image as the dominant figure of authority did not vanish. The neighbours provided help at the time of crises and the living here was to a great extent communal living. Contrary to what is reported by the social researchers (refer to p. 33), that the responsibility assumption gets delayed, we observed that responsibility among the sons gets considerably increased not only towards day to day activities, but even towards the mother. For example the slightly grown up sons attitude towards the mother becomes one of protection, this attitude crystallizes since the father who is not only the responsible head of the household but also the protector is absent.

In one case, however, extremely negative effects of father absence were observed. Case 4, P.K., (sailors) was a family where the father was married for 18 years and had been in active service for about 28 years. The time when he got married due to accommodation problems at the family stations and due to frequent transfers from one station to another he could not stay with his family. Also since his parents were old and there was nobody to help his mother, he did not take his family along. Now 18 years have passed and his children have grown up. This pattern was observed among a few in this group. Further the idea of not taking his wife along was that women from the rural areas could not go back and adjust with their families in the villages. Also it was believed by him that "they became fashion conscious and therefore started acting big". The father, in this case, was away for substantial periods of his life from the family. He would visit the home generally only two months in a year. The wife and children stayed away from the husband/father
throughout the tenure of his service. In this case, the eldest son fell into bad company, which became a cause of constant tension in their family. The father made all efforts to explain to him, to place him into a suitable job, but all his efforts failed. Another factor which came to light in the course of the interview was that the mother was all the time shielding the son from his undesirable activities. Whenever, the father was on leave she did not give the correct picture of the son's whereabouts. The mother, who was also uneducated always believed the son's version of the stories. She shielded the son because the father was extremely authoritarian, possessed extremely orthodox views and attitudes of bringing up children. Consequently in this case, the child reflected an essence of hostility, a withdrawal from what the father thought right. The parents on their side felt a sense of defeat and insecurity because of their son.

This case significantly reveals how the absence of the father from home for a long period has been a causal factor in spoiling the character of his son. The father through great efforts had got him commissioned in the army, but the son deserted the army and the father came to know about this only after a period of 5 to 6 months. Even after this, the father tried to put him in farming, but here too he failed. At present the boy had started behaving as if he had become a "Sevadar in the Gurudwara", (a person who serves the Gods) which requires a great deal of sacrifice in life. The

2. "Totally shut out from the world" - This was the expression of the husband, Mr. P.K. about his wife. Since she was uneducated, hardly moved out from the house.
father was unaware of his son's whereabouts and was undergoing a state of near breakdown because of him.

The father felt that such a situation had arisen because of extreme mismanagement by the mother, and also because she did not adopt a responsible role. Further it could be attributed to the personality structure of the mother. Many questions however, cannot be answered fully due to lack of accessibility to the father. Such extreme cases were not found in the other families.

A point which strongly emerges from the sample of 50 families of sailors is that the mother's personality should be strong enough to be able to dominate over the children, and be strict enough to control the children in the father's absence. Though the absence of the male figure is not complete in our cases the mother had to be alone in charge of the household and the children. Generally the change in the role of the mother comes across in terms of disciplining the children, supervising the education and a greater responsibility of caring for the children.

This change in role pattern comes about in spite of the presence of other male members in the family, as the mother is mainly responsible for the welfare of the child. During his period of absence, the mother has to take additional role of the father. She should possess the capacity to discipline and tackle the children in the right way.

The important consideration is not the method of discipline she uses but her mode of handling different situations e.g. her methods of dealing with lack of concentration in studies. Could it be due to
diversions? Does she try and locate the diversions? Could she decide that this could be attributed to change of environment, or to lack of academic competition? Or could it be due to other occupational interests like farming? Most significantly did she make any efforts to put the child back to normalcy?

But in most of the families studied no such efforts were located. The mothers did not have any idea as to how their children could be brought back to the right track. If the children were not doing well in their studies the parents did show some concern over the child's lack of interest in studies but in none of the families studied could the parents locate the cause of failure, or the reason for lack of concentration in academics, or find a way to treat the failure through corrective measures.

This case points to the fact that extremely long absence of the father may cause such a situation. Further in other cases where the families lived in their father's posting station many negative influences were not felt because the young boys and girls would also observe other families where the father was away. As pointed out earlier most of the families are living in the cantonment areas, wherein families of similar regions constantly interact with each other and consider themselves as kin.