

Chapter 4 Families and households

Topic 5 Changing family patterns

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Activity: Research

Patterns of obligation

Learning objectives

At the end of this activity you should be able to:

- Identify views on patterns of obligation in the extended family today from your own research.
- Analyse results of your research to draw conclusions about views of the nature of obligations in the extended family today.

- A. Re-read the text on pages 221-222 on the extended family today.
- B. Conduct interviews with two or three adults you know, to look at patterns of obligation in extended families. You need to present the adults with five scenarios and ask them who would be most obliged to offer help. The scenarios are listed below.

Make five cards and write a scenario on each one so you can let your interviewees read them and then reply. Make sure you get full explanations for their answers – ask a follow-up question if necessary (e.g. 'Why do you say that?').

Write down or if possible record their answers.

Scenarios

1. An elderly woman has one daughter and two sons. She recently had a fall. She is still able to care for herself day-to-day, but needs some help with bathing.
 2. A lone-parent working mother has to do a late shift once a week and is not able to pick her daughter up from school. She has two sisters and her mother lives close by.
 3. A young couple are looking to buy their first home. They need help with the deposit and want to borrow some money. Their parents all work.
 4. A married couple are both professionals and work long hours. They live far away from both sets of relatives. They need help with the care of their two children.
 5. A young man has recently divorced and needs somewhere to stay. His parents are nearby and he has a wide network of friends.
- C. Pool your results as a class. Are there any patterns to the responses, e.g. for question 1, did all the interviewees choose the daughter? What reasons did they give?
- D. Write a summary paragraph on the patterns of obligation your class found in your research. Did the class's findings reflect the same patterns as those described on page 222 of your textbook?