

ALLOPARENTAL CARE IN TWO SOCIETIES: WHO HELPS AND IN WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES

Gretchen Perry

Dr. Karthik Panchanathan, Dissertation Advisor

SHORT ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigated alloparental care in two societies. Most prior research on alloparental care finds that close kin, matrilineal kin (especially grandmothers) are more frequent and more beneficial alloparents than more distant kin, patrilineal kin, but is this true in more challenging circumstances when children require an alloparent to take over their primary care, or in a patrilocal society where women observe *purdah*? The first project involved out-of-home placements with Family and Children's Services of Waterloo Region, Canada. A database was created of children who were receiving child protection services and were placed with "kin". Maternal kin, particularly grandmothers, provided placements much more often than paternal and under more compromised conditions than paternal kin. Maternal kin placements resulted in permanency outcomes more often, whereas paternal kin placements were more likely to breakdown.

Matlab, Bangladesh, is patrilocal and women observe *purdah*, reducing their easy access to matrilineal family. The data collected showed that where children resided, who served as their primary and secondary caregivers, and who provided material support differed across five family types, but matrilineal kin played a major role in all family types, especially as material resource providers. Mothers visited their own mothers and brothers more than their commensurate in-laws, even when controlling for likely confounds, showing their efforts to maintain contact with matrilineal family. The surviving children of deceased mothers had the most negative outcomes.

The matrilineal bias in alloparental care and positive child outcomes were in keeping with predictions based on kin selection, paternity certainty theories, and the special role of grandmothers as alloparents.