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Intimacy: a developmental perspective

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Because such an unusual financial gain would automatically boost one's informal status, the status of the confidant might possibly be of import.

The third question in this dimension suggests a strong identification between the subject and the named individual. The latter's opinion or needs would seem of greatest salience besides the subject's own. At issue is also some degree of constraint (be it but subjective), whether or not it is willingly accepted.

At the heart of this dimension is the fact that people are practically linked to each other. That person or those persons at the nexus of one's relationship network are somewhat akin to the traffic comptrolier at an airport, directing and filtering communications with other relations. Because family is so often structurally definitive for one's wider pattern of relationships, it is not surprising that family members predominate, nine to one, in this dimension.

A question that straddles both the Network Centre dimension and the third and next dimension, Emotional Permeability/Vulnerability, may serve as a conceptual bridge between the two. (Because this question overlaps two dimensions, however, it will not be used in further discussion and analysis of the seven closeness dimensions.) "Whom do you worry or pray about most?" relates both to the questions about "messages" and "big

win" in the Network Centre dimension, and to three questions in the Permeability/Vulnerability cluster which involve physical closeness (Q38 and Q48) and dependency (Q42), respectively. Thus on the one hand, worries and prayers seem to follow the same direction as central lines of affective communication. On the other hand, worries and prayers reflect patterns of connectedness that are associated with touching and primary interdependence.

3.3.4 Emotional Permeability/Vulnerability

The kind of caring implicit in the worry/pray question helps introduce the dimension of emotional pregnability, which is conceptually central to the ascribed end of the closeness continuum. The kind of ego-blurring that Lillian Rubin (1983) argues is especially characteristic of women, certainly occurs for both men and women. This is what is meant by the term "emotional permeability" attached to this dimension. Along with the trust that closeness and reciprocity demand, goes the potential for hurt, or "vulnerability."

This Permeability/Vulnerabilty dimension includes seven questions to which subjects replied with names of family an average of four times out of five. Within the province of kin lie many of love's deepest claims as well as keenest disappointments. The questions themselves reflect such a spectrum of emotional intensity:

- "Whom do you need most emotionally?" (Q39a) or for children, "Whom do you need most for comfort?"
- "Who needs you most?" (Q42)
- "Whom would you like to have rub your back if you were very ill?" (Q48)
- "If you couldn't wash yourself without help from someone else, whom would you prefer to have helping you?" (Q38)
- "Who could (but not necessarily would), hurt you the most?" (Q28, adults only)
- "Whom can you get most angry or upset with?" (Q19)
- "Who could make you feel most embarrassed or ashamed?" (Q31)

TABLE 10 **Permeability/Vulnerability Dimension**

Response Category	Q39a	Q42	Q48	Q33	Q28	Q19	Q31	Total
Family	166 83%	137 86%	169 85%	172 86%	133 83%	153 77%	156 78%	1086 82%
Friends	29 15%	19 12%	25 13%	22 11%	22 14%	36 18%	35 18%	188 14%
Other	5 3%	4 3%	6 3%	6 3%	5 3%	11 6%	9 5%	46 3%
Total	200 101%	160 101%	200 101%	200 100%	160 100%	200 101%	200 101%	1320 99%

$X^2=12.25$, df=12, $p>.30$

The ambivalence of ascribed relationships is apparent. While it is typically the family who has readiest access to private emotional and physical space, it is also the

family that can deal the harshest wounds. It is hardly surprising that family would predominate in such emotionally charged questions, both positive and negative. The fundamental role of family in one's self-formation and its largely involuntary, irrevocable nature, contribute to inherent tensions and pulls. What is finally at issue is the "permeability" and "vulnerability" in intimate relationships referred to in the title.

The questions in this dimension may be broken down into three sub-clusters which for practical purposes will be called "dependence," "physical closeness," and "ambivalence."

3.3.4.1 Dependence

TABLE 11 **Dependence Sub-Dimension (of Permeability/Vulnerability Dimension)**

Response Category	Q39a	Q42	Total
Family	166 83%	137 86%	303 84%
Friends	29 15%	19 12%	48 13%
Other	5 3%	4 3%	9 3%
Total	200 101%	160 101%	360 100%

X^2=.53, df=2, p>.70

Questions 39a and 42 both refer specifically to people's need for one another. Whereas the first question deals

with the subject's most deeply felt emotional, affiliative needs, the second reverses the perspective to ask who needs the subject most. The shift of perspective is not entirely symmetric, however. Whereas emotional need is specified in the first instance, in the second case "need" is a generic term. Yet when subjects were asked in what way(s) the named person particularly needed them, 75% of them included an emotional component (see Appendix D for table). While the persons mentioned in each of these two question are unlikely to be the same, the dominance of family in this area of dependence is substantial. Obviously much of the literature on reciprocity or equity theory, based so heavily as it is on young adult student populations, neglects a large part of the universe (cf, for example, Bersheid and Walster, 1978).

3.3.4.2 Physical Closeness

TABLE 12 Physical Closeness Sub-Dimension (of Permeability/Vulnerability Dimension)

Response Category	Q38	Q48	Total
Family	172 86%	169 85%	341 85%
Friends	22 11%	25 13%	47 12%
Other	6 3%	6 3%	12 3%
Total	200 100%	200 101%	400 100%

X^2=.22, df=2, p>.80

Allowing penetration of one's closest, spatial territory is a highly intimate action (cf. Duck, 1986: 37-45). More particularly intimate is giving access to one's body. In both of questions 38 and 48 the activities of washing and back rubbing, respectively, involve touching and are associated with care-giving, affirmative behavior (Montague, 1986/71). Indeed, so generally is this pattern accepted that situations in which touching is not intimate behavior, as for example, medical examinations, are highly impersonalized and ritualized (cf. for example, Emerson, 1970).

It is worth noting here that a question on sexual intimacy could not be included because only 44% of the sample were involved in a sexual relationship. The question "What would it mean to you if your spouse (or

friend) didn't make love to you for a long time?" (Q56) was inapplicable for over half of the subjects. With or without sexual activity (for the inadequacy of using sexual satisfaction as a measure of closeness, see Goethals, et al., 1976:231), however, more than two thirds of respondents (69%), preferred the close proximity of sharing a bed with someone to sleeping alone. Indeed, those who shared such close physical space were in all instances family members or potential family -- that is lovers.

3.3.4.3 Ambivalence

TABLE 13 **Ambivalence Sub-Dimension (of Permeability/Vulnerability Dimension)**

Response Category	Q28	Q19	Q31	Total
Family	133 83%	153 77%	156 78%	442 79%
Friends	22 14%	36 18%	35 18%	93 17%
Other	5 3%	11 6%	9 5%	25 4%
Total	160 100%	200 101%	200 101%	560 100%

$X^2=2.77$, df=4, $p>.50$

Questions 28, 19, and 31 deal with specifically negative elements of Permeability/Vulnerability. Hurt, anger, and shame echo some of the incipient violence which Freud and Suttie (1960/1935) stressed in their analysis of family relationships. Suttie would presumeably maintain that

like hate, they all arise from frustrated or disappointed intimacy. The deeper the level of physical and emotional interdependence, the greater the degree of vulnerability. Hatfield (1984) in her more recent work makes much of this ambivalence.

The question "Who could hurt you most?" by its very generality is pertinent to a wide range of human experience. The adults of whom this was asked had little difficulty in acknowledging their potential vulnerability. The response of a 42-year old male, "My wife, if she should leave me and return to her [maiden] name [#122]" was not untypical.

The embarrassment/shame question implies identification with another to the extent of sharing to some degree their moral universe and experiencing mortification on their account or at their behest. Reputation is not only personal but also familial, especially in a small community. Precisely because individuals are so closely identified with their families, injury to reputation because of them can be extremely hurtful or damaging.

Finally, the anger/upset question was one of two items in the questionnaire that asked about overt conflict. Interestingly the other question, "With whom do you have most disagreements?" was not significantly related to the Permeability/ Vulnerability dimension. Thus intensity, rather than frequency, of conflict was a more reliable

predictor of this very central dimension. Studies of family violence attest to the prevalence of conflict within patterns of solidarity and indeed their often culturally and legally legitimized expression (cf, for example, Strauss, et al., 1980, Gelles, 1972, and Gelles and Cornell, 1985).

3.3.5 Shared Resources

Although this next dimension is not so sharply distinct in empirical terms from the previous one, with two of its questions significantly related to question 39a, it is nonetheless highly consistent internally. It also has very considerable theoretical coherence. All three questions refer to shared resources, whether personal history or things:

- "Whom would you choose to pick out a big surprise present for yourself?" (Q16)
- "If you had R1000 to spend with someone, who could most easily agree with you on how to spend it?" (Q33)
- "Whom do you think knows most how you feel about your past life?" (Q2) or for children, "Whom do you think knows most about your life?"

TABLE 14 **Shared Resources Dimension**

Response Category	Q16	Q33	Q2	Total
Family	156 78%	159 80%	151 76%	466 78%
Friends	39 20%	37 19%	42 21%	118 20%
Other	5 3%	4 2%	7 4%	16 3%
Total	200 101%	200 101%	200 101%	600 101%

$X^2=.87$, df=4, $p>.90$

All the questions assume a kind of shared personal economy. They suppose another person knows a lot about one's responses to things both material and experiential. That knowledge will likely obtain either from direct confidences or tacit intuitions believed to be shared. One assumes a certain benevolence on the part of the other towards oneself. As with the previous dimensions, a good deal of trust is implied as well as in the case of adults, proven reciprocity.

This is certainly the case with the gift question, which calls for a generosity of spirit on the part of the giver, not to mention openness on the part of the recipient. Two professional-status subjects who were engaged in intense, long-term family hostilities, for example, wanted nothing to do with gifts. A gift, they each said, required that something be proffered in

return. Most others, though, visibly enjoyed answering the question and smiled and spoke animatedly at recollections it evoked. In fact, a great many clearly answered on the basis of past experience because they mentioned specific items they had previously received from the named individual.

The spending of R1000 with another relates in a similar vein to mutually shared values about material assets. Certainly the named person would be expected either to go along with one's own ideas or to suggest satisfactory allocation of it. Trusting another person to agree about money thus demands an intimate knowledge of that person before all else.

Because knowledge about one's past constitutes power of a sort, people generally use discretion in confiding information about it to others. Indeed, in medieval Western literature, concern is frequently expressed lest a stranger discover one's name, thereby gaining special power over one's person. Whoever knows most, as indicated in question 2, has a potentially valuable claim. For children, their past belongs to those who have most visibly participated in it. With the attainment of adolescence and what Piaget terms "formal operations," however, a person is able to interpret and reconstruct, or reinvent, his past. Thus from adolescence on, one tends to modify, edit, and elaborate his ever-lengthening personal history. Whoever has

greatest knowledge of that personal history at any given point, will most likely either have shared directly in many of its events and/or been privy to special confidences.

Supporting the notion of confidences, question 5, which deals with such, was significantly related (although on a low level) to all the questions in the Shared Resources dimension. "Last time you were very upset or depressed about something, whom did you tell first?" yielded a pattern of results not dissimilar to that for the knowledge of past, gift, and R1000 questions. Providing intimate self-revelation would seem to demand a similar trust to that required by other acts of voluntary sharing.

In this dimension of Shared Resources, family responses still predominate more than three quarters of the time. However, one fifth of the time friends are named for these intimate honors.

3.3.6 Personal Contact

Two essentially factual questions and one which requires a more subjective evaluation comprise this dimension:

- "Outside of work/school, whom do you talk to most?" (Q3)
- "Outside of work/school, with whom do you spend most time?" (Q29)

- "Who reacts to life most nearly to way you do?" (Q34, adults only)

TABLE 15 **Personal Contact Dimension**

Response Category	Q3	Q29	Q34	Total
Family	121 61%	126 63%	100 63%	347 62%
Friends	76 38%	69 35%	54 34%	199 36%
Other	3 2%	5 3%	6 4%	14 3%
Total	200 101%	200 101%	160 101%	560 101%

$X^2=2.46$, df=4, $p>.50$

This is the first of the dimensions in which substantial numbers of friends are mentioned. Nonetheless, Personal Contact has nearly twice as many family as friendship answers. Although more people spent the greatest number of hours outside of work and school with family members rather than with friends, a substantial element of choice is indicated by the number of friendship mentions. Of course, people are able to exercise choice amongst family members, but choice is preeminently illustrated with friendship responses.

It is hardly surprising that the question about whom one talks to most is closely related to that of most contact hours. Surely someone is likely to engage in most

verbal exchange with the same set of persons with whom one spends most free time. The correspondences between the first two questions and the third, which deals with similar reactions, suggests that patterns of interaction relate to common constructions of social reality. That might be either a matter of choice or the outcome of a common socialization, shared time and space. This dimension suggests that the subjects are likely to see themselves as emotionally akin to the same kinds of people with whom they keep company outside of their work (or school).

3.3.7 Common Attitudes

An even greater frequency of voluntary, as opposed to ascribed, relationships in this next dimension indicates the importance of attitude similarity in friendship (Byrne, 1971). Common Attitudes comprises two sub-dimensions, Mutual Values and Intimate Beliefs. Although the goodness-of-fit (requiring non-significance) of these two sub-dimensions to each other has a level of significance above .05, they nonetheless fit less closely than do questions within the sub-dimensions themselves, or for that matter than do questions within the other dimensions. The decision to include them into one dimension is thus as much theoretical as empirical.

TABLE 16 **Common Attitudes Dimension**

Response Category	Q6	Q20	Q32	Q4	Q10	Total
Family	104 52%	112 56%	81 51%	97 49%	104 52%	498 52%
Friends	93 47%	85 43%	69 43%	89 45%	85 43%	421 44%
Others	3 2%	3 2%	10 6%	14 7%	10 5%	40 4%
Total	200 101%	200 101%	160 100%	200 101%	199 101%	959 100%

$X^2 = 14.33$, df=8, $p>.05$

The sub-dimensions break down as follows:

3.3.7.1 Mutual Values

- "Who most agrees with you about what best friends should be?" (Q6) and for children, "Whom do you think is your really best friend?"
- "Who likes most to do the kinds of things you enjoy?" (Q20)

3.7.7.2 Intimate Beliefs

- "Whose ideas about God are most like your own?" (Q32, adults only)
- "Whom do you think knows most about your deepest secrets?" (Q4) and for children "Whom do you like to share secrets with?"
- "Whom do you know who most wants the same things out

of life that you want?" (Q10, with "out of life" omitted for children)

In the first sub-dimension, that of Mutual Values, the element of choice emerges clearly.

TABLE 17 **Mutual Values Sub-Dimension (of Common Attitudes Dimension)**

Response Category	Q6	Q20	Total
Family	104 52%	112 56%	216 54%
Friends	93 47%	85 43%	178 45%
Other	3 2%	3 2%	6 2%
Total	200 101%	200 101%	400 101%

X^2=.66, df=2, p>.70

Here the discrepancy between family and friendship answers is small despite a continued majority for family. Both the questions of same joys and best friends imply proven companionability. They are rooted in mutual activity of a special quality which sets the relationship apart. Mutual Values thus suggests more existential than cognitive sharing. The questions indicate an affirmation of one another that has been proven over time. People are dealing here more with shared intuitions than with common beliefs.

TABLE 18 **Intimate Beliefs Sub-Dimension (of Common Attitudes Dimension)**

Response Category	Q32	Q4	Q10	Total
Family	81 51%	97 49%	104 52%	282 50%
Friends	69 43%	89 45%	85 43%	243 43%
Other	10 6%	14 7%	10 5%	34 6%
Total	160 100%	200 101%	199 101%	559 99%

$X^2=1.01$, df=4, $p>.90$

The sub-dimension of Intimate Beliefs, on the other hand, is more conceptual in its content, implying a dialogue about life's meanings. Its questions about God, deepest secrets, and similar life goals disclose common understandings but not necessarily mutual values or shared experience. There is a more explicit degree of conscious reflection on ideas in this sub-category chan is the case for any of the other dimensions.

3.3.8 Shared Experiences

Here, on the farthest end of the family-friendship continuum, the frequency of family responses converges even more closely with numbers of friend answers. Indeed, in this dimension friendship totals actually exceed family mentions on two of the questions.

The questions in the Shared Experiences dimension include the following:

- "If you went to a concert, who would most likely go with you?" (Q24)
- "When you have a free day ("from school" added for children), whom do you usually spend it with?" (Q35)
- "Whom would you most like to go with if you were going to a party?" (Q51)

TABLE 19 **Shared Experiences Dimension**

Response Category	Q24	Q35	Q51	Total
Family	96 50%	96 48%	85 43%	277 47%
Friends	94 49%	97 49%	111 56%	302 51%
Other	2 1%	7 4%	4 2%	13 2%
Total	192 100%	200 101%	200 101%	592 100%

$X^2=5.22$, df=4, p>.20

In Shared Experiences, the relationships chosen are most voluntary of all. Here for the first time the majority passes to friends, but with a clear edge only for the party question. The questions about a concert, free day, and party all refer to things one typically chooses to do. While concerts and parties are explicitly pleasure-oriented social functions, free days afford one leisure to spend with selected others. Indeed, the party

question, the single one to ask what people would like rather than what they habitually do, is the only one with a clear friend majority. This suggests that people may have somewhat less freedom in their leisure activities than they might like or perhaps that parties are conceived pre-eminently for socializing beyond family confines.

For purposes of economy of exposition, the final three dimensions -- Contact, Common Attitudes and Shared Experiences -- will sometimes be referred to as the "friendship" or "compatibility" dimensions because of their higher proportion of friendship responses. Certainly people come to friends with different expectations than to family. For one, friendship functions to validate that part of the self that is so frequently suppressed by the controlling hegemony of the family's structure (for a useful distinction between personal and structural commitment in relationships, see Johnson, 1982:52-58). Although within the family individuals drop their "public self" and are generally more expressive of emotion (including hostility and violence), with friends they have more room for open expression of ideas. There is something liberating about friendship. Friends pay attention to one with a freshness of attitude that is less likely within the family. Family member's conceptions of one other are conditioned by long-established patterns of interaction and by commonly held stereotypes (Ferriera, 1960) that

are reinforced by the shared perceptions of all. Not only do friends typically permit greater freedom, but they also allow greater subtlety and possibilities for innovation in expressing one's ideas or positions. The family, on the other hand, operates with an historically processed notion of its members and their attitudes. The latter, in fact, is an important presupposition of family counselling. The counselling context presumably enables members to say things to each other that they have not been able to say or that family members have been unable to hear in the normal course of family interaction (cf. Minuchin, 1984). Friends, thus, tend to be more tolerant of individual expression of beliefs and values. In friendship there exists greater scope for the intellectual and emotional accord that is probed by the last three more voluntary dimensions.

Of course, a family member often performs a distinct friendship function for another person in the family so that the distinction between friends and family is a conceptual, but not necessarily an experiential one. For example, since marriage is the vehicle by which friends become family in contemporary society, the spouse frequently serves a dual role epitomized in the notion of "companionate marriage" for middle-class Western marriages (Stone, 1979:ch.8). Despite this sometimes blurring of the boundaries between friendship or family functions in certain relationships, friend responses

nonetheless begin to feature much more prominently within the voluntary dimensions.

3.3.9 Finances

The Finances dimension is one of the two which fall outside of the family/friendship continuum because of their high number of "other" responses. While two-thirds of answers were family members, the other third were almost entirely "self." The three questions under Finances include:

- "Who is responsible for meeting your material needs?" (Q7c) and for children, "Who works to get the money for the things you need?"
- "Whom do you need most financially? (Q39b), with "financially" replaced by "for money" for children.
- "Under whose name is the house you live in registered or rented?" (Q25)

TABLE 20 **"Finances" Dimension**

Response Category	Q7c	Q39b	Q25	Total
Family	132 66%	130 65%	144 72%	406 68%
Friends	1 1%	2 1%	2 1%	5 1%
Other	67 34%	68 34%	54 27%	189 32%
Total	200 101%	200 100%	200 100%	600 101%

$X^2=3.18$, df=4, p>.50

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Friends	1 1%	2 1%	2 1%	5 1%
Other	67 34%	68 34%	54 27%	189 32%
Total	200 101%	200 100%	200 100%	600 101%

$X^2=3.18$, df=4, p>.50

Questions 7c and 39b elicited virtually synonymous responses. The house question differed slightly because more individuals are self-supporting than own or rent their place of residence. All three questions, however, tap the economic basis of existence. While they have no explicit emotional content, they nonetheless expose the material foundation around which revolve many important emotional ties and tensions. No discussion of close relationships would be complete without recognition of the economic component of deep connectedness. From earliest childhood, emotional dependence is interfused with the economic. In adulthood whether or not total financial independence is achieved, provider/dependent primary roles are usually reversed as one becomes responsible for the subsistence of others. People spend their money on those they care about, and those who receive, ambivalent though they may feel, are necessarily indebted to the provider. It is precisely because the family is at the emotional center of people's lives that the family is the locus for the major dispersal of their funds.

Again, the reason that the financial dimension elicited so many "other" responses is that "other" is here comprised almost exclusively of answers of "self." Had mentions of "self" been included with "family" responses to these financial questions, the dimension would be even more exclusively familial than the most ascribed in the family/friendship continuum, Ultimate Loss! Money

remains essentially within the family, with the single "friend" answer denoting a fiance.

3.3.10 Personal Services

The second dimension falling outside of the continuum for reasons of a high "other" category involves two questions concerning personal services. Those questions are:

- "Whom do you need most for personal services/ taking care of your clothing, food, household?" (Q39)
- "Who prepares your food ordinarily?" (Q30)

TABLE 21 **Personal Services Dimension**

Response Category	Q39c	Q30	Total
Family	123 62%	113 57%	236 59%
Friends	3 2%	4 2%	7 2%
Other	74 37%	83 42%	157 39%
Total	200 101%	200 101%	400 100%

$X^2=1.08$, df=2, p>.50

While approximately three fifths of the subjects answered "family" to these questions, two fifths mentioned "other." Substantially more than half of the "others" refer tc ego, with the remainder referring to domestic servants.

Like Finances, the Personal Services dimension deals with the material base of society. Unlike money, however, the rendering of domestic services does not confer status or power. Although both dimensions explicitly involve material exchanges, money is typically associated with the public outside world, whereas domestic service takes place in the prime locus of the personal sphere, the home. Thus, although money is spent on behalf of the family and personal services are performed within the family, they are not given equal weight. Although domestic labor demands much in the way of energy and time, it carries no prestige, whether it be done for pay or voluntarily for those one loves. Clearly the family is the principal site for "reproductive" tasks. In white South Africa where nearly every family has a domestic servant, it is surprising that they are mentioned so few times. In many cases supervision of domestic work by the homemaker was perceived as more important than the black servant who actually performs the work (cf. Cock, 1980).

Even as in the case of Finances, Personal Services are suffused with an emotional content which is by and large more consciously recognized by the giver than the receiver. However, because domestic tasks generally elicit such low regard, whether or not they are remunerated, they are more readily taken for granted than money. Because domestic services are largely invisible, they tend to figure less prominently in the emotional economy of the family.

3.4 CONCLUSION

In seeking to plumb the nature of close relationships, a questionnaire was devised which permitted respondents to name whomever they wished. The subjects' responses, however, proved inadequate for the theoretical assumptions behind the questionnaire, based as they were upon then available social-psychological literature. Instead the answers suggested a substantially new framework within which to analyse closeness. The conceptual order thus arose from the nature of the responses people gave, rather than from preconceptions brought to the study by either the researcher or her subjects. The framework suggests a universal theory of closeness, at least for South Africa, which transcends determination by age, gender, ethnicity, social class and marriage status.

By virtue of the open-endedness and inclusiveness of the questionnaire, it was possible to develop a theoretical framework for closeness which is very true to the data obtained. Responses broke down into three categories appropriate across age, gender, and ethnicity. The resultant patterns of responses for each question cluster into nine distinct dimensions. Seven of those dimensions describe a Closeness Continuum that moves from a response pattern which is almost entirely ascribed, or family, to a more voluntarist pattern of half friends, half family. While questions of death, network center, emotional

permeability and vulnerability, and to a lesser extent sharing of resources and personal contact elicited more family responses, questions of common attitudes and shared experiences drew as many friendship as family answers. The two dimensions probing material exchange of money and personal services alone yielded a significant number of "other" responses, or "self" and "self" or "domestic servant" responses, respectively.

The concept of closeness is not subsumed in any single one of the different dimensions, but each expresses another facet of it. Each has hence been carefully examined in this chapter in order to elucidate closeness in its entirety in this South African context. The result, then, is to arrive at a far more theoretically nuanced and empirically based conception of close relationships than exists in the literature to date.

On the basis of the foregoing discussion, one might suggest an heuristic paradigm for different categories of closeness, set forth as follows:

A. Ascribed ("family") category: this includes aspects of closeness in which emotional bonding is taken for granted -- that is, aspects in which commitment to any other proceeds less from personal choice than from a long history of self-formative growth in mutual interaction, often fraught with tension and ambivalence yet nonetheless extraordinarily powerful. Such ascribed

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aspects of closeness are most often located within family ties. [Ultimate Loss, Network Centre and Permeability/Vulnerability Dimensions]

B. Voluntary ("friendship" or "compatibility") category: this includes those elements of closeness in which greater, often more conscious, personal choice is exercised. Characterised by friendship-type relations, these voluntary aspects of closeness imply greater self-disclosure, more conscious discussion of values and attitudes, and enjoyment of each other's company. [Personal Contact, Common Attitudes and Shared Experiences Dimensions]

C. Practical category: this includes those economic and domestic factors which are inseparable from ongoing close relationships, especially within the family context. This very pragmatic, material base cannot properly be overlooked if one considers close relationships over time. [Financial and Personal Services Dimensions]

D. Shared Resources ("intermediate") category: this aspect of closeness is intermediate between Ascribed and Voluntary dimensions on the Closeness Continuum, and so is less easy to categorize. As said before in discussing the Shared Resources dimension, it is based on confidence in the benevolence of another that has been built up in an ongoing interaction over time. It deals less with emotional elements of closeness (as in the Ascribed

category) or with mutual experiences and attitudes (as in the Voluntary category) than with a conscious and proven estimate of the other's trustworthiness and goodwill. In this respect it shares both the historicity of the Ascribed category and the deliberateness of the Voluntary category. [Shared Resources Dimension]

This paradigm of categories of closeness, abstracted as it is from the empirical findings of this study, should be recognized for what it is -- a working model. The bounda. ies between the different categories of closeness are not sharply fixed and they are by no means exclusively separated in the intimate experiences of any single individual. However, they will serve as useful guideposts in examining closeness or intimacy as it occurs across the life course in different cultural and class contexts and between different genders. This examination will be the task of the chapters which follow.

4. CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS OVER THE LIFE COURSE

The previous chapter sets out the various dimensions of close relationships without reference to such variables as age, gender, race and social class. In order to test the impact of these independent variables upon close relationships, a breakdown of the homogeneity count was falculated for each of the variables. Following that procedure, the "family," "friend" and "other" responses for the questions within each dimension and sub-dimension were combined and then broken down by the independent variables. An analysis of variance test was applied to each of those counts in order to ascertain any statistical significance for the differences between the various age categories, between men and women, and between Xhosa and English-speakers (blacks and whites). The results of these procedures will be discussed in detail, dealing in consecutive chapters with age, race/class, and gender.

On the assumption that relationships change as one moves through life's developmental stages, the sample was selected from five representative age groups. These are childhood (9-11 yrs.), adolescence (16-17), young-adulthood (22-25), middle-age adulthood (36-46), and senior-adulthood (62 and over), respectively. They were selected because they form distinctive periods in psychological development across the entire course of an individual's life span (cf. for example, Lowe, 1972). On

the basis of life histories collected from the subjects of this study and the general literature in the area, a descriptive model for the developmental stages was constructed for comparison with the quantitative data.

4.1 LIFE STAGES: A DESCRIPTIVE MODEL

4.1.1 Growing Up

4.1.1.1 Childhood

Between the ages of 9 and 11, children are heavily dependent on their parent(s) or other primary care-giver(s), but their social world is not exclusively that of the family -- parents, siblings, and other relations. Indeed, the neighbourhood and school setting both permit wider social interaction with other children as well as non-familial adults (cf. Rubin, 1980). As one 10-year-old girl stated,

> I often visit Mrs. Grue, my next-door neighbour. She has always lived there, and she has lots of animals. I also go on my own to visit Aunty Ruthy. She's not an "aunt," really, but a good friend. She's quite old, ninety-two. She lives around the corner on Short Street. She has lots of interesting things to talk about, likes having me and my friend around. She's there all the time except Saturday afternoons [#38].

The social universe of a typical 11-year-old already includes a rich texture of different relationships:

> I play soccer in the street with Fezekile and Malibongwe. We live in the same street; Malibongwe is just opposite. I play with them until very late. We do our homework together too.

> My cousin Patrick helps me with homework if I don't understand. He is in standard five. He and I share a bed and sleep in the same room with Granny. She looked after me when I was a baby because my mother was not well, so I am closer to her.
>
> Last year Patrick and I went to Port Elizabeth for two weeks to visit my grandmother's sister, who works there. I also went to Port Alfred for a day with my old school. My friends Lungisile, Vuyo, Wandisile, and Wenzile were with me. I started school with all of them. We went to a new school this year, all except Wenzile. Our friend failed the year. He was very sad, and we were very sorry, because we were great friends.
>
> Patrick and I also went to Peddie for two weeks. On the way, I saw the Fish River. Patrick showed me and told me its Xhosa name - Nxuba River. I asked my cousin at Peddie the English name, and she told me. She is in standard eight [#6]!

4.1.1.2 Adolescence

The process of growing up involves a gradual moving away from one's family of origin in the direction of greater financial and emotional independence and a clearer consciousness of the self in relationship to others. Adolescence sees the acceleration of this transition in emotional if not financial terms (Kon, 1981:190-197). There is often clear recognition of ongoing dependence -- but in the context of an intentional effort to maintain distance. In the words of one rather typical teenager:

> I disagree most with my father and can get most angry with him. I get from him materially -- and a lot! But I don't get on with him or talk to him. I can't discuss with him. He gets an idea and won't change it. I'd like communication with him...[#76].

Another noted:

> My father is the bread-winner in my house. My elder brother, who stays on the same property, helps in buying food and paying for my school fees as well as my sisters'. The old man drinks,

> but he manages to bring his money home. He drinks only on weekends when he is not working [#44].

A strong identification with the peer group typically aids in forming an identity (cf. Douvan & Adelson, 1966). In childhood, the definitions and parameters of one's relationships are clear and taken for granted. With the onset of adolescence, these patterns become more self-conscious and elaborated. This move toward heightened self-awareness and away from the family towards the peer group is reflected in the words of a 17-year-old male:

> My sister Michelle is a year and a half younger than I. We played a lot with each other before we started school. My younger brothers paired off -- Andrew who is four years younger and Gary who is six years younger. Even now we still don't do much together; we lead separate lives, pretty much. [He now does everything with Craig and Dion his peer-friends.] I feel closest to them when we are fixing or riding our motor-bikes. Craig and Dion were both with me the day I got my motor-bike -- the most special day for me in the past year. Over the last holiday when I was with my family, Craig and Dion came down for a few days [#55].

In adolescence one is coming to terms with a new body, a new set of expectations toward the self (with parents and school making heavier demands) and intense personal awakenings that are at the same time intellectual, moral, and emotional. In this welter of strong feelings and opinions, the peer group represents an important vehicle for comparison and self-affirmation (for traditional Xhosa adolescent peer organization, cf. Mayer & Mayer, 1970). Another boy graphically captures the links

between the peer group and awakening sexuality:

> Phumzile, Siphiwo, and I all go to the same school. My cousin Phumzile lives next door. Siphiwo lives two streets away from us but sometimes stays overnight with me. I am also close to Mthuthuzeli, whom I have known for six years. Our girlfriends are close friends of each other too. My girlfriend is Nomfusi. Sometimes she'll visit me at night and we'll sleep together. There is a girl who has just moved in to my next-door-neighbour's house with her parents. I really love her. She is older than I, but she is very pretty. I am afraid to tell her how much I love her, that I would like to be close to her. Mthuthuzeli and Phumzile laugh at me when I ask them now to bell the cat [#42].

In the midst of much of what seems new, the peer group gives a sense of belonging and security without the intrusions of adult authority. Despite all the uncertainties of adolescence, at least in South African society, the financial and normative structure provided by both school and parents remains a fairly fixed arena within which, or against which, individuals work out their identities alongside their peers (cf. Rawlins & Holl, 1988, for a nuanced discussion of the differing contexts in which American adolescents choose to discuss with parents or friends).

An English-speaking 16-year-old spoke of his eagerness to leave what he (and a number of other adolescent subjects) saw as the confines of school:

> It's only my parents and teachers who are keeping me at school. My inclination is to pull out and get off on my own. School is really a small society. It gives me no valid options. Wider society offers other choices -- the ones I would prefer [#60].

Other typical normative constraints are illustrated by

the following account:

> Any free time I spend with Kholekile, my boyfriend. Our love is only three months old, but we have little chance to be together. He is studying matric, working very hard. My sister told me not to have a boyfriend until I finish my studies, so I'm not telling her and I'm pleased that she's not in the same school. Otherwise she would have hit me or told my uncle. The only person to know is my friend Ntombizakhe. My uncle trusts me, and I am very close to him. I wouldn't like him to hear about all the things I do, especially not about my boyfriend [#69].

4.1.2 Adulthood

In adulthood, the social environment begins to vary considerably (cf. Dickens & Perlman, 1981:94). While children and even adolescents are typically well-anchored within their family of origin and school, adults from their early twenties to old age experience a greater diversity of closeness structures. Further, as people attain maturity, differentiation between male and female worlds of production and reproduction and between different ethnic and social class norms significantly influence the configuration of their intimate lives. Convention still presents a standard life trajectory -- that the young adult is entering or preparing to enter the market place and/or a domestic reproductive role, that the middle-age adult is deeply involved in contributing to society's economy and in producing a family, and that the senior adult is at or nearing retirement from both of the latter tasks and is now providing more by way of symbolic continuity with the past and its wisdom.

However, individual lives may diverge substantially from these accepted models. One Xhosa young adult, for instance, lost her mother and was widowed in the same year, aged 20, when her son was two years old. She now lives with her sister, whom, say says, "acts as my mother to us [#105]." On the other hand, a 64-year-old widower [#171] with two sons now in their thirties, remarried a much younger divorcee. He says he now needs his sister most emotionally and would be most grieved to lose either son, for whom he provides both financial and moral support in their businesses. The while, however, he lives with his young second wife and her primary-school-age children.

4.1.2.1 Young Adulthood

Withal, it is still worth noting that certain exigencies are attached more to one life stage than another. In the case of young adults, there is a definite move out of, if not away from, one's family of origin, although movement away from the family is often less marked for the black respondents. For some Xhosa males the ceremony of circumcision designates formal entry into this stage, while for Xhosa females giving birth to a child (which includes weathering the inevitable family wrath if she is unmarried), seems to have a similarly maturing effect.

Many years have already been invested in raising and training the young adult to become a productive worker in the adult world. Those with aspirations for the highest-

status and usually highest-paid positions are typically still in training. Indeed, a substantial proportion of young adults in the sample were either studying or planning for further study. Of the white sample, only one male and one female were employed and not simultaneously engaged in a higher degree program. Of the black sample, two males and three females were still completing high school or technical training, while five males and three females were saving their money or recovering from an interruption caused by riots or the birth of a baby, with the intention of going back for further education. For example, a young unmarried Xhosa mother announced,

> Now that I feel better [ie. over the pregnancy], I am planning to go back to school. I don't think of marriage at all. I want to become a teacher and educate my daughter. Then I could marry once I'm working. My mother doesn't think I should get married [now]. She says boys are always wasting girls' opportunities [#110].

A similar commitment to education before marriage was expressed by 24-year-old Msokoli, whose schooling ended abruptly in standard eight on account of the riots:

> Oh yes, I have a girlfriend, but I am not going to get married yet. I want to further my studies. At Joza there is a technical college to be opened very soon, and I have made application to it. When it is opened, I'm going there with the money I'm saving for my studies. I always tell my girlfriend that if she wants to change her life, she can. At the moment, I want education. I think I should be honest with her. I don't want her to waste her time with me. I love her, but I am not prepared to marry her now [#81].

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