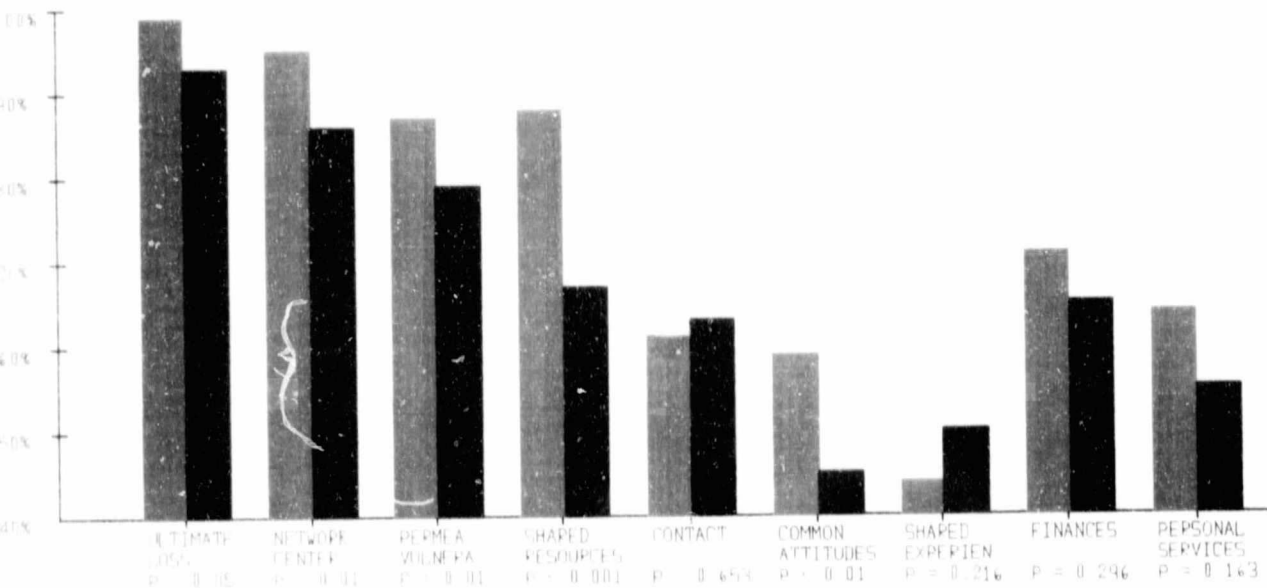


FAMILY BY ETHNICITY

■ XHOSA
■ ENGLISH



the latter two dimensions, where English-speakers name family more frequently than do Xhosa, are not statistically significant, however. Neither are ethnic differences significant for the Finances and Personal Services dimensions.

While the sharing of resources is predominantly a family arena for both blacks and whites, the data here contradict Stack's (1974) and Wilsworth's (1980: 161-181) argument that exchange is essentially a neighbourhood phenomenon amongst people in poverty. Stack's very title, All Our Kin, implies a neighborhood-wide concept of family, which is belied by the findings here. Indeed, in South Africa the family-centered distribution of goods amongst those in poverty can leave the individual without family ties in desperate straits (cf. Spiegel, 1980).

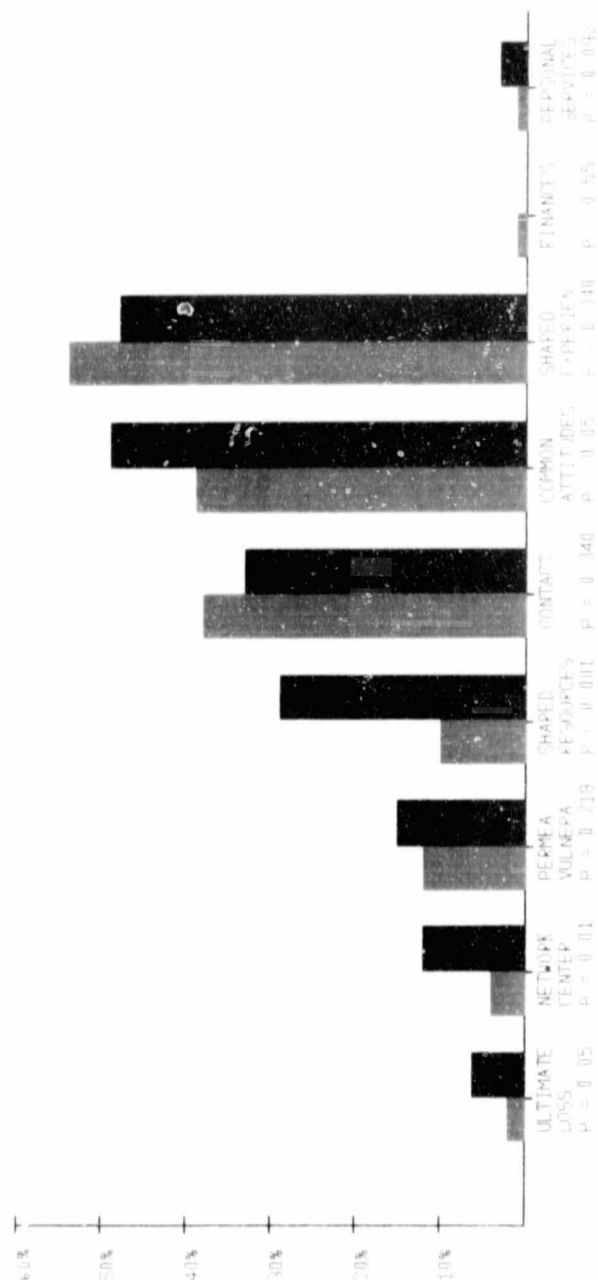
This general trend toward somewhat more Xhosa family mentions, particularly at the ascribed end of the Closeness Continuum, cannot be explained by ethnic differences in marital status. There are no significant differences in marital status for any of the age groups. Other possible explanations might be: the great number of Xhosa family options alluded to above, a stronger cultural tradition of family loyalty amongst the Xhosa, the fact that most of the Xhosa are working class (cf. Allan, 1979:4), and the greater economic imperative for the less affluent group. While all of these motivations may have some validity, the substantially higher (21%)

percentage of family responses for Shared Resources gives special weight to the economic argument. However, one must note that the "resources" shared in this dimension include "knowledge of past" and are therefore not strictly material resources. Perhaps, then, these responses imply that the general community of sharing is more family centered amongst the Xhosa. This would fit with the significant, if not very large, majority of family mentions in the Ascribed category and the rather greater difference in family mentions for the Common Attitudes dimension. Indeed the anomaly of significantly higher family mentions in Common Attitudes is accounted for by differences in the sub-dimension of Mutual Values. Thus it could be concluded that the Xhosa family is somewhat more exclusive than the English-speaking one.

5.2.2 Friend Mentions by Ethnicity

Given the general mythology about the importance of the African extended family system and anthropological findings on the importance of the family amongst working class people in many parts of the world, the results in Figure 4 are certainly not so dramatic as one might expect (for tables in support of Figure 4, see Appendix F). Indeed, in the major dimension of the Ascribed category (that is, Permeability/Vulnerability) and in two of the three dimensions in the Voluntary category (Contact and Shared Experiences), differences between ethnic groups' mentions of friends are not statistically

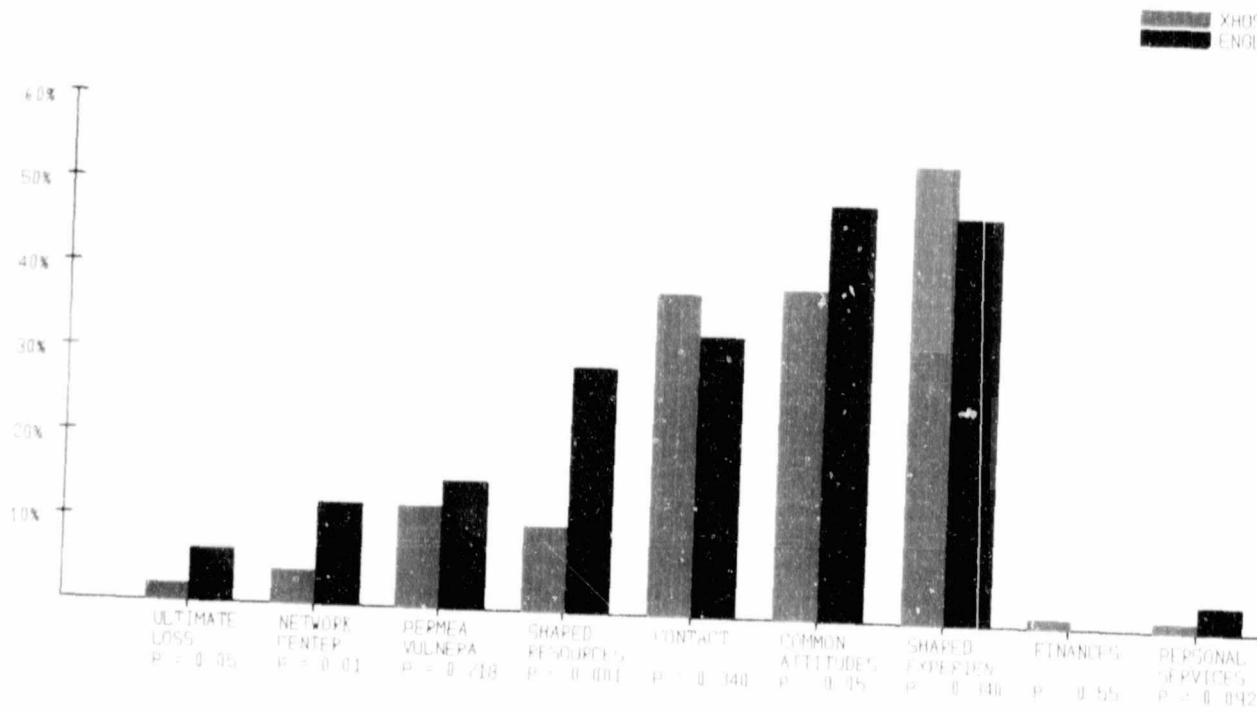
FRIENDS BY ETHNICITY



Friend Mentions by Ethnic Group

Figure 4.

FRIENDS BY ETHNICITY



Friend Mentions by Ethnic Group
Figure 4.

significant. It is especially surprising that in the Contact and Shared Experiences dimensions, English-speakers mention slightly fewer friends than do the Xhosa. Yet except for the Shared Resources dimension, overall differences between Xhosa and English-speaker mentions of friends are not so great as studies of working and middle classes in the United Kingdom would lead one to expect (cf. Allan, 1979). Rather these findings indicate that in South Africa the make-up of the basic core of close relationships remains very similar (at least regarding proportions of kin and kith) across ethnic groups and social classes (since the Xhosa may be seen as a socio-economic as well as a racial group).

How then do we explain the apparent discrepancy between these findings and so much of the received wisdom? Part of the explanation no doubt lies in the very traditional family structure amongst Grahamstown whites as well as blacks. However, more is involved than this.

While life in a small South African city may be fairly traditional for whites, an analysis of socio-economic status reveals a preponderance of professional/executive and middle-class respondents amongst the whites (91%) compared to an overwhelming majority of working-class subjects amongst the Xhosa sample (85%). Thus for this study, wide-ranging generalizations about social-class differences between kin and non-kin, at least for core relationships, are far less significant than, for

instance, differences evident amongst the five age-stages. Perhaps a reason for the over stress on class differences in community studies has been the tendency of such studies to concentrate on the working class, thus overlooking the fundamental importance of family relationships for middle- and professional/executive-class individuals. For instance, an unmarried, middle-aged university lecturer [#131] mentioned his only living relatives, cousins living in England, as his closest intimates although he has many local friends. Despite their geographical distance, his having met them for the first time when he was 17 years old, and his seeing them only rarely every several years, he nonetheless communicates with them regularly and sees them as central in his network of very close relationships.

5.3 DIFFERENCES IN RELATIONSHIP DISCOURSE

Certain subtle differences of interpersonal tone and idiom distinguish the Xhosa from the white transcripts and life histories. Although their core objective structures of close relationships are surprisingly similar, Xhosa and English-speakers speak of and would seem to conceive of their intimates in a somewhat different mode. The difference of tone and expression in their responses is not only notable in the autobiographies, but can actually be measured in responses to certain questions (as in Q44 & Q53).

A comparison of four life histories captures well the ethnic contrast in discourse about relationships. For instance, two middle-aged women each tell of happy marriages, but in distinctly different narrative genres.

On the one hand, the Xhosa woman recounted:

I had my first boyfriend when I was 17. We were very much in love. After a year of friendship, we married. My parents were Christians, so we married at church. I was already pregnant, but since I was just five months my parents didn't see that. Both of us were very happy about my pregnancy, longing for a baby to come.

When I was eight months, I asked my husband if I could go home to my parents to have the baby. He agreed because there was no one whom we knew or trusted on the farm. So I had my baby at Settlers Hospital. It was a baby boy -- Mthetheleli. My parents were very happy. I went back to the farm. My husband's father was very happy about the child, and we stayed very happily together. My parents and sisters came to the farm and spent a few weeks with us.

After two years I had twins, who died when they were a year old. After that I had a baby girl, and after that girl, my son Thembisile. After him I had two more boys. In all I had five children. It was a very happy family, and my husband loved his children [141].

A white woman of the same age described her marriage in a similarly positive but very different tone:

I care about my husband more than anyone else in the world. I used to be very close to my mother, but now my husband gets the confidences that used to be hers. There is more equality in my husband's and my relationship -- it can never be the same between parents and children.

I think it's hard for a mother of daughters. Of course, I haven't any, but I know my sons must move out and away from the family and attach themselves to a wife in due course. My elder son of 19 is moving gradually out of the tight family circled. He's asserting himself,

and that is as it should be.
 My husband wants me to be at home looking after the children. He feels he was deprived as a child. His mother went out to work and left him in the charge of a large African maid. The grandmother was at home, too, but she was ill and very intolerant.

My husband is really my best friend. We get along very well. We disagree over two areas only, and then we can get really worked up -- that is, our younger son and my husband's parents [#152].

Both women feel deeply fulfilled in their marriages; they are happy and able to express their content. The first account is essentially descriptive, however. The happiness in the conjugal relationship is embodied in the bearing of children and strengthened through loss. Its joy is substantiated in a setting that includes the husband's family as well as the wife's. There seems to be no need for the narrator to justify her statement; her feelings are validated by the familiar social context and the events in themselves.

The second woman's account, on the other hand, focuses upon her exclusive coupleness with her husband. Their relationship is consciously individuated from its wider social and generational setting and is subjected to psychological analysis and assessment, however cliched. Despite the woman's heavily value-laden tone, she attempts to maintain an "objective" attitude. These differences in discourse about relationships are as evident in male life histories and at different stages in the life course. For example, two retired men each of

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whom grew up with an abusive father, recount the situation in similarly contrasting styles. To wit, a 72-year-old Xhosa son of a tenant on a sheep farm told how

my father and mother used to go and drink and come home drunk. At home my sisters and brothers were dying of hunger....one day there was no food in the house. My parents had gone to drink. I was crying for lack of food. When my parents came back, every one of us was crying. My mother was cross with my father, who didn't care. He beat her for worrying him. Then he asked my brother to kill a sheep so we could eat some meat.

My father was a strange person. Everybody was afraid of him, especially his children and wife. I didn't have any friends because other children were afraid of him, and I was not allowed to go and play with them. My father was really cruel. If we children wanted to know something from him, we couldn't face him. We would send my mother and she would ask him for us. My mother was like a servant in the house. My father had a sjambok. If there was a sheep lost, my mother and sisters and brothers had to go and look for it, and we had to find it or not come home! I didn't have love in my house at all [#169].

The story of a 74-year-old white retiree who grew up an architect's son in England, differs from the foregoing account in its attempt to maintain an "objective" and analytical tone similar to that of the white woman above:

I was an only child. I remember creating a hell of a row in the nursery, hoping the nanny would be got rid of -- and she was! My mother really did all the nurturing from then on. I can't remember a nanny in the new house we went to when I was about five. There mother took over completely. That was the root of the whole problem. My father was jealous and away from home during the war. The trouble resulted from the war, I think, now that I look back on it. My father was in the RAF but didn't leave the country. We saw him when we could -- went to Henley for three to six months to be near him. But my parents had difficulty getting together in the early twenties. The triangular

thing began which had been delayed because we had domestic help before. There was some violence. I had the wrong mentality toward my father. I couldn't see the difficulties he had [#175].

Again as in the first two female accounts, there are clear ethnic differences in talking about close relationships. The whites have access to a psychological idiom which disposes them to attempt an explanation of hidden meanings and motivations. The African accounts, on the other hand, set forth personal attributes such as cruelty or kindness as inherent properties of persons which require illustration but no further explanation. People are what they are and behave as they do. For instance, several Xhosa respondents had close relatives in the mental hospital. While they grieved the absence of their loved one and fervently desired their recovery from the illness, there was no attempt at psychological analysis or attribution of blame. Indeed, the thoroughly entrenched therapeutic language of relationships which permeates the discourse of the white South Africans sample radically distinguishes them from the majority of the Xhosa respondents. The universe of discourse of the Xhosa appears closer to the idiom of classical Greek drama than the psychologically overdetermined world view of twentieth century Europe.

Quantitative support for ethnic differences in relationship idiom comes from responses to two specific questions, numbers 44 and 53. In Question 44, people

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Quantitative support for ethnic differences in relationship idiom comes from responses to two specific questions, numbers 44 and 53. In Question 44, people

were asked to tell how they express affection to someone the same age and gender as themselves. Individuals were free to say as much or as little as they chose. Responses were coded into nine separate categories prior to any analysis. The results are summarized in Table 24.

TABLE 24 Expressions of Affection by Ethnicity

Expressive Mode	Xhosa	English	Total Mentions	Significance (by x2 test)
Spending Time Together	80	83	163	p=.716
Bed/Food/Gift	80	14	94	p<.001
Affirmation of Other	10	57	67	p<.001
Physical Demonstration	22	34	56	p=.083
Advising/Helping/Favours	7	39	46	p<.001
Joking	8	25	33	p<.01
Introduction to Close Others	29	0	29	p<.001
Drinking Together	20	4	24	p=.001
Other	33	16	49	p<.01

The most common response is to spend time with the other person. Indeed, approximately four fifths of each ethnic group mention spending time together. Also statistically insignificant are mentions of physical demonstrations, such as shaking hands or hugging, although English-speakers do refer to physical demonstrations one third

more often than the Xhosa. In all other expressions of affection, there are substantially significant ethnic differences.

On the whole Xhosa responses are more often concrete and substantive, whereas white answers tend to be more psychologically self-conscious and affirmative of the other. For instance, 80% of the Xhosa mentioned hospitality or gift-giving, compared to only 14% of the English-speakers. Associated with hospitality is the introducing of one's close friend to other friends and relatives, an exclusively Xhosa response (with 29% raising this point). Another concrete expression of affection is drinking together. Twenty Xhosa (mostly men), compared to but four English-speakers, thought to speak of this as a demonstration of caring

The most typically English-speaking expression of affection is to affirm the other verbally -- for example, "giving them time when they are talking about themselves, giving confirmation of themselves and advice, prodding them along [111]." This sort of response is more than five times more frequent for English-speakers (57% of all English subjects of both genders) than for Xhosa (10%). Offering advice, giving help, or doing favors is also a typically English-speaking expression (39%, compared to 7% of the Xhosa). Finally, four times as many whites (and most of them men) as Xhosa speak of joking by way of expressing affection.

Looking at responses to question 44 by ethnicity, the greater significance of material demonstrations of affection for the Xhosa may help explain their very numerous family mentions in the Shared Resources dimension. Sharing not only one's field of acquaintances but also one's home (directly contrary to Allan's, 1979, findings on the working class in England) and cash savings would seem to be a true indication of loyalty for the Xhosa. The English-speakers, on the other hand, seem to set special store by verbal and otherwise symbolic demonstrations of affections.

The responses to question 44 also give credence to the argument from the qualitative material about ethnic differences of idiom in discourse about close relationships. Once more one notices that English-speakers make frequent reference to a psychological frame in expressing affection, whereas the Xhosa are more typically down-to-earth in their reflections on relationships.

Ethnic differences are even more striking in the answers provided to question 53. Here each subject was asked to specify the situation in which he or she feels most close to his or her three closest intimates. The totally open-ended responses were coded into 32 different categories before being subjected to any statistical analysis.

TABLE 25 "When Close" Answers (A)

Response Type	Xhosa	English
General Reciprocity		
Working together	9	7
Problem solving	6	4
Helping/advising	6	12
Receiving help/advice	5	13
Receiving food/candy	5	3
Receiving gift/favour	6	9
Comforting/worrying about	12	6
When other is kind	5	5
Pleasing other	0	2
Interactive Reflection		
Conversing	22	46
Receiving confidences	0	22
Corresponding	2	1
Religious sharing	1	7
Reminiscing together	4	11
Contemplating future together	8	1
Reconciliation	0	1
Non-Interactive Reflection		
Thinking of dependency on other	27	2
Thinking of other	60	1
Watching other	19	3
In absence of other	60	2
Great loss or sorrow	1	0
When self achieves	0	1
Celebratory Togetherness		
Joking	3	1
Fun together	19	62
Special celebrations	0	1
Other happy/excited	0	3
Drinking together	1	4
Reunion	7	6
Exclusive Togetherness		
Alone with other	1	26
With other	3	11
In bed with other	2	14
Non-specific Responses		
At all times	3	3
No special time	0	3

This table would seem to establish clear qualitative differences between Xhosa and English-speaking conceptions of closeness. While roughly equal numbers of both ethnic groups mention "General Reciprocity" as the context in which they experience greatest closeness, ethnic differences seem dramatic in the other Closeness Contexts. Hence, while both groups do not mention markedly disparate numbers of family or friends when questioned about different closeness situations, they would appear to experience closeness somewhat different ways. More Xhosa-speakers, for instance, say they feel closest to their most intimate others when they have them in mind, rather than when they are actually interacting with them.

The most common response, "Having fun together," is three times more frequent for English-speakers than Xhosa. English-speakers predominate as well in the next most frequent category, "Conversing," which they answered twice as often as Xhosa. On the other hand, the two categories which rank third highest, "In the other's absence," and "Thinking of the person" are almost exclusively Xhosa (60 out of 61 mentions in both cases). Xhosa prevail as well in the categories "Thinking of dependence on the other" (27 out of the 29 mentions) and "Watching the other" (19 out of a total of 22 mentions). English-speakers, meanwhile, dominate the categories of "Receiving confidences" (all 22 mentions) and "Alone with the other" (26 out of 27 mentions).

Given the unwieldiness of operating with so very many categories, these were clustered into half a dozen theoretically consistent groups.

TABLE 26 "When Close" Answers (B)

Response Type	Xhosa	English	Total	Significance
General Reciprocity	54 18%	61 21%	115 19%	p=.520
Interactive Reflection	37 12%	88 30%	125 21%	p<.001
Non-Interactive Reflection	167 56%	8 3%	175 30%	p<.001
Celebratory Togetherness	30 10%	80 26%	110 19%	p<.001
Exclusive Togetherness	6 2%	51 17%	57 10%	p<.001
Non-Specific Responses	3 1%	6 2%	9 2%	p=.303
TOTAL	297 99%	293 99%	591 100%	

(9 missing responses)

Significance determined by analysis of variance test on ethnic breakdown for each category

This table would seem to substantiate the notion of clear, qualitative differences between Xhosa and English-speaking conceptions of closeness. While roughly equal numbers of both ethnic groups mention "General Reciprocity" as the context in which they experience greatest closeness, ethnic differences seem dramatic in the other closeness contexts. The preponderance of

English-speaking respondents in the categories of "Exclusive Togetherness" and "Interactive Reflection" provides further support for the argument that this group tends to conceive of close relationships in a self-consciously exclusive, coupled mode. The real puzzle is the large numbers of Xhosa-speakers who claim to feel closest to their most intimate others when they have them in mind, rather than when they are interacting with them. This response pattern appeared so unusual to a Western analyst, that it seemed possible that there had been an error in the translation. A check with three highly-educated Xhosa informants in Grahamstown, however, confirmed that the Xhosa version of the question had a similar meaning to the English version. In both languages "closeness" has the same connotative as well as denotative implications.

Given the validity of the recorded differences, then, one can but speculate on the possible explanations for this phenomenon. The discussion that follows is neither definitive nor are the several suggested explanations mutually exclusive.

a. Migration and other absences

To begin with, closeness through absence may have something to do with separations from loved ones caused by the migrant labor system. Xhosa family members or friends may well work elsewhere, say in Port Elizabeth or Uitenhage, even Cape Town or Johannesburg. Mothers are

often absent too for long periods during the day on account of their work, and indeed some black children live with grandparents because their parents are out of town. Many of the older Xhosa were first generation towns-people who had left white farms in the countryside. Amongst all the age groups, Xhosa subjects often expressed a nostalgia for the abundant subsistence they remembered from life on the farms -- also for those left behind or for children sent back to attend school.

However, amongst the whites, a similarly frequent motif was nostalgia for family and friends scattered throughout South Africa and especially for those who had emigrated to England, Australia, and other English-speaking areas. Hence the predominance of non-interactive reflection amongst the Xhosa cannot simply be explained by separation. Further, why should a Xhosa woman whose husband works locally in Grahamstown feel closest to him during the hours when he is away at his job [#104]? Or why should a 36-year-old Xhosa man feel closest to his wife who lives with him and is not employed "when I think of her when she is not here [#124]?" Another Xhosa man who feels closest to his wife "when talking about our future" and to his children "when watching them at play," says about his childhood friend whom he sees almost daily that he feels closest "when I think of him and have not seen him for two days [#127]." Migration cannot explain such responses.

b. Differences in socialization about expressing feelings

The Xhosa-speaking individuals who verified the translation of the question suggested that the explanation might lie in Xhosa socialization, which tends to suppress overt expression of feelings. Positive comments about someone would not generally be made in that person's presence or earshot, for example. In traditional ("red-blanket") Xhosa society, said Vivienne Ndatshe:

A father expresses tenderness when his child is still a toddler, but at about age five the child is weaned from the attentions of his parents. An older child will go to the parent if he or she needs something. The parent will be concerned if the child has a problem, but there is no built-in mode for expressing tenderness, love. A woman might feel love inside but doesn't show it. She must be shy and the man expressive toward her. Any attention must be given in private. Indeed while living with the husband's parents, they avoid direct contact with each other in front of the parents. For instance, if the husband wants a blanket, he asks a boy to ask his wife, or a wife will ask the parents to ask their son for money.

A pattern of socialization that inhibits public and direct expression of positive feelings about others may help to explain why caring is so often expressed in material terms as well. It certainly helps to illuminate why so many Xhosa parents say they feel closest to their children while watching them outside at play.

c. Traditional relationship structures

The more traditional character of Xhosa society may also help to elucidate the observed differences.

Relationships are described more conventionally by Xhosa informants because roles are more clearly defined and taken for granted. Thus, for instance, everyone knows what is expected of a spouse, child or parent (in fact, disappointed expectations were a frequent theme in adult Xhosa life histories). One child captured well a variation on the oft-repeated moral verities of a Xhosa youngster's world, when he said:

Every evening my sister and brothers and I pray before we go to sleep, asking God to help us grow and be big girls and boys and to go to college and study there. And when we're finished, we will work for mother and father, as they work for us now. We'll also buy them food. They will be old by that time and unable to walk. They will be like my father's father, who walks with a stick [#21].

Such expressions of obligation were not confined to Xhosa children but were fairly typical for Xhosa adolescents and even some young adults when referring to their parents. The meaning of the traditional circle of relationships is well expressed by John Taylor (1963:100):

Responsibility and obligation -- these are the operative words. The human solidarities of Africa do not depend upon the changes and chances of affection. The family is a delicately poised and interlacing organism in which each knows to whom he owes particular duties, from whom he can expect particular rights, and for whom he bears particular responsibilities. And this whole pattern of interdependence is symbolized and ratified by the way in which food is provided from one household and shared amongst others.

Lengthy conversations or psychological explanations are not required to discover what the other is thinking

because convention tells one that (for similar conclusions about traditional and older American couples, see Pike & Sillars, 1985:321 and Zietlow & Sillars, 1988). Given these expectations, people demean themselves more predictably; elaborate psychological explanations of motivation are unnecessary. The somewhat anomalous preponderance of family mentions for Xhosa in the Mutual Values sub-dimension of Common Attitudes might also be explained by this more traditional existential orientation. Within the traditional family, taken-for-granted scripts of mutual values may cause family members to feel less need to search out kindred souls outside of the family, although they certainly do find such individuals for more cognitive discussions and for sharing experiences.

This is not to say that Xhosa lack psychological insight. For instance, a 43-year-old Xhosa male showed considerable canniness in the following account:

I was confused because I didn't want to lose my girlfriend, and on the other hand I didn't want to hurt my mother [who had chosen my wife]. I started to get rid of my wife in a sly way so that she would be fed up and leave me. I sometimes stayed with my girlfriend for a week. My plan worked. My wife told my mother that she was going to Port Elizabeth to work [#125].

What we are dealing with here is not lack of psychological understanding, but rather different modes of discourse, distinct interactional idioms which have behavioural as well as attitudinal implications. Any one of the African life histories could be chosen to

illustrate this point. The words of a middle-aged Xhosa male and female, respectively, may serve as examples.

The former recounted:

So I lost both my parents when I still was not yet married. I had my younger brother and sister to look after. Having to take care of those children, I was like a fish out of water. I didn't know where to start. I went to Claudie -- my father's friend, who suggested I should first look for a wife. So I married my wife at church. We were a happy little family. She liked my sister and brother [#121].

Uncertain how to meet responsibilities following upon the death of his father and mother, the young Xhosa man turned to a logical adviser -- his father's old friend. The proposed solution, to create a new household, would provide for the brother and sister. The father's trusted peer both advised the young man and sanctioned his formal entry into a new life stage. The young man's feelings for his new wife are not mentioned -- they seem irrelevant.

The Xhosa woman's story is quite as matter-of-fact about rooting relationships in concrete expectations and obligations:

I was a big girl when I had a boyfriend. I couldn't enjoy him a lot, though, because I was afraid of my aunt's seeing him. I didn't know what she might say if she found out. Could she say, "Leave my house"? If so, where would I go? That relationship went on for about a year. Then the man who became my husband proposed marriage to me. It took a long time to decide what to do. I remember asking my sister when I visited her, "What should I do about these two men?" She suggested that I accept the man who proposed marriage because the other one only wanted to enjoy life with me, and it was time for me to have my own home.

I was 19 years old when I got married. At about 20, I got pregnant. My husband and I were very excited. When I had my first child, Mbeko, the father was more excited than I was. A boy! I was a good wife to my husband for my first baby was a boy. We loved our baby so much [#147].

Whereas relationships are more conventionally defined for the Xhosa-speakers, a central assumption of contemporary middle-class English-speaking culture is the uniqueness of each individual. It is thus necessary to search out the interior of that individual in order to know him or her. Interaction becomes a quest for validation of the relationship and indeed of oneself. Personal identities and interpersonal relationships need to be continually reinforced and reinterpreted -- hence, the importance of the unique coupled identity in which each partner sustains the psychological development of the other (for gender differences, see section 6.2.1.2).

Similar differences were noticeable when adult informants discussed children and the meaning of children in their lives. While English-speakers seldom dealt with the actual event of the child's birth, they had much more to say about the child's developing personality. As one father said of his baby daughter:

I feel a particularly close bond with Mary, you know, sympathetically close, intuitively close. She has more my temperament. It's more difficult for her. She's more introverted [#98].

For the Xhosa, on the other hand, a new birth seems to have great moment in and of itself. The event seems as much ritual and communal as psychological. A 40-year-old informant, speaking of his daughter's birth 12 years earlier, recounted:

My wife was pregnant. She wrote me a letter and told me. I was very excited when she told and longed to be near her. I asked my brother if I could marry her. He agreed, and she went to stay with her mother until she had Ntombomzi -- my first child. I was very happy when I heard, though I had wanted a boy. My wife was also excited. She stayed at her home. I wrote to my brother at home and told him about the great news. (We are still very close to each other today). I told him we would be staying in his house with him until we got a new place for the three of us. I took my leave and prepared to come home.

They were waiting for us here in Grahamstown. We came on Sunday morning by train, and we walked to my home. Everybody was so excited about the baby. My sister-in-law took her from her mother and carried her. Our next-door neighbours also arrived to see the baby. The following week, my brother killed a goat for an imbeleko [softened skin for carrying baby on back] for the baby. It was a very big party. Only my eldest brother was not there, but his wife and her children came [#128].

The mood of the foregoing account is not at all unusual. Indeed it is typical of Xhosa life histories not only in the vividness and joy with which the arrival of children is attended but also in the frequency with which such events are narrated and the conventional form in which they are expressed.

d. Differing metaphysics of relationships

Bennie Khoapa [personal communication, April 1988] suggested an additional explanation for the Xhosa-

speaking expression of closeness in the absence of the other. This, he suggested, has to do with a difference between African and Western metaphysics. For Africans, he thought, relationships are a matter of "being" rather than "becoming." Persons closely related to one another share in a common spirituality which transcends physical separation. Indeed, when apart, persons may be better able to concentrate on the spiritual essence of the other without interference from the clutter of everyday interaction. This is particularly true of parents and children, since the cult of the ancestors implies a common spiritual essence in which the greatest closeness of all is achieved after death, which is the final separation. Thus since relationships are spiritual, one may actually be closer to a person when absent.

Echoes of this African metaphysics may be found in the philosophy of Plato, where the essential forms of reality are non-empirical, and in European literature, as in courtly love, where contemplation of the beloved in her or his absence is more compelling than the beloved's presence, or in the writings of Marcel Proust, where reminiscences of past events and persons are imbued with deeper meaning than when they were actually experienced. Despite such analogies in Western tradition, absence and presence were not similarly linked in the common sense of English-speaking white Grahamstonians, for whom concrete social interaction almost invariably attended feelings of greatest closeness.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

Although Xhosa-speakers mention more individuals initially when asked to name all those to whom they feel particularly close, an analysis of the actual structure of their closeness relationships reveals surprisingly little difference between the two ethnic groups. Recalling that in this South African sample ethnicity and social class are inextricably linked, the differences in initial mentions may be explained by a safety-net theory -- that persons who are economically marginal may tend to keep alive a wider set of relationships to be tapped when necessary. On the other hand, the more traditional nature of African society may also explain the larger number of initial mentions by Xhosa-speakers. Certainly, Xhosa mentions of family members are significantly more frequent than amongst English-speakers, especially on the ascribed half of the Closeness Continuum and for the Mutual Values sub-dimension of Common Attitudes. One may conclude more generally, however, that individuals in different social classes and cultures practice a common emotional economy in close relationships. That is to say, they invest genuine commitment, true closeness, in a relatively small number of very significant others across the dimensions of closeness, irrespective of cultural and class differences.

Yet when modes of discourse about relationships are compared, profound differences between Xhosa and English-

speakers in the sample do emerge. There are highly significant differences in expressing how one feels about closeness and the behaviours by which one demonstrates it. Xhosa-speakers show their commitment to each other in material rather than psychological ways and experience commitment spiritually as well as interactionally. It is thus in cultural expressions of closeness, rather than in the organizational pattern of close relationships (with the caveat noted for Shared Resources and the sub-dimension Mutual Values), that ethnic differences disclose themselves.

6. MALE AND FEMALE WORLDS OF CLOSENESS

Feminist psychological studies have generally continued the Freudian argument of separate male and female worlds, although the causes are seen as differences in socialization rather than of biological destiny. From Dorothy Dinnerstein (1976) and Nancy Chodorow (1978) to Lillian Rubin (1983), the reasoning goes that differences in primary relationships within the family lead women and men to experience unique social and emotional worlds. They maintain that because little girls are the same gender as their mothers, who are also the primary caregivers, they do not develop a fully separate ego, as do their brothers. Hence, women grow up with a keener sense of connectedness to other persons, while men feel more independent and differentiated from others.

While their Freudian origins move the above feminist scholars to focus on emotional differences, Carol Gilligan's Kohlbergian background leads her to concentrate on conceptual and moral issues (cf. Kohlberg, 1974). Indeed, Gilligan (1982) finds that women tend to evaluate ethical alternatives differently from men. Young women, she says, tend to think in an ethic of relatedness rather than abstract imperatives. Certainly the dominant psychological strand of contemporary American feminism postulates separate male and female social psychological realities. Bernard (1981) sets forth a similar but sociologically-based view of "the

female world." While women presumably dominate the "private world" of relationships, men are believed to control the "public world" of work in the market place and political leadership.

Feminist psychological assumptions about male-female differences in close relationships will be empirically investigated in the present chapter. First to be considered is the general issue of homogeneity of responses by gender across the entire questionnaire.

6.1 HOMOGENEITY

Looking at the findings on homogeneity, one notes little significant difference between males and females.

TABLE 27 Homogeneity by Gender

Mentions		Male	Female
Same person mentioned	10%	17%	25% or
less of the time			
Same person mentioned		63%	66%
25% to 50% of the time			
Same person mentioned	27%	17%	
more than 50% of the time			

$$\chi^2 = 4.157, \text{ df} = 2, \text{ p} < .10$$

Female scores were somewhat more heterogeneous, however. Specifically, males almost one third more often than females named the same individual over 50% of the time, whereas females more than one third more often named a

given person 25% or less of the time. These findings raise a question as to whether intimacy is a more exclusive phenomenon amongst males (cf. Hatfield, 1983). It is more likely, however, that since 36 men in the sample are married, as compared to 25 women, this result simply reflects a more homogeneous pattern of responses for married persons (cf. Fischer & Phillips, 1982). Such a conclusion is consistent with the discussion of middle-aged and senior adults in the chapter on age differences.

6.2 CATEGORIES OF CLOSENESS

With regard to the family/friend distinction in all the Closeness dimensions from Ultimate Loss to Shared Experiences, there is no statistically significant difference between answers of male and answers of female respondents. Therefore, a graph was considered redundant, although all the relevant tables are set forth in Appendix G. On the face of it, these findings give no support for the feminist assumption of separate public-private spheres divided along gender lines, where women predominate in the family and men outside of it. Were such a public-private two-sphere argument to hold, one might expect females to name more family and males more friends.

A more detailed analysis of the gender aspects of closeness is possible by examining the gender of the individuals mentioned, whether family or friend, in each

category of closeness. On account of the complexity of the data on gender, discussion will deal with each of the general categories of closeness -- Ascribed, Voluntary, Shared Resources and Practical -- in turn. (For a paradigmatic model of categories of closeness, see section 3.11.) However, since the two graphs for this chapter (Figures 5 & 6) deal with all the dimensions and will be adverted to throughout, they are inserted at this point for ease of reference (for tables in support of Figures 5 & 6, see Appendix H).

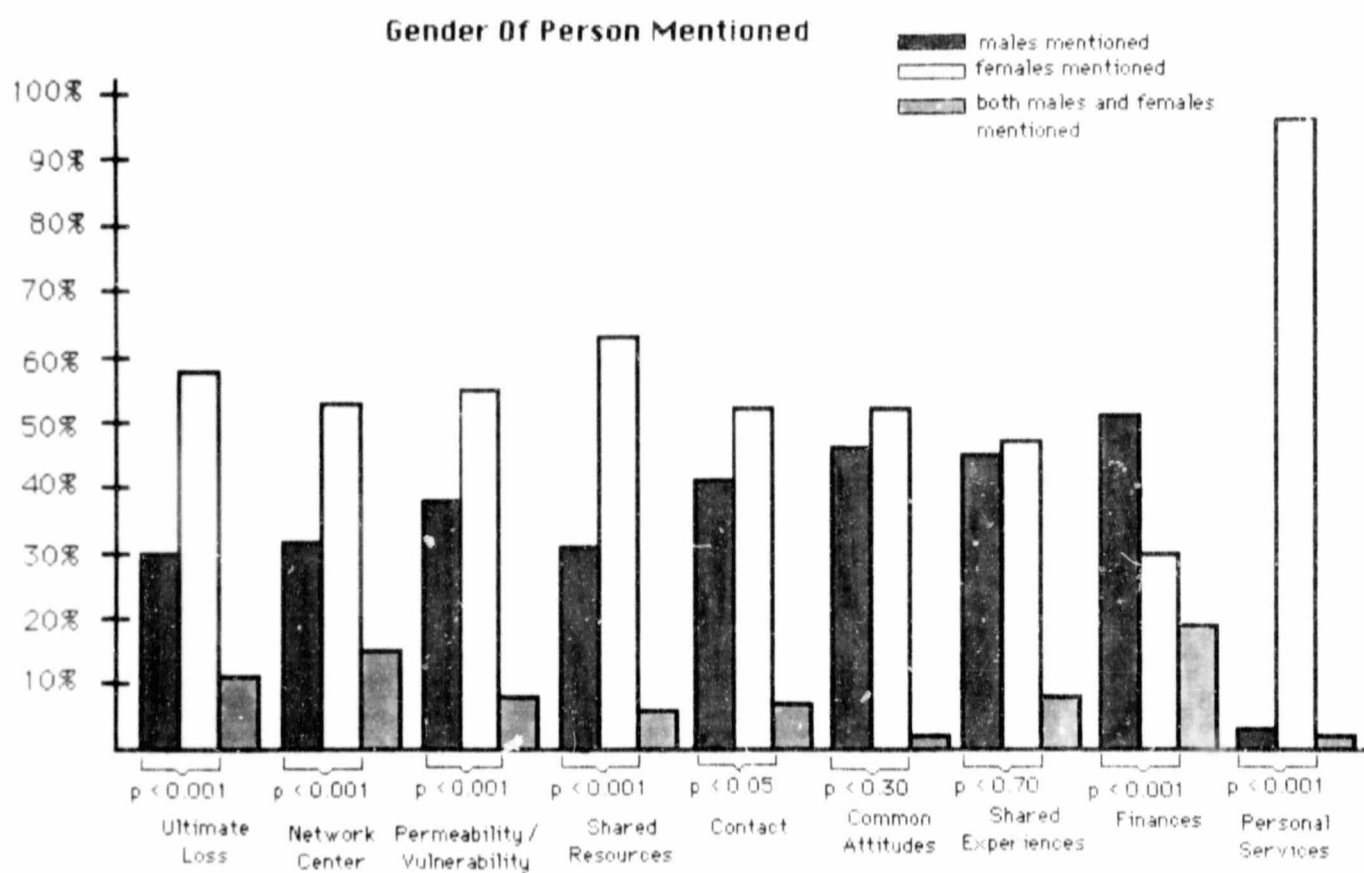
6.2.1 Ascribed Category

6.2.1.1 Gender Mentions

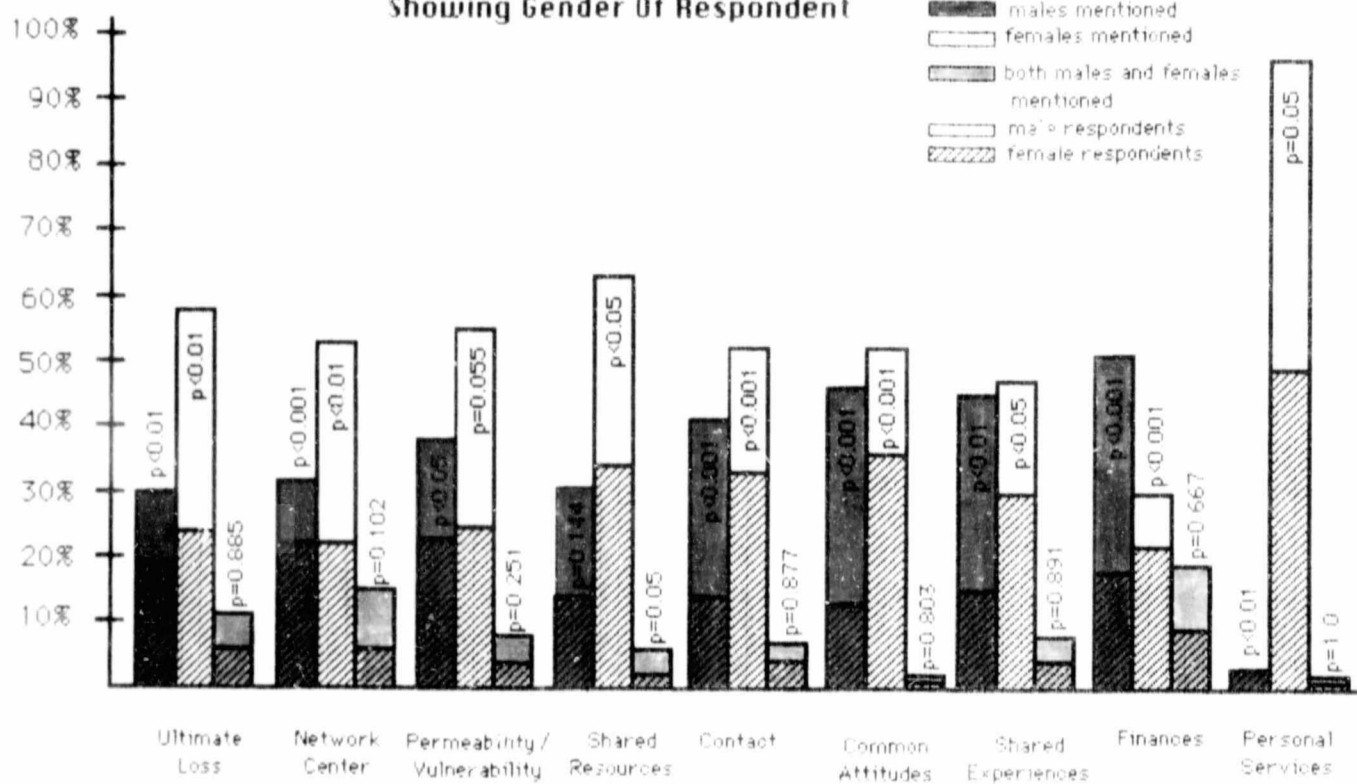
Female mentions clearly dominate amongst the Ascribed dimensions, from about twice as often in Ultimate Loss to somewhat less than one third more frequent than male mentions in Permeability/Vulnerability (Figure 5). (Both genders are named relatively seldom, and where they are, more than a quarter of the time it is a case of children mentioning both parents or parents mentioning both-gender children.) While subjects named males a third of the time for this family end of the Closeness Continuum, they named females 55% of the time ($p < .001$). These results seem to substantiate Lillian Rubin's often repeated argument that women prevail in the internal world of personal connectedness. She claims that

by virtue of their early developmental experiences, women do have some special sensitivities and capacities for empathy that

Gender of Person Mentioned
Figure 5.



Gender Of Person Mentioned Showing Gender Of Respondent



Gender of Person Mentioned
Showing Gender of Respondent
Figure 6.

come with greater difficulty to men. The greater permeability of a woman's ego boundaries means that she is more readily able to connect with another [1983: 202; cf. also Chodorow, 1978: 198].

On the other hand, the number of male mentions is considerable and suggests less dichotomy than Rubin argues for. Indeed, when one looks at gender responses by the gender of respondents (Figure 6), interesting nuances emerge.

6.2.1.2 Gender Mentions by Gender of Respondent

In the three dimensions of the Ascribed category, females mention both males and females roughly an equal number of times. What accounts then for the large number of females mentioned is that males name females substantially more often than they do their own gender, about three times more often for Ultimate Loss and Network Centre and twice as frequently for Permeability/Vulnerability. These results do sustain Rubin's (1983) claim that within the family women are the "emotional specialists." For a majority of the men and boys interviewed, females preside over their networks of closeness. Nonetheless between a quarter and a third of males mention other males. (Indeed, in the results for this sample, the only area of close relationships where women predominate almost exclusively is Personal Services.)

Author Aldrich Meredith J

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