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THE CONTEXTS OF PERSONAL RELATIONS: AN EXPLORATORY NETWORK ANALYSIS

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THE CONTEXTS OF PERSONAL RELATIONS:
AN EXPLORATORY NETWORK ANALYSIS*

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November 1977

Working Paper 281

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**Many people played important roles in the data collection. I can single out only a few: M. Sue Gerson, project coordinator; Lynne McCallister Jones, who helped develop the instrument; and Charlotte Coleman, who advised on the survey work. Helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper were provided by Paul Burstein and Norman Shulman.

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PREFACE

This Working Paper is the first in what we expect will be a long series of reports from the Northern California Community Study (also known as the "Social Networks Project"). Aside from its substantive content, the paper is intended to illustrate applications of the method we developed for measuring social networks. It is an illustration drawn from the two pretest surveys we conducted. The next planned paper in this series will present in detail the technique we developed for studying personal networks by mass survey and the logic behind that method.

C.S.F.

November 1977

ABSTRACT

Classic Decline-of-Community theories assume a certain connection between the contexts of personal relations and their qualities. This paper addresses the issues of whether (1) relations set in bounded, traditional contexts are more intimate and supportive than one's drawn from voluntaristic settings; (2) whether education -- as an indicator of modernism -- is associated with having relations in voluntaristic contexts; and therefore (3) that education is associated with having less intimate and supportive ties. The data are drawn from two pilot surveys using a method of measuring networks that yields unusually rich descriptions of personal relations. The results tend to support the second proposition, but neither of the other two.

Today's popular ideologies concerning personal relations appear to juxtapose two antithetical notions about intimate ties. One is the "neotraditional" idea (as David Riesman terms it) that truly fulfilling personal bonds arise from the tightly bounded, pre-modern contexts of life, contexts such as kinship, church, and the local community. The other notion stresses the quest to find one's soulmates, one's "karass" (as Kurt Vonnegut terms it), by breaking away from such constraining settings. These two ideas, often believed by the same person at the same time, parallel two sociological perspectives on personal relations.

The first perspective might be labelled "Decline of Community": Intimate and supportive relations emerge from "primordial" social groups, such as the family, tribe, and neighborhood. These groups possess strong boundaries that isolate members from outside ties, and functional interdependence and frequent interaction among the members. The relations that members manage to establish with people outside the group are typically superficial, transitory, and instrumental. Yet, modern society has broken down the traditional barriers, allowing more and more people to search outside their traditional groups for personal relations. The consequence is a society whose members have many diffuse instrumental connections to others, but few deep, intimate ties, and who are losing "community."¹

The second perspective might be called "Diversity Theory." According to this view, the bonds formed under the constraints of corporate groups are less intimate and supportive than those formed by people who have access to many very diverse groups of people. Under conditions of

wider choice, individuals are likelier to find associates with whom they have affinity. Note that there are critical points of agreement between both schools: Historical changes have lowered barriers, encouraged individual exploration, and ultimately, have affected intimate life. The clash is fundamentally social-psychological: What kinds of ties are formed under narrower or wider limits?²

Evaluation of the arguments is difficult because they contain ambiguities concerning the causal links between social structure and personal relations. Classical sociological theories, largely of the Decline school, make those links largely through metaphor, vague ideas about "consciousness," organic models, and instinct theories.³ Even when the debate is joined by contemporary theorists (say, Nisbet versus Shils), it tends to be expressed in quite general terms, such as "ethos" or "freedom." The same is typically the case for expressions of Diversity theory.⁴ It is quite difficult to tell in these writings just how it is that macroscopic social structures -- for example, systems of production -- shape intimate relations -- for example, whether people entertain their in-laws.

This paper addresses the Decline/Diversity debate in two ways: First, it restates the arguments in network analytic terms, which allows a more explicit formulation (see also Frankenburg, 1965; Craven and Wellman, 1973; Fischer et al., 1977); and second, it presents findings from two pilot studies on personal networks, findings that by no means resolve the debate, but that do cast some light on it. The data concerns the connection between the social contexts and the personal qualities of social ties.

A NETWORK FORMULATION

Here is a simple model of social structure and personal networks: Individuals acting as rational decision-makers, choose to engage in personal relations⁵ with some of the people whom they encounter in various social contexts.⁶ The major connection between social structure and personal relations is the set of social contexts within which given individuals form relations. In the most basic society, there is but a single major context, the nuclear family; the typical pre-modern society has two, the extended family and the locality. These pre-modern contexts encompass all the essential activities of individuals (from survival to the sacred), include relatively few persons, and are isolated from the rest of the world. Consequently, individuals must engage all their personal relations with relatively few people with whom they are interdependent in many ways (the relations are thus termed "multiplex"), and who are each similarly involved with one another (the networks are then called "dense").

In a modern, differentiated social structure, there are many more contexts -- the workplace, the social club, etc. -- and there are many more ways to meet functional needs -- different kinds of jobs, places to live, and so on. Consequently, individuals can form ties with people from diverse contexts, with whom they are interdependent in limited ways, and who need not know one another (low "multiplexity" and low "density").

This is perhaps the first point of divergence between Decline and Diversity theories. Modern life has widened the social options of individuals so that they can develop such dispersed ties. But to what extent do they? Diversity theorists -- say, Herbert Gans -- tend to

stress the persistence of traditional "social worlds" into the modern age (for example, urban "ethnic villages"), while Decline theorists -- say, Maurice Stein -- argue that structural changes (for example, the unviability of the family farm, absentee corporate capitalism) compel everyone to adopt modern-form networks. The most critical difference, however, is in each side's assumptions about the consequences of the changes in network formation.

These assumptions are implicit propositions about how attributes of personal relations are associated with one another. Most important for this paper are the contrasting assumptions about social contexts and the "communal" quality of relations. For Decline theorists, relations embedded in traditional, prescribed social contexts -- i.e., settings people are born into and bound to, notably the family -- are more likely to be supportive and intimate than those embedded in more voluntary contexts -- i.e., settings people join and leave freely, such as a social club -- or that are not embedded in any context at all.⁷ (The mediating variables in the analysis are multiplexity and density, both of which are thought to be greater in the former contexts, and both of which are assumed to foster intimacy and support. But to simplify this paper, I plan to present the rather complex analyses of those intervening variables elsewhere.) For Diversity theorists there is no connection between the two or even the reverse: traditional and/or bounded contexts promote rigid, draining, even coercive ties. Coser (1974), for example, describes such contexts as "greedy institutions."

The historical dimension of the debate -- have communal ties declined or increased over the last few generations? -- is beyond the scope of this paper. However, there is one individual attribute that has been

and can be used as an indicator of historical trends: education. Young and Willmott (1973) have recently argued, as others have assumed before them, that educational differences roughly indicate historical trends, with the highly educated signalling future patterns and the less educated showing fading patterns. Furthermore, we can fairly assume that education is positively associated with access to those technologies and social attitudes thought to typify modern society. In this analysis, education is not used as a causal variable in any strict sense, but instead as a signal of modernism.

Propositional Summary. Although this discussion has reviewed many attributes of personal relations, for purposes of brevity the data analysis will consider only a few specific variables. The dependent variables are measures of the "communal" quality of particular relations -- the kinds of support alter provides ego and how "close" ego feels to alter. The basic independent variable is the predominant "social context" of the relation: kinship, work, club, and so forth. Education of ego serves as the basic conditioning or specification variable. The propositions to be considered are stated in terms of Decline theory:

1. The more traditional and bounded the context of a relation, the more communal the relation; the more voluntaristic the context, the less communal.

2. The more education ego has, the more his or her relations are set in nontraditional, voluntaristic contexts.

3. Consequently, the more education ego has, the less communal his or her ties.

Note carefully that the unit of analysis is the relation, not the individual (who has many relations).

METHOD

Although several network surveys have been conducted in recent years (e.g., Laumann, 1973; Wellman et al., 1973; Shulman, 1976), the two pilot surveys reported here provide much broader and more comprehensive descriptions of personal networks than available heretofore. It is therefore useful to specify the key features of our interview method.

My associates and I have been engaged in a study of the effects of attributes of residential environments on people's personal networks and mental health. As part of that project, we⁸ developed a prototype networks survey instrument. To test this instrument, we conducted two pilot surveys in local communities. It is results from those surveys that I report here. Our technique involved the following steps: (1) We asked respondents to name (first names only) people with whom they were involved in many specific ways (28 ways in Pilot I and 12 ways in Pilot II). Most of these questions referred to a relation in which the named persons provided the respondent with something -- for example, help in finding his or her current residence, advice on the job, help with small repairs, money, advice on personal problems -- but (especially in Pilot I) we also included a few questions on who received from the respondent (for example, who the respondent had baby-sat for) and to whom the respondent felt related (for example, best friends, people the respondent tries to stay in touch with). For the responses to each question, interviewers recorded up to eight names. (2) Interviewers then compiled the list of names and asked respondents to add the names of any people whom they felt were "important" to them and were missing. (3) With the respondent holding the complete list in hand, interviewers then asked for descriptions of both the named individuals and the respondent's relations

with them. (If, in the course of these questions, new names emerged, they were added on.) (4) For a subset of up to five names apiece, the respondent filled out self-administered questionnaires asking for further details about each associate and relation.⁹

Among the advantages of this method over previous ones are a larger set of names (an average of 20 per respondent in Pilot I and 17 in Pilot II), ranging over a wide spectrum of relational contents (borrowing, advising, entertaining, etc.), elicited by clearly defined behavioral probes (rather than a single ambiguous question about "best friends"), names that can be considered and discussed by the respondent in a leisurely manner. Although the sample sizes of the pilot surveys reported here are relatively modest, the details of the network data they provide are uniquely rich and deep.

DATA

Samples. In Pilot I, we randomly drew 69 respondents, age 16 and over, from 12 locations in predominantly white census tracts of Oakland, California, and its near suburbs. (We also interviewed spouses of 20 of the original 69 respondents, but they are excluded from this analysis.) After dropping the names of any spouses and any children living at home from the lists, we have 1,346 relations for the main sample of Pilot I. Of these, 267 were the subjects of the self-administered questionnaires, and form the Pilot I subsample.

In Pilot II we selected four neighborhoods in the San Francisco Bay Area to represent archetypal residential areas: one set of inner city blocks, one working-class suburb, one planned community, and one very affluent "ex-urb" (all predominantly white). About 20 interviews

were conducted in each. The final 78 interviews yielded 1,218 relations (again, this excludes spouses and children at home) for the main sample and 319 for the subsample.¹⁰

Measures. The measure of "social context" is the respondent's answers to the following question:

Now I'd like to find out how each of these people is connected with you. Here's a list of some of the ways people are connected with each other. Some people will be connected in more than one way. So, when I read you a name, please tell me all the ways that person is connected with you right now. (LIST: Relative -- how are you related; co-worker, neighbor, member of same organization, friend, acquaintance, other.)

Respondents usually gave only one or two responses, and most often "Friend" was the second or third connection. When they gave multiple responses, I assigned the relation to one category in an order of priority that was based on the most probable origin of the relation -- kin, neighbor, co-worker, organization, "just friend," acquaintance, other. This order of priority also roughly corresponds to the degree of boundedness and traditionalism of the context. For the names in the subsamples, we also have answers to the question, "How did you meet this person?"

In both surveys, there is a strong association between social context and how the two persons met.¹¹ Relations coded as "just friends" differ from the others. Assuming that the respondent did not simply forget to cite another connection, a "just friend" relation was not set in any functional or ecological context. The origins of these "free" ties were diverse. In the subsamples (averaging both surveys), 25 percent of these dyads grew up together or met in school, 21 percent met through a

third friend, 19 percent through another person or "other" way, 14 percent at work, and 12 percent in the neighborhood. Most of these links, therefore, were formed in a relatively "voluntaristic" manner, as well as currently being free of particular contexts.

In the end, we obtained the following distribution of relations by context: parents and adult children, in Pilot I, nine percent (in Pilot II, 10 percent); other relatives, 28 percent (27 percent);¹² neighbors, 11 percent (seven percent); co-workers, 14 percent (eight percent); co-members of clubs, two percent (five percent); "just friends," 32 percent (41 percent); and others, four percent (one percent).

In Pilot I we have measures of the kind of support or exchanges the respondent received from each nominated person. After compiling the list of names, the interviewer asked respondents to indicate which persons they were most likely to turn to for various kinds of specific interactions. I grouped these situations into three categories. (1) Instrumental exchanges: the nominee was selected from the list as a person who did or would provide one or more forms of instrumental assistance -- discussing with the respondent how to do his work, taking care of the respondent's home while he was away, looking after the respondent's children for a few hours, taking care of the respondent for a few day's recuperation from an operation, and lending him money in an emergency. In total, 45 percent of the associates, or about nine people per respondent, provided one or more such kinds of aid. (2) Social exchanges refer to sociable interaction -- having a good time together, enjoying each other's company, and so on. The interviewer handed each respondent a list of sociable activities (including attending a party, dropping by for a visit, going out for dinner, etc.), asked which he had done in

the last three months, and asked him to select the persons with whom he tended to do these kinds of things at least every few months. Anyone named was coded as providing a social exchange, and 43 percent of the links -- about eight per respondent -- were so coded. (3) A measure of personal exchanges, advising or consoling the respondent on personal matters, was available in both surveys. Specifically, respondents selected from their lists the people whose judgment they relied on in making important decisions in their lives, and the people they talked to when upset about a personal matter. Respondents in Pilot I selected 17 percent of the names, about three each, for one or the other of the two probes; in Pilot II, 21 percent, also about three each, were picked. In Pilot I, 35 percent of the listed names (about seven per respondent) were not selected in response to any of these questions. Although these names might be characterized as "nominal" members of the network, it is just as likely that we simply did not ask about the specific kinds of exchanges that those persons provided. These measures together yield an index of exchange-type multiplexity, the number of different kinds of exchanges the nominated person provided.

The measure of personal exchanges can be used as one indicator of intimacy. An additional and quite different measure of intimacy is also available in each survey. For the Pilot I subsample we asked of the 267 names: "How close do you feel to this person?," using a four-point response scale. In Pilot II, we asked of all names: "Which of the people people on this list do you feel especially close to?". Thirty-six percent were checked.¹³

FINDINGS

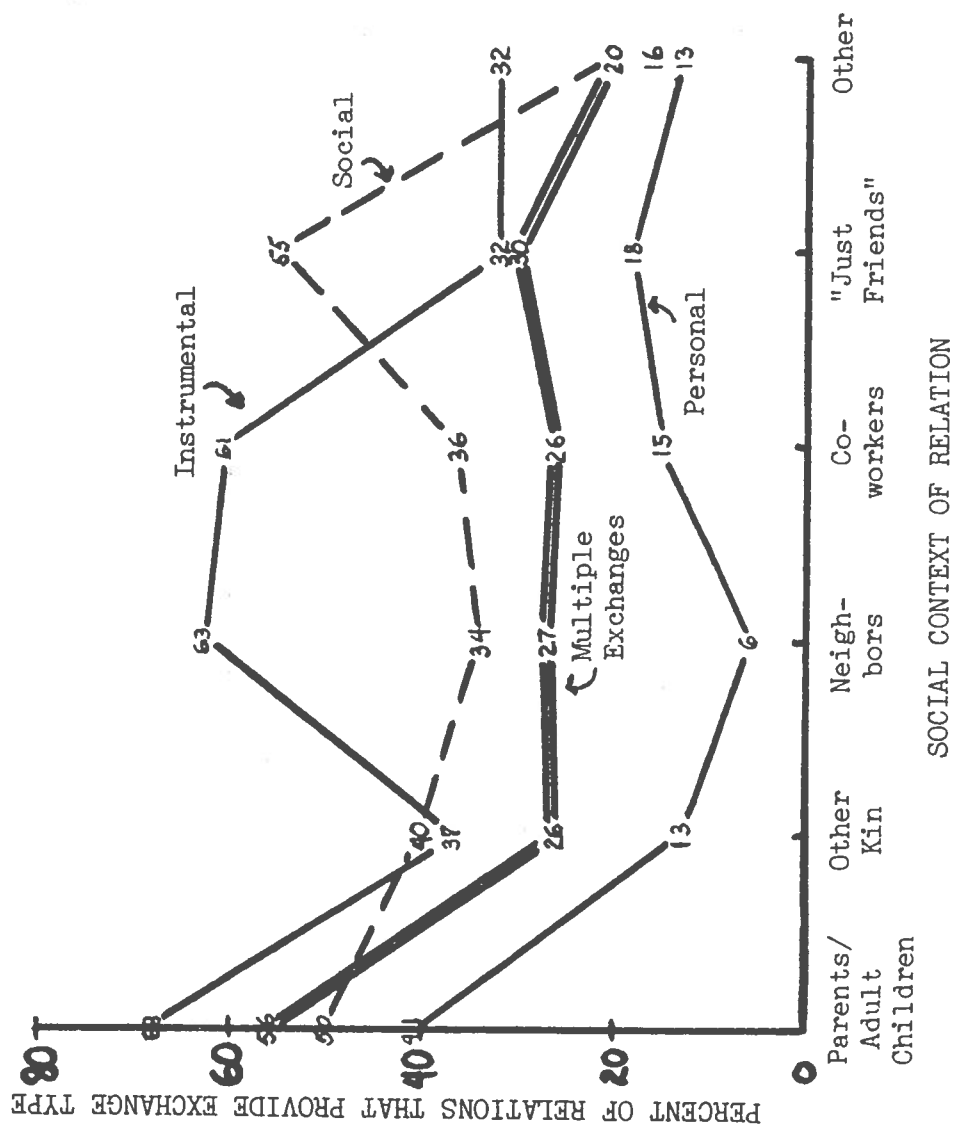
Contexts and Types of Exchange. How do the exchanges in a relation vary by its context? Table 1 presents a summary of the data. Figure 1 presents some of that data graphically, showing, for Pilot I, the percentage of relations in each social context that provides the respondent with each type of exchange. (As Table 1 shows, the personal exchange results in Pilot II are quite similar to those in Pilot I.) There are notable variations by context: Parents and children were especially common sources of all kinds of help, most notably of personal consultation, while other relatives were general and moderate sources of all kinds of exchanges. Neighbors and co-workers exhibit sharp distinctions: Instrumental exchanges were most common, social next, and personal far behind. These differences are more extreme for neighbors than for co-workers. "Just friends" were particularly likely to be social companions, and to a certain extent, personal advisors.

A few general suggestions emerge from these results. One is that, while kin, especially close kin, were general sources of exchanges, specialization was common -- neighbors and co-workers as sources of instrumental help, friends as social companions and confidants.¹⁴ A second is that close kin were particularly important in these person's networks, but neighbors particularly unimportant. Third, aside from kin, the "functional" contexts of place and work seem less the source of exchanges than the loose category of "just friend."

Table 1. Exchange Characteristics of Relations by Social Context

		Social Context					
		Parent, Child	Other Kin	Neigh- bor	Co- worker	Friend	Other
<u>Pilot I</u>	(N =)	(122)	(370)	(158)	(183)	(429)	(82)
Percent of relations providing...							
	Instrumental exchanges	68%	37%	63%	61%	32%	32%
	Social exchanges	50	40	34	36	55	20
	Personal exchanges	41	13	06	15	18	13
	Two or three exchanges	56	26	27	26	30	16
Mean number of relations per respondent providing...							
	Instrumental exchanges	1.2	2.0	1.4	1.6	2.1	0.4
	Social exchanges	0.9	2.1	0.8	0.9	3.4	0.2
	Personal exchanges	0.7	0.7	0.1	0.4	1.1	0.2
	Two or three exchanges	1.0	1.4	0.6	0.7	1.8	0.2
<u>Pilot II</u>	(N =)	(126)	(326)	(82)	(92)	(502)	(90)
Percent of relations providing...							
	Personal exchanges	46%	13%	16%	25%	22%	11%
Mean number of relations per respondent providing							
	Personal Exchanges	0.7	0.5	0.2	0.3	1.4	0.1

FIGURE 1. PERCENTAGE OF RELATIONS FROM EACH CONTEXT PROVIDING SPECIFIED TYPE OF EXCHANGE



These findings are consistent with those Shulman (1976) obtained in Toronto. He discovered, for example, that neighbors were more often lenders and borrowers, but kin were more likely to be confidential advisors and general supporters. (Shulman did not distinguish among kin.) While other studies have found contextual differences in perceived intimacy (see below), they have not dealt with the substance of the exchanges, as we have done here.¹⁵

Intimacy. One indicator of intimacy is whether the respondent reported turning to the named individual for personal advice or to talk things over when upset. The proportion of relations from each context in which personal exchanges were reported are indicated in Table 1 and Figure 1. In both surveys, respondents were far more likely to report parents/children as confidants than any other group, and were least likely to report neighbors and "other relatives." The second indicator of intimacy is answers to specific questions about "closeness." The results of that probe are shown in Table 2. Although some of the percentages vary widely between the two surveys (a result of variations in the method), the basic patterns are similar: parents/children rated highest, followed by other kin, and neighbors rated lowest.

In comparing both indices of intimacy in both surveys, interesting consistencies and discrepancies appear. Setting aside the "other" category, we can rank the social contexts as follows:

Table 2. Reported Closeness of Relation by Context

	Social Context					
	Parents, Children	Other rela- tives	Neigh- bor	Co- worker	Friend	Other
Pilot I: Percent Reported "very close" ^a (N =)	87% (47)	76% (67)	22% (41)	60% (15)	65% (88)	(6) (9)
Pilot II: Percent Selected as "especially close" ^b (N =)	68% (126)	41% (326)	16% (82)	20% (92)	27% (502)	27% (90)

^aAsked only of subsample of all names (see text).

^bChosen from list of all names.

<u>Personal Exchanges</u>		<u>Rated "Closeness"</u>	
<u>Pilot I</u>	<u>Pilot II</u>	<u>Pilot I</u>	<u>Pilot II</u>
Parents/Children	Parents/Children	Parents/Children	Parents/Children
Friends	Co-workers	Other Kin	Other Kin
Co-workers	Friends	Friends	Friends
Other Kin	Neighbors	Co-workers	Co-workers
Neighbors	Other Kin	Neighbors	Neighbors

The rankings are similar for both surveys. They are also similar for both indices, except in one notable respect: "Other Relatives" were rarely pointed out as confidants or advisors, but were often seen as "close." (Whether this reflects on the nature of relations with extended kin, or on the meaning of the "closeness" questions, or both, is beyond the scope of this essay.¹⁶) More consistently, parents/children were seen as very intimate, freinds and co-workers moderately so, and neighbors almost not at all.

Comparable prior studies have used probes such as the "feel close" item, and yielded similar rankings: kin high, neighbors low, and generally unspecified friends in between (Shulman, 1975; Wellman, 1977; Fischer et al., 1977: Chapter 3).

Implications. These results have mixed implications for Proposition 1, that relations are more communal, the more traditional and bounded and the less voluntaristic their contexts are. On the one hand, relations between parents and children were very likely to involve exchanges and feelings of closeness. Yet, extended kin did not have particularly exchangeeful relations with the respondents, ranking high only on perceived closeness. The category of "just friend" is particularly notable, since it represents relations that had no apparent, current functional context. Such friends were more likely to be sources

of support and intimacy than were other associates, especially than were neighbors and slightly more than were other kin. Since they represent the most voluntaristic of ties, such friendships challenge Proposition 1 and lend weight instead to Diversity theory.

Contexts and Educational Differences. I divided the respondents into three groups by education -- those who had not graduated from high school, those who had gone further but had not graduated from college, and college graduates. Table 3 presents, for each survey, the mean number of relations drawn from each context by each educational group. Although there are a few inconsistencies between the two surveys, basic patterns stand out: Relations with parents and children do not vary much by education, but relations with other relatives become less frequent with increases in education. In their stead, the mean number of relations with co-workers and with friends increases. (Note also that the total number of relations also increases, but modestly.)

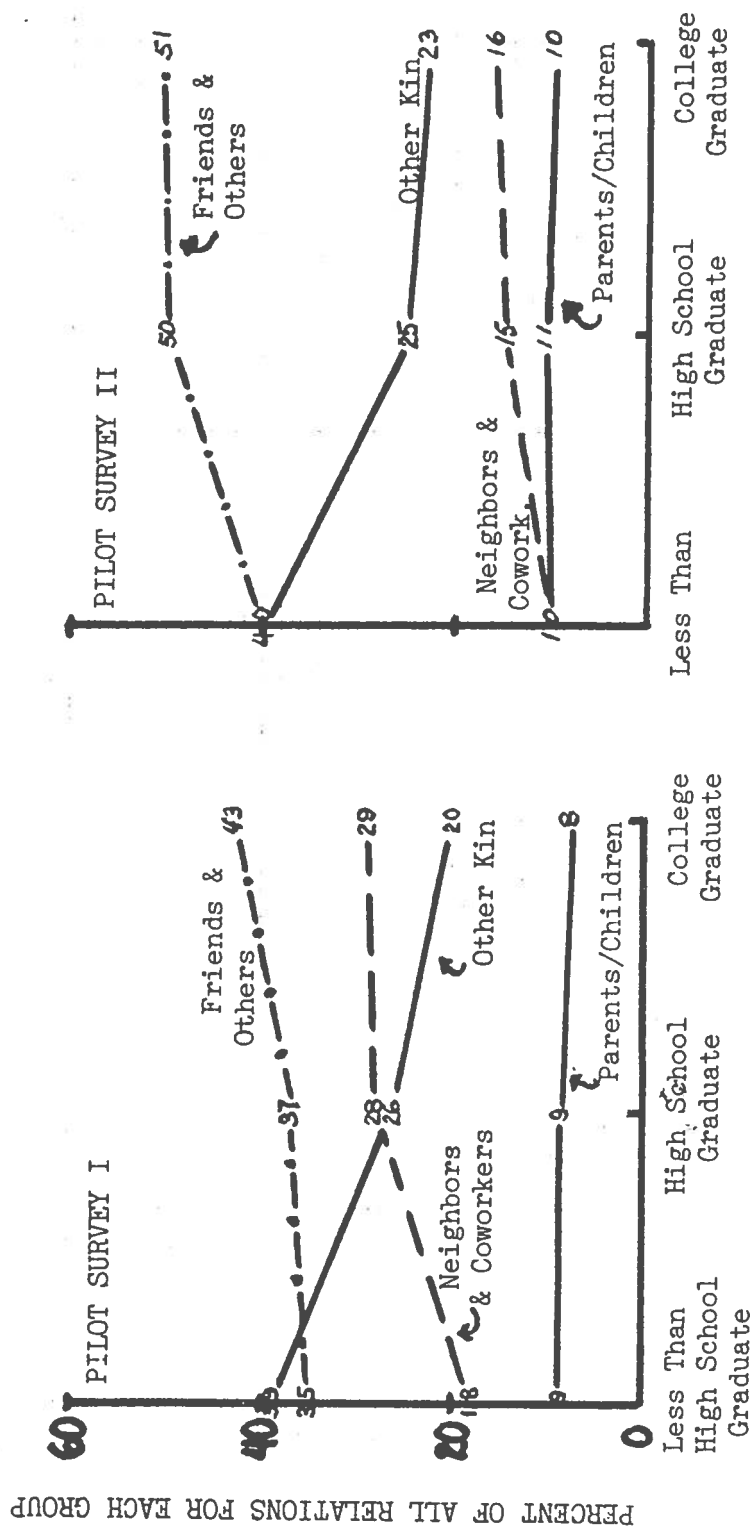
The basic pattern can be seen more sharply when the numbers are translated into percentages and the contexts are grouped on the basis of degree of boundedness versus voluntarism: (1) parents/children; (2) other kin; (3) neighbors and co-workers; and (4) friends and others (others are largely club members). This is done in Figure 2. Clearly, as education increases, relations with extended kin give way, proportionately, to more voluntaristic kinds of relations. This is consistent with Proposition 2, with various ethnographic and clinical studies (e.g., Komarovsky, 1967; Gans, 1962; Rainwater et al., 1959; Young and Willmott, 1957), and with indications from prior network surveys.¹⁷

Table 3. Mean Number of Relations Drawn from each Context by Respondent's Education

Context	Pilot I			Pilot II		
	Less than	H.S.	College	Less than	H.S.	College
	H.S.	Grad.	Grad.	H.S.	Grad.	Grad.
Parents/children	1.6	1.9	1.6	1.4	1.6	1.8
Other relatives	7.2	5.0	4.2	5.6	3.6	4.1
Neighbors	1.9	2.4	2.5	0.8	0.8	1.6
Co-workers	1.4	2.9	3.5	0.6	1.3	1.3
Friends	6.1	5.8	7.2	4.4	6.6	7.3
Other ^a	0.3	1.3	1.9	1.3	0.6	1.9
(Total)	(18.5)	(19.2)	(21.0)	(14.1)	(14.4)	(18.0)
(N of Relations)	(333)	(654)	(357)	(198)	(533)	(487)
(N of Respondents)	(18)	(34)	(17)	(14)	(37)	(27)

^aLargest proportion of "others" are fellow organization members; also includes "acquaintances" and unclassifiabes (e.g., "landlord").

FIGURE 2. DISTRIBUTION OF RELATIONS BY SOCIAL CONTEXT, BY EDUCATION OF RESPONDENT.*



*Percentages add vertically to approximately 100% for each educational group.

Education and Attributes of Relations. Decline theory would contend that, given the shift in contexts, more educated respondents should receive fewer exchanges from and have less intimacy with their associates than would those with less education. Table 4 presents the appropriate data. In terms of sheer numbers, education, particularly college education, is associated with more exchangeable ties. College graduates reported receiving instrumental help from, socializing with, and obtaining advice from more people than did those who failed to graduate high school. Note, in particular, that they reported more relations involving multiple types of exchanges (7.5 versus 5.1). Except for personal exchanges in Pilot I, high school graduates fall in between.

In terms of respondents' total networks, the results do not support Decline theory. However, since the college-educated had larger networks overall, these numbers may be misleading when trying to evaluate the average quality of relations. The percentages in the bottom half of Table 4 address that issue. Again, the proportion of relations with exchanges increases modestly with education -- except for personal exchanges. In terms of our measurements of exchange, the college educated appear to have received more, on the average, from each of their associates than did others. This finding, too, is more consistent with Diversity than with Decline assumptions.

We turn next to the issue of education and intimacy. In Pilot I, both measures of intimacy -- personal exchanges and rated closeness --

Table 4. Attributes of Relations by Education of Respondent

	Pilot I			Pilot II		
	Less than H.S.	H.S. Grad.	College Grad.	Less than H.S.	H.S. Grad.	College Grad.
Mean number of relations providing:						
Instrumental exchanges	7.1	8.4	11.2	-- ^a	--	--
Social exchanges	6.9	8.6	9.4	--	--	--
Personal exchanges	3.4	2.4	4.6	2.6	3.2	3.7
Two or three exchanges	5.1	5.1	7.5	--	--	--
Mean number seen as "close" ^b	2.6	1.9	2.8	5.9	4.3	6.0

Percentage of relations providing:						
Instrumental exchanges	38%	44%	53%	--	--	--
Social Exchanges	37	45	45	--	--	--
Personal exchanges	18	12	22	18%	23%	20%
Two or three exchanges	28	27	36	--	--	--
Percentage of relations seen as "close" ^b	70	49	71	41	31	33

^a Appropriate data not available.

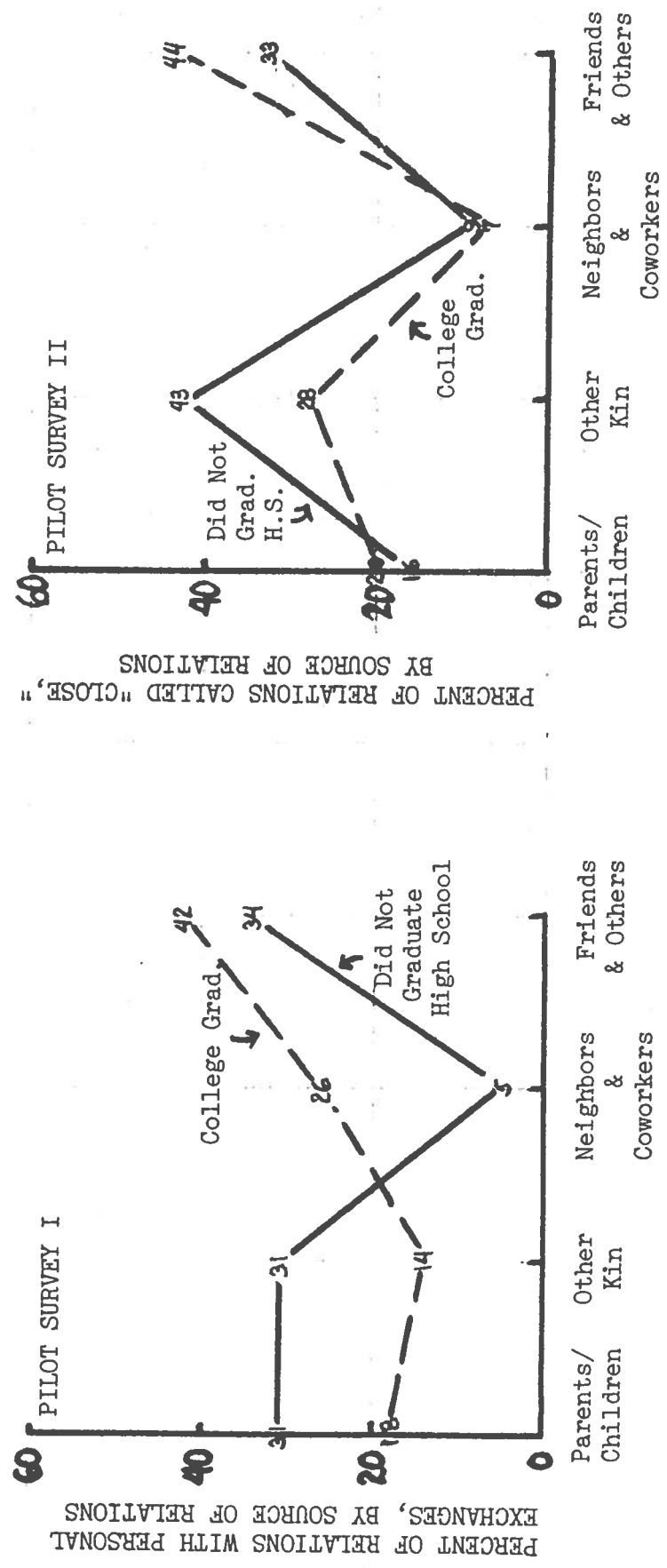
^b In Pilot I, this refers to the subset of names; in Pilot II, to all names.

indicate curvilinear patterns. The college graduates rank slightly ahead of the least educated in number and proportion of intimates, while the high school graduates clearly rank far below. In Pilot II, that anomaly disappears, but other variations occur. The surest statement that can be made is that intimacy does not vary clearly with education.

The evidence so far implies that the more educated draw as much or more support from their networks than do the less educated, and that they draw the support from somewhat different contexts. We can examine that implication more directly by looking at exchange-type X context X education tables. Those tables (not presented here) show that, as education increases, the tendency not only to have relations from voluntaristic contexts increases (as shown above), but also that the tendency to draw important exchanges from those voluntaristic contexts also increases. That is, not only did the highly educated have more co-worker, "just friends," and "other" relations, they also drew more from those ties. For example, in Pilot I, the co-workers that the college-educated listed were considerably more likely to provide any kind of exchange than were the co-workers listed by grammar school graduates.¹⁸ At the same time, there was little difference, by education, in the comparative supportiveness of "other kin."

Another way of examining the issue is presented in Figure 3. What proportion of the relations that do provide personal exchanges come from each of the varying contexts? The graph on the left shows that, in Pilot I, the college educated relied on non-kin relatively more than did those without high school diplomas. The figure on the right asks,

FIGURE 3. DISTRIBUTION OF RELATIONS OF CERTAIN KINDS BY SOCIAL CONTEXT, FOR
LEAST AND MOST EDUCATED RESPONDENTS*.



Of those who were called "close" in Pilot II, what proportions came from each context? The educational differences are narrowed but similar: The less educated's intimates were disproportionately likely to be "other relatives" and less likely to be friends or others. These two pilot surveys suggest, in summary, that people with higher educational attainment have at least as supportive and communal relations as those with less education -- contradicting Proposition 3 drawn from Decline theory. The results are more consistent with Diversity theory.

In some respects, these findings elaborate a pattern seen in previous ethnographic and survey studies of personal relations. The higher the socioeconomic status of a person, the greater the range of contexts from which he draws his personal relations, and in particular, the less kin-focused they are. The data from this study show that pattern perhaps more clearly than earlier studies, because we have a broader picture of the entire network. So, one can see that kin (other than immediate kin) not only appear less often in the networks of the more educated, but also that those who do appear in their networks play a relatively less significant and intimate role than those who appear in networks of the less educated. Instead, the more educated draw upon, exchange with, and feel close to associates from a range of contexts, even those with whom they share no current functional context.

CONCLUSION

The limitations of this analysis should be clear: The samples of respondents were small and not fully representative, the variety of exchanges asked about is obviously incomplete, and our methodology is novel. At the same time, the advantages of the analysis should also

be clear: We obtained an unprecedentedly rich picture of each respondent's personal network -- rich in breadth and in depth of detail concerning each relation.¹⁹ We can be confident of having obtained a relatively reliable inventory of respondents' personal relations, and can therefore draw reliable comparisons among relations and among networks or relations.

In the Introduction, I contrasted the implicit social psychologies of Decline and Diversity theories. The first assumes that supportive and intimate ties arise from traditional and bounded contexts, the latter that such relations are more often formed under conditions of widest choice. In two major respects, the assumptions of Decline theory held up in this study: Kin were a major part of most persons' networks -- 37 percent of all relations, in both surveys, exclusive of spouses and children at home; moreover, relations between parents and children were the most supportive and intimate of all. Yet, in most other respects, Decline theory assumptions did not stand up under test: The supportiveness and intimacy of relations were not associated with the traditionalism, boundedness, or functional bases of their contexts; extended kin, although perceived as "close," were not especially supportive; and "just friends" relations, apparently "free-floating," were more communal than relations from contexts such as the neighborhood. Indeed, aside from parents and children, the chances of intimate exchanges were slightly greater, the more "voluntaristic" the context.

This pattern seemed to be sharpest among the college educated, while kin-focused networks appeared to be more common among the least educated. To the extent that education indicates modernism, or access to modern technology and life-styles, the results suggest that the

historical trend is toward more diverse sources of social relations, less emphasis on extended kin (no less on immediate kin), and more emphasis on voluntaristic attachments²⁰ -- all with no net decline (perhaps an increase) in total communal relations.

NOTES

¹See Fischer, et al. (1977: Chapter 1) for a more extensive exegesis of Decline of Community theory.

²Others have noted similar arguments. Wellman (1977) contrasts the "Community Lost" to the "Community Transformed" argument; Crump (1977) calls them "Community Decayed" and "Community Liberated."

³Thus, for example, Tönnies refers to "natural will" versus "rational will," and Durkheim to a dual human nature. Similarly, the individual is depicted as an organ of an organic solidarity or a subsystem of the social system.

⁴For example, while Nisbet worries about the "twilight of authority," Shils (1962:101) extols "the growth...of an appreciation of the value of the experience of personal relationships, of the intrinsic value of a personal attachment" as an expression of unique personal dispositions. While Nisbet (1969) laments the loss of connection to primordial soil, Shils (1962) applauds the triumph of freedom of choice over the "primordial, traditional, hierarchical" constraints of premodern society.

⁵"Personal relations" refers here to materially and/or emotionally significant interdependence over an extended period of time. I have used the word "engage" so as to encompass both formation of a relation -- as in "making a friend" -- and activating socially-given associations -- as in visiting a kinsman.

⁶"Contexts" are distinctive spheres of activity, as delimited by social structure, such as family, workplace, and neighborhood. (The concept is akin to, but broader than Barker's concept of "behavior setting" [Barker and Gump, 1964].)

⁷Again, see Fischer et al. (1977: Chapter 1) for the argument in detail.

⁸Lynne McCallister Jones was directly responsible for the development work in formulating this methodology, and the advice of Charlotte Coleman of Berkeley Survey Research Center was extremely helpful. The interviews were conducted by the Survey Research Center staff.

⁹For an extended discussion of the method, see Jones and Fischer (1978).

¹⁰Since relations rather than people are the units of analysis, we must consider possible distortion in the results introduced by the variation in number of names contributed by each respondent, some contributing two or three times as many units of analysis as others. To check on possible bias, I repeated much of the analysis by controlling for network size (divided at 20 in Pilot I and 17 in Pilot II). The basic patterns are confirmed. The more general issue, concerning the appropriate statistical treatment for units such as these is still unresolved in network studies like this one. The issue also raises questions about significance tests, so they will not be applied.

¹¹Averaging across both surveys; 98 percent of those labeled kin were met "in the family" or through a spouse or child; 82 percent of "neighbors" were met in the neighborhood; 58 percent of co-workers were first met at work (15 percent were met in school); and 44 percent of fellow club members were met in an organization (25 percent were met through a friend). One ambiguity in the priority assignment was between neighbor and co-worker, but there was little overlap between the two: one percent of those coded neighbors had been met at work; eight percent of co-workers had been met in a neighborhood (not necessarily the present one).

¹²"Other relatives" were composed of approximately one-third siblings, one-third in-laws, and one-third others.

¹³In Pilot II, we also used a probe much like that in Pilot I. It was strongly associated with the list-checking question.

¹⁴How much specialization of exchange content was there, overall? We can calculate the expected number of multiple-exchange-type relations from the proportion of relations in each kind of exchange. Assuming that there are no expected associations among exchange types, and excluding relations with no exchanges at all, the expected proportion of any combination is the product of the probabilities of each exchange type. For example, the probability of an instrumental-only relation equals the product of the probabilities of an instrumental exchange (.693), no social exchange (1 - .663), and no personal exchange (1 - .256), or .174. After distributing the expected combination of no exchanges (.077), this procedure yields the following distribution of expected and observed exchange combination:

	<u>Expected</u>	<u>Observed</u>	<u>O/E</u>
Relations with...			
Only one type of exchange	.38	.55	1.4
Two types of exchange	.50	.30	0.6
All three types	.13	.16	1.2

There is a bimodal pattern: Single-content relations appeared more often than expected (although personal-exchange-only relations were below expectation; O/E = 0.7) and so did triple-content exchanges. As Figure 1 suggests, the single-exchange relations are disproportionately with

neighbors and co-workers, and the triple-exchange relations with parents and children (see also Shulman, 1976).

¹⁵Wellman et al. (1973) asked about general "everyday " and "emergency" support. Groups ranked as follows on perceived availability: parents/children, other relatives, then neighbors and friends. Neighbors seem to rank as high as friends in the Toronto study, either because of proximity (see Wellman, 1977) or the method of eliciting names.

¹⁶Further analyses suggest that "other relatives" were especially likely not to be identified with any exchanges, but to still be reported as "close."

¹⁷See Ericksen and Yancey (1976), Gordon (1977), and Fischer et al. (1977:49). Laumann (1966) reports a curvilinear function (inverted-U) between class and proportion of kin.

¹⁸On instrumental exchanges, 87 percent versus 60; social, 38 versus 20; and personal, 27 versus 8. Pilot II, however, shows little difference in personal exchanges, the only kind measured.

¹⁹Combining both Pilots, we obtained an average of 18 names per respondent (compared to an average of five for Wellman [1977]), and over 30 descriptive variables for each name.

²⁰And perhaps, replaceable attachments (see Crump, 1977).

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