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## An Analysis of Help Patterns and Interaction between Parents and their Married Children

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AN ANALYSIS OF HELP PATTERNS AND INTERACTION  
BETWEEN PARENTS AND THEIR MARRIED CHILDREN

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A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Sociology  
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

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by  
Harold L. Bare

1975

APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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## ABSTRACT

This study was developed to explore the dimensions of family interactions and helping patterns between young married couples and their parental in-laws. The hypotheses are systematically ordered to test the relationship of certain variables to the kinds of help given, and to the frequency of visitation, correspondence, and telephoning. The variables most frequently dealt with were residential propinquity and level of education. Data were gathered by means of a mailed questionnaire sent to 137 young married couples (under age 40). Names were obtained from the marriage register of those who married for the first time during 1973 in Wythe County, Virginia. Seventy-six usable questionnaires comprise the research sample. The findings indicate that helping patterns are likely to be stronger among those in close proximity to each other and among those more educated. In general, the study supports the widely held sociological premise that the family is a viable institution in contemporary society, both in providing a reference for primary social interaction, and in the exchange of goods and services.

AN ANALYSIS OF HELP PATTERNS AND INTERACTION  
BETWEEN PARENTS AND THEIR MARRIED CHILDREN



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION, LITERATURE REVIEW, AND HYPOTHESES

This chapter consists of three sections. The first section provides a general orientation to the research background and design of this project. A literature review follows which deals with research on family interaction. In summary fashion, the last section advances the major assumptions and hypotheses of the research.

#### Introduction

Most students of society in general have held that the family is the basic societal unit. However, in contemporary research, the viability of the family to function adequately as the primary agent of socialization has been questioned by some. Talcott Parsons, based on research of the early 1940's, postulated the existence of a "relatively isolated nuclear family" (Parsons, 1943). Parsons and his adherents viewed the isolated nuclear family as primarily a byproduct of industrialization. With increased technology and enlargement and differentiation of the economy, mobility was an inevitable factor which led to the splintering of the extended family.

Advocates of Parsons' hypothesis contended that atomization of the extended family heralded the slow demise of the family as the major social mechanism for the transmission of cultural and social norms. As nuclear family units moved away from their extended kin, the need to develop primary contacts with non-kin increased. Further, because of adjustments to urban living, the nuclear family may have become a secondary force in the socialization process of its own members. Such studies imply that value systems may have been internalized through interaction with primary socializers who were of a non-kin relationship. Thus, if the family were no longer the primary socializer, the implications for social planning would need re-evaluation.

Opponents of Parsons' theory responded with research findings which indicated that fragmentation of the traditional extended family was but an innovative step to enhance the survival of the family in a highly industrialized society. Studies of family interaction began to take on new significance. Rituals such as funerals, birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, and special family days, were studied as social gatherings designed to perpetuate family value systems. The frequency of phone calls, letters, telegrams, and similar evidences of family involvement, was tabulated as a means of determining the nature and degree of interaction between relatively isolated nuclear families and their immediate kin (Sussman, 1953).

Bert Adams, in a study of Greensboro, North Carolina, specifically challenged the notion of the isolated nuclear family. He hypothesized that geographical proximity was not necessarily a restrictive factor in family interaction, and that even when industrialization necessitated geographical mobility, it did not inherently break social ties with the extended family (Adams, 1968). As an out-growth of Adams' work, this study was designed to determine the amount and kind of help patterns and interaction patterns occurring between young married couples and their parents in the greater Wythe County area of southwest Virginia. The data collected concerning helping and other interaction will be primarily of a specific nature, e.g., cash or goods exchanged, place of residence and distance from parents.

#### Review of the Literature

Talcott Parsons' concept of the "relatively isolated nuclear family" has generally been accepted as the ideal type family to be found in the urban-industrial setting, particularly in Western society. Parsons has written of the isolated nuclear family that it "is the most distinctive feature of the American kinship system and underlies most of its peculiar functional and dynamic problems" (Parsons, 1943). Support of this argument has most often involved taking the pre-industrial extended family as a dependent variable, then examining the effects of

urbanization and industrialization processes. As industrialization, urbanization, and bureaucracy increase within the community, related industrializing forces impinge upon the extended family structure, gradually effecting an adaptation to the nuclear family as described by Parsons (Heller, 1970).

Research studies by a number of sociologists have argued to the contrary, suggesting--in fact--that the pre-Industrial Revolution extended family was an ideal type, which in reality co-existed with the nuclear family, or that the extended family was adapting characteristics of the nuclear family prior to industrialization. Among American sociologists, Sussman (1962), Greenfield (1961), Litwak (1960), Axelrod (1956), and Adams (1968), have pointed to strains of the extended family surviving within the urban-industrial setting. Goode pointed to evidence of recent trends in the nuclear family structure which are in actuality only very old extended family characteristics (Adams, 1968). Those who have pointed to the weaknesses of the Parsonian theory of the nuclear family draw further upon evidence from studies of ethnic groups and industrialized or partially-industrialized societies to add weight to their argument that the kinship structure has not always been the dependent variable in the urban industrial complex (Firth, 1964).

In explaining the changing structure of the family, Parsons pointed to its loss of functions in the urban

society. Basic in his argument and central to an understanding of the isolated nuclear family was the concept of "differentiation." The traditional extended family functioned as a single system encompassing and providing for the physical and social needs of individual family members. As industrialization increased, the number of family functions decreased, thus increasing the number of specialized systems, and simultaneously delimiting the family's role to fewer functions (Parsons, 1943).

As the Industrial Revolution developed, it stimulated changes in the social organization. Factories demanded large quantities of workers. One consequence of this was increased migration from rural to urban areas. Cities grew to supply workers, and in doing so contributed to ecological, demographic, and social changes in society.

Parsons' interpretation of family change in modern society is not expressed in dysfunctional terms, but rather, is more accurately perceived as only one result of the increasing differentiation of the total society. Critics of Parsons' differentiation theory have frequently countered that the process is one of a "dehumanizing" or "fragmentizing" nature. However, Parsons insistently noted that differentiation via specialization has made it possible for the family to have more time for fewer tasks. Hence, family viability is maintained in the face of transcended traditional family functions.

The relative isolation of the nuclear family has particular reference to the residential and economic modifications that may result in kinship networks resulting from increased social mobility. The nuclear families within the same kinship structure may be geographically separated by large distances and socially separated by widely divergent economic levels (LeMasters, 1954).

The exchange of mutual aid among relatives emphasizes the strength of social ties between young couples and other kin. Sussman discovered that middle-aged, middle-class parents financially help their young children in an attempt to prevent married children from falling below the family socio-economic status (Sussman, 1962). Bossard discovered that in the upper-class family, influence is instrumental in choice of mate and in child-rearing (Bossard, 1950). Dotson, in a study of the working class, found that the number or necessity of secondary associations does not appear to displace primary group relationships. In fact, 20 of 50 urban families had no intimate or primary relationships outside of their kinspeople (Dotson, 1951). Kosa, et al, found that sharing the home with relatives is a common practice specifically related to family solidarity (Kosa, 1960). Further, according to LeMasters, extended families which resist segregation as a consequence of differential mobility are characterized by frequent

visits and regular correspondence (LeMasters, 1954). Litwak found that a money economy and modern transportation systems minimize the significance of distance. When the extended family does coalesce, finances are a secondary problem because nuclear sub-parts have peak earning capacity. Fifty-two percent of Litwak's sample were visited by urban relatives on an average of at least once per week (Litwak, 1960). These studies, reflecting the post World War II period, demonstrate clearly that extended kin still are important primary socialization agents. Moreover, such family ties appear to be maintained in the face of geographical separation.

In the latter vein, Adams (1968) hypothesized that spatial separation does not inherently dictate social isolation among kin. Adams sought to find those types of contact patterns which served as surrogates for face-to-face contact. Of those whose parents lived a minimum of one hundred miles away, more than two-thirds reported writing letters at least once a month. As for telephoning, frequency of calls was the greatest when both parents and adult offspring were residents of Greensboro, with seventy per cent reporting calls weekly or more often. However, of the 289 whose parents lived outside Greensboro, fifty-four percent reported telephone conversations with them at least once a month. While it is not maintained that phone calls and letter writing assume the significance of face-to-face contact, it

appears clear that such methods of contact do serve to enhance family loyalties and maintain significant relationships in the absence of frequent face-to-face contact.

Sussman found in his study of New Haven that 70 percent of white, middle-class parents in his sample furnished enough material support to their married children to influence their offsprings' social status. The aid was generally characterized as being in the form of standard of living: "clothes, aid for home, babies, and illness" (Sussman, 1953).

At this point, in the interest of parsimony and generalizability, two concepts appear to explain succinctly the foregoing discussion. They are: (1) reciprocity, and (2) status maintenance. Reciprocity is concerned with giving and receiving. It has as part of its function the fulfillment of obligation. In her study of blue collar marriage, Komarovsky refers to the function of reciprocity as a "contractual" transaction. When a gift, favor or service is done for someone else, there is an unwritten, unspoken understanding that something must be given back to the giver. Among blue collar workers, the principle of reciprocity is the fundamental explanation for kin helping kin (Komarovsky, 1940).

Status maintenance involves those forces which are instrumental in resisting social mobility, especially downward mobility, and maintaining social class. Sussman (1953) found that educational assistance is a characteristic of the middle class. However, in a later study



(1962), he found that lower class families are financially unable to provide very much help, except in cases of tragedy or disaster. While the middle class encourages upward social mobility through financing education, the lower class' lack of finances is a factor which hinders social mobility. In actuality, certain family functions may tend to promote status maintenance or social class stability (Bossard, 1950). Hollingshead (1950) characterizes family types by social class. The end result may be that whatever families are doing or not doing, it may be the consequence of economic conditions, which has been a central reflection of status position in American society.

#### Research Hypotheses

The major premise of this study is that young married couples do derive significant material support from parental in-laws, and that--consistent with such support--there will also be frequent interaction or contact, i.e., visits, telephone calls, and correspondence between parental in-laws and their married offspring. It is expected that such support will be reflected in goods and services, as well as in direct cash. If the research data support the hypotheses, this study would help reaffirm the viability of the kin network in contemporary American society. Further, it is expected that the study will reveal, with sociological accuracy, the types and amounts of helping patterns

existing between young married couples and their parental in-laws in Wythe County and the immediate outlying areas.

The foregoing review of previous theory and research generate the following hypotheses which will be tested in this study:

1. The probability of young couples living near parental in-laws is greater when both sets of parental in-laws live in the same area.
2. The lower the education of the young couples, the greater the probability that they will live near one or both sets of parental in-laws.
3. The greater the proximity of young couples to their parents, the greater the probability they receive help in the form of goods and services.
4. The greater the proximity of young couples to their parents, the greater the probability they will receive occupational assistance.
5. The higher the education of parental in-laws, the more help they will give to the young married couple.
6. The help received by young married couples from parental in-laws will be primarily in the form of goods and services, rather than in direct cash.
7. When one parental in-law is deceased, the young married couple will be more likely to help the surviving widow/widower.
8. Couples who have children will receive more help from parental in-laws than those who do not have children.
9. Young married couples tend to visit those parental in-laws who visit them.
10. When young couples do visit parental in-laws, they go together.
11. The greater the probability of infrequent telephone calls, the more likely it is that young couples will live in proximity to their parents.

12. The greater the distance between young couples and their parents, the greater the probability of frequent correspondence.

The first four hypotheses look at the interrelationships between propinquity and such variables as residence of parental in-laws, level of education, and amount of goods or services received by the young couple from parental in-laws. Hypotheses five through eight are concerned with relationships between givers and donors, employing variables such as the number of children, education of parents, and life status of parents, and testing for helping patterns between young couples and their parents. The last four hypotheses involve testing for reciprocity in visitation and non face-to-face contact. In general, the first four hypotheses reflect status maintenance, and the last eight are indicators of family solidarity.

## CHAPTER II

### METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

The methodology chapter begins with a discussion of the targeted population of young married couples who were studied. This discussion is followed by a sequential outlining of the data collection instrument and the procedures employed. In this regard, sections of the questionnaire are reviewed, and telephone and mailing strategies are given some lengthened comment. The final section of the chapter enumerates the measurement of independent and dependent variables employed to assess the research hypotheses listed earlier.

#### The Sample

To obtain a sample population for this study, the public marriage register of all marriages performed in the calendar year of 1973 for which licenses were issued in the County of Wythe, Virginia, was employed. The geographic area was Wytheville and its hinterlands. As a precaution, the Commonwealth Attorney was consulted to insure the legality of preparing mailing lists from public registers. Eliminated from the total number

of 215 marriages for which licenses were issued that year were: (1) those marriages with either person being over forty years of age, (2) interracial marriages, (3) those marriages in which either person was previously married, divorced, or widowed, and (4) marriages of Blacks. All of the above information was provided in the register.

The strategy of elimination of those in the above four classifications was used to provide control for extraneous variables. Those over forty years of age are generally beyond the age of child-bearing, and they would usually be self-supporting. Interracial and ethnic marriages and marriages of Blacks were too small a portion (8) of the total sample (215) to warrant their inclusion. Those marriages involving divorce could involve intervening variables, such as rejection by parents, and there was no mechanism design in this study to provide control for such variables.

Also were two couples eliminated whose first marriage partner was deceased; interestingly, in both cases their second marriage was to a person previously divorced. The remaining marriages which were eliminated included either a person over forty years of age, a divorced person, or a combination of such.

For the selected sample of the remaining 137 couples, the following information was taken from the marriage register: the names of both persons, address at time of marriage, age, sex, race, educational level at time of

marriage, and type of ceremony--whether religious or civil. Four of the ceremonies were civil, and 133 were performed by ministers, with Methodist being the religious denomination listed most frequently by the officiating minister.

### The Questionnaire

A seven-page questionnaire plus a cover letter were designed for mailing to the sample population. (see Appendices A and B). The questionnaire was divided into six categories, those being: (1) general information about the young couple and their parents, (2) education, (3) occupation, (4) contributions and gifts, (5) visitation with parental in-laws, and (6) phone calls and correspondence.

Because of the length of the questionnaire, every effort was made to keep it as simple and readable as possible. Thus, whenever possible, sociological terminology was converted to lay language. In an effort to encourage the respondents to fill out the questionnaire, every question save one was designed so the respondent could simply place an "X" in the proper category. The respondents were asked to write in their occupation.

For pre-testing purposes, the questionnaire was then given to several young married persons, with the request that they make suggestions and be perfectly candid in questioning anything they did not understand.

The results of the pre-test were primarily word changes and the inclusion of new categories under certain questions to enhance clarity.

The final page of the questionnaire simply solicited any voluntary remarks the respondents might wish to make about the questionnaire in general or interaction with parental in-laws in particular. Seventy-six percent (58) of the final seventy-six respondents made no comment. Of the twenty-seven percent (18) who did comment, their remarks fell into three main categories: (1) those clarifying previous questions, (2) opinions as to what the proper relationship between young marrieds and parental in-laws should be, and (3) those comments expressing good luck to the researcher.

#### The Telephoning

The decision was made to attempt to call the respondents. Initially, the intent was to confirm mailing addresses and hopefully expedite the return of the questionnaires. However, ex post facto analysis indicates that there were several other benefits which stemmed from the telephoning. These will be discussed later.

As stated previously, the Marriage Register listed the names of the parents of the young couples. Since all of the marriages were performed in the same county, it was logically assumed that the majority were residents of

Wythe County at the time of their marriage. Using telephone books for all of Wythe County, a systematic search was made through the listings of each community to find (in the order listed) the telephone number of: (1) the respondent, (2) the husband's father, and (3) the wife's father.

Telephone numbers were located for 85.4 percent of the total sample. During the afternoon and evening hours 78.6 percent of the 85.4 percent were successfully contacted. In addition to the confirmation of current address, other results of the telephoning were: (1) clarification that the research being done was in no way connected with the researcher's community position as a clergyman and columnist in the local newspaper, and (2) an opportunity to answer general questions and thank the respondents in advance for their cooperation.

The results indicate that the telephoning was a definite success. Of the 92 reached by telephone, only one refused to give his address--explaining that he does not believe questionnaires are morally ethical. Of the returned questionnaires, 72.4 percent were received within ten days of the first mailing date. Of the total mailed, 86.8 percent of the returns finally received were from respondents who had been contacted by phone. (Table 1).

A chi-square was used to assess the rate of returns for those called and the rate of returns for those not



TABLE 1  
 RELATIONSHIP OF QUESTIONNAIRES RETURNED  
 AND RESPONDENTS TELEPHONED

(In Percentages)

Questionnaires	Telephoned		Total
	Called	Not Called	
Returned	71.7 (66)	22.2 (10)	(76)
Not Returned	28.3 (26)	77.8 (35)	(61)
Total	100.0 (92)	100.0 (45)	(137)

Chi-square value,  $1df = 29.10$ , significant at the .05 level

called. The chi-square value for those telephoned who returned their questionnaire was 29.99 with one degree of freedom, which is statistically significant at the .05 level. It must be pointed out that the questionnaire was also accompanied by a letter of introduction and explanation. The conclusion is that, whatever the number of returns would have been without the telephone calls, it was substantially increased through the personal contact by phone.

#### The Mailing

A total of 137 questionnaires were initially mailed with return addressed envelopes enclosed for each respondent. Ten days later a second wave of questionnaires was mailed. A second letter (see Appendix A) was mailed with these questionnaires. The second mail-out resulted in a return of twenty additional questionnaires. Of the 137 original mail-outs, 55.4 percent were returned.

#### Discussion of Variables Measurement

Dependent variables measured in this research were the following: employment help, business funding, parental advice, goods and services, occupation, and frequency of visitation, telephoning, and correspondence. Employment help refers to either "help offered" or "help not offered" by parental in-laws in locating jobs for married offsprings. Business funding relates to those parental in-laws who offered or did not offer

to fund a business for married offsprings. Parental advice was measured as those parental in-laws who either gave, or did not give, advice to married offsprings. Goods and services, and helping patterns, are non-monetary terms used to measure help which was either given, or not given, between parents and married offsprings. Occupation was divided into two categories: (1) those in professional and managerial positions and those in technical fields and in clerical and sales positions were labeled "high" occupation levels; and (2) those in skilled labor, general labor, and those unemployed were labeled "low" occupation levels. Visitation, correspondence, and telephoning were measured as either "frequent" or "seldom." For visitation and correspondence, "frequent" was interpreted as being "once a month or more," and "seldom" was "less than once a month." For telephoning, the same frequency code was applied on a per week basis.

Independent variables measured in this research were the following: propinquity, life status, children, education, and age. "High" propinquity is 0-50 miles, and "low" propinquity is over 50 miles. Life statuses are obviously either deceased or living (used as a variable to test for help given to the surviving parent by the young couple). Those respondents having children are compared to those who do not have children in relation to parental helping patterns. Education was divided

into two categories: those having a high school education or less were labeled "low" educational level, and those having more than a high school education were labeled "high" education level. Age was also divided into two categories: those through 23 years of age, and those 24-40 years of age.

## CHAPTER III

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

For purposes of systematic analysis, the hypotheses are divided into three sections. The first section, which includes four hypotheses, is primarily concerned with residential propinquity of the young couple to parental in-laws. The variables of education, amount of help exchanged, and kinds of help exchanged are tested in relation to residential propinquity to determine if there are patterned differences in the first three and the physical distance the young married live from one or both sets of parents. The second section deals with hypotheses regarding exchange of goods and services among in-laws of this sample. Hypothesizing that couples in the early years of marriage are the recipients more than the donors, variables such as education, amount and kinds of help, and existence of grandchildren, are introduced in relation to reciprocity. In the latter part of the section, further analysis is made to describe helping patterns from young couples to parental in-laws. The third section incorporates several hypotheses testing for the extent of interaction between respondents and their parents. Visitation, phone calls,

and correspondence are tested for frequency, reciprocity, and propinquity.

#### Residential Propinquity and Related Factors of Young Married Couples to Their Parents

This section consists of a set of findings which evaluate the variable of distance in relation to residence of young couples. Variables tested are: nearness to in-laws, goods and services exchanged, and education.

#### Residential Propinquity of Young Couples To Parents

The pattern of young adults establishing residence near parents has been indicated in recent research (Young and Wilmott, 1964; Adams, 1968). The hypothesis advanced here goes one step further. It is expected that young married couples are more likely to live near parental in-laws--that is, within 50 miles--if both sets of in-laws live in the same area. Data from the Wytheville study indicated that 69.7 percent of the wives and 60.5 percent of the husbands lived within 0-50 miles of their parents. Of the total sample, 80.3 percent of the young adults live within 0-50 miles of at least one set of parental in-laws. Of the total sample, 50.0 percent live within 0-50 miles of both sets of parents.

Since the data of parental in-laws of both husbands and wives were similar, for purposes of illustration

wives and their fathers will be used as representative. More than two-thirds (68.4 percent) of the wives live 50 miles or less from their fathers. Over fourteen (14.5) percent live within 51-500 miles of their fathers. From this, it can be seen that 82.9 percent of the young married wives in the sample live within car driving distance of less than ten hours from their fathers. (Appendix C).

The hypothesis is clearly supported, although the data do seem to indicate a matrilocal pattern--that is, residence is more frequently established nearer the wife's parents than the husband's. In view of the young age of the wife at the time of marriage (80.3 percent were 21 years of age or younger), the data suggest that the wife may have either been in school or working and living at home, and the husband may have felt an obligation to remain in the general locale of the wife's previous residence. Or, an equally plausible alternative may be that the prospective husband made his living in the area prior to the marriage, something probably less true of the prospective wife.

#### Education and Propinquity to Parental In-Laws

As stated earlier, Wytheville is a relatively rural mountain town. At the time the data were collected for this research, 77.6 percent of the sample still lived within 0-50 miles of the town of Wytheville, as determined

by mailing addresses. This is consistent with the literature that the lower the income, the higher the probability that the young couple will live near at least one set of parental in-laws (Bossard, 1950). Data patterns of the individual parental in-laws were similar for both spouses on several different dimensions. Thus, the wife's mother is used for purposes of illustration.

Since income data were not obtained, educational level of the spouse (in this case, the wife) was employed to test the hypothesis that lower educational level would be associated with greater propinquity to the parents. To test this relationship, chi-square was used. It is understood that the 76 respondents of this study do not comprise a strict random sample. However, of the total population of 137 couples enumerated, there was a return of 54.0 percent (76). Since there appeared to be no discernible response biases, the sample was considered reasonably representative of the total population. It is therefore deemed justifiable to employ tests for statistical inference. (Table 2).

The data support a strong relationship between high propinquity and low education, i.e., young couples with lower educational levels do tend to live within 0-50 miles of their parents, more so than do similar age couples with education beyond high school. Of those



TABLE 2  
 RELATIONSHIP OF RESIDENTIAL PROPINQUITY OF WIFE  
 TO HER MOTHER ACCORDING TO  
 WIFE'S EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

(In Percentages)

	Educational Level		Total
	High School Graduate Or Less	More Than High School Graduate	
0-50 Miles	90.5 (38)	53.6 (15)	(53)
Over 50 Miles	9.5 (4)	46.4 (13)	(17)
Total	100.0 (42)	100.0 (28)	(70)

Chi-square value,  $ldf = 12.44$ , significant at the .05 level

having a low education level, only 9.5 percent live 51 miles or more from their mother. Of particular interest in considering the similarity of data between husband and wife is the fact that 65.8 percent of the wives in this category either listed themselves as unemployed or housewife. It would seem that since 96.1 percent of the husbands are employed, there would have been significant variations in the data. However, a valid explanation seems to be reached by arriving at socio-economic status through the two factor scale of education and occupation. Of those husbands employed, 60.5 percent have lower educational levels and hold jobs rated in the lower prestige categories of skilled labor, general labor, or unemployed. The findings of this study are therefore in keeping with previous research (Komarovsky, 1962) and support the hypothesis that blue collar workers do tend to live near their parents.

#### Propinquity and Parental Help

Adams (1968) summarized the works of numerous scholars of the family whose research indicated that strong and reciprocal help patterns do exist between parents and married offsprings. The present research was designed to take this one step further. Here it is hypothesized that such reciprocity is greater among those parents and married offsprings who live closer to rather than farther from each other.

Since Wytheville is a small, rural, mountain, community-college town, it was somewhat of a surprise to find that 93.4 percent of the respondents indicated that they do not regularly receive financial help from their parents, and 78.9 percent reported that they do not regularly receive help in the form of goods and services. This is at variance with Sussman's findings that mutual aid is a primary activity of the kin network (Sussman, 1956). In fact, 19.7 percent of the respondents in this study indicated that they themselves regularly give goods and services to at least one of their parents, while only 21.1 percent said they regularly receive help from at least one parent. Chi-square was used to test for a relationship between residential propinquity and the receiving of goods or services from parental in-laws (Table 3).

As indicated in Table 3, none of the young couples who regularly receive goods or services live over 50 miles or more from their parental in-laws. It would appear then that the hypothesis is strongly supported. However, the small size of the sample warrants a degree of caution in comparing this study to larger populations or generalizing from the results.

#### Propinquity and Parental Help for Employment

In order to test the relationship of parental help patterns in the area of employment, the respondents were

TABLE 3  
 RELATIONSHIP OF RECEIPT OF GOODS AND SERVICES  
 TO RESIDENTIAL PROPINQUITY  
 (In Percentages)

Goods And Services	Distance		Total
	0-50 Miles	Over 50 Miles	
Received	27.1 (16)	00.0 (0)	(16)
Not Received	72.9 (43)	100.0 (17)	(60)
Total	100.0 (59)	100.0 (17)	(76)

Chi-square value, 1df = 5.84, significant at the .05 level

asked if their parental in-laws had ever: (1) offered them a job, (2) helped them to obtain a job, or (3) advised or helped in the choice of occupation. (See Appendix D). More than 80.0 percent of the husbands answered "no" to all the variables, with the exception that 54.0 percent indicated they had received advice from one or more parents about choice of occupation. Table 4 shows that advice giving does vary according to proximity of husbands to their parents.

The parents who live within 50 miles of their young married offsprings were divided equally into those who gave advice and those who did not. The variations were found among those parents who live over 51 miles from the young couple, with more giving advice than not. The chi-square value was significant at the .05 level, thus supporting the hypothesis. Sussman (1956) and Axelrod (1956) both indicate the importance of near-kin for companionship and advice and suggest that procurement of jobs by parents for their married offsprings seems to be a diminishing aspect of the contemporary American family network. It seems plausible to suggest that employment and personnel agencies are a by-product of industrialization and urbanization, which are increasingly removing procurement of employment from family influence. In summary, these data would tend to suggest that help and advice from parental in-laws are not necessarily synonymous, and for the purposes of more clarification

TABLE 4  
 RELATIONSHIP OF PARENTAL EMPLOYMENT ADVICE  
 TO YOUNG COUPLE TO RESIDENTIAL PROPINQUITY  
 (In Percentages)

Parental Advice	Distance		Total
	0-50 Miles	Over 50 Miles	
Given	50.0 (32)	83.33 (10)	(42)
Not Given	50.0 (32)	16.67 (2)	(34)
Total	100.0 (64)	100.0 (12)	(76)

Chi-square value, 1df = 4.54, significant at the .05 level

and specificity on these relationships, future research should deal with them separately.

### Summary

The lower the education, the higher the probability that young married couples will live near parental in-laws. Also, if both sets of parental in-laws live in proximity to each other, the greater is the probability that young couples will live near them. Further, when they do live near parents, they are more likely to receive goods and services and advice about employment.

### Reciprocity in Goods and Services

This section analyzes the data of this study which are concerned with reciprocity in goods and services. Four hypotheses are tested for kinds of help patterns existing between respondents and their parents.

### Education and Parental Help

In conjunction with status theories and studies of the American middle-class family (Sussman, 1953), the present research was designed to test whether those couples whose parents have more than a high school education tend to receive more help than those whose parents have a high school education or less. Such a relationship would suggest a concern on the part of parents to maintain the married offsprings in a socio-economic status similar to that of their parents and reflect a community prestige concern. As indicated

previously in the analysis, the giving and receiving of goods and services and all other kinds of help were not reported by the respondents to be as substantial as had been expected. However, two variables concerning help in job procurement and another concerning offers to fund a business for offspring--are analyzed to see whether they are affected by parental educational level. Table 5 provides the relationship between help given in job procurement and parental educational level. It does not indicate a relationship in favor of the hypothesis, i.e., it appears that parents who have attained a higher education do tend to help their offsprings more in job procurement than those parents who have a lower education. However, it must be noted that there is clearly a disproportionate percentage of parents in the "low education" and "no help" categories.

Chi-square was used also to test the relationship between parents who had a high education (as defined in the previous question) and those who have offered to set the husband up in his own business. (See Table 6). As with the previous question, the small percentages reported in three of the categories reduce the stability of this finding.

#### Parental Help Primarily Goods and Services

The particular concern of this hypothesis is that parental in-laws who do help do so primarily in the form of goods and services. Some consideration has already



TABLE 5  
 RELATIONSHIP OF HUSBANDS GIVEN HELP IN JOB PROCUREMENT  
 AND EDUCATION OF THEIR PARENTS

(In Percentages)

Employment Help	Education Level		Total
	High	Low	
Parents Helped Get Job	28.6 (2)	17.4 (12)	(14)
Parents Did Not Help Get Job	71.4 (5)	82.6 (57)	(62)
Total	100.0 (7)	100.0 (69)	(76)

Chi-square value, 1df = .70  
 Not significant at the .05 level

TABLE 6  
 RELATIONSHIP OF HUSBANDS GIVEN OFFERS BY PARENTS  
 TO FUND BUSINESS AND EDUCATION  
 OF THEIR PARENTS

(In Percentages)

Business Funding	Education Level of Parents		Total
	High	Low	
Parents Offered to Fund Business	14.3 (1)	4.3 (3)	(4)
Parents Did Not Offer To Fund Business	85.7 (6)	95.7 (66)	(72)
Total	100.0 (7)	100.0 (69)	(76)

Chi-square value, 1df = 1.26  
 Not significant at the .05 level

been given to this question while dealing with propinquity in the previous section. However, because of the importance of the question in understanding the kinds of goods and services exchanged in reciprocity, the question is pursued further at this point.

In reply to questions regarding the giving and receiving of financial help, 6.6 percent of the respondents indicated they receive financial help regularly, while 21.1 percent said they give financial help to one or more of their parental in-laws regularly. The response to the goods and services question varied slightly, with 21.1 percent stating that they regularly receive goods or services, and 19.8 percent stating that they regularly give goods or services to one or more parental in-laws. The preceding percentages reflect a minimal amount of mutual aid, but do indicate a slight tendency in favor of goods and services being more commonly given and received than direct cash among the sample population of the Wytheville study.

The data were further studied to determine who constitute the 21.1 percent that regularly receive goods and services from their parental in-laws. It revealed that 63.0 percent (10 of 16) of the young married couples regularly receiving goods or services have children, and that 93.7 percent (15 of 16) live 0-50 miles from one or both sets of parental in-laws, with only one of these living less than 100 miles (but more than 50

miles) from one or both sets of parental in-laws. In terms of occupational prestige, 75.0 percent (12 of 16) of the husbands and 100.0 percent (16 of 16) of the wives have lower prestige jobs, meaning that they are either skilled workers, laborers, or unemployed. Thus, married couples in this study who do receive help from parental in-laws are more likely to receive goods and services, to live near parental in-laws, to have children, and to have lower prestige level jobs.

#### Parental In-Laws as Receivers Of Goods and Services

Since the percentages of giving and receiving were somewhat consistent between parental in-laws and young married couples, the data were further studied to determine characteristics of those who do help their parents. On the basis of a study by Kosa (1960), which indicated that traditionally oriented families are more likely to share the home with relatives than are upwardly mobile families, the hypothesis was advanced that young married couples are more likely to help parental in-laws when at least one parent is deceased. Of the 19.7 percent who reported that they regularly give goods or services to one or both sets of parental in-laws, 53.3 percent (8 of 15) have all their parents living, and 46.7 percent (7 of 15) have one or more parents deceased. Chi-square was used to statistically determine whether or not those young couples who give goods or services more regularly

have one or more parental in-laws deceased. (See Table 7). The chi-square value is significant at the .05 percent level, thus supporting a relationship between the giving of help by young married couples and the decease of at least one of their parents. The data were similar for those young couples who give financial help to parental in-laws.

### Grandchildren and Help Patterns

The research sample was designed with the expectation that a majority of young couples married two years would have at least one child. However, of the 76 respondents, only 21 (27.6 percent) had one child. None had more than one child. Chi-square was employed to determine if having a child increased the chances of the young couple receiving goods and services from parental in-laws. (See Table 8). The chi-square value of 12:32 suggests a very strong relationship between young couples having a child and receiving goods and services from parental in-laws.

### Summary

There is some indication, though not statistically significant at the .05 level in this particular study, that the higher the educational level of parental in-laws, the greater the probability that they will help their married offsprings. And, when they do help, it will be primarily with giving of ordinary goods and services. When the young do help their parental in-laws, there is

TABLE 7  
 RELATIONSHIP OF YOUNG COUPLES WHO GAVE  
 GOODS OR SERVICES TO PARENTAL IN-LAWS  
 AND LIFE STATUS OF PARENTAL IN-LAWS

(In Percentages)

Goods And Services	Life Status		Total
	A Parent Is Deceased	All Parents Alive	
Given By Young Couple	36.8 (7)	14.0 (8)	(15)
Not Given By Young Couple	63.2 (12)	86.0 (49)	(61)
Total	100.0 (19)	100.0 (57)	(76)

Chi-square value, 1df = 4.52, significant at the .05 level

TABLE 8  
 RELATIONSHIP OF GOODS AND SERVICES RECEIVED FROM PARENTS  
 TO PARENTAL STATUS OF YOUNG COUPLES

(In Percentages)

Goods and Services	Parental Status Of Young Couples		Total
	Children	No Children	
Received From Parental In-Laws	47.7 (10)	10.9 (6)	(16)
Not Received From Parental In-Laws	52.3 (11)	89.1 (49)	(60)
Total	100.0 (21)	100.0 (55)	(76)

Chi-square value, ldf = 12.32, significant at the .05 level

a high probability that one parent (or more) is deceased. Those couples who have a child are more likely to receive help than those who do not have a child.

Visitation and Correspondence of  
Young Married Couples  
With Parental In-Laws

This section analyzes reciprocity patterns in terms of visitation, correspondence, and telephoning. The discussion is primarily concerned with the variables of distance and frequency.

Reciprocity in Visitation

When Parsons advanced his "theory" of the "isolated nuclear family" in the mid-forties, the American family was moving to urban areas in spiraling numbers. The sociological phenomenon which Parsons possibly foresaw was that the family as an institution would necessarily experience behavior changes in adjusting to a more urbanized way of life than it had previously known (Parsons, 1943). What could not be foreseen in the forties were the exponential changes that would be made in communications and transportation. Progress in every phase of communications continues to be evidenced, and the interstate highway systems begun under the Eisenhower Administration stimulated ecological and demographic changes in the American population which, in turn, generated the greater dispersion of nuclear families. Thus, it seems reasonable to assume that part of the explanation for the



divergence of literature on family interaction in urban life may be that migration theory simply seemed to outrun communications theory (Adams, 1968).

Since Parsons advanced his "theory" of the "isolated nuclear family" (which, incidentally, he never advocated as being more than an hypothesis), there has been a steady flow of research done either to refute, confirm, or explore and explain his tentative propositions. It may be said in support of Parsons that, whatever else his theories accomplished in the field of sociology, they did introduce a wealth of studies on family interaction.

It is not the intent of this research to refute or confirm Parsons' concept of the "isolated nuclear family," but rather to explore certain aspects of family interaction which would tend to reveal how the family has changed in the process of becoming urbanized. Thus, the hypothesis was advanced regarding visitation, i.e., that kin tend to visit those kin who visit them. To test this hypothesis, young married couples and their parental in-laws were studied. More directly, the hypothesis was that young couples who do visit their parental in-laws frequently, will be visited by their parental in-laws frequently. "Frequently" was defined as being once a week or more. The frequencies were similar in most categories for husband and wife. Consequently, the data for the wife are used to compute the chi-square value, which was significant at the .05 level. (See Table 9).

TABLE 9  
 RELATIONSHIP OF RECIPROCAL VISITS BETWEEN  
 YOUNG WIVES AND THEIR PARENTS  
 (In Percentages)

Young Wives	Parents of Young Wife		Total
	Visit Her	Do Not Visit Her	
Visit Parents	100.0 (41)	88.0 (22)	63
Do Not Visit Parents	00.0 (0)	12.0 (3)	3
Total	100.0 (41)	100.0 (25)	66

Chi-square value,  $ldf = 5.15$ , significant at the .05 level

One hundred percent (100 percent) of the wife's parents who visit the young couple at least once a week are in turn visited by the young couple at least once a week. However, of those who "seldomly visit," the pattern is somewhat different. More specifically of the 29 parental in-laws who visit their married offsprings seldomly, 16 of the young couples still visit their parents frequently, while 13 visit them seldomly. This finding would suggest that married offsprings continue to visit even when parental in-laws do not visit them. Therefore, the hypothesis is supported. Young married couples do tend to visit those parents who visit them. While this finding cannot be the basis for discussion of visitation patterns among other kin, it does raise the question as to whether the reciprocity in visitation may be simply a function of obligation, i.e., kin feel a responsibility to visit those kin who visit them, or else be talked about or raise a community question about family loyalty.

#### Husband and Wife Visit Parental In-Laws

As an outgrowth of the previous hypothesis, and in an effort to determine as much as possible (within the limits of these data), whether couples visit out of obligation, the data were further analyzed to determine whether young couples go together to visit their parental in-laws rather than going alone to see one's own parents. The expectation is that, if the wife visits her parents

and the husband visits his parents, they may simply be fulfilling obligatory functions. Sussman (1962) suggests that socialization processes used by parents with their children instill a sense of responsibility to parents in later years. If, in fact, couples do tend to visit together, it would be supportive of the sociological theory that--disregarding distance--parental in-laws and other kin maintain primary ties in the contemporary American family. Further, in this study the data indicate that young couples who do visit parental in-laws do tend to go together.

In visitation of the wife's mother, 83.3 percent of the young couples visit together, and 76.3 percent go together when they visit the wife's father. When the fact that 8.1 percent of the wife's fathers are deceased is considered, it seems highly probable that very little, if any variation exists between visitation patterns to the wife's mother and the wife's father. The remaining percentages are essentially explained by the fact that 5.3 percent of the couples live with the wife's mother, and 1.3 percent accounts for decease of the wife's mother. The percentages are about the same in the visitation of the husband's parents, with 86.0 percent of the couples going as a pair to visit the husband's mother and 75.0 percent going as a pair to visit the husband's father. Again, death accounts for most of the difference in percentages of visits to the husband's mother and father. In general, the data support the hypothesis.

Telephone Calls Between Young Couples  
And Parental In-Laws

The limited number of studies done to date which explore the use and function of the telephone in kin relationship denies students of the family a thorough understanding of the proper relationship and comparison of telephone calls with visitation patterns. Hopefully, as new studies continue to regard the exchange of phone calls as being an important secondary means of establishing and maintaining contact with near kin, the picture will become clearer as to how a phone call and a visit are similar and how they are different in terms of maintaining social ties. The question may be raised as to whether young couples tend to call their parental in-laws primarily when there is a problem; however, the same question can be raised regarding visits. It is certainly true that phone calls and visits cannot be equated in terms of intensity of interaction, since one is face-to-face contact and the other is not. Perhaps the best explanation to date, though not validated in research, is Bell Telephone Company's advertisement that telephoning is "the next best thing to being there."

Since the frequency rates observed were similar for the several variables for each of the four parental in-laws, the wife's father is used to test the hypothesis that young married wives who live near their fathers call them more frequently than those who live farther away.

In Table 10, the respondents were divided into two categories--those living 0-50 miles from the wife's father, and those living over 50 miles from the wife's father. These two categories were then further divided into those who call at least once a week and those who call less than once a week. A majority (80.0 percent) of those wives who live near their fathers call them at least once a week. The smallest category as those who live over 50 miles from their father and call him at least once a week. The chi-square value was significant at the .05 level. Thus, it may be affirmed with some degree of confidence that, at least in the Wytheville study, the telephone is a vital means of keeping in contact with parental in-laws. And, it would seem that once a week or more would indicate more of a social conversation than the airing of some grievance or a request for help.

Correspondence and Propinquity Between  
Young Marrieds and Their Parental In-Laws

The final hypothesis dealt with generally-held expectations that young couples who do not live in proximity to their parents will resort to letter writing as a means of communication. Since 50 miles generally corresponds to about one hour's travel time by car, it was reasoned that a round-trip time of at least two hours would occasionally be foregone in favor of a telephone call. In turn, with increased distance, the

TABLE 10.  
 RELATIONSHIP OF TELEPHONE CALLS AND  
 PROPINQUITY OF YOUNG WIVES  
 TO THEIR FATHERS

(In Percentages)

Wife Calls Her Father .	Distance		Total
	0-50 Miles	Over 50 Miles	
At Least Once a Week	84.0 (42)	22.2 (4)	(46)
Less Than Once a Week	16.0 (8)	77.8 (14)	(22)
Total	100.0 (50)	100.0 (18)	(68)

Chi-square value, 1df = 23.08, significant at the .05 level

family economizes by visiting and phoning less frequently and writing letters more often. If the economic position is a valid one, as increasing gasoline prices raise the cost of transportation, it seems reasonable that kin who live farther away will increase the frequency of non-face-to-face contact, i.e., correspondence and telephoning.

To test the hypothesis, the respondents were again divided into two distance categories--those who live 0-50 miles from the husband's parents, and those who live over 50 miles from the husband's parents. Letter writing was divided into those young couples who write the husband's parents at least once a month, and those who write less than once a month. The largest cell in the resulting two-by-two table consisted of those respondents who live less than 50 miles away and write the husband's parents seldomly. The smallest consisted of those young couples who live less than 50 miles from the husband's parents and write frequently. The data were similar for the wife's parents. In this problem N=66. Of those not included in the analysis, the couple was either (1) living with the husband's parents, or (2) the husband's parents are deceased. The chi-square value was significant at the .05 level, which can be seen in Table 11. Thus, a strong relationship is demonstrated between propinquity and correspondence.



TABLE 11  
 RELATIONSHIP OF FREQUENCY OF CORRESPONDENCE  
 TO PROPINQUITY TO HUSBAND'S PARENTS

(In Percentages)

Couple Writes Husband's Parents	Distance		Total
	Over 50 Miles	0-50 Miles	
At Least Once a Month	44.4 (8)	6.2 (3)	(11)
Less Than Once a Month	55.6 (10)	93.8 (45)	(55)
Total	100.0 (18)	100.0 (48)	(66)

Chi-square value, 1df = 13.75, significant at the .05 level

Summary

Young married couples tend to visit parental in-laws more frequently when they are visited by their parental in-laws. And, when young couples do visit their parental in-laws, they generally go together. Telephoning is strongest when young couples live in proximity of 50 miles or less of their parents. Correspondence is primarily a means of social contact for young couples and their parents when they are separated by more than 50 miles.



## CHAPTER IV

### Conclusion and Interpretations

This final chapter of the thesis briefly summarizes the findings of this study and then relates them to previous literature on helping and other social interaction behavior in families. The thesis closes with issues which have been raised by this study which merit continuing empirical research. The general outline used in the analysis will be used here for purposes of discussion and drawing general conclusions. Reciprocity of helping patterns, residential propinquity of offsprings to parents, and reciprocity of visitation will be discussed and related to general sociological perspectives on family interaction patterns.

In the Wytheville study, the data indicated that young married couples do tend to live near parental in-laws, that those young couples who do live near parental in-laws tend to have lower educational levels and to receive more goods and services than do those couples who live more distant. The inference can be drawn that perhaps young couples live near their parents in order to receive more goods and services. However, causal relationships are difficult to unravel, and--in

this case--conventional explanations serve a more functional purpose than do discussions of etiology. At any rate, the hypotheses for which data were collected were not designed to determine causal relationships, but rather to test for patterns of interaction between young couples and parental in-laws. Propinquity is not then the issue, but rather a variable to test for interaction patterns. And yet, the conspicuousness of residential nearness of in-laws is most certainly a fact which impinges upon a number of facets of family interaction. For example, to assume that young couples live near their parents in order to receive more goods and services does an injustice to the equally plausible explanation that, because young couples do live near their parents, they receive more help. (What also can all too easily be omitted from consideration is the possibility that it may not be the young couples who are establishing residence in proximity to parents in all cases, i.e., in upwardly mobile families both offsprings and parents may be migrational, and the parents may be changing residence to be near their children). To clarify further the relationship of propinquity to place of residence, alternative suggestions are made as to why kin either live near each other or do not live near each other. The discussion will follow in two parts: (1) why people either live near each other or do not live near each other, and (2) the possible consequences of living in close proximity.

What is posited is that at some point in time kin perform the real function of obtaining living quarters and establishing permanent residence near other kin, in this case young married couples and their parents. There are three alternatives offered as interpretations for this phenomenon of family interaction. They are: (1) the characteristics of the couples, (2) the characteristics of the parents, and (3) the characteristics of the area. The first proposition suggests that educational level, occupational level, age of couple, number of children, and other variables doubtlessly have an impact upon the decision of the young couple as to where to live. For example, as indicated in this study, those with low educational levels are prone to live near their parents. It may be that the reason why they live near their parents is a lack of confidence in their ability to successfully gain employment in a new area (which becomes an inhibiting factor resulting in the establishing of residence in familiar surroundings, which just happens to be near parents). The second proposition offers that variables of age of parents, whether or not one parent is deceased, financial stability, educational level, occupational status (employed, retired), number of children, and other variables may be primary determinants in location of residence. For example, a mother with a low education, her spouse deceased, and only one child, might just move in with the child (Kosa, 1960).

The final proposition is that kin may live where they do as a consequence of the impinging forces of urbanization and industrialization. Income per capita, cost of living, and educational costs are variables generated by an industrialized society which may delimit the ability of individual families to be migrational, i.e., insufficient funds to seek upward social mobility limit the family to remaining in traditional territory. The foregoing would help to explain why Winch (1968) found that in rural areas non-migration is related to familism. In essence, as in this study, those young couples who cannot afford to be migrational and who establish residence in the locale in which they grew up, simply continue primary interaction with parents with an adjusted pattern of continuity. On the other hand, Sussman (1962) found that upward social mobility is characterized by financial help given to offsprings by parents for educational purposes, which indicates that economics may be one of the vital determinants as to where kin live. Obviously, the geography of an area, its demographic and ecological characteristics, and its industry are all external influences which affect family residence patterns. What Parsons (1943) had reference to in introducing the "isolated nuclear family" were these external influences of urbanization and industrialization. If Parsons' perspective was inadequate, it was primarily inadequate in failing to allow for the further possibility that

affective ties among family members contributed to residential propinquity.

The second set of propositions is concerned with possible consequences of kin living near kin. Community characteristics and expectations may exact the fulfillment of obligatory roles. Because kin do live near each other, they may feel an obligation to "check on" each other. The Wytheville study found that often when parents do not visit their married offsprings, the married offsprings continue to visit their parents. It is not altogether clear whether the young couples visit their parents because of affective ties, or because of a sense of obligation or fear of rejection by parents, or social duty. However, the study also found that about one-half of the young couples helping a parent had one parent deceased. It thus seems valid to suggest that whatever affective ties there may be between the young couple and parents, the young couples also sense a responsibility toward the parents. Sussman (1953) suggests that part of the process of socialization of childhood is the internalization of a set of expectations of reciprocity, i.e., parents' "giving" to children internalizes in children a responsibility to help their parents later in life. The concept of reciprocity can therefore be applied to family help patterns. In another perspective, when kin help kin, particularly in exchange patterns between young couples and their parents, it may

be the manifestation of an overt or covert function of social status. Help may flow in whichever direction it is needed in order to maintain social class stability within the family structure. In keeping with the status maintenance arguments, Sussman and Burchinal (1953) indicate that middle-class parents give to their children to maintain social class stability. Bossard (1953), in a study of the blue collar workers, found that they regularly give and receive very little. However, in times of crises, help will be forthcoming from kin. Thus, in consideration of the fact that only about 20.0 percent of the respondents of the Wytheville sample are involved in the regular exchange of goods and services, the suggestion is made that perhaps economic factors limit the exchange of goods and services. However, if the young couple should be in a crisis which threatened status position, it is most likely that help would be forthcoming from parental in-laws.

In summation, married offspring living near their parents, and the exchange of goods and services, cannot be equated in a one-to-one relationship. Rather, those variations in family interaction and help patterns which exist between young couples and their parents reflect consequences of propinquity.

The reciprocity in goods and services has been discussed to some extent previously. To reiterate, young couples of this study who received help from



parental in-laws were characterized by low educational and occupational levels, and had at least one child. As indicated previously, external forces may have influenced the place of residence. However, the manner in which families interact, after residence is established near each other, may be related to another set of circumstances. That kin do interact is universally accepted. The purposes and extent of that interaction are still areas of family sociology which need considerable research. It seems a tenable position that young couples and their parents in this study interact in multi-faceted ways, and that socialization with primary others is a dominant value. While those young couples living near their parents are characterized by low levels of education and occupation, the point remains that a majority of the total sample population indicated they do visit their parents frequently, thus indicating that most of the respondents do place a high value on family solidarity. The conclusion then is that the amount and kinds of goods and services exchanged between young couples and their parents is probably not related to educational or occupational level. First of all, the data did not reflect that giving was in sufficiently substantial amounts to affect social status. The giving was primarily characterized by exchanging of ordinary (non-monetary) goods and services. Thus, for this study,

the data do not reflect a high degree of giving for status maintenance. However, this does not eliminate the possibility that help would be forthcoming if circumstances so demanded. The most probable explanation for helping patterns revealed in this study is that nearness precipitates doing of favors among kin. And, when a favor is done, the unwritten, "contractual" rule of reciprocity is manifested, e.g., if the young couple paint the husband's parents' home, the husband's parents buy the young couple a set of lawn furniture. It should be mentioned that these data reflected regular exchange of goods and services. Bossard (1950) indicates that gift giving is a family ritual. Relating that to the foregoing, it seems sociologically tenable to suggest that, while special occasion giving (birthdays, anniversaries, Christmas) is not considered regular giving, it may reflect as high a degree of family solidarity as regular giving. Consistent with such a position is the finding of this study that couples and parents, without regard to propinquity or educational level, do exchange correspondence and telephone calls on about an equal basis. This latter finding is supportive of family solidarity in contemporary American society. While the practice of reciprocity may well apply to the areas of correspondence and telephoning, it is important to realize that a young couple spatially separated from

parental in-laws probably does not have the consciousness of neighbors' knowing all the family business. Thus, when young couples who live at some distance from parents interact with parents, the coalescing seems to be more of a product of voluntary behavior than obligation or status prestige. The result, at any rate, is that this study supports the viability of the extended family in present society.

#### Questions for Future Research

In the process of this study, several interesting questions have been raised for which additional research is needed. For example, it is a fact that parental in-laws and their married offsprings do exchange goods and services. A specific area of these helping patterns is the question of whether parental aid strengthens youthful marriages or weakens them. It is suggested that a study of divorced persons could reveal the extent of parental help in those marriages which did not survive and whether this help or lack of help had any bearing on the dissolving of the marriage. Further, because of limitations of time and economics, this study incorporated a questionnaire for the young couples only. A follow-up study could reciprocate with a similar questionnaire to parental in-laws and test for consistency of reporting, as well as for revealed variations in real and perceived help patterns. Finally, to date most studies

of family help patterns have essentially represented each family by one representative person from that family. A study is suggested which would include a certain number of families and interview or send questionnaires to each family member separately. The data would make possible distinctions between status maintenance, reciprocity, and affectivity as related to family interaction and help patterns among siblings and their parents.

## APPENDIX A

COVER LETTERS AND QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I am a graduate student at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. For my graduate thesis I am doing a study of family help patterns.

In order to properly complete this study, I need you to answer the following questions for me. The questions are stated so that they can be answered quickly. I want to assure you that your answers will be strictly confidential. They will be used only for the purpose of studying how kinfolks help each other in the early years of marriage. You are included in this research because your marriage license was issued in Wythe County, Virginia, in the year of 1973.

It is very important that I receive all questionnaires back. A stamped return-addressed envelope is enclosed for you to use. Please notice that you do not have to put your name to any part of the questionnaire. No one will be able to tell who you are from my written study.

I thank you in advance for your co-operation. Please return your questionnaire within the next five days. If you have any question at all, please call me collect at 703-228-2543, Wytheville, Virginia.

Sincerely,

Harold L. Bare

HLB/lbb

Enclosure

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

About ten days ago I mailed to you the enclosed letter, questionnaire, and stamped return-addressed envelope. A good number of you have returned your questionnaires, and I thank you for it.

However, I would like to encourage those of you who have not returned your questionnaires to please do so, as this would greatly increase the validity of my research. On the chance that you did not receive the first mailing, I am enclosing another questionnaire and return envelope.

I would like to re-emphasize that all information shared in the questionnaire will be grouped together, and that no names will be matched with information.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Sincerely,

Harold L. Bare

HLB/lbb

Enclosures

APPENDIX B



FAMILY HELP PATTERNS

QUESTIONNAIRE

Please place an X in the proper space or spaces provided for each item or question. Sometimes you may need to X more than one space.

Part I RESPONDENT

1. Who is filling out this questionnaire?

- Wife
- Husband
- Both husband and wife

2. Do you live with any of the following? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

If "Yes", which of the following do you live with now?

- Wife's mother only
- Wife's father only
- Wife's mother and father
- Husband's mother only
- Husband's father only
- Husband's mother and father

3. Which of the following are presently alive?

- Wife's mother
- Wife's father
- Husband's mother
- Husband's father

Part II EDUCATION

1. Check the highest grade level you have completed.

	<u>Husband</u>	<u>Wife</u>
0-8 Elementary	___	___
9-12 High School (Did not graduate)	___	___
Graduated from High School	___	___
Graduated from 2-year college	___	___
Graduated from 4-year college	___	___
Graduate or professional school	___	___
Other (Technical, Army, etc.)	___	___
What type of school? _____		

2. Check the highest grade level each of the following have completed.

	<u>Husband</u>	<u>Wife</u>
0-8 Elementary	_____	_____
9-12 High School (Did not graduate)	_____	_____
Graduated from High School	_____	_____
Graduated from 2-year college	_____	_____
Graduated from 4-year college	_____	_____
Graduate or professional school	_____	_____
Other (Technical, Army, etc.)	_____	_____
What type of school? _____		

3. Have any of the following promised assistance to you and your spouse if you would continue your education?  
 Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
 (If "Yes", check all of the following who have done so.)

- \_\_\_\_\_ Wife's mother
- \_\_\_\_\_ Wife's father
- \_\_\_\_\_ Husband's mother
- \_\_\_\_\_ Husband's father

Part III OCCUPATION

1. What do you do? (Your specific job: teacher, nurse, farmer, etc.)

Husband \_\_\_\_\_  
 Wife \_\_\_\_\_

2. Do you work for any of the following? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
 (If "Yes", check the appropriate block or blocks.)

	<u>Wife</u>	<u>Husband</u>
Wife's mother	_____	_____
Wife's father	_____	_____
Husband's mother	_____	_____
Husband's father	_____	_____

3. Have any of the following ever helped you or your spouse get a job? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
 (If "Yes", check the appropriate block or blocks.)

	<u>Wife</u>	<u>Husband</u>
Wife's mother	_____	_____
Wife's father	_____	_____
Husband's mother	_____	_____
Husband's father	_____	_____

4. Have any of the following ever offered you or your spouse a job? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
 (If "Yes", check the appropriate block or blocks.)

	<u>Wife</u>	<u>Husband</u>
Wife's mother	___	___
Wife's father	___	___
Husband's mother	___	___
Husband's father	___	___

5. Have any of the following offered to help set you and/or your spouse up in private business? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
 (If "Yes", check the appropriate block or blocks.)

	<u>Wife</u>	<u>Husband</u>
Wife's mother	___	___
Wife's father	___	___
Husband's mother	___	___
Husband's father	___	___

6. Check any of the following who have ever given advice, on their own or asked for, about your job or your spouse's job, or a future job.

- \_\_\_ Wife's mother  
 \_\_\_ Wife's father  
 \_\_\_ Husband's mother  
 \_\_\_ Husband's father

This advice was: \_\_\_ Followed  
 \_\_\_ Partly followed  
 \_\_\_ Rejected

Part IV CONTRIBUTIONS, GIFTS, ETC.

1. If you and your spouse have received cash gifts from any of the following, check the answer nearest to the amount of the gift.

	<u>\$0- \$100</u>	<u>\$100- \$500</u>	<u>\$500- \$1,000</u>	<u>\$1,000- \$5,000</u>	<u>\$5,000- \$10,000</u>
Wife's mother	___	___	___	___	___
Wife's father	___	___	___	___	___
Wife's parents	___	___	___	___	___
Husband's mother	___	___	___	___	___
Husband's father	___	___	___	___	___
Husband's parents	___	___	___	___	___

2. The approximate value of the wedding gift received from the following was:

	\$0- \$100	\$100- \$500	\$500- \$1,000	\$1,000- \$5,000	Over \$5,000
Wife's mother	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Wife's father	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Wife's parents	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Husband's mother	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Husband's father	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Husband's parents	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

3. How many children do you and your spouse have?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- More than 2

(If you do not have any children, please go to Question 6. If you do have children, please answer all the following.)

4. Did any of the following help with a gift (either cash or goods) of more than \$100 value during pregnancy?

Yes  No   
 (If "Yes", check the appropriate block or blocks.)

- Wife's mother
- Wife's father
- Wife's mother and father
- Husband's mother
- Husband's father
- Husband's mother and father

5. Have you and your spouse received any additional support from any of the following since your child(ren) was born? Yes  No

(If "Yes", check the appropriate block or blocks.)

- Wife's mother
- Wife's father
- Wife's mother and father
- Husband's mother
- Husband's father
- Husband's mother and father

6. Have any of the following suggested that you move to a larger house and helped provide finances to make it possible? Yes  No

(If "Yes", check the appropriate block or blocks.)

- Wife's mother
- Wife's father
- Husband's mother
- Husband's father

7. Do you and your spouse generally and regularly give any financial help to any of the following?

Yes  No

(If "Yes", check the appropriate block or blocks.)

Wife's mother  
 Wife's father  
 Husband's mother  
 Husband's father

8. Do you and your spouse regularly give goods or services to any of the following? (Such as groceries, clothes, trips, etc.) Yes  No

(If "Yes", check the appropriate block or blocks.)

Wife's mother  
 Wife's father  
 Husband's mother  
 Husband's father

9. Do you and your spouse or your child(ren) regularly receive financial help from any of the following?

Yes  No

(If "Yes", check the appropriate block or blocks.)

Wife's mother  
 Wife's father  
 Husband's mother  
 Husband's father

10. Do you, your spouse, or your children, regularly receive goods or services from any of the following? (Such as groceries, clothes, trips, babysitting, toys, etc.) Yes  No

(If "Yes", check the appropriate block or blocks.)

Wife's mother  
 Wife's father  
 Husband's mother  
 Husband's father

11. Do any of the following work outside the home?

Yes  No

(If "Yes", check the appropriate block or blocks.)

Wife's mother  
 Wife's father  
 Husband's mother  
 Husband's father

Part V VISITATION WITH PARENTAL IN-LAWS

1. In terms of mileage, check below the ones which show how far away from you your parents and in-laws live.

	<u>Wife's Parents</u>		<u>Husband's Parents</u>	
	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>
0-10 Miles	_____	_____	_____	_____
10-50 Miles	_____	_____	_____	_____
50-100 Miles	_____	_____	_____	_____
100-500 Miles	_____	_____	_____	_____
Over 500 Miles	_____	_____	_____	_____

2. How do you usually travel to the following?

	<u>Wife's Parents</u>		<u>Husband's Parents</u>	
	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>
Walk	_____	_____	_____	_____
Car	_____	_____	_____	_____
Bus	_____	_____	_____	_____
Train	_____	_____	_____	_____
Plane	_____	_____	_____	_____

3. How long does it take to get from your home to the homes of the following? (By mode of transportation most often used.)

	<u>Wife's Parents</u>		<u>Husband's Parents</u>	
	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>
0-15 Minutes	_____	_____	_____	_____
15-60 Minutes	_____	_____	_____	_____
1-4 Hours	_____	_____	_____	_____
4-10 Hours	_____	_____	_____	_____
Over 10 Hours	_____	_____	_____	_____

4. On an average, how often do you visit each of the parental in-laws?

	<u>Wife's Parents</u>		<u>Husband's Parents</u>	
	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>
2 or more times per week	_____	_____	_____	_____
Once a week	_____	_____	_____	_____
Once a month	_____	_____	_____	_____
Twice a year	_____	_____	_____	_____
Once a year	_____	_____	_____	_____
Less than once a year	_____	_____	_____	_____

5. When you do visit your parents or in-laws, do you and your spouse usually go together to:

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Wife's mother's	_____	_____
Wife's father's	_____	_____
Husband's mother's	_____	_____
Husband's father's	_____	_____

6. How often do the following come to visit you and your spouse?

	<u>Wife's Parents</u>		<u>Husband's Parents</u>	
	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>
Several times a week	_____	_____	_____	_____
Once a week	_____	_____	_____	_____
Once a month	_____	_____	_____	_____
Twice a year	_____	_____	_____	_____
Once a year	_____	_____	_____	_____
Less than once a year	_____	_____	_____	_____

Part VI PHONE CALLS AND CORRESPONDENCE

1. How often do you telephone each of the following:

	<u>Wife's Parents</u>		<u>Husband's Parents</u>	
	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>
Several times a week	_____	_____	_____	_____
Once a week	_____	_____	_____	_____
Once a month	_____	_____	_____	_____
Twice a year	_____	_____	_____	_____
Once a year	_____	_____	_____	_____
Less than once a year	_____	_____	_____	_____

2. How often do the following telephone you?

	<u>Wife's Parents</u>		<u>Husband's Parents</u>	
	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>
Several times a week	_____	_____	_____	_____
Once a week	_____	_____	_____	_____
Once a month	_____	_____	_____	_____
Twice a year	_____	_____	_____	_____
Once a year	_____	_____	_____	_____
Less than once a year	_____	_____	_____	_____

3. How often do you write a letter or card to the following?

	<u>Wife's Parents</u>		<u>Husband's Parents</u>	
	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>
More than once a week	_____	_____	_____	_____
More than once a month	_____	_____	_____	_____
A few times a year	_____	_____	_____	_____
Once a year	_____	_____	_____	_____
Not at all	_____	_____	_____	_____

4. How often do you receive a letter or card from the following?

	<u>Wife's Parents</u>		<u>Husband's Parents</u>	
	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>
More than once a week	_____	_____	_____	_____
More than once a month	_____	_____	_____	_____
A few times a year	_____	_____	_____	_____
Once a year	_____	_____	_____	_____
Not at all	_____	_____	_____	_____

Part VII COMMENTS

If there are any comments you would like to make further about exchanging visits, telephone calls with your parents and in-laws, correspondence, and any help you receive from or give to them, please use this sheet to describe them.

THANK YOU.



APPENDIX C

FREQUENCY OF CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN YOUNG MARRIED COUPLES AND THEIR PARENTS

(In Percentages)

Correspondence	More Than Once Per Week	More Than Once Per Month	Few Times Per Year	Once Per Year	Never	Not# Appli- cable	Total
Letter to wife's mother	3.9	10.5	21.1	6.6	48.7	9.2	100.0
Letter from wife's mother	5.3	3.9	25.0	10.5	46.1	9.2	100.0
Letter to wife's father	3.9	6.6	18.4	6.6	48.7	15.8	100.0
Letter from wife's father	6.6	2.6	17.1	11.8	46.1	15.8	100.0
Letter to husband's mother	3.9	6.6	25.0	7.9	47.4	9.2	100.0
Letter from husband's mother	3.9	7.9	23.7	10.5	44.8	9.2	100.0
Letter to husband's father	2.6	5.3	22.4	6.6	42.1	21.0	100.0
Letter from husband's father	2.6	5.3	21.1	9.2	40.8	21.0	100.0

\*"Not Applicable" includes those parents who are either dead or living with the couple and those with no response to the particular question.

FREQUENCY OF TELEPHONE CALLS BETWEEN  
YOUNG MARRIEDS AND THEIR PARENTS

(In Percentages)

Telephone Calls	Several Times A Week	Once A Week	Once A Month	Twice A Year	Once A Year Or Less	Not# Appli- cable	Total
Couple calls wife's mother	35.5	21.1	22.4	--	9.2	11.8	100.0
Wife's mother calls couple	26.3	25.0	22.4	1.3	11.8	13.2	100.0
Couple calls wife's father	27.6	22.4	18.4	1.3	10.5	19.8	100.0
Wife's father calls couple	19.8	25.0	14.4	2.6	18.4	19.8	100.0
Couple calls husband's mother	26.3	18.4	27.7	1.3	9.2	17.1	100.0
Husband's mother calls couple	22.4	21.1	22.4	5.3	11.7	17.1	100.0
Couple calls husband's father	19.8	14.4	26.3	1.3	9.2	29.0	100.0
Husband's father calls couple	14.5	14.5	21.1	5.3	13.1	31.5	100.0

\*"Not Applicable" includes those parents who are either dead or living with the couple and those with no response to the particular question.

## APPENDIX D

PARENTAL HELP AND ADVICE PATTERNS GIVEN  
IN SEEKING FOR EMPLOYMENT

(In Percentages)

Job Assistance

Help Given	Husband	Wife
Has been offered a job by one or more parents	19.7 (15)	5.3 (4)
<u>No</u> parent has ever offered a job	80.3 (61)	94.7 (72)
Total	100.0 (76)	100.0 (76)

Business Assistance

Help Given	Husband	Wife
One or more parents has offered to help set up in business	5.3 (4)	0.0 (0)
<u>No</u> parent has offered to help set up in business	94.7 (72)	100.0 (76)
Total	100.0 (76)	100.0 (76)

## Parental Help

Help Given	Husband	Wife
One or more parents have helped in obtaining a job	18.4 (14)	7.9 (6)
<u>No</u> parent has helped in obtaining a job	81.6 (62)	92.1 (70)
Total	100.0 (76)	100.0 (76)

## Employment By Parents

Help Given	Husband	Wife
Is employed by one or more parents	17.1 (13)	2.6 (2)
Is <u>not</u> employed by a parent	82.9 (63)	97.4 (74)
Total	100.0 (76)	100.0 (76)

## Occupational Advice

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One or more parents have given advice, on their own or asked for, about the husband or wife's job or a future job	55.3 (42)
<u>No</u> parent has ever given advice about a past, present, or future job	44.7 (34)
Total	100.0 (76)

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## VITA

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