Family, friends and personal communities; Changing models-in-the-mind

Ray Pahl
Liz Spencer

Institute for Social and Economic Research
University of Essex

INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL
& ECONOMIC RESEARCH

E·S·R·C
ECONOMIC
& SOCIAL
RESEARCH
COUNCIL

Family, Friends and Personal Communities; Changing Models-in-the-Mind

Non-technical Summary

Idealised notions of personal relationships, for example about the 'proper' way to be a family or to be a friend, develop within particular cultures and contexts. In practice, however, these 'models-in-the-mind' may not correspond with the way people actually live. A mismatch between the 'ideal' and 'real' can trigger a range of different reactions. For example, 'non-traditional' families may be criticised as essentially deviant and deficient in some way (the deficit response). Alternatively, they may be heralded as 'families of choice', and championed as a way of escaping out-of-date and oppressive models (the liberation response). Finally, the notion of the family may be recast so that those who play a family-like role in people's lives, who behave like family, or are treated as family, should be defined as family (the functional response). Each response implicitly suggests that there is some kind of taken-for-granted model that has to be compensated for, rebelled against or redefined.

Rather than bemoaning or extolling perceived departures from an ideal, the paper urges an examination of the nature and content of informal social relationships, and the ways in which people give and receive companionship, intimacy and support – whether this is with family members, or friends, or other significant ties. This approach makes it possible to reveal cases where a blurring of boundaries is taking place, with family members playing more friend-like roles and friends taking on more family-like functions, a process the authors call fusion.

Finally the idea of a personal community – the collection of 'important' personal ties in which people are embedded – is suggested as a practical schema. Through the lens of personal communities, different patterns of commitment to friends and family can be empirically observed. Rather than subscribing to gloomy prognoses about the breakdown of the family, the loss of commitment or the death of community, researchers can identify where people are well-rooted in flexible, supportive and robust personal communities and, by contrast, where more fragile, fractured social bonds are to be found.

Family, Friends and Personal Communities;

Changing Models-in-the-Mind

Ray Pahl

Institute for Social and Economic Research,

University of Essex

rpahl@essex.ac.uk or raypahl@btinternet.com

and

Liz Spencer

Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Essex

liz@new-perspectives.org.uk

ABSTRACT

'Models-in-the-minds' about the 'proper' and 'right' way to be a 'true' friend or to 'do' family behaviour may not necessarily fit lived experience, especially in cases where relationships become fused and distinctions between 'family' and 'friend' become blurred.. We suggest the idea of a personal community – the micro-social world of significant others for any given individual – as a practical schema for capturing the set of relationships in which people are actually embedded.

INTRODUCTION

The paper is divided into four main sections. In the first, we review some of the evidence relating to idealised notions of family and friendship behaviour and show how this generates debates about the 'proper' or appropriate way to 'do ' or to 'display' such behaviour. The discrepancy between idealised notions and actual behaviour is developed in the next section, where we suggest that notions of personal relationships that individuals consider to be normatively accepted in their society - or that segment of society that is socially significant for them - exist in their minds. Such a collection of notions we describe as PRISM – personal relations in the social mind. We then propose a conceptualisation in diagrammatic form to indicate degrees of congruence between PRISM and practice.

In the third section we discuss the process of fusion[1] between what are conventionally described as family relationships and relationships of friendship respectively. This idea was explored in detail in earlier work (Spencer and Pahl, 2006). Finally, we conclude with a discussion of personal communities – the collection of 'important' personal ties in which each of us embedded – where different patterns of fusion and commitment to friends and family can be empirically observed. A typology of personal communities is presented, which might provide a basis for future research. Our evidence serves to refute those who claim to see personal relationships becoming more transitory and superficial, associated with the inevitable advance of a deterministic process of 'individualization'. (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Bauman, 2003).

Before we address the main themes of the paper, however, we feel it may be salutary *recueillir pour mieux sauter*, as the French neatly say. Perhaps sociologists need to be regularly reminded of the need to be cautious before making all-embracing claims based on particular historical and cultural observations. For example, in the mid-twentieth century, Parsons' theory of the family, which maintained that the solidarity of the conjugal unit is strengthened if the 'wife and mother is either exclusively a "housewife" or at most has a "job" rather than a career', (Parsons, 1943 in 1964, p. 192), was presented as a universal and value-free structural-functional model. In the intervening years, however, this model has been severely criticised as a highly selective extrapolation from patterns of family life found among middle class white Americans in the 1940s. A sociology of the family that is concerned with a limited identifiable object is being challenged by a sociology that is concerned with family as a process or, as Morgan puts it, 'a quality rather than a thing' (1996, p. 186). In this vein, we present our discussion of family, friends and personal communities

and the importance of capturing the sets of significant relationships in which people are actually embedded. As Brynin and Ermisch argue

> 'This perspective provides an empirical basis for the analysis of relationships derived not from biological, legal or normative definitions but in terms of observed interactions'. (2009, p. 4).

FAMILY AND FRIENDS: IDEALS AND REALITY

Fifty years after the publication of the article by Parsons, the *Journal of Marriage and the Family* published a debate on American Family Decline in which David Popenoe addressed empirical evidence for the decline of the family as a social institution.

> 'Families have lost functions, social power, and authority over their members. They have grown smaller in size, less stable, and shorter in life span. People have become less willing to invest time, money and energy on family life, turning instead to investments in themselves' (1993, p. 528)

In response, Judith Stacey claimed that

> 'no positivist definition of the family, however revisionist, is viable. Anthropological and historical studies convince me that the family is not an institution but has a history and a politics' (1993, p. 545)

In some senses, of course, both are right. Those who agree with Popenoe can adduce statistical evidence documenting increases in divorce, single parent families and so forth, although their implications might be undermined by a more detailed consideration of the historical trend (Stone, 1990). Likewise Stacey can draw on a considerable body of historical, anthropological and sociological analysis to support her case (e.g. Carston (ed), 2000; Coontz, 2000; Gillis, 1996; Morgan, 1996). There is, of course, a third position, which demonstrates that both Popenoe and Stacey greatly overstate their case, (Bengston et al., 2002; Crow, 2002, chapter 3).

It is unlikely that this particular debate will be finally resolved, since it is fundamentally about a difference in values, illustrated by Judith Stacey's value-loaded titles of *Brave New Families* (1990) and her affirming 'Good Riddance to the Family'(1993) in response to Popenoe. This focus on values appears stronger in the literature in the United States, perhaps because of the greater significance of religious affiliation and interest groups, compared, say with Britain.

The suggestion that the family is primarily an ideological, symbolic construct has been readily absorbed into the conventional sociological wisdom. For example, two influential studies published in 1984 showed how participants actually or implicitly recognised the notion of 'ordinary families' – an ideal-typical model in the mind. One described how stepfamilies accommodated to the ideal (Burgoyne and Clark, 1984); the other demonstrated a discrepancy between people's 'public' and 'private' accounts (Cornwall, 1984). Public accounts focussed on images of unity and the idea of the family as a natural social unit, whereas private accounts provided 'stories of internal rifts within families, and described the stresses and strains individuals suffered because of their families' (Cornwall, 1984, p. 102).

This disjunction between ideals and reality has become an important issue for American sociologists (for example Nelson, 2006; Smith, 1993). Lempert and DeVault argue that

> 'the nuclear family ideal endures as a representation that powerfully shapes activity, institutional life and policy . . . (C)alls to strengthen family life dominate public discourse on these topics, yet the rhetoric seems increasingly dissonant with household life as it is actually lived'. (2000, p. 6)

This raises a fundamental issue not only for theorists of 'the family' but also for lawyers, counsellors and other practitioners. We clearly need a way to link rhetoric with reality. We also need to be careful not to equate 'household' with 'family'. Finch refers to studies that

> 'confirm that the household in which an individual currently lives is no longer synonymous with "my family". For many people, their close relationships extend to other households formed through dissolved marriages, through cohabitation past and present, to step relationships both inside and outside their own household to broader kin relationships, and to same sex partnerships and to friendships'. (2007, p. 68)

If 'the family' appears to be increasingly difficult to define both comprehensively and rigorously, defining such an all-encompassing word as 'friend' is certainly no easier (Allan, 1989; Argyle and Henderson, 1984; Bidart, 1997; Brain, 1976; Fischer, 1982). Friendship is also an ideological symbolic construct and social historians and sociologists have debated whether friendships in past times are of the same 'conceptual stuff' as contemporary friendships (e.g. Silver, 1990; Tadmor 2001; Thomas, 2009). Any attempt to discover whether we are now more or less friendly is fraught with difficulties; the word 'friend' can mean different things in different periods and contexts, although attempts have been made to provide distinctive 'rules of friendship', (Argyle and Henderson, 1984). These are not necessarily followed in practice. There is a disjunction between an ideal-type friend and the disposition of friendliness and the actual practices of day-to-day friendships. When asked to

define a good friend, participants will generally provide a list of moral and social attributes that are unlikely to apply in their entirety to anyone they know personally. In our own recent empirical study of friendships in Britain, we reported that participants readily accepted and recognised that friendship comes in many different forms and provide many different functions[2].

> 'It seems that actual friendships are valued for particular attributes, and these attributes can compensate for other shortcomings, so that friends may be fun but unreliable, trustworthy but dull and so on, and it is this particular combination of qualities. . which gives each friendship its distinctive character'. (Spencer and Pahl, 2006, p. 59)

Friends, as described in our study, ranged from simple relationships based on shared activities, fun or favours, to more complex and intimate ties involving emotional support and trust – from associates and what some referred to as 'champagne friends', to confidants and 'soul-mates'. Not only this, people varied in the range of types of friends they had, or what was described as their 'friendship repertoire'. While some had mainly light-hearted ties, looking to family members or a partner for more intimacy and support, others enjoyed a wide repertoire of intimate and non-intimate friendships.

People seem relatively comfortable with the understanding that there are diverse forms of friendship, but there is still recognition that some of their friends could potentially fail to live up to their expectations. Furthermore, it is commonly agreed that certain kinds of behaviour are not acceptable amongst certain kinds of friends. Those defined as 'soul mates' or 'best friends' should not, for example, betray confidences. Those 'friends of utility'- to borrow Aristotle's term – should be reliable and trustworthy, so that if they promised, say, to collect a child from school at a certain time, they should be expected to do so and there may be a further expectation that having done so conscientiously, a reciprocal favour may be granted. If we inadvertently provide personal information to our utility friend, who then gossips, this need not end that kind of friendship, although we would surely be more cautious in future. However, betrayal of shared secrets by a soul-mate could jeopardise the qualitative nature of that particular form of friendship. (Pahl, 2000).

We were impressed in our study by the highly nuanced and subtle understanding some participants brought to bear upon their friendships. They recognised the way in which different friends performed different functions and we found cases where a small group of friends played a more significant role than the majority of family members. For these people, practice was more important than ideology. Someone, such as a very religious person might

have a kindly and friendly disposition towards everyone, yet have no individual personal friends. We may draw a parallel with someone with a strongly internalised model of how a traditional family should behave but who does not have a 'traditional family'. Unmarried uncles and aunts may behave in this way; so, too, may certain unmarried, long-standing family friends. This whole area of friendly or family dispositions has not received much scholarly attention. However, the conception of appropriate behaviour by those not in specific structured roles may serve to strengthen those general assertions to which we now turn.

PERSONAL RELATIONS IN THE SOCIAL MIND (PRISM)
– PRINCIPLE AND PRACTICE

It is a truism that all personal relationships are idealised in some way. People will readily offer opinions about what being a 'good mother', a 'good parent', a 'true friend' and so on might or should involve. These idealised conceptions may encourage people to be judgemental about themselves or about others; sometimes there is a recognition that there is debate and ambiguity about the right and proper way to carry out certain family tasks or responsibilities. Thus, for example, fashions in patterns of baby care changed in the twentieth century from the more rigid routines popularised by Trudy King, to the more relaxed approach of Dr Spock, and back to routines again. One idealised model replaced another.

These idealised, internalised models of behaviour can coalesce with greater or lesser ease into clusters of roles, which may be referred to as families, friends or kith and kin. So, idealised roles relating to families may involve 'doing' certain kinds of behaviours, engaging in certain kinds of rituals or *rites de passage* and 'displaying' families in distinctive ways (Finch, 2007; Morgan, 1996; Nelson, 2006; Sarkisian, 2006).

> 'It is precisely because relationships are both defined and experienced by their quality – not simply their existence – that family relationships need to be displayed as well as 'done'. Displaying families confirms the qualitative characters of a given relationship at a particular point in time as 'family'….. The activity of display is an important part of the nurturing and development of relationships so that 'family-like' qualities are positively *established*' (Finch, 2007, p. 79 - 80. Emphasis in the original).

The implication is that there is an idealised notion of a *cluster* of roles – for example how families should behave when they are on display, say when eating in public – that is different from individual roles. The role set of a woman at a family celebration could include that of

daughter, mother, sister, aunt, partner or wife. At other kinds of public celebrations, not restricted to family, the same woman could also be a best friend, a neighbour, a co-worker, a fellow sports team player and so on. There are idealised expectations of how these various roles should be acted or 'done' and how displayed in 'bundles'. The woman might move from seeing her young children were happily fed and settled with their friends (displaying and doing the nurturing, motherly, family role) to joining a group of her own friends and acquaintances at the bar where she becomes the convivial and acceptable member of a group (displaying distinctive friend-like qualities, sharing gossip or arranging practical reciprocal exchanges).

It is central to our argument that idealised conceptions of personal relationships tend to refer to family and friends separately; the connections and clusters between such relationships are not necessarily articulated or conceptualised, since most people are not given to an over-reflexive approach to their everyday lives. Furthermore, it is common experience that how people 'do' these relationships frequently falls short of their aspirations. Feelings of guilt, embarrassment or disappointment and betrayal are common responses to mismatches between individual expectations, based on how ego or alter should behave, and their actual behaviour. These idealised relationships are not idiosyncratic, although there may be variations based on age, class, gender, ethnic origin, religious affiliation, geographical context and so on. Despite such variations, these idealised conceptions are based on shared values and norms and serve as bases for determining the legitimacy or otherwise of patterns of behaviour that come under scrutiny. 'Should that woman have behaved that way to her partner and should her best friend have intervened?' Such is the stuff of everyday social life and drama and it depends on shared notions of idealised personal relationships. These personal relations in the social mind we term PRISM[3].

It is evident that the mismatch between PRISM and practice is at the root of many currently perceived social problems. This may be because the nature of PRISM is changing but this is not generally recognised or accepted. Appropriate ways of caring for the elderly or the role of grandparents are matters of debate, as much in the media as amongst scholars and policy-makers. So-called 'non-normal' families may be seen to present a challenge to a traditional PRISM. What are the putative responses to such a perceived mismatch? We suggest three possibilities in relation to a particular 'family' PRISM and consider each in turn.

6

The deficit response

One way of handling the mismatch has been to adopt a *deficit* response whereby sets of family-like relationships that deviate from some conventional image of 'the family' are viewed by large sections of society as deficient in some way. Here there is a mismatch or tension between people's model of 'family' and the current situation in which they find themselves and they may feel under pressure to attempt to normalise their situation. The case of lone mothers, for example, has triggered an interesting discussion of how they 'do' family, and the choices they make about who counts as family, Nelson (2006). First-hand experience of being judged according to the deficit approach has been described by young women sociologists with small children, writing from a feminist perspective. For example, Dorothy Smith, acknowledges that, as a single mother, she and her colleague 'were viewed at school as defective families: defective families produce defective children; any problem our children might have at school indexed the defective family as its underlying interpreter; we were always guilty. . . . . As my small son said one day, arriving from school, "There's something awfully wrong with our family"' (1993, p. 56).

In a study of relationships between non heterosexual and heterosexual friends, Muraco (2006) identified a number of ways in which friendships provided family-like support that was otherwise lacking, such as access to children, financial support, and the prospect of growing old together. Family models-in-the-mind also influence older people, who may 'adopt' non-related others as surrogate partners, siblings or children. These 'fictive kin' fill the gaps that arise through death or lack of procreation (MacRae, 1992).

The liberation response

Rather than attempting to accommodate to a 'normal family-in-the-mind', some observers claim to recognise the emergence of 'families of choice', unconstrained by what may have become, or are perceived by the practitioners to be, outmoded patterns and processes, (Lempert and DeVault, 2000; Weeks et al., 2001). Proponents of this perspective emphasize what *is*, not what ought to be. Their argument is that people are doing no more than seeking a kind of freedom in their personal lives that their political leaders encourage them to believe exists in their public lives. By asserting their right to choose, those living in families of choice may subscribe to a kind of historical conception of progress, one that provides a more liberating and fulfilling way of life, in which relationships are more likely to be chosen than

given and ties of blood or genetics to be just one possible base for intimacy or secure and continuing relationships. The emergence of such an ideology with its associated practices has created a lively debate between those who emphasize the potential of such new chosen forms to provide a greater opportunity for tolerance and family democracy, and others who hold different ideological preconceptions and fear that 'the breakdown of family' may be an unintended consequence. Such social divisions have existed to a greater or lesser degree for many centuries (MacFarlane, 1978; Stone, 1997).

However, observers of the liberation response, which is based on assumptions about increasing levels of individualization, have been criticised for playing more of an advocate role, 'notorious for asserting their almost millenarian scenarios on the basis of sketchy evidence'. (Duncan and Phillips 2008, p. 60). Solid statistically significant evidence has been hard to obtain, although recent British studies document the case of partners who opt to live separately – known as 'living apart together', (Haskey, 2005; Ermisch and Siedler, 2009).

The functional response

An alternative approach to the deficit and the liberation responses is to replace a focus on the characteristics of 'family actors' with a concern for 'family functions'. Those who play a family-like role in people's lives, who behave like family, who consider themselves family, or are treated as family, should be defined as family. However, our acceptance of a functional approach could well depend on which type of family functions we are considering and, indeed, on the way in which such an approach impinges on different personal or professional responsibilities.

One such family function that might be of major concern is the care of a dependent child. In practice, the nature and quality of this care is a matter for empirical investigation and cannot be, as it were, read off directly from the carer's personal social and economic characteristics. According to a functional model, this care might be equally good irrespective of the sex or sexual orientation of the carers or the nature of their formal relationship to the child. An elder sibling may do a more responsible job than an overworked or depressed natural mother, a permanent nanny than a frequently absent lone father, a loving lesbian couple than quarrelsome or substance-abusing heterosexual one, and so on.

We have referred briefly to these three responses since they all implicitly suggest that there is some kind of taken-for-granted model, or PRISM, which has to be compensated for,

rebelled against or redefined. In the first case, some may attempt to maintain or to reinforce the 'traditional' family PRISM, as Gillis (1997) has so thoroughly documented. Secondly, there are those who rebel by seeking liberation from what are perceived to be dysfunctional or destructive models (Stacey, 1993; Weeks et al., 2001). Finally, there are those who affirm people's commitments but who redefine the nature and significance of family life (Smart, 2007; Williams, 2004).

Despite empirical variation in PRISM and actual practices, it is possible to clarify the nature of the disjunction. People may have a different set of PRISM, reflecting class, ethnic, regional and other variations, but they are nevertheless aware if their behaviour reflects, rebels against or reinforces the surrounding social norms and values of their significant others. By recognising this empirically, we are able also to clarify the issue of whether PRISM is a societal or an individual phenomenon. It is both: people know whether their behaviour is consonant or dissonant with the model in their mind of what they perceive to be society's expectations, whether or not they conform to them. This points needs to be emphasised: *we are concerned with the idea of an idea.* However, we are not claiming that there can be one PRISM for all members of a society. Nor, indeed are we suggesting that there are n+1 PRISM sets that are potentially empirically verifiable. We are simply claiming that individuals have a *perceived* PRISM in their heads, to which they may respond in the different manners we have suggested.

Table 1 shows a series of possible relationships between PRISM and practice. For the purpose of illustration, the PRISM in relation to which we describe a range of consonant and dissonant responses refers to the 'traditional' concept of a nuclear family, composed of a married couple and their dependent children living in the same household. In cell 1 we may find those who subscribe to this model of the family; they feel that is the right and proper way to live and may see themselves as active conformers, perhaps promoting 'family values'. In cell 2 are those who hold the same PRISM as those in cell 1 but who do not fit the pattern in the way they would prefer. Such people might include sole parents, widows with young children, stepfamilies, and others who have been unsuccessful in establishing the kind of household they would aspire to and prefer.

TABLE 1: CONFORMITY BETWEEN PRISM AND PRACTICE

	PRISM subscribed to by individual	PRISM not subscribed to by individual
Situation / behaviour conforms to PRISM	**1** Consonance	**2** Dissonance
Situation / behaviour does not conform to PRISM	**3** Dissonance	**4** Consonance

In cell 3 are those who, in their household composition, are similar to those in cell 1 but who do not subscribe to the traditional PRISM and who are resentful conformers, keeping up appearances despite feeling 'trapped', for example, as housewives or breadwinners. Finally, in cell 4, are those who reject – in principle and in practice – what they perceive to be a generally accepted PRISM of the conventional nuclear family, feeling no sense of guilt or deprivation. Their position may be based on a liberation response, perhaps stemming from 'gay pride', or a functional model of flexible, interchangeable personal relationships.

FUSION BETWEEN KITH AND KIN

Both the liberation and functional models of personal relationships implicitly acknowledge that some friends may play family-like roles and some family members play friend-like roles, particularly perhaps as individuals get older, (Pahl and Pevalin, 2005). How does such a putative process of fusion affect PRISM?

Even in a PRISM that acknowledges fusion, there are still likely to be expectations about culturally appropriate forms of behaviour in relation to the formal statuses of 'family' and 'friend'. It might be argued, for example, that a friend taking over a grand-parenting role is more acceptable than a father taking his teenage daughter clubbing with other teenagers. In practice, of course, some forms of fusion have long been deemed acceptable: two sisters going on holiday together is much the same as each going separately with another female friend. As Allan recently noted, 'the boundaries between family and friendship are becoming less clear-cut in people's construction of their micro social worlds'. Allan places his argument in the wider context of the social and economic transformations that are purported to have taken place in Western societies (Allan, 2008, p. 6; see also Adams and Allan, 1998).

In our study of friendship, we found clear cases where – in *some* relationships – friends were perceived to play 'family-like' and family to play 'friend-like' roles. For example, where there was generalised rather than specific reciprocity, where a strong sense of obligation and utter dependability existed between friends, where they loved as well as liked each other and the relationship had lasted many years, then these ties were referred to as having a family-like quality,

> 'Esther and I are like sisters … you have your ups and downs and your disagreements and your fallouts but it doesn't mean the end of the friendship'. (Spencer and Pahl, 2006, p. 118)

By contrast, when family members chose to spend time together rather than out of a sense of duty, when they liked as well as loved each other, when they could trust each other as non-judgemental confidants, then their relationship was perceived as friend-like in its character.

> 'I think it's because it's not only about obligations, it's not only about blood relations, it's about other things we have in common, that we could do, that we could talk about… you know, the warmth that we feel in each other's company'. (2006, p. 115)

Sometimes this process of fusion is explicitly acknowledged in the language people use when referring to a family-like or friend-like tie, for example calling a friend a brother, or a sister a friend. However, it is important to recognise that people are not claiming a *formal* change of status has taken place, but a *functional* one. The person has become more *like* a friend, or more *like* a member of the family. It is also important to remember that fusion is not a universal phenomenon: for some people the roles played by family and friends remain highly distinct and specialised; for others only some of their relationships may become fused – a distant cousin or a casual friend is hardly likely to qualify.

How can we make sense of this apparent process of fusion? When people think in terms of relationships being family- or friend-like they are implicitly referring to some model-in-the-mind - some part of PRISM - of what family or friendship *should* be like. But can we assume that these models are stable over time and in different cultures? In the case of friends, for example, some writers have claimed that certain kinds of friendship are not found universally but occur only in particular historical, cultural or economic settings (Silver, 1990; Strathern, 1988; Tadmor, 2001).

The concept of fusion also rests on the notion that people actually do make clear distinctions between what constitutes family and what constitutes friend. Not only this, the suggestion that 'the boundaries between family and friendship are *becoming* less clear cut',

(Allan, 2008, p. 6, our emphasis) implies that these distinctions were even more clearly drawn in the past.

Allan goes on to consider how priorities between family and friends are determined 'it is not that people feel no sense of obligation to offer help and support to their friends. Rather, it is that providing support to genealogically close family members is typically given priority, especially when the support needed is demanding', (2008, p. 11). However, the empirical evidence is not conclusive on this. Rossi and Rossi (1990), for example, argue that expectations vary for different kinds of behaviour and for different types of kin. They also suggest that a stronger sense of obligation can be felt between close friends than between some members of an extended family. In the case of informal care for the elderly, Allan argues that expectations rest primarily with the family whereas 'friends are likely to step back' (Allan, 2008). Other evidence, however, indicates that friends may play a greater role with the very old and infirm (Mathews, 1983; 1986; Wenger, 1996; Jerome and Wenger, 1999) and, certainly, there is evidence in the social support literature to suggest that friends are highly valued as carers, since they do not generate the anxiety arising from 'worrying' relatives or coping with the 'Martha syndrome' (Coyne et al., 1988; Rook, 1984)[4].

When people play 'non traditional' or fused roles, they challenge normative models-in-the-mind by showing ways in which such models fail to reflect the way we actually relate to friends and family. They call into question our assumptions that some relationships are more important than others *by virtue of their status* rather than their quality. How then, does the process of fusion impact on our concept of PRISM?

One response might be to resist any adjustment to the model. Despite some apparent blurring of boundaries and inter-changeability of roles, fundamental distinctions between family and friends are maintained. Allan affirms that the normative framing of family ties is 'distinct in many important regards. In other words, people's everyday understandings of what family entails are different from their everyday understandings of what friendship entails'. (2008, p. 10). He argues that people still associate family ties with hierarchy rather than equality, generalised rather equivalent reciprocity, obligation rather than choice, legal rights and responsibilities, financial support and the significance of 'blood' rather than 'water'.

An alternative response might be to use fusion as evidence that some models-in-the-mind are obsolete or repressive, since they do not reflect the reality of everyday lived experience. Indeed, the liberation response might be seen to be taking this approach. However, the term 'families of choice', can include those who are rebelling against conventional models –

perhaps motivated by a form of gay pride – but who still maintain old traditional distinctions, for example, gay partners who are still dutiful and conventional sons and daughters to their parents. Yet another response might be to revise the models-in-the-mind to take account of *different patterns of interaction and support*, rather than imposing formal distinctions. Wenger (1996) for example, has explored empirically the model of a support network in relation to the care of older people, and identified many different combinations of relatives, friends and neighbours. In this, essentially functional, approach, the model does not concern itself with *the defining characteristics of different statuses*, such as 'family', 'friend', or 'neighbour' but on *the roles people actually play*.

Of course, this last approach is much more in line with current discourse about 'doing' and 'displaying' family, where the emphasis is on activities, interaction, and identity rather than on structure, membership or household composition. Williams has usefully emphasized how people 'do the proper thing':

> 'What it means to be a good mother, father, grandparent, partner, ex-partner, lover, son, daughter or friend is crucial to the way people negotiate the proper thing to do'. (2004, p. 74)

Morgan's remark that 'family' represents 'a quality rather than a thing', (1996, p. 186) is now more widely accepted amongst sociologists. Previous research by Finch and Mason (1993) had provided strong empirical support for his assertion and the development of this idea has continued (Smart, 2007, Williams, 2004).

'Doing' or 'displaying' the proper way of affirming specific relationships as 'family relationships' implies that actor and audience agree on what family relationships appropriately are. The fact that there may be discrepancies between people's internalised perceptions of appropriate behaviour for friends and family does not mean that the lack of common agreement implies that 'anything goes'. On the contrary, it implies the need to construct shared models that would enable us to make judgement about the kinds of relationships that are beneficial and appropriate in different situations and at different stages of the life-course.

Arguably, in societies characterised by increasing individualisation and choice, the *locus classicus* of fusion can be found in the relationship with an 'exclusive' or 'committed' partner, whether or not this involves the institution of marriage; indeed, in our own study, some participants referred to their partners as their best friends [5]. Nevertheless, the fact that a partner can combine both family-like and friend-like qualities does not imply that a partner is *interchangeable* with other close friends: a partner may be both family and friend, but friends

who are also considered family are not necessarily considered partners. The relationship between marital partners and close friends, particularly for women, has recently received some scholarly attention, possibly because of its putative significance for marriage and family therapy (Harrison, 1998; Oliker, 1989; Rubin, 1985; Proulx et al., 2004).   However such studies are not *stricto sensu* about fusion. They are primarily concerned with how specific kinds of 'marriage work' are shared between partners (who may be 'best friends') and other friends. Notions of what appropriate 'marriage work' involves is clearly class-specific as Harrison (1998) makes clear.

Studies of fusion are at an early stage and clear empirical evidence is not readily available. However, it does seem that there is more widespread understanding and acceptance of ways in which friends and family can play interchangeable roles. Indeed, two fifths of those interviewed in the British Social Attitudes Survey felt that this was indeed taking place, (Duncan and Philips 2008, p. 84). Of course, ideas of fusion will vary according to class, ethnic origin, local cultural context and much else besides: there are likely to be substantial variations between, for example, what happens in different European countries or within such a diverse mix of cultures as the United States. Despite such variations, however, so long as friends and friendships grow in salience and importance, so too, will fusion.

PERSONAL COMMUNITIES

We have developed an argument showing possible mismatches between models-in-the-mind and actual behaviour in relation to family and friends. We have introduced the idea of PRISM and we have suggested a sociological fusion between friends and family. We now introduce the notion of a personal community and suggest that it might provide a valuable alternative to a purely family-based or friend-based PRISM.

By personal community we refer to the set of personal relationships that a person considers to be important for him or her at a particular time. Members of a personal community may include those designated simply as 'family', 'friend', 'work mate', 'neighbour', but also more complex combinations, such as 'brother, friend and work colleague'. We are not, of course, claiming that the idea of a personal community is original, (Macfarlane, 1970; Wellman, 1982, 1990; Wellman et al., 1988), however, we do make an important distinction between a personal community and a *social network*. The latter is often used to refer to the set of interrelationships between people in a specified domain – between network members, whereas a personal community refers to the relationships of a focal person

(Milardo and Allan, 2000). A personal community also differs from a *personal star* (Allan, 1996), since the personal community contains only those relationships that are considered significant, rather than the full range of contacts a person may have.

It is crucial to our argument to explain that, in our own study of friendship and personal community (Spencer and Pahl, 2006), the concept of a personal community was not imposed on participants as a model-in-the-mind; personal communities were created empirically by the participants themselves. The researchers invited participants to generate a list of people considered important at the time, to distinguish different degrees of importance by placing people on a map made up of a series of concentric circles[6], and to describe the nature of particular relationships. In this way, personal communities emerged and were mapped as a result of the research process and, once they had been elicited, were confirmed and accepted by participants as a portrayal of their micro-social world, making explicit what they already 'knew' implicitly.

Unlike models of 'family', 'friend' and 'social network', however, a model of 'personal community' is not well established in the social mind. Personal communities are not often on display (except, perhaps, at significant birthdays, weddings, funerals and so on) in the way that families or groups of friends are, (Finch, 2007). Our own research demonstrates that even when people map their personal communities by describing significant relationships, the power of more established models may still be evident. For example, although some people felt at liberty to assign importance according to the nature of the interaction, regardless of the formal status of the relationship, others felt constrained to assign greatest importance to members of their family, regardless of the quality of the tie, even in cases where the relationship was estranged.

Clearly a personal community PRISM has not yet arrived. Whilst people readily understand ideal ways of doing or displaying 'family' or accept ideal models of friends and friendships, there is no comparable *'ideal'* personal community. Personal communities can be more family- or friend- focused, varying between cultures and at different stages in the life course. Indeed, in our own research, we developed a typology of personal communities based on a very detailed analysis of the kinds of relationships included as 'important' to participants, the varying degrees of 'importance' attached to different relationships, the type of friendship repertoire, the degree of fusion between family and friends, and the pattern of reliance on given or chosen ties (Spencer and Pahl, 2006, p. 131). We described these personal communities as: *family-based* (family-like and family enveloped); *friend-based*

(friend-like and friend enveloped); *neighbour-based*; *partner-based*; *neighbour-based* and *professional-based*.

It could be argued that that some types of personal community are more robust than others. For example, those combining high levels of fusion with high levels of redundancy – where several members can provide different kinds of support – may be more robust than those where only one person can fulfil a particular function, depending on context.

In advocating the idea of personal community we are not proposing a *single ideal* form. Rather, we are suggesting an alternative way of thinking about clusters of personal relationships, so that a PRISM takes account of the process of fusion and the reality of people's lived experience. This raises a very important issue. In societies and cultures where, as some have argued, chosen rather than given personal relationships are becoming increasingly important, and friend-like relationships are on the ascendant, the concept of a personal community may facilitate greater congruence between PRISM and practice. If this is, indeed, the case then many of the arguments about the family – as evidenced in the Popenoe-Stacey debate – will become increasingly redundant and will seem as quaint (or perhaps as embarrassing) as the statement by Talcott Parsons with which we started.

However, adopting a personal community PRISM, a model based on different patterns and clusters of friend-like and family-like relationships that acknowledges the role that friends – as *chosen* relationships – can play, does not mean accepting there is an overwhelming trend towards a selfish individualism and inevitably fleeting social relationships (Bauman, 2003; Bellah et al., 1985). We must make it emphatically clear that we reject the idea that greater choice *necessarily* implies less commitment, as we have been at pains to point out elsewhere (Pahl and Spencer, 2004).

Clearly there needs to be evidence to underpin such assertions and this, we believe, is what we provide in *Rethinking Friendship: Hidden Solidarities Today* (2006). In the light of our own and other research findings (Rossi and Rossi, 1990), we argue that both chosen and given ties, friendships and family relationships, can vary in the degree of commitment involved.

Different configurations of commitment and choice are displayed in Table 2. For example, given relationships may be high or low in commitment, ranging from *solid*, *foundational* ties among immediate family members to *nominal* ties between distant kin. Chosen relationships may also range from highly committed or *forged* ties with close friends to more *liquid*, transient ties with casual friends and acquaintances.[7] With fusion, the lines between chosen and given ties become blurred and relationships become even more complex.

Given-as-chosen ties can range from highly committed *bonus* relationships, in which a close family member takes on friend-like qualities, such as fun and companionship, to *neglected* ties, where the exercise of choice means that 'family obligations' are not felt or are largely abandoned. Finally, chosen-as-given relationships may vary from *adopted* ties, where levels of commitment are similar to those felt between close family members, and the person is treated as a member of the family, to *heart-sink* ties where people feel some level of obligation to continue the relationship, but not through active choice.

TABLE 2: COMMITMENT AND CHOICE IN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

NATURE OF TIE	LEVEL OF COMMITMENT	
	High commitment	**Low commitment**
Given	Solid / foundational	Nominal
Given-as-chosen	Bonus	Neglected / abandoned
Chosen-as-given	Adopted	Heart-sink
Chosen	Forged	Liquid

CONCLUSIONS

There is now common acceptance that the family norms of a bygone era are no longer workable in an era and in cultures characterised by choice and individualisation. Norms of equality and reciprocity fit more easily with contemporary styles of behaviour than do norms based on hierarchy and obligation. However, this is not to say, as we have been at pains to point out, that 'choice' and 'low commitment' are displacing 'obligation' and 'high commitment'. That would be to misunderstand completely our arguments about fusion. *One set of values is not replacing another: rather the two sets may be fusing.*

Hence, we find ourselves in disagreement with the Parsonian view, expressed in the typology of pattern variables (Parsons and Shils, 1951), that people are obliged to make choices between different sets of principles. To claim that the family in the 'traditional social mind' is unsustainable, emphatically does not imply that the social obligations based on hierarchy and consanguinity are necessary abandoned. They may, however, be modified.

The relationship between partners in marriage or cohabitation is now more likely to be based on equality than on hierarchy but there are few indications that the principle of hierarchy does not still apply in the relationships between parents and children, although these may vary considerably over the life course.

A central, point implied in our conceptual approach to fusion, is that the principles of equality and hierarchy may exist comfortably in the *same* relationship: sometimes adult daughters defer to their mother's age and experiences; sometimes they may behave as equal friends on, say, a girly shopping expedition.

By focussing solely on the values of choice, equality and reciprocity, it may *appear* that there is a secular trend to 'families of choice' where relationships are in danger of being more superficial and transitory – or 'liquid' in Bauman's term. A trend towards individualisation may lead to social isolation and consequent social problems associated with loneliness (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, Brashears, 2006), although the evidence for this has recently been seriously challenged (Fischer, 2009). Whilst the 'Shrunken Social Network' thesis may, exceptionally, apply to the United States, it is hard to see how this thesis applies in other societies that have experienced similar forces of social and economic change, such as the UK, but which lack the evidence purportedly found in the US. Indeed our own research, which focused on the nature and quality of personal relationships, demonstrated that, far from being isolated, anomic or narcissistically self-focused, people may still feel connected and committed to others, through their personal communities, in a significant and meaningful way.

We see no reason to assume that our typology of personal communities, with modifications, may not apply in other, similar, Western societies. The distinctions we describe between 'friend-like' and 'friend-enveloped' or between 'family-like' and 'family-enveloped' were based on a rigorous analysis of our data. We do not postulate a 'one size fits all' model and we certainly recognise that, whilst our typology emerged from our data, we cannot claim that it is exhaustive. However, we hope that it will provide a *framework* and serve as a basis for further research amongst other socio-economic, ethnic and cultural groups. The development of the concepts of fusion and personal communities has undoubtedly much scope for further sociological analysis and refinement.

We have defended as robustly as we can our concepts of fusion and its embodiment in some types of personal community. There remains the issue of PRISM. As we stated above, personal communities cannot yet be recognised as a PRISM in the same way as can the ideals of family and friendship. However, if the fusion between the values of friends and family –

choice and equality and obligation and hierarchy – continues in the way some have suggested, then personal communities will become the appropriate basis for forming individual versions of PRISM. Faced with such practical issues of, for example, determining which members of their family or which friends should be appropriately bought together for an 18th or a 60th birthday party, individuals will come to recognise and understand the nature of their own personal community and to recognise the salience of the personal communities of others.

Whilst each personal community is different, in the same sense that every family is different, we suggest that a relatively limited range of distinctive forms of personal communities exists. As people become increasingly aware of this real and enduring social entity, they will adjust their normative behaviour accordingly, recognising that fusion frees them from making false choices. There will, of course, always remain the issue of how we personally fulfil our individual and specific roles as daughter, work colleague, soul-mate and so on. Individual characteristics and circumstances will inevitably provide the basis of much guilt and joy, bitterness and fulfilment.

We suggest that personal communities provide a valuable and practical framework for understanding relationships in the twenty-first century since they fit well with the realities of social and geographical mobility and the contemporary emphasis on personal development and fulfilment. Such a framework also enables us – as private individuals or as members of the caring professions – to recognise existing and potential sources of social support. Finally, it enables researchers to identify where people are well-embedded in flexible, supportive and robust personal communities and, by contrast, where more fragile, fractured micro-social worlds are to be found. In this way, developments in empirically derived theory may have useful practical applications.

[1] Our use of the term fusion should not be confused with the way family therapists, such as Murray Bowen, use it to refer to extreme enmeshment of a person in his or her family of origin, (Bowen, 1978).

[2] This qualitative study was conducted between 1998 and 2001. It involved in-depth interviews with a purposive sample of 60 men and women, of different ages and at different stages in the life-course, from a range of socio-economic backgrounds and living in different parts of Britain, including mid Wales and the northwest and southeast of England. The sample also included a sub-set of people who were at risk of social exclusion, (Spencer and Pahl, 2006, Appendix pp. 213 - 230).

[3] We should make it clear that we are not suggesting that PRISM is in any way related to the notion of *conscience collective*, as discussed by Durkheim, in which it seemed as a precursor to the function of the division of labour in society. As Lukes points out in his magisterial discussion of Durkheim's work: 'it is worth noting that he saw *conscience collective* as the "psychic type of society, with its own distinctive properties, conditions of existence and mode of development". He also defined the term as meaning "the totality of social resemblances". Crime was an offence against "strong and definite states of the conscience collective", which punishment restored and reinforced'. (Lukes, 1973, p. 5) Durkheim defined the *conscience collective* as 'the set of beliefs and sentiments common to the average members of a simple society which forms a determinate system that has its own life' (quoted in Lukes, 1973, p. 3). The idea of PRISM is more an idea about an idea: a perception of an idea of which might include the whole or a substantial element of a given society.

[4] The 'Martha Syndrome' refers to a feeling of being taken for granted and refers to a story in the New Testament. When Jesus was the guest of Martha and her sister Mary, Mary sat at his feet, listening to his teachings, while her sister Martha prepared food and waited on the guests. When Martha complained that she had been left to do all the work, Jesus replied that Mary had chosen 'the better part' (Luke 10: 38- 42).

[5] Partners may be seen typically as a fusion of a *chosen* relationship, combined with durability and commitment. that is to say, the fusion of the archetype 'friend' values with the archetype 'family' values.

[6] This kind of affective mapping is not new (Antonucci and Akiyama, 1995), and is established practice in the social work community. Perhaps its most famous application to date is by Barack Obama, who used the idea of circles as a way of making sense of his own family situation (Obama, 2008, p. 327-328).

[7] We have adopted the term 'liquid' from Bauman's work (2003).

REFERENCES

Adams, R. G., & Allan, G. A. (Eds.), (1998). *Placing friendship in context.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Allan, G. A. (1989). *Friendship: Developing a sociological perspective.* New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Allan, G. A. (1996). *Kin ship and Friendship in Modern Society.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Allan, G. A. (2008). Flexibility, friendship and family. *Personal Relationships, 15,* 1 – 16.

Antonucci, T. C. & Akiyama, H. (1995). Convoys of social relationships: Family and friendships within a life span context. In R.Blieszner & V. H. Bedford (Eds.), *Handbook of Aging and the Family* (pp. 355-371). New York: Greenwood.

Argyle, M., & Henderson, M. (1984). The rules of friendship. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 1*, 211 – 237.

Bauman, Z. (2003). *Liquid love: On the frailty of human bonds.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Beck, U., & Beck-Gernsheim, E. (2002) *Individualization.* London: Sage.

Bellah, R. N., Madsen, R., Sullivan, W. M., Swidler, A., & Tipton, S. T. (1985). *Habits of the heart: Individualism and commitment.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bengston, V. L., Biblarz, T. J., & Roberts, R. E. (2002). *How families still matter: A longitudinal study of youth in two generations.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bidart, C. (1997). *L'Amitié: Un lien social.* Paris: Editions La Découverte.

Bowen, M. (1978) *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice.* Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson.

Brain, R. (1976). *Friends and lovers.* London: Hart-Davis, MacGibbon.

Brynin, M., and Ermisch, J. (2009). Introduction: The Social Significance of Relationships. In M. Brynin and J. Ermisch (Eds) *Changing Relationships* (pp. 3 – 28). New York: Routledge.

Burgoyne, J., & Clark, D. (1984). *Making a go of it: A study of stepfamilies in Sheffield.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Carsten, J. (Ed.) (2000). *Cultures of relatedness: New approaches to the study of kinship.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Coontz, S. (2000). Historical perspectives on family studies. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 62*, 253 – 297.

Cornwall, J. (1984). *Hard-earned lives.* Accounts of health and illness from East London. London: Tavistock.

Coyne, J. C., Wortman, C. B., & Lehman, D. L. (1988). The other side of support: Emotional over involvement and miscarried helping. In B. Gottlieb (Ed.), *Social support* (pp. 305 – 330), Berkeley: Sage.

Crow, G. (2002). *Social solidarities: Theories, identities and social change*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Duncan, S., & Phillips, M. (2008). New families? Tradition and change in partnering and relationships. In A. Park, J. Curtice, K. Thomson, M. Phillips, M. Johnson & E. Clery (Eds.), *British Social Attitudes*, 24th Report (pp. 59 – 88). London: Sage.

Durkheim, E. (1902, tr. 1933). *The division of labour in society.* New York: Macmillan.

Ermisch, J., and Siedler, T. (2009). Living Apart Together. In M. Brynin and J. Ermisch (Eds) *Changing Relationships* (pp. 29 – 43). New York: Routledge.

Finch, J. (2007). Displaying families. *Sociology, 41*, 65 – 81.

Finch, J., & Mason, J. (1993). *Negotiating family responsibilities.* London: Routledge.

Fischer, C. S. (1982). What do we mean by "friend"? An inductive study. *Social Networks, 3*, 287 – 306.

Fischer, C. S. (2009). The 2004 GSS finding of shrunken social networks: An artifact? *American Sociological Review*. 7: 657-669

Gillis, J. R. (1997). *A world of their own making. A history of myth and ritual in family life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Haskey, J. (2005). Living arrangements in contemporary Britain: Having a partner who usually lives elsewhere and living apart together (LAT). *Population Trends, 122*, 35 – 45.

Harrison, K. (1998) Rich friendships, affluent friends: Middle-class practices of friendship, in R. G. Adams & G. Allan (Eds.) *Placing Friendship in Context* (pp. 92 – 116). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jerome, D., & Wenger, G. C. (1999). Stability and change in late-life friendships. *Ageing and Society, 19*, 661 – 676.

Komter, A., & Vollerbergh, W. (1997). Gift giving and the emotional significance of family and friends. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 59,* 747 – 757.

Lempert, L. B., & DeVault, M. L. (2000). Guest Editor's Introduction. *Gender and Society, 14*, Special issue: Emergent and Reconfigured Forms of Family Life, 6 – 10.

Lukes, S. (1973) *Emile Durkheim: His life and work*. London: Allan Lane, The Penguin Press.

MacRae, H. (1992). Fictive kin as a component of the social networks of older people. *Research on Aging, 14*, 226 – 247.

Macfarlane, A. (1970). *The family life of Ralph Josselyn*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Macfarlane, A. (1978). *Origins of English individualism*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Mathews, S. (1983). Definitions of friendship and their consequences in old age. *Ageing and Society, 3*, 141 – 155.

Mathews, S. (1986). *Friendships through the life course*. Beverly Hills: Sage.

McPherson, M., Smith-Lovin, L. & Brashears, M. E. (2006). Social isolation in America: Changes in core discussion networks over two decades. *American Sociological Review, 71,* 353 – 375.

Morgan, D. H. J. (1996). *Family connections*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Milardo, R. M., & Allan, G. (2000). Social networks and marital relationships. In R. M. Milardo and S. Duck (Eds.) *Families as relationships* (pp. 117 – 133). Chichester: John Wiley.

Muraco, A. (2006). Intentional families: Fictive kin ties between cross-gender, different sexual orientation friends. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 68,* 1313 – 1325.

Nelson, M. (2006). Single mothers "do" family. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 68*, 781 – 795.

Obama, B. (2008) *Dreams from my father*. (Paperback edition). Edinburgh: Canongate Books.

Oliker, S. (1989). *Best friends and marriage.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Pahl, R.E., & Pevalin, D.J. (2005). Between family and friends: A longitudinal study of friendship choice. *British Journal of Sociology, 56*, 433 – 450.

Pahl, R., & Spencer, L. (2004). Personal communities: Not simply families of fate or choice. *Current Sociology*, *52*, 199 – 221.

Parsons, T. (1954). The Kinship System of the United States (1943). Republished in *Essay in Sociological Theory* (Revised edition). London: Collier-Macmillan, The Free Press of Glencoe.

Parsons, T., & Shils, E.A. (Eds.) (1951). *Towards a general theory of action.* Part 4 by T. Parson 'The Social System'. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Popenoe, D. (1993) American family decline, 1960-1990. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 55*, 527 – 542.

Proulx, C., Helms, H.M., & Payne, C.C. (2004). Wives domain-specific marriage work with friends and spouses: Links to marital quality. *Family Relations, 53*, 393 – 404.

Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Rook, K. S. (1984). The negative side of social interaction: Impact on psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 46,* 1097 – 1108.

Rossi, A. S., and Rossi, P. H. (1990). *On Human Bonding: parent-child relations across the life course.*

Rubin, L. B. (1985). *Just friends: The role of friendship in our lives*. New York: Harper and Row.

Sarkisian, N. (2006). Doing family ambivalence: Nuclear and extended families in single mothers' lives. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 68*, 804 – 811.

Scanzoni, J., & Marsiglio, W. (1991). Wider families as primary relationships. *Marriage and Family Review, 17*, 117 – 133.

Silver, A. (1990). Friendship in commercial society. *American Journal of Sociology*, *95*, 1474 – 1504.

Smart, C. (2007). *Personal life: New directions in sociological thinking*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Smith, D. E. (1993). The standard North American family: SNAF as an ideological code. *Journal of Family Issues, 14*, 50 – 65.

Spencer, L., & Pahl, R. (2006). *Rethinking friendship: Hidden solidarities today*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Stacey, J. (1993). Good riddance to "the family": A response to David Popenoe. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 55,* 545 – 547.

Stacey, J. (1990). *Brave new families, stories of domestic upheaval in late 20th century America*. New York: Basic Books.

Stone, L. (1977). *The family, sex and marriage in England, 1500 – 1800*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson.

Stone, L. (1990). *Road to divorce: England 1530 – 1987*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Strathern, M. (1988). *The gender of the gift: Problems with women and problems with society in Melanesia*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Tadmor, N. (2001). *Family and friends in eighteenth century England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Thomas, K. (2008) *The ends of life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Weeks, J., Heaphy, B., & Donovan, C. (2001). *Same sex intimacies and other experiments*. London and New York: Routledge.

Wellman, B. (1982). Studying personal communities. In P. Marsden & N. Lin (Eds.) *Social Structure and Network Analysis* (pp. 61 – 80). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Wellman, B. (1991). The place of kinfolk in community networks, *Marriage and Family Review, 15*, 195 – 228.

Wellman, B., Carrington, P., & Hall, A. (1988). Networks as personal communities. In B. Wellman & S. D. Berowitz (Eds.), *Social Structures: A Network Approach.* (pp. 130 – 184). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wenger, G. C. (1996). Social network research in gerontology: How did we get here and where do we go next? In V. Minichiello, N. Chappell, H. Kendig and A. Walker (Eds.), *Sociology of Aging: International Perspectives,* (pp. 60 – 81). Melbourne, Australia: International Sociological Association Research Committee on Aging.

Williams, F. (2004). *Rethinking families*. London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.