

PATTERNS OF FAMILIAL SUPPORT: OLDER MOTHERS'  
PERCEPTIONS OF THE RELATIONSHIP QUALITY  
WITH THEIR DAUGHTERS AND SONS

by

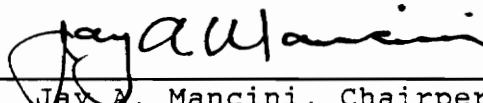
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(ABSTRACT)

The intent of this study was to examine how perceived aid exchange patterns between mothers and adult children influence the mothers' perception of the quality of their relationship. We also examined how mothers' characteristics (health, age, and marital status), childrens' characteristics (marital status and gender), and propinquity were associated with mothers' perceptions of giving and receiving of aid. The types of aid explored were Financial Help, Gifts Besides Money, Help With the House, Help During Sickness, Advice on Life's Problems, Advice on Decisions, Affection, and Overall Exchange of Aid. Aid patterns were classified as Mother Gave More, Child Gave More, About Equal Exchange, or No Exchange. Data were collected from interviews with 330 mothers, 65 years or older, using a six-stage sample selection process.

Perceived relationship quality was significantly different for the four different aid pattern groups in

regard to Financial Help, Gifts Besides Money, Advice on Life's Problems, and Overall Aid. Highest perceived relationship quality was found in those groups in which Child Gave More or in which there was About Equal Exchange. Lowest perceived relationship quality was found for the group Mother Gave More of these four types of aid. Mother's characteristics, child's characteristics, (except gender), and propinquity were not related to relationship quality. Differences in aid patterns were found between mother's health and Gifts Besides Money, Help When Sick, Affection, and Overall Aid; between mother's age and Advice on Life's Problems, Help When Sick, Help With House; between mother's marital status and Advice on Decisions, Help With House; between childrens' marital status and Financial Help, Gifts Besides Money, Help With House; between childrens' gender with Help With House; and between propinquity and Financial Help, Help When Sick, Help With House, Advice on Decisions.

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Patterns of Familial Support and Older Mothers'  
Perceptions of the Relationship Quality  
With Their Daughters and Sons

Elderly people were once believed, by the research community, to be isolated and alienated from their parents, children, siblings, and other relatives. This view was initially challenged during the 1950s by Sussman and others. Sussman (1959) wrote, "Families are an interdependent kinship system tied together by networks of activity and mutual assistance" (p. 6). Since then, it has repeatedly been found that an overwhelming majority of people over the age of 65 live near at least one child and regularly interact with their grown children (Troll, 1971). For example, Troll and Smith (1976) found that nuclear families tend to be bound together in networks that interact and communicate frequently, exchange instrumental and affective aid, and are located close by.

Most gerontologists since the 1960s have concluded that the nuclear family is not isolated from other kin (Adams, 1968; Hill, Foote, Aldous, Carlson, & MacDonald, 1970; Litwak, 1960; Shanas, 1979, 1980; Shanas, Townsend, Wedderburn, Friis, Milhhoj, & Stehouwer, 1968; Sussman & Burchinal, 1962; Troll, 1971). In fact, family theorists speak of the family structure as one that is modified-extended, as defined by Sussman and Burchinal (1962) as one



that is bound together by choice and through affection and patterns of mutual aid.

There is substantial interaction among adult children and their aging parents (Troll, 1971). Not only are parents and their children frequently in contact, they also provide a considerable amount of practical support for each other (Mancini & Blieszner, 1989). An important dimension of this relationship is the giving and receiving of aid (Bengtson, Olander, & Haddad, 1976): children provide support to their aging parents and aging parents continue to provide support to their adult children (Mancini & Blieszner, 1989; Morgan, 1982; Troll, Miller, & Atchley, 1979). The flow of support between adult children and their elderly parents is bidirectional and recursive as need, opportunity, and ability dictate.

#### Mothers and Children.

In particular, the mother-daughter relationship is the most enduring and active of intergenerational bonds (Adams, 1958, Hill 1970; Leigh, 1982; Neugarten, 1968). Mothers have the longest lasting bond with their children due to the traditional intensity of the mother-child relationship as well as women's longevity. Additionally, women are recognized to have the pivotal position as the "keeper" of family ties. Bromberg (1983) wrote that "given the matriarchal emphasis in our society and given women's longer

life span, the mother-daughter component constitutes the major relationship component in older women's lives" (p. 76). Because of the special relationship between mothers and their children, many researchers have focused on mothers and their children, particularly daughters, when assessing intergenerational relations (Beckman, 1981; Bromberg, 1983; Cicirelli, 1983; Houser & Berkman, 1984; Walker & Thompson, 1983, 1984). It is this focus that is chosen for this study.

Although researchers have explored how the pattern of exchanging aid between generations affects the well-being, morale, and/or life satisfaction of the elderly, (Beckman, 1981; Lee & Ellithorpe, 1982; Mutran & Reitzes, 1984; Stoller, 1985), few have studied how these patterns of exchange affect the quality of the parent-child relationship. The purpose of this paper is to explore the factors that are associated with patterns of exchanging aid and how those factors individually, or in combination, affect the quality of the mother-child relationship. The approach to examine how the factors may influence patterns of exchanging aid focused on measures of the mothers' health, age, and marital status; the child's marital status and sex, and propinquity between the mother and her child.

#### Continuing Exchanges.

It was commonly believed that as people aged, their

needs increased, making them more dependent upon others, especially their children. Aldous and Hill (1965) found that the balance of mutual aid between generations shifts as parents become older and more dependent with more aid flowing from children to their parents. This has not been clearly supported, however. In fact, the proportion of older persons who give help to their children often exceeds the proportion who receive help, particularly in the middle socio-economic status levels (Riley & Foner, 1968; Streib, 1965). Harris (1978) pointed out that, although the elderly are a diverse group, cross-sectional data suggest that most elderly parents receive services from their children, but that they also return assistance to the families of their children. Atchley and Miller (1980) found that neither parent or child is either a giver or a receiver of aid in that both give and receive aid. Mancini and Blieszner (1989) also found that several different patterns of aid can be identified. Aid may flow from the old to the young, from the middle generation to their parents and to their children, with reciprocity between all three generations. One hypothesis of the present study was that there will be a high amount of perceived reciprocity by mothers in perceived aid exchange.

#### Effects of Aid Patterns

A lack of reciprocity in the exchange of aid between

mothers and children can negatively influence affection (Adams, 1968; Cicirelli, 1983; Jarrett, 1985), contact (Hill, 1970), attachment (Thompson & Walker, 1984), life satisfaction (Beckman, 1981), and morale (Mutran & Reitzes, 1984; Stoller, 1985). Stoller (1985) found that the inability to reciprocate, rather than the need for assistance, had a greater negative effect on the morale of the aged. She further found that the provision of assistance to children by mothers exerted a stronger, more positive effect on the elderly's emotional well-being; the reception of help by mothers may be associated with depression-related symptoms in mothers.

An imbalance between giving and receiving aid can be difficult for those involved, especially if the older adult is the recipient of more aid. According to Exchange Theory (Homans, 1961), when this kind of unbalanced exchange pattern exists, the partner who gives more aid will attempt to rebalance the relationship. The person who believes that the costs outweigh their rewards in the relationship, will perceive that relationship in a negative manner. A dependent, elderly parent however, with poor health and low resources may find it extremely difficult to rebalance a perceived unequal distribution of aid. Withholding services to a needy parent by a child who is giving more aid would be equally difficult. This perceived inequity may alter

the existing family relationship. For example, unbalanced exchanges between with children and parents may undermine definitions of family roles. Mutran and Reitzes (1984) explain that benefits accruing to the older parent that exceed their costs may be interpreted as leading to a state of dependency which counters the expectations of both the parent and child. Similarly, Beckman (1981) found that if children provide more to a relationship than their mothers, mothers may experience distress and dissatisfaction with the relationship. This finding supports that which would be predicted by Equity Theory (Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978). According to this theory, the over-benefitted may be distressed and feel guilty while the under-benefitted may feel anger and resentment. Adams (1968) further found that perceptions of reciprocity is a key factor in maintaining satisfactory relations between middle-class adults and widowed mothers.

Simply receiving aid by children may lead to problems for the elderly while giving aid to their children may lead to increased positive feelings in the elderly. Stoller (1985) found that the elderly receiving help may be associated with depress-related symptoms in the elderly, while providing assistance to children exerts a stronger, more positive effect on emotional well-being in the elderly. Bengtson (1976) suggested that aid given, rather than aid

received by the elderly, contributes to affection. In fact, aid given, reciprocated or not, is related to high family interaction, while aid received is related to less frequent contact. Leigh (1982) found that aid given by the elderly is predictive of contact with children but aid received is not predictive.

According to Equity Theory, an imbalance in the exchange of aid between mothers and children, would negatively affect the quality of their relationship. The under-benefitted person would have negative feelings toward the over-benefitted and the over-benefitted would have negative feelings toward the under-benefitted. According to Exchange Theory, an imbalance in the exchange of aid would negatively affect the quality of the parent-child relationship as well because the under-benefitted would have negative feelings toward the over-benefitted. A second hypothesis of this study was that mothers who report the most reciprocity in their exchanges with their children also will report the highest relationship quality. Hypothesis 3 was that mothers who give more aid to their children will report higher quality relationships with their children.

Mothers' Characteristics and  
Perceived Relationship Quality

Health

Although Seelbach and Hanson (1980) found that health

was not associated with the elderly feeling better or worse about their families, many researchers have found that parents rate their relationships with their children higher when parents are in better health (Troll, Miller, & Atchley, 1979; Johnson, 1978; Johnson & Bursk 1977). Baruch and Barnett (1983) also found that a mother's poor health was associated with lower rapport between mothers and children. Hypothesis 4 was that those mothers in better health will have higher perceived relationship quality than those in poorer health. (Hypothesis 4).

#### Age

Barnett (1988) found that the morale of the younger-elderly (between sixty and seventy-three) but not the older elderly (between seventy four and ninety five) was significantly correlated with relationship satisfaction. The relationships she studied were not limited to children. She also found that as children aged, the relationship between mothers and children became more positive. "By the age of thirty-five, however, the problems of the past had by and large been resolved and the relationship was a powerful source of good feelings" (p. 42). Cohler (1988) supported this view when he wrote that the relationship between younger adult women and their mothers may be characterized by greater conflict than is the case after the daughters have reached midlife. This could be due to an earlier

period in their lives when mothers "attempting to meet the demands of their adult daughters, who feel overwhelmed with housework and child care, grandmothers often feel resentful at the demands placed upon them" (Cohler, 1988, p. 67). If this is the case, conflict may develop in both the mother and child and affect the quality of their relationship. Seelbach and Hanson (1980) found in their study that significantly more older-elderly, compared to the younger-elderly, endorsed the statement that, "I get as much love and affection from my family now as I ever did before" (p. 92). Hypothesis 5 was that the relationship quality would be higher among older mothers compared to younger mothers.

#### Marital Status

When the mother is married, she turns primarily to her husband to meet her needs (Johnson & Catalano, 1981); when a spouse is not present, however, other family members provide more help (Pihlblad, Hessler, & Freshley, 1975; Shanas, 1974; Sussman, 1976), particularly adult daughters. Anderson (1984) found that compared with the married, a greater percentage of the widowed relied on children in every situation. This increased neediness of the mother could make the child feel more useful and needed and therefore, contribute to higher relationship quality. In support of this, Adams (1968b) reported greater closeness between mother and daughter when the mother was widowed than



when she was still married. Hypothesis 6 was that unmarried mothers will report having higher relationship quality with their adult children than will married mothers.

#### Child's Characteristics and Relationship Quality

##### Gender

Do sons or daughters tend to have a better quality relationship with their elderly mothers? Troll, Miller, and Atchley (1979) found that "when the mother is a widow, the mother-daughter relationship is smoother and closer than the mother-son relationship because mothers and daughters can reciprocate services, but mothers and sons cannot" (p. 97). Baruch and Barnett (1983) found that the majority of the relationships between women and their mothers were characterized by warmth, companionship, and compassion. Traupman (1981; in Barnett, 1988) found that, "mothers were very resentful when disappointed by their daughters, yet were not resentful at all when disappointed by their sons" (p. 48). Hypothesis 7 was that daughters will have a closer relationship with their mothers than sons will.

##### Propinquity and Relationship Quality

Although Troll (1971) wrote that propinquity can affect the quality, as well as the quantity of interactions, how propinquity affects mothers' perceptions of the relationship quality with their children is still unclear. Some suggest that physical distance between mothers and children alter

their affective relationship. For example, Adams (1968) found that living at a close range may render children more obligated to visit their parents; living at a distance may render children to be more unable to visit their parents. Conversely, Walker and Thompson (1983) found that aid that required physical contact was a significant predictor of intimacy for both mothers and daughters. Furthermore, it may be "harder to realistically ascertain the need of parents or children at a distance and particularly difficult to be aware of the little things that each might do to make life more pleasant for the other" (Moss, et al., 1985, p. 138).

In apparent contrast, Cicirelli (1981) suggested that conflict is no more likely to occur between those families living close by than those living far away. Others have also found that the quality of the relationship between parents and their children is not related to the amount of physical contact between them. Instead, the quality of the relationship between parents and children is related to their socio-emotional distance (Moss, et al., 1985). Merely living far away from each other does not necessitate an emotional distance in the mother-child relationship. Johnson and Bursk (1977) found that health, financial status, and the elderly's attitude toward aging, rather than physical proximity between parents and children, were

related to parents' positive attitudes toward their children. Lopata (1979) also suggested that family members can feel close to one another without frequent contact. Moss et al. (1985) also cautioned that the number of miles between parent and child may be less important for those families with economic resources. Economic resources may allow families to bridge the physical distance with more frequent visits and telephone contacts. Litwak, Kulis, and Worth (1982) affirmed this by suggesting that the proximity and frequency of contact needs to be understood in terms of various technologies of communication that are available. Hypothesis 8 was that propinquity will not be related to perceived relationship quality.

#### Factors Affecting Aid Exchange

##### Mothers' Characteristics

Health. The health of older persons is one of the major factors affecting the pattern of giving and receiving aid (Atchley & Miller, 1980; Mutran & Reitzes, 1984; Seelbach, 1978; Shanas, et al., 1968), and, in particular, the health of the mother is the strongest variable when predicting the amount of aid she receives. Good health enables one to fully participate in activities and adult roles. Poor health restricts the mobility of the elderly and limits their opportunities for giving aid to their adult children (Mutran & Reitzes, 1984). Stoller (1985) wrote

that the physical capacity of older persons is a key factor that affects the pattern of exchanges between older persons and their children. Those elders whose activity is the most limited were less likely to provide help and the most likely to receive it. As such, mothers in poor health appear to give less aid to their children and require more aid from their children than those mothers in good health.

Hypothesis 9 was that mothers in better health will receive less aid than those in poorer health. Hypothesis 10 was that mothers in better health will give more aid to their children than those in poorer health. Age. Age may also influence the pattern of aid exchanged between mothers and their children. Advanced age may restrict mobility and limit the elderly's opportunities to give aid to their adult children (Mutran & Reitzes, 1984). While younger mothers provide more concrete aid, older mothers provide primarily affective support to older daughters (Bromberg, 1983). Due to their high level of activity, the younger elderly also may have difficulty providing particular types of aid to their adult children. If they are in good health, they may work or be involved in a variety of activities. They may not be able to provide the aid that their children expect of them, in particular, babysitting services. Hypothesis 11 was that younger elderly mothers would receive less assistance from their children than would older mothers.

Hypothesis 12 was that there is a curvilinear relationship between providing aid to children and the age of the mother, with the youngest and oldest mothers providing the least amount of aid.

Marital status. The older person's marital status also may have a profound influence on the range of their activities, the breadth of their social network, and on the needs that are met by adult children and other kin. A mother's marital status represents a set of potential obligations, and/or a source of support, may lessen the intensity of the mother's relationship with her child. Married parents over 65 years of age generally give more help than they receive (Mutran & Reitzes, 1984). In fact, these elderly couples turn primarily to each other to meet their needs (Johnson & Catalano, 1981). When a spouse is not present, other family members provide more help, particularly adult daughters (Pihlblad, et al., 1975; Shanas, 1974; Sussman, 1976). Seelbach (1978) found that widowed or unmarried elderly were more likely to receive higher levels of filial support than their married counterparts. In contrast, Longino and Lipman (1982) found that married women received more family support than widowed women. Hypothesis 13 was that unmarried older mothers will be recipients of more aid than married mothers. Hypothesis 14 was that married mothers will give more aid than

unmarried mothers.

### Child's Characteristics

Marital status. When children are married, they provide less help to their elderly parents than when they are unmarried (Myers, 1988; Stoller, 1983). This may be because of the increased number of roles that the children often perform. Employment by sons and daughters furthers the development of competition between responsibilities which reduce the amount of time allocated to parental caregiving. Except for marital status, their status in the labor-force has the greatest impact of all predictors for aid given by sons to parents (Stoller, 1983). Hypothesis 15 was that more aid will be given by unmarried children than by married children to their mothers.

Gender. Research has shown that gender is another factor that may affect the patterns of aid exchange between mothers and children. For example, one study of kin relations showed that men were more likely to provide instrumental help (money and services) to their parents (Adams, 1968). Coward (1987; in Lewis, 1990) found that the elderly reported having middle aged sons help them more than their daughters. The sons' help was primarily in the form of routine home repairs and maintenance. Sons were 10 times more likely to provide home repairs; daughters were 8 times more likely to perform household chores. Similarly,

Bromberg (1983) found that the type of aid exchanged is different for mothers and daughters. Mothers were the recipients of instrumental and affective aid, such as help in daily life chores, crisis intervention, and tension-reducing tasks. Aid flowing from mothers to daughters was heavily affective with concentration in tension reduction, gift-giving, and visiting. Mothers received more instrumental and affective aid than fathers and daughters were recipients of heavily affective aid (Bromberg, 1983). Adult daughters assist parents in their daily activities and provide support in times of illness (Cantor, 1976; Collins & Pancoast, 1977; Hess & Waring, 1978; Shanas, 1979; Stoller, 1983). Cicirelli (1983) also found that there is more helping behavior when the child was a daughter. Hypothesis 16 was that daughters will provide more aid to their mothers than sons will. Hypothesis 17 was that sons will give more instrumental aid (Financial Help, Help With House) and daughters will give more affective aid (Help When Sick, Affection) to their mothers.

#### Propinquity.

The distance between mothers and their children is one indicator of the potential for particular kinds of family interaction (Troll, 1971). Constraints imposed by physical distance may include less face-to-face interaction and less instrumental aid to the older adult. When mothers and

children live at a distance, a different type of aid pattern and type would be expected than if they lived close by. For example, Cicirelli (1983) showed that there is more helping behavior when the adult child lived closer to his/her parents. If mothers are physically close to their children, they can contribute different kinds of aid than if there is a greater physical distance.

Walker and Thompson (1983) classified different types of aid into proximal and distal categories based upon the physical distance between mothers and their daughters. Distal aid, or aid that can be provided at a distance, includes such factors as money and gifts. Mothers living at a distance, however, are unable to provide such services as babysitting for their grandchildren on any regular basis. This type of aid requires physical proximity and includes such support as giving help during illness, advice, and shopping. Similarly, Moss, Moss, and Moles (1985) found that regular personal care and daily housework cannot be given when families live far away, but that affective ties are maintained despite the geographic distance.

Because this is an exploratory area, it is difficult to predict specific differences between those mothers and children living within the same city and those living farther away from each other. However, Hypothesis 18 was that there would be differences in the types of aid



exchanged between these two groups.

#### Summary

Studying elderly mothers and their adult children is of particular interest to the field of family studies because both members of this dyad experience different developmental needs. A primary need across the adult years involves autonomy and the ability to act on one's own behalf. The struggle between dependence and independence in old age is significant for successful aging. This is particularly true considering that the needs of older adults tend to increase with advancing age. Ironically, it is at the same time that their financial, personal, and interpersonal resources may be decreasing (Myers, 1988).

If parents receive more aid than they give to their children, an imbalance in aid exchange develops and may be associated with lower feelings of well-being. Mutran and Reitzes (1984) wrote that familial support may make the elderly more susceptible to conflicts in their values. If the elderly define the situation of receiving support from their adult children as a violation of the cultural norms of independence, greater dependence on their children leads to a devaluing of self and a lowering of morale (Hess & Waring, 1978; Kerckhoff, 1966).

Adult children also find themselves in a quandary. Middle age is not only a peak time for independence and

career mobility, it is a period for evaluation, and planning for the future. A predominant focus of people during this period of life is on their relationships with those who are younger, yet they also must look ahead and relate to older family members (Myers, 1988). The parent, having been viewed since childhood as a source of strength and support, may now be seen as vulnerable, potentially weak, and eventually mortal. The child is now not only in a position to assist her/his parents, but often finds that there is now a need for their help. Issues facing adult children that may affect how they give aid include coming to terms with the indignities of aging, dealing with dependency on children and others, and being unprepared for the burdens imposed by aging parents (Cohen, 1983).

Due to the somewhat opposing needs and stations in life of the mother and her adult child, it is interesting how these differences manifest themselves in the context of the elderly mother and her child's relationship. The objective of the present study is to examine whether, and how, aid patterns are associated with the quality of the relationship between a mother and her adult child. Is the mother's perception of the quality of the relationship with her children affected by whether she or her children give more of particular kinds of aid? How does the perceived degree of reciprocity in the amount of aid provided affect the

quality of the relationship? How does this perceived relationship quality and perceived aid patterns vary within the context of the mother's health, age, and marital status, the child's marital status and gender, and the physical distance, or propinquity, between the mother and her children?

## Method

### Subjects

Subjects were 330 older women who resided in the urbanized area of Roanoke, Virginia. Sample selection was conducted in six stages: (1) use of census tract data and block statistics, (2) application of a sampling multiplier, (3) derivation of cumulative sampling units, (4) formation of paper zones, (5) random selection of sampling units, and (6) use of a compact sampling procedure. In brief, census data were employed to segment Roanoke according to year-round dwellings. The aggregate number of such dwellings (42,672) was partitioned into groups of 30, and these were defined as the sampling units. These units (about 1422) were then grouped into 10 zones and within each zone six sampling units were randomly selected. All dwellings within these six selected units were canvassed and all residents who met the age and parent requirements were asked to participate in the interview. The response rate for the sample was 78%. Respondents were interviewed in their homes

or apartments by trained interviewers. Interviews lasted an average of one hour. Data collected were from responses by the mothers concerning themselves and the child they chose to discuss. Actual aid exchange behavior was not assessed by the interviewers.

The mean age of the sample was 74, with a range of 61 to 97 years old. Forty-five percent were under 70 years of age and 17% were at least 80 years of age. Thirty-nine percent were married at the time of the interview and 52% were widowed. Eighty-four percent were white. Average years of formal education was 9 with 24% reporting more than 12 years of schooling. The average number of living children was just under three; 29% had just one child. The age of the adult child ranged from 20 to 74 with the average age being 45. Almost 60% were daughters, almost 70% of the children were currently married.

#### Measurement

Dependent variable: Perceived Relationship quality.

Relationship quality with an adult child was assessed by a 10-item scale (Lee, 1982; Walker, 1979). Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which the statements described the relationship they had with their adult child (responses ranged from "never true" to "always true" on a 4-point scale.) Representative statements were: "We comfort each other," "We trust each other," "We understand each

other," and "We feel that nothing can come between us." Although scores were generally high, indicating that there was a high level of relationship quality perceived by the mothers, scores ranged from 19 to 40. Three groups emerged, for non-parametric statistic analyses, from the data: lower relationship quality (scores ranged from 19 to 35, n = 37), medium relationship quality (scores ranged from 36 to 39, n = 95), and higher relationship quality (scores equal 40, n = 192).

#### Independent variables

Exchange equity. Equity of exchange was measured by eight items drawn from scales used in earlier research (Bild & Havighurst, 1976; Lee & Ellithorpe, 1982). Respondents were questioned about exchanges of eight different types of aid: Financial Help, Gifts Besides Money, Help With the House, Help When Sick, Advice on Life's Problems, Advice on Decisions, Affection, and an question assessing mother-child Overall Aid Exchange. Responses were categorized as Mother Gave More, Child Gave More, About Equal, or Does Not Apply (interpreted as No Exchange) for the eight types of aid.

#### Mother's Characteristics.

Health and Mobility. The following items were used to examine health: (1) Would you say that your health, in general, is excellent, good, fair, or poor? (2) Compared to five years ago, would you say that your health today is

worse, about the same, or better? (3) Do your health troubles stand in the way of your doing the things you want to do not-at-all, some, or a great deal? (4) Would you say that you are sick very often, somewhat often, or rarely? (5) Because of your health-related problems do you depend on others rarely, somewhat often, or very often? (6) Do your health troubles prevent you from going to the places you want to go not at all, some, or a great deal? These items were adapted from Mancini and Quinn (1981) and were summed into an index of health and mobility. The responses were then divided into lower health (scores could range from 0 to 12, n = 89) and better health (scores were 13 and above, n = 234) for purposes of non-parametric analyses.

Age. Respondents were asked to report their age as of the interview date. Respondents were then categorized as young-old (61-70 years, n = 146), old (71-80, n = 133), and old-old (81-97, n = 50).

Marital status. Respondents were asked to report their marital status. Responses were classified according to: married (n = 126) or not married (n = 200).

#### Child's Characteristics

Marital Status. Respondents were asked to report on their child's current marital status. Responses were classified as either married (n = 227) or not married (n = 99).

Gender. Respondents were asked to report on the gender of adult child named by the respondent (males = 131, females = 127).

#### Relationship Factor

Propinquity. The identified child's (or only child's) residential proximity to the older parent was measured by a scale originally used by Cicirelli (1981). The categories of proximity were divided as either living in the same city (n = 206) or does not live in the same city (n = 120).

#### Results

Eighteen hypotheses were tested. Results are summarized in Table 12 (p. 50).

#### Reciprocity

The purpose of the first set of analyses was to examine the hypothesis that there is a high degree of reciprocity between mothers and their adult children in the eight different types of aid measured in this study. A Chi Square analysis was performed for each of the eight types of aid by examining the number of subjects who were classified as either (1) Mother Gave More (2) Child Gave More (3) About Equal exchange and (4) No Exchange. The distribution of the number of subjects in each classification for each aid pattern and the results of the Chi Square analyses are shown in Table 1 (p. 25). As seen in Table 1, the distribution of the number of subjects in each of the four classifications

Table 1. Distribution of Subjects and Chi-squares for  
Each Aid Exchange Pattern and Aid Type.

<u>Types of Aid</u>	<u>Aid Exchange Patterns</u>			
	Mother >	Child >	Equal	No Exchange
<u>Financial Help*</u>				
$X^2(3) = 161.21$	58 (18%)	38 (12%)	50 (15%)	180 (55%)
<u>Gifts*</u>				
$X^2(3) = 221.47$	30 ( 9%)	93 (29%)	186 (57%)	16 ( 5%)
<u>Help When Sick*</u>				
$X^2(3) = 56.3$	31 (10%)	126 (39%)	88 (27%)	80 (25%)
<u>Help With House*</u>				
$X^2(3) = 50.44$	49 (15%)	108 (33%)	49 (15%)	117 (36%)
<u>Advice on Problems*</u>				
$X^2(3) = 63.32$	69 (21%)	49 (15%)	142 (44%)	65 (20%)
<u>Advice on Decisions*</u>				
$X^2(3) = 44.39$	54 (17%)	67 (21%)	132 (41%)	72 (22%)
<u>Affection*</u>				
$X^2(3) = 790.77$	10 ( 3%)	14 ( 4%)	300 (93%)	0
<u>Overall*</u>				
$X^2(3) = 458.59$	34 (11%)	36 (11%)	244 (76%)	5 ( 2%)
p < .001*				



of aid exchange departed from that expected by chance (all  $p$ 's  $<.001$ ). The pattern of these results generally support Hypothesis 1. Reciprocity between mothers and their children was the most prevalent pattern of aid exchange for Gifts Besides Money, Advice on Decisions, Advice on Problems, Affection, and Overall Aid. No Exchange was the most prevalent pattern for Financial Help. The category of Child Give More Aid was the most prevalent pattern for the variable Help with the House and Help When Sick.

#### Aid Patterns and Relationship Quality

The next analysis compared the mothers' perceived relationship quality as a function of the classification of exchange of aid. One-way Analyses of Variance with 3 levels (Mother Gave More, Child Gave More, About Equal Exchange) were conducted for each of the eight types of aid. Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations, and results of the eight analyses of variance (p. 27). Newman-Keuls post-hoc comparisons were conducted to explore differences between cell means. In partial support of Hypothesis 2 and contrary to Hypothesis 3, results showed that the mothers' perceived relationship quality with their children was reliably lower when she perceived that she gave more Financial Help, Gifts Besides Money, Advice on Life's Problems, and Overall Aid than when she perceived that there was About Equal exchange or the Child Gave More. No

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations of Mothers' Perceived Relationship Quality for Different Patterns of Aid and Results of ANOVAS.

<u>PERCEIVED RELATIONSHIP QUALITY</u>				
	<u>Mother &gt;</u>	<u>Child &gt;</u>	<u>Equal</u>	<u>F(df)</u>
<u>Types of Aid</u>				
<u>Financial</u>				
X <sup>2</sup>	37.30	39.13	39.60	9.85 (2,141)**
SD	4.03	2.03	1.04	
<u>Gifts</u>				
X <sup>2</sup>	37.00	38.96	38.54	4.80 (2,303)*
SD	4.87	2.20	2.86	
<u>Help With House</u>				
X <sup>2</sup>	38.82	39.12	38.37	2.33 (2,203)
SD	2.21	1.72	2.46	
<u>Help When Sick</u>				
X <sup>2</sup>	38.67	38.79	38.86	.06 (2,239)
SD	2.15	2.85	2.56	

PERCEIVED RELATIONSHIP QUALITY

	<u>Mother &gt;</u>	<u>Child &gt;</u>	<u>Equal</u>	<u>F(df)</u>
<u>Types of Aid</u>				
<u>Advice-Problems</u>				
X <sup>2</sup>	37.83	38.69	39.01	4.64 (2,253)*
SD	3.36	2.76	2.10	
<u>Advice-Decisions</u>				
X <sup>2</sup>	38.62	38.62	39.16	1.99 (2,246)
SD	3.02	2.23	1.63	
<u>Affection</u>				
X <sup>2</sup>	37.50	37.21	38.52	1.75 (2,321)
SD	4.33	2.94	2.97	
<u>Overall Aid</u>				
X <sup>2</sup>	36.24	38.28	38.89	14.88 (2,311)**
SD	5.06	2.43	2.19	

p ≤ .01\*

p ≤ .001\*\*

significant differences were found in relationship quality between the categories of About Equal exchange and Child Gave More Aid for any of these four types of aid. No significant differences were found between the three classifications of Aid Exchange and relationship quality for Advice on Life's Problems, Help When Sick, Help With House, and Affection.

Chi Square analyses were then conducted to examine the number of subjects who were classified as having Low (scores = 19 through 35), Medium (scores 36 through 39) and High (score = 40) relationship quality as a function of the mothers' characteristics, the child's gender, and propinquity (Hypotheses 4 through 8). Tables 3, 4, and 5 show the distribution of subjects for each of these analyses, respectively (p. 31 and 32).

#### Mothers' Characteristics and Relationship Quality

##### Health.

No significant differences were found in the number of subjects in the three health levels as a function of the three categories of relationship quality, not supporting hypothesis 4.

##### Age.

No significant differences were found in the number of subjects in the three age category levels as a function of the three categories of relationship quality. Hypothesis 5

was not supported.

#### Marital Status.

No significant differences were found in the two marital status category levels as a function of the three categories of relationship quality. Hypothesis 6 was not supported.

#### Child's Characteristics and Relationship Quality

##### Gender.

Daughters had a significantly higher quality of relationship with their mothers than did sons. Sixty-five percent of daughters reported high relationship quality compared to 50% of sons. Hypothesis 7 was supported.

#### Propinquity and Relationship Quality

No significant differences were found in the number of subjects in the two propinquity levels as a function of the three categories of relationship quality. Hypothesis 8 was supported.

#### Mother's Characteristics and Aid Patterns

A Chi Square analysis was performed for each of the eight types of aid by examining the number of subjects who were classified in the two health levels, in the three age levels, and in the two marital status levels. The distribution of the number of subjects in each classification for each aid pattern and the results of the Chi Squares are shown in Tables 6, 7, and 8, respectively

Table 3. Distribution of the Number of Subjects for Three Categories of Relationship Quality and Mothers' Characteristics.

<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>Relationship Quality</u>		
	Low	Medium	High
Health [ $X^2(2) = .88$ ]			
Low Score	8	25	56
High Score	28	70	135
Age [ $X^2(4) = 3.75$ ]			
Young-old	12	44	89
Old	20	35	76
Oldest	5	16	28
Marital Status [ $X^2(2) = 4.89$ ]			
Married	9	43	76
Unmarried	28	52	117

Table 4. Distribution of the Number of Subjects for Three Categories of Relationship Quality and Childs' Gender.

<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>Relationship Quality</u>		
	Low	Medium	High
Gender [ $\chi^2(2) = 7.45$ ]*			
Sons	19 (15%)	46 (35%)	66 (50%)
Daughters	18 ( 9%)	49 (25%)	127 (65%)

p < .05\*

Table 5. Distribution of the Number of Subjects for Three Categories of Relationship Quality and Propinquity

	<u>Relationship Quality</u>		
	Low	Medium	High
Propinquity [ $\chi^2(2) = 1.52$ ]			
Within City	22	56	127
Outside City	15	39	66

(p. 34, 37, and 39).

Health.

Significant differences were found in the number of subjects in the two health levels as a function of Gifts Besides Money, Help When Sick, and Overall Aid. No significant differences were found as a function of Financial Help, Help With House, Advice on Problems, Advice on Decisions, and Affection.

More mothers in poorer health received more Help When Sick (62% of the lower health group versus 29% of the better health group) and Overall Aid (18% versus 9%, respectively) from their children than they gave. There were also substantially more About Equal exchanges of gifts between mothers in better health and their children (46% versus 62%). There were fewer exchanges of Help When Sick when the mothers were healthier (15% versus 29%). This result supported hypothesis 9. It generally supported hypothesis 10 in that mothers in better health gave significantly more Overall Aid (2% versus 14%) and Help When Sick (1% versus 13%).

Age.

Significant differences were found in the number of subjects in the three age category levels as a function of Help With House, Help When Sick, Advice on Life's Problems. No significant differences were found as a function of



Table 6. Distribution of the Number of Subjects for Eight Types of Aid and Mothers' Health

<u>Aid Type</u>	<u>Aid Exchange Patterns</u>			
	<u>Mother &gt;</u>	<u>Child &gt;</u>	<u>Equal</u>	<u>No Exchange</u>
<u>Financial</u> [ $X^2(3) = 2.19, G = -.11$ ]				
Low Score	11	11	14	52
High Score	46	26	36	128
<u>Gifts Besides Money</u> [ $X^2(3) = 10.69, G = .11$ ]*				
Low Score	6 ( 7%)	35 (39%)	41 (46%)	7 ( 8%)
High Score	23 (10%)	57 (24%)	145 (62%)	9 ( 4%)
<u>Help With House</u> [ $X^2(3) = 6.71, G = .16$ ]				
Low Score	12	39	12	25
High Score	36	69	38	92
<u>Help When Sick</u> [ $X^2(4) = 33.13, G = .22$ ]**				
Low Score	1 ( 1%)	54 (62%)	19 (22%)	13 (15%)
High Score	30 (13%)	69 (29%)	69 (29%)	67 (29%)
<u>Advice on Problems</u> [ $X^2(4) = 4.20, G = .08$ ]				
Low Score	18	18	35	17
High Score	50	29	107	48

Aid Exchange Patterns

Aid Type                      Mother >    Child >            Equal    No Exchange

Advice-Decisions    [ $X^2(3) = 7.37, G = .10$ ]

    Low Score                      11                      26                      36                      15

    High Score                      41                      40                      96                      57

Affection    [ $X^2(3) = 7.42, G = .08$ ]

    Low Score                      1                      7                      81                      1

    High Score                      8                      7                      220                      0

Overall    [ $X^2(4) = 15.32, G = -.21$ ]\*

    Low Score                      2 ( 2%)    15 (18%)            68 (76%)    3 ( 3%)

    High Score                      32 (14%)    21 ( 9%)            177 (76%)    3 ( 1%)

$p < .01^*$

$p < .001^{**}$

Financial Help, Gifts Besides Money, Advice on Decisions, Affection, and Overall Aid. The young-old and old mothers had very similar distributions for Advice on Problems but the oldest mothers had fewer About Equal Exchanges (34% of the oldest versus 45% of the young-old and old), and Mother Gave More (4% versus 22% and 26%). Children gave more (32% versus 15% and 10%, respectively). There were more About Equal Exchanges in Help With the House when the mothers were younger (21% versus 14% for old and 4% of the oldest) but there were more children who Helped With the House when their mothers were older (42% of the oldest compared to 26% of the young-old). These findings support Advice than they received for the oldest group of mothers Hypothesis 11. A greater proportion of younger mothers gave more help to their children when the children were sick than did older mothers (14% of young-old compared to 4% of oldest), not supporting Hypothesis 12.

#### Marital Status.

Significant differences were found in the number of subjects in the two marital status category levels as a function of Help With House and Advice on Decisions. No significant differences were found as a function of Financial Help, Gifts Besides Money, Help When Sick, Advice on Problems, Affection, and Overall Aid.

Table 7. Distribution of the Number of Subjects for Eight Types of Aid and Mothers' Age

<u>Aid Type</u>	<u>Aid Exchange Patterns</u>			
	<u>Mother &gt;</u>	<u>Child &gt;</u>	<u>Equal</u>	<u>No Exchange</u>
<u>Financial</u> [ $X^2(3) = 9.74, G = .13$ ]				
Young-Old	31	17	26	72
Old	22	12	19	18
Oldest	5	10	5	28
<u>Gifts Besides Money</u> [ $X^2(3) = 8.79, G = .06$ ]				
Young-Old	17	39	87	3
Old	11	37	74	10
Oldest	2	18	25	3
<u>Help With House</u> [ $X^2(3) = 14.06, G = .03$ ]*				
Young-Old	27 (19%)	37 (26%)	30 (21%)	51 (35%)
Old	16 (12%)	52 (39%)	18 (14%)	47 (35%)
Oldest	7 ( 5%)	20 (42%)	2 ( 4%)	19 (40%)
<u>Help When Sick</u> [ $X^2(4) = 19.68, G = .01$ ]**				
Young-Old	20 (14%)	40 (28%)	46 (32%)	39 (27%)
Old	8 ( 6%)	59 (45%)	34 (26%)	31 (23%)
Oldest	3 ( 4%)	27 (38%)	31 (44%)	10 (14%)

Aid Exchange Patterns

Aid Type                      Mother > Child >                      Equal    No Exchange

Advice on Problems    [ $X^2(4) = 25.84, G = .09$ ]\*\*\*

    Young-Old            38 (26%) 14 (10%)    66 (45%)    27 (18%)

    Old                    29 (22%) 20 (15%)    60 (45%)    24 (18%)

    Oldest                2 ( 4%) 15 (32%)    16 (34%)    14 (30%)

Advice-Decisions    [ $X^2(3) = 8.76, G = -.04$ ]

    Young-Old            29            21            62            33

    Old                    18            31            54            30

    Oldest                7            15            16            9

Affection    [ $X^2(3) = 3.87, G = -.12$ ]

    Young-Old            4            4            139            0

    Old                    5            8            119            1

    Oldest                1            2            45            0

Overall    [ $X^2(4) = 14.79, G = .24$ ]

    Young-Old            22            16            108            0

    Old                    11            13            103            3

    Oldest                2            7            35            3

p < .05\*

p < .01\*\*

p < .001\*\*\*

Table 8. Distribution of the Number of Subjects for Eight Types of Aid and Mothers' Marital Status

<u>Aid Type</u>	<u>Aid Exchange Patterns</u>			
	<u>Mother &gt;</u>	<u>Child &gt;</u>	<u>Equal</u>	<u>No Exchange</u>
<u>Financial</u>	[ $X^2(3) = 2.46, G = -.002$ ]			
Married	26	13	16	72
Unmarried	32	26	34	108
<u>Gifts Besides Money</u>	[ $X^2(3) = 3.59, G = -.13$ ]			
Married	12	29	79	6
Unmarried	18	65	107	10
<u>Help With House</u>	[ $X^2(3) = 15.70, G = .06$ ]**			
Married	29 (23%)	29 (23%)	23 (18%)	45 (36%)
Unmarried	21 (11%)	80 (40%)	27 (14%)	72 (36%)
<u>Help When Sick</u>	[ $X^2(4) = 6.96, G = .02$ ]			
Married	17	42	37	30
Unmarried	14	84	51	50
<u>Advice on Problems</u>	[ $X^2(4) = 5.99, G = -.03$ ]			
Married	30	14	55	26
Unmarried	39	35	87	39

Aid Exchange Patterns

Aid Type            Mother > Child >        Equal    No Exchange

Advice-Decisions    [ $X^2(3) = 13.55, G = -.12$ ]\*

    Married            26 (21%) 15 (12%)    49 (39%)    36 (29%)

    Unmarried         28 (14%) 52 (26%)    83 (42%)    36 (18%)

Affection            [ $X^2(3) = 4.80, G = .34$ ]

    Married            7            6            116            0

    Unmarried         3            8            187            1

Overall            [ $X^2(4) = 7.66, G = .15$ ]

    Married            17            12            98            0

    Unmarried         18            24            148            6

$p < .01^*$

$p < .001^{**}$

More unmarried mothers received more advice from their children (26% versus 12% when married) and more unmarried mothers received assistance from their children in Help With House (40% versus 23% when married). More married mothers perceived giving more help in Help With House than did the unmarried (23% of married versus 11% of unmarried).

Hypotheses 13 and 14 were supported.

#### Child's Characteristics and Aid Patterns

A Chi Square analysis was performed for each of the eight types of aid by examining the number of children who were classified in the two marital status levels and in the two gender levels. The distribution of the number of subjects in each classification for each aid pattern and the results of the Chi Square analyses are shown in Tables 9 and 10 (p. 42 and 45).

##### Marital Status.

Significant differences were found in the number of the children of subjects in the two marital status category levels as a function of Financial Help and Gifts Besides Money. No significant differences were found as a function of Help With House, Help When Sick, Advice on Problems, Advice on Decisions, Affection, and Overall Aid.

There was less exchange of Financial Aid for married children than for non-married children (62% versus 40%). Almost twice as many unmarried children received more



Table 9. Distribution of the Number of Subjects for Eight Types of Aid and Childs' Marital Status

Aid Exchange Patterns

<u>Aid Type</u>	<u>Mother &gt;</u>	<u>Child &gt;</u>	<u>Equal</u>	<u>No Exchange</u>
<u>Financial</u> [ $X^2(3) = 13.84, G = -.33$ ]**				
Married	32 (14%)	25 (11%)	30 (13%)	140 (62%)
Unmarried	26 (26%)	13 (13%)	20 (20%)	40 (40%)
<u>Gifts Besides Money</u> [ $X^2(3) = 8.33, G = -.19$ ]				
Married	18 ( 8%)	58 (26%)	141 (62%)	9 ( 4%)
Unmarried	12 (12%)	35 (35%)	45 (45%)	7 ( 7%)
<u>Help With House</u> [ $X^2(3) = 11.6337, G = -.14$ ]				
Married	26	83	32	86
Unmarried	24	25	18	31
<u>Help When Sick</u> [ $X^2(4) = 2.67, G = -.08$ ]				
Married	18	89	62	57
Unmarried	13	36	26	23
<u>Advice on Problems</u> [ $X^2(4) = 5.87, G = -.11$ ]				
Married	41	36	104	44
Unmarried	28	13	37	21

Aid Exchange Patterns

<u>Aid Type</u>	<u>Mother &gt;</u>	<u>Child &gt;</u>	<u>Equal</u>	<u>No Exchange</u>
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Advice-Decisions [ $\chi^2(3) = 5.22, G = -.17$ ]

Married	31	48	94	54
---------	----	----	----	----

Unmarried	23	19	37	18
-----------	----	----	----	----

Affection [ $\chi^2(3) = 3.36, G = .31$ ]

Married	8	11	209	0
---------	---	----	-----	---

Unmarried	2	3	93	1
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Overall [ $\chi^2(4) = 4.75, G = -.20$ ]

Married	19	25	175	5
---------	----	----	-----	---

Unmarried	16	10	71	1
-----------	----	----	----	---

$p < .05^*$

$p < .01^{**}$

financial assistance from their mothers (26% versus 14%) than did married children. More married children (62%) had an About Equal exchange of Gifts Besides Money with their mothers than did non-married children (45%). These findings did not support Hypothesis 15.

#### Gender.

Significant differences were found between sons and daughters as a function of Help With House. No significant differences were found as a function of Financial Help, Gifts Besides Money, Help When Sick, Advice on Problems, Advice on Decisions, Affection, and Overall Aid. This finding was contrary to hypothesis 16 and limitedly supported hypothesis 17. Significantly more mothers helped their daughters with their houses than they helped their sons (10% versus 19%, respectively), and more sons helped their mothers with their houses than did daughters (42% versus 28%, respectively).

#### Propinquity and Aid Patterns.

A Chi Square analysis was performed for each of the eight types of aid by examining the number of subjects who were classified in the two propinquity levels. The distribution of the number of subjects in each classification for each aid pattern and the results of the Chi Square analyses are shown in Table 11 (p. 48).

Significant differences were found between those

Table 10. Distribution of the Number of Subjects for Eight Types of Aid and Childs' Gender

<u>Aid Type</u>	<u>Aid Exchange Patterns</u>			
	<u>Mother &gt;</u>	<u>Child &gt;</u>	<u>Equal</u>	<u>No Exchange</u>
<u>Financial</u>	[ $X^2(3) = 3.72, G = -.18$ ]			
Sons	19	14	18	81
Daughters	39	25	32	99
<u>Gifts Besides Money</u>	[ $X^2(3) = 7.22, G = -.20$ ]			
Sons	13	28	82	9
Daughters	17	66	104	7
<u>Help With House</u>	[ $X^2(3) = 9.58, G = .008$ ]*			
Sons	13 (10%)	55 (42%)	21 (16%)	43 (33%)
Daughters	37 (19%)	54 (28%)	29 (15%)	74 (38%)
<u>Help When Sick</u>	[ $X^2(4) = 3.63, G = -.14$ ]			
Sons	10	47	37	36
Daughters	21	79	51	44
<u>Advice on Problems</u>	[ $X^2(4) = 5.66, G = .02$ ]			
Sons	31	22	47	31
Daughters	38	27	95	34

Aid Exchange Patterns

<u>Aid Type</u>	<u>Mother &gt;</u>	<u>Child &gt;</u>	<u>Equal</u>	<u>No Exchange</u>
<u>Advice-Decisions</u> [ $X^2(3) = 2.75, G = -.13$ ]				
Sons	20	23	55	34
Daughters	34	44	77	38
<u>Affection</u> [ $X^2(3) = 3.42, G = -.30$ ]				
Sons	2	5	125	1
Daughters	8	9	178	0
<u>Overall</u> [ $X^2(4) = 5.91, G = -.10$ ]				
Sons	15	13	97	5
Daughters	20	23	149	1

$p < .05^*$

children living within the same city and those living beyond the same city as a function of Financial Help, Help With House, Help When Sick, and Advice on Decisions. No significant differences were found as a function of Gifts Besides Money, Advice on Problems, Affection, and Overall Aid. More dyads had About Equal financial exchanges when they lived in the same city (19% versus 8%). There was more No Exchange of Help When Sick for those dyads that did not live in the same city (14% versus 43%). More children who lived in the same city gave more (45%) or About Equal exchange (32%) with their mothers on Help When Sick than for those dyads that did not live in the same city (28% and 18%, respectively). More dyads had no exchange of help with the house when they did not live in the same city (50% versus 28%). There was more exchange of Advice on Decisions when the mother child dyad lived in the same city (15% versus 35%). These findings supported Hypothesis 18.

Table 11. Distribution of the Number of Subjects for Eight Types of Aid and Propinquity

<u>Aid Type</u>	<u>Aid Exchange Patterns</u>			
	<u>Mother &gt;</u>	<u>Child &gt;</u>	<u>Equal</u>	<u>No Exchange</u>
<u>Financial</u>	[ $X^2(3) = 10.08, G = .13$ ]*			
Closer	34 (17%)	28 (14%)	40 (19%)	104 (50%)
Farther	24 (20%)	11 ( 9%)	10 ( 8%)	76 (63%)
<u>Gifts Besides Money</u>	[ $X^2(3) = 3.20, G = .16$ ]			
Closer	20	65	109	10
Farther	10	29	77	6
<u>Help With House</u>	[ $X^2(3) = 17.26, G = .27$ ]**			
Closer	33 (16%)	79 (45%)	37 (32%)	57 (28%)
Farther	17 (14%)	30 (25%)	13 (11%)	60 (50%)
<u>Help When Sick</u>	[ $X^2(4) = 38.47, G = .33$ ]**			
Closer	19 ( 9%)	92 (45%)	66 (32%)	28 (14%)
Farther	12 (10%)	34 (28%)	22 (18%)	52 (43%)
<u>Advice on Problems</u>	[ $X^2(4) = 7.63, G = .16$ ]			
Closer	46	33	93	32
Farther	23	16	49	33

Aid Exchange Patterns

<u>Aid Type</u>	<u>Mother &gt;</u>	<u>Child &gt;</u>	<u>Equal</u>	<u>No Exchange</u>
<u>Advice-Decisions</u> [ $X^2(3) = 18.32, G = .30$ ]**				
Closer	38 (19%)	47 (23%)	90 (44%)	30 (15%)
Farther	16 (13%)	20 (17%)	42 (35%)	42 (35%)
<u>Affection</u> [ $X^2(3) = 1.92, G = .14$ ]				
Closer	7	9	109	0
Farther	3	5	113	1
<u>Overall</u> [ $X^2(4) = 5.72, G = .15$ ]				
Closer	23	26	151	2
Farther	12	10	95	4

$p < .05^*$

$p < .001^{**}$



Table 12. Hypotheses and Findings

1. There is high reciprocity in aid exchange.  
Finding: Supported.
2. Mothers who have higher amounts of reciprocity with their children will report higher relationship quality.  
Finding: Supported.
3. Mothers who give more to their children than they receive will report higher relationship quality.  
Finding: Not Supported.
4. Mothers in better health will report higher relationship quality with their children.  
Finding: Not supported.
5. Older mothers will report higher relationship quality with their children.  
Finding: Not supported.
6. Unmarried mothers will report higher relationship quality than will married mothers.  
Finding: Not supported.
7. Mothers will report higher relationship quality with their daughters than with sons.  
Finding: Supported.
8. Propinquity is not related to relationship quality.  
Finding: Supported.
9. Mothers in better health receive less aid from

their children.

Finding: Supported for gifts, help when sick, affection, and overall aid.

10. Mothers in better health give more aid to their children.

Finding: Supported in that more perceived reciprocity among those mothers in better health)

11. Younger mothers receive less aid than do older mothers.

Finding: Supported for advice on problems and help with the house.

12. The oldest and youngest mothers give less aid than the middle group of mothers.

Finding: Not supported.

13. Unmarried mothers get more aid than do married mothers.

Finding: Supported for advice on decisions and help with house.

14. Married mothers give more aid than unmarried mothers.

Finding: Supported for help with house.

15. Unmarried children give more aid than do married children.

Finding: Not supported.

16. Daughters give more aid than do sons.

Finding: Not supported.

17. Daughters give more affective aid (affection, advice, help when sick) and sons will give more instrumental aid (Financial Help, Gifts Besides Money, Help With House) to mothers.

Finding: Supported in that sons gave more help with the house than did daughters.

18. Aid Patterns will differ between those dyads living closeby and those living farther away.

Finding: Supported for Financial Help, Help With House, Help When Sick, and Advice on Decisions.

## Discussion

From previous research findings, it was unclear how relationship quality between mothers and children was affected by aid exchange patterns. The present study attempted to determine whether there were differences in relationship quality between mothers and children as a function of whether Mothers Gave More, Children Gave More, there was an About Equal exchange, or there were No Exchanges for eight different types of aid.

### Relationship Quality

As was anticipated, perceived relationship quality was associated with the perception of differing aid patterns and Financial Help, Gifts Besides Money, Advice on Life's Problems, and Overall Aid. When Mothers Gave More of Financial Help, Gifts Besides Money, and Overall Aid, the perceived relationship quality was lower than when the Child Gave More or there was an About Equal Exchange. For the item, Advice on Life's Problems, perceived relationship quality was highest for About Equal Exchange. Thus, certain types of aid types and aid patterns affected relationship quality.

### Reciprocity.

The results of this study show that reciprocity in aid exchange is an integral part of the mother-child relationship. Reciprocity between mothers and their children was the most prevalent pattern of aid exchange for five of the aid types: Gifts, Advice on Decisions, Advice on Problems, Affection, and Overall Aid. Mothers Gave More Financial Help, and Children Gave More Help With House and Help When Sick, but for these three types of aid, there was still a high degree of reciprocity. These results support previous research findings that there is a high degree of reciprocity between elderly parents and adult children (Mancini & Blieszner, 1989; Morgan, 1982; Atchley & Miller, 1980; Troll, Miller, & Atchley, 1979).

The nature of this reciprocity is that it does affect the quality of the mother-child relationship. Results of this study indicated that when there was reciprocity in aid exchange, the quality of the mother-child relationship was high. Previous research findings support the present finding that reciprocity may contribute to higher relationship quality (Stoller, 1985; Mutran & Reitzes, 1984; Adams, 1968).

#### Aid Exchange Patterns.

This research also showed that the quality of the mother-child relationship was high when the Child Gave More to the mother and was lower when the Mother Gave More to the child. These findings are in contrast to other research conducted previously which found that when children gave more to their mothers than mothers gave to their children, mothers had difficulty with themselves or with the relationship (Stoller, 1985; Mutran & Reitzes, 1984; Bengston, 1976). However, Beckman (1981) found that mothers' well-being was higher the more the child gave, relative to what the mother gave. She hypothesized that this was because mothers felt they deserved the benefits they received due to their past efforts at being a good mother. Lee and Ellithorpe (1982) reached a similar conclusion. They wrote that aid received from children may demonstrate that children are concerned for their parents' well-being and, therefore, when children contribute more, relative to their parents, there is higher relationship quality between parents and children.

#### Mother and Child Characteristics, and Propinquity.

The quality of the mother-child relationship was also found to be related to another variable, other than the pattern of exchanging aid. In the present study, we found that the child's gender was significantly related to

relationship quality. As previous research has found (Barnett, 1988; Baruch & Barnett, 1983; Troll, Miller & Atchley, 1979), the present study also found that daughters had higher relationship quality with their mothers than did sons. While some studies suggest that older mothers, (Barnett, 1988; Cohler, 1988; Seelbach & Hanson, 1980), mothers in better health (Troll, Miller & Atchley, 1979; Johnson, 1978; Johnson & Bursk, 1977), and decreased propinquity (Moss, et al., 1985; Walker & Thompson, 1983) are related to higher relationship quality, other research found no relationship between relationship quality and health (Seelbach & Hanson, 1980) or propinquity (Moss, et al., 1985; Cicirelli, 1981; Litwak, Kulis, & Worth, 1982; Lopata, 1979; Johnson & Bursk, 1977). The results of the present study found that the mothers' age and health, and propinquity had no significant affect on the quality of the mother-child relationship.

### Conclusion

It is believed by many researchers that giving aid to children is associated with increased positive feelings while receiving aid from children could lead to negative feelings (Stoller, 1985; Leigh, 1982; Beckman, 1981; Bengston, V., Olander, E. B., & Haddad, A. A., 1976). This is due to the elderly's need for independence and autonomy, which can be demonstrated through their continued ability to

give to their children. When they no longer give as much aid, the mothers may feel too dependent upon their children.

Many of these studies did not look at the quality of the parent child relationship but instead focused on well-being, morale, or depression of the parent.

The present study examined the exchange patterns of mothers and children who were interdependent - they mostly reciprocated in their aid exchange. With this sample, being too dependent may not have been an issue causing dissatisfaction amongst the mothers receiving more aid. When children gave more or reciprocated, mothers may have felt that they were no longer over-benefitting their child. They were now receiving their just dues - equity in the relationship, not experiencing an over dependence upon their children. Dono, et al (1978; in Stoller, 1985) conjectured that substantial aid may "only be provided by a group to which the older person contributed during his productive years and from which members can expect to draw help if needed in the future" (p. 336). Perhaps these mothers felt that the future is now and the children viewed giving to their mothers as an opportunity to reciprocate for support provided to them in the past. As Lewis (1990) cited Clark (1969, p. 72) "when both generations see the necessity of this dependence and transcended this basic cultural contradiction ... [then the elderly can be] freed for



further growth and development in the later years of life" (p. 78).

In this way, the present finding may be explained using a developmental historical perspective. Researchers have believed that benefits that accrue to the older parent which exceed their costs could be viewed as leading to a state of dependency. (Mutran and Reitzes, 1984). Although receiving more from a child later in life is counter to earlier expectations, it is perhaps a time for more equity over the course of their relationship. It may be important to consider the life course of the parent child relationship.

Parents' and children's interaction and aid patterns may not be identical, but may still be considered equitable. Parents may give more of one kind of aid while children may give more of another kind, and each may do so at different times over the course of their relationship. If this is true, an imbalance may exist in the pattern of aid at the present time although it may not necessarily affect the relationship negatively. Since rewards or costs may be emotional, as well as material, the actual perceived outcome of an imbalance is difficult to predict because the emotional rewards may negate the cost (Mutran & Reitzes, 1984).

Higher relationship quality was associated with reciprocity or the child giving more aid. This relationship

may be primarily involved with instrumental functions (Financial Help, Gifts Besides Money, Help With the House, Help When Sick) as opposed to affective ones (Advice and Affection). To some degree, affective aid is exchanged by parents and children throughout their life course. Most children can and do provide love, affection, and concern throughout most of their lives. Interdependence of instrumental aid can only come about after children have reached a certain level of independence. Once children are themselves adults and can provide instrumental types of aid, parents may expect that what they have given will to some degree be returned (Lewis, 1990). When these types of aid are given by children, parents may view their relationship with their child in a more positive, equal way. This would not necessarily be the case for affective aid since there is the expectation that this has been and will continue to be exchanged throughout the parent and child's life. The present study found that children gave more Help With House and Help When Sick to mothers, both instrumental aid items and that there was a high degree of reciprocity for all affective aid items (Affection and Advice).

When mothers either receive more than she gives or exchanges equal amounts of aid with her children, she views the relationship with her child more positively than if she feels that she is under-benefitted. Not being under-

benefitted may be more important to these elderly mothers than, as previously believed, being able to continue to give aid as they had in the past, demonstrating independence and autonomy. This supports the view of Exchange Theory. There may be a relationship between receiving aid and lowered relationship quality, but it is probably one of degree. When the elderly mothers felt that they had been giving too much for too long, their feelings about their relationship with their child may have suffered. If, on the other hand, mothers receive so much assistance that it renders them dependent, this most likely would affect the quality of their relationships with those upon whom they have become dependent. Respondents in the present study were in relatively good health and living independently. These mothers were probably not at high-risk for being overly dependent upon their children at the present time.

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Master's Thesis (May 1990)  
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Father-Daughter/Father-Son Relationship Project (1986-1987). Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University  
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Interviewed respondents and assisted in coding instrument.

### Presentations

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## Clinical Experience

Graduate Practicum Student (September 1988 - December 1988). Mental Health Services of the New River Valley, Blacksburg, Virginia.

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Provided therapy for individuals and families with a variety of presenting problems. I adopted specific therapeutic approaches to each client's own problem situation. I familiarized myself with the paperwork necessary according to regulations governing governmental agencies including the use of the DSM III-R.

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Gained experience in supervision of co-therapy and solo therapy as well as exposure to a wide variety of individual, marriage and family problems with ways of adopting specific therapeutic approaches to specific problem situations. Observed and participated in weekly supervision sessions with four different supervisors.

Psychosocial Rehabilitation Counselor/Intern (August 1987 - September 1988). Substance Abuse Services of the New River Valley, Christiansburg, Virginia.

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Assisted in the implementation of a psychosocial rehabilitation night treatment intensive outpatient program for substance abusers. Provided therapy for individual clients referred from this group treatment and assisted in the development and implementation of an extended care program for substance abusers of the Stepping Stones Program.

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