

# The Relationship Closeness Inventory: Assessing the Closeness of Interpersonal Relationships

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This article describes the development of the Relationship Closeness Inventory (RCI), which draws on the conceptualization of closeness as high interdependence between two people's activities proposed by Kelley et al. (1983). The current "closest" relationship of individuals ( $N = 241$ ) drawn from the college student population served as the basis for RCI development, with the closest relationship found to encompass several relationship types, including romantic, friend, and family relationships. The development and psychometric properties of the three RCI subscales (Frequency, Diversity, Strength), their scoring, and their combination to form an overall index of closeness are described. The RCI's test-retest reliability is reported and the association between RCI score and the longevity of the relationship is discussed. RCI scores for individuals' closest relationships are contrasted to those of not-close relationships, to a subjective closeness index, and to several measures of relationship affect, including Rubin's (1973) Liking and Loving scales. Finally, the ability of the RCI to predict relationship break up is contrasted to that of the Subjective Closeness Index, an index of the emotional tone of the relationship, and to relationship longevity. It is concluded that the RCI possesses acceptable internal and test-retest reliability, satisfactory discriminant and construct validity, and encouraging predictive validity, thus suggesting that it constitutes a viable means of assessing relationship closeness.

The study of interpersonal relationships has burgeoned in recent years across a variety of disciplines. Investigators increasingly have recognized the theoretical and practical importance of studying *close* relationships. As Clark and Reis (1988) concluded in their recent review of the relationship literature, closeness is a process that appears to underlie many relationship phenomena that have long been of interest. Thus, the need for both a theoretical conceptualization of closeness and a means of assessing closeness in ongoing relationships has become clear.

The closeness of interpersonal relationships has been defined and measured in a variety of ways (see Berscheid, Snyder, &

Omoto, 1989, for a discussion of this point). Few definitions and fewer measures, however, have been derived from careful conceptualizations of closeness, and the reliability and validity of many currently used closeness measures remain to be examined. We present here an instrument for assessing relationship closeness for which the conceptualization of closeness outlined by Kelley et al. (1983) served as the heuristic.

Kelley et al. (1983) emphasize the *interdependence* that exists between relationship partners as evidenced in their day-to-day activities, and thus stress assessment of the *properties* of the interaction between two people. Specifically, they propose that a close relationship is characterized by high interdependence, where

A high degree of interdependence between two people is revealed in four properties of their interconnected activities: (1) the individuals have *frequent* impact on each other; (2) the degree of impact per each occurrence is *strong*; (3) the impact involves *diverse* kinds of activities for each person; and (4) all of these properties characterize the interconnected activity series for a relatively long *duration* of time. (Kelley et al., 1983, p. 13)

This conceptualization of closeness thus constitutes a rough blueprint for measuring the closeness of interpersonal relationships.

The ideal way to assess relationship interdependence, as Kelley et al. (1983) discuss, would be for an omniscient investigator

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to observe the activities of both relationship partners continuously over a very long period of time, recording not only their outward behaviors but also their inner thoughts and physiological responses. The revealed interconnections between their activities would then be aggregated so as to arrive at assessments of the interaction properties of frequency, diversity, strength, and duration. Such observation is not possible, of course, and so one is immediately resigned to the fact that any attempt to measure interdependence between relationship partners as conceptualized by Kelley et al. is destined to reflect only the shadow of that interdependence. To the extent that this conceptualization of relationship closeness has power, however, even a rough index of the partners' true interdependence should prove useful. On faith in that assumption, we attempted to devise an instrument for assessing relationship closeness with the following characteristics:

1. It should focus on the 1st three properties of interaction highlighted by Kelley et al. (1983): frequency, diversity, and strength. (The property of duration poses special problems, which are discussed shortly.) In the absence of an omniscient observer to record the actual interaction chain of events, how one assesses these properties is necessarily somewhat arbitrary. Nevertheless, we believed that however the assessment was to be made, it should at least attempt to reflect the individual flavor of each of these properties of interdependence separately. We assumed that although each of these properties may be an indicator of closeness, they need not be, and probably are not, strongly correlated across all of a person's relationships or across all relationship types. Thus, the closeness measure should be composed of several separate subindexes of closeness, each a reflection of one of the three properties specified.

2. These individual indicators of closeness should be assessed in a way that permits an overall, or summary, index of closeness to be made for each relationship examined.

3. The manner of assessing these indicators of closeness should not be strongly tied to any one relationship type (e.g., romantic relationships or friendships) and should not be predicated on any one population of persons (e.g., adolescents or young adults). In other words, the instrument should be as versatile as possible across all types of close relationships and subject populations.

4. The instrument should be easy to administer and require little of the respondent's time (15 min, at most), to allow its inclusion in projects involving other measures addressed to a wide variety of relationship questions.

This last consideration virtually dictated a self-report instrument, with all the pitfalls and deficiencies inherent in such measures. A subsidiary aim, then, was to carefully structure the questions posed to the respondent to minimize the influences of social desirability, faulty memory, and wishful thinking, or to assess each dimension of closeness as much as possible as a relationship "outsider" might (Olson, 1977). Thus, we hoped to query partners about specific relationship events that either had or had not occurred, events that could have been easily observed by others had they been present. Moreover, we attempted to avoid asking the respondent to make global judgments and summary statements about the relationship (see Ritter & Langlois, 1988) and to avoid, too, problems of language usage and

definition (e.g., what an investigator or respondent may personally mean by *closeness*, *strength*, and the like).

## Method

The development of the Relationship Closeness Inventory (RCI) required a number of preliminary decisions, most importantly the selection of the type of relationship that would be used in its initial construction and the selection of a subject population.

### *Selection of the "Closest" Relationship for RCI Development*

To develop the RCI, we began by collecting theoretically relevant information about people's *closest* relationships. By asking people to report on the one relationship they believed to be the closest of all their interpersonal relationships, rather than simply on any one relationship they believed to be close, we borrowed a research strategy from the domain of personality and social behavior (see Snyder & Ickes, 1985). This strategy suggests that a researcher interested in the dynamics of a social psychological phenomenon or process should identify and then study individuals who are particularly likely to manifest that phenomenon or process, thereby most efficiently and effectively gaining insight into the phenomenon or process as it naturally occurs. In like fashion, we reasoned that to study relationship "closeness," we should select individuals' closest relationships for initial examination to ensure that closeness would indeed be present in the relationships examined, and that, if anything, there would be more of it rather than less of it to study. This decision, however, also posed a risk: namely, that by selecting individuals' closest relationships, we would find little or no variability in relationship closeness, and hence be left with a relative inability to predict outcomes of interest. This, however, was a risk we considered worth taking in the initial development of a device intended to measure closeness.

### *Selection of College Students as the Primary Population for RCI Development*

The ubiquitous college student was chosen as the subject on which initial development of the RCI would be based, not only because college students were in relatively abundant supply (a necessary condition for the repeated administrations of the various forms and evolutions of the RCI), but because much of the close-relationship literature, as well as available data on other instruments to which we wished to compare the RCI, focuses on this subject population. Additionally, and from a life span developmental perspective, persons at this time of life, perhaps more than any other, are actively engaged in developing close relationships.

Thus, the primary sample from which the basic data on the RCI are reported consisted of 241 (116 male and 125 female) college students at the University of Minnesota. Respondents ranged in age from 18–49 years, with a mean age of 19.38 years. The modal participant was a 19- to 20-year-old sophomore who was single and a full-time student. All secondary samples from which supplementary data are reported (and which are identified as secondary in the report to follow) were drawn from the same subject population and did not differ significantly with respect to these characteristics of the primary sample.

### *Identifying the Closest Relationship*

In the context of a mass-testing setting and in return for extra course credit, introductory psychology students who constituted the primary sample identified the *one* person with whom they had "the closest, deepest, most involved, and most intimate relationship," and then com-

pleted an extensive questionnaire about that relationship. After identifying their closest relationship by writing the first initial of their partner's name, respondents indicated the *type* of relationship they had with that person by choosing 1 of 15 specific relationship descriptors (e.g., brother or sister, dating only this person, etc.) that best characterized their relationship with the nominated partner. From these descriptors four summary categories of relationship types were created: romantic, friend, family, and other relationships, this last category including work relationships.

We found that, by and large, our college students shared their closest interpersonal relationships with romantic partners and friends. Specifically, 47% of our respondents nominated a romantic relationship as their closest relationship, with friendships the second most frequently nominated type (36%). The third major category of closest relationship nomination was family relationships, although this type was nominated relatively infrequently (14%). Only a very small percentage of respondents (3%) nominated some other type of relationship (usually work) as their closest relationship. There were no differences between men and women in the types of closest relationships nominated.

This distribution of the closest relationship over several relationship types was greeted with some relief for it revealed that, at least within this subject population, the closest relationship, on which we were to base the development of our closeness measure, would not be hopelessly confounded with type of relationship. Moreover, this distribution of closest relationships over relationship types proved to be relatively stable in subsequent secondary samples drawn from this subject population. For example, across three secondary samples comprising a total of 514 respondents, the distribution of relationships was 59% romantic, 18% friend, and 22% family. The lion's share of closest relationships in this subject population appear to be romantic relationships.

### The RCI

As previously indicated, after identifying the one person with whom they experienced their closest relationship, each respondent completed an extensive questionnaire about the relationship. That questionnaire included a number of questions about respondent demographic characteristics and other items of interest, as well as items that constitute the RCI (see Appendix A). In the following sections, we describe the rationale that led to the formation of each of the RCI subscales intended to tap the properties of frequency, diversity, and strength; the internal consistency of each of the three RCI subscales; the transformation of responses performed on the 1st two of the subscales and the scoring procedures for all three that permit their aggregation into a simple summary closeness index; and, finally, the conceptual problems posed by the incorporation of the property of duration into a relationship closeness index.

### Assessing Frequency

If one could truly measure the frequency of impact that two people have on each other's activities, one would likely need no other measure of closeness. Ironically, however, perhaps no other property of interaction is so difficult to accurately assess, and so the notion of frequency of impact, no matter how conceptually sound, must be considered only as a heuristic for any actual measure. Nevertheless, we believed that an attempt to assess at least some facet of the frequency dimension should be made. We reasoned that, at minimum, it might prove useful to know the amount of time that relationship partners spend interacting with each other face to face. Although face-to-face

interaction is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for one person to influence another's activities, it seemed to us to be the most facilitative condition for interpersonal causal impact. Hence, we viewed frequency of impact in terms of the amount of time that individuals spend alone with their relationship partners during their waking day, reasoning that the more time people spend together, the more opportunity they have to influence each other's thoughts and other behaviors. It should be noted that we realized from the outset that some closest relationship partners do not live together and so do not interact with each other every day, and, moreover, some of those who do live together are frequently separated from each other by travel and work for extended periods of time. Despite the fact that our frequency measure might provide an underestimation of the true closeness of such partners, we resisted modifying this measure, reasoning that people who do not see each other frequently—for whatever reason, even involuntary "good" reasons—simply cannot be as close, other things being equal, as people who *do* spend a lot of time together. Finally, we focused on time alone with the partner because the potential for impact is greatest when people are alone with each other; in the presence of other people, causal impact may depend on other factors such as the number of people present and their interrelationships.

On the basis of our decision to use time as a rough indicator of frequency of causal impact, we asked respondents to estimate the actual number of hours and minutes they spent alone with their partner in the morning, afternoon, and evening of a typical day. (To attempt to improve the accuracy of the Frequency subscale, we now recommend that subjects report typical time together *within the past week*. The RCI items used to assess frequency are shown in Appendix A and reflect this modification.) By summing over the time estimates for the morning, afternoon, and evening, we obtained a frequency total that reflected the number of minutes respondents typically spent alone with their partners in their waking hours. By treating each of these three time estimates as a separate indicator of the total frequency score, it is possible to compute a reliability statistic for the overall Frequency scale. There is, however, no reason to expect such a scale to demonstrate high internal consistency; that is, people who spend a great deal of time alone with their partners in the morning need not necessarily spend considerable time with the partner in the afternoon or in the evening. What is no doubt critical is the total amount of time spent together and the total opportunity it provides for influence. Thus, it is neither surprising nor disheartening that the Frequency scale obtained an overall alpha of .56, with individual alphas greater than .52 within the three main types of closest relationship (romantic, friend, and family).

To create the Frequency scale, we defined a theoretical range of 0–1,200 min (20 hr) that could be spent with the partner. Because we were interested in causal impact, not just time spent in physical proximity to the partner, we wished to exclude time spent sleeping in our overall frequency score, and so set this theoretical ceiling of 20 hr. Even this extreme of 20 hr seemed rather unlikely to be observed, and indeed, inspection of the obtained distribution of time estimates revealed a highly skewed distribution in which most respondents reported spending relatively little time alone with their partner.

To "spread out" this skewed distribution, we used a square-root transformation on the raw time totals. A square root transformation is one common transformation (cf. Kirk, 1982) that has the effect of heightening distinctions among low-scoring individuals while simultaneously "bringing in the tail" of a distribution and obscuring distinctions among high scorers. As expected, this transformation did indeed reduce the skew in our original frequency distribution, spreading respondents more evenly across the frequency dimension. A 10-point Frequency scale was then created by taking the square root of our theoretically defined maximum value (1,200 min) and dividing this root by 10. We then used this quotient as the incremental increase that defined each of our converted scale points. (Raw frequency totals and their corresponding scale values can be found in Appendix B.)

### *Assessing Diversity*

We hypothesized that one good indicant of the diversity of causal impact would be the number of different activity domains in which relationship partners engage in activities together. Thus, we assessed the diversity dimension by examining the number of *different* specific activities that relationship partners performed together in the past week. We also believed that this characterization would help ensure that the assessments of frequency and diversity would be relatively independent.

To create the diversity measure, we generated a checklist of 38 different and specific activities that people could potentially perform in any given week. The activities on the checklist, moreover, were selected so as to span many different activity types, from the more mundane (e.g., did laundry, ate a meal) to the more unusual (e.g., went on an outing, planned a party/social event). Our intent was to create an exhaustive list of typical weekly activities.

A preliminary sample of 212 respondents, again drawn from the same subject population as the primary sample, completed a list of activities which they had performed with their closest relationship partner in the past week. On the basis of the results of this preliminary sample, and in consideration of item readability, obvious item omissions and redundancy, and more favorable psychometric properties (e.g., higher internal consistencies), we constructed the item format and item content for the Diversity subscale that was administered to our primary sample. (The complete list of activities used to measure diversity can be found in Appendix A.)

Respondents indicated whether they had performed each of the 38 activities on the checklist alone with their partner in the past week. Diversity scores had a theoretical range from 0 to 38. Because of the heterogeneity of the behavioral domains sampled, high internal consistency would not necessarily be expected. We did, however, compute a Kuder-Richardson reliability coefficient as a measure of internal consistency for this 38-item scale of dichotomous responses and found that the scale is internally consistent. Collapsing over all relationship types revealed an alpha of .87, with internal consistencies within the three main relationship types all exceeding .64.

The distribution of raw diversity totals was highly skewed, with no respondents reporting more than 25 different activities performed alone with their partner in the past week. Therefore,

we performed a square root transformation on the theoretical range of scores before creating a 10-point equal-interval scale. In addition to smoothing the distribution of diversity scores, this transformation can readily be seen to create a psychologically meaningful interval scale, where fine distinctions between relationships at the low end (where very many relationships were found) are possible and less distinction is made among relationships at the high end (where very few relationships were found). (The conversion table for the diversity scores can be found in Appendix B.)

### *Assessing Strength*

In our search for indicators of strength of impact, we reasoned that to the extent that relationship partners influence each other's everyday behaviors, decisions, plans, and goals, they have strong causal impact on each other. One way to tap strength, at least as characterized in this way, is to present people with diverse life domains and to ask them to estimate the degree to which they believe they are influenced by their partner in each domain. Such an approach also enhanced the prospects for a strength measure that would be independent of frequency and diversity.

On the basis of our decision to characterize strength of impact in terms of perceived influence, we generated a 34-item measure (shown in Appendix A). This measure is composed of numerous itemized activities, decisions, and plans through which both current and future strength of impact are assessed. As with the Diversity scale, furthermore, the strength items include more mundane activities (e.g., what one watches on TV) as well as more significant plans and behaviors (e.g., career and family plans).

The scoring of the Strength scale is straightforward and, unlike the Frequency and Diversity scales, does not require transformation. After reverse-scoring appropriate items, a raw strength total is obtained by summing over all 34 items, with higher scores indicating greater strength of impact. In our primary sample of closest relationships, we found high internal consistency reliability for this measure across all relationship types ( $\alpha = .90$ ), as well as within the three main relationship types ( $\alpha s > .87$ ).

Total sums on the strength-of-impact measure have a theoretical range of 34–238 (or 204 possible scores), and our primary sample of respondents revealed a near-normal distribution of scores centered slightly above the theoretical midpoint. To convert these strength totals to a 1–10 value, we divided the theoretical range of possible scores into intervals of 20 points, with the last interval having 24 points. (The resulting scale points and their corresponding raw strength totals are shown in Appendix B.)

### *The Problem of Duration*

The property of duration presents conceptual problems. Kelley et al. (1983) propose that interdependence is revealed by the interaction properties of high frequency, diversity, and strength where these have been characteristic of the partners' activity series "for a relatively long *duration* of time" (p. 13). How long, they do not say. A week, a year, 2 years? Long enough to be sure

that the high frequency, diversity, and strength observed in the interaction pattern is not a will-o'-the-wisp? Or does the duration of the pattern of high frequency, diversity, and strength over time *itself* contribute to closeness, with closeness hypothesized to increase monotonically with the length of time the pattern has been in place?

Although Kelley et al. (1983) do not address these questions, one thing is clear: It is not the duration of the relationship alone that is of significance; rather, it is the duration of the properties of high frequency, high diversity, and high strength. Thus, the assessment of these three properties is primary, with duration entering into the closeness equation only when the interaction pattern possesses these three properties in high degree. To put it another way, long duration of low frequency, low diversity, and low strength should not add to the closeness quotient of a relationship. For this reason, we took the assessment of the 1st three properties as primary and the concept of duration as of interest, but its inclusion in any closeness index was considered to be a complex matter that should be held in abeyance, perhaps resolved empirically. At minimum, it seemed clear that the mere duration of an interaction pattern that reveals low interdependence should not add, in linear fashion, to a closeness score.

The property of duration of high interdependence, then, should not be conceptually confused with the duration of the relationship, or the length of time two people have experienced some, perhaps a very low, degree of interdependence with each other. To facilitate distinction between these two concepts, we refer to the duration of the relationship itself as *relationship longevity*.

Some relationship researchers have assumed that relationship longevity is itself an important feature of closeness—that as relationships move through time, they tend to become closer, disclosure becomes more intimate, investments become greater, and love grows deeper, for example. Such an assumption is, of course, patently false. As Levinger (1983) points out in his discussion of relationship development, many long-term relationships (e.g., as with a secretary, a neighbor, a cousin) become fixated at low levels of closeness, or at only slight interdependence. Relationship longevity, then, is not a *sufficient* condition for closeness, and undoubtedly is, by itself, a poor indicant of closeness. The question of whether longevity is a *necessary* condition for closeness leads again to the question of how long a relationship must be in existence for closeness to be realized. In the absence of theoretical wisdom, this becomes an empirical question, which in turn suggests that the association between relationship longevity and putative indicants of closeness should be routinely assessed. In doing so, however, it is important to keep in mind that longevity almost always is confounded not only with the age of the individual but also with the type of relationship, for family relationships are usually of longer longevity than any other type. In our primary sample, for example, such confounding is apparent: The average longevity of romantic relationships was slightly less than 3.5 years, friend relationships had lasted an average of about 5.5 years, and the mean longevity of family relationships was slightly more than 19 years; men's and women's relationships did not differ in longevity.

There is yet another reason why relationship longevity should be assessed and examined separately from other closeness in-

dexes. Predictions about human behavior, like predictions about the weather, are importantly based on the simple actuarial assumption that what occurred in the past is likely to occur tomorrow, and that the more frequently a particular state of affairs has been observed in the past, the more likely it is to be observed tomorrow. For this reason, simple knowledge of relationship longevity is probably important for many predictions about relationships. Thus, although we do not include relationship longevity in the total RCI score, the RCI always contains a longevity item (in Appendix A, the question "How long have you known this person?"), an auxiliary measure whose association with the RCI score and with relationship outcomes of interest should be examined separately.

As for duration of high interdependence, we must confess that the means for its measurement was beyond us. It would have entailed, first, measuring frequency, diversity, and strength (as we have done); second, selecting out those individuals who scored high on these measures; third, determining how long that pattern of high interdependence had characterized the relationships of these individuals; and finally, adding in this component to their closeness score in a manner that elevated their score commensurate with the length of time that high interdependence had characterized their relationship. We doubted that self-reports to any variant of the question "How long has your relationship been like this?", even with "like this" spelled out in detail, would produce anything worthwhile. Our inability to assess duration of high interdependence with the type of brief, easily administered instrument we set out to construct should not, of course, be taken to imply that such assessment might not be useful and might improve the accuracy of closeness estimates. It seems to us, however, that the value of the duration-of-interdependence component of a closeness estimate will have to be determined in a situation in which the investigator can observe the growth of the relationship (e.g., among children in a summer camp where the individuals are in a controlled environment and thus easily and continuously observed). In any event, we believe it to be beyond most individuals' capacity to provide accurate and simple self-reports of this relationship property, and we could think of no means of eliciting such information from them indirectly.

### *An Overall Index of Relationship Closeness*

As we have described, then, we developed independent scales to roughly measure the interaction properties of frequency, diversity, and strength. Each of these measures was created by aggregating across specific reports provided by respondents. In scoring each measure, we devised procedures for converting raw totals to values on a common 10-point scale, with higher scores always indicating greater closeness on that dimension.

With respect to the manner of conversion, the reader may wonder why we did not use standard scores. To be sure, standard scores would facilitate the creation of an overall index of closeness; for example, one could readily sum across standardized frequency, diversity, and strength dimensions, each dimension having the same mean and standard deviation. However, such a standardizing procedure would be sample specific, and it would have to be performed anew on each sample of RCI respondents. Moreover, such a procedure would preclude mak-

Table 1  
*Intercorrelations of Relationship Closeness Inventory Subscale Scores in Primary Sample of Closest Relationships, by Relationship Type and by Sex of Respondent*

	Diversity	Strength
All relationship types ( $N = 241$ )		
Frequency	.44*	.30*
Diversity	—	.31*
Romantic relationships ( $n = 114$ )		
Frequency	.34**	.30**
Diversity	—	.39**
Friend relationships ( $n = 87$ )		
Frequency	.49**	.27**
Diversity	—	.20
Family relationships ( $n = 34$ )		
Frequency	.45**	.06
Diversity	—	-.05
Male respondents ( $n = 116$ )		
Frequency	.46**	.19**
Diversity	—	.25**
Female respondents ( $n = 125$ )		
Frequency	.42**	.41**
Diversity	—	.39**

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

ing comparisons across samples because, after standardizing, any two samples to be compared would have, by definition, the same mean and standard deviation. By contrast, the scoring criteria for converting raw scores to a common 10-point scale presented in Appendix B can be used for any sample of respondents. Moreover, as is seen later, this conversion facilitates the creation of an overall index of closeness by simply summing across the three dimensions. It also permits meaningful comparisons across samples of their relative standing on frequency, diversity, and strength, as well as on overall closeness.

Our final task was to use the converted frequency, diversity, and strength scores to create an overall index of relationship closeness. As separate indicators of closeness, we expected the three scales to be intercorrelated among people's closest relationships. We should note that this pattern of substantial correlation would not necessarily be expected across all relationship types; certain "less close" relationships (with coworkers, for example) might include frequent interaction, but contact that is neither particularly diverse nor consequential. Given the Kelley et al. (1983) characterization of a close relationship as one characterized by relatively high frequency, diversity, and strength, however, we expected moderate associations among the RCI dimensions in our sample of closest relationships. As shown in Table 1, the expected pattern of modest intercorrelation between the Frequency, Diversity, and Strength scales was obtained. The measures were correlated, but were not redundant with one another. (The intercorrelations of RCI subscale scores broken down by relationship type as well as by sex of subject are also displayed in Table 1. Romantic and friend relationships show roughly the same pattern of intercorrelation between measures, but family relationships show strength to be unassociated with frequency or diversity; men and women show approximately the same pattern of intercorrelation between measures.)

To create an overall index of relationship closeness, we decided to sum across the frequency, diversity, and strength scores. We arrived at this equal weighting scheme simply by virtue of the fact that we possessed neither theoretical nor empirical justification for doing otherwise. This simple aggregation, furthermore, was possible because scores on each dimension had been converted to a common 10-point metric, so that each dimension contributed equally to overall closeness scores. Overall closeness scores, therefore, could range from 3 to 30, with higher scores reflecting greater closeness. The coefficient alpha computed from this three-item RCI index was .62.

## Results and Discussion

### Test-Retest Reliability of the RCI

We have already reported the internal consistency coefficients for the three subscales of the RCI, each of which was within expected latitudes. The matter of ascertaining the test-retest reliability of the RCI posed the usual conceptual problem with scales of this type: to wit, how stable does one expect the closeness of a relationship to be, or over what time period does one expect to see little fluctuation in closeness? With respect to the individual scales, we expected that there might be some fluctuation in the two scales that are heavily activity based, but that the strength measure would be relatively more stable. Considering the stability of the RCI overall, we reasoned that because these were the respondents' closest relationships, they should show reasonable stability within a period of a month. (On the other hand, the fact that romantic relationships were chosen as the closest relationship by the majority of individuals in this subject population, combined with the fact that such relationships are reputed to be notoriously unstable, made us somewhat uncertain of even this assumption.) The point here is that there is no theory that would allow us to select a specific time period over which we believed the RCI score should remain stable. As is the case in the development of many psychological measures, then, we knew that the test-retest reliability of the RCI over any particular time period would tell us something about the RCI and something about the stability of closest relationships, but in unknown proportion about each if test-retest reliability proved to be low.

In the end, we set a 3- to 5-week time period over which we expected RCI scores to remain stable. Accordingly, we drew a secondary sample of 75 subjects who completed the RCI for their closest relationship at Time 1 and then again at Time 2, 3-5 weeks later (the variability in Time 2 being the result of scheduling problems with individual subjects). Again, the respondents in this sample were similar in all respects to the primary sample. The correlation between RCI total scores at Time 1 and Time 2 was  $r(75) = .82, p < .001$ . The test-retest coefficient for frequency was .82 ( $p < .001$ ); for diversity, .61 ( $p < .001$ ); and for strength, .81 ( $p < .001$ ). Paired  $t$  tests revealed no significant differences between Time 1 and Time 2 RCI totals or between Time 1 and Time 2 subscale scores (all  $t$ s  $< 1.7, ns$ ). We conclude, then, that the RCI possesses acceptable test-retest reliability for the closest relationship.

Table 2  
Total Relationship Closeness Inventory (RCI) Scores and Subscale Scores  
by Relationship Type in Primary Sample

Measure	Relationship type								<i>F</i> (2, 232)
	All ( <i>N</i> = 241)		Romantic ( <i>n</i> = 114)		Friend ( <i>n</i> = 87)		Family ( <i>n</i> = 34)		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Frequency	3.30	2.16	3.84 <sub>b</sub>	2.24	2.89 <sub>a</sub>	2.05	2.74 <sub>a</sub>	1.88	6.58*
Diversity	3.96	1.86	4.49 <sub>b</sub>	2.01	3.58 <sub>a</sub>	1.71	3.47 <sub>a</sub>	1.08	8.18**
Strength	4.98	1.63	5.52 <sub>c</sub>	1.65	4.28 <sub>a</sub>	1.34	4.91 <sub>b</sub>	1.55	16.35**
Total RCI	12.24	4.29	13.85 <sub>b</sub>	4.44	10.74 <sub>a</sub>	3.84	11.12 <sub>a</sub>	3.02	16.35**

Note. Higher means indicate greater closeness; "All" includes work and other relationships. Subscale ranges are from 1 to 10; total RCI ranges from 3 to 30. Means in a row with different subscripts differ significantly,  $p < .05$ .

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

### Distribution of RCI Scores in the Primary Sample of Closest Relationships

Before proceeding to questions of the RCI's validity, we describe the distribution of RCI scores obtained in our primary sample, breaking them down by relationship type (see Table 2) and by sex of respondent (see Table 3). We also present the correlations between the subscales within these breakdowns. It can be seen from Table 2 that, at least in this sample, different types of closest relationships did differ in degree of closeness as measured by the RCI; specifically, the romantic relationships were closer than either the family or friend relationships, with the latter two types of relationship not differing from each other in closeness,  $F(2, 234) = 16.35$ ,  $p < .001$ . There were no sex differences in closeness over all types of relationships on total RCI or any of the subscales, as can be seen in Table 3. It also should be noted that there were no significant Sex  $\times$  Type of Relationship interactions on total RCI or on any of the subscales (all  $F$ s  $\leq 1.08$ ).

### Association Between RCI Scores and Relationship Longevity in Primary Sample

Supporting our decision to treat relationship longevity separately from our closeness index, we found small and negative

correlations between longevity and RCI scores in our primary sample of closest relationships (total RCI,  $r = -.19$ ,  $p < .01$ ; frequency,  $r = -.16$ ,  $p < .05$ ; diversity,  $r = -.19$ ,  $p < .05$ ; strength,  $r = -.09$ , *ns*). If anything, longer as opposed to shorter relationships tended to be ones in which partners in this particular sample spent less time together, engaged in few different activities together, and had less influence on each other's decisions, plans, and activities. Breaking down the overall negative association between longevity and total RCI score by relationship type, however, we discovered that the friend relationships were primarily responsible ( $r = -.33$ ,  $p < .01$ ), with no significant association between longevity and total RCI score within either the romantic relationships ( $r = .00$ ) or the family relationships ( $r = .23$ ). Moreover, no significant association between longevity and any one of the RCI subscales was observed for romantic and family relationships, and significant negative correlations on all three subscales were obtained within friend relationships (frequency,  $r = -.25$ ,  $p < .05$ ; diversity,  $r = -.21$ ,  $p < .05$ ; strength,  $r = -.29$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

Our suspicion that the matter of the association between relationship longevity and relationship closeness is a complex one, both conceptually and empirically, was thus confirmed. The lack of association between relationship longevity and closeness within romantic closest relationships suggests that this type of relationship may be very close, at least on our indicators, and yet be either long term or short term; or that long-term romantic relationships, at least when they are the closest relationship, are not closer than short-term romantic relationships on the dimensions of frequency, diversity, and strength. Family relationships tend to be long-term relationships, most having lasted over the individual's life span; thus, the lack of association between longevity and RCI score may be the result of a restriction in range on the longevity dimension in this population (although such restriction would not necessarily be expected in other populations, one composed of binuclear families, for example).

Friend relationships, however, were a surprise. When the friend relationship was the closest relationship, there was a negative association between longevity and RCI score, suggesting that it is short-term friendships that tend to be close, at least when viewed from the angles of our measures. With respect to

Table 3  
Total Relationship Closeness Inventory (RCI) Scores and Subscale Scores by Sex of Respondent in Primary Sample

Measure	Sex of respondent				<i>F</i> (1, 239)
	Male ( <i>n</i> = 116)		Female ( <i>n</i> = 125)		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Frequency	3.20	2.14	3.38	2.19	<1
Diversity	3.83	1.96	4.09	1.76	<2
Strength	5.08	1.69	4.90	1.58	<1
Total RCI	12.10	4.27	12.37	4.32	<1

Note. Higher means indicate greater closeness.

Table 4  
*Total Relationship Closeness Inventory (RCI)*  
*and Subscale Scores for Close and Not Close*  
*Relationships in Secondary Sample*

Measure	Close ( <i>n</i> = 75)		Not close ( <i>n</i> = 75)		<i>t</i> (74)
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Frequency	4.95	1.94	2.81	1.70	8.85*
Diversity	5.85	1.67	3.60	1.49	9.50*
Strength	5.13	1.55	2.59	1.49	11.21*
Total RCI	15.93	3.89	9.00	3.72	12.15*

*Note.* Close relationship scores taken from RCI Time 1 administration; pattern of scores and significance levels do not differ from Time 2 RCI Close administration.

\*  $p < .001$ .

the long-term friendships in this sample, one can speculate that many respondents chose a friend from times past (e.g., high school), perhaps a person they now see infrequently. If so, these long-term friendships would show up low on both frequency and diversity. However, they also are revealed to be low on strength, suggesting that these long-term friends are truly having little impact on the individuals' activities. These long-term friends, however, may still be warmly and affectionately regarded, leading to their choice as the respondent's closest relationship. When viewed through the lens of the RCI, however, where closeness is equated with high interdependence, these are not close relationships.

#### *Closest Relationship RCI Scores Contrasted With RCI Scores of a Not-Close Relationship*

If the RCI has any validity, it should, at bare minimum, be able to discriminate between an individual's closest relationship and a current relationship that is not close. Thus, we asked a secondary sample of 75 respondents (the same secondary sample previously described from whom test-retest reliability data were collected) not only to complete the RCI for their closest relationship, but also to complete it for a "not-close" relationship. Specifically, respondents were told,

As part of our ongoing investigation into the nature of interpersonal relationships, we would like you to answer some questions about a relationship you have that is NOT CLOSE. Think of a person with whom you have a relationship where the relationship does not qualify as a close relationship; where it is not a deep relationship, not an involved relationship, and not an intimate relationship.

A comparison of the RCI scores for the closest relationship and for a not-close relationship is presented in Table 4. It can be seen that paired *t* tests between the close RCI and the not-close RCI produced highly significant differences, with the close RCI total scores, as well as the subscale scores, being almost twice as high as the not-close scores. The RCI thus seems to possess at least some degree of validity in discriminating the closeness of an individual's relationships.

Parentetically, we observe with interest that the type of rela-

tionship chosen as closest differs from the type chosen as an ongoing but not-close relationship. Although most of the closest relationships in this secondary sample were romantic relationships, less than 3% chose a romantic relationship as a not-close relationship. Rather, most identified a friend relationship as a not-close relationship (61%); and 16% identified a work relationship, 13% a roommate relationship, and 8% a family relationship as not close.

It should be explicitly noted, then, that our close versus not-close relationship comparisons are confounded by relationship type. However, if we examine close and not-close relationships within the friend relationship type (the only relationship type chosen in sufficient numbers in both close [ $n = 20$ ] and not-close [ $n = 45$ ] designations), we still find a significant RCI total score difference (close,  $M = 13.10$ ; not close,  $M = 8.91$ ),  $t(63) = 3.59$ ,  $p < .001$ . When we examine the RCI scores of just those people ( $n = 16$ ) who chose a friend as their closest relationship and another friend as their not-close relationship, we continue to observe significant discrimination between the two relationships on the RCI (close,  $M = 13.13$ ; not close,  $M = 8.69$ ),  $t(16) = 3.11$ ,  $p < .01$ .

#### *RCI Scores Contrasted to a Subjective Closeness Index in Primary Sample of Closest Relationships*

So far, we have established that the RCI possesses satisfactory reliability and a modicum of validity in that it does distinguish between a relationship that the respondent identifies as his or her closest and one that is identified as not close. Other commonly used measures of relationship closeness may possess those characteristics as well. We now directly confront, then, the question of the RCI's redundancy with other putative measures of closeness, or the matter of the RCI's *discriminant validity*.

The most commonly used method to assess the closeness of a relationship has been based on the assumption that the individual is the supreme authority on whether, and how much, a relationship is close, and, moreover, is perfectly capable of saying as much to interested observers. This assumption does not appear to be wholly unreasonable, for the individuals themselves, far better than the observers, can draw on their own extensive and special knowledge of the relationship, as well as their undoubtedly somewhat idiosyncratic meanings of the word *close* (e.g., love, intimacy, trust, commitment, etc.) to arrive at their assessment. Given the popularity, as well as the reasonableness and ease of simply asking people how close their relationship is, as contrasted to the psychometric and conceptual acrobatics the development of a device such as the RCI entails, there was perhaps no question of greater interest to us than how responses to the RCI would compare with the individuals' own subjective assessments of the closeness of their closest relationship.

Accordingly, in addition to completing the RCI for the closest relationship, each respondent in the primary sample also answered two other questions about that relationship: (a) "Relative to *all* your other relationships (both same and opposite sex), how would you characterize your relationship with this person?" and (b) "Relative to what you know about *other people's* close relationships, how would you characterize your relation-

ship with this person?" In both cases, respondents estimated the closeness of their relationships on 7-point scales, with higher scores indicating greater closeness. Responses to these two items were positively correlated ( $r = .58, p < .001$ ), and they were summed to create a Subjective Closeness Index.

The correlation between the total RCI score and the Subjective Closeness Index score was statistically significant but modest ( $r = .20, p < .05$ ). Again, whatever each closeness index is measuring, they are not wholly redundant with each other. Moreover, the two indexes exhibit different patterns when the scores are broken down by sex of respondent. It will be recalled that the RCI did not show significant differences between sex of respondent on total score or on subscale scores. The Subjective Closeness Index, however, did show a difference (male,  $M = 11.57$ , female,  $M = 12.19$ ),  $F(1, 240) = 6.06, p < .05$ . Thus, although the RCI indicated that there is no difference in the closeness of men's and women's closest relationships, the Subjective Closeness Index suggested that women's closest relationships are closer than men's.

The Subjective Closeness Index also showed a different pattern than the RCI when closeness scores were broken down by relationship type. It will be recalled that the RCI indicated romantic closest relationships to be closer than either friend or family relationships, which did not differ in closeness. The Subjective Closeness Index, on the other hand, indicated both romantic ( $M = 12.03$ ) and friend ( $M = 11.95$ ) relationships to be equally close, and closer than family relationships ( $M = 11.03$ ),  $F(2, 234) = 3.62, p < .05$ . (It should also be noted that the Subjective Closeness Index was modestly [ $r = -.10, ns$ ] but, unlike the RCI, not significantly associated with longevity.) As this suggests, the magnitude of the correlations between RCI scores and Subjective Closeness Index scores differed among relationship types, with the greatest correspondence within romantic relationships ( $r = .33, p < .001$ ), lesser association within family relationships ( $r = .20, ns$ ), and virtually no correspondence within friend relationships ( $r = .01, ns$ ).

We did anticipate that the RCI and Subjective Closeness Index scores would differ somewhat, if only because what is undoubtedly included in any individual's subjective closeness assessment, and what is intentionally missing from the RCI, is the individual's affective *feelings* for the relationship partner. In fact, it has been hypothesized (Berscheid, 1983) that it is the override of these affective feelings, along with the popular assumption that close relationships are characterized by positive emotions and feelings and that negatively toned relationships are not close, that leads people to experience nasty surprises about how close their relationships truly are. (The reader will recall that we have already pointed a suspicious finger at affect as being responsible for the observed negative association between closeness as measured by the RCI and longevity within friendships.)

The layperson's belief that close relationships are characterized by both positive affect and infrequent experiences of negative feeling is shared by some relationship investigators. For example, relationship researchers and therapists commonly attempt to assess the degree of "satisfaction" or "distress" in relationships, often implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) assuming this to be an important feature of relationship closeness (see Bradbury & Fincham, 1987, for a discussion of affect as-

essment in marital counseling, for example). Because we suspected that subjective assessments of closeness might importantly incorporate the affective factor, and thus be at least partially responsible for the observed discrepancy between RCI scores and scores on the Subjective Closeness Index, we attacked the issue directly and assessed the affective tone of the closest relationship.

### *RCI Scores Contrasted to Three Measures of Relationship Affect*

The affective tone of the relationship was examined in three ways: (a) In the primary sample, we constructed a relationship Emotional Tone Index and contrasted it to RCI scores, to Subjective Closeness Index scores, and to longevity; (b) in the primary sample, we also examined the correspondence between RCI scores, Subjective Closeness Index scores, and responses to two questions assessing affect for the partner; and (c) in a secondary sample of closest relationships, we contrasted RCI scores to scores on Rubin's (1970, 1973) Liking and Loving scales.

**Emotional Tone Index.** To measure the emotional tone of the relationship, we asked respondents in our primary sample to estimate the frequency with which they experienced 27 different emotions in their closest relationship (using 7-point scales with 1 = *never* and 7 = *almost always*). Included were 12 positive and 15 negative emotions, with both intense emotions (such as elated and angry) and less intense feelings (such as contented and disappointed) represented. We then took the difference between each individual's average ratings on the positive and the negative emotions as a measure of the relative frequency with which positive and negative emotions were experienced in the relationship, with positive scores indicating an affectively positive relationship.

There was no association between RCI score and score on the Emotional Tone Index ( $r = .04, ns$ ), and there also were no sex differences on the Emotional Tone Index (male,  $M = 2.17$ ; female,  $M = 2.42$ ),  $F(1, 240) < 2, ns$ . There were also no differences between relationship types on the Emotional Tone Index (romantic,  $M = 2.38$ ; friend,  $M = 2.32$ ; family,  $M = 2.10$ ),  $F(2, 234) < 1, ns$ . The Emotional Tone Index did show a significant but modest association with longevity ( $r = -.11, p < .05$ ), with longer relationships reflecting relatively less positive affect. Also, and just as we suspected there would be, there was a positive but again slight association between Emotional Tone Index score and Subjective Closeness Index score ( $r = .13, p < .05$ ), with the subjectively closer relationships being more positively toned affectively.

Pausing to reflect on the implications of those findings for the discriminant validity of the RCI, it appears that none of the relationship indexes examined so far can be substituted for any one of the others, for, importantly, they are not tapping the same thing. In fact, each of the measures gives a different view of closest relationships; depending on the measure of closeness used, one arrives at different answers to substantive questions about close relationships.

The RCI suggests that men's and women's closest relationships do not differ in closeness and that romantic relationships are significantly closer than either family or friend relation-

Table 5

*Affect for Partner Index Correlations With Relationship Closeness Inventory (RCI) and Subjective Closeness Index by Relationship Type and Sex of Respondent in Primary Sample*

Type of relationship and sex of respondent	Measure		
	RCI	Subjective closeness index	<i>z</i>
All relationships	.20***	.41***	3.58**
Romantic	.33***	.57***	3.21**
Friend	-.03	.43***	3.91**
Family	.23	.23	<1
Men (all relationships)	.16*	.34***	2.03*
Women (all relationships)	.23**	.45***	3.46**

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

ships; however, the Subjective Closeness Index indicates that women's closest relationships are closer than men's, and that romantic and friend relationships are equally close and both are closer than family relationships. The Emotional Tone Index, on the other hand, suggests no sex differences and no differences in closeness among relationship types. The RCI, the Subjective Closeness Index, and the Emotional Tone Index thus do not present a unified picture of people's closest relationships. For present purposes, this state of affairs testifies to the discriminant validity of the RCI (as well as to that of the other measures, of course).

*Affect for Partner Index.* In the primary sample of closest relationships, we asked each respondent to indicate, on a 7-point scale (with the anchors 1 = *not at all* and 7 = *a great deal*) "How much do you love X?" and "How much do you like X?" The responses to these two items were summed ( $r = .34$ ,  $p < .001$ ) to provide an Affect for Partner Index for the closest relationship, and the correlations between this index and the RCI, as well as between it and the Subjective Closeness Index, are displayed in Table 5 (with each also broken down by relationship type and by sex of respondent).

Because these are the individuals' closest relationships, one would expect some association between closeness, however it is assessed, and subjective feelings of loving and liking for the partner. As Table 5 reflects, that was indeed the case. However, because the RCI was intended to assess interdependence, not affect, and because we suspected that subjective feelings of closeness are importantly influenced by the positivity of affective feelings for the partner, we expected to observe less correspondence between it and the Affect for Partner Index than between the Subjective Closeness and Affect for Partner indexes. As can be seen in Table 5, the difference between these correlations was significant and in the expected direction ( $z = 3.58$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and was obtained for both men and women. (Although the sets of correlations for men and women on both indexes suggest that women may show more of an association between closeness and affect for the partner than do men, the differences were not significant.)

Breaking down the correlations by type of relationship, we see that the association between Affect for Partner and RCI scores holds primarily for romantic relationships (with the asso-

ciation between affect and the RCI still being significantly less than that observed for affect and the Subjective Closeness Index). The Subjective Closeness Index, however, shows strong association with affect for both romantic and friend relationships. Both closeness indexes show no association between closeness and affect positivity within family relationships.

This pattern of results thus provides further support for the discriminant validity of the RCI; again, it is not tapping precisely what a Subjective Closeness Index taps. It also provides a measure of construct validity for the RCI in that we expected to observe RCI scores *not* to be highly associated with an Affect for Partner Index. This last point was especially important to us, for we hope the RCI will prove to be useful in identifying close relationships that the respondent him- or herself would not think to label as *close*. In this sample, of course, the respondent identified the closest relationship, and if the observed association between positive affect and feelings of subjective closeness is any indication, the respondent's affective feelings for the partner probably played a role in that initial designation. Thus, if we, the investigators, had obtained RCI scores for all of the respondent's relationships, and if from those scores we had identified his or her closest relationship, we would expect to find even less of an association between positive affect and RCI scores for closest relationships.

*Rubin's Loving and Liking scales.* Rubin's (1973) Loving and Liking scales not only directly assess the quality of the affective ties between relationship partners, they are among the few relationship assessment scales that have been carefully developed psychometrically. It thus was of interest to compare RCI scores with responses on these two scales. Accordingly, subjects in our secondary sample also completed Rubin's Liking and Loving scales for their closest relationship as well as for the relationship they had identified as not close. The correlations between the RCI and its subscales with the Rubin scales for the close and not-close relationships are displayed in Table 6.

Happily for the construct validity of the RCI, the Rubin Lik-

Table 6

*Relationship Closeness Inventory Correlations with Rubin Liking and Loving Scales Within "Close" and "Not Close" Relationships in Secondary Sample*

Relationship	Liking scale	Loving scale
Close		
RCI total	-.07	.21
Frequency	-.18	-.04
Diversity	-.01	.12
Strength	-.07	.45*
<i>M</i>	61.22	58.37
<i>SD</i>	12.65	12.78
Not close		
RCI total	.28*	.59*
Frequency	.16	.39*
Diversity	.21	.45*
Strength	.32*	.58*
<i>M</i>	48.05	28.59
<i>SD</i>	16.74	12.93

Note. Liking and Loving Scales are scored on a scale from 9 to 81, with higher scores indicating greater liking and loving.

\*  $p < .01$ .

ing Scale was uncorrelated with the total RCI and with its subscales for the closest relationships, and the Loving Scale was significantly correlated only with the RCI Strength scale,  $r(75) = .45, p < .01$ . This significant correlation is somewhat understandable if only for the reason that the Strength subscale and the Loving Scale both draw heavily on the respondent's subjective perceptions and are answered on similar 7-point scales. On this basis, the lack of correlation between the two Rubin scales and the two behavioral subscales of the RCI, Frequency and Diversity, is also understandable.

Some additional support for the construct validity of the RCI is also found by examining the pattern of correlation between the RCI and Rubin scales within close and not-close relationships. Within not-close relationships, the RCI and Rubin scales are positively correlated (especially in the case of the Loving Scale), yet within close relationships, only one subscale of the RCI shows significant correlation, as previously noted. (As shown in Table 6, restricted ranges on loving and liking scores for the closest relationships do not appear to adequately explain the obtained pattern of correlations.) This, then, suggests more of an overlap between the RCI and Rubin scales when the relationship is of lesser closeness. Why this should be so is not clear.

### *Correspondence Between Romantic Partners on RCI Scores*

So far, we have reported data from only one partner, and those data are for the closest relationship. It is of interest to know how the RCI scores of relationship partners correspond to each other. Although we do not have this information for the closest relationship, we do have it for a sample of 83 subjects drawn from the same population as all samples previously reported (see Omoto, 1989). These heterosexual couples had dated at least 1 month but were not living together, engaged, or married, and both members of the couple completed the RCI and the longevity item.

There was a significant, although far from perfect, correlation between male and female partners' total RCI scores,  $r(83) = .43, p < .05$ ; frequency,  $r = .24, p < .05$ ; diversity,  $r = .43, p < .05$ ; and strength,  $r = .21, p < .05$ . The low frequency correlation is surprising and disappointing; there should have been better correspondence between partners on how much time they typically spend together (hence our recommendation that frequency items in the future refer to "past week" rather than "typical week"). When raw untransformed frequency scores are examined, the correlation improves ( $r = .34, p < .05$ ), but it still is lower than expected. By contrast, the diversity correlation is quite satisfactory, and one would expect it to be for it reflects concrete events of the past week. The fact that the Strength subscale correlation between partners is low is not unexpected for this sample; presumably, it would have been larger if these romantic relationships had also been each partner's closest relationship. It should be noted, too, that all of these partner correlations may suffer from a restriction in range, for all of these relationships were romantic, which probably score higher on each subscale than other relationship types. Finally, partners were in almost perfect agreement on longevity ( $r = .93, p < .05$ ); they agreed on the length of time they had known each other, if not on how much time they typically spend together.

### *Predictive Validity of the RCI Compared With Longevity, Subjective Closeness, and Hedonic Emotional Tone in Primary Sample*

Given that the RCI appears not to be redundant with a number of other measures, can it predict anything of interest? Two relationship outcomes of traditional concern to relationship investigators are relationship stability and the emotional distress experienced by respondents in relationships that weaken or are dissolved. Accordingly, we set out to compare the predictive validity of the RCI with the Subjective Closeness Index, the Emotional Tone Index, and also longevity. With respect to longevity, the prediction was the simple actuarial one: that relationships that had already lasted a long time should be most likely to continue to show endurance. With respect to the RCI and the Subjective Closeness Index, we predicted that closer relationships should endure longer; however, if and when they are terminated, the dissolution of a closer relationship should precipitate more emotional distress. With respect to the Emotional Tone Index, we predicted that the more positively toned the relationship, the more likely it would endure.

To test these predictions, 3 months after collecting the measures of closeness from the primary sample, we contacted by telephone the respondents who had identified a romantic relationship as their closest relationship and asked them about the current status of that relationship. If their relationship had ended in the intervening months, they answered six questions (using 7- and 8-point scales) about the intensity and duration of emotional distress they remembered experiencing at break up (e.g., "Immediately after the break up, how difficult was it for you to make an emotional adjustment?" and "How long were you upset after the break up?") Six months after this follow-up (9 months after our initial contact with them), we contacted the respondents a second time and asked them the same questions about relationship status and emotional distress (if they had broken up).

Of the 105 respondents who had originally nominated a romantic relationship as their closest, we succeeded in contacting 74 at both 3 and 9 months. Of these respondents, 25 (34%) reported that their relationships had ended only 3 months after they had identified it as their closest interpersonal relationship. By the 9-month follow-up, moreover, an additional 11 (15%) respondents reported that their relationships had ended. Thus, being chosen as the *closest* relationship did not guarantee that a current romantic relationship would survive even less than 1 year later, as 49% of these relationships had been dissolved by the last of our follow-ups (see also Hill, Rubin, & Peplau, 1976).

What, if anything, did we know about these relationships 9 months earlier that would have allowed us to predict which would dissolve and which would last? To answer this question, we conducted a simultaneous regression analysis predicting final relationship status (dissolved or enduring) from longevity, the Subjective Closeness Index, the Emotional Tone Index, and the RCI.

Overall, this set of predictors did indeed significantly forecast final relationship status,  $R^2 = .18, F(4, 66) = 3.51, p < .02$ . (Degrees of freedom vary slightly because 3 individuals had incomplete data from the initial questionnaire, making it impossible to construct all of the predictor indexes for these people.)

Table 7  
Standardized Regression Coefficients for the Prediction of  
Relationship Status and Emotional Distress at Break Up

Predictor	Relationship status	Emotional distress
Longevity	.12	.35*
Subjective closeness	.14	.26
Hedonic emotional tone	.14	-.20
Relationship Closeness Inventory	.29*	.04

\*  $p < .05$ .

Among these four predictors, however, the only individual measure that contributed significantly to prediction was the RCI (see Table 7). Members of closer relationships, as determined initially by the RCI, were more likely to stay together than members of less-close relationships. In fact, when entered by itself, the RCI predicted more than 68% of the variance accounted for by the full regression equation.

We also conducted separate analyses for each of the RCI subscales. Frequency did not predict relationship dissolution ( $r^2 = .02$ ,  $ns$ ); more time spent with the partner was related to relationship stability in the predicted direction, although nonsignificantly. However, both the Diversity ( $r^2 = .09$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and Strength scales ( $r^2 = .13$ ,  $p < .01$ ) proved to be significant predictors of break up. As expected, relationships were more likely to endure if respondents reported greater diversity of activities with their partners in the past week as well as greater perceived influence from their partners.

To even more stringently test the RCI's ability to predict final relationship status, we conducted a hierarchical regression analysis in which RCI scores were entered *after* the indexes of longevity, subjective closeness, and emotional tone. As a set, these three measures only marginally predicted final relationship status,  $R^2 = .10$ ,  $F(3, 67) = 2.59$ ,  $p < .10$ . Most important, however, the addition of the RCI significantly contributed to the prediction of final relationship status,  $r^2 = .07$ ,  $F(1, 66) = 5.73$ ,  $p < .05$ . Thus, the RCI was able to significantly predict relationship status above and beyond the other indexes of relationship closeness. Reversing the order of entry, moreover, produced a complementary pattern of effects in which the prediction of relationship status provided by the RCI alone,  $r^2 = .12$ ,  $F(1, 69) = 9.50$ ,  $p < .01$ , could not be improved on by the other measures (incremental  $F = 1.45$ ,  $ns$ ).

To further examine the association between RCI score and relationship status, we created three relationship status categories based on data from our follow-up contacts: (a) relationships that had ended by the initial 3-month follow-up (early break ups); (b) relationships dissolved between 3 and 9 months (late break ups); and (c) those relationships that were still intact at the time of our last, 9-month follow-up (enduring relationships). Next, we conducted a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) on RCI scores as a function of relationship status. The ANOVA revealed a significant effect,  $F(2, 71) = 4.48$ ,  $p < .01$ , which, as can be seen in Figure 1, conformed precisely to prediction. Specifically, early break ups occurred among respondents with the lowest RCI scores, late break ups occurred among individuals with middle RCI scores, and respondents

whose relationships were still intact at the 9-month follow-up had the highest initial RCI scores. Pairwise comparisons using the Student Newman-Keuls procedure revealed a reliable difference ( $p < .05$ ) between the mean RCI scores of the enduring and early-break-up groups. Thus, not only was the RCI capable of predicting break up better than longevity and the other relationship measures, it was able to do so in a relatively precise way. Moreover, when one considers that we were making the prediction from the RCI score of only one partner in the relationship, and that although it takes two people for a relationship to endure but only one to abort it, the potential for the RCI to predict this outcome when the scores of both partners are known seems substantial. This seems especially true when one recalls that the partner correlation, at least for romantic partners whose relationship is not necessarily their closest, is far from perfect.

To measure distress at break up, we created an aggregate index of emotional distress by summing across the six individual distress items ( $\alpha = .86$ ), with higher scores indicating greater emotional distress. Next, we submitted this index to a simultaneous regression analysis, attempting to predict distress from longevity, the Subjective Closeness Index, the Emotional Tone Index, and the RCI. To the extent that each of these measures taps closeness, it should forecast distress at break up (see Berscheid, 1983, 1985).

Overall, this set of predictors significantly predicted distress among individuals whose relationships were ended,  $R^2 = .30$ ,  $F(4, 30) = 3.23$ ,  $p < .05$ . Table 7 shows the individual contributions of the four predictors to distress. As can be seen, only longevity predicted distress. Members of longer relationships reported experiencing greater emotional distress at the dissolution of their relationships than members of shorter relationships. A prime candidate for future investigation to explain this association would be the lesser availability of "substitute partners" (see Berscheid, 1986) to those in longer-term relationships, for emotional distress at the break up of a close relationship should be associated with an inability to resume current activity routines and to fulfill plans and goals. Finally, it should be noted here that although the RCI did not reliably predict distress at dissolution in this sample, as it should have, it has done so within other samples (Simpson, 1987).

## Conclusions

Relationship theorists and investigators have increasingly focused on closeness as the relationship property that underlies many, if not most, relationship phenomena of special predictive interest. Although the adjective *close* as applied to a relationship between two people is immediately meaningful to the behavioral scientist and layperson alike, the development of a science of relationships critically depends on careful explication of the concept of closeness and the subsequent construction of practical means of assessing the extent to which any given relationship possesses this quality. It also ultimately depends on the development of a degree of consensus among relationship researchers about the most profitable ways of conceptualizing and measuring closeness, as we have discussed at length elsewhere (Berscheid et al., 1989). At minimum, progress in understanding relationships in general, and close relationships in particu-

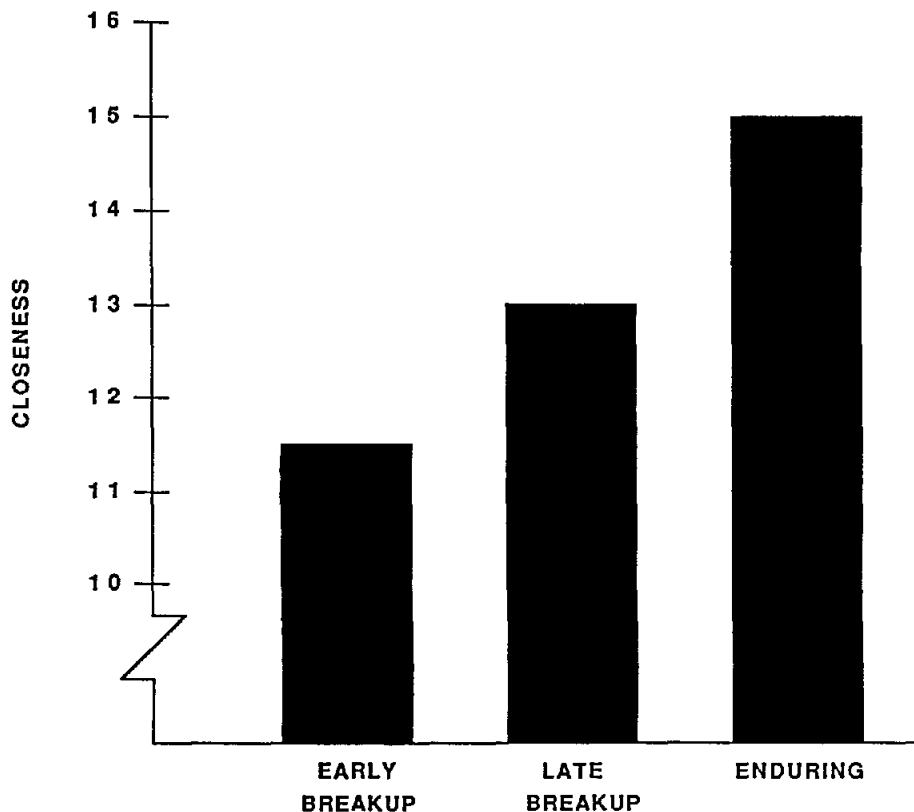


Figure 1. Mean initial Relationship Closeness Inventory scores as a function of relationship status.

lar, will be furthered by attention to the conceptual ambiguities present in the various popular means of identifying those relationships that are close and those that are less so.

It will be recalled that the development of the RCI began with the hope of developing a *generic* closeness measure, one that assessed the common denominator of closeness that is believed to underlie many relationships even though those close relationships may take different outward forms. It is usual, of course, to study close relationships within relationship type. Whole literatures have developed that focus exclusively on romantic relationships (and within this type, dating relationships and marital relationships), on friendships, and on family relationships; it is relatively rare for a single investigation to span several relationship types. However, if it is true that closeness is a quality that underlies many relationship phenomena, then some means of plumbing down through the particularities of different types of relationships to reach their common nub of closeness must be found to examine how closeness itself is associated with relationship outcomes.

The RCI is only a small beginning in the effort to distill closeness from relationship type, but it is a beginning nonetheless. At the least, the effort to develop a generic measure of closeness has served to remind us, and undoubtedly the reader as well, of the potency of relationship type for influencing answers to questions about close relationships and for posing obstacles to making estimates about the manner in which closeness does underlie relationship phenomena of interest. Of the many exam-

ples of this sad fact, we shall leave the reader with only one: The stability of a close relationship is, as we previously noted, a relationship outcome that has traditionally been of interest to relationship theorists and researchers, and it is also an outcome that frequently has been hypothesized to be associated with closeness. Accordingly, we decided early on that relationship dissolution should be the major predictive validity criterion for the RCI. When it was time to predict dissolution of the closest relationship, however, we belatedly realized how fortunate we were that so many respondents in this subject population had designated a romantic relationship as their closest; we were lucky because this type of relationship usually has a clear breakup point. Friend relationships, on the other hand, do not (and, indeed, very few of our friend closest relationships were reported to have dissolved). Rather, friend relationships that dissolve often wither slowly, like a leaf on a tree, and eventually simply drop out of awareness without notice or care. If we possessed a valid instrument of closeness, we might be able to chart the withering process, but it is unlikely that one could find many people who would ever report that the relationship had "dissolved" and that the former friend was a friend no longer—even though, by our measure, we might confidently pronounce the relationship dead. Similarly, it seems unlikely that many family relationships would be reported to be dissolved, no matter how distant they might be; disinheritance and other clear signs of dissolution, such as making a child a ward of the court, are infrequent events in family relationships. Thus, each relationship

type has norms and customs for "break up" that dictate how—and if—relationship stability can be assessed, and each undoubtedly has other norms and customs that will influence other sorts of relationship outcome measures as well.

In addition to problems associated with relationship type that present special challenges to constructing and validating generic measures of closeness, and thus to testing hypotheses about the role closeness plays in producing and influencing relationship phenomena, the dissection and explication of a concept as robust and complex as closeness is itself a sobering exercise. It is sobering to see what is left when all of the surplus meanings that give the concept its richness (and also help to ensure that the greatest number of people are comfortable with the concept as one has defined it) are excised. Even more sobering is the actual construction of an assessment device based on that specific conceptualization. After all the realities of measurement have been confronted, the practicalities satisfied, and the compromises made, one is left feeling no little surprise that the blunt instrument remaining assesses anything of interest or that it performs in the manner it is supposed to—especially, as in this case, when competing against a Subjective Closeness Index that allows the concept of closeness to be retained in its full idiosyncratic glory by the relationship partners themselves.

The RCI obviously is not the only way to assess relationship closeness. Although we used the Kelley et al. (1983) conceptualization of closeness as a heuristic, that conceptualization is itself only one way to view the important properties of relationship closeness. The RCI does have its modest virtues, however: Some of its psychometric properties are now known; it appears not to be redundant with other often used measures; and it has been demonstrated to predict certain relationship phenomena that a closeness measure should be able to predict if current theories about closeness are correct. We offer the RCI, then, as an alternative to relationship researchers interested in assessing relationship closeness. Only additional use of the inventory will determine if it is useful within other relationship populations and for predicting a variety of relationship phenomena. At the least, and as the data reported here illustrate, the RCI opens up a number of substantive questions about close relationships that otherwise might not have been asked. These importantly include the associations between relationship longevity and other putative indicants of closeness, between relationship affect and closeness, and the associations among all of these within the form the close relationship takes.

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(Appendixes begin on next page.)

## Appendix A

We are currently investigating the nature of interpersonal relationships. As part of this study, we would like you to answer the following questions about your relationship with another person. Specifically, we would like you to choose the *one* person with whom you have the *closest, deepest, most involved, and most intimate relationship*, and answer the following questions with regard to this particular person. For some of you, this person may be a dating partner or someone with whom you have a romantic relationship. For others of you, this person may be a close, personal friend, family member, or companion. It makes no difference exactly who this person is as long as she or he is the one person with whom you have the closest, deepest, most involved, and most intimate relationship. *Please select this person carefully since this decision will affect the rest of this questionnaire.*

With this person in mind, please respond to the following questions:

1. Who is this person? (initial of first name only) \_\_\_\_\_  
 a. What is this person's age? \_\_\_\_\_ What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_  
 b. What is this person's sex? \_\_\_\_\_ What is your sex? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Which one of the following best describes your relationship with this person? (Check *only one*)

**WORK:**

\_\_\_\_\_ co-worker \_\_\_\_\_ your boss/supervisor \_\_\_\_\_ your subordinate

**FAMILY:**

\_\_\_\_\_ aunt/uncle \_\_\_\_\_ sister/brother \_\_\_\_\_ parent \_\_\_\_\_ cousin

**ROMANTIC:**

\_\_\_\_\_ married \_\_\_\_\_ engaged \_\_\_\_\_ living together

\_\_\_\_\_ dating: date only this person

\_\_\_\_\_ dating: date this person and others

**FRIEND:**

\_\_\_\_\_ close friend (non-romantic) \_\_\_\_\_ casual friend

**OTHER:**

\_\_\_\_\_ (please specify \_\_\_\_\_)

3. How long have you *known* this person? Please indicate the *number* of years and/or months (for example, 3 years, 8 months)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months

We would like you to estimate the amount of time you typically spend alone with this person (referred to below as "X") during the day. We would like you to make these time estimates by breaking the day into morning, afternoon, and evening, although you should interpret each of these time periods in terms of your own typical daily schedule. (For example, if you work a night shift, "morning" may actually reflect time in the afternoon, but is nevertheless time immediately after waking.) Think back over the past week and write in the average amount of time, per day, that you spent *alone with X, with no one else around*, during each time period. If you did not spend any time with X in some time periods, write 0 hour(s) 0 minutes.

4. DURING THE PAST WEEK, what is the average amount of time, per day, that you spent *alone with X* in the MORNING (e.g., between the time you wake and 12 noon)?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ hour(s) \_\_\_\_\_ minutes

5. DURING THE PAST WEEK, what is the average amount of time, per day, that you spent *alone with X* in the AFTERNOON (e.g., between 12 noon and 6 pm)?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ hour(s) \_\_\_\_\_ minutes

6. DURING THE PAST WEEK, what is the average amount of time, per day, that you spent *alone with X* in the EVENING (e.g., between 6 pm and bedtime)?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ hour(s) \_\_\_\_\_ minutes

Compared with the "normal" amount of time you usually spend alone with X, how typical was the *past week*? (Check one)

\_\_\_\_\_ typical \_\_\_\_\_ not typical . . . if so, why? (please explain)

The following is a list of different activities that people may engage in over the course of one week. For each of the activities listed, please check all of those that you have engaged in *alone with X in the past week*. Check only those activities that were done *alone with X* and *not* done with X in the presence of others.

*In the past week*, I did the following activities *alone with X*: (Check all that apply)

- \_\_\_\_\_ did laundry
- \_\_\_\_\_ prepared a meal
- \_\_\_\_\_ watched TV
- \_\_\_\_\_ went to an auction/antique show
- \_\_\_\_\_ attended a non-class lecture or presentation
- \_\_\_\_\_ went to a restaurant
- \_\_\_\_\_ went to a grocery store
- \_\_\_\_\_ went for a walk/drive
- \_\_\_\_\_ discussed things of a personal nature
- \_\_\_\_\_ went to a museum/art show
- \_\_\_\_\_ planned a party/social event
- \_\_\_\_\_ attended class
- \_\_\_\_\_ went on a trip (e.g., vacation or weekend)
- \_\_\_\_\_ cleaned house/apartment
- \_\_\_\_\_ went to church/religious function
- \_\_\_\_\_ worked on homework
- \_\_\_\_\_ engaged in sexual relations
- \_\_\_\_\_ discussed things of a non-personal nature
- \_\_\_\_\_ went to a clothing store
- \_\_\_\_\_ talked on the phone
- \_\_\_\_\_ went to a movie
- \_\_\_\_\_ ate a meal
- \_\_\_\_\_ participated in a sporting activity
- \_\_\_\_\_ outdoor recreation (e.g., sailing)
- \_\_\_\_\_ went to a play
- \_\_\_\_\_ went to a bar
- \_\_\_\_\_ visited family
- \_\_\_\_\_ visited friends
- \_\_\_\_\_ went to a department, book, hardware store, etc.
- \_\_\_\_\_ played cards/board game
- \_\_\_\_\_ attended a sporting event
- \_\_\_\_\_ exercised (e.g., jogging, aerobics)
- \_\_\_\_\_ went on an outing (e.g., picnic, beach, zoo, winter carnival)
- \_\_\_\_\_ wilderness activity (e.g., hunting, hiking, fishing)
- \_\_\_\_\_ went to a concert
- \_\_\_\_\_ went dancing
- \_\_\_\_\_ went to a party
- \_\_\_\_\_ played music/sang

The following questions concern the amount of influence X has on your thoughts, feelings, and behavior. Using the 7-point scale below, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree by writing the appropriate number in the space corresponding to each item.

- |                     |   |   |   |   |   |                  |
|---------------------|---|---|---|---|---|------------------|
| 1                   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                |
| I strongly disagree |   |   |   |   |   | I strongly agree |
1. \_\_\_\_\_ X will influence my future financial security.
  2. \_\_\_\_\_ X does *not* influence everyday things in my life.<sup>1</sup>
  3. \_\_\_\_\_ X influences important things in my life.
  4. \_\_\_\_\_ X influences which parties and other social events I attend.
  5. \_\_\_\_\_ X influences the extent to which I accept responsibilities in our relationship.

- |    |  |   |   |   |   |   |                |
|----|--|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
|    | 1  | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7              |
|    | not at all   |   |   |   |   |   | a great extent |
| 1. | _____ my vacation plans  |   |   |   |   |   |                |
| 2. | _____ my marriage plans  |   |   |   |   |   |                |
| 3. | _____ my plans to have children  |   |   |   |   |   |                |
| 4. | _____ my plans to make <i>major</i> investments (house, car, etc.)     |   |   |   |   |   |                |
| 5. | _____ my plans to join a club, social organization, church, etc.       |   |   |   |   |   |                |
| 6. | _____ my school-related plans  |   |   |   |   |   |                |
| 7. | _____ my plans for achieving a particular financial standard of living |   |   |   |   |   |                |
- <sup>1</sup> reverse-scored item.

### Scoring Criteria for Relationship Closeness Inventory Scales

Now we would like you to tell us how much X affects your future plans and goals. Using the 7-point scale below, please indicate the degree to which your future plans and goals are affected by X by writing the appropriate number in the space corresponding to each item. If an area does not apply to you (e.g., you have no plans or goals in that area), write a 1.

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