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**The Friendship Formation Process in Nigeria:
A Preliminary Study of Cultural Impact,
Communication Pattern, and
Relationship Variables**

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The English language is replete with colloquial phrases extolling the value of friendship. Indeed, such adages are universal—expressed in different words and ways in different cultures but all a manifestation of the very important place of friendship in the life of human beings. A wise saying of the Igbo of Nigeria—“Ezi oyi ka ego”—loosely translates as “a good friend is more valuable than riches.”

However universal the act of friendship (Gudykunst, 1989), its formation, growth, and maintenance appear to differ from culture to culture. Several studies have shown that friendship patterns are culture-specific—that is, are regulated and governed by cultural norms and values (Atsumi, 1980; Cushman and Cahn, 1985; Cushman, Valentinsen, and Dietrich, 1982; Gudykunst, 1985, 1989; Gudykunst and Nishida, 1986; Thompson and Nishimura, 1952; Wright, 1978; Yum, 1983, 1988). For example, in the United States the roles of spouse and best friend are usually performed by one person; a mother and her child could see themselves (and be accepted so by society) as best friends; brothers and sisters proudly refer to themselves as best friends. In Nigeria, such references would be seen as insulting and degrading to levels of blood relationships. Even though an individual might be very fond of a parent and confide in that parent, the individual would not refer to the relationship as a friendship.

Purpose and Rationale

This study is directed at identifying the factors—social, cultural, human, and communication—that influence the formation, development, and maintenance of friendship in Nigeria. There is no existing study of friendship as a relational pattern in that nation. The existing literature on friendship-formation patterns contains no information from the continent of Africa, nor does it adequately account for cultural variability in friendship patterns around the world. This vacuum is conspicuous in light of demands for intercultural communication research, which is fast becoming the cornerstone of international understanding and world peace. Information from different parts of the world on factors or social forces that underlie systems of interpersonal relationships can provide insight for peoples of the world as to why people from other cultures behave the way they do. The present study examines one form of relational pattern in Nigeria toward the goal of greater comprehension among various cultures.

We are concerned with two basic issues. First, we attempt to identify the variables or qualities which Nigerians consider important in the formation and maintenance of friendship. Second, we attempt to determine the importance attached to each variable or quality in the process (see Moemeka, 1983). The findings of this preliminary study may enhance the pursuit of other significant issues—for example, the impact of existing friendship patterns on the social system, the necessity to distinguish between same-sex and opposite-sex friendship patterns (see Bahk, chapter 5), the importance of identifying subcultural (idiosyncratic) variations within the culture, and the significance of the conditions that make for friendship termination.

Cultural Background

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa with a 1990 population estimation of 110 million. If UNESCO's estimate of the population of Africa as just over 400 million is accurate, every fourth African is a Nigerian. The size of Nigeria's population, its enormous natural resources, and the quantity and quality of its human resources make Nigeria a force to reckon with in Africa. This enviable position, although it seems to have evaporated in recent years because of economic crisis, has acted as a culturally binding force that tends to make Nigerians behave amicably toward one another, providing an enhanced environment for friendship formation.

Nigeria is a multiethnic society. There are about 300 ethnic groups (tribes), each with its own distinct language and easily identifiable subculture. Thus, the country is rich in cultural diversity and has developed a national sensitivity

toward the need for "unity in diversity." Political leaders, since before independence from the United Kingdom in 1960, have stressed the need for interethnic understanding that could lead to friendship across tribal lines.

Among the multiplicity of ethnic groups, three tribes—the Hausa (in the north), the Igbo (in the east), and the Yoruba (in the west)—have dominated the socio-political and economic life of the country since 1950. Each controlled one of the three political regions into which the country was divided before independence, and still wields substantial power over that political entity. Other tribal or ethnic groups that have had substantial political and social influence on the nation include the Fulani and the Kanuri in the north, the Efik and the Ijaw in the east, and the Edo in the west.

In spite of people's recognition of the need for interethnic understanding and friendship, political wrangling and bitterness have plagued relationships among the ethnic groups, especially among the three major ones. These three have been particularly envious of one another over who has (or should have) the largest share of the national "cake"—political power and control of government, industrial and economic superiority, educational opportunities, and other social amenities. It was mainly this deadly envy manifested in intolerance and feelings of superiority that led to the 1966–69 civil war.

Surprisingly, the civil war, tribal animosity, and political strife appear to be directed at the tribes as entities rather than the individuals that make up the tribes. For even though the tribes have strong prejudicial attitudes toward one another, examples of strong friendship across tribal lines abound. Most important, these friendships exist not only among ordinary citizens, but also among political and industrial leaders. Two of the best-known friends of the first president of Nigeria, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe (an Igbo), are Chief Adeniran Ogunsanya (a Yoruba) and Alhaji Aminu Kano (a Hausa). It was probably the influence of Igbo friends that led the current president of the country, General Ibrahim Babangida (from the north), to the woman he eventually married, Maryam (an Igbo from the midwest). The first author of this chapter—an Igbo—has two very close friends. One is Urhobo; the other Yoruba.

The existence of such friendship formation in the face of strong tribal prejudices would thus appear to be determined by factors that cut across tribal lines. One set of these factors may be human behavioral qualities that distinguish between "good" and "bad" friends, irrespective of circumstances of birth. The question then arises: What are these qualities, and which of them prevail in Nigeria?

It must be noted that for Nigerians and other Africans the concept "friend" is not a constant. Its meaning and application change depending on whom one is talking about and to whom one is talking. Someone introduced as a friend to one person could be introduced as a brother to another person. It is unlikely that any culture-conscious Nigerian would introduce another Nigerian (irrespective of his/her tribe) to non-Nigerians as a friend. S/he is

most likely to introduce that person as a brother or sister. However, if that Nigerian were in the midst of people of his/her own ethnic group, s/he would introduce that same person as a friend. Traditionally, the closer the blood relation between two people of the same sex who exhibit a close relationship, the less likely is it that the concept "friend" would be used to describe that relationship. This usage is based on the belief that a brother/sister is culturally more highly valued than a friend. This cultural assessment is reflected in an Igbo adage, "ozu sime oyi a naa," which is translated, "as soon as the corpse starts decomposing, friends disappear." This implies that only brothers and sisters endure until the very last. Other tribes have similar adages.

When a friend becomes very valuable, s/he is accorded an honorary brother/sister status; it is never the other way around. Though brothers or sisters may be very close, they do not become "friends." This is why one occasionally hears the statement, "He is no longer a friend—he is much more: he is now a brother." It is not that the culture has little regard for friendship; the importance of friendship, though well-recognized, is third after that of parents and brothers/sisters (of the same parents and of the extended family).

Friendship across sex lines is culturally suspect. In fact, it is openly discouraged, unless it involves young boys and very old women or young girls and very old men. The rationale for this is the necessity to protect the citizens against sexual temptations, which if given in to would lead to the violation of cultural norms and values concerning the sanctity of sex. It is said that friendship between opposite sex partners who are not culturally permitted to have sexual relationship is like "hiding a rat where a cat can get at it." (See Chapter 10 for a full treatment of culturally dictated values for sex in Nigeria.)

Because it is expected that these cultural variables are not the only ones that affect friendship formation in Nigeria, questions arise: What are the other variables and how do they relate to the friendship process in the Nigerian sociocultural environment?

The qualities Honesty and Responsibility are treated specially here. In everyday discussions, political speeches, academic exchanges, and even among co-workers and teenagers, these qualities are mentioned as the key to lasting friendship. This anecdotal evidence of their prevalence would seem to suggest a high degree of cultural value attached to them. It is thus important to discover if this normative ascription of value identifies theoretically important variables for friendship formation in Nigeria. Furthermore, it is important to discover the relationship between these traditional qualities and other variables.

Our basic concerns in this study can be summarized in the following formal research questions:

RQ1: *What are the most important friendship qualities (variables) in the Nigerian cultural environment?*

RQ2: *What is the relationship between friendship qualities (variables) and Honest Person?*

RQ3: *What is the relationship between friendship qualities (variables) and Responsible Person?*

Semantic markers for levels of friendship have been identified by research (see Chapter 3) as variables for levels or degrees of friendship. These markers are Acquaintance, Casual (Ordinary) Friend, Good (Close) Friend, and Best Friend.

Addressing these levels of friendship and a fifth level, Ideal Friend, we posit three related research questions.

RQ4: *What is the relationship between the Self and the semantic markers; in other words, do these markers represent increasing degrees of friendship for this culture?*

RQ5: *What are the entry level variables (those which predict initiation) and intensity variables (those which predict growth) in friendship?*

RQ6: *How much do individuals value the crucial entry and intensity variables in friendship?*

RQ7: *What are the respondents' perceptions of the relationships among the semantic marker variables?*

Methodology

Sample

The sample, chosen from a population of civil servants and graduate students from different parts of Nigeria, consists of 54 respondents (27 females and 27 males) purposely selected from eight ethnic groups (Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Fulani, Kanuri, Efik, Edo, and Ijaw) whose cultures are considered most pervasive among Nigerians. Ethnic groups were distributed throughout the sample as follows: 20 individuals of northern Nigerian ethnicity (Hausa, Fulani, and Kanuri); 20 individuals of eastern Nigerian ethnicity (Igbo, Efik, and Ijaw); and 14 individuals of western Nigerian ethnicity (Yoruba and Edo). The average age of the respondents, whose minimum level of education is high school, was 38 years, an age considered old enough for the individual to have felt the impact of pure traditional culture, yet young enough to have

been influenced by encroaching Western values. (See Chapter 10 for a discussion of Nigerian value change.)

Data Collection/Measurement

The data were collected through a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire first asked respondents to list freely, in descending order of preference, 10 qualities that must be present in someone before they can consider entering into a friend relationship with that person. Such a listing produced two measures: the frequency of the listed qualities; and the frequency of each quality at each point on a scale of 1 (most preferred) to 10 (least preferred). For this latter measure, a value score was computed by reversing the ranks given by the respondents (so that no mention of qualities by some respondents would be reflected as true zeros), then by summing the rankings. The most highly valued qualities were thus identified by frequency and value scores. Some of the qualities mentioned by respondents were collapsed because of similarity in meaning. For example, "truthfulness" and "honesty" were collapsed into one concept—Honesty. "Smartness" and "intelligence" were collapsed into Intelligence; "hard work" and "resourcefulness" into Resourcefulness; and "dependability," "trustfulness," and "trustworthiness" into Trustworthiness.

Respondents were required to rate the distances of the valued qualities from the concepts Honest Person and Responsible Person and to rate the distance between the self (Real Self and Ideal Self) and each of the most valued qualities (and other variables in the analysis). These ratings were done in terms of perceived distance in cognitive space measured in points from 1 (extremely strong) to 20+ (extremely weak). In addition, they were asked to rate the distance of each of the most valued qualities in relation to the semantic-marker variables for increasing levels of friendship—Acquaintance, Ordinary Friend, Close Friend, and Best Friend—as well as the concept Ideal Friend. Finally, they were asked to rate the distances among the semantic markers. The measures obtained (Strength of Relationship points) served as indications of the values placed on each quality (variable) by respondents. The scale was interpreted as follows:

<u>Points Apart</u>	<u>Value</u>
1-3	extremely strong
4-6	very strong
7-9	strong
10-13	weak
14-17	very weak
18-20+	extremely weak

Table 6.1
Frequency Count, Percentage Scores, Value Scores, and Value Ranks
of the Most Frequently Mentioned Qualities

<i>Quality</i>	<i>Frequency (%)</i>	<i>Value Score</i>	<i>Value Rank</i>
Tolerance	54 (100%)	303	2
Honesty	51 (94%)	465	1
Caring	49 (90.7%)	303	3
Trustworthiness	43 (79.6%)	217	5
Humor	42 (77.8%)	132	6
Intelligence	40 (74.1%)	230	4
Responsibility	28 (51.8%)	126	7
Religion	18 (33.3%)	123	8
Self-Discipline	18 (33.3%)	122	9
Resourcefulness	18 (33.3%)	97	10

Analyses, Results, and Discussion

Although only 10 friendship qualities were requested in the questionnaire, respondents were free to mention any qualities. In total, a list of 27 variables resulted. Many of the qualities were listed by few respondents. For example, Respect was listed by only 5 (9%) of the respondents; Boldness by 7 (12%); and Sociability by 10 (18%). The highest possible score was 54 (100%). Those qualities that did not score up to one-third of this total were eliminated. Those qualities that exceeded two-thirds of this total—mentioned by a majority of the respondents—are considered to be the crucial set of variables. Table 6.1 presents a list showing the frequency count, percentage scores, and value scores of the most frequently mentioned qualities.

The Frequency/Percentage tables that follow contain, in detail, the Strength of Relationship points (measured in cognitive-space distance) as perceived by the individual with regard to the relationship between friendship qualities and Honest Person and Responsible Person, between the self and semantic-marker variables, between friendship qualities and semantic-marker variables, between the self and friendship qualities, and among the semantic marker variables. (In these tables, percentages sum to less than 100% because not all respondents listed all qualities.)

Analyses

The thrust of these analyses is, of course, to explore the research questions raised in this chapter. These analyses provide an understanding of the

friendship variables at work in Nigeria and their role in initiating and maintaining friendship. First, we identify the crucial variables (mentioned by two-thirds of the respondents). These variables—Tolerance, Honesty, Caring, Trustworthiness, Humor, and Intelligence—are the first set of variables used in this analysis. The second set of variables are the semantic markers that address questions of levels and intensity of interaction in friendship.

For questions that examine strength of relationship, the tables divide the scale into six levels, from extremely strong to extremely weak. This provides detailed levels of the strength of the relationships examined. For the particular purpose of these analyses, which are directed at determining the relative strength or weakness of the relationship rather than the level of strength, we divided the scale into two levels—Strong and Weak. In considering the results, therefore, all scores should be collapsed accordingly; positive levels of relationship classified as Strong, and negative levels as Weak.

Results and discussion for RQ1. What are the most important friendship qualities (variables) in the Nigerian cultural environment? Ten variables were mentioned by at least one-third of the respondents. Of these ten, six are considered crucial (mentioned by two-thirds). Tolerance was listed by 100% of the respondents and ranks second in value score. Honesty, listed by 94% of the respondents, ranks first in value. The remaining crucial variables in order of frequency are Caring (91%, rank 3), Trustworthiness (80%, rank 5), Humor (78%, rank 6), and Intelligence (74%, rank 4). (See Table 6.1.)

The two traditional friendship variables, Honesty and Responsibility, were both mentioned by the respondents. Though Honesty (94%, rank 1) is still extremely important, Responsibility (52%, rank 7) appears to have been superseded by other friendship qualities.

Results and discussion for RQ2. What is the relationship between friendship qualities (variables) and Honest Person? The data in Table 6.1 show that Honesty is clearly an important variable for Nigerian friendship. This traditional quality thus retains its place in cultural estimation. The thrust of RQ2, however, is not whether Honesty is still important, but rather the examination of the relationship between Honest Person and other friendship qualities. In other words, how do Nigerians perceive an honest person in relation to the other most valued friendship qualities? Table 6.2 presents these results. These respondents view an honest person as caring, trustworthy, tolerant, and somewhat humorous (in order of relationship strength), but not necessarily intelligent. All but one of the crucial variables are strongly related to Honest Person.

Results and discussion for RQ3. What is the relationship between friendship qualities (variables) and Responsible Person? The data in Table 6.1

Table 6.2
Strength of Relationship Between
Honest Person and Friendship Qualities

	<i>Extremely Strong</i>	<i>Very Strong</i>	<i>Strong</i>	<i>Weak</i>	<i>Very Weak</i>	<i>Extremely Weak</i>
Tolerance	18 (33%)	4 (7%)	12 (22%)	13 (24%)	7 (13%)	—
Caring	41 (76%)	3 (6%)	5 (9%)	—	—	—
Trustworthiness	43 (80%)	—	—	—	—	—
Humor	16 (30%)	12 (22%)	—	—	3 (6%)	—
Intelligence	19 (35%)	—	—	15 (28%)	6 (11%)	—
Responsibility	18 (33%)	—	—	—	—	—
Religion	15 (28%)	3 (6%)	—	—	—	—
Self-Discipline	18 (33%)	—	—	—	—	—
Resourcefulness	9 (17%)	—	—	—	9 (17%)	—

Table 6.3
Strength of Relationship Between
Responsible Person and Friendship Qualities

	<i>Extremely Strong</i>	<i>Very Strong</i>	<i>Strong</i>	<i>Weak</i>	<i>Very Weak</i>	<i>Extremely Weak</i>
Tolerance	20 (37%)	6 (11%)	11 (20%)	12 (22%)	—	—
Honesty	50 (93%)	1 (2%)	—	—	—	—
Caring	25 (46%)	12 (22%)	12 (22%)	—	—	—
Trustworthiness	31 (57%)	9 (17%)	3 (6%)	—	—	—
Humor	3 (6%)	5 (9%)	11 (20%)	23 (43%)	—	—
Intelligence	15 (28%)	14 (26%)	—	6 (11%)	5 (9%)	—
Religion	9 (17%)	—	—	9 (17%)	—	—
Self-Discipline	12 (22%)	6 (11%)	—	—	—	—
Resourcefulness	17 (31%)	1 (2%)	—	—	—	—

show that Responsibility as a traditionally valued friendship quality may be diminishing in its importance in contemporary Nigerian friendships. The focus of RQ3, however, is to examine the relationship between Responsible Person and other friendship qualities. In other words, how do Nigerians perceive a responsible person in relation to the other most valued friendship qualities? Table 6.3 presents these results. Responsible Person is very strongly associated with Honesty, signifying a close relationship between these two traditional friendship qualities. A responsible person is honest, caring, trust-

Table 6.4
Strength of Relationship Between the Self
and Semantic-Marker Variables

	<i>Extremely Strong</i>	<i>Very Strong</i>	<i>Strong</i>	<i>Weak</i>	<i>Very Weak</i>	<i>Extremely Weak</i>
<i>Real Self and . . .</i>						
Acquaintance	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	—	5 (9%)	—	33 (61%)
Ordinary Friend	4 (7%)	—	—	10 (19%)	6 (11%)	27 (50%)
Close Friend	18 (33%)	9 (17%)	10 (19%)	6 (11%)	3 (6%)	8 (15%)
Best Friend	34 (63%)	4 (7%)	4 (7%)	9 (17%)	—	2 (4%)
Ideal Friend	45 (63%)	8 (15%)	—	3 (6%)	—	2 (4%)
<i>Ideal Self and . . .</i>						
Acquaintance	6 (11%)	6 (11%)	3 (6%)	—	—	35 (65%)
Ordinary Friend	3 (6%)	5 (9%)	—	5 (9%)	18 (33%)	21 (39%)
Close Friend	20 (37%)	13 (24%)	—	12 (22%)	5 (9%)	4 (7%)
Best Friend	32 (59%)	10 (19%)	9 (17%)	3 (6%)	—	—
Ideal Friend	46 (85%)	4 (7%)	—	—	—	—
<i>Real Self</i>	4 (7%)	16 (30%)	—	—	—	29 (54%)

worthy, tolerant, and somewhat intelligent (in order of relationship strength), but is not humorous. All but one of the crucial variables are strongly related to Responsible Person.

The weak relationship between Humor and Responsible Person may explain the apparent decline in the cultural value of Responsibility. Humor (78%, rank 6) was mentioned more often and ranked more highly in value than Responsibility (52%, rank 7). For these contemporary Nigerians, Humor is a more highly valued friendship quality than Responsibility. The two also have a weak relationship. It thus appears that Humor has superseded Responsibility as a salient and valued friendship quality.

Results and discussion for RQ4. What is the relationship between respondents and the semantic markers; in other words, do these markers represent increasing degrees of friendship for this culture? The results in Table 6.4 indicate that these semantic markers are salient levels for increasing friendship in Nigeria. For both Real Self and Ideal Self, each successive semantic marker is more strongly related. For Real Self, 70% of the respondents view Acquaintance as weakly related (61% rated it extremely weak); 80% view Ordinary Friend as weakly related (50% as extremely weak). The gap between Ordinary Friend and Close Friend appears to be the crucial transitional period for increasing friendship. With Close Friend, the relationship to Real Self is rated on

the strong side of the scale. These ratings again increase toward the strong end of the continuum for Best Friend and Ideal Friend.

For Ideal Self, 65% of the respondents view Acquaintance as weakly related (all rated it extremely weak); 81% view Ordinary Friend as weakly related (39% as extremely weak). The gap between Ordinary Friend and Close Friend again appears to be the crucial transitional period for increasing friendship. With Close Friend, the relationship to Real Self is rated on the strong side of the scale. These ratings again increase toward the strong end of the continuum for Best Friend and Ideal Friend.

Real Self and Ideal Self are weakly related, indicating a self-actualization need that friendship may fulfill. Indeed, 85% of the respondents rated the relationship between Ideal Self and Ideal Friend as extremely strong, whereas only 63% rated the relationship between Real Self and Ideal Friend as extremely strong. We can conclude that the ideal friend is seen by Nigerians as resembling the self, especially the self one aspires to be.

Results and discussion for RQ5. What are the entry-level variables (those that predict initiation) and intensity variables (those that predict growth) in friendship? The crucial qualities were examined for their nature. All of these variables are very strongly related to Ideal Friend, providing more evidence of their salience and importance. Of the six variables (Tolerance, Honesty, Caring, Trustworthiness, Humor, and Intelligence), two were identified as entry-level variables and three as intensity variables. They were identified as such by their patterns of relationship strength with levels of friendship intensity. (See the results for RQ4, which establish that these semantic markers denote salient increasing levels of friendship.) Those variables whose perceived strength of relationship with the semantic markers remained relatively steady were identified as entry level variables. These are Humor and Intelligence. Those variables whose strength of relationship with the semantic markers increased with the friendship level were identified as intensity variables. These are Tolerance, Caring, and Trust. Tables 6.5a-e show these results.

Honesty shows an interesting pattern. The relationship between Honesty and friendship intensity gets weaker from Acquaintance to Ordinary Friend. In the transition to Close Friend, however, the relationship gains tremendous strength and then remains steady. As we saw for the relationship between the self and friendship levels, the gap between Ordinary Friend and Close Friend appears to be a crucial transition period. Because Honesty has been identified as a traditionally valued quality, the pattern for the other traditionally valued quality was examined. Responsibility shows a similar pattern. Although the relationship is on the strong side of the scale for both Acquaintance and Ordinary Friend, it is slightly stronger for Acquaintance; the strength of relationship increases dramatically for Close Friend, then

Tables 6.5a-e
Strength of Relationship Between
Semantic-Markers and Friendship Qualities

Table 6.5a: Acquaintance

	<i>Extremely Strong</i>	<i>Very Strong</i>	<i>Strong</i>	<i>Weak</i>	<i>Very Weak</i>	<i>Extremely Weak</i>
<i>Acquaintance and . . .</i>						
Tolerance	9 (17%)	6 (11%)	15 (28%)	9 (15%)	15 (28%)	—
Honesty	10 (19%)	12 (22%)	—	5 (9%)	—	24 (44%)
Caring	13 (24%)	6 (11%)	—	6 (11%)	—	24 (44%)
Trustworthiness	10 (19%)	10 (19%)	—	18 (33%)	5 (9%)	—
Humor	12 (22%)	13 (24%)	4 (7%)	—	—	13 (24%)
Intelligence	8 (15%)	7 (13%)	10 (19%)	—	15 (28%)	—
Responsibility	10 (19%)	—	6 (11%)	4 (7%)	8 (15%)	—
Religion	—	6 (11%)	—	12 (22%)	—	—
Self-Discipline	3 (6%)	5 (9%)	7 (13%)	3 (6%)	—	—
Resourcefulness	5 (9%)	8 (15%)	—	3 (6%)	2 (4%)	—

Table 6.5b: Ordinary Friend

	<i>Extremely Strong</i>	<i>Very Strong</i>	<i>Strong</i>	<i>Weak</i>	<i>Very Weak</i>	<i>Extremely Weak</i>
<i>Ordinary Friend and . . .</i>						
Tolerance	14 (26%)	14 (26%)	6 (11%)	10 (19%)	10 (19%)	—
Honesty	10 (19%)	6 (11%)	—	10 (19%)	12 (22%)	13 (24%)
Caring	16 (30%)	8 (15%)	5 (9%)	10 (19%)	—	10 (19%)
Trustworthiness	13 (24%)	7 (13%)	10 (19%)	8 (15%)	5 (9%)	—
Humor	16 (30%)	9 (17%)	9 (17%)	3 (6%)	5 (9%)	—
Intelligence	10 (19%)	6 (11%)	—	5 (9%)	9 (17%)	10 (19%)
Responsibility	7 (13%)	8 (15%)	—	8 (15%)	6 (11%)	—
Religion	2 (4%)	6 (11%)	10 (19%)	—	—	—
Self-Discipline	—	3 (6%)	6 (11%)	6 (11%)	—	3 (6%)
Resourcefulness	—	3 (6%)	—	9 (17%)	—	6 (11%)

Table 6.5c: Close Friend

	Extremely Strong	Very Weak	Strong	Strong	Very Weak	Extremely Weak
<i>Close Friend and . . .</i>						
Tolerance	42 (78%)	10 (19%)	—	2 (4%)	—	—
Honesty	46 (85%)	5 (9%)	—	—	—	—
Caring	37 (69%)	3 (6%)	9 (17%)	—	—	—
Trustworthiness	30 (56%)	13 (24%)	—	—	—	—
Humor	14 (26%)	10 (19%)	5 (9%)	—	8 (15%)	5 (9%)
Intelligence	13 (24%)	9 (17%)	—	16 (30%)	2 (4%)	—
Responsibility	27 (50%)	1 (2%)	—	—	—	—
Religion	13 (24%)	5 (9%)	—	—	—	—
Self-Discipline	5 (9%)	10 (19%)	—	3 (6%)	—	—
Resourcefulness	13 (24%)	4 (7%)	—	1 (2%)	—	—

Table 6.5d: Best Friend

	Extremely Strong	Very Strong	Strong	Weak	Very Weak	Extremely Weak
<i>Best Friend and . . .</i>						
Tolerance	38 (70%)	10 (12%)	6 (11%)	—	—	—
Honesty	40 (74%)	11 (20%)	—	—	—	—
Caring	48 (89%)	1 (2%)	—	—	—	—
Trustworthiness	40 (74%)	3 (6%)	—	—	—	—
Humor	18 (33%)	21 (39%)	—	3 (6%)	—	—
Intelligence	22 (40%)	12 (22%)	6 (11%)	—	—	—
Responsibility	14 (26%)	10 (19%)	1 (2%)	3 (6%)	—	—
Religion	12 (22%)	6 (11%)	—	—	—	—
Self-Discipline	18 (33%)	—	—	—	—	—
Resourcefulness	18 (33%)	—	—	—	—	—

Table 6.5: Ideal Friend

	Extremely Strong	Very Strong	Strong	Weak	Very Weak	Extremely Weak
<i>Ideal Friend and . . .</i>						
Tolerance	53 (98%)	1 (2%)	—	—	—	—
Honesty	51 (94%)	—	—	—	—	—
Caring	47 (87%)	2 (4%)	—	—	—	—
Trustworthiness	43 (80%)	—	—	—	—	—
Humor	28 (52%)	14 (26%)	—	—	—	—
Intelligence	40 (74%)	—	—	—	—	—
Responsibility	26 (48%)	—	2 (4%)	—	—	—
Religion	15 (28%)	3 (6%)	—	—	—	—
Self-Discipline	15 (28%)	—	3 (6%)	—	—	—
Resourcefulness	17 (31%)	1 (2%)	—	—	—	—

remains steady. No other variables show this pattern. Honesty and Responsibility appear to be a type of entry variable for close friendship levels.

Results and discussion for RQ6. How much do individuals value the crucial entry and intensity variables in friendship? This question examines how the respondents ranked the variables in value (what qualities they feel are most suitable for an ideal friendship) and how they see themselves in relation to the variables. This question is explored with frequency and value scores (see Table 6.1) as well as relationship strength between the self and each of the six crucial friendship qualities. (See Tables 6.6a and b.)

Table 6.1 shows that the six crucial variables rank as follows, beginning with the most highly valued: Honesty, Tolerance, Caring, Intelligence, Trustworthiness, and Humor. Tables 6.6a and b show how the respondents relate to the friendship qualities they chose—how these qualities are related to Real Self and Ideal Self.

All friendship qualities score on the strong side of the scale for both Real Self and Ideal Self. This indicates that the respondents' view of ideal friendship qualities parallels their view of qualities they see and aspire to in themselves. Some interesting differences can be seen between Real Self and Ideal Self that may help to explain the cultural value placed on these friendship qualities. Relationships of the qualities with Ideal Self are consistently stronger than those for Real Self. Extreme differences in the strength of relationship can be seen for Honesty, Trustworthiness, Intelligence, and Responsibility. The respondents aspire to higher levels of these variables than they see in their actual selves. These attributes can thus be presumed to be very highly valued culturally.

Table 6.6a and b
Strength of Relationship Between the Self and Friendship Qualities

Table 6.6a: Real Self

	<i>Extremely Strong</i>	<i>Very Strong</i>	<i>Strong</i>	<i>Weak</i>	<i>Very Weak</i>	<i>Extremely Weak</i>
<i>Real Self and . . .</i>						
Tolerance	31 (57%)	5 (9%)	15 (28%)	—	—	3 (6%)
Honesty	27 (50%)	4 (7%)	—	—	8 (15%)	12 (22%)
Caring	39 (72%)	5 (9%)	5 (9%)	—	—	—
Trustworthiness	24 (44%)	6 (11%)	—	3 (6%)	—	10 (19%)
Humor	30 (56%)	—	—	12 (22%)	—	—
Intelligence	12 (22%)	19 (35%)	—	5 (9%)	4 (7%)	—
Responsibility	12 (22%)	6 (11%)	—	—	—	—
Religion	5 (9%)	—	7 (13%)	6 (11%)	—	—
Self Discipline	12 (22%)	—	—	3 (6%)	—	—
Resourcefulness	10 (19%)	8 (15%)	—	—	—	—

Table 6.6b: Ideal Self

	<i>Extremely Strong</i>	<i>Very Strong</i>	<i>Strong</i>	<i>Weak</i>	<i>Very Weak</i>	<i>Extremely Weak</i>
<i>Ideal Self and . . .</i>						
Tolerance	30 (56%)	10 (19%)	11 (20%)	3 (6%)	—	—
Honesty	39 (72%)	11 (20%)	—	—	—	1 (2%)
Caring	28 (52%)	13 (24%)	8 (15%)	—	—	—
Trustworthiness	37 (69%)	6 (11%)	—	—	—	—
Humor	24 (44%)	10 (19%)	—	8 (15%)	—	—
Intelligence	37 (69%)	—	3 (6%)	—	—	—
Responsibility	11 (20%)	7 (13%)	10 (19%)	—	—	—
Religion	10 (19%)	3 (6%)	5 (9%)	—	—	—
Self-Discipline	10 (19%)	5 (9%)	—	3 (6%)	—	—
Resourcefulness	8 (15%)	10 (19%)	—	—	—	—

Results and discussion for RQ7. What are the respondents' perceptions of the relationships among the semantic-marker variables? The results in Table 6.7 address this question. These results, as do those in Table 6.4, show that Nigerians see these semantic markers as salient levels of friendship. They also show again a gap between casual relationships and more serious relationships. The gap again appears, as before, between Ordinary Friend and Close Friend. There is an extreme shift in the strength of relationship for higher

Table 6.7
Strength of Relationship Among Semantic-Marker Variables

	<i>Extremely Strong</i>	<i>Very Strong</i>	<i>Strong</i>	<i>Weak</i>	<i>Very Weak</i>	<i>Extremely Weak</i>
<i>Acquaintance and . . .</i>						
Ordinary Friend	10 (19%)	2 (4%)	—	7 (13%)	2 (4%)	31 (57%)
Close Friend	—	10 (19%)	2 (4%)	4 (7%)	4 (7%)	30 (56%)
Best Friend	2 (4%)	8 (15%)	—	9 (17%)	—	33 (61%)
Ideal Friend	4 (7%)	4 (7%)	—	5 (9%)	3 (6%)	37 (69%)
<i>Ordinary Friend and . . .</i>						
Close Friend	2 (4%)	5 (9%)	—	12 (22%)	—	31 (57%)
Best Friend	2 (4%)	4 (7%)	6 (11%)	9 (17%)	—	30 (56%)
Ideal Friend	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	—	9 (17%)	—	36 (67%)
<i>Close Friend and . . .</i>						
Best Friend	40 (74%)	6 (11%)	3 (6%)	—	4 (7%)	—
Ideal Friend	43 (80%)	4 (7%)	—	2 (4%)	—	3 (6%)
<i>Best Friend and . . .</i>						
Ideal Friend	44 (81%)	6 (11%)	4 (7%)	—	—	—

levels of friendship. These respondents seem to value closeness in friendship to such an extent that they distinguish very clearly between casual and close friendship levels.

Conclusion

This study has discussed the impact of culture on friendship formation and maintenance and the communication patterns that encourage and sustain friends; it has also identified the qualities that Nigerians see as most important in their quest to enter into and remain in friendships. The six crucial variables identified appear to have the greatest value for the respondents and would seem to have the greatest impact on friend relationships in Nigeria. An examination of the character of these variables reveals interesting patterns for Nigerian friendships. Tolerance, mentioned by every respondent, reflects the paradox of intertribal envy and intertribal friendship. Tolerance is a crucial attribute if intertribal friendships are to occur in an atmosphere of intertribal prejudice. Trustworthiness may also assist in forming intertribal friendships. Honesty, a traditionally valued trait, is very highly valued among these contemporary Nigerians. Responsibility, however, has lost some of the value it was traditionally accorded. Humor was mentioned by more respon-

dents and is more highly valued than Responsibility; this may be a sign of encroaching Western values. Future research may provide greater insight into the character of these variables.

The developmental progression of friendship in Nigeria sharply distinguishes casual levels of relationship from close levels. That the distinctions were found to be especially prevalent for traditionally valued attributes may reflect some degree of discomfort with casual relationships; it may also reflect a high value placed on close relationships, such that they are entered into selectively. Indeed, given the strength of relationship among the higher levels of friendship, it appears that a crucial threshold arises between Ordinary Friend and Close Friend.

Although we have met the conditions we set out to achieve in this preliminary study, we must not fail to draw attention to one obvious limitation. The sample size and ethnic composition of our study, in relation to the size and composition of the Nigerian population, do not allow us to generalize to Nigerians beyond our sample characteristics (relatively young civil servants and graduate students from eight ethnic groups). Because the cultures of these groups are considered most pervasive among Nigerians, we have some small degree of generalizability. However, even though there is an underlying cultural trait that affects all ethnic groups, it is possible that a more representative sample (more ethnic groups and more respondents) could substantially alter the results we have obtained in this study. Our results must not be considered conclusive but must be tested further.

Other issues connected with the sampling include locale, social status, and education. Our sample was made up of educated, urban dwellers who were well exposed to Western influences. Future investigations should use suburban and rural respondents, examining them separately and together. Such studies would help to confirm or invalidate the results of this study and contribute to defining more clearly the nature of friendship in Nigeria. In addition, weak responses and nonresponses in our data make the results less conclusive. Our understanding of Nigerian friendship would be enhanced by studies designed to determine whether or not such weak relationships are ethnically based, and if so, which ethnic groups account for the differences.

Finally, we must draw attention to what appears to be a contradiction about honesty among most Nigerians. The very high value accorded honesty as a traditional and contemporary friendship quality stands in direct contrast to what can be anecdotally noted about most Nigerians' relationships—social, political and economic. Explicit behavior is in contrast to expressed attitude. As one respondent answered orally, when asked if he believed he were honest, "Honesty means being straightforward and truthful and non-deceptive in everything at all times. Everyone knows that and expects it from others. But only very few, if any, are that honest. To that extent I am not. But the fact that I am not does not detract from the fact that 'honesty is the best

policy.” Interesting patterns of Nigerian culture may be revealed with study into such accepted contradiction between attitudes and actions. Comparison with other cultures would provide further insight.

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