

SOCIAL SUPPORT DURING ADJUSTMENT TO LATER-LIFE DIVORCE:
HOW ADULT CHILDREN HELP PARENTS

by

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(ABSTRACT)

This study investigated the adult child's role as a provider of social support to divorced parents. Each of the 230 randomly-selected individuals participating in the survey had been divorced after 19 or more years of marriage and had at least one child over age 18. Participants ranged in age from 36 to 72 and had been married an average of 28 years prior to divorce.

Respondents were asked to indicate the types and amounts of support provided by children in two major areas: instrumental aid (e.g., advice, services, financial assistance) and socioemotional aid. The pattern of support varied according to sex of the parent and the sex of the child. Mothers received significantly more support than fathers in all four categories: advice, services, financial assistance, and socioemotional aid. Sons and daughters did not differ significantly with regard to frequency of provision of advice or financial aid. However, sons provided significantly more services, and daughters provided significantly more socioemotional aid.

Circumstances connected with filial provision of support--opportunity, parental expectation of aid, parental financial need, parental health and morale, competing role responsibilities of

the child, and quality of the parent-child relationship--were analyzed. Multiple regression was used to specify the relationship between total support received and seven independent variables: frequency of contact, sex of respondent, emotional closeness, filial expectations, frequency of telephoning, sidetaking-behavior, and financial strain. These variables explained 52% of the variance in total support.

Mothers were more likely than fathers to rank children as the most helpful source of support during the divorce process: 42.6% of mothers, as compared to 18.3% of fathers ranked children as the most helpful. Mothers ranked children higher than all other sources of support; fathers, on the other hand, ranked their friends and their parents ahead of their children with respect to support provided during the divorce period.

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SOCIAL SUPPORT DURING ADJUSTMENT TO LATER LIFE DIVORCE:
HOW ADULT CHILDREN HELP PARENTS

Introduction

Divorce has been called "one of the most stressful transitions in contemporary American life" (Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1979, p. 126). Marital dissolution has long been linked to a variety of physical and psychological disorders (Bloom, Asher, & White, 1978). Some researchers believe that the impact of marital breakdown may be more devastating at midlife and beyond than at earlier ages (Berardo, 1982). First, the long-time married may suffer more due to their commitment to the former married way of life (Payne & Pittard, 1969). They must withdraw from the relationship, relinquish attachment to the marital role, disturb the routines of daily living, and sever the bonds of common experience and interdependence (Hagestad & Smyer, 1982). Psychologically, they must cope with a sense of failure after lengthy personal investment. Second, the economic impact of divorce may be severe, forcing increased need for social welfare support (Uhlenberg & Myers, 1981). Third, the very elderly may suffer from physical impairments and lack of mobility which compound the difficulty of daily living as a divorced person. Fourth, social support from friends and relatives may be less likely since their cohort was socialized to believe that divorce is an unacceptable alternative to an unhappy marriage.

Whatever the basis of the distress, older divorcing individuals tend to exhibit emotional disequilibrium. In a comparison of

recently separated men and women ranging in age from 20 to 70, Chiriboga (1982) found those over age 50 to be least happy and to be most likely to demonstrate depressed emotional functioning.

Likewise, Gubrium's (1974) elderly divorced respondents, ranging in age from 60 to 94, expressed more life dissatisfaction than widowed, never married, or married respondents. Older divorced persons also had poorer health (Verbrugge, 1979) and higher mortality rates (Gove, 1973).

Awareness of the impact of divorce on the individual and society has resulted in increased interest in how persons who face divorce ameliorate the stresses involved. Recently, researchers hypothesized that the individual's support system may help moderate the effects of this stressful life event (Antonovsky, 1974, 1979; Caplan, 1974; Cassel, 1976; Cobb, 1976; Henderson, Byrne, Duncan-Jones, Adcock, Scott, & Steel, 1978; Kaplan, Cassel, & Gore, 1977; Liem & Liem, 1978). Social supports serve as "protective factors buffering or cushioning the individual from the physiologic and psychologic consequences of exposure to the stressor situation" (Cassel, 1974, p. 478).

Social support may be defined as information which reassures individuals that they are (1) loved and cared for, (2) esteemed and valued, and (3) part of a network of communication and mutual obligation (Cobb, 1976). Others treat social support as "a secure base" (Bowlby, 1969), "intimacy" (Brown & Harris, 1978; Weiss, 1969), and "reassurance of worth" (Weiss, 1969). According to Kahn (1979), social support includes positive affect, affirmation or endorsement

of behavior, and the giving of aid to another. For the purposes of this research, the following definition was employed: Social support is the degree to which a person's basic social needs are gratified through interaction with others (Kaplan et al., 1977). Basic social needs include affection, esteem or approval, belonging, identity, and security. These needs may be met by either provision of socioemotional aid (e.g., affection, sympathy and understanding, acceptance, and esteem from significant others) or by the provision of instrumental aid (e.g. advice, information, help with family or work responsibilities, financial aid). Both socioemotional and instrumental aid tend to assure recipients that they are cared for. The social support system will be defined as "that subset of persons in the individual's total social network upon whom he or she relies for socioemotional aid, instrumental aid, or both" (Thoits, 1982, p. 148). These definitions allow the operationalization and examination of a variety of dimensions of social support.

Traditionally, relatives have formed an integral part of the social support network of divorced persons (Spanier & Casto, 1979; Spanier & Thompson, 1984). These networks are usually rather small because they are chiefly comprised of family members who live in close proximity to the divorced individual (McLanahan, Wedemeyer, & Adelberg, 1981). Network members usually interact frequently and a few individuals supply nearly all of the support. Support functions tend to be distributed according to the traditional sex-role division of labor. Female relatives provide emotional support and help with child care. Male relatives are more likely to provide financial

assistance and help with household repairs.

The efficacy of having a support network filled with relatives has been questioned (Wilcox, 1981). In Wilcox's sample, women who showed more positive postdivorce adjustment had larger, less kin-dominated networks. Goode (1956) and Weiss (1975) offer explanations of the finding that kin-dominated networks might be associated with less positive adjustment. They note that family members, while providing reassurance and support, find it difficult to accept the fact that the marriage is over. According to Weiss (1975), relatives "assume the right to comment on the separation, to criticize it, to disapprove or approve of it, perhaps going on until the separated individual is driven to exasperation" (p. 132).

Stability of social networks following separation and divorce is related to satisfactory post-divorce adjustment (Daniels-Mohring & Berger, 1984). Supportive networks tend to be correlated with less stress (Raschke, 1977), with more effective parenting (Colletta, 1979), and with better adaptation to role changes and transitions in self-identity (Kohen, 1981). The most profitable utilization of social networks occurs when the type of network coincides with the role orientation of the divorced individual. Close-knit networks are supportive for those attempting to maintain their existing identities, while loose-knit networks are supportive for those seeking to establish a new identity (McLanahan, et al., 1981).

In one of the few studies addressing divorce at mid-life, Hagestad, Smyer, and Stierman (1982) emphasized the importance of adult children to the support network. When both parents and

children were available as potential supports, the divorced respondents turned more frequently to children for assistance. Women, more often than men, approached children as adult equals and confidants; women were five times more likely than men to name a child as "the most helpful" during the divorce process. More men felt that the relationship with their children had deteriorated since the divorce.

The character of the social support network is different for the divorced individual who is middle-aged or older. The adult child is a network member unavailable to younger divorcing individuals. The child can be a considerable interpersonal resource, but only if patterns of interdependence are reshaped (Hagestad & Snow, 1977).

Pearlin (1983) aptly describes this phenomenon:

Those who were the providers of help, protection, and succor are now its recipients, and those who received are now its donors; parents who in an earlier life stage controlled, directed, and guided their children's behavior are now subject to children's judgments about their well-being; patterns of autonomy and dependency now tend to be reversed. Changes of this order displace and come to substitute for relationships between parents and children that have a long and deeply implanted history (p. 24).

To qualify as aid givers, adult children must develop "filial maturity"--the readiness to accept a new dependence from parents (Blenkner, 1965).

How adult children adapt to new roles as providers of support, we do not know. No studies are available on the nature of social support provided to divorced parents by adult children. The present study was undertaken in order to gain a better understanding of the adult child's role in the parent's social support network. In order

to accurately characterize the nature of the child's social support, two basic research questions were investigated:

1. What types and amounts of support do children provide parents after divorce?
 - How do children compare with other sources of support (i.e., the divorced respondent's friends, siblings, in-laws, and parents)?
 - Does the pattern of support differ depending on the sex of the parent or the sex of the child?
2. What circumstances are connected with filial provision of support?

The study will evaluate impact of the following variables:

- Opportunity: geographical proximity and frequency of face-to-face and telephone contact.
- Parental expectation of aid.
- Parental financial need.
- Parental health and morale.
- Competing role responsibilities of child: effect of child's marital status.
- Quality of the parent-child relationship: sidetaking behavior, emotional closeness, intimacy, and conflict.

Methods

Participants

The names of recently divorced individuals were manually selected from court records in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina.

Persons chosen for inclusion in the study had been divorced after 19 or more years of marriage and had at least one child over age 18. The sampling frame of 940 cases was derived by selecting the names and addresses of all persons who met the above criteria from January, 1983 to May, 1985. From these, a random sample was selected.

Each subject was mailed a questionnaire. A cover letter established the legitimacy of the research, explained the purpose of the study, and described how the subject was selected to participate and how the data would be used. Each participant was asked to complete the questionnaire and return it in the preaddressed, stamped envelope. One week after the initial mailing, a postcard follow-up was sent to transmit thanks to those who had responded and to serve as a reminder for those who had not. After four weeks, data collection was concluded. (See Appendix B for samples of the correspondence and questionnaire.)

The survey was mailed to 800 divorced persons. Out of those mailings, 102 were returned by the post office as "undeliverable" and 19 were returned by respondents who were ineligible to participate because they did not meet the criteria for the study. In all, 230 completed surveys were returned, for a response rate of 34%.

Respondents had been married an average of 27.8 years prior to divorce, with a range from 19 to 49 years. Of the 230 participants in this study, 78 were males ranging in age from 39 to 70 years (mean = 51.6), and 152 were females ranging in age from 36 to 72 years (mean = 49). (See Table 1 for a frequency distribution for ages of respondents.) Ninety-three percent of the respondents were white;

the remainder were black or Latin American. The average educational level was 13.8 years, with a range from four years to doctoral degrees. Since income was reported in categories, averaging would be meaningless; however, 50.7% of the sample made over \$20,000 a year and 67.7% made over \$15,000. As might be expected, there were more men than women in the highest income category; 58% of the men made \$30,000 or more a year as compared to 12% of the women. A higher percentage of men had remarried since divorcing; 39.7% of men had remarried as compared to 4.6% of women. (For a more detailed breakdown of characteristics of respondents, see Table 2.)

Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here

Respondents reported on the social support provided by adult children. The children ranged in age from 18 to 49, with the average age of 23 years. (See Table 3 for a frequency distribution for ages of children.) Of the 230 adult children discussed, 129 were females and 101 were males. Of those, 66 percent were unmarried, 20 percent were married, and 14 percent were either separated, divorced, or remarried. A majority of sons had never been married (81.2%), as compared to 54% of the daughters. About the same percentage of sons and daughters lived in the same house with their parent--30.7% and 27.8%, respectively. There was no significant difference in proximity of sons and daughters to parents. (See Table 4 for data concerning children of respondents.)

Insert Tables 3 and 4 about here

Measures

Each respondent received a 34-item questionnaire which could be completed within a 20- to 30-minute time frame. Participants were asked to answer the questions about their geographically closest child in order to keep the instrument reasonably short. If respondents had been asked to answer questions about all of their adult children, an inordinate time commitment would have been involved, perhaps jeopardizing the response rate. Also, the mode of questioning was chosen on the assumption that children who lived nearby would have the greatest opportunity for providing daily support to the parent. The researcher recognized the fact that the most helpful child was not always selected by this procedure.

Measures employed in the questionnaire were as follows:

Sources of support. Respondents were asked to rank the three most important sources of assistance since their separation. Choices included brothers/sisters, children, friends, in-laws, mother/father, and others (which they could specify).

Types of support. Four categories of support were included. Three categories addressed the forms of instrumental aid: advice, services, and financial assistance. The advice category was comprised of three items asking how often the adult child (1) offered advice, (2) was available to talk, and (3) provided information to the parents. The services category was comprised of nine types of

aid: running errands, doing shopping, performing home repair, providing transportation, giving assistance when sick, and helping with housework, yardwork, paperwork, or care of the parent's car. Financial assistance was separated according to type: monetary loans, payment for services, monetary gifts, and non-monetary gifts. One category addressed socio-emotional aid: showing concern and respect or giving encouragement and affection. Questionnaire items used to evaluate this section included inviting the parent for social gatherings, visiting the parent, and offering emotional support, sympathy, and affection.

Frequency of support. For each of the instrumental and socioemotional aid categories, respondents were asked to indicate how often the child provided these types of support. Six response choices ranged from "never" to "every day." Also included were response choices "didn't ask" and "does not apply" so the respondent could indicate inapplicable items. Responses for each support category were summed and a mean was derived. The means of each of the four support categories were added to get a "total support" score.

Opportunity for support. In order to ascertain frequency of contact, respondents were asked how often they saw their child. They were also asked how often they talked to their child on the telephone. Response choices for both questions ranged from "every day" to "less than once a year."

In order to gauge geographic proximity, respondents were asked how far away the child lived from them. Response choices ranged from

"lives in the same house with me" to "more than 301 miles away."

Parental expectation of aid. The Filial Expectancy Scale (Seelbach & Sauer, 1977) was used to measure the expectations that parents have regarding the duties and obligations of offspring. The six-item Likert-type index resulted in total scores ranging from 6 to 30. The scores were dichotomized into two levels of types: low expectations (index scores of 6 to 23) and high expectations (index scores of 24 to 30).

Parental financial need. Three items addressed the financial standing of the respondent. The first was income category. The respondent was asked to give the total dollar amount received during the past year from all of the following sources combined: wages, social security, pensions, alimony, savings and interest, welfare, or other sources. Income categories listed ranged from "less than \$4,999" to "\$30,000 and over." The second measure required the respondent to compare present financial condition to financial status prior to separation. Response choices were "better than before," "about the same as before," and "worse than before." The third question asked the respondent to evaluate present level of financial strain. Four response choices ranged from "no financial strain" to "a lot of financial strain."

In addition, parents were asked if they would be willing to invite a child to live with them in times of financial hardship. They were also asked whether they would go to live with a child in order to share expenses. Response choices to these questions were simply "yes" and "no."

Parental health and morale. An evaluation of parental health was made by asking parents to respond to Rosow and Breslau's (1966) Functional Health Scale. Scores on the scale could range from 0 (low functional health) to 3 (high functional health). The variable could be dichotomized into poor (< 1.5) and good (> 1.5) health categories. For the total scale, the Coefficient of Reproducibility = .91, with a 9% level of error (Rosow & Breslau, 1966).

Morale was measured by a six-item scale (Lee, 1979). Each item was followed by four response categories ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Scores for the summated scale ranged from 6 to 24. The reliability of the scale according to Cronbach's alpha was determined to be .851 for males and .866 for females (Lee, 1979).

Competing role responsibilities of child. Demographic data were used to place the child in one of three marital status categories: never-married, married, or maritally disrupted (i.e., separated, divorced, or remarried). Each category was compared according to level of support by using a Kruskal-Wallis test.

Quality of parent-child relationship. The first measure of quality of the parent-child relationship was sidetaking behavior. The respondent was asked to rate the child's sidetaking behavior at the present time (i.e., "now"). Response choices included (1) strongly takes former spouse's side, (2) tends to take former spouse's side, (3) remains neutral, (4) tends to take my side, and (5) strongly takes my side.

The second measure of quality of the parent-child relationship

was emotional closeness. Respondents were asked to report their feelings of emotional closeness to the child at the present time. A five-point response scale ranged from "not very close" to "very close."

The third measure tested was intimacy. Walker's (1979) 50-item intimacy scale was reduced to a 10-item scale. Thompson (1982) performed a factor analysis on the 50 items and accepted only the items which loaded at .75 or higher for the 10-item version. Four response choices for each item ranged from "disagree" to "agree."

The fourth measure of the parent-child relationship was conflict. Braiker and Kelley's (1979) five-item scale was used. The respondent reported the frequency of occurrence of five conflict behaviors. A five-point Likert-type response category ranged from "never" to "very often."

Results

Adult Child As Aid-Giver

Mothers were more likely than fathers to rank children as the most helpful source of support during the divorce process: 46.2% of mothers, as compared to 18.3% of fathers, ranked children as the most helpful (see Table 5). Mothers ranked children higher than all other sources of support: siblings, friends, in-laws, parents, and others. Fathers, on the other hand, ranked their friends and their parents ahead of their children with respect to support provided during the

divorce period.

Insert Table 5 about here

In order to ascertain the relationship of the adult child's sex to the level of support received by the parents, a Mann-Whitney U test was performed. As shown in Table 6, male children provided significantly more services ($Z = -2.517$, $p = .0118$); however, after separate chi-square analyses, children differed significantly in only one category, car repair. Sons more frequently helped with car repair ($\chi^2 = 13.585$, $df = 5$, $p = .019$). Female children more frequently provided socioemotional aid ($z = -2.3971$, $p = .0165$). Daughters included the parent in social gatherings more often ($\chi^2 = 13.259$, $df = 5$, $p = .02$), and they more frequently sympathized when parents experienced problems ($\chi^2 = 12.749$, $df = 5$, $p = .026$).

Insert Table 6 about here

In addition to the analysis of the relationship of the child's sex to level of support, the relationship of the child's marital status to level of support was also evaluated. The marital status categories of the children were collapsed into three groups: (1) never married, (2) married, and (3) maritally disrupted (i.e., separated, divorced, or remarried). Each category was compared according to level of support by using a Kruskal-Wallis test. Analysis revealed a significant effect for services ($\chi^2 = 30.299$, $df = 2$, $p < .001$), with never-married children providing the most

services. Additional Kruskal-Wallis tests were performed, separating the children according to sex. Never-married daughters provided significantly more services than did daughters from the other two marital categories ($\chi^2 = 24.51$, $df = 2$, $p < .001$). Sons from the three marital categories did not differ significantly with regard to services performed for parents.

Married children gave significantly more socioemotional aid ($\chi^2 = 11.322$, $df = 2$, $p < .01$). Married sons gave significantly more socioemotional support than did sons from either of the two other marital categories ($\chi^2 = 6.650$, $df = 2$, $p < .05$). Daughters from the three marital categories did not differ significantly with regard to socioemotional support offered to the parent.

Variables Related to Total Support

The analytic method used to specify the relationship between the dependent variable, total support, and independent variables was multiple regression. The process of analysis followed two steps. In the initial regression equation, slopes of certain demographic variables (e.g., age, years of schooling, geographical distance from child, current marital status, and health) and attitudinal variables (e.g., conflict, intimacy, and morale) did not differ significantly from zero. Therefore, these variables were dropped from the equation. A second regression equation was formed. The correlations of the variables used in the second equation ranged from $-.44$ to $.52$ (See Table 7).

Insert Table 7 about here

The seven independent variables--frequency of contact, sex of respondent, emotional closeness, filial expectations, frequency of telephoning, sidetaking behavior, and financial strain--explained 53% of the variance in total support. When adjusting for number of variables and sample size, the equation explained 52% of the variance (see Table 8).

Insert Table 8 about here

Frequency of contact. In the revised equation, frequency of face-to-face contact was the best predictor of total support ($\beta = .39$). Parents averaged seeing the adult child once a week. Thirty-four percent of mothers and 10 percent of fathers reported every day contact. Perhaps frequent contact made the child more aware of parental needs and thus contributed to both the motivation and the opportunity to provide aid.

Sex of respondent. The next best predictor of support was sex of the respondent ($\beta = .-245$). Mothers received more help than fathers in each support category: advice, services, financial aid, and socioemotional aid. Mann-Whitney U tests were performed to determine the magnitude of differences in support received (see Table 9).

Insert Table 9 about here

A more in-depth examination of the responses to certain items may explain the results of Table 9. With respect to the instrumental aid category "advice," mothers averaged receiving advice once or twice a month, while fathers averaged receiving advice once or twice a year. In addition, the adult child was more often available to provide information or to "talk things over" with mothers than with fathers.

The instrumental aid category "services" revealed similar support patterns. Considering the nine possible services performed by the child, mothers averaged receiving services once or twice a year while fathers rarely or never received these services. The most commonly performed service for both mothers and fathers was "running errands"; 68% of mothers and 53% of fathers had been recipients. About half of the mothers had been helped with shopping or housework, as compared to one-fourth of the fathers. Mothers were two to three times more likely than fathers to have received assistance with home repair, car maintenance, transportation, or yardwork. Forty-nine percent of mothers were given assistance when sick, as opposed to 18 percent of fathers. Neither parent received much help with paperwork; only 12 percent of mothers and 6 percent of fathers had obtained this type of aid from the adult child.

The third instrumental aid category was "financial assistance." As might be expected, financial support from adult children was rather rare. Eighty percent of parents had never been recipients of

monetary loans, and 84% had never been recipients of monetary gifts from children. Women were more likely than men to receive money from children; 29% of mothers, as compared to 4% of fathers, reported that they received a loan "once in a while." Most parents (83%) had never been paid for services performed for children (e.g., babysitting, housekeeping, home or car repairs, etc.). Payment for services was more common for mothers than for fathers; 25% of mothers, as opposed to 3% of fathers, had received payment. The most popular form of indirect financial assistance was gift items (e.g., clothes, household items, furniture, etc.); however, 49% of parents reported that they never received gifts of this type.

In accordance with the aid pattern exhibited in advice, service, and financial support categories, mothers also received more socioemotional support. Mothers were recipients of support on the average of once every two or three months, while fathers were recipients on the average of once or twice a year. According to mothers, children exhibited support on the average of once or twice a month when they expressed affection, sympathized with parental problems, or dropped in for visits. According to fathers, the most frequent type of support was expression of affection, occurring on the average of once or twice a month. The most rare type of filial support was inclusion of the parent in social gatherings; mothers were included every two or three months while fathers were included once or twice a year.

Filial expectations. Parental expectation for support, as evaluated by the Filial Expectancy Scale, was a predictor of support

received ($\beta = .217$). Parents who expect support are more likely to receive it. Their desire for support is transmitted to the child, thus encouraging the child to offer assistance.

In order to determine if there was a difference in the amount of support expected by divorced mothers and fathers, a Mann-Whitney U test was performed. Divorced mothers and fathers did not differ significantly in their expectations of support from offspring ($z = -1.29, p = .196$).

Emotional closeness. The family has traditionally served as the primary source of emotional sustenance, so it is not surprising to find that emotional closeness is a good predictor of total support ($\beta = .189$). Feelings of caring and devotion resulted in tangible social support for the parent.

Sidetaking. Sidetaking behavior of the child was predictive of total support for the parent ($\beta = .162$). Children gave support to the parent with whom they sided. Parents were asked to analyze the child's sidetaking behavior at the time the survey was administered. Siding with parents resulted in social support to them.

Frequency of telephoning. Talking with the parent on the telephone was also predictive of total support ($\beta = .145$). Those children who exhibited caring through telephone contact also revealed their support in other ways. Mothers tended to receive phone calls from the child on the average of once every two or three months, while fathers averaged receiving calls once a month.

Financial strain. The last predictor of total support was

the financial strain of the parent ($\beta = .140$). Children were somewhat more supportive when they perceived that the parent was encountering financial difficulties. Mothers, more often than fathers, found themselves under financial strain (62% to 38%, respectively). Only 11% of the mothers, as compared to 38% of fathers, reported no financial strain. Even though financial status had worsened for 47% of respondents, they were not interested in living with adult children to ease financial difficulties. Eighty-one percent of parents indicated that they would not invite an adult child to live with them in order to share expenses, and 94% stated that they would not go to live with an adult child to alleviate financial strain. Parents preferred to be self-sufficient, even if it meant more financial hardship.

Discussion

A substantial volume of literature upholds the idea that satisfying supportive relationships are beneficial in ameliorating the stress following divorce. Traditionally, the family has proven to be an integral part of the support network. For individuals experiencing mid- to late-life divorce, the adult child represents a network component unavailable to younger divorced persons. The adult child can be an invaluable resource. This study clarified the nature of support offered the divorced parent by the adult child.

The sex of the adult child was related to support received by the parent. Among the nine service categories addressed in the questionnaire, car repair was the only category in which there was

significant difference between male and female children. Male children more frequently helped the parent with car repairs. One might expect such a finding since car repair is a male-dominated activity. However, the interesting point is that there were no significant differences in frequency of provision of traditionally female-dominated activities (e.g., running errands, doing shopping, or giving assistance when sick) or in other traditionally male activities (e.g., performing home repair, helping with yardwork). This finding contradicts a volume of literature supporting the premise that adult daughters provide the bulk of services to parents (Brody & Lang, 1982; Shanas, 1979; Tobin & Kulys, 1980). Possible explanations of current findings remain unclear. Did sons provide services because they lived in closer geographic proximity to parents? Interestingly, there was no significant difference in proximity of sons and daughters to parents. Perhaps adult children are becoming less bound by sex-role stereotypes. They perform services for parents when a need is perceived.

Socioemotional aid, on the other hand, is more frequently provided by female children. This finding mirrors the traditional role that females have played as expressive leaders of the family (Lipman, 1977). Women more frequently verbalize feelings of sympathy, affection, and caring.

Furthermore, the child's marital status was related to support received by the parent. Never-married children provided the most services. Never-married daughters provided significantly more services than did daughters from the other two marital categories.

Perhaps unmarried children had fewer role responsibilities and thus more time to provide services. It is also more likely that many of the unmarried children live in the same home with the parent. They may perform services as part of their household responsibilities.

Married children ranked second as providers of services. Children from the category "maritally disrupted" were ranked last. This finding parallels those of Cicirelli (1983). The maritally disrupted may be preoccupied with their own problems, may be less sensitive to the other's needs, or may have job responsibilities which limit their availability to help. Adult children with disrupted marriages experience greater drain on their resources for self-care.

According to Hagestad, Smyer, and Stierman (1982), adult children are frequently chosen over parents as support agents, even when both parents and children are available. Divorced mothers viewed adult children as their most important source of support. One female respondent wrote: "Without question, my children have been my greatest source of comfort." Others hated to think of facing the divorce process without the help of their children. One mother wrote: "All of my children took me places and invited me everywhere they went. Thank God for support during a time like I went through."

One divorced mother described the difference between support provided by her son and her mother. Her son calls once a week and they are "closer emotionally now than . . . when my ex lived here." The relationship with her mother was another story. She had received no emotional support from her mother: "She takes my divorce as

something I've done just to annoy her!"

Fathers, more often than mothers, mentioned that children had severed ties with them since the divorce and consequently never offered support of any kind. One father wrote, "my daughter will not speak to me because of the divorce." Another wrote, "The biggest factor influencing my relationship with my children was my former wife's conviction that the divorce was my fault -- children should choose sides, be loyal to her, and not associate with me. Two of my children behave this way" Obviously, many adult children had difficulty remaining loyal to both parents.

Not surprisingly, divorced fathers ranked friends and parents ahead of children as support agents. A possible explanation for this finding may rest in role expectations men have for themselves. As fathers, they expect to be strong and self-sufficient; it would be humiliating to assume the subordinate role of helpseeker and acknowledge a need for filial support. Traditionally, males have had more difficulty admitting problems to themselves and others (Jourard, 1964). Unfortunately for fathers, helpseeking behavior has an impact on the amount of assistance received. Persons who seek the most help tend to receive more assistance (Chiriboga, Coho, Stein, & Roberts, 1979).

The quality of the parent-child relationship was evaluated by looking at several variables--emotional closeness, intimacy, and conflict. The emotional closeness item was significantly related to total support received by the parent ($r = .40, p < .01$). The intimacy scale was not significantly related to total support. Possible

explanations for this finding may rest in the format of the two constructs. The intimacy scale, comprised of ten agree-or-disagree statements was perhaps more subject to the on-stage effect of social desirability. Most people do not want to admit that their children make them feel worse or that they do not like each other. The emotional closeness item, on the other hand, simply required the respondent to rate emotional closeness along a continuum.

In addition, the conflict scale was not significantly related to total support. To some degree, social desirability may be explanatory of this finding also. Family conflict is considered by many to be "back-stage" behavior: one does not talk about arguments and quarrels outside the family. Consequently, one does not admit that conflict exists. Another possible explanation could be that family members are supportive, regardless of the presence or absence of conflict, because they desire to help or feel obligation to be supportive.

For whatever reason, mothers received significantly more support than fathers in all four support categories: advice, services, financial assistance, and socioemotional aid. One feasible explanation, according to Seelbach (1977), is that older women expect more filial support than older men. However, divorced men and women in this study did not differ significantly concerning expectations of support. Perhaps age is related to expectations; Seelbach's sample had a mean age of 72 years as opposed to a mean of 50 years for this sample. Furthermore, difference in cohort could account for discrepant findings. Younger women may have a different sex-role

orientation; they may have rejected much of the affective, passive, and dependent types of behavior. The process of divorce itself may have forced women to become more assertive -- a characteristic essential to functioning as a single adult. Or the parent may recognize the child's resources and limitations, thus adjusting expectations to the child's available resources (Brown, 1960; Bellin, 1961). Since the average age of children in this sample was 23 years, most would be too young to have accumulated large financial or material resources.

Another explanation for the fact that mothers receive more help than fathers rests in the child's perception of parental need. Children may believe that mothers need more advice, services, financial assistance, and socioemotional support than fathers. In some support categories this may certainly be true. Few mothers have skills to do home or car repairs so they may need help with these services. In the same vein, children probably know the financial status of their parents and gauge the support accordingly. Since most women earn considerably less than men, it is not surprising that mothers in our sample received more financial assistance from children. Children may recognize that mothers have a greater need for advice and socioemotional support also.

Many parents, while appreciative of the support offered by children, expressed a desire to be self-sufficient. Expectations of support in many cases were not very high. One mother wrote, "I want to take care of myself and not depend on my children in very many ways. I expect them to let me build a new life. I resent . . . one

trying to run my life and giving me too much unwanted advice." Another mother wrote that she would feel smothered if any of her children "hung around too much."

Nevertheless, filial support remains crucial to the well-being of most older divorced individuals. Children can provide both instrumental and socioemotional aid during the difficult days of readjustment which follow separation and divorce. Relationships could be enhanced by adult children's knowledge of the magnitude of their contribution; many parents view them as their most important source of support. Professionals in family research, developmental psychology, and counseling should promote and support the use of the adult child as an invaluable resource for persons divorcing later in life.

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Table 1

Frequency Distribution for Ages of Male and Female Respondents

Age	MALES		FEMALES	
	Absolute Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Absolute Frequency	Cumulative Frequency
36-40	1	1.3%	11	7.3%
41-45	10	14.1	43	36.0
46-50	29	51.3	34	58.7
51-55	26	78.2	40	85.3
56-60	9	89.7	15	95.3
61-65	5	96.2	5	98.7
65-70	3	100.0	1	99.3
71-72	0	--	1	100.0
Total	78		152	

Table 2

Characteristics of Respondents (N = 230)

Characteristic	Fathers (n = 78)			Mothers (n = 152)		
	Mean	Range	SD	Mean	Range	SD
Age	51.6	39-70	6.5	49.0	36-72	6.7
Education	14.6	4-24	3.3	13.4	8-24	2.5
Years Married Prior to Divorce	28.0	20-43	5.4	27.7	19-49	5.7
				Percentage		
Race						
White			94.9			92.7
Black			5.1			6.6
Other			--			0.7
Current Marital Status						
Separated			--			2.0
Divorced			60.3			92.1
Remarried			39.7			4.6
Widowed			--			1.3
Income						
Less than \$4999			1.4			9.4
\$5000 to \$9999			2.7			8.1
\$10,000 to \$14,999			6.8			25.5
\$15,000 to \$19,999			6.8			22.1
\$20,000 to \$29,999			24.3			22.8
\$30,000 and over			58.1			12.1

Table 3

Frequency Distribution for Ages of Adult Children

Age	MALE CHILDREN		FEMALE CHILDREN	
	Absolute Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Absolute Frequency	Cumulative Frequency
18-20	30	29.7%	30	23.3%
21-23	30	65.3	37	51.9
24-26	16	81.2	21	68.2
27-29	14	95.0	20	83.7
30-35	3	98.0	18	97.7
36-40	2	100.0	2	99.2
41-45	0	--	0	99.2
46-49	0	--	1	100.0
Total	101		129	

Table 4

Characteristics of Adult Children (N = 230)

Characteristic	Sons (n = 101)			Daughters (n = 129)		
	Mean	Range	SD	Mean	Range	SD
Age	23.0	18-38	3.9	24.4	18-49	5.1
<u>Percentage</u>						
Current Marital Status						
Never married			81.2			54.0
Married			10.9			27.8
Separated			1.0			3.2
Divorced			5.0			11.1
Remarried			2.0			4.0
Geographical Proximity						
Same house with parent			30.7			27.8
1 to 5 miles			29.7			17.5
6 to 30 miles			16.8			31.7
31 to 150 miles			10.9			11.1
151 to 300 miles			6.9			6.3
More than 301 miles			5.0			5.6
Frequency of Contact						
Less than once a year			1.0			2.4
Once or twice a year			2.0			4.8
Once every 2-3 months			15.8			12.8
Once a month			13.9			15.2
Once every 2 weeks			15.8			12.8
Once a week			9.9			12.8
Twice a week			5.9			8.0
3 to 6 times a week			6.9			8.0
Every day			28.7			23.2

Table 5

Most Helpful Sources of Assistance for Divorced Parents

Rankings by Parents	<u>Sources of Assistance</u>					
	Siblings	Children	Friends	In-Laws	Parents	Others
"First" in Helpfulness						
Fathers	14.1%	18.3%	36.6%	1.4%	19.7%	9.9%
Mothers	4.9	46.2	33.6	1.4	9.1	4.9
"Second" in Helpfulness						
Fathers	20.3	28.1	20.3	3.1	18.8	9.4
Mothers	22.0	30.5	30.5	2.1	11.3	3.5
"Third" in Helpfulness						
Fathers	34.0	17.0	28.3	7.5	9.4	1.9
Mothers	31.7	11.7	24.2	5.8	16.7	10.0

Table 6

Difference in Support Provided by Sons and Daughters

Results of Mann-Whitney U Tests								
Instrumental Aid								
Statistic	Advice		Services		Financial Aid		Socioemotional Aid	
	Sons	Daughters	Sons	Daughters	Sons	Daughters	Sons	Daughters
No. Cases	101	129	101	129	101	129	101	129
R	107.04	122.12	127.94	105.76	115.08	115.83	103.62	124.80
U	5660.5		5258.0*		6472.5		5315.0*	
Z ₀	-1.7107		-2.5170		-0.0877		-2.3971	

*p < .05

Table 7

Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations of Study Variables

Variables	Total Support	Frequency of Contact	Sex	Emotional Closeness	Filial Expectations	Telephone	Sidetaking	Financial Strain
Total Support	1.00							
Frequency of contact	.52**	1.00						
Sex of respondent ^a	-.44**	-.30**	1.00					
Emotional closeness	.40**	.25**	-.16*	1.00				
Filial expectations	.21**	.12	.09	-.06	1.00			
Frequency of telephoning	-.02	-.41**	.08	.11	-.08	1.00		
Sidetaking behavior	.43**	.27**	-.27**	.44**	-.02	.07	1.00	
Financial strain	.19**	.02	-.25**	-.01	-.06	.06	-.05	1.00
\bar{X}	8.98	5.95	0.34	4.04	16.31	3.48	3.65	2.52
SD	4.17	2.39	0.47	1.26	4.41	2.16	1.06	0.98

^aFemale = 0; Male = 1

*p < .05

**p < .01

Table 8

Stepwise Multiple Regression Results
 Dependent Variable: Total Support (n = 212)

Variables	Variables in the Equation				
	B	Std. Error B	Beta	t	Significance of t
Frequency of contact	0.681	0.104	0.390	6.581	.0000
Sex of respondent	-2.145	0.469	-0.245	-4.568	.0000
Emotional closeness	0.629	0.183	0.189	3.441	.0007
Filial expectations	0.206	0.046	0.217	4.436	.0000
Frequency of telephoning	0.281	0.107	0.145	2.634	.0091
Sidetaking	0.638	0.222	0.162	2.869	.0046
Financial Strain	0.596	0.213	0.140	2.797	.0056
Multiple R	0.729				
R Square	0.532				
Adjusted R Square	0.516				
Standard Error	2.900				
			$F_{7/204} = 33.137$		Significance of F = .0001

Table 9

Differences in Support Received by Divorced Mothers and Divorced Fathers

Results of Mann-Whitney U Tests								
Instrumental Aid								
Statistic	Advice		Services		Financial Aid		Socioemotional Aid	
	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers
No. Cases	78	152	78	152	78	152	78	152
R	82.39	132.49	90.85	128.15	89.47	128.86	82.01	132.69
U	3345.5*		4005.5*		3897.5*		3315.5*	
Z ₀	-5.4230		-4.0371		-4.4456		-5.4731	

*p < .0001

APPENDIX A
Review of Literature

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Divorce as a Stress-Producer

Marital disruption has been shown to be a significant disruptive force in the lives of those who experience it. Hetherington, Cox, and Cox (1979) call divorce "one of the most stressful transitions in contemporary American life" (p. 126). A growing body of evidence links divorce and a variety of physical and psychological disorders. Divorced people are overrepresented in all psychiatric populations (Bloom, 1975; Bloom, Asher, & White, 1978; Crago, 1972; Redick & Johnson, 1974). Divorced and separated persons are more likely to develop physical illness (Holmes & Masuda, 1974); they have the poorest health status of all marital categories (Verbrugge, 1979). The probability of acquiring a mortal illness or injury is greater for the formerly married. Studies have shown that the divorced population is at excessive risk for suicide, homicide, and traffic accidents (Bloom et al., 1978).

Divorced individuals encounter many problems in the area of pragmatic issues. Changes in economic status following marital disruption appear to be particularly stressful, especially for women (Brandwein, Brown, & Fox, 1974; Epenshade, 1979). Both men and women encounter problems in the areas of home repair and maintenance, work efficiency and performance, and household organization (Bohannon, 1970; Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1976, 1977a, 1977b, 1979; Mendes, 1976; Yates, 1976). During the first year following a divorce, both

men and women report low self-esteem, confusion concerning social and sexual roles, and feelings of anger, anxiety, ambivalence, and depression (Bloom, et al., 1978; Dasteel, 1982; Hetherington, et al., 1976). Men report feelings of rootlessness, guilt, and loss (Hetherington, et al., 1976; Mendes, 1976), while women report feeling unattractive, helpless, and personally and socially incompetent (Hetherington et al., 1977a).

Interpersonal and familial problems have a major effect on overall mood state (Berman & Turk, 1981). Goode (1956) described areas of interpersonal discontent. Friends are initially supportive and helpful, but later may withdraw some of their succor (Miller, 1970). Friendships must be reinterpreted following separation and divorce (Weiss, 1975). Interactions with former spouse and with children are also sources of distress. Prolonged, negative contact between spouses preceding, during, and following the divorce interferes with effective adaptation. Persistence of attachment, coupled with continuing conflict, tends to elevate stress levels (Hetherington et al., 1976; Weiss, 1975). In addition, negative reactions of children to divorce can cause strained parent-child relationships. Multiple sources of stress bear upon the single parent, often resulting in ineffective parenting strategies and aversive parent-child interactions (Hetherington et al., 1977a, 1979).

Some researchers believe that the impact of marital breakdown may be more devastating at midlife and beyond than at earlier ages (Berardo, 1982). The long-time married may suffer more due to their

commitment to the former, married way of life (Payne & Pittard, 1969). They must emotionally withdraw from the relationship, give up attachment to the marital role, disrupt the routines of daily living, and sever the bonds of shared experience and interdependence (Hagestad & Smyer, 1982). Psychologically, they must cope with a sense of failure after lengthy personal investment.

Those who divorce after many years of marriage frequently find entry into the dating world problematic, if not traumatic. Mores have changed, and a double standard exists with respect to age norms for mate selection: Marriages between older men and younger women are acceptable, but marriages between older women and younger men are disapproved. This double standard of eligible partners often means that middle-aged women must compete with younger women for men in their age group (Berardo, 1982).

The divorced elderly have many of the problems of the younger generations plus those particular to their age group (Uhlenberg & Myers, 1981). First, the economic impact of divorce may be severe, forcing increased need for social welfare support. Standards of living may deteriorate rapidly. Many elderly persons survive on fixed incomes only because they have already paid for their homes. Setting up two places of residence can destroy the economic balance (Berardo, 1982). Second, physical impairments and lack of mobility make it difficult to cope with the stress of divorce and with the problems of finding another mate. The search for a new partner is compounded by an uneven sex ratio, making it extremely difficult for women over age sixty-five to find a mate. Third, social support from

relatives and friends is less likely for older persons. Their cohort was socialized in an era when divorce was an unacceptable alternative to an unhappy marriage. Fourth, divorce could contribute to the severing of ties with some friends and relatives. Loss of relationships with grandchildren could be especially devastating to the elderly.

Whatever the basis for the distress, older divorcing individuals tend to exhibit emotional disequilibrium. In a comparison of recently-separated men and women ranging in age from 20 to 70, Chiriboga (1982) found those over age 50 to be least happy and to be most likely to demonstrate depressed emotional functioning. Likewise, Gubrium's (1974) elderly divorced respondents expressed more life dissatisfaction than widowed, never married, or married respondents. Elderly divorced also show poorer health (Verbrugge, 1979) and higher mortality rates (Gove, 1973).

Social Support as a Buffer to Divorce-Related Stress

The concept of social support. Awareness of the impact of divorce on the individual and society has resulted in increased interest in how persons who face divorce ameliorate the stresses involved. Recently, researchers hypothesized that the individual's support system may help moderate the effects of stressful life events (Antonovsky, 1974, 1979; Caplan, 1974; Cassel, 1976; Cobb, 1976; Henderson, Byrne, Duncan-Jones, Adcock, Scott, & Steel, 1978; Kaplan, Cassel, & Gore, 1977; Liem & Liem, 1978). Social supports serve as "protective factors buffering or cushioning the individual from the physiologic or psychologic consequences of exposure to the stressor

situation" (Cassel, 1974, p. 478).

Research on social support as a buffer to stress has followed three basic formats (Wilcox, 1981a). The first format examines the relationship of well-being, social support, and specific stressors. Studies evaluated the relationship of social support and adjustment following divorce. Divorced individuals who had supportive relationships experienced less stress (Raschke, 1977), were more effective parents (Colletta, 1979), and adapted better to role changes and transitions in self identity (Kohen, 1981). It appears that low levels of strain are related to high levels of social support.

The second research format examines the relationships of well-being, social support, and multiple stressors. Many of these studies examine the relationship of life events and a variety of health-related outcome measures. The Holmes-Rahe Schedule of Recent Events (1967) is frequently used as the gauge for determining the cumulative effects of multiple events. Obtained correlations have not been particularly impressive; they generally range between .30 and .40 (Wilcox, 1981a). More recent studies using this second format have shifted emphasis to the stress-buffering role of social support. According to Wilcox (1981b), the correlation between life events and psychological distress becomes higher as social support decreases.

Operationalization of "social support" in the previously mentioned research formats has taken several forms. Frequently, social support has been equated with having close friends or

confidants. Social support has also been viewed as synonymous with marital status, since it is generally accepted that married persons receive more support than non-married persons.

The third format for research evaluates social support "networks." According to Mitchell (1969) and Fischer et al. (1977), characteristics of personal social networks influence behavior of the individuals who are a part of those networks. Networks may be classified according to distinct morphological and interactional characteristics (Mitchell, 1969):

1. Anchorage - the designated center of the network, called ego.
2. Density - the degree to which network members interact with each other.
3. Content - the degree to which relationships are multiplex (based on multiple ties) or uniplex (based on a single tie).
4. Direction - the degree to which the relationships are reciprocal and symmetrical.
5. Durability - the degree to which relationships are based on obligations.
6. Intensity - the depth of the obligation.
7. Frequency - the amount of contact among members or between the ego and individual members.
8. Range - the size of the network.

Consequently, the characteristics of the network influence the amount of support available to the individual.

Social support networks. Traditionally, relatives have formed an integral part of the support network of divorced persons.

Consanguineal kin tend to be especially helpful during the separation process. This display of support was evident in the Spanier and

Casto (1979) study: eighty-four percent of respondents reported that relatives were supportive. Most kin offered support regardless of whether they approved of the break-up (Spanier & Thompson, 1984). However, Kitson, Moir, and Mason (1982) found a relationship between approval of divorce and level of support ($p < .05$). Family members who were least supportive tended to have strong feelings against divorce in general (Spanier & Casto, 1979) or were themselves experiencing life change events (Kitson et al., 1982).

Stability of social networks following separation and divorce may be related to satisfactory post-divorce adjustment. According to Daniels-Mohring and Berger (1984), changes in social networks tend to decrease the quality of adjustment. However, Leslie and Grady (1985) reported change in the support networks of divorced women. Their networks became more homogeneous, more dense, and more kin-filled during the year following divorce. It is not clear whether individuals self-select out of a network, whether they were dropped as "unsupportive," or whether relatives just "rally around" and thus increase their importance in a time of need.

The efficacy of having a support network filled with relatives has been questioned (Wilcox, 1981a). In Wilcox's sample, women who showed more positive postdivorce adjustment had larger, less kin-dominated networks. Goode (1956) and Weiss (1975) offer explanations of the finding that kin-dominated networks might be associated with less positive adjustment. They note that family members, while providing reassurance and support, find it difficult to accept the fact that the marriage is over. According to Weiss

(1975), relatives "assume the right to comment on the separation, to criticize it, to disapprove or approve of it, perhaps going on until the separated individual is driven to exasperation" (p. 132).

There may be a relationship between the structure of the social network and the type of support available. McLanahan, Wedemeyer, and Adelberg (1981) hypothesized that close-knit networks composed of dense, multiplex, durable, and intense ties would be positively associated with the provision of services and emotional supports. Loose-knit networks would be more associated with communication of new information and development of new social contacts. The most beneficial network for the individual can be determined by role orientation. The close-knit network is supportive for those who are attempting to maintain their existing identities. The loose knit networks are supportive for those seeking to establish a new identity. For maximum utilization of the support network, network type should complement the role orientation of the divorced individual. "Social support is more than a single quality and may require a variety of sources, including but not restricted to the family, to meet the diversity of individual needs" (Pilisuk & Parks, 1983, p. 147).

Helpseeking behavior. Another factor appears to influence the amount of social support that the divorced receive. It seems that the most stressed individuals seek the most support (Brown, 1978). Women and younger respondents tend to seek out support more frequently than men and older respondents (Chiriboga, Coho, Stein, & Roberts, 1979). Due to a more traditional role set, men have more

difficulty admitting problems to themselves and others. Jourard (1964) labels this inability a "lethal trait" since failure to disclose problems severely limits helpseeking. Men who develop the ability to disclose themselves generally do so with wives (Balswick & Peek, 1971). When these individuals divorce, they lose not only the person closest to them, but also the person who is most able to help them cope with the loss (Chiriboga et al., 1979). For older respondents, the problem may be declining availability of supportive persons (Chiriboga, Roberts & Stein, 1978; Payne & Pittard, 1969). Many older respondents turn to formal supporting agents which may fail to provide the same buffer to stress that is available through informal systems (Gurland, 1978).

Social Support Provided by Family Members

The family of origin becomes an integral social support network for divorced persons. These networks are usually rather small because they are chiefly comprised of family members who live in close proximity to the divorced individual (McLanahan et al., 1981). Support relationships are dense and multiplex; that is, network members interact frequently and a few individuals supply nearly all of the support. Support functions tend to be distributed according to the traditional sex-role division of labor. Female relatives tend to provide emotional support and help with child care. Male relatives are more likely to give financial help or assistance with household repairs.

Older adults tend to choose children over other relatives as sources of aid (Bellin, 1961; Streib & Beck, 1980; Troll, 1971).

However, when we look specifically at the flow of support between parents and children, a distinct pattern emerges. Most instrumental and socioemotional aid flows from parent to child rather than from child to parent (McLanahan et al., 1981). Direction of the flow of aid is not reversed until parents experience financial instability, or become very elderly, ill, or widowed (Cicirelli, 1981). Parents generally expect more socioemotional aid than instrumental aid (Sussman, 1953, 1965). As a general rule, parents do not want to interfere in the lives of their children, nor do they want their children to be responsible for their care. They simply want love and attention.

Another influence upon the amount of support parents receive is the marital status of the child. Adult children with intact marriages give significantly more psychological support to parents than do those with disrupted marriages--divorced, widowed, or remarried (Cicirelli, 1983).

Women generally assume more supportive roles than men. Women are usually the "kinkeepers"; that is, they initiate contact with relatives (Adams, 1968; Sweetser, 1963; Troll, 1971). They also provide most of the concrete services (Adams, 1970; Troll, 1971). They often accept the lion's share of supportive functions, especially when they relate to children or parents. Brody and Lang (1982) view this pattern as indicative of the cultural assignment of gender appropriate roles.

Socioemotional aid. According to Kaplan, Cassel, and Gore (1977), socioemotional aid is comprised of affection, sympathy and

understanding, acceptance, and esteem from significant others. Both men and women rely heavily on parents and siblings for moral support. Spanier and Thompson (1984) discussed constructs associated with moral support. For women, "a bleak view of life" was associated with moral support from parents ($r = .18$). For men, low morale was associated with moral support from siblings ($r = .19$). When relatives recognize signs of depression, they respond with emotional support.

The family network may be viewed as a source of emotional security for the divorcing individual (McLanahan et al., 1981). The divorced verbalize this support as "standing by--no matter what happens." This view of support is consistent with Bowlby's (1969) notion of "a secure base."

Family networks also provide the divorced a sense of personal worth. According to McLanahan et al. (1981), family members tend to encourage divorced, single mothers in their parenting. Familial support resulted in feelings of competence and in reluctance to give up the role as major provider for children. There was less urgency to "find a husband" to help provide for children. In addition, a sense of personal worth was encouraged by intimate exchanges between the divorced individual and specific family members. Close relationships promoted "mutual confiding," enhancing self-worth.

For mid- to late-life divorced individuals, the character of familial emotional support changes due to the addition of another player to the drama: the adult child. Grown children can be a considerable interpersonal resource for emotional support (Hagestad & Snow, 1977). A problem arises when adult children must switch from

their traditional roles as "receptors" of emotional support to the role as "providers" of emotional support. Adult children must reach "filial maturity"--the readiness to accept a new dependence from parents (Blenkner, 1965). They must work through the feeling that parents should be strong and invulnerable up to old age. Patterns of interdependence must be reshaped.

According to Hagestad, Smyer, & Steirman (1982), adult children formed an integral part of the support system of persons divorcing at mid-life. Women were more likely than men to approach children as adult equals. Women were five times more likely than men to name a child as the most helpful during the divorce process. When both parents and children were available as potential supports to the mid-life divorced, children were turned to considerably more than parents. Women tended to consult with children early in the divorce process, perhaps even before separation.

The utilization of family members as sources of socioemotional aid not only protects the divorced from dependence on outside relationships, but also serves to isolate them from community supports and new social experiences (McLanahan et al., 1981). The emotional support of family members is essential as a "secure base," but it does not preclude the need for outside support as well.

Instrumental aid. According to Kaplan, Cassel, and Gore (1977), instrumental aid involves advice, information, help with family and work responsibilities, and financial assistance. Family members frequently give advice and information to divorced relatives. Women, more frequently than men, turn to adult children for advice

and support (Hagestad et al., 1982). Children were preferred over parents by middle-aged divorced individuals. However, exclusive utilization of family and friends as sources of advice and information can result in underutilization of formal help services (Unger & Powell, 1980). The divorced need to be alert to overusage of network members as lay consultants when professionals could better meet their needs.

According to Spanier and Thompson (1984), services (babysitting, errands, housework, home repairs, etc.) were more frequently rendered to divorced women than to divorced men. Service support was more likely if relatives lived within an hour's driving distance. Having children was correlated with receipt of services ($r = .34$ for men and $.21$ for women).

For elderly persons, services were the predominant form of economic assistance provided by children (Ruffin, 1984). Daughters were primary providers of direct service (Horowitz and Shindelman, 1981). Men provided care only when there tended to be no female alternative available.

Women generally receive more financial aid than men (Spanier & Thompson, 1984). This may be attributed in part to the fact that divorced women are more likely to be financially unstable, whether employed or unemployed. Parents are more likely than siblings to give money to divorced women. In the Spanier and Thompson study, about half of the women received financial help from parents. Siblings were more likely to contribute money to divorced sisters when they viewed them as being depressed or as having low morale ($r =$

.33). Relatives also supported divorced men financially, but to a lesser degree than they supported women. If real financial difficulties are encountered, relatives tend to rush to the aid of both sexes. Financial assistance to parents from children is most likely if parents are advanced in age, are in poor health, or are experiencing financial strain (Ruffin, 1984).

Summary

As we have seen, numerous circumstances account for the provision of support: "geographic proximity of kin, inclusion of family and friends among intimates, disapproval of the breakup, presence of children, financial instability and strain, and well-being at the time of separation" (Spanier & Thompson, 1984, p. 171). Provision of services was related to geographical closeness, but financial and moral support were not. Family members who have supplied one type of help usually provided other types as well. Support was generally unrelated to approval of the divorce. Presence of children in the home increased the likelihood of service support. Financial support was linked to financial instability for men but not for women. Monetary gifts to women were not as closely connected with "perceived financial need." Support was connected with the divorced person's ratings of low morale.

Family members are the primary resources for both instrumental and socioemotional support throughout the lifespan (Shanas, 1979). Women tend to expect more social support than men (Seelbach, 1977). Those expectancies may be due in part to the female cohort's "traditional socialization into affective, passive, and dependent sex

roles" (Seelbach, 1977, p. 424). The aging mother may expect to be repaid in kind for all of the nurturance and support she has given over the years. Traditionally, women take the responsibility for keeping up with family ties by writing letters, sending gifts, and generally keeping up with the everyday and special events of family members. The female is usually the expressive leader of the family (Lipman, 1977). In old age, women tend to reap the rewards of lifelong social investments (Treas, 1977).

Older men tend to expect and receive less support than older women. Men may not be willing to accept dependency. Most males were socialized into roles of instrumentality, independence, and autonomy; they are more likely to turn to help outside the family (Powers & Bultena, 1976).

The utilization of family members for social support may depend on the type of assistance needed. The need for intimacy provided by a confidant may best be supplied by persons with similar experiences and values; persons from the same cohort may be the most logical choices (Simons, 1984). Consequently, siblings or friends are more often selected than children. Friendships with peers may be an essential component in elevation of morale of older persons (Mancini, 1979). Friendship support rests on mutual choice and need, and thus may be different in character from kin support. It appears that diversity in social networks is essential, especially during later years (Simons, 1984).

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APPENDIX B
The Questionnaire



Appalachian State University
Boone, North Carolina 28608

Each year thousands of Americans get a divorce. The process of separation and divorce is rarely pleasant; often it is an upsetting and stressful experience. Frequently, family members offer support during that time. The purpose of this study is to find out exactly how children help divorced parents.

You are one of a small number of people who was selected from the court records of divorces in Mecklenburg County. I am particularly interested in information from persons who are separated or divorced and who have at least one child over age eighteen. Please fill out your questionnaire and return it as soon as possible.

You may be assured of complete confidentiality. Your children will not be contacted.

Results of this research will be made available to family therapists, counselors, and other professionals who work with divorced people. If you would like to receive a summary of the results of the study, write "copy of results requested" on the back of your return envelope. Be sure that your name and address are also on the envelope. Please do not put your address on the questionnaire itself; we want to protect your confidentiality.

If you need additional information or if you need assistance in answering your questionnaire, please write or call. The telephone number is shown above, or I can be reached collect at

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Carol Lamb Wright
Project Director

/v

PARENT-ADULT CHILD
RELATIONSHIPS

We are interested in your thoughts and feelings about the parent-child relationship.

Please answer all of the questions. If you have comments to explain your answers, you may use the margins. It will take only 20-30 minutes to complete your questionnaire. Return it as soon as you can in the postage paid envelope.

Thank you.

1. This section of statements is about the expectations that parents have regarding the duties and obligations of children. (Circle 1 for "Strongly Disagree;" circle 5 for "Strongly Agree.")

	Circle the Number				
	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
A. MARRIED CHILDREN SHOULD LIVE CLOSE TO PARENTS.	1	2	3	4	5
B. CHILDREN SHOULD TAKE CARE OF THEIR PARENTS, IN WHATEVER WAY NECESSARY, WHEN THEY ARE SICK.	1	2	3	4	5
C. CHILDREN SHOULD GIVE THEIR PARENTS FINANCIAL HELP.	1	2	3	4	5
D. IF CHILDREN LIVE NEARBY AFTER THEY GROW UP, THEY SHOULD VISIT THEIR PARENTS AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK.	1	2	3	4	5
E. CHILDREN WHO LIVE AT A DISTANCE SHOULD WRITE THEIR PARENTS AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK.	1	2	3	4	5
F. THE CHILDREN SHOULD FEEL RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR PARENTS.	1	2	3	4	5

Please answer the rest of the questions about your relationship with the child who is over 18 years old and who lives closest in distance to you. The questions will refer to this child as "your nearest child." We are not asking about your relationship with other children in these specific questions. The questions refer only to the child who lives nearest you.

2. What is the sex of your nearest child? (Circle the number.)

1. MALE
2. FEMALE

3. What is the age of your nearest child?

WRITE IN NUMBER _____.

4. What is the marital status of your nearest child? (Circle the number.)
1. NEVER MARRIED
 2. MARRIED
 3. SEPARATED
 4. DIVORCED
 5. WIDOWED
 6. REMARRIED
5. How far away does your nearest child live from you? (Circle the number.)
1. LIVES IN THE SAME HOUSE WITH ME
 2. 1 TO 5 MILES
 3. 6 TO 30 MILES
 4. 31 TO 150 MILES
 5. 151 TO 300 MILES
 6. MORE THAN 301 MILES
6. What is your nearest child's position among all of your children? (Circle the number.)
1. ONLY CHILD
 2. FIRSTBORN CHILD
 3. SECOND CHILD
 4. THIRD CHILD
 5. FOURTH CHILD
 6. FIFTH CHILD
 7. SIXTH CHILD
 8. OTHER. PLEASE SPECIFY _____.

7. How often do you usually see your nearest child? (Circle the number.)
1. LESS THAN ONCE A YEAR
 2. ONCE OR TWICE A YEAR
 3. ONCE EVERY 2-3 MONTHS
 4. ONCE A MONTH
 5. ONCE EVERY 2 WEEKS
 6. ONCE A WEEK
 7. TWICE A WEEK
 8. 3 TO 6 TIMES A WEEK
 9. EVERY DAY
8. How often do you talk to your nearest child on the telephone? (Circle the number.)
0. WE LIVE IN THE SAME HOUSE SO WE DON'T TALK ON THE PHONE.
 1. LESS THAN ONCE A YEAR
 2. ONCE OR TWICE A YEAR
 3. ONCE EVERY 2-3 MONTHS
 4. ONCE OR TWICE A MONTH
 5. ONCE OR TWICE A WEEK
 6. EVERY DAY
9. Parents sometimes report differences in feelings of emotional closeness to children. How close to your nearest child were you at these different points in time? (Circle 1 for "Not Very Close;" circle 5 for "Very Close," etc.)

	Circle the Number				
	Not Very Close 1	2	Somewhat Close 3	4	Very Close 5
A. BEFORE YOUR SEPARATION... (WHILE YOU WERE STILL LIVING WITH FORMER HUSBAND OR WIFE)	1	2	3	4	5
B. DURING THE SEPARATION (BUT PRIOR TO YOUR DIVORCE)	1	2	3	4	5
C. AT THE TIME OF YOUR DIVORCE	1	2	3	4	5
D. NOW	1	2	3	4	5

10. Children often express opinions about parents' divorce. What reaction did your nearest child have at these different points in time? (Circle 1 for "Strongly Disapproved;" circle 5 for "Strongly Approved," etc.)

	Circle the Number				
	Strongly Disapproved 1	Mildly Disapproved 2	Neither Approved Nor Disapproved 3	Mildly Approved 4	Strongly Approved 5
A. AT TIME OF SEPARATION FROM YOUR HUSBAND OR WIFE	1	2	3	4	5
B. DURING THE SEPARATION PERIOD (BUT PRIOR TO YOUR DIVORCE)	1	2	3	4	5
C. AFTER YOUR DIVORCE BECAME FINAL	1	2	3	4	5
D. NOW	1	2	3	4	5

11. Sometimes children take sides when parents divorce. How did your nearest child react at the times listed below? (Circle 1 for "Strongly took former spouse's side;" circle 5 for "Strongly took my side," etc.).

	Circle the Number				
	Strongly took former spouse's side 1	Tended to take former spouse's side 2	Remained neutral 3	Tended to take my side 4	Strongly took my side 5
A. AT TIME OF SEPARATION FROM YOUR HUSBAND OR WIFE	1	2	3	4	5
B. DURING SEPARATION PERIOD (BUT PRIOR TO YOUR DIVORCE)	1	2	3	4	5
C. AFTER YOUR DIVORCE BECAME FINAL	1	2	3	4	5
D. NOW	1	2	3	4	5

12. This section of statements is about how close you feel to your nearest child.
(Circle 1 for "Disagree;" circle 4 for "Agree.")

	Circle the Number			
	Disagree 1	Tend to Disagree 2	Tend to Agree 3	Agree 4
A. WE COMFORT EACH OTHER.	1	2	3	4
B. WE DO NOT LIKE EACH OTHER.	1	2	3	4
C. WE SHARE A MUTUAL TRUST.	1	2	3	4
D. WE DO NOT ENJOY THE RELATIONSHIP.	1	2	3	4
E. OUR LIVES ARE BETTER BECAUSE OF EACH OTHER.	1	2	3	4
F. WE DO NOT UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER.	1	2	3	4
G. WE DO NOT CARE ABOUT EACH OTHER'S FEELINGS.	1	2	3	4
H. WE MAKE EACH OTHER FEEL WORSE.	1	2	3	4
I. WE SHARE A FEELING THAT NOTHING CAN COME BETWEEN US.	1	2	3	4
J. WE'RE DEVOTED TO EACH OTHER.	1	2	3	4

13. Since your separation from your husband/wife, how often has your nearest child supported you in these ways? (Circle 1 for "Never;" circle 6 for "Every day.")

	Circle the Number						
	Didn't ask or does not apply 0	Never 1	Once or twice a year 2	Once every 2-3 months 3	Once or twice a month 4	Once or twice a week 5	Every day 6
A. OFFERED ADVICE WHEN YOU SOLICIT IT.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
B. BE AVAILABLE TO TALK THINGS OVER WITH YOU.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
C. PROVIDED INFORMATION WHEN ASKED.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

14. With regard to the items in question 13, how satisfied are you overall with the amount of support given you by your nearest child since your separation? (Circle the number.)

1. VERY DISSATISFIED
2. SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED
3. SOMEWHAT SATISFIED
4. VERY SATISFIED

15. Since your separation from your husband/wife, how often has your nearest child performed these services for you? Circle 1 for "Never;" circle 6 for "Every day."

Circle the Number

	Didn't ask or does not apply 0	Never 1	Once or twice a year 2	Once every 2-3 months 3	Once or twice a month 4	Once or twice a week 5	Every day 6
A. RUN ERRANDS	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
B. DO SHOPPING	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
C. HELP WITH HOUSEWORK	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
D. PERFORM HOME REPAIR	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
E. PROVIDE TRANSPORTATION	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
F. GIVE ASSISTANCE WHEN YOU ARE SICK	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
G. HELP WITH YARDWORK	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
H. HELP TAKE CARE OF YOUR CAR	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
I. HELP WITH PAPERWORK	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
J. OTHERS? PLEASE NAME THEM:							
_____	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
_____	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

16. With regard to the services mentioned in question 15, how satisfied are you with the overall amount of services performed for you by your nearest child since your separation? (Circle the number.)
1. VERY DISSATISFIED
 2. SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED
 3. SOMEWHAT SATISFIED
 4. VERY SATISFIED
17. The period following separation/divorce is often characterized by a change in financial status. Since your separation, would you say your financial condition is . . . (Circle the number.)
1. BETTER THAN BEFORE
 2. ABOUT THE SAME AS BEFORE
 3. WORSE THAN BEFORE
18. At present, are you feeling. . . (Circle the number.)
1. NO FINANCIAL STRAIN
 2. VERY LITTLE FINANCIAL STRAIN
 3. SOME FINANCIAL STRAIN
 4. A LOT OF FINANCIAL STRAIN
19. If you were having financial difficulties, would you do any of the following things to ease your financial problems?
- A. INVITE YOUR NEAREST CHILD TO LIVE WITH YOU IN ORDER TO SHARE EXPENSES?
(Circle number.)
1. YES
 2. NO
- B. GO TO LIVE WITH YOUR NEAREST CHILD?
1. YES
 2. NO
- C. INVITE ONE OF YOUR OTHER CHILDREN TO LIVE WITH YOU?
1. YES
 2. NO

19. D. GO TO LIVE WITH ONE OF YOUR OTHER CHILDREN?

1. YES
2. NO

20. Since your separation from your husband/wife, how often has your nearest child helped you financially by performing the following services? (Circle 1 for "Never;" circle 5 for "Frequently.")

	Circle the Number				
	Never 1	2	Once in a while 3	4	Frequently 5
A. LOANED YOU MONEY	1	2	3	4	5
B. PAID YOU FOR SERVICES (E.G., BABYSITTING, HOUSEKEEPING, HOME OR CAR REPAIRS, ETC.)	1	2	3	4	5
C. GIVEN YOU MONEY AS A GIFT	1	2	3	4	5
D. GIVEN YOU OTHER GIFTS (E.G., CLOTHES, HOUSEHOLD ITEMS, FURNITURE, ETC.)	1	2	3	4	5

21. With regard to the items mentioned in question 20, how satisfied are you with the overall amount of financial help given you by your nearest child since your separation? (Circle the number.)

1. VERY DISSATISFIED
2. SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED
3. SOMEWHAT SATISFIED
4. VERY SATISFIED

22. Since your separation from your husband/wife, how often has your nearest child done the following things? (Circle 1 for "Never;" circle 6 for "Every day," etc.)

	Circle the Number						
	Does not apply or did not ask 0	Never 1	Once or twice a year 2	Once every 2-3 months 3	Once or twice a month 4	Once or twice a week 5	Every day 6
A. MADE BRIEF DROP IN VISITS FOR CONVERSATION	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
B. INVITED YOU TO HIS/HER HOME	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

22. (continued)

	Circle the Number						
	Does not apply or did not ask 0	Never 1	Once or twice a year 2	Once every 2-3 months 3	Once or twice a month 4	Once or twice a week 5	Every day 6
C. INCLUDED YOU IN SOCIAL GATHERINGS	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
D. GIVEN YOU EMOTIONAL SUPPORT WHEN YOU ARE "BLUE"	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
E. EXPRESSED AFFECTION OR DEVOTION TO YOU IN SOME WAY	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
F. SYMPATHIZED WITH YOU WHEN YOU HAVE PROBLEMS	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

23. With regard to the items mention in question 22, how satisfied are you overall with the emotional support received from your nearest child? (Circle the number.)

1. VERY DISSATISFIED
2. SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED
3. SOMEWHAT SATISFIED
4. VERY SATISFIED

24. Even in close family relationships, there is some conflict. Indicate how often the following types of conflict occur between you and your nearest child. (Circle 1 for "Never;" circle 5 for "Very Often.")

	Circle the Number				
	Never 1	2	Sometimes 3	4	Very Often 5
HOW OFTEN DO YOU AND YOUR NEAREST CHILD.					
A. ARGUE	1	2	3	4	5
B. TRY TO CHANGE THINGS ABOUT EACH OTHER	1	2	3	4	5
C. FEEL ANGRY OR RESENTFUL	1	2	3	4	5
D. HAVE ARGUMENTS THAT ARE SERIOUS	1	2	3	4	5
E. EXPRESS NEGATIVE FEELINGS (ANGER, DISSATISFACTION, ETC.)	1	2	3	4	5

25. In this questionnaire, we have asked you how your children have supported you during the divorce process. Often, other persons are important sources of assistance. Would you rank the three most important sources of assistance since your separation? (Your children may or may not be included in the three you select.) Place a "1" beside the most important source, a "2" by the second most important, and a "3" by the source which is third in importance to you.

- _____ A. BROTHERS/SISTERS
- _____ B. CHILDREN
- _____ C. FRIENDS
- _____ D. IN-LAWS
- _____ E. MOTHER/FATHER
- _____ F. OTHERS (PLEASE SPECIFY _____)

Now, I would like to ask you a few questions about yourself. This information will help us understand some of the factors which affect relationships between parents and their children.

26. What is your sex? (Circle the number.)

- 1. MALE
- 2. FEMALE

27. What is your age? Write in number: _____

28. What is your race? (Circle the number.)

- 1. WHITE
- 2. BLACK
- 3. ASIAN
- 4. LATIN AMERICAN
- 5. AMERICAN INDIAN
- 6. OTHER. PLEASE SPECIFY _____

29. How many years of schooling did you complete? Write in number _____

30. This section of statements is about your feelings. (Circle 1 for "Strongly Disagree;" circle 5 for "Strongly Agree.")

	Circle the Number				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
A. ON THE WHOLE, LIFE GIVES ME A LOT OF PLEASURE.	1	2	3	4	5
B. ON THE WHOLE, I AM VERY SATISFIED WITH MY WAY OF LIFE TODAY.	1	2	3	4	5
C. THINGS JUST KEEP GETTING WORSE AND WORSE FOR ME AS I GET OLDER.	1	2	3	4	5
D. ALL IN ALL, I FIND A GREAT DEAL OF HAPPINESS IN LIFE TODAY.	1	2	3	4	5
E. I HAVE A LOT TO BE SAD ABOUT.	1	2	3	4	5
F. NOTHING EVER TURNS OUT FOR ME THE WAY I WANT IT TO.	1	2	3	4	5

31. Please answer these questions about your health.

A. IS THERE ANY PHYSICAL CONDITION THAT BOTHERS YOU? (Circle the number.)

1. YES

2. NO

B. WHICH OF THESE STATEMENTS FITS YOU BEST? (Circle the number.)

1. I CANNOT WORK AT ALL NOW BECAUSE OF MY HEALTH.

2. I HAVE TO LIMIT SOME OF THE WORK OR THINGS THAT I DO.

3. I AM NOT LIMITED IN ANY OF THE THINGS THAT I DO.

C. ARE YOU ABLE TO WALK A HALF MILE WITHOUT HELP? (Circle the number.)

1. YES

2. NO

APPENDIX C
Supplementary Procedure Information

REMINDER POSTCARD

Last week a questionnaire was mailed to you asking about your relationship with your children. If you have completed and returned the questionnaire, please accept my sincere thanks. If not, please do so today. Because the questionnaire was mailed to only a small number of individuals, your response is particularly important. We need your opinions in order to get an accurate picture of how people feel regarding this topic.

If by some chance you did not receive the questionnaire, or it got misplaced, please call me right now, collect , and I will mail you another one today.

Sincerely,

Carol Lamb Wright
Project Director

APPENDIX D
Response Rates for Mail Surveys

Response Rates for Mail Surveys

<u>Mail Survey (Time 1)</u>	N = 600	<u>Mail Survey (Time 2)</u>	N = 200	Total
Undeliverable	74	28		102
Respondent Ineligible	16	3		19
<u>Uncompleted Return</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>		<u>2</u>
Total Unusable N	91	32		123
Returned After Closeout Date	0	5		5
Non-return or Refusal	329	113		442
Completed Cases	180	50		230
Net Response Rate	35.4%	29.8%		34.0%

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