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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MOTHERS' USE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT AND THEIR
PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING FOLLOWING MARITAL SEPARATION

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
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DEDICATION

There are several people who enabled me to reach this culmination of my graduate studies, and I owe them my appreciation and gratitude. This dissertation is dedicated to:

--my father and grandfather, well-known and respected educators in western North Carolina, who were responsible for instilling in me a life-long desire to grow and achieve. They both continued educational pursuits concurrent with professional responsibilities and were excellent role models for my graduate endeavors;

--my husband, who understood and endorsed my strong desire for educational attainment and created the stability in our home life so that I might accomplish my goals. His financial and emotional support provided the impetus for combining academic pursuits with being a wife, mother, and professional;

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the direct and moderating influence of social support on the relationship between life change and mothers' psychological well-being approximately 5-6 months following marital separation. The sample consisted of 108 residential mothers with children between the ages of 3 and 18. Mothers' psychological well-being was conceptualized in terms of three dimensions: emotional affect, self-esteem, and psychosomatic symptomatology. Life change was measured by assessing the occurrence and disruptiveness of changes in mothers' lives since the separation. Three dimensions of social support were measured: range (total support), sources of support, and functions of support. For the most part, buffering effects of social support on the relationship between life change and psychological well-being were non-significant. Rather, the use of social support was directly related to separated mothers' emotional affect and self-esteem but not to psychosomatic symptomatology.

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I. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Marital separation is a stressful life event that usually demands personal and social changes on the part of the separated mother (Nelson, 1989). Researchers have concluded that separation is the most stressful and critical social-psychological period for those experiencing marital disruption (Bloom, Hodges, Kern, & McFadden, 1985; Propst, Pardington, Ostrom, & Watkins, 1986). Given this insight, the objective of this study was to examine the relationships among three salient variables identified from the stress literature: psychological well-being, life change, and social support.

Psychological Well-being

The psychological well-being of separated mothers is important to study because surveys indicate that they have higher rates of anxiety and depression than women in other marital statuses (Gove & Shin, 1989; McLanahan, Wedemeyer, & Adelberg, 1981; Radloff & Rae, 1979). Hetherington, Cox, and Cox (1977) concluded that in the postseparation period, mothers often exhibit low self-esteem; confusion regarding social and sexual roles; and feelings of anger, anxiety, depression, and personal and social incompetence. Women's vulnerability during this transition is particularly salient because the psychological well-being of separated mothers is a key factor in several areas of individual and family functioning.

First, psychological characteristics of separated mothers predict their own short-term and long-term divorce adjustment (Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1978; Thomas, 1982; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Second,

the psychosocial adjustment of separated mothers predicts the level of emotional and physical availability to their children and, subsequently, children's divorce adjustment (Buehler, 1989; McLanahan & Adams, 1989; Stolberg & Bush, 1985). Third, the psychosocial well-being of separated mothers is essential for the stabilization and reorganization of the family (Johnson, 1986; Zelkowitz, 1987).

For this study psychological well-being was conceptualized in terms of three dimensions: emotional affect, self-esteem, and psychosomatic symptomatology. In this conceptualization, past research is acknowledged that documents well-being as a multidimensional construct encompassing social, psychological, and physiological dimensions (Campbell, 1981; Diener, 1984; Warr, 1978; Weingarten, 1985). Representative of this multidimensional perspective, Bryant and Veroff (1982) presented confirmatory factor analyses demonstrating that self-reported well-being involves three distinct dimensions: affective evaluation, a cognitive factor, and bodily reaction. In accordance, these three dimensions are represented in this study, i.e., emotional affect for affective evaluation, self-esteem for a cognitive factor, and psychosomatic symptomatology as bodily reaction.

Life Change

Based on family and individual stress theories, researchers have suggested that life changes (stressors) influence psychological well-being (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Tschann, Johnston, & Wallerstein, 1989). Life change is defined conceptually as any set of circumstances in which the advent requires modification of the individual's life pattern (Holmes & Rahe, 1967). Holmes and Rahe have conceptualized

that change itself is the critical element in the assessment of life stressors. Community surveys repeatedly have demonstrated a relationship between the occurrence of stressful life events in the recent past (2 years or less) and general levels of psychological adjustment (Andrews, Tennant, Hewson, & Valliant, 1978; Myers, Lindenthal, & Pepper, 1975).

Some theorists have suggested that the amount of life change is related negatively to the psychosocial well-being of separated mothers and that this relationship is stronger if she perceives the changes as disruptive and disabling (Menaghan, 1989). However, investigators have confirmed tremendous variation in the psychological well-being of persons experiencing marital disruption and have noted that individuals vary in the intensity, timing, and duration of their responses (Buehler & Langenbrunner, 1987; Colletta, 1983; Duffy, 1989; Kitson & Raschke, 1981).

For example, Pearlin, Lieberman, Menaghan, and Mullen (1981) concluded that individuals are not equally stressed by life change, making it necessary to consider ways in which people recognize and respond to events. Rather than the cognitive meaning of the event's outcome, the quality of the affective reaction that accompanies the event may be the most important facet of how the event is experienced. Other researchers have acknowledged that perceptions by the individual regarding the disruptiveness of the change must be taken into account when conceptualizing and measuring life change (Block & Zautra, 1981; Buehler & Langenbrunner, 1987; Chiriboga & Cutler, 1977; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Based on these recommendations, occurrence of life

change and the disruptiveness associated with those life changes were included in this study.

Social Support

One important influence on the variability of separated mothers' psychological well-being following marital separation seems to be the availability of social support (Caldwell & Bloom, 1982). Researchers have proposed that access to potentially supportive others can help people deal more effectively with stressful life conditions (Caplan, 1974; Cassel, 1976; LaRocco, House, & French, 1980; Lin, Ensel, Simeone, & Kuo, 1979). Evidence from diverse types of research, including laboratory experimental studies of animals and humans, has confirmed that social support can reduce morbidity and mortality (House, Umberson, & Landis, 1988). Conversely, lack of support has been related to a range of psychosomatic complaints and physical ailments (Eaton, 1978; Gore, 1981). The mere quantity of ties seems to promote well-being and reduce symptom levels regardless of the intensity of the relationship or the perceived efficacy of the support (Gerstel, Riessman, & Rosenfield, 1985; Henderson, Byrne, Duncan-Jones, Scott, & Adcock, 1980; Palmore, Cleveland, & Nowlin, 1979).

Research on the availability of social support for separated mothers has not been extensively pursued (McLanahan et al., 1981). However, it is known that, on the average, approximately 40% of an individual's social support constituency during marriage is dropped following separation (Rands, in press). Furthermore, some researchers have proposed that separated/divorced mothers are more vulnerable than

others to stressful life change because they have fewer social resources (Daniels-Mohring & Berger, 1984; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978).

According to Longfellow (1979), marital disruption seems to "intensify the separated mother's need for an external support system, while at the same time it throws up obstacles against her ability to build or maintain such a network" (p. 297). Subsequently the family of origin, out of necessity, often becomes the primary support (Gerstel et al., 1985; Kitson, Moir, & Mason, 1982). Separated mothers who do have comprehensive support systems, however, experience less stress (Raschke, 1977; Spanier & Casto, 1979), make better transitions in self-identity (Kohen, 1981), and are better able to help their children through the transition following separation (Emery, Hetherington, & DiLalla, 1984; McPhee, 1984).

In terms of conceptualization, researchers have concluded that social support is a multidimensional concept (Broadhead, Kaplan, James, & Wagner, 1983; Heller & Swindle, 1983; Kobasa & Puccetti, 1983; Pearlin et al., 1981; Sarason, Levine, Basham, & Sarason, 1983; Vaux & Harrison, 1985). Not only is the total amount of support important, but the sources and functions of support provided also are salient dimensions (Hirsch, 1980; Leavy, 1983; Sandler & Barrera, 1984; Thoits, 1982). Thus, three major dimensions of social support were included in the present study: total availability of support, sources of support, and functions of support. Total availability of support is labeled range of support in this study, and is defined as the number of social contacts in the individual's support network (McLanahan et al., 1981). Sources of support is defined as those providers of the support

received and functions of support is defined as the needs met by those providers. (See Appendix A for a more extensive discussion of social support.)

Relationships Among Psychological Well-being, Life Change, and Social Support

Several investigators have emphasized that the relationships among psychological well-being, life change, and social support are exceedingly complex (Deiner, 1984; Menaghan, 1989; Warheit, 1979). A critical element of the complexity is that researchers have acknowledged the presence of social support as a major determinant of an individual's adjustment to stressful life events but have reached different conclusions regarding the precise role played by social support (Caplan, 1974; Cohen & Wills, 1985; House & Kahn, 1985). Specifically, some researchers have concluded that social support has a direct effect on psychological well-being (Andrews et al., 1978; Berkman & Syme, 1979; Liem & Liem, 1978; Lin et al., 1979; Williams, Ware, & Donald, 1981). A direct effect indicates that social support is beneficial regardless of the level of stress. That is, social support resources provide generalized facilitating and enhancing mental health functions that operate at all times, not just under certain conditions of high stress (Cummins, 1988; Murrell & Norris, 1983). In contrast, other researchers (Caplan, 1974; Cassell, 1976; Cobb, 1976; Dean & Lin, 1977; Henderson et al., 1980; Johnson & Sarason, 1978; Turner, 1981; Wilcox, 1981) have concluded that the individual's social support system may help moderate or buffer the effects of life events upon his/her psychological state. The most prominent version of the

buffering effect proposes that the relationship between stress and psychological distress is greater under conditions of low support than it is under conditions of high support. The more effective the buffer functions, the less negative the effect of life change on psychological state (Brown & Gary, 1988; Murrell & Norris, 1983).

Thus, a key question is not whether social networks provide support but when and under what conditions the social network operates. That is, do social support processes operate at all times (direct effects) or only when an individual confronts high levels of stress (moderating effects)? In their reviews, both Thoits (1982) and Turner (1983) strongly advised researchers to test concurrently for direct and moderating effects of social support. Some researchers have incorporated such procedures in their studies (Dean & Ensel, 1982; Kessler & Essex, in press; Ladewig, McGee, & Newell, 1990; Landerman, George, Campbell, & Blazer, 1989; Pittman & Lloyd, 1988; Vinkour & Caplan, 1986), and a few (Caldwell & Bloom, 1982; D'Ercole, 1988; Tetzloff & Barrera, 1987) have focused on separated mothers. The findings from these three studies on separated mothers have conflicted, two providing evidence primarily for direct effects (D'Ercole, 1988; Tetzloff & Barrera, 1987), and one providing evidence primarily for moderating effects (Caldwell & Bloom, 1982).

Purpose of the Study

Two major conclusions are formulated from the preceding literature review. First, it is not sufficient to study the impact of life change on separated mothers' psychological well-being without consideration of the social support contexts within which potentially stressful life

events occur. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine the direct and moderating influences of social support on the relationship between separated mothers' stressful life change and their psychological well-being approximately 5-6 months following marital separation. Four research questions were addressed: (a) What are the significant sources of social support perceived by separated mothers? (b) What significant functions do these sources provide? (c) Does social support directly affect separated mothers' psychological well-being? (d) Does social support buffer or moderate the relationship between life change and separated mothers' psychological well-being? (See Figure 1).

The second major conclusion drawn from the literature review was that the role played by social support postseparation has important implications for practice. Family scientists could readily implement this knowledge in the areas of policy development and program planning. For instance, the timing and focus of prevention/intervention efforts could be more effectively targeted if further research efforts can clarify the influence of direct and moderating effects of social support for those women experiencing marital separation (Leavy, 1983).

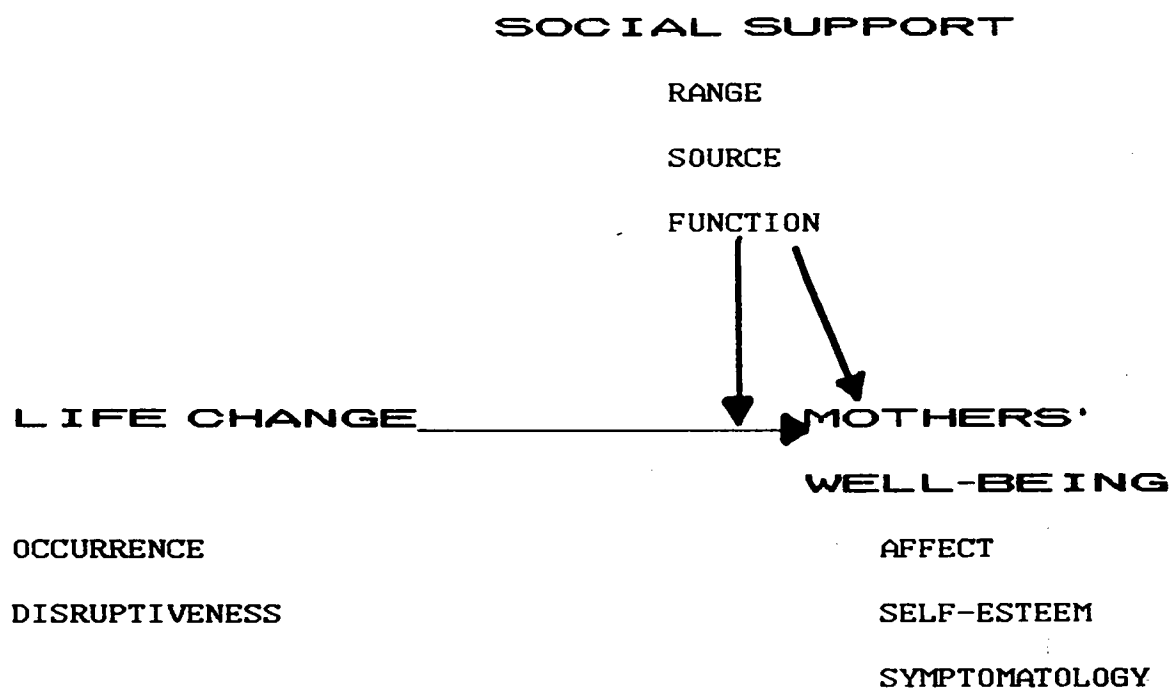


Figure 1. A model representing the direct effects of social support on separated mothers' psychological well-being and the moderating effects of social support on the relationship between life change and separated mothers' well-being.

II. METHODS

This study was part of a larger, more comprehensive study of the well-being of parents and children following marital separation (Buehler, 1990; Buehler & Trotter, in press).

Sampling and Data Collection

Sample characteristics. The subsample for this study consisted of 108 mothers with children between the ages of 3 and 18 years. The population was identified using the 1986 court records in a large southeastern city. Questionnaires were sent to 422 separated mothers, and of that number, 79 (19%) of the questionnaires were nondeliverable. Questionnaires were completed and returned by 148 mothers (41% of those who received the invitation). Of these mothers, 108 met the following criteria: (a) completed the questionnaire appropriately and (b) had children living with them at least half the time.

These 108 mothers ranged in age from 21 to 45 years ($M = 32$ years, $SD = 5.3$). The respondents were primarily Caucasian, with 104 white mothers and 4 black mothers included in the sample. (An analysis of the 1986 court records indicated that only five divorcing couples (10 individuals) were nonwhite.) The median length of marriage for the mothers was 10 years ($SD = 5.2$) and median length of separation 6 months ($SD = 10.5$). About 85% of the mothers had either 1 or 2 children. The educational attainment of these mothers ranged from grade school or less (2%) to completion of a graduate degree (5%), with the majority (93%) having completed high school. The modal occupational status was clerical/sales and 79% were currently employed

(71% were employed before the separation). Mothers' current monthly income ranged from \$0 to \$5,000 (Median = \$875; $SD = \$788$). Their preseparation monthly income ranged from \$130 to \$14,000 (Median = \$2158; $SD = \$2271$). Most of these mothers defined their economic situation as "struggling" (36%) or "doing okay" (45%).

There were two different procedures used to assess sample representativeness. In the first procedure, the survey respondents and nonrespondents were compared using background data available from court records. The two groups were compared on the following variables: age, educational status, length of current marriage, number of previous marriages, number of children, awarding of spousal support, and the amount of monthly spousal support payments. There were no differences between respondents and nonrespondents on age, educational status, length of current marriage, and number of children. Survey respondents had fewer previous marriages ($t(354) = 1.43, p = < .02$), were more likely to have been awarded spousal support ($\chi^2 = 5.86, p = < .02$), and agreed to larger monthly payments of spousal support ($t(361) = 3.94, p = < .01$).

The second procedure used to assess sample representativeness was comparison of the sample survey data with data from the 1986 Census (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1987a, 1987b). The mothers in the sample for the current study were more educated than the U.S. average of separated mothers, cf. 93% of survey respondents were high school graduates as compared to 80% of separated/divorced mothers reported in the U.S. census sample. The mean monthly income for survey respondents was lower than for separated mothers in the census data, cf. \$984 as

compared to \$1172. The two groups were comparable on age and number of children.

The two procedures used to examine the representativeness of the current sample indicated that it was representative of Caucasian separated/divorced mothers on several sociodemographic characteristics. The exception was a slight bias in the present sample on educational attainment. (See Appendix B for detailed information regarding sampling and data collection procedures. See Appendix B, Tables 5 and 6 for additional information on demographic characteristics of the separated mothers in this study.)

Measurement

Psychological well-being. Based on the multidimensional conceptualization, three well-being dimensions were measured in this study: emotional affect, self-esteem, and psychosomatic symptomatology. Emotional affect was measured by the Bradburn Affect Balance Scale (Bradburn, 1969; Bradburn & Caplovitz, 1965), an instrument designed to assess a variety of positive and negative feelings along with the frequency of their occurrence. Respondents reported on 10 items, such as how often during the past week they felt "particularly excited or interested in something." Responses range from never (1) to often (4), and an average score was calculated. The Bradburn scale was standardized on five broad and heterogeneous samples and findings have been replicated with varying community samples (Cherlin & Reeder, 1975; Diener & Emmons, in press; Warr, 1978).

Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .84. (See Table 7, Appendix B, for scale descriptions).

Self-esteem was measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965). This instrument assesses the positiveness and negativeness of one's attitude toward oneself by asking respondents to state the extent to which they agree or disagree with 10 items such as "I feel I have a number of good qualities," and "At times, I think I am no good at all." Responses range from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (4). The scale has been used to measure self-concept in diverse populations (Ostrow, 1982) and specifically, in separated individuals (Spanier & Hanson, 1982). Recently, some researchers (Barber, 1987; Openshaw, Thomas, & Rollins, 1984) have concluded that the scale is multidimensional, but a factor analysis completed in this study resulted in a unidimensional solution that did not substantiate the multidimensional assertion. Averaged scores were calculated, and Cronbach's alpha was .76.

The third measure of mothers' well-being was a psychosomatic symptomatology self-report instrument that assessed respondents' physical distress. Respondents' indicated whether they have experienced nine primary symptom dimensions such as sleeplessness, headaches, and indigestion. A simple summated score of the nine items was calculated. The symptomatology instrument as used by Spanier and Thompson (1984) demonstrated a relationship between marital disruption and physical changes, indicating some evidence of construct validity in the context of marital status. In other studies, researchers have

implemented objective measures of symptom checklists as one measure of well-being (Bultena & Oyler, 1971).

Life change. For this study, Buehler and Langenbrunner's (1987) multidimensional concept of life change, which includes dimensions of occurrence, disruptiveness, area of life change, social desirability, and subjective desirability, was used. Specifically, the dimensions of occurrence and disruptiveness of life change were assessed. Occurrence of life change was measured by summing the responses to a list of 26 events, situations, or strains that mothers may have experienced since the separation. Examples are "I have moved" and "I have changed jobs." Disruptiveness was measured by averaging mothers' disruption responses to the 26 items, responses that range from "experienced this but it was not disruptive" (1) to "experienced this and it was very disruptive" (5). As a result, this scale provided information on the question, Of the events experienced, how disruptive were they?" (Non-occurrence items were not included in the disruptiveness score.)

Some researchers (Barrera, 1986; Heller & Swindle, 1983) have cautioned that measures of perceived stress and self-reported psychological distress may overlap with social support measures. Slavin and Compas (1989) noted that the problem of confounded measures may be especially serious, both theoretically and practically, in the context of investigations of the relation between social support and psychological well-being. In the current study, the researcher concluded that several individual items on the occurrence/disruptiveness scale did, in fact, overlap conceptually with other study variables. Based on the above concerns, the following

items were dropped from the measure of life change: (a) I have felt intense pain; (b) I have felt more of a sense of failure; (c) I have more problems sleeping; (d) I have been more depressed; and (e) I have felt as though I don't control my own life.

Social support. Three social support variables were measured in this study: range, sources of support, and functions of support. The social support instrument for this study was derived from the framework developed by Bloom and Hodges (1981) and has been used in previous research (Kurdek, in press) on mothers' and children's correlates of social support postdivorce. Range of support was measured by summing the total number of supports. Mothers indicated whether or not (0 = No, 1 = Yes) each of 13 sources available provided support for each of six areas of need: child care, financial support, discussing feelings, social needs, intimacy/sex, and discussing separation. The possible scale range was 0 to 78.

Factor analysis has been used by several researchers to clarify the underlying dimensions of social support (Barrera & Ainlay, 1983; Bowen, 1982; Dean & Ensel, 1982; D'Ercole, 1988; Landerman et al., 1989; Stokes & Wilson, 1984). Measures of sources of support were developed by factor analyzing the summed subscales of support from key network members (e.g., the number of individuals meeting needs.) The factor analysis indicated five source indices: people (friends, relatives, parents, job-related individuals), counselors (clergy, mental health professionals, divorce education groups, workshops), technical (attorneys, books, articles), children, and other separated/divorced individuals.

Measures of functions of social support received by separated mothers were developed by factor analyzing the function subscale scores (e.g., the number of needs met). Three social support function indices were created based on the results of the factor analysis: socioemotional needs (social needs, discussing feelings, discussing the marital separation), social freedom needs (child care assistance, sexual/intimacy needs), and financial needs. Summed scores were calculated for each source and function measure. (See Appendix B, Tables 8 and 9, for results of factor analyses.)

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of this investigation was to examine the sources and functions of social support received by separated mothers and to interpret the nature of the influence of those social supports on their psychological well-being.

The means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for the study variables are presented in Table 1. It is important to note the low to moderate correlations between the life change, social support, and well-being variables. The pattern of results indicate that there is no confounding of variables, thus minimizing conceptual and operational overlap and the prospect of redundant statistical effects.

Descriptive Analyses of Social Support

In their reviews of social support literature, Cohen & Wills (1985) and Monroe & Steiner (1986) have urged that researchers further delineate different sources of support. Accordingly, the first objective of this study was to provide descriptive information on sources of social support used by separated mothers and the functions of that support postseparation. The social support variables were correlated positively, meaning that support from one source/function does not eliminate the possibility of support from other sources/functions. Correlations ranged from low (counselor/social freedom needs: $r=.23$; children/financial needs: $r=.26$) to high (people/socioemotional needs: $r=.73$; separated-divorced persons/social needs: $r=.72$). Past research (Chiriboga et al., 1977; McLanahan et

Table 1

Zero-Order Correlations Among Life Change, Social Support, and Separated Mothers' Well Being

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
LIFE CHANGE													
1. Occurrence		.34*	-.29*	-.32*	.29*	.02	.17*	-.01	-.01	.02	.07	.11	-.10
2. Disruptiveness			-.20*	-.16*	.14	-.04	.07	-.19*	-.11	-.06	-.04	-.05	-.11
WELL-BEING													
3. Self-Esteem				.73*	-.48*	.13	.13	.26*	.07	.26*	.22*	.06	.23*
4. Affect					-.52*	.22*	.16	.40*	.10	.34*	.29*	.18*	.34*
5. Symptomatology						.01	.14	-.14	.05	-.02	.03	.13	-.06
SUPPORT SOURCES													
6. People							.21*	.32*	.43*	.55*	.73*	.58*	.58*
7. Counselor								.33*	.35*	.44*	.68*	.23*	.26*
8. Technical									.45*	.38*	.57*	.34*	.54*
9. Children										.36*	.67*	.25*	.26*
10. Sep/Div Persons											.72*	.36*	.49*
SUPPORT FUNCTIONS													
11. Socioemotional												.36*	.50*
12. Social Freedom													.36*
13. Financial													
MEAN	8.8	2.4	3.0	2.7	4.3	2.3	.58	1.0	1.3	1.3	4.5	1.3	1.7
(S.D.)	3.7	.78	.65	.59	1.9	1.1	.73	1.1	1.2	1.4	2.5	.94	1.4

Note: N = 108.

*p < .05.

al., 1981) has indicated that separated mothers turn to several sources of support and call upon them for specific functions, and this finding was replicated in the current study.

The mean number of total supports for separated mothers in this study was 17.7 (SD = 9.3). In the study by Gerstel et al. (1985), mean supports for separated mothers were 16.2 (SD = 9.2), but they utilized a "free association" list as opposed to the "fixed listing" of the current respondents. Thus, definitive comparison of the results is debatable, but the similarity of acknowledged supports is nonetheless noteworthy. To add perspective to these data, Gerstel's comparison study revealed that separated mothers had an average of four fewer supports than married mothers.

As shown in Table 2, separated mothers in the present study received financial assistance from their parents and from other family members. The fact that kin are supportive in the financial realm has been established with samples of divorced mothers (Colletta, 1979; Leslie & Grady, 1985; Spanier & Hanson, 1982) and is confirmed with this sample of separated mothers. The family of origin provided additional support for tangible and intangible needs in the present research, a result that replicates the findings of Kitson, Noir, and Mason (1982) that 63% of separated/divorced mothers received help from kin in areas of finances, counseling, and direct services support. The family's role as an important source of social support does not negate, however, the concern expressed by Leslie and Grady (1985) that future emphasis should be given to studying the relationship between increased

Table 2. Percentages of Separated Mothers Who Received Social Support

Support source	Areas of Need					
	Child care	Financial	Discussing feelings	Social	Intimacy	Discussing separation
Friends	37	11	92	71	16	79
Clergy	09	04	32	07	00	32
Lawyers	07	21	24	06	01	63
Counselors	03	01	29	07	03	30
Relatives	55	33	69	35	01	53
Ex-Spouse	32	40	30	06	06	36
Children	07	03	47	34	02	36
Sep/Div	05	03	49	27	04	40
Parents	49	42	56	31	01	53
Job peers	07	03	48	40	02	43
Groups	04	00	11	13	02	11
Books	10	07	25	11	06	25
Workshops	04	02	16	08	01	13

Note. N = 108.

reliance on kin and mothers' long-range emotional adjustment postseparation.

In the present study, friends and other separated/divorced persons provided socioemotional support as their main function (see Table 2). Daniels-Mohring and Berger (1984) suggested that the family of origin centers around multiplex relationships, e.g., those relationships providing more than one relational need, but extended network relationships are usually uniplex, e.g., different individuals are called upon for distinctly different kinds of support. Gerstel (1988) pointed out that nonkin are more suited for dealing with tasks requiring similar values and interests, such as shared leisure activities and discussion of fears and concerns. Berman and Turk (1981) found that social and interpersonal activities accounted for a significant amount of variance in their study of divorced persons' adjustment.

Although previous studies have confirmed the importance of friends and relatives as sources of support for separated/divorced mothers (Chiriboga et al., 1977; Leslie & Grady, 1985; Spanier & Thompson, 1984), this study is among the first to observe that children can be sources of socioemotional support for their mothers in the postseparation period (Kurdek, in press; Spanier & Casto, 1979). In fact, Brandwein, Brown, & Fox (1974) concluded that "children cannot provide emotional support--their love is demanding of the separated parent, rather than supportive" (p. 507). Yet, over one-third of the separated mothers in the current research indicated that their children provided socioemotional support for them, and more than half of the

respondents in Kurdek's study confirmed children's support in this area. This finding suggests that concurrent with viewing children as sources of stress, separated mothers may perceive supportive elements in the mother-child relationship. This issue has not been fully explored in social support research but appears worthy of future consideration because at least 80% of the children will live with their mother postdivorce.

In the present study, support from the former husband was surprisingly low in most areas, given the conclusion by Hetherington et al. (1977) that the former spouse seems to help out most in the early months postseparation. Former spouse support ranged from 6% for social needs to 40% for financial needs (see Table 2). Johnson (1986) reported that 87% of separated mothers perceived the former spouse as being available to help with family needs. Kurdek (in press) also found that 55% of separated mothers reported receiving assistance from the former spouse in financial and child-care areas. In both the Kurdek and Johnson samples, however, mothers had been separated/divorced for longer periods than the current respondents (mean=13 months and 14 months, respectively); perhaps by that time, financial and child-care obligations had become solidified through conflict resolution, mediation, or the court system.

An important function of social support that is virtually unmet by any source in the current study is separated mothers' intimacy and sexual needs (intimacy support ranged from 0 to 16%--see Table 2). Hunt and Hunt (1977) reported that 90% of their respondents engaged in postseparation sexual activity, and indicated that involvement was a

positive influence on adjustment. Other investigators (Menaghan & Lieberman, 1986; Spanier & Casto, 1979) also concluded that dating and sexual involvement are essential to postseparation adjustment but reported declines similar to the present study immediately following separation.

A logical interpretation of these findings seems to be that separated mothers, in their new role as head of the family, seek to ensure the basic operations of the family as priority and often subjugate their personal needs of intimacy and sexual involvement. This is especially meaningful in light of the Hetherington et al. (1977) conclusion that by two years postdivorce, the most important factor in enhancing separated mothers' self-concept is the establishment of a satisfying, intimate, heterosexual relationship. Leslie and Grady (1985) proposed, however, that even 1 year postdivorce is not a long enough period of time to make definitive statements about separated mothers' personal and social relationships. The recency of the present respondents' separation makes it difficult to interpret whether these mothers are even ready emotionally to deal with an intimate relationship. This critical aspect of separated mothers' adjustment must be studied from a longitudinal perspective.

Regression Analyses to Test Buffering Effects

The second major objective of the study was to assess the influence of direct and moderating effects of social support on separated mothers' psychological well-being. Data were analyzed using the following basic hierarchial multiple regression equation:

$$Y = b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + b_5X_5 + e \text{ where:}$$

Y = dependent variable (emotional affect, self-esteem, psychosomatic symptomatology;

X1 = occurrence of life change;

X2 = disruptiveness of life change;

X3 = social support measure;

X4 = interaction term of occurrence/social support; and

X5 = interaction term of disruptiveness/social support

Each hierarchical regression analysis consisted of predictors entered in the following order: occurrence and disruptiveness, the two independent variables denoting life change, the social support variable, and the product of the interaction of social support with occurrence/disruptiveness of life change. In order to eliminate multicollinearity, a special technique was used to create the interaction term which involves "centering the variable" by subtracting a constant (i.e., the mean) from each product term before calculating the interaction variable (Smith & Sasaki, 1979). As a result, the interaction term does not have an additive effect, allowing for more substantive interpretation. If the interaction term has a significant effect, its regression coefficient should be significant, and it should make a unique and significant contribution to the overall R² in each of the groupings.

Separate regressions were calculated to determine whether each social support variable operated as a buffer between life change and psychological well-being. Generally, the statistical analyses indicate that interaction variables did not provide any more significant explanatory power than was already provided by direct main effects.

Only 2 of the 27 analyses tested were found to be significant at the $p \leq .05$ level [e.g., (a) the interaction of occurrence of life change and people--kin, relatives, friends--with separated mothers' psychosomatic symptomatology and (b) the interaction of disruptiveness of life change and people with separated mothers' self-esteem]. At this level of probability testing, the two interactions could have occurred by chance. This current study is consistent with Tetzloff and Barrera's (1987) study on separated mothers' social support in finding that social support is related directly to psychological well-being, independent of life stress.

Direct Effect of Social Support

In contrast to the lack of significant interaction effects, there was ample evidence of the direct effect of social support on separated mothers' psychological well-being, specifically in the dimensions of emotional affect (see Table 3) and self-esteem (see Table 4). Of the 9 social support variables tested, 8 were positively related to separated mothers' affect and 5 were positively related to mothers' self-esteem. This confirms the findings of Fiore, Coppel, Becker, & Cox (1986), who concluded that in general, social support is related more consistently and strongly to psychological than to physiological adjustment. Accordingly, in the current study, there were no significant direct effects of social support on separated mothers' psychosomatic symptomatology (see Appendix C, Table 10). In Caldwell and Bloom's (1982) study, a symptomatology composite did not significantly predict psychological distress immediately following separation but did account for 25% of the variance in a 6-month follow-up. These researchers

Table 3

The Direct Effect of Social Support on Separated Mothers' Emotional Affect

Variables	Full Model E	Full Model (df)	Full Model R ²	Reduced Model R ²	Support Variable Beta Partial r	Occurrence Beta Partial r	Disruptiveness Beta Partial r
Range (Total Support)	6.20	(3, 104)	.23	.23	.34**	-.34**	-.03
SOURCE OF SUPPORT							
People	4.27	(3, 104)	.17	.16	.21**	-.47**	.11
Counselor	4.49	(3, 104)	.18	.15	.20**	-.34**	-.07
Technical	7.43	(3, 104)	.27	.26	.42**	-.36**	.00
Children					.08	-.37	-.02
Sep/Divorced	6.42	(3, 104)	.24	.22	.35**	-.39**	.00
FUNCTION OF SUPPORT							
Socio- emotional	6.03	(3, 104)	.23	.20	.30**	-.59**	-.02
Social Freedom	3.76	(3, 104)	.16	.15	.22**	-.36**	.00
Financial	5.31	(3, 104)	.21	.20	.33**	-.37**	.02

*p < .05

**p < .001

Table 4

The Direct Effect of Social Support on Separated Mothers' Self-Esteem

Variables	Full Model F	Full Model (df)	Full Model R ²	Reduced Model R ²	Support Variable Beta Partial r	Occurrence Beta Partial r	Disruptiveness Beta Partial r
Range	5.11	(3, 104)	.16	.15	.23**	.27**	-.09
(Total Support)							
SOURCE OF SUPPORT							
People					.12	NS	.19
Counselor					.15	NS	-.18
Technical	4.71	(3, 104)	.15	.13	.25**	.29**	.06
Children					.05	NS	-.07
Sep/Divorced	5.24	(3, 104)	.17	.16	.26**	.30**	-.08
FUNCTION OF SUPPORT							
Socio-emotional	5.57	(3, 104)	.17	.14	.22**	.50**	-.06
Social Freedom					.08	NS	-.07
Financial	4.69	(3, 104)	.14	.13	.22**	.26**	-.14

*p < .05

**p < .001

concluded that the effects of separation stress take time to develop and noted that chronic stresses tend to have a "wearing" effect on adjustment. Perhaps this offers a plausible explanation for the virtual absence of a relationship between social support and symptomatology in the present study of those recently separated.

In examining the relative influence of the variables measured, occurrence of life change and the social support variables accounted for a major proportion of the variance. This substantiates Buehler's (1989) finding that occurrence exerts a stronger effect than disruptiveness, possibly because the "pile-up" of life change seems to erode well-being and strain the psychological resources of parents in the postseparation period. Vinkour and Caplan (1986) also concluded that this accumulation of events increases stress and reduces adjustment.

Two functional dimensions of social support showed a positive relationship to dual aspects of separated mothers' psychological well-being postseparation. The results indicate that financial support is essential to separated mothers' self-esteem and affect, and confirms the conclusion by Hetherington et al. (1977) that real-world problems exert a strong influence on the mothers' self-esteem and emotional state. It appears that financial instability influences not only the separated mothers' affective realm, but her cognitive appraisal of self as well.

There also was a positive relationship between the function of socioemotional needs and separated mothers' self-esteem and affect. Brandwein et al. (1974) stressed that although the meeting of direct

needs is vital, the provision of socioemotional needs is just as central to separated mothers' adjustment. Other researchers (Barron, 1987; Cohen & McKay, 1984) have argued that socioemotional support is especially needed when self-esteem is threatened, and separated mothers may certainly perceive the end of their marriage as a personal failure, representing a very real threat to identity. The meeting of social needs also offers separated mothers an opportunity to socialize and be part of a network of peers, fostering feelings that they are worthwhile and valued by significant others.

In addition, the functional dimension of social freedom needs was related positively to separated mothers' affect (see Table 4). The meeting of needs such as childcare impacts positively on separated mothers' emotional state. Life change can be especially difficult for mothers locked in a child's world, shouldering primary responsibility for the demands of childrearing (Bowen, 1982; McClanahan & Adams, 1989). In Issacs and Leon's (1986) study, separated mothers indicated that childcare provides relief from emotional distress, especially when it is rendered so that it does not usurp the mother's role or her overall management of the household.

Technical sources (e.g., legal advice and assistance from books and workshops) displayed a positive impact on separated mothers' emotional well-being and self-esteem. It is evident that when women seek legal assistance and expertise on separation/divorce issues, this signifies that they are not passive recipients of social support. Certainly this may reduce their sense of anxiety and enhance their self-perception and sense of control over the situation. This finding

corroborates Caldwell and Bloom's (1982) conclusion that separated mothers are likely to seek professional competence in legal areas following separation.

Other separated/divorced persons served as social support sources that were positively related to separated mothers' affect and self-esteem in the current study. These individuals share a common status and future expectations. They are all involved in reorganizing their lives and seeking to establish a new identity. McLanahan et al. (1981) pointed out that this sense of shared experiences not only renders support but also affords mothers an opportunity to help others, which can boost confidence and enhance emotional outlook. Cohen and Hoberman's (1983) alternative assessment of such relationships is that emotional adjustment improves when individuals perceive they are better off than comparison others.

People (e.g., friends, relatives/parents, job peers) and counselor sources (i.e., clergy, professionals, divorce workshops) showed a positive effect on separated mothers' affect in the current study (see Table 3). Significant others can encourage these women to explore the full range of feelings about the marital disruption and their present status. Buehler and Langenbrunner (1987) emphasized that the separation/divorce transition includes both positive and negative experiences and, no doubt, it is vitally important for separated mothers to have a "sounding board" for these diverse emotions. McLanahan et al. (1981) found that separated mothers interpreted their emotional network as a source of intimacy.

IV. IMPLICATIONS

Before highlighting implications of these findings, it is important to address the limitations of this study. The generalizability of these findings is limited by the sole use of self-report measures and the cross-sectional research design in which separated mothers' social support was examined at only one point in time. Obviously, the use of a longitudinal design would not only allow the researcher to measure changes in social support received but also to focus attention on the variability of needs facing separated mothers over time. Change takes place quite rapidly during the separation process (White & Mika, 1983), and the needs of separated mothers do indeed vary over time, changing from the social losses which occur relatively soon after separation to child-related problems that develop somewhat later (Tetzloff & Barrera, 1987; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Finally, the relatively low response rate (41%) also is a limiting factor of the study. However, Furstenburg and Spanier (1984) indicated that this level of response rate is not uncommon with divorce research and should be considered normative. In addition, the tests for sample representativeness conducted in this study indicated that the sample was not irreparably compromised by the achieved response rate. With these caveats in mind, implications for future research, theory, and practice are discussed briefly.

Implications for Future Research

One of the findings in this study was that socioemotional support provides the emotional closeness helpful for separated mothers who

often feel isolated, unloved, and unlovable. The separated/divorced women in Daniels-Mohring and Berger's (1984) study described the value of social support as giving them "worth." Self-esteem is based on respectful and concerned treatment from significant others and influences the separated mother's ability to feel good about herself. However, social support and occurrence of life change accounted for only 15% of the variance in self-esteem in the current study.

Clearly, separated mothers' self-esteem is affected by other predisposing factors that must be considered. This study is similar to most divorce research in that there is little information provided about predivorce conditions, referred to by Tschann et al. (1989) as preseparation psychological functioning. Other factors influencing separated mothers' self-esteem include whether the separation was self-initiated or voluntary, the degree of commitment to the marriage, appraisal of the degree of threat or vulnerability, and personality variables such as sense of autonomy, assertiveness, intelligence, and self-sufficiency (Dunkel-Schetter, Folkman, & Lazarus, 1987; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Thomas, 1982). Because psychological distress and lowered self-esteem may increase the likelihood of marital dissolution (Gerstel et al., 1985), the preseparation psychological functioning of separated mothers' must certainly be included as a factor in future divorce research.

One of the major findings of this study was that moderating effects of social support were nonsignificant. Future research on the relative importance of direct and moderating effects of social support needs to incorporate more comprehensive support measures. This study

focused on receipt of support. However, Cummins (1988) concluded that a measure of subjects' receipt of social support yields different information from a measure of the amount and quality of support available to them. Furthermore, Vaux, Phillips, Holly, Thomson, Williams, & Stewart (1986) proposed that social support is best understood as a meta-construct with three subsidiary constructs-- support resources, supportive behaviors, and subjective appraisals of support. The absence of a buffering effect in the present study may be attributed to the use of the first two social support measures (resources/behaviors) proposed by Vaux et al. (1986) and the absence of the third Vaux et al. measure (subjective appraisals). For example, Kessler and Essex (in press), in their research on marital status and depression, included a subjective appraisal measure of support, and found significant moderating effects. Thus, it appears essential that further research studies include subjective estimates of the usefulness of social support, as well as measures of availability. The inclusion of subjective appraisal variables would enable researchers to test accurately for the moderating effect of social support and to reach more valid conclusions regarding the impact of both direct and moderating effects.

Implications for Theory

Hetherington et al. (1978) documented that the process of adapting to marital separation and divorce may extend over several years, with the key time for difficulties being up to 18 months postseparation. Given that marital separation is a process rather than an event, it appears that the life transition model developed by Felner, Farber, &

Primavera (1983) might provide an appropriate theoretical base for studying mothers' social support postseparation. In this framework, individuals undergoing life transitions (e.g., parenthood, relocation, retirement, separation) are perceived as actively engaged in adapting to change--both internal changes and environmental changes. Pertinent domains for future studies include the role of social support in the postseparation transition of fathers (Milardo, 1987) and in children of separated parents (Kurdek, in press).

An important theoretical issue related to the study of social support postseparation is the recognition that support does not affect the psychological well-being of separated mothers unidirectionally. These women are not passive recipients of social support but actively interact with others in ways that reinforce or extinguish help-giving actions. They make choices about supportive or nonsupportive elements in the social network. Separated mothers' effective use of social support also depends on their personal competencies in assessing supportive others, and patterns developed over time in which seeking support becomes part of an effective coping strategy. According to House et al. (1988), "it is highly plausible that various skills and dispositions of individuals affect their ability to establish and maintain social relationships, thus affecting the levels of social relationships they experience" (p. 309).

A second theoretical issue is that the use of social support and coping behaviors postseparation are related. For example, specific aspects of social support may facilitate successful coping efforts, and successful coping efforts may lead to more adequate social support

networks. As emphasized by Dunkel-Schetter and her colleagues (1987), theoretical models need to include the examination of both social support and coping over time in a more comprehensive attempt to understand more clearly the complex issues facing mothers during the postseparation period.

Implications for Practice

It seems that key tasks facing separated mothers include the need to redefine their roles and modify their views of life situations in ways that come to reflect their changed circumstances, thereby enabling them to use social support more effectively. Thus, from the standpoint of professional practice, family counselors and divorce therapists working with mothers postseparation could employ basic techniques to evaluate social support, including (a) social mapping techniques or social network analysis, providing a thorough assessment of separated mothers' social support resources, including changes in the provision/use of resources, and (b) individual and group counseling sessions that place emphasis on strengthening existing resources.

In addition, professionals could implement social skills training programs that enable separated mothers to develop new relationships to meet changing needs. As observed by Wortman (1984), it often is necessary to teach strategies to help individuals mobilize social support as well as develop coping resources to use support more effectively. Specific programs suggested by Wortman include assertiveness training and social problem-solving tasks. Structured sessions on skills development and career orientation strategies will assist the single mother in her quest to overcome feelings of

helplessness, form a more positive self-concept, and gain perspective on the dissolution of the marriage. Resources that help to empower single mothers and increase their well-being can be cost-effective and serve to prevent the development and exacerbation of a dysfunctional single family unit. Along the same lines, D'Ercole (1988) concluded that professionals can serve to enable separated mothers to sort out complex emotions and provide a high degree of affirmation for their efforts in demanding life situations. She suggested that counselors can teach these mothers to reframe daily frustrations in which they more realistically assess environmental demands rather than interpreting problems as individual failure. Tschann et al., (1989) concluded that women who develop better social resources postseparation have a more positive adjustment. However, limitations in the time, energy, and economic resources of separated mothers greatly constrain and restrict their ability to develop and enhance their social support network on their own. Family scientists can advocate for separated mothers and their children as they struggle with decreased availability of supports, declines in the standard of living, and increased economic difficulties. It appears essential that social policies need to emerge that sanction funding for programs designed to enable separated mothers to receive professional guidance and instruction.

Some programs have begun to provide formalized training to emphasize the value of support that mother and child can offer one another in the postseparation transition (McPhee, 1984). These kinds of interventions could certainly enhance separated mothers' self-perception about social support relationships, empower them with

increased self-confidence, and serve as a source of optimism for the future.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

EXTENDED DISCUSSION OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

The purpose of this study was to examine the direct and moderating influence of social support on the relationship between stressful life change and separated mothers' psychological well-being approximately 5-6 months following marital separation. Life change and psychological well-being are constructs that have been thoroughly developed, conceptually and methodologically, in the social science literature. However, the task of gaining a clear perspective on the social support construct was difficult. The history of social support theory and research is one that is characterized by conceptual and empirical confusion (Vaux et al., 1986). In fact, Gottlieb (1985) protested that "with each new study, a new definition of social support surfaces" (p. 50). Wilcox (1981) also indicated that "the concept of social support has been operationalized in a somewhat bewildering assortment of ways" (p. 98). The result has been indices of social support without established reliability or validity.

Research on social support has mushroomed over the last decade, and studies have focused on an array of problem areas including depression, cancer, birth complications, job distress, and child maltreatment (Barrera, 1986). Adults have been the primary subjects of social support research, but children (Kurdek, in press; Sandler, Wolchik, & Braver, 1985) and the elderly (Fiore, Becker, & Coppel, 1983) have received some attention.

In his early reviews, Cobb (1976) stated that the "conclusion that supportive interactions among people are important is hardly new . . . what is new is the assembling of hard evidence of the benefits of social support" (p. 380). He defined social support as "information leading the subject to believe that he/she is cared for and loved, esteemed, and a member of a network of mutual obligations" (p. 300). Kaplan, Cassel, & Gore (1977) offered a similar view stating that "support is the degree to which an individual's social needs are met through social integration" (p. 48). Thoits (1982) has expanded on these earlier definitions of social support to include social support (gratification of needs) through socioemotional and instrumental aid (behavior) provided by the social support system (a subset of the social network). Her comprehensive conceptual approach, endorsed by other researchers (Hirsch, 1980; Wilcox, 1981) is as follows:

Social support is the degree to which a person's basic social needs are gratified through interaction with others. Basic social needs include affection, esteem, belonging, identity, and security. These needs may be met by either the provision of socio-emotional aid (e.g., affection, sympathy, acceptance, and esteem from significant others) or the provision of instrumental aid (e.g., advice, information, financial aid). (p. 147)

As researchers engage in elaboration and differentiation of the construct of social support, the need for a more distinct focus has increased (Vaux et al., 1986). Tardy (1985) has identified five primary elements of social support: (a) content, (b) network, (c) disposition, (d) direction, and (e) evaluation. Support content defines four types of helping behaviors: emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal; support network identifies the possible support sources one has available; support disposition includes both

the availability and utilization of support; support direction is the distinction between support that is given and received, and support evaluation focuses on people's satisfaction with their support. In the current study, the first three elements, i.e., content, network, and disposition are explored but the other two elements, direction and evaluation, are not examined. Tardy emphasized that clearer operational definitions of social support will eliminate multiple interpretations of the concept. Barrera (1986) stressed that "investigators need to carefully identify the social support concepts that fit their research questions and to select measures that match their concepts" (p. 420).

Related to conceptual issues, Cohen and Hoberman (1983) have pointed out that there are two biased assumptions which most researchers continue to make about social support. First, there is the assumption that the benefits of one's social network are directly proportional to the size and range of the network, and secondly, that having a relationship is equivalent to getting support from that relationship. In the current research topic, separated mothers' social support, researchers (Leslie & Grady, 1985; McLanahan et al., 1981) have determined that the number of persons in the mothers' network is not as important as the degree to which the resource providers are integrated into the network. In the second concern, Heller and Swindle (1983) stress that support from others is not an unqualified positive experience. Other researchers (Wortman, 1984) have argued that recognition should be given to the negative or health-damaging effects

of conflictual interaction. Further studies of separated mothers' interactions with the former spouse need to address this issue.

In addition to more explicit conceptualization, there is a strong need to move from hastily developed measures of an imprecise construct to more focused measures of social support (Vaux et al., 1986). Currently there is no instrument which comprehensively measures the central components of social support with acceptable levels of reliability or validity (Leavy, 1983). Tardy (1985) interprets the most pressing methodological concern to be the development of instruments which clearly delineate among the types of social support content and which assess the provisions of support. New measures must be constructed and present ones revised. Vaux et al. (1986) warned, however, that attempts at measurement which try to capture all the facets of social support in a single composite measure will likely fail to adequately assess any of them. Rather, they advocate a set of interrelated measures that tap the various dimensions of social support. The need persists for a relatively short measure suitable for presentation through a variety of data collection methods. However, several proponents of the interview method have suggested that it is superior on the basis that it provides a more individualized and meaningful assessment of support, allowing the subject's attention to be focused on specific aspects of support and support transactions (Sarason, Shearin, Pierce, & Sarason, 1987). An overview of the current research on separated/divorced women indicates that some researchers prefer survey techniques (Johnson, 1986; Ladewig et al., 1990), other employ the interview approach (Barron, 1987; Issacs &

Leon, 1986; Menaghan & Lieberman, 1986) and some (Nelson, 1989) utilize a combination of both methods.

Regardless of the research methods used, Leavy (1983) concluded that studies consistently show a relationship between the use of social support and psychological well-being. Some studies have indicated a main effect for social support, suggesting that support itself is beneficial regardless of the presence of stress. Others have found an interaction between stress and support such that support has its greatest impact on the stress-strain relationship for individuals under high rather than low levels of stress (Cummins, 1988). The determination of whether direct or buffering effects of social support impact separated mothers' psychological well-being is a key objective of the present study.

Researchers (House et al., 1988; Leavy, 1983) have proposed that future investigations include prospective designs where conjoint and separate variability of adjustment and social support can be assessed in a longitudinal framework. Many problems in interpretation could be solved by longitudinal research which assesses available social support and perceived usefulness at one point in time, and examines the ability to predict psychological or physiological distress at a later point. For instance, in terms of the present research, this approach would increase the likelihood of developing an "at risk" assessment of the recently separated mother and better determining the extent of resources and interventions that might be needed in her postseparation transition.

Other questions remain unanswered in probing the complex processes whereby social support is related to physical and psychological adjustment. House et al. (1988) suggest, for instance, that future research must explore other dimensions such as relational demands and conflicts and social regulation. Relational demands and conflicts refers to the negative or conflictive aspects of relationships that may be deleterious to health. Social regulation or control refers to the controlling or regulating quality of social relationships which, depending on the behaviors controlled or regulated, may be either health promoting or health damaging.

House et al. (1988) also point out that researchers have almost exclusively studied social support as an independent or moderating variable. They suggest that researchers begin to view social support as a dependent variable as psychological and biomedical scientists have argued that psychological and even biological factors may be the underlying causes of structure and processes of social relationships.

The current research has confirmed that recently separated mothers receive social support from a number of sources, i.e., parents, relatives, children, friends, other separated and divorced individuals and professionals such as counselors, clergy, and attorneys. Financial and socio-emotional support appear to be the most important functions provided, but individual caretaking, such as child-care, serves a useful purpose as well. The complexities involved in testing for the differential impact of direct or moderating effects on separated mothers' psychological well-being have been elucidated in this study and issues have been raised concerning the most precise way to measure

social support using structure, content, and process variables. The scope of the present investigation did not entail the relational demands and conflicts or social regulation aspects of separated mothers' relationships but certainly there is recognition of the need to explore these aspects of supportive ties in future research.

APPENDIX B

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

The data used in this study were collected in 1986 as part of the Orientation for Divorcing Parents (ODP) project. The ODP is a prevention-oriented, community-based educational program that consists of five weekly, two-hour sessions for parents undergoing divorce. It has been offered four times a year since 1984 by Child and Family Services, a non-profit community service agency in Knoxville, Tennessee. The program was initiated by Bill Swann, Judge of the Fourth Circuit Court of Knox County, who requested that Child and Family Services develop and implement a program for divorcing parents in the local community.

Every parent involved in a divorce petition in the Fourth Circuit Court of Knox County was sent a letter from Judge Swann describing the ODP program and encouraging his or her participation. The ODP program was designed by Phyllis Betz and the late Mary Evans, licensed clinical social workers employed by Child and Family Services. Dr. Cheryl Buehler, associate professor of Child and Family Studies, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, designed and implemented the evaluation component of the program.

Evaluation procedures were implemented during the spring, summer and fall ODP programs conducted in 1986. A 24-page self-administered questionnaire was completed by divorcing parents who attended the ODP program during this time period as well as by those divorcing parents who chose not to attend the sessions. Dr. Buehler's evaluation was

completed with the following goals: (a) identification of factors that affect children's and parent's well-being following separation, (b) evaluation of the ODP's effectiveness for strengthening these factors by comparing participants and nonparticipants of the ODP program, and (c) recommendations for improvement of the ODP program.

The questionnaire was mailed to ODP participants 10 days before the first session of the ODP program and they were asked to complete the form and bring it with them to the first session. It was not mandatory to complete the questionnaire in order to participate in the ODP program. Of 245 program participants, 148 completed the form which yielded a 60% response rate. Parents who chose not to attend the ODP program were mailed the questionnaire using Dillman's (1978) Total Design methodology, which includes mailing the questionnaire to nonrespondents at designated intervals.

Of these 633 parents, the questionnaire potentially reached 530 divorcing parents, and 99 were completed and returned. A partial explanation for the low response rate for nonparticipants of the ODP program is that because funds were limited, only one mailing was done in the spring of 1986. The response rate was 12%. Additional funds were raised so that three mailings could be completed with other nonparticipants. This doubled the response rate to 24%, thus supporting Dillman's recommendation of three mailings. When the ODP participants and nonparticipants are combined, 878 questionnaires were distributed, with 775 potentially reaching divorcing parents. A total of 247 questionnaires were returned for a 32% response rate. Of these

247 parents, 108 were residential mothers who had children living with them at least half of the time.

Table 5. Demographic Characteristics of Separated Mothers--
Continuous Data

Characteristic	<u>M</u>	Range	<u>SD</u>
Age	32	21-45	5.30
Hours worked per week	30	0-60	17.50
Current monthly income	\$984	\$0-5,000	788.00
Number of children	1.8	1-4	.72
Length of marriage	10 years	2-23	5.20

Note. N = 108.

Table 6. Demographic Characteristics of Separated Mothers--
Categorical Data

Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
Race: White	104	96.3
Black	4	3.7
Employment status: Employed	85	78.7
Not employed	23	21.3
Education level:		
1. Grade school or less	2	1.9
2. Some high school	6	5.6
3. High school diploma	37	34.3
4. Non-college training	13	12.0
5. Some college	28	25.9
6. College degree	12	11.1
7. Some graduate work	5	4.6
8. Graduate degree	5	4.6

Note. N = 108.

Table 7. Scale Descriptions

Scale	Items	Response	Range	Mean (S.D.)
Bradburn Affect Scale	11	(1) Never to (4) Often	1-4	2.7 (.59)
Rosenberg Self-Esteem	5	(1) Strongly Agree to (4) Strongly Disagree	1-4	3.0 (.65)
Symptomatology Self-Report	9	Symptom marked if experienced	Yes-No	4.3 (1.9)
Occurrence of Life Change	26	Yes--Change did occur No--Change did not occur	Yes-No	8.8 (3.7)
Disruptiveness of Life Change	26	(1) Experienced but not disruptive (2) Experienced and very disruptive	1-5	2.4 (.78)
Range of Social Support (Total Support)	78	Support item marked if utilized	Yes-No	17.7 (9.3)
Source of Social Support	5 Factors	Source of Support item marked if utilized	Yes-No	Rel/Friends .50 (.50) Counselor .52 (.50) Technical .51 (.50) Children .43 (.50) Sep./Div. .41 (.49)
Function of Social Support	3 Factors	Function of Support item marked if utilized	Yes-No	Socio-emotional .50 (.50) Social .44 (.50) Freedom Financial .52 (.50)

Table 8. Factor Coefficients for Separated Mothers' Sources of Social Support

Items	Factors		
	I	II	III
I. People			
Parents	.84	.01	.03
Relatives	.72	-.15	.35
Job-peers	.66	.32	.07
Friends	.63	.09	.14
II. Counselors			
Mental health counselors	-.13	.70	.20
Groups/organizations	.22	.64	.02
Clergy	-.04	.63	.27
Workshops/classes	.19	.58	.19
III. Technical			
Books/articles	.13	.13	.76
Attorneys	.20	.21	.71
IV. Children ^a	.40	.27	.52
V. Other separated/ divorced persons	.57	.48	.58

Note. N = 108.

^aChildren and other separated/divorced persons did not load primarily on any factor; thus, these items were treated as single-item factors.

Table 9. Factor Coefficients for Separated Mothers' Functions of Social Support Received

Items	Factors	
	I	II
I. Socioemotional needs		
Discussing feelings	.94	.01
Discussing the separation	.92	.13
Social needs	.75	.41
II. Social freedom needs		
Sexual intimacy	.19	.78
Child care	.06	.75
III. Financial needs ^a	.54	.43

Note. N = 108.

^aFinancial needs did not load primarily on any factor; thus it was treated as a single-item factor.

APPENDIX C

PRESENTATION OF NONSIGNIFICANT TEST RESULTS

Table 10. The Direct Effect of Social Support on Separated Mothers' Psychosomatic Symptomatology

Variables	Support variable		Occurrence		Disruptiveness	
	Beta	Partial r	Beta	Partial r	Beta	Partial r
Range	.03	NS	.05	NS	.28	NS
SOURCE OF SUPPORT						
People	.03	NS	.65	NS	-.07	NS
Counselor	.08	NS	.04	NS	.28	NS
Technical	-.15	NS	.28	NS	.02	NS
Children	-.06	NS	.33	NS	.03	NS
Separated/ divorced	-.03	NS	.35	NS	-.03	NS
FUNCTION OF SUPPORT						
Socio- emotional	.02	NS	.49	NS	.04	NS
Social freedom	.11	NS	-.06	NS	.33	NS
Financial	-.05	NS	.35	NS	-.02	NS

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .001$

APPENDIX D

ADDITIONAL TABLES

Table 11. Percentages of Occurrence of Life Change in Separated Mothers

Occurrence of life change	Percent
Household routines/daily patterns changed	82
Meeting household expenses more difficult	81
Money matters with ex-spouse more difficult	72
Relationship with ex-spouse worse	71
Shared parenting more difficult	71
Completing household tasks more difficult	59
Feel don't control own life	58
Fewer good times with friends	56
Have less time to spend with children	55
Have concerns about who will get what	52
Have moved	40
Relationships with children worse	36
Contact with lawyer more difficult	32
Have started working outside home	32
Have lost friends	30
Relationships with parents worse	26
Children have changed schools	21
Had problem finding job	19
My use alcohol/drugs has increased	15
Have changed jobs	12
We are contesting the divorce	11
Child has been to juvenile court	6

Note: N = 108

Table 12. Percentages of Reported Symptoms Experienced by Separated Mothers

Condition experienced in past month	Percent
Being Tired	85
Nervousness	71
Moody Spells	64
Headaches	63
Sleeplessness	57
Indigestion	33
Allergies	26
Colds, Fever, Flu	21
Irregularity	18

Note. N = 108

APPENDIX E

INSTRUMENTS USED IN THE STUDY

Bradburn Affect Scale

How often in the past week did you feel each of the following?

	Never	Once	Several Times	Often
Particularly excited or interested in something.	1	2	3	4
So restless you couldn't sit long in a chair.	1	2	3	4
Very angry at somebody or something.	1	2	3	4
That things were going your way.	1	2	3	4
Upset because someone criticized you.	1	2	3	4
On top of the world.	1	2	3	4
Very lonely, not close to other people.	1	2	3	4
Pleased about having accomplished something.	1	2	3	4
Bored.	1	2	3	4
Down and discouraged because nothing seemed to be going right for you.	1	2	3	4
Proud because someone complimented you on something you had done.	1	2	3	4

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

For each statement, please circle the choice that best describes
how you feel.

	Strongly Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Strongly Disagree
I feel I'm a person of worth, at least on equal basis with others.	1	2	3	4
I feel I have a number of good qualities.	1	2	3	4
All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	1	2	3	4
I am able to do things as well as most other people.	1	2	3	4
I feel that I do not have much to be proud of.	1	2	3	4
I take a positive attitude toward myself.	1	2	3	4
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	1	2	3	4
I wish I could have more respect for myself.	1	2	3	4
I certainly feel useless at times.	1	2	3	4
At times I think I am no good at all.	1	2	3	4

Psychosomatic Symptomatology Self-Report

Here is a list of common conditions that people experience. Please indicate whether you have experienced this condition within the past month by circling the corresponding number.

(1) sleeplessness

(6) allergies

(2) nervousness

(7) colds, flu, or fever

(3) being tired

(8) irregularity or diarrhea

(4) headaches

(9) moody spells

(5) indigestion or ulcers

Occurrence/Disruptiveness of Life Change

The following is a list of events or situations you may have experienced since your separation. Please read each item carefully. If you have NOT experienced the item, circle the "0" and go on to the next item. If you have experienced the item, circle the number that represents how disruptive it has been in your life (how much it has changed your life).

0 = did NOT experience

1 = experienced this - it was not disruptive

2 = experienced this - it was somewhat disruptive

3 = experienced this - it was moderately disruptive

4 = experienced this - it was quite disruptive

5 = experienced this - it was extremely disruptive

Meeting household expenses has been more difficult.	0	1	2	3	4	5
The children have changed schools.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I started working outside the home.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I have had less time to spend with my children.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Sharing parenting responsibilities with my husband/wife has been more difficult.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I don't have as many good times with friends as I used to.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I have felt intense emotional pain.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I have felt more of a sense of failure.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I have more problems sleeping.	0	1	2	3	4	5
We are contesting the divorce.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Contact with my lawyer has been more difficult.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I have moved.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I have been concerned about who will get what.	0	1	2	3	4	5

Household routines and daily patterns have changed.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I have had problems finding a job.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I have changed jobs.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Relationships with my children have gotten worse.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Talking with my husband/wife about money matters has been more difficult.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Relationships with my parents have gotten worse.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I have lost friends.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I have been more depressed.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I have felt as though I don't control my own life.	0	1	2	3	4	5
My use of alcohol or drugs has increased.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Getting household tasks done has been more difficult.	0	1	2	3	4	5
A child has been to juvenile court.	0	1	2	3	4	5
My relationship with my husband/wife has gotten worse.	0	1	2	3	4	5

Social Support Instrument

For each of the following resources, please place a check in each column that contributes to meeting your needs in that area.

	Child Care	Financial Support	Discussing Feelings	Social Needs	Intimacy/ Sex	Discussing Separation
Friends						
Clergy						
Lawyer						
Counselor						
Relatives						
Husband/Wife						
Children						
Sep/Div Persons						
Parents						
People/Job						
People/Groups						
Books/Arts						
Workshops/ Classes						

VITA

Bobbie Hobson Legg was born in Minneapolis, North Carolina, on July 19, 1946, the first child of Robert Edward and Ann Buchanan Hobson. She attended Avery County public schools and graduated in 1963 from Cranberry High School in Elk Park, North Carolina.

Her undergraduate education was acquired at East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee, where she was a 1967 cum laude graduate with a Bachelor's degree in Social Work. She completed the Master's degree in Public Health from The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in 1982 and has worked as a community health educator and patient advocate in several local community agencies.

In 1989-90, she worked as Field Coordinator for the Human Service Education Department, College of Special Services Education, The University of Tennessee. Ms. Legg graduated with a Ph.D. in Philosophy from the College of Human Ecology in August, 1990. She has accepted the position of Coordinator of the East Tennessee Hemophilia Center at University of Tennessee Hospital, Knoxville. She is a member of the National Council of Family Relations, Omicron Nu, and Alpha Delta Omega Honor Societies.

Ms. Legg is married to George Freeman Legg, and they have two children, Jason, a freshman at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and LeAnne, a freshman at Bearden High School.