Dimitri Mortelmans
University of Antwerp, Belgium

Wendy Verheyen
University of Antwerp, Belgium

A Dyadic View on the Post-separation Network of Single Mothers

Abstract

Many empirical studies have focused on the quantitative changes in the social networks of divorced and separated people. In this qualitative study, we use interviews with dyads to construct a two-sided view of the support network after separation. The aim of the study is to gain insight into the needs for support after a relational breakup. Including a network member in the analysis enables a more detailed view on the interaction at hand in the bond between these women and their supportive network members. The results show that personal coping resources are left untouched. Giving advice on ones daily activities is counter-productive. This is better understood by non family members compared to the women's parents (especially the mother). With respect to the reciprocity in these relationships, network members do not expect a return in the period after the separation.

'Till death do us apart' is a promise that nowadays seems difficult to keep. Separation has become common in our society. Nevertheless, it remains a complex issue affecting many people's lives and potentially causing a lot of stress for both the partners and their children. Splitting up joint accounts and household goods does not necessarily bring an end to this stress. It is possible that other matters and developments will arise (e.g., assuming sole responsibility for the care of the children

---

[1] Dimitri Mortelmans is an Associate Professor at the University of Antwerp (Belgium). He is the head of the Research Center for Longitudinal and Life Course Studies (CELLO). His principal research interests lie in the is sociology of family and labour. His main research topics cover divorce, work-life balance and career patterns. Contact: dimitri.mortelmans@ua.ac.be

[2] Wendy Verheyen is a Research Assistant in the Research Center for Longitudinal and Life Course Studies (CELLO) at the University of Antwerp (Belgium). She works on gender issues and divorce. Contact: Wendy.verheyen@ua.ac.be

and the loss of social support), thereby disturbing the emotions and behaviour of the people involved.

In this article, we focus on a divorce's or a separation's social consequences for mothers. By 'social' we mean changes in their social network and their social participation. Studies have shown that a separation significantly reshapes the social environment of a man and a woman in various ways (Milardo 1987; Hurlbert 1990). We are interested in how mothers experience their social life after the breakup. Since previous research has demonstrated that due to several reasons (financial drawback, increased working hours, childcare), it is difficult for women to have a social life (Munch et al. 1997; Miller et al. 1998; Poortman 2000; Poortman and Fokkema 2001).

Research has already turned its attention to the amount and the kind of support being attributed to separated persons. Therefore, we focus on the different types of support (financial, instrumental, emotional, etc.) available, as well as, on how mothers (in our sample) perceive their post-separation network. We interviewed both mothers and network members so as to enlarge our understanding of the situation of mothers after a breakup and the extent to which their social network functions as a coping resource.

We chose to focus on the situation of recently separated women because the immediate aftermath of a breakup is a stressful period during which mothers face a range of pressing problems, such as a radically reduced income, increased parenting responsibilities, and the loss of mutual friends. This period is characterised by reorientation; therefore, it is a time of life in which support is needed. Before elaborating on the two research questions, we give a short overview of the literature on post-separation social networks, social participation, and on how being part of contributes to the adjustment and well-being of divorced women.

Separation and its social consequences

It is important to look at the relationship that precedes the breakup, since this influences the post-separation social life. According to Gerstel (1988), marriage is a "greedy institution" for women. During the wedded life, personal networks shrink, network-overlap arises, and networks grow as the relationship develops. This phenomenon is known as 'dyadic withdrawal' (Kalmijn 2003; Sprechter et al. 2006). Women appear to have far less contact with their friends than their husbands do (Milardo 1987; Albeck and Kaydar 2002). This is partly due to the presence of children. As Fisher (1982) puts it, marriage and family involves "restrictive commitments." Next to having fewer contacts with friends, women's social participation levels change. After marriage, people take part in fewer, rather couple- and family-oriented, activities (Munch et al. 1997). Most friendships are based on ties with other couples (Rands 1988; Kalmijn and Bernansco 2001). This raises the "exit costs," especially for women (Kalmijn 2003).

Another interesting finding is that women are more involved in maintaining contact with both family sides and with mutual friends (O'Donnell 1985). As women seem to invest more in their familial social life, one could question whether or not this has an effect on the female post-separation social life.

Network changes after a breakup

As mentioned earlier, a divorce is a stressful event in life, having far-reaching consequences. It does not only affect the emotions and the lifestyle of the split-up family, but also alters the social network of which both partners are part. A relationship unifies two families and two circles of friends. What happens to this unit after a breakup? Is a division inevitable or will friends keep in contact with both of the divorced partners? Keeping in mind that women invested more in their and their partners' social life during the marriage, one might expect a positive effect after the separation.

Research on the link between separation and isolation is not univocal. Some researchers point out that contact with kin becomes less frequent after a breakup (Milardo 1987; Gerstel 1988; Rands 1988; Hurlbert 1990; Sprechter et al. 2006). Others found no significant differences between divorced and married people in terms of contacts with family members (Kalmijn and Broese van Groenou 2005). It even seems relatively easy for men and women to intensify contacts with their own friends and acquaintances or to strike up a new friendship after the separation (Albeck and Kaydar 2002; Kalmijn and Broese van Groenou 2005).

In their meta-analysis, Krumrei and others (2007) point to the fact that new relationships are built with people who have gone through a similar experience, people who "understand." Separated people therefore prefer the company of unattached individuals (Albeck and Kaydar 2002). Leigh and Grady (1985) state that divorced mothers have close-knit networks that are primarily composed of kin and co-workers who they have known for a long period of time. Gerstel (1988) also found that women mainly tighten the bonds of old friendships. Further research on why they rely on old friends leads to the next question: which factors influence the composition of and integration in a social network of divorced women?

According to Gerstel (1988), there are two important elements affecting women's networks after a breakup: child custody and income reduction. These two influences could explain why women's post-separation activities are housebound: near the children and less expensive than going out. Apparently, separated mothers are less likely to engage in recreational activities and social clubs than their male counterparts. However, in comparison to women, they are twice as likely to participate in new age activities (Kaydar 2001; Kalmijn and Broese van Groenou 2005; Kalmijn 2007).

The worsened financial position makes it less easy for women to go out. Next to a reduced income, women have to deal with time reduction since they have to combine various roles (sole parent, housekeeper, provider of family income). This role management has an effect on leisure time (social activities and outdoor contact with friends). In other words, divorced women are constrained from maintaining or rebuilding a social life (Milardo 1987). Their free time is scarce, especially when the children are young. Another reason for this shortage is the fact that mothers tend to do everything in their power to spare their children (Munch et al. 1997).

A major role of divorced mothers is that of income provider. This can be translated into going back to work or increasing work activities. Earlier research showed that coping through work is experienced in different ways. Some mothers describe their job as a distraction, an opportunity to meet new people, or a source of social support. According to others, a job causes a lot of stress as it goes together with time restrictions (Kalmijn and Broese van Groenou 2005).

Next to income and labour, the consequences of a separation also extend to the social network of the women. Women who are fully or mainly dependent on the

network of their partners experience more damage in their social network after a divorce (Albeck and Kaydar 2002). This is reinforced by not having a job. In their qualitative research, Verheyen and Mortelmans (2008) found that women who had lived for their family and children during their marriage, and who had given up their own careers, not only suffered financially but also socially. These findings correspond with the research results of Marks and MacDermid (1996) – individuals who keep their roles in balance will have a lower level of depression, higher self-esteem, and a more positive level of well-being.

In summary, we need to point to the influence of one's personal coping resources or personal characteristics, which play an important role when dealing with stressors. The two personal coping resources that have been studied most often are self-esteem and a sense of control or mastery (Pearlin and Schooler 1978). Individuals with high self-esteem and a sense of control or mastery have better social skills, which in turn should enhance the likelihood of their having a network on which they can rely (Thoits 1995). For someone with low self-esteem, it is more difficult to go out and meet new people; for example because one is afraid of being rejected by others (Terhell, Broese van Groenou and Van Tilburg 2004).

Social support and doping

In addition to personal coping resources, social support also serves as a buffer against the negative consequences of a separation (Flowers 1996). According to Briggs (1998), ties offering social support help individuals to get by and cope with the demands of everyday life and other types of stress. Social support is most often associated with 'strong ties' (kin, friends, neighbours). Some studies stress that social support has a positive influence on women's adjustment to the post-separation situation (Samson 1997; Duran-Aydintug 1998). Social support facilitates role changes, provides critical information, and enhances the coping behaviour. Other studies point to the fact that close personal relationships can both promote and undermine one's psychological health in the (immediate) aftermath of a divorce (Kunz 1995; Miller et al. 1998; Hetherington and Kelly 2003). Lu (1997) found that being helped can lead to negative reactions, especially when the aid threatens one's own idea of self-management, damages one's self-esteem, or does not match the needs of the recipient.

The most frequently used typology for social support is: instrumental, financial, and emotional support (Leigh and Grady 1985; Flowers 1996; Smerglia 1999). Albeck and Kaydar (2002) found that the family mainly offers practical help and gives information. Expressive support and feedback are the forms of support given by friends. Numerous studies have revealed that separated women are most in need of someone who listens to them, someone whom they can socialize with, and someone who is emotionally supportive (Duffy 1993; Miller et al. 1998; Smerglia 1999). Apparently, offering emotional support is the task of close friends. They seem to be more objective and empathic, whereas family members do offer support but are also critical of the separation process (Milardo 1987; Flowers 1996). Thoits (1995) found that women, more than men, seek social support, and turn first to friends and then to their parents (especially mothers). Women also rely on their siblings more often than men do (Duffy 1993; Duran-Aydintug 1998).

This study focuses on the mothers' attitudes and feelings towards the assistance they receive. Support can cause more distress, feelings of inadequacy, and loss of autonomy (Kessler et al. 1995; Cohen and Deken 2000). Miller and

others (1998), for instance, found that widows and divorcees receiving more material support (i.e., gifts, money, etc.) experienced an increased distress level after one year.

Research Questions

The foregoing literature review shows that many researchers have already focused on the social consequences of separation. They paid attention to women's 'losses,' the composition of their post-separation network, and the kind of support they received. Little is known, however, about how women experience the consequences of a divorce and how their possibly changed social environment affects them.

This study has two main purposes. First, we want to widen our understanding of how separated mothers perceive their post-separation social life, how they experience the received support, and what they consider to be helpful and not. The actual reception of support as well as the amount of support may be irrelevant if the recipient is ambivalent or negative about it. Flowers (1996) found that it is the satisfaction derived from the support that has the greatest impact on the mother's adjustment. Concerning the goal of this study, it is not important to know how many talks a mother has had with her best friend; we are merely interested in how she feels about these talks. Do they encourage her or do they have a negative effect on her? We want to give as thorough a view as possible on what is needed by and helpful to women, and therefore we also involve the network members of the separated women in the study. How do the latter observe their 'giving,' and what is their opinion on what is important in the process of giving support? Secondly, we want to shed light on the social processes taking place between the support givers and receivers. Do the ones who are supportive long for something in return or not? Do the women, for instance, 'refund' their supportive network members, and if so, how do they do it? Before discussing the results of our study, we will elaborate on the methodology: how did we build up this study, who participated, and how did we analyse the data?

Method

Participants' recruitment

Separated women

It was not easy to find divorcees willing to collaborate with this research. Therefore, the search for respondents was divided into three phases. First, we contacted community centers, self-help groups, and welfare services in the province of Antwerp to find out whether or not they knew women who would qualify for our research. This first round resulted in 10 respondents.

Secondly, we focused on the interviewers' social network. This way the group of respondents was enlarged to 48 separated mothers. We made sure that the divorcees were not interviewed by the member of their social network who recruited them. An interim analysis revealed a bias towards mothers with a higher socioeconomic status (SES) and education level. This is why, in the final phase, we

searched for women with a lower SES. We found four divorcees by contacting poverty organizations. In total, our group consisted of 52 separated mothers.

Network members

After interviewing the separated mothers, we asked for an interview with one of their supportive network members. The women were free to choose a network member. Some of the network people were contacted at the time of the interview itself; other divorcees preferred to ask someone later on, or they gave us the telephone number of these people so we could contact them ourselves. Twenty-three mothers refused to contact one of their network members; for instance, because they did not want to bother their network with an interview. In the end, 29 network people were willing to collaborate.

Data collection

The interviews were conducted by a research team from the University of Antwerp from April until July 2008. The separated mothers were contacted by telephone, which gave them the opportunity to ask questions and sometimes led to the immediate planning of the interview. As mentioned above, the network members were contacted by the mothers at the time of the interview or at a later time by the researcher who would conduct the interview.

Opting for in-depth interviews is a matter of course, since this method enables us to discover the context in which these respondents attach significance to their feelings and experiences. The interviews were conducted in an environment familiar to the respondent, which contributed to our aim to get a grip on the social world in which the respondents act. Open and non-suggestive questions were asked to enable us to enter their habitat. At the end of each interview, the separated mothers were asked to fill out a drop-off questionnaire on socio-demographic background information (e.g., date of birth, child(ren)'s birthday(s), income before and after breakup).

A topic guide was used to structure the interviews. By doing so, the interviewers were not focused on a questionnaire (more freedom) and the respondents were given the opportunity to tell their story instead of responding to a list of fixed questions (more flexibility). The use of a topic list, however, did not just have advantages. Although the interviewers received interview training, one cannot assure that the interviews were conducted in the exact same way. It is important to note that all the interviewers had to complete a contact summary sheet in which they reflect on the interview, point to certain circumstantial disturbances, and think about their own strengths and weaknesses (Miles and Huberman 1984). These memos were taken into account during the analysis. Regarding the open-ended nature of the survey, the participants' responses cannot be approached as being exhaustive. Nevertheless, we can assume that the respondents focused on themes that keep or kept them busy; and this interests us most.

Participant characteristics

Separated women

Fifty-two divorced mothers, with a mean age of 38 (range 24–55), participated in this study. All the women have been separated for less than 1,5 years. 'Separated' in this article means that the relationship (marriage or cohabitation) has ended. The married women had not necessarily gone through a legal separation at the time of the interview. The mothers in our sample had lived with their ex-partners for 14 years on average (range 1 year–30 years). Fifteen women reported having a new relationship, but only 5 of them live with their new partner. All the women have children (average: 2), and the mean age of the children is 14 (range 3,5 months–29 years old). Although our aim was a broad sample, we need to mention that only 9 out of the 52 mothers have a low education level (occupational training). Nineteen mothers had already been working full-time during their marriage and maintain this work scheme. Fourteen have started working more hours after the breakup. The remaining 19 are either unemployed, work part-time, or work in a 70% work regime.

Network members

This respondent group consists of 29 participants. The separated mothers could choose which network member we interviewed as long as he or she was appreciated for being very supportive to her at the time of the divorce. The majority of the network participants were friends of the mothers (15 female, 1 male). Nine close family members were interviewed (3 mothers, 1 parent couple, 1 daughter, and 4 sisters). Three mothers mentioned their new partners as their most important network persons and one of the separated mothers stated that the social worker of the public welfare service was most supportive to her. Eight of the network members we interviewed were also separated, and 4 respondents were single (never married). The others were married, had a relationship, or lived together with their partner. Thirteen participants had a job with a social character (e.g., nurse, social worker, and therapist).

Analysis procedures

The interviews with the separated women, as well as with their network members, were recorded on tape and transcribed verbatim for the analysis. Structuring the recorded material into text offers an overview and is in itself a beginning analysis (Strauss and Corbin 1990). We used the grounded theory approach and its principal technique, inductive analysis (Glaser and Strauss 1967), and analyzed the transcripts in accordance with the methods of Miles and Huberman (1984). Names and personally identifiable details were altered for reasons of confidentiality. Atlas.ti was used to analyze the transcripts.

In the first phase, we read and reread the interviews with the separated mothers. Important concepts and themes related to the women's social situations after the breakup, as well as their experiences and feelings, were identified. During this phase of getting familiar with the data, theoretical and methodological reflection memos were written. Every story was compared and contrasted with the other stories in order to specify similarities and differences among the women. The analyses of the interviews with the network people were performed similarly. Special attention was

given to how they perceived giving support and what they felt was important in doing so. The extent to which the give-and-take balance concerned them was another focus.

The final stage of the analysis was a comparison between the kind of support that is and is not helpful according to the separated mothers and the aid their 'support givers' mentioned as being important. This is an important issue, since it can contribute to the knowledge of social services and of other interested persons or organizations working with separated mothers.

Results

In the next section, we start by giving information about the post-separation context of the women (network changes, types of support). This information is necessary to understand the mothers' personal experiences with the received support, which will be discussed next. This section is completed with a look at what the support givers perceive as being important in giving help. We wind up the results section by taking note of the motives for giving support and whether or not these motives (altruistic, reciprocal) correspond with the experiences of the women.

The post-separation social context

Ending a relationship does not only mean the end of a partnership between two people and a reorganization of the family life, it also brings with it other far-reaching financial, as well as social, consequences. Friends either take sides against one of the partners or try to steer a middle course. In this paragraph, we present an overview of the judgements of the 52 mothers in our sample. What are their social losses, or perhaps, 'gains?' We also give an outline of the different types of support they receive and whom they receive it from.

The magnitude of the network

The analysis of the interview transcripts indicates that a breakup has several social consequences. On the one hand, there are women who report that some friends ditched them:

> Yes, yes. There are people I considered to be real friends. I don't hear anything from them anymore, while others are surprisingly supportive. (Josephine, 49 years)

> …it is difficult for them to take sides for me, since they went to the same school Luke did. They know him much longer than they know me. (Shelley, 33 years)

On the other hand, there are also women whose networks have expanded since the divorce. Half of the mothers who mentioned having made new friends have taken up courses such as meditation, yoga, and other social-minded classes. It is as if they take these courses to get to know themselves better, to get a grip on their lives, and to deal with the breakup. At the same time, taking a class is an opportunity to widen their network and, perhaps, to meet fellow sufferers.

>Due to me starting these courses and developing quite an alternative life-style, my circle of friends has changed...And, now I'm surrounded by people, peers, whom I can talk to. (Mary, 48 years)

Others have come in contact with peers by joining self-help groups for separated people. Again, being part of such a group can have multiple benefits: acting as a sounding board, having social contact, et cetera.

The women who say their network of friends has expanded seem to be able to undertake activities, and to invest time in new hobbies and people, but for most of the other mothers this is out of the question. Their social life and the possibility of meeting (old or new) friends is hindered by different factors, such as a decreased income, which forces them to cut down on activities that cost money (e.g., sports), and lack of time, due to an increase in roles (sole earner, 'sole parent,' housekeeper). Most mothers meet friends or take some time off for themselves when the children are with their father. Spending time with friends during these 'weekends off' is a way of dealing with their loneliness. Other inner hindrances are shame and grief over the breakup and its consequences. These make it difficult for these mothers to go out and meet new people.

Besides changes in their circle of friends, some women report changes in family contact. It is remarkable that not all mothers lose contact with their family-in-law after the breakup. There are some who state that their relationship with their own parents became worse or that they have lost all contact because of different reasons: some mothers mention that their parents are not able to accept their decision to separate, others want to spare their parents and therefore avoid contact as much as possible. One woman mentioned that her parents have a rather negative attitude. As this demoralizes her, she keeps them at a distance.

Functions of the social network

In the current section we will focus on the role of the network on an emotional as well as on a financial, material, and social level when having to cope with a divorce. We start by giving an overview of the kinds of support mothers receive and of the support givers.

Practical help	Emotional support	Financial help	Instrumental help	Social support
• childcare • housing • household chores • administration	• 'being there' • listening, sounding board • understanding	• money donations • buying things	• furniture • clothes • food	• activities • invitations • visits

Table 1. Overview of support/help given
Source: self-reported data

A general look at the kind of support given to the mothers clearly shows that the mothers themselves as well as the network members (mainly friends) report receiving or giving a lot of emotional support, and underline the importance of this support type.

A divorce is a complex event not merely accompanied by emotional losses. One who separates does not only lose a companion but also a pair of extra hands, helping hands in raising the children, cleaning the house, keeping the yard in order, administering the home, and so on. The persons that most often assist the mothers in managing these daily hassles are parents, neighbours (chores around the house), and friends (helping to move).

> I can always rely on my parents and, if necessary, also on my brothers. Thank god I can count on them, otherwise I would not be able to manage it. For them this is an extra burden; my parents are not the grandparents but the co-parents of my children. Yeah, I'm really glad they are around. (Diane, 40 years)

Nevertheless, the group of 'parent-supporters' is quite diverse. On the one hand, there are separated women, like Diane, who state that their parents mainly help them financially and/or practically. On the other hand, some mentioned also receiving emotional support from their parents.

> My parents supported me a lot. They were not judgemental and they listened to me. I discovered my mother's strength and her will not to give up. I am very thankful for that. There were moments on which I couldn't see the light at the end of the tunnel. For instance, I lacked the energy to paint my new house. In moments like that, my mother would come around and motivate me to do things. (Vicky, 47 years)

Those mothers who did not receive any emotional support from their parents state that they do not have such an emotional relationship with them or that they did not want to bother their parents with their misery. In other words, their bond seems rather functional and less emotional.

The mothers do not only lose a pair of hands to share the practical responsibilities with but also to bring money in. Financial help appears to be donated solely by the parents. A more indirect way to alleviate the financial burden is through instrumental help, such as clothes, fresh vegetables, and furniture given by close kin, neighbours, and friends.

Another important need of the women in our sample is having a social life, meeting their friends, going out, et cetera. We noticed that their network – especially their friends – plays an important role in stimulating outdoor activities and keeping mothers out of social isolation.

A minority of the women mention finding it sometimes difficult to contact friends because it feels as though they are a bother. They think they are intruding into their friends' lives, especially when these friends have children.

> ...when the children are with their father and I am alone,…it is difficult…you can't just go to wherever you want because people have their own lives, their households, children, and so on … (Vera, 43 years)

These doubts often have a lot to do with one's personal coping resources. A lack of self-confidence or a low sense of control may be the source of these kinds of reactions. A mother who is not feeling well runs the risk of shutting herself in, thereby diminishing the opportunity to meet people and to talk about her experiences. This in turn may intensify negative feelings and lead to a vicious circle that is hard to break out of.

Few women express the desire to have more single friends. Often, Sunday is a family day, during which the women's friends make trips with their husbands and children. Joining them on their day trip makes the single mothers feel like the odd one out. The barrier to making contact with single friends is less high, since in one way or another these singles are companions.

Lastly, there is the role of the children in giving support. Most women mention receiving some kind of support from them, but in a rather indirect way. Younger children, for instance, cuddle their mothers more often. Their presence alone can be very important as well since they animate their mothers. Older children, for instance, make an effort by eating at home instead of at their friends' houses. Thanks to the children's attendance, the divorced mothers feel significant because they feel their children need them.

This was a brief overview of the different types of help. The next question to be answered is: What is important in giving help to recently separated women, according to themselves and their network? The contribution of the network members will provide insight into the 'do's' and 'don'ts' of giving support.

Giving and receiving support: important themes

During the interviews, the women, as well as their network persons, were asked what they considered important in giving support. We also asked the network person why he/she thinks woman X chose him/her as the one most supportive to her. In the following section, the results of the analysis will be discussed. First, the experiences of the separated women will be examined, after which focus will be given to what is important in giving help, according to those who have a supportive role.

The perception of the received suport

As mentioned earlier, separated women long for someone who listens to them, someone with whom they can share their worries and fears. They neither expect their network to be omniscient, nor do they want the network to be giving answers freeing them from the feelings and questions they are struggling with:

> …she is all ears and actually I don't long for anything else. I don't need other people's advice; I'll sort things out for myself. Nevertheless, having somebody close to you who listens to what I have to say… (Hanna, 44 years)

> Nobody told me what to do or what not to do. Other people can't and may not tell me what to do, as I am the one to make the decision. But, someone who understands you and is all ears, that, I think, is the most important thing. (Lydia, 49 years)

A separation is a disruptive life event and people going through the process need to overcome a range of obstacles. They face quite an insecure period. One might think that giving good advice or taking care of a few things lightens the burden, but this does not seem to be the case. Divorced women state not wanting any advice unless they explicitly ask for it. A separation disrupts their daily life and goes together with loss of control in one way or another. Therefore, it is comprehensible that they want to maintain a firm grip on things. Giving advice is perceived as an attack on their autonomy, which is very precious to them. Other people's advice potentially

increases their vulnerability, and lessens their personal strength and self-esteem. Instead of someone telling them what to do and how to do it, they are in need of acceptance, meaning they want to be listened to without any intrusion on their autonomy. Not respecting their self-determination equals not respecting who they are or how they feel at that moment.

This 'being there for them' is one of the important features of giving support that is mentioned by all the network members. In the next paragraph, we explore this issue in depth.

The perception of the support given

It is remarkable how the stories of the network members about the do's and don'ts of giving support correspond with those about the needs of the women. Next to being there for them, words like 'standing by them' and a 'safety net' express the willingness of the network to support the mother whenever she needs it. The following quotation makes it clear how serious network members are about this:

> …the feeling that she can count on me day and night, and I take that very literally. There was a time when I always had my cell phone on me, even when I went to bed. I wanted to give her the feeling that she could rely on me, day and night, no matter where I was, even when I was at work. (Chrissy, 38 years)

What is more, the network members' opinions about what is not helpful match the separated mothers' expressions about what they do not need, namely, good advice. Another no-no to keep in mind is taking over chores. It appears this kind of aid is not appreciated by the women, but especially supportive mothers and new partners mention being guilty of violating this rule now and then.

According to the network members the words 'things will get better' are considered a stopgap and are therefore to be avoided. The mothers indeed regard this sentence as a makeweight. Although these kinds of expressions are well-meaning, they do not seem to lighten the women's feelings of sadness or fear. By saying such words, one simply bypasses the mothers' feelings. The women are given the impression that they (or their difficulties) are not taken seriously.

Apparently, giving a call or paying a visit once in a while does not come across as interference or mothering. The 'friend-supporters' report doing a lot of 'outreaching,' meaning they do not always wait until their separated friend, for instance, calls them to talk about her problems. Instead, they pay her a visit or call her once a week. By doing this they want to show her they care, give her the opportunity to talk about her feelings or concerns, and try to help her avoid social isolation.

Next to determining what is perceived as important in giving support, it is necessary to go more deeply into why these network members are so giving. This question arose during the analyses of the data, as 'unconditional' giving caught our attention.

The support network: motives and consequences

In this section we do not only discuss the network members' motives for helping their separated friend. We also look at how the women feel about this. Do they feel guilty about receiving so much help, or do they take the efforts for granted?

Motives for helping

Capturing the motives of the network respondents is a difficult task. As Vaisey (2009) points out, people have difficulties in articulating their motives in substantive, propositional terms. There is often a distinction between the behaviour and the discourse on certain actions people undertake (Giddens 1984). In exchange relationships, we are most likely to encounter basic scripts our network participants draw upon (Swidler 1986). The most elementary one involved in this situation is undoubtedly the norm of reciprocity. Already according to Mauss (1970), who studied gift-giving in a primitive context, the guiding principle was *do ut des* – I'll give so that you will give. This moral obligation is at the basis of social relations between people (Ekeh 1974). But in a more modern context, the same rule was set out by Gouldner (1960, 1973), explicitly as 'the norm of reciprocity.' As we will see, this basic script of the balance of debt and the issue of being altruistic or not (Schwartz 1967, 1993) reappears as a guiding principle in the answers. Since a lot of the network people describe themselves as a giving person or as someone who is very helpful to a lot of people, many found it difficult to answer the question: What was the last thing you did for somebody else? Most of them are socially engaged and active in various organisations.

> People contact me very often; I think I attract people with difficulties – I don't know. For instance, I was late for this appointment because a woman from the dog school needed to pour out her heart about her daughter. Although I didn't have time to listen to her since you came, I did because these things are important. Everyone comes to me or calls me, whereas I myself never turn to other people for help. (Gerda, 48 years)

These kinds of quotes made us wonder: Is there a form of reciprocity in the relationship, or do network members act on a merely altruistic or rather egoistic basis? Some participants asked themselves:

> …Helping others…I do it because it gives me a good feeling, it enriches me and I do not desire anything in return…Egoism?...Because of the fact that it makes me happy?…That is a difficult question. Perhaps everybody is selfish in one way or the other?…I think my helping is rather based on altruism… (Bert, 73 years)

The analysis leads to a clear distinction between the giving of two groups: kin and non-kin. In the following section, we first describe the similarities and differences within the group of 'kin-givers.' We also focus on issues that struck us during the interviews. Secondly, we give an overview of the motives of 'friend-givers' for supporting their friends in need.

Family support: no tit for tat

'That is what family is for' is the logical reasoning of the interviewed parents (mainly mothers) and sisters of the divorced mothers for helping their daughter or sister. It caught our eye that some of the 'sister-givers' are not very concerned or emotional when it comes to their separated sister. The sisters seem driven by inner duty or moral obligation.

In contrast to them, the parents mention that the separation upsets them. Seeing their children and grandchildren suffer hurts them, and may have an effect on their way and ability to love all over them. One parent (female) told us that the self-

help group offers her daughter more emotional support than she herself can, since she mothers too much and tends to lecture her daughter more than, for instance, friends or fellow sufferers do. For this mother, being her daughter's emotional safety net does not correspond with her role as a parent.

A form of support that does match the parent role is offering financial aid and practical support (e.g., childcare).

> What helps her the most?…Well, I don't know that, actually. I should ask her. You know, I think us being their for her children means a lot to her. That way she can do her work without being disturbed. (Anna, 61 years)

Most parents do not question their giving help; they consider it their duty as a parent. They are concerned about their daughter and grandchildren and do what is in their power to moderate the consequences of the breakup. Some parents state that their grandchildren are their main motivation for helping, since their separated daughter is more or less able to cope, but the future of the little ones worries them. The grandchildren are part of the separation and the grandparents feel sorry for them and want to spare them from pain as much as possible. One thing that is important to the parent-givers is steering a middle course between their children. They make sure that there is a balanced giving to all their children.

Based on these findings, we can state that the supportive family members are rather altruistic. They do not put a price on the assistance they offer. The separated mothers show a lot of gratitude, and apparently, this kind of refund satisfies parents and other family members.

Non-kin helping hand

The analysis of the interviews reveals that only close kin (mainly parents) offer financial help. Friends all state that they help the separated mothers in every possible way except financially. Financial help appears to be something that is confined to the family. 'Non-kin givers' are very generous in giving the separated mothers every kind of non-financial help.

Remarkably, the analysis of the interviews with friend-givers indicates that these persons are best at offering emotional and social support. Another striking issue, which was already mentioned earlier, is that friends do not only find it important to be available 24/7, they also give the impression that this is normal. Nevertheless, further analysis shows that their motives are not as altruistic as they seem. The following quotations make this clear:

> To me it is an enrichment. You know, sometimes I compare my own experiences and feelings with those of others and that can be very instructive.

> I'm glad I can do such a thing. The fact that she has financial problems and I can help her, not by donating money, but in another way…that satisfies me.

> I think it's normal. Whenever someone I know is in trouble, I want to help him as much as possible. It actually gives me a good feeling…a benefactress.

On the one hand, most of the helpers feel the need to give to those who are in need; but on the other hand, the quotations make it clear that they always receive

something in return, for example satisfaction and a good feeling. Thus, one might ask oneself whether or not the givers' intentions are as altruistic as those of the family, since giving enriches them in one way or another.

Due to these findings, the following questions arose: Is it possible to be purely altruistic? Does one not always long for something in return for an effort made? Some of the friends state that their giving is an answer to what their separated friend has done for them in the past. Others assume that their friend would also help them if the need arose. This reciprocity seems to be the underlying motivation of many of our respondents. Apparently, they do not long for anything in return right away as they are not the ones who are in need. However, they feel comfortable about receiving repayment for their time and diligence whenever they would need it. Obviously, they are confident that the other person will make it up to them, and this expectation – in one way or another – might be the motive of non-kin for helping their friend. Another important issue is trust. A lot of our non-kin respondents have known their separated mother-friend for a long time. There is mutual trust; they know what they can and cannot expect from each other. At the time of the interviews, their giving may be encouraged by the fact that it does good to the receivers, and these show gratitude for all their effort. This gratitude can be seen as a payoff for the received support and may suffice to balance the relationship (Schwartz 1967; Mauss 1970).

In the next section, we shed light on the separated women. Again, we differentiate between how the separated women perceive the help they receive from kin and non-kin and whether or not the help creates certain expectations.

The experience of being helped

It is family business

Close kin like parents and brothers or sisters are very supportive, especially practically, financially, and instrumentally. The assistance offered in childcare is indispensable to the women, who appreciate this kind of aid a lot and literally state that they would be lost without help from their family. Thanks to the help of close kin, the separated women are able to, for instance, continue working or even increase their working hours.

Repaying family support is not one of the mothers' major concerns, as this was not mentioned during the interview. Due to the breakup, their spare time has become a scarce good (being sole parent, sole earner, and sole housekeeper), which makes it almost impossible to repay their parents, for instance, by mowing the lawn or getting the groceries. The separated women do show a lot of gratitude and do their best to cause the least bother to their close family. Dianne, for instance, does not go out during the weekend because this would again mean having to ask her parents for help watching the children.

They do not only want to spare them practically but also emotionally:

> The bond with my parents is very good. Yeah, I tell them a lot, sometimes too much…personal stuff. Afterwards, I think: "Oh no, now they will brood over it or they will start interfering…" (Anna, 27 years, 2 children: 1 year and 3 months)

As mentioned earlier, financial aid is only given by the parents of the separated women. The way this kind of help is perceived varies. Some women point out that the

money donation is not a gift, but an inheritance advance. Others find it normal that parents also help their children financially.

> My parents always told me that they would give the same to all their children. I find this quite logical. In the past, my brother was faced with financial problems and my parents supported him. At the same time they gave an equal amount of money to me and my sisters. They reason: "We have four children and we treat them equally." (Cindy, 45 years)

Asking for or accepting money is not as easy as having a chat or receiving fresh vegetables. It attacks the separated women's independence more. They want to justify these financial gifts; they want to point out that they are not profiteers. Clarifying the donations helps them to be proud of oneself and remain self-sufficient.

The importance of "real" friends

The support given by friends varies from a chat or an intense conversation to doing activities together. All mothers stress the value of having (a) good friend(s):

> …It's very important. Much more important than money. Comforting words are more helpful and make it possible to save on antidepressants and doctors. (Cathy, 41 years)

> …I have a lot of good friends and acquaintances and some of them invite me for dinner with a nice bottle of wine and a good chat. It does me a world of good. (Rosemary, 46 years)

The majority of the separated women are not deeply indebted to their supportive social network; some of the mothers seem to take their help for granted. The analysis of the interview transcripts show that most of the women have a rather long and intimate relationship with their close friends. This 'shared history' most likely explains why immediate restitution of what was received is not necessary, assuming that equivalence or reciprocity will eventually be achieved. The relationship appears to be rather communal and is not based on exchange, meaning the persons in the relationship are mutually responsive to each other's needs regardless of a balance sheet, so to speak. Apparently, they share the same definition of their role as friends and the support giving that goes along with it. This is why offering emotional support can be seen as a logical form of assistance: 'That is what friends are for.' The same goes for social support. Going out together is considered part of their relationship.

A comparison between the support received from friends and that from colleagues reveals that the role relation can determine the kind of support and the way in which this support is perceived. Some women mention that in the beginning, their colleagues were concerned and frequently asked how they were doing, but these concerns gradually faded. They do not expect their colleagues to remain interested in their personal life. Others report still receiving a lot of support from their colleagues, but they do mention having become friends with these colleagues. Interestingly enough, most of the co-workers who eventually became friends have gone through a similar experience (divorce or single parenthood). The transition from colleague to friend goes together with more intense contact and more open conversations. This behaviour fits the friend-friend role relation better.

The foregoing discussion shows that the receiver's biggest gift in return is gratitude for and appreciation of what their family and friends do or did for them. Repaying them is not their, or their network's, primary concern. This enables the

separated mother to "use" these people as a coping resource, a way to overcome their grief and troubles.

Discussion

Previous studies show that social support can act as a buffer against the negative consequences of a separation and has a positive influence on the post-separation adjustment (Flowers 1996; Samson 1997; Duran-Aydintug 1998). This study's aim is to gain insight into how supportive this network actually is according to the 'experience experts,' namely, the separated women and their network members. Separation is a stressful event in life; therefore, it is important to broaden our view on what kind of help divorced women do and do not need, who is best fitted to offer it, and whether or not this giving is unconditional. If giving support is associated with a particular expectation of something that has to be done in return, one might wonder: is this truly helpful or rather stressful for the separated women? We start this discussion by focussing on the impact of the separation on the single mothers' social network.

A first finding confirms the results of previous research: a separation has an effect on the size and the composition of a person's social network (Milardo 1987; Gerstel 1988; Rands 1988; Hurlbert 1990; Sprechter et al. 2006). Some women mention losses (e.g., friends, family-in-law), but what comes to the forefront is the expansion of the network or the development of a new circle of friends (Albeck and Kaydar 2002). For some mothers a breakup means a fresh start. Apparently, new hobbies as well as new friends are part of a new beginning. Noteworthy is the alternative character of their new hobbies, which confirms the findings of previous studies (Kaydar 2001; Kalmijn and Broese van Groenou 2005; Kalmijn 2007). It also appears that these new hobbies come to meet various needs – rebuilding a social life, personal growth, and getting over the divorce.

Not all women have the money or the time to engage in hobbies or to go out since they are restricted by role overload (Gerstel 1988). Being a single parent, a sole earner, and a sole housekeeper limits their quality time or, in other words, the time they can spend with their friends or in a sports club. A lot of the separated mothers find it hard. Having some kind of social life would make them feel better. This finding corresponds with the results of a study by Hughes and others (Hughes Good and Candell 1993): being involved in social activities is strongly related to the well-being of separated mothers. Socializing can be seen as a way to respite other responsibilities.

How friends and family supplement each other

A second finding also backs up the results of previous studies on the kind of help given by the different network members. Emotional and social (e.g., going out) support is mainly offered by close friends (Albeck and Kaydar 2002). Words like 'being there,' 'listening,' and 'safety net' are often mentioned by the single women as well as by their network members and underline the fact that emotional support was an urgent need at the time of the interviews.

Next to emotional support, practical assistance is indispensable to these women, especially childcare assistance. This kind of aid, as well as financial and instrumental help, is mainly given by close family (Milardo 1987). Whereas friends

seem to play an important role in helping the women cope emotionally with the breakup, family support seems to contribute to the management of the practical and financial consequences of a separation. Due to the fact that parents turn into co-parents, the women are able to keep working or even to increase their working hours, which is an important coping strategy in dealing with the financial consequences of a breakup.

Some women report that their relationship with their parents, especially with their mothers, is based on more than just functional solidarity (Mc Chesney and Bengston 1988). They describe their mother as a warm and generous person, someone who does not judge and is not obtrusive. These characteristics seem very important to the separated women. What is more, this finding is confirmed by other women, who mention finding it difficult to be mothered or to be overloaded with good parental advice.

Apparently, being given advice and being taken care of are not what the separated women need. Previous studies focusing on the negative impact of social support given to separated people confirm this finding (Kunz 1995; Miller et al. 1998; Hetherington 1999). Divorced women are happier when they are active in their network and they do not want to be reduced to mere support receivers (Leigh and Grady 1985). Bawin-Legros and Stassen (2002) state that family solidarity in general (not only in case of a separation) does not necessarily correspond with the needs of the receiver, but is often organized as a function of the needs and desires of the givers. The desire of the parent-givers is to see their daughter happy. They want to limit the negative consequences their daughter has to face, and in pursuing this aim, parents become blind to their daughter's needs. Our analysis shows that these good intentions are considered a potential threat to the separated women's idea of self-management. It may damage their self-esteem and self-confidence and possibly evoke feelings of helplessness (Coates, Wortman and Abbey 1979; Williams and Williams 1983; McLeroy et al. 1984). The separated women want to manage their (confusing) situation themselves as much as possible. In the light of the coping theory, this can only be encouraged since it shows that these women want to establish their inner locus of control, an important coping resource for dealing with their difficulties in a problem-focused way (Pearlin and Schooler 1978).

The importance of holding on to one's own potential is also the core principle of the 'empowerment paradigm.' "Empowerment is viewed as a process: the mechanisms by which people, organizations, and communities gain mastery over their lives" (Zimmerman 2000: 43-44).

The occasional disempowerment attitude of the parent-givers could explain why most women suggested a good friend when we asked for an interviewee who is very supportive to them. Good support equals being there for someone and listening, rather than taking over matters and giving advice.

A comparison between the stories of the women and those of their friends shows that these persons connect very well. They seem to speak the same language. A lot of friendships go a long way back. Because of this shared history, there is a profound basis of trust; they both know what to expect from one another. Unlike the parents, the good friends do not seem to give unwanted advice. A possible explanation is that the friends are less emotionally involved in the divorce process and are thus better able to listen to the women's stories with an open mind (Milardo 1987; Flowers 1996). They seem to come only as close as necessary.

A striking finding is the fact that there seems to be a tacit agreement when it comes to financial support: friends giving money to separated mother-friends is not done. This kind of aid fits the parent-child relationship best. It is important to mention

that these grown-up children find it hard to accept such financial support and in one way or another try to make it clear that they are not profiteers. To them, accepting money violates their independence and their self-confidence, another important coping resource (Pearlin and Schooler 1978). We found that they tended to gloss over this kind of help, which can be seen as a way to cope with their dependence and therefore attempt to stick to a personal coping resource (self-esteem).

What goes around comes around?

After a first reading of the interviews, all the network members seemed to be benefactors. Most of them state that they are giving persons, and to them helping others is something natural. They do not explicitly mention longing for something in return. Nevertheless, further analysis showed that the giving of a particular group of network members is not entirely unconditional or altruistic.

Although the friend-supporters state that they do not want anything in return, they also mention that the separated women have helped them in the past or would do so, if needed, in the future. This points to some kind of reciprocity in the relationship. The fact that the friendship has an intimate character and goes back a long way allows the receiver some leeway in returning the aid. This finding can be linked to Gouldner's theory of reciprocity – the stability of social relationships is based on the expectation that the help will be reciprocated at an adequate time period and in a contingent way (1960). The relationship can be seen as a communal one wherein the partners are mutually responsive to each other's needs. They do not seem to keep a hypothetical balance sheet. If the friendship were not that close, it would rather be based on exchange (Mendelson and Kay 2003).

Another element showing that a friend's help is not completely altruistic is the fact that the intangible efforts are rewarded with intangible compensation (gratitude, good feeling). According to Simmel, people are tied by gratitude since it functions as a motive to give in return (1987). This perceived gratitude intensifies the network members' confidence that their commitment will be paid for sooner or later. The good feeling experienced by the friends is positively associated with their own psychological well-being. They get the feeling that they matter to the divorced mother and that they are significant (Schieman and Taylor 2001; Marshall and Lambert 2006). Thus, one might state that the helping process is beneficial to both the giver and the receiver.

Can we see this exchange of help in kin and non kin as a pure gift (Parry 1986; Eisenberg 1993; Donati 2003)? Even though many network members saw their help outside the chains of reciprocal giving and receiving, the mother's not always had the exact same experience. Some have expressed feelings of shame and indebtedness towards their benefactors. Especially when the exchange of goods is involved (e.g., money or groceries), the idea of the inalienable gift (Mauss 1970; Gregory 1982) is visible in the answers. Financial help is not offered by friends since this kind of tangible help is more loaded or, in other words, is a less unconditional form of aid. As separated women are often faced with financial problems, it is less likely that they would be able to repay this gift or loan in a short period of time. Gratitude or a good feeling does not seem to suffice as 'repayment' when it comes to money (Blau 1964; Ekeh 1974).

The network members who are prepared to help these separated women financially are close kin. The family members we interviewed did not seem to question their financial assistance at all, since 'that is what family is for' (family

obligation standard) (Komter 1996; Komter and Vollebergh 1997; Ganong and Coleman 2006). Parents who offer financial help do not long for anything in return. To them, equal giving to all their children is more important. The stories of the separated women confirm this – the money received is either an advance of the inheritance or an amount owed to them (women). The fact that receiving money is less unusual in a family context makes it easier to accept the financial assistance.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to gain a better insight into how the process of social support is perceived by separated women. We gave an overview of the support types and which people offer it. The study enabled us to disentangle the most important needs of the women and their perception of the aid given by close kin and close friends. What is more, we were able to look into the dynamics at the root of such supportive processes.

Involving network members in the study also made it possible for us to shed a different light upon the influence of social support on coping with a breakup. Previous studies pointed to the contribution of social support in handling a separation (Flowers 1996; Samson 1997; Briggs 1998; Duran-Aydintug 1998). In some of those studies, it is stated that support also has a negative influence on the well-being of separated people (Kunz 1995; Miller et al. 1998; Hetherington and Kelly 2003). The results of our study complement these findings. The experience experts point to the fact that giving advice and mothering is not done. If the social support equals this kind of help, the social network cannot function as an effective social coping resource. What is more, the social network can have a detrimental effect on one's personal coping resources (sense of control, self-confidence) (Pearlin 1989). The immediate aftermath of a breakup is characterized by uncertainties, fear, and so on. For the women to cope with this difficult period of time, it is very important that their personal coping resources are left untouched or, even better, are reinforced.

Close kin often lapse into giving advice. The close friends we interviewed have a better appreciation of what their separated female friend needs. It also appears that the separated women themselves know best who to call upon for their different needs. We can thus state that a diverse network can take care of the different needs of separated mothers.

The supportive relationship itself was also examined. Apparently, the divorced women (the receivers) are not pressured to immediately refund the support they have received. Indirectly, they do give something in return – gratitude. Although, objectively, the repayment is not in balance with the help given, it suffices for the supportive network members. A decisive answer about whether or not this feeling is permanent can only be obtained through a longitudinal study. It would be interesting to study these women's as well as their network's perception of the social support in one or two years. What are the separated women's needs by that time, and how supportive will their network still be? Some women mentioned that they have joined a self-help group. We did not pursue this matter since it would have led us too far. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to research how this kind of support is perceived and what the strengths of such a group are.

References

Albeck, Shulamith and Dania Kaydar. 2002. "Divorced Mothers: Their Network of Friends Pre- and Post-Divorce." *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 36(3/4):111-138.

Bawin-Legros, Bernadette and Jean-Francois Stassen. 2002. "Intergenerational Solidarity: Between the Family and the State." *Current Sociology* 50(2):243-262.

Blau, Peter. 1964. *Exchange and power in social life*. New York: Wiley.

Briggs, Xavier deSouza. 1998. "Brown Kids in White Suburbs: Housing Mobility and the Many Faces of Social Capital." *Housing Policy Debate* 9(1):177-221. Retrieved August 1, 2011 (http://www.knowledgeplex.org/kp/text_document_summary/scholarly_article/rel files/hpd_0901_briggs.pdf).

Coates, Dan, Caroline B. Wortman and Antonia Abbey. 1979. "Reactions to Victims." Pp. 21-52 in *New Approaches to Social Problems,* edited by Irene H. Friez, Daniel Bar-Tal, John S. Carroll. San Fransisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Cohen, Orna and Rachel Deken. 2000. "Sense of coherence, ways of coping, and wellbeing of married and divorced mothers." *Contemporary Family Therapy* 22(4):467-486.

Donati, Pierpaolo. 2003. "Giving and Social Relations: The Culture of Free Giving and its Differentiation Today." *International Review of Sociology* 13(2):243-272.

Duffy, Manja. 1993. "Social Support: The Providers' Perspective." *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 19(1/2):57-73.

Duran-Aydintug, Candan. 1998. "Emotional Support During Separation: Its Sources and Determinants." *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 39(3/4):121-141.

Eisenberg, Nancy. 1993. "Does true altruism exists?" *Contemporary Psychology* 38(4):350-351.

Ekeh, Peter P. 1974. *Social exchange theory: The two traditions.* London: Heinemann Educational.

Fischer, Claude. 1982. *To Dwell Among Friends*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Flowers, Anita. 1996. "Social Support and Adjustment in Mothers with Young Children." *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 25(3/4):69-83.

Ganong, Lawrence and Marilyn Coleman. 2006. "Patterns of Exchange and Intergenerational Responsibilities after Divorce and Remarriage." *Journal of Aging Studies* 20(3):265-278.

Gerstel, Naomi. 1988. "Divorce, Gender and Social Integration." *Gender and Society* 2(3):343-367.

Giddens, Anthony. 1984. *The constitution of society*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Glaser, Barney and Anselm L. Strauss. 1967. *The Discovery of the Grounded Theory*. Chicago: Aldine.

Gouldner, Alvin W. 1960. "The Norm of Reciprocity: A Preliminary Statement." *American Sociological Review* 25(2):161-178.

Gouldner, Alvin W. 1973. "The importance of something for nothing." Pp. 260-299 in *For sociology. Renewal and critique in sociology today*, edited by Alvin W. Gouldner. London: Allen Lane.

Gregory, Christopher A. 1982. *Gifts and commodities* (Vol. 2). London: Academic Press.

Hetherington, E. Mavis. 1999. *Coping with divorce, single parenting and remarriage: a risk and resiliency perspective*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc.

Hetherington, E. Mavis and John Kelly. 2003. *For better or for worse: divorce reconsidered*. New York: Norton.

Hughes, Robert, Jr., Elaine Good and Kristin Candell. 1993. "A longitudinal study of the effects of social support on the psychological adjustment of divorced mothers." *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 19(1):37-56.

Hurlbert, Jeanne. 1990. "The Effects of Marital Status on the Form and Composition of Social Networks." *Social Science Quarterly* 71(1):163-174.

Kalmijn, Matthijs. 2003. "Shared Friendships Networks and the Life Course: an Analysis of Survey Data on Married and Cohabiting Couples." *Social Networks* 25:231-244.

Kalmijn, Matthijs. 2007. "Gender differences in the effects of divorce, widowhood and remarriage on intergenerational support: does marriage protect fathers?" *Social Forces* 85(3):1079-1104.

Kalmijn, Matthijs and Wim Bernansco. 2001. "Separated Lifestyles in Married and Cohabiting Relationships." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 63:639-654.

Kalmijn, Matthijs and Marjolein Broese van Groenou. 2005. "Differential effects of divorce on social integration." *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 22:455-476.

Kaydar, Dania. 2001. "The Humanities and Social Sciences Gender and Divorce: Changes and Oscillations in the Networks of Friends of Divorced Mothers and Fathers." *Dissertation Abstracts International* 61(12):4978-A.

Kessler, Ronald C. et al. 1995. "Social Psychology and Health." Pp. 548-570 in *Sociological Perspectives on Social Psychology,* edited by Karen S. Cook, Gary A. Fine, James S. House. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Komter, Aafke. 1996. "Reciprocity as a principle of exclusion: Gift giving in the Netherlands." *Sociology* 30(2):299-316.

Komter, Aafke and Wilma Vollebergh. 1997. "Gift giving and the emotional significance of family and friends." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 59:747-757.

Krumrei, Elizabeth et al. 2007. "Post–Divorce Adjustment and Social Relationships: A Meta-Analytic Review." *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 46(3/4):145-166.

Kunz, Jenifer. 1995. "Social Support during the Process of Divorce: It Does Make a Difference." *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 24(3/4):111-119.

Leigh, Leslie and Katherine Grady. 1985. "Changes in Mothers' Social Networks and Social Support Following Diovrce." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 47(3):663-673.

Lu, Luo. 1997. "Social Support, Reciprocity, and Well-Being." *The Journal of Social Psychology* 137(5):618-628.

Marks, Stephen R. and Shelley MacDermid. 1996. "Multiple Roles and the Self." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 58:417-432.

Marshall, Sheila and David Lambert. 2006. "Parental mattering." *Journal of Family Issues* 27(1):1516-1582.

Mauss, Marcel. 1970. *The gift: Forms and functions of exchange in archaic societies.* London: Cohen and West.

McChesney, Kay Y. and Vern Bengston. 1988. "Solidarity, Integration and Cohesion in Families: Concepts and Theories." Pp. 15-30 in *Measurement of Intergenerational Relations,* edited by David Mangen, Vern Bengston, Pierre Laudry. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

McLeroy, Kenneth R. et al. 1984. "Social Support and Physical Recovery in a Stroke Population." *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 1:396-413.

Mendelson, Morton J. and Aaraon C. Kay. 2003. "Positive Feelings in Friendship. Does Imbalance in the Relationship Matter?" *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 20(1):101-116.

Milardo, Robert. 1987. "Changes in social networks of men and women following divorce." *Journal of Family Issues* 8(1):87-96.

Miles, Matthew B. and Micheal Huberman. 1984. *Qualitative Data Analysis: a Sourcebook of New Methods.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Miller, Nancy B. et al. 1998. "Stressful Life Events, Social Support, and the Distress of Widowed and Divorced Women: A Counteractive Model." *Journal of Family Issues* 19(2):181-203.

Munch, Allison, J. Miller Mc Pherson and Lynn Smith-Loving. 1997. "Gender, Children and Social Contact: The Effect of Childrearing for Men and Women." *American Sociological Review* 62:509-520.

O'Donnell, Lydia. 1985. *The Unheralded Majority.* Lexington, KY: Lexington Books.

Parry, Jonathan. 1986. "The gift, the Indian gift and the «Indian gift»." *Man* 21(3):453-473.

Pearlin, Leonardo I. 1989. "The Sociological Study of Stress." *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour* 30(3):241-256.

Pearlin, Leonardo I. and Carmi Schooler. 1978. "The structure of coping." *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour* 19:2-21.

Poortman, Anne-Rigt. 2000. "Sex differences in the Economic consequences of Separation: a panel study of the Netherlands." *European Sociological Review* 16(4):367-383.

Poortman, Anne-Rigt and Tineke Fokkema. 2001. "Economische gevolgen van echtscheiding voor mannen en vrouwen in Nederland, 1949-1998" [Economic

consequences of divorce for men and women in the Netherlands]. *Sociale Wetenschappen* 44:69-92.

Rands, Marylyn. 1988. "Changes in Social Networks following Marital Separation and Divorce." Pp. 127-146 in *Families and Social Networks,* edited by R. Milardo. London: Sage.

Samson, Douglas. 1997. "Stress following Marriage Breakdown: Does Social Support Play a Role?" *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 26(3/4):39-49.

Schieman, Scott and John Taylor. 2001. "Statuses, Roles, and the Sense of Mattering." *Sociological Perspectives* 44(4):469-484.

Schwartz, Barry. 1967. "The social psychology of the gift." *The American Journal of Sociology* 73(1):1-11.

Schwartz, Barry. 1993. "Why altruism is impossible...And ubiquitous." *Social service review* 67(3):314-343.

Simmel, Georg. 1987. *La Philosophie de l'Argent.* Paris: Presses Universitair de France.

Smerglia, Virginia. 1999. "The Impact of Social Support on Women's Adjustment to Divorce: A Literature Review and Analysis." *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 32(1/2):63-89.

Sprechter, Susan et al. 2006. "No Breakup Occors on an Island: Social Networks and Relationship Dissolution." Pp. 457-478 in *Handbook of Divorce and Relationship Dissolution,* edited by M. A. Fine, J. Harvey. London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Strauss, Anselm L. and Juliet Corbin. 1990. *Basics of Qualitative Research. Grounded Theory, Procedures and Techniques.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Swidler, Ann. 1986. "Culture in action: Symbols and strategies." *American Sociological Review* 51(2):273-286.

Terhell, Elizabeth L., Marjolein I. Broese van Groenou and Theo van Tilburg. 2004. "Network Dynamics in the Long-Term Period after Divorce." *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 21(6):719-738.

Thoits, Peggy A. 1995. "Stress, Coping, and Social Support Processes: Where are We? What Next?" *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour* 35 (extra issue: Forty Years of Medical Sociology):53-79.

Vaisey, Stephen. 2009. "Motivation and Justification: A Dual-Process Model of Culture in Action." *American Journal of Sociology* 114(6):1675-1715.

Verheyen Wendy and Dimitri Mortelmans. 2008. "*Hoe gaan vrouwen om met de financiële gevolgen van een echtscheiding? Een kwalitatieve kijk op copingstrategieën*" [How do women cope with the financial consequences of divorce? A qualitative perspective on coping straties]. Pp. 69-98 in *Echtscheiding: werkelijk win for life? De sociologische en juridische gevolgen van het echtscheidingsrecht voor risicogroepen,* edited by D. Cuypers, D. Mortelmans, N. Torfs. Brugge: Die Keure.

Williams, Karen B. and Kilping D. Williams. 1983. "Social Inhibition and Asking for Help: the Effects of Number, Strength and immediacy of Potention Help Givers." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 44:67-77.

Zimmerman, Marc A. 2000. "Empowerment Theory: Psychological, Organizational and Community Levels of Analysis." Pp. 43-63 in *Handbook of Community Psychology*, edited by J. Rappaport, E. Seidman. New York: Kluwer Academic/Lenum Publishers.

Citation

Mortelmans, Dimitri and Wendy Verheyen. 2011. "A Dyadic View on the Post-separation Network of Single Mothers." *Qualitative Sociology Review*, Vol. VII Issue 3. Retrieved Month, Year (http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org/ENG/archive_eng.php).