

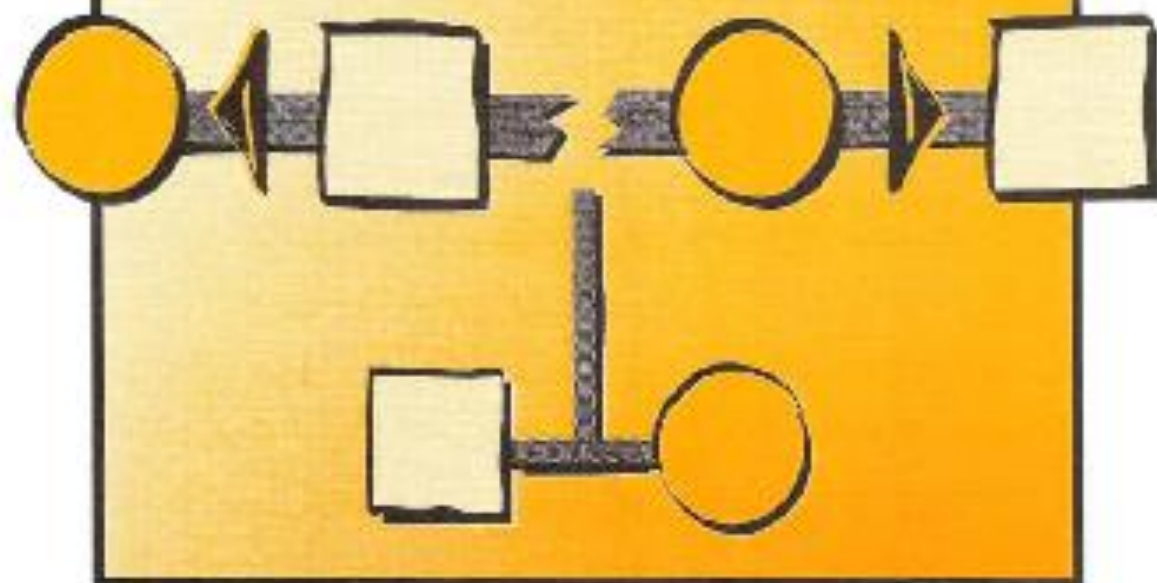
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Divorced Mothers: Their Network of Friends Pre- and Post-Divorce

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ABSTRACT. Divorce, as a cardinal turning point in the individual's life, triggers waves in the social circles of those who divorce. This article presents findings of research (Kaydar, 1996) which examined the fluctuations and changes that take place in the texture of the social network¹ of divorced mothers after the divorce and as a result of the divorce. For the first time, the sub-network of friends is considered as a whole network, with all its components, unlike in previous research. The sources of the contact that led to friendship, the degrees of closeness and intensity of the relationships, the time when the relationship was formed (before marriage/during marriage/after divorce), and who formed it (the wife/husband/both) were examined.

The research findings show that there are indeed changes in the social network after divorce. Among the findings are: The network of friends increases. Intensity in the relationships with the group of friends formed during the marriage period decreases. Within this group there is now more closeness and intensity in the woman's relationships with her group of friends than with the husband's group of friends or with the friends that the couple shared in common.

The network of friends today includes more women than men. The intensity of the ties and the degrees of closeness are now higher with women than with men.

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The network today comprises more "unmarried" (single/divorced/widowed) women and men or individual singles "of married status" (in other words, the relationship has been maintained with that married individual and not with both members of the couple) and the intensity of the contacts with them today is higher than with married friends. The network of friends today includes more friends with whom the friendship originated in "workplace," "studies," "a shared event," and a "club," in comparison with the period of the marriage. [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <getinfo@haworthpressinc.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2002 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

KEYWORDS. Divorce process, divorced mothers, divorce and the social network

AFTER THE DIVORCE: SOCIAL SUPPORT THROUGH SOCIAL NETWORKS

A review of the literature on divorce, in all its aspects, shows that in the wake of the divorce there is a loss that encompasses various circles in the life of divorced mothers: their self-esteem, their intimate relationships, ties to friends, children, the constellation of the extended family, financial situation, employment, residence, etc. (Weiss, 1979; Albeck, 1983; Menaghan & Liberman, 1986; Lin & Westcott, 1991; D'Abate, 1993). Social support in general, and particularly during times of crisis, is vital for the well-being of the individual (Caduri, 1994; Cohen & Liebenberg, 1994; Marks & McLanahan, 1993; Amato & Keith, 1991; Lin, 1986; Cohen & Syme, 1985). With the divorce, when interaction between the couple comes to an end, the pool of expressive and instrumental support resources that was enhanced by the marriage is reduced (Kessler & Essex, 1982; Lin et al., 1986). When support from the partner is no longer available, it is natural that the person should turn to external sources for support and to meet various needs.

The social support network includes: extended family, friends, and formal frameworks. At first the individual tries to be self-reliant; then

will turn to informal support systems that are close to hand; and finally to the formal support systems (Golan, 1981).

Members of the original family are a significant and primary source of support in the natural support network, for both emotional and concrete assistance (Spanier & Thompson, 1984; Leslie & Grady, 1985; Gerstel, 1988; Clark-Stewart, 1989; Osland et al., 1991; D'Abate, 1993).

But the family may sometimes create emotional pressure, leading to a regressive, dependent condition and limiting social integration (Spanier & Hanson, 1982; Katz & Bendor, 1986; McKenry & Price, 1991). Therefore divorced people prefer, at a certain stage, to turn to a network of friends rather than, or in addition to, their family (Malo, 1994). This network is perceived as effective in providing information, practical help, and social integration (McLanahan et al., 1981; Seeman & Berkman, 1988). Likewise, the network of friends gives the expressive support and feedback that are so necessary in this situation (Huddleston & Hawking, 1993).

SOCIAL NETWORKS IN MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE— FLUCTUATIONS IN THE SOCIAL CIRCLES

A social network is described in various ways by researchers. Generally speaking, it means people or a group with whom the individual is in contact in order to obtain expressive and instrumental support (Bott, 1957; 1971; Line & Westcott, 1991; D'Abate, 1993). Social networks include a number of characteristics: *The Network Structure*—size, density and degree of contact; *The Network Components*—family members, friends, neighbors; *Connections Among the Network Members*—frequency of the contact, its direction and strength (Mitchell & Trickett, 1980; Rands, 1988).

Marriage reinforces the bridge between two hitherto separate social networks. A social process takes place in which the couple preserve, reinforce, or selectively dissolve former relationships, with the clear purpose of strengthening the couple's new combined network (Daniels-Mohring & Berger, 1984; Rands, 1988; Lin & Westcott, 1991). The more intense the relationship between the couple, the shorter the bridge between them becomes, and both of them benefit jointly from access to more varied social resources, enabling them to fulfill better their various needs.

Lin and Westcott (1991) considered two characteristic types of social networks in the marriage relationship:

Type A—A network in which both members of the couple preserve significant parts of their personal networks without overlapping (this network is varied and rich in resources).

Type B—A network in which each of the couple is in direct contact with most of the partner's network. It was found that the husband's network is usually larger.

It was found that married couples' networks have different characteristics from pre-nuptial networks. Most of a woman's ties prior to marriage are with women and the man's ties are with men (Shamgar-Hendelman, 1990). During the marriage, most friendships are based on ties with other couples (Farrell & Rosenberg, 1977; Rands, 1988) or with husband's friends. Only rarely do the wife's friendships from her single days develop into a relationship with both partners in the couple (Shamgar-Hendelman, 1990).

The social network during marriage is characterized by more stability, and is less prone to changes (Shulman, 1975; Rands 1988). In the divorce process, as in every crisis situation, the support of friends and acquaintances is vital for the well-being and adjustment of those getting divorced (Mueller, 1980; Amato & Keith, 1991; Marks & McLanahan, 1993). Their availability and support significantly affect the woman's satisfaction and adaptation to the new situation (Line & Westcott, 1991; Landau, 1993).

Upon divorce, the social bridges collapse, and with it, perforce, many of the relationships that were formed through these bridges. It has been found that the divorcing individual loses a significant percentage of the network of shared friends, sometimes as many as 40 percent or more (Wilcox, 1986; Duffy, 1993; Hughes et al., 1993). A divorced mother's constellation of friends tends to contract, and sometimes even to collapse entirely, within a relatively short space of time from the divorce (Lopata, 1973; Rands, 1988; Shamgar-Hendelman, 1990; Duffy, 1993). There are many reasons for this: the social activity of married couples fits better with couples than with single people (Hetherington et al., 1976; Chiancola, 1978). The social status of married women depends considerably on the husband's status (Wiseman, 1975; Moore 1990; Shamgar-Hendelman, 1990). Therefore, the greater the woman's dependence on the network to which her husband was the bridge, the more significant is the damage to her social network after divorce (Daniels et al., 1984; Gerstel et al., 1985; Henderson & Argyle, 1985; Wallerstein, 1985). Also, friends sometimes distance themselves from one of the

couple because of a conflict of loyalty (Rands, 1981; Cohen & Levenberg, 1994; Shamgar-Hendelman, 1990).

Women note special difficulty because of social norms that incorporate a negative attitude to divorced women (D'Abate, 1993; Caduri, 1994). Also, the women usually retain custody of the children and they are more emotionally, psychologically and physically exhausted, and less free for social involvement after the divorce (Clarke et al., 1989; Amato, 1994). The oppressive social attitude also stems from the absence of recognized social behavioral codes for divorce, as opposed to the rituals for mourning.

During the initial period after the divorce, divorced mothers are busy addressing the new situation's difficulties—the emotional, technical, economic, and social difficulties (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Carter & McGoldrick, 1989). An improvement in social relationships, as part of the ability to cope with the situation, usually takes place 18-24 months after divorce (Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1979; Silverman, 1981). Together with the process of the woman's growth and adjustment to the divorce, changes take place in her social network (Leslie & Grady, 1985).

Research conducted previously have pointed to the changes in the size of the overall social network; however did not deal specifically with the network of friends as a separate network in the social network. It follows, therefore, that the changes that take place in it were not researched at all.

The research covered in this article is unique in that it investigated the changes and fluctuations in the texture of divorced mothers' networks of friends in the period after divorce compared to the time of the marriage. This network undergoes fluctuations, consolidating in a different composition, with different patterns of connections and interactions, and with different sources for relationships than during the period of the marriage. The present article offers a new perspective to study these important issues.

THE AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of the research was to examine the changes that take place in divorced mothers' networks of friends after the divorce ("today") compared to the period of the marriage. The research aimed to examine changes: (1) in the components of the network of friends (according to gender and family status); (2) in the intensity of the ties and the level of closeness. These were investigated from three aspects:

- (A). The period when friendships were formed (before the marriage/during the marriage/today)
- (B). The group to which the friends belong (the wife's friends/the husband's friends/friends of the couple)
- (C). The source of the friendship tie.

RESEARCH POPULATION

Research Population Included

1. Divorced, Jewish mothers.
2. Their children live with them.
3. They run an independent household without the permanent presence of a partner.
4. Aged between 20-50.
5. Divorced for 2-7 years.
6. After first divorce.
7. Live in urban communities in the center of the country.

The population was sampled from the following sources:

1. A list of divorced mothers who applied to social services departments (non clinical).
2. A list of divorced mothers organized in the frameworks of public and voluntary organizations.
3. A list of divorced mothers from various single parent centers.

Seventy-seven suitable divorced mothers who met the established criteria and were willing to participate in the research took part in the study.

At the beginning of February 1996, the pre-test was administered to 10 women. Data from the remaining 67 women were gathered from February to May 1996, by means of a structured interview. At the end, there was a debriefing to relieve participants' distress and for closure of painful points that had arisen when they looked into "the social mirror" and examined details of the constellations of relationships with their friends.

Characteristics of the Research Population: Research participants ranged in age between 27 and 50. ($M = 40.46$; $SD = 5.83$). The majority

are Israeli-born (82.1%) and a minority were born overseas (17.9%). New immigrants were not included in the sample. About half of their fathers are of Eastern (African/Asian) origin (52.2%), while 38.8% are Western and 9% are Israeli-born. Data on the mothers' origin were very similar. Most of the participants (44.8%) have two children, 40.3% have three or more, and 14.9% have one child. About half the participants had been married for up to 12 years, about 35% up to 20 years, and 15% had been married over 20 years ($M = 13.43$; $SD = 6.28$). Among the participants, 58.2% had been divorced for up to 3 years at the time of answering the questionnaire, the rest between 4-7 years ($M = 3.69$; $SD = 1.60$).

About half the participants (50.7%) have a high school education, 31.3% have a university education, 17.9% have a post-high school education, and 3% have a primary school education. Most of the participants (77.6%) now work full-time; a minority work part-time (10.4%) or have occasional jobs (7.5%); while 4.5% do not work at all. Some participants (41.8%) defined their economic situation as "good," 32.8% defined theirs as "middling," and 25.4% defined theirs as "bad." The majority defined themselves as secular (70.1%) and the minority as traditional (29.9%). No one defined herself as religious or ultra-Orthodox.

RESEARCH TOOLS

Tools Were Built for the Purposes of This Research

1. *Personal Details Questionnaire*: Includes a number of demographic variables, variables that characterize the socio-economic and employment situation of the woman during her marriage and today, and a number of variables connected to the divorce.
2. *Social Relationships Questionnaire*: Its purpose was to discern participants' feelings and their evaluation of their social relationships. The questionnaire comprises 4 parts:

Part A: Examines the participant's feelings of loneliness in her social connections on a 4-level Lickert scale, from 1 = "Very true" to 4 = "Not at all true." This part contains 5 statements, for example: "It seems to me that I'm now invited out to events of our group of friends less than when I was married."

Part B: Examines the reasons for strengthening of ties with friends. There were 5 possible answers and the participant had to mark them in order of priority. For example: shared need, similar family situation, etc.

Part C: Examines the reasons for diminishing/severing of ties with friends. There were 5 possible answers and the participants had to mark them in order of priority. For example: loyalty to ex-husband, fear of closeness with a distancing friend.

Part D: Examines the participant's preferences today regarding type of friends, from the viewpoint of gender, family status, etc., measured on a 5-level Lickert scale, ranging from 1 = "Always" to 5 = "Not at all." This part contains 5 statements, for example: "Nowadays I prefer to be in the company of single women."

3. *Social Network Questionnaire:* In this questionnaire the participants state by name their friends today and during the marriage. The questionnaire examines the source of each relationship, when it was formed and who formed it, the gender of the friend, and his/her family status. The questionnaire examines the relationships with friends in the network—during the marriage and today—according to 7 indicators (closeness, telephone conversations, reciprocal visits, going out for pleasure, expressive support, instrumental support, and help with the children). The answers are given on a 5-level Lickert scale, ranging from 1 = "Always" to 5 = "Not at all." For example, "When you have emotional problems (romance, loneliness, sadness, fear, etc.), how much does each friend assist you? 1 = "Always," 5 = "Not at all."

The Social Relationships Questionnaire. The idea for the basic structure of the questionnaire was influenced by the formal structure of Nor Beck's (1980) Social Support Questionnaire. Participants are requested to indicate the members of their social network and to answer a series of questions regarding each member. The response range is 1-5, with 1 being the lowest and 5-the highest. Considerable support exists in literature for this type of scale (Bruhn & Philips, 1984; House & Khan, 1985 in Oslander et al., 1990). The Social Relationships Questionnaire, specially structured for the research, was found to be extremely detailed and effective, providing much and varied information on each one of the participant's friends during marriage and today. During the research it was found that the questionnaire was appropriate for use as a tool in the therapeutic process.

THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

As stated, the aim of the research was to examine the changes that have taken place in the women's network of friends since the divorce ("today"). The findings will be presented as follows: the network's size;

the network's composition according to various groups of friends (before the marriage, during the marriage, today); the intensity of the ties with them during the marriage and today; the composition of the network according to gender and marital status; and the sources of the friendship.

The Size of the Network

It was found that the average number of friends in each participant's network of friends today is 13.52 and during the marriage it was 12.33. A t-test analysis for dependent samples shows significant differences between the two networks ($t = 1.92$; $df = 66$; $P < 0.5$) The network today ($M = 13.52$; $SD = 3.14$) is bigger than that during the marriage ($M = 12.33$; $SD = 4.70$).

Composition of the Network According to Various Groups of Friends and the Intensity of the Connections with Them

In investigating the composition of the network of friends, one has to distinguish between friends who were in the network during the marriage and those who are in it today. Naturally, a differentiation has to be made among the friends concerning the period when the relationship was formed: relationships formed before marriage, relationships formed during the marriage and those made after the divorce (today). Among the friendships formed during the marriage, a differentiation has to be made regarding who formed the friendship—the wife, the husband, or both partners. Following are the findings specific to various categories of the network's composition and the intensity of the ties:

1. There has been a decline today in the intensity of the ties with friends from the period of the marriage in all 7 indicators that were investigated: closeness and intimacy, telephone conversations, reciprocal visits, going out for pleasure, expressive support, instrumental support, and support with the children.

These data are shown on Figure 1. There is a decline in all the indicators but a relatively greater drop is seen in reciprocal visits, going out for pleasure, and the degree of closeness. There is a more moderate decline in instrumental help and support with the children. A uni-directional MANOVA analysis with repeated measurements found significant differences across all the indicators: $F(7.60) = 11.91$; $P < .001$.

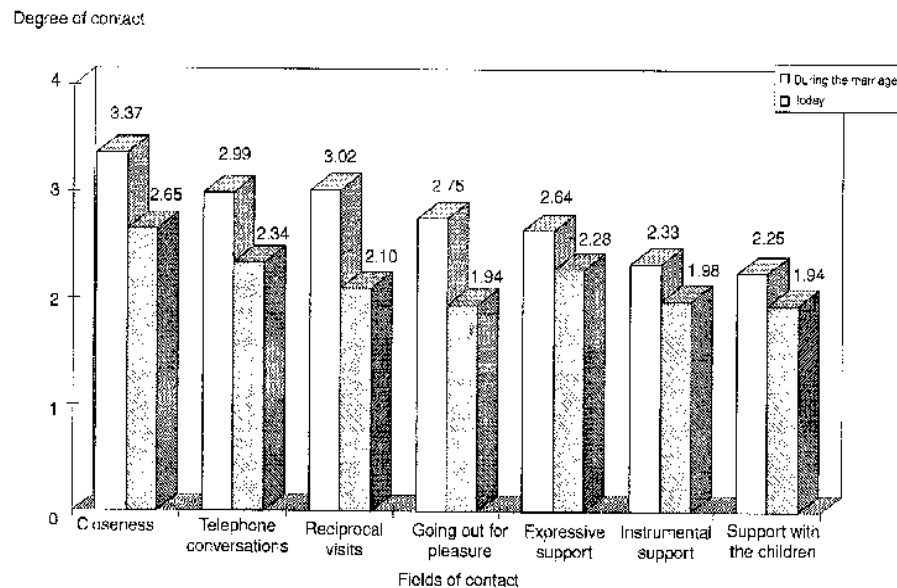
2. It was found in general that the divorced mothers' network of friends today comprises intense and close ties with more friends from the time of having the status "single"/"unmarried" (i.e., with new friends from the period after the divorce and with old friends from before the marriage) than with friends from the period of the marriage.

A MANOVA analysis with repeated measurements found significant differences among the three groups of friends across the seven indicators: $F(14,184) = 4.37$; $P < .001$. The level of the contact in these fields according to the three groups of friends is presented in Figure 2. The various analyses of each separate indicator showed significant differences among the three groups of friends (prior to the marriage/during the marriage/after the divorce) in the following indicators: closeness, telephone conversations, reciprocal visits, going out for pleasure, expressive support. In all of them the level of contact with friends from the marriage is lower today in comparison with the level of contact with the two other groups of friends (new friends and old friends).

3. With regard to friends who became included in the network during the marriage—there is today greater closeness and intensity in the contacts with the wife's friends ("mine") than with the couple's common friends ("ours") (Table 1). The reasons for the increased closeness to friends were rated by the research participants (from high to low): willingness to help them (29.9%), similarity in various spheres between the participants and friends (28.4%), mutual need (17.9%), a feeling of liking and compassion (11.9%), similar family status (7.5%). There was a significant interaction between the type of friends ("mine" as opposed to "ours") and the period (during the marriage as opposed to today): $F(7,42) = 2.75$; $P < .05$.

Figures 3-8 show the significant interactions. From the diagrams, it is seen that in all the indicators showing significant interaction there is a drop in the level of contact between the participants and those who are friends of *both partners of the couple*. On the other hand, no change was found, or there was even an improvement, in the level of contact with the wife's friends. In comparative analyses of couples on each type of friends separately, a significant difference was found between the level of contact during the marriage and the level of contact today only in the

FIGURE 1. Average indicators of contacts with friends—During the marriage and today.



couple's shared group of friends, and today the contact with them is less intense and less close (Figure 9).

Composition of Friends According to Family Status and Intensity of Contacts with Them Today and During the Marriage

The findings presented relate to the composition of the network from the aspect of gender (the number of male friends in the network in contrast with the number of females) as well as the marital status of the friends (single, married, widowed, divorced, individual of married status).

1. It was found that the number of women in the network of friends today is larger than the number of men in comparison with the period of the marriage. The list of participants' contacts today shows that they average 65.73% women, the rest (34.27%) being men. The difference between the number of women and the number of men is significant ($t = 8.51$; $df = 66$; $P < .001$). In an analysis of divergence 2×2 (gender \times period) with repeated measurements, a clear interaction of gender \times period was found: $F(1,60) = 52.00$; $P < .001$: the ratio between the number of women and the number of men is different today from the ratio between them during the marriage. Figure 9 presents these differences.

FIGURE 2. Average levels of contacts in various fields in which clear differences are found according to three groups of friends: Prior to the marriage from the marriage/after the divorce (today).

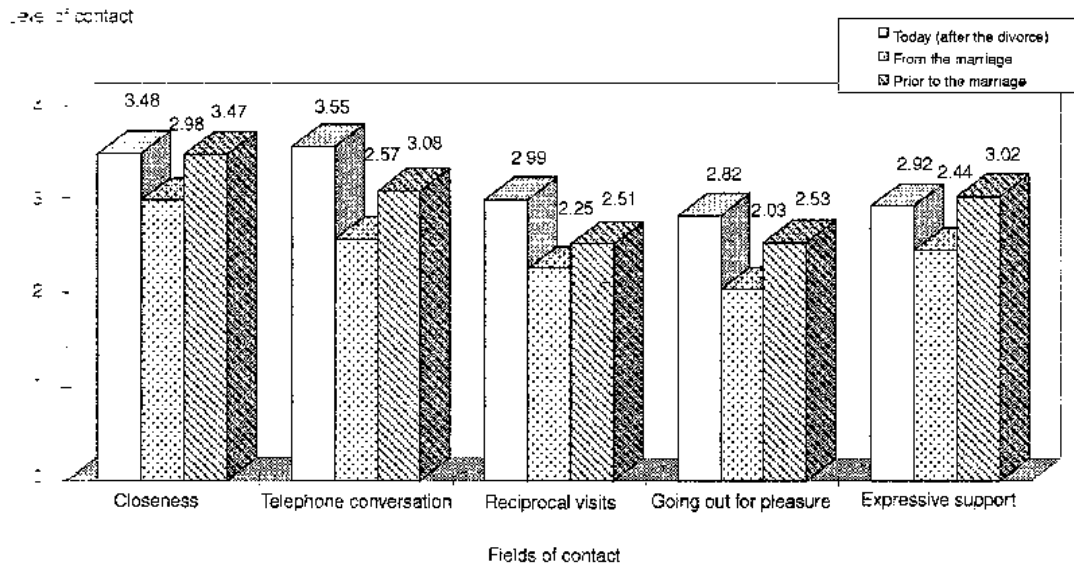


TABLE 1. Averages and deviation from the norm in different indicators of the contacts according to the type of friends ("mine" as opposed to "ours") and the period of the friendship—during the marriage in comparison with today.

The indicators		Groups of friends from the marriage				F (1,48) Type of friends x period
		Wife's friends		Couple's friends		
		During the marriage	Today	During the marriage	Today	
Closeness	M	3.28	3.46	3.52	3.00	5.89*
	SD	1.11	1.19	.74	.93	
Telephone	M	2.91	3.05	3.15	2.57	8.04**
	SD	1.08	1.06	.85	.85	
Visits	M	2.49	2.50	3.20	2.26	15.94***
	SD	1.04	1.00	.88	.85	
Going out	M	2.60	2.54	2.67	2.05	5.09*
	SD	1.13	1.07	.79	.71	
Expressive support	M	2.78	2.99	2.87	2.46	6.23*
	SD	1.16	1.05	.96	.86	
Instrumental support	M	2.41	2.57	2.56	2.23	4.41*
	SD	1.21	1.27	1.14	.97	
Support with children	M	2.29	2.36	2.38	2.15	2.51
	SD	1.13	1.02	.94	.96	

* $P < .05$; ** $P < .01$; *** $P < .001$

FIGURES 3-8. Averages of participants' relationships with wife's friends as opposed to friends of the couple during the marriage and today.

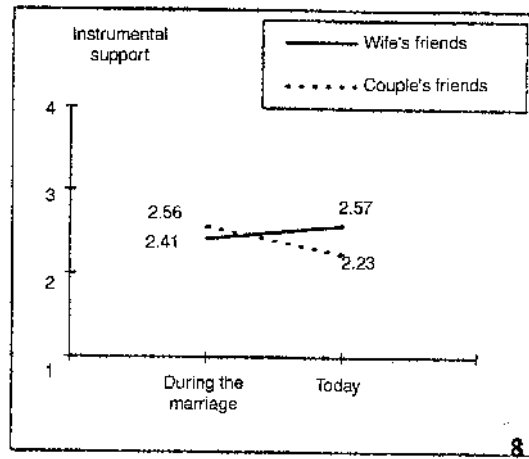
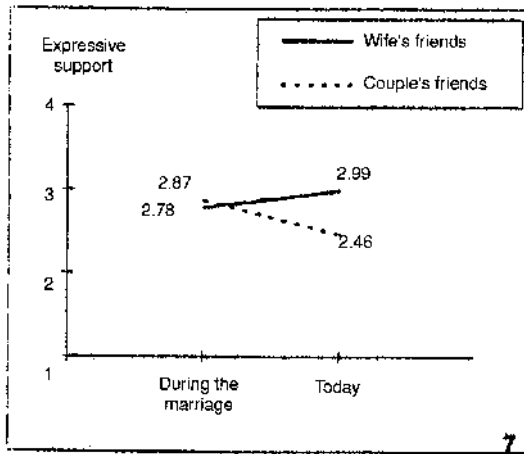
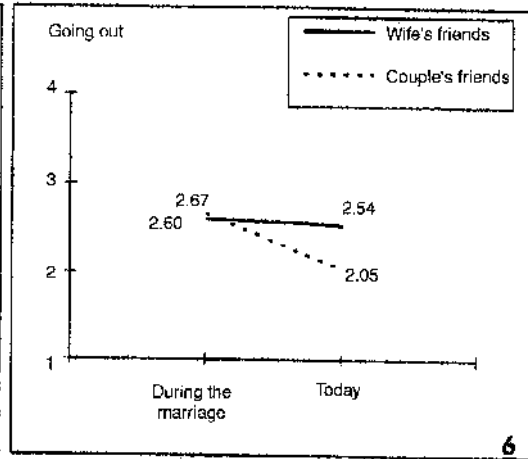
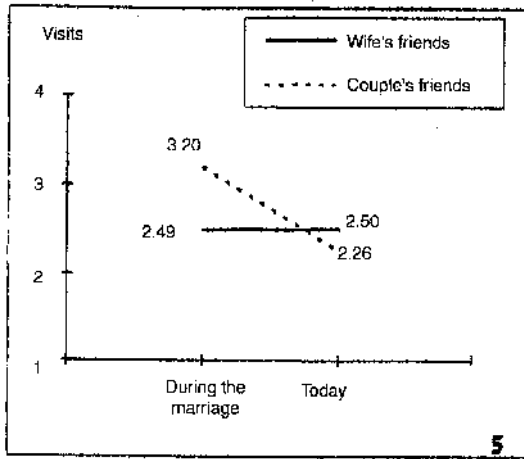
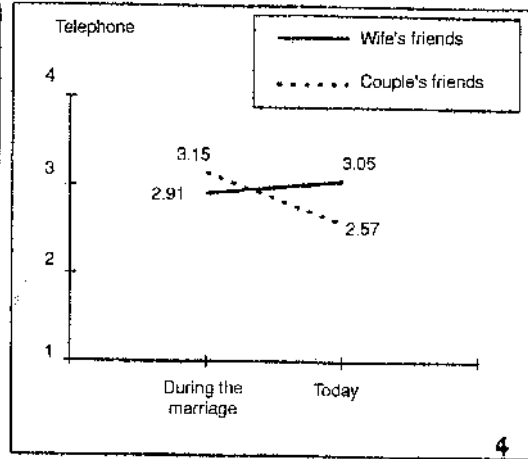
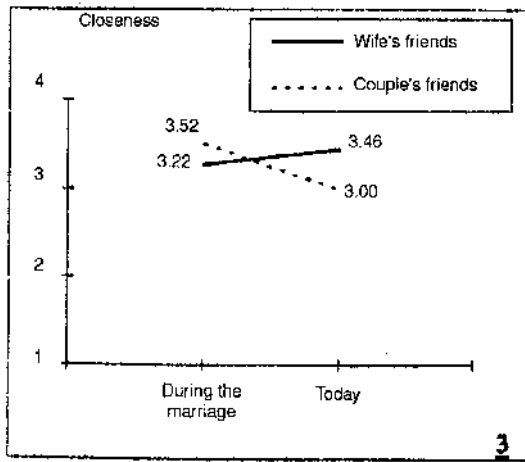


FIGURE 9. Size of network of friends—Percentage of women and men in the network of friends today and during the marriage.

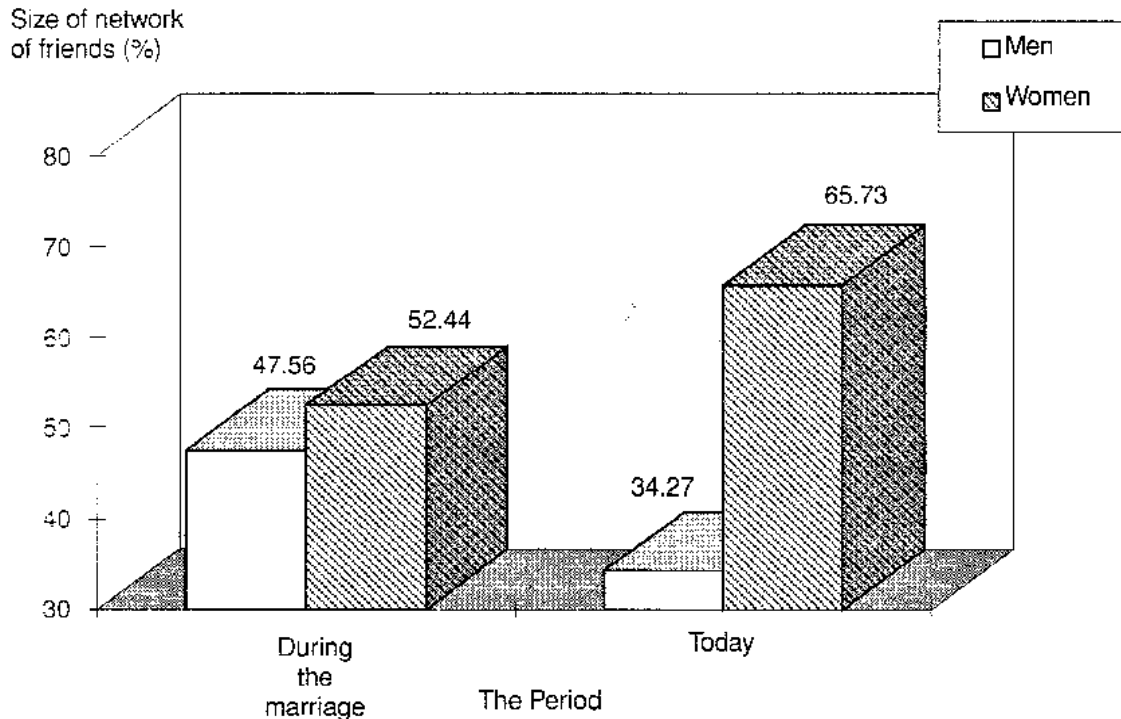
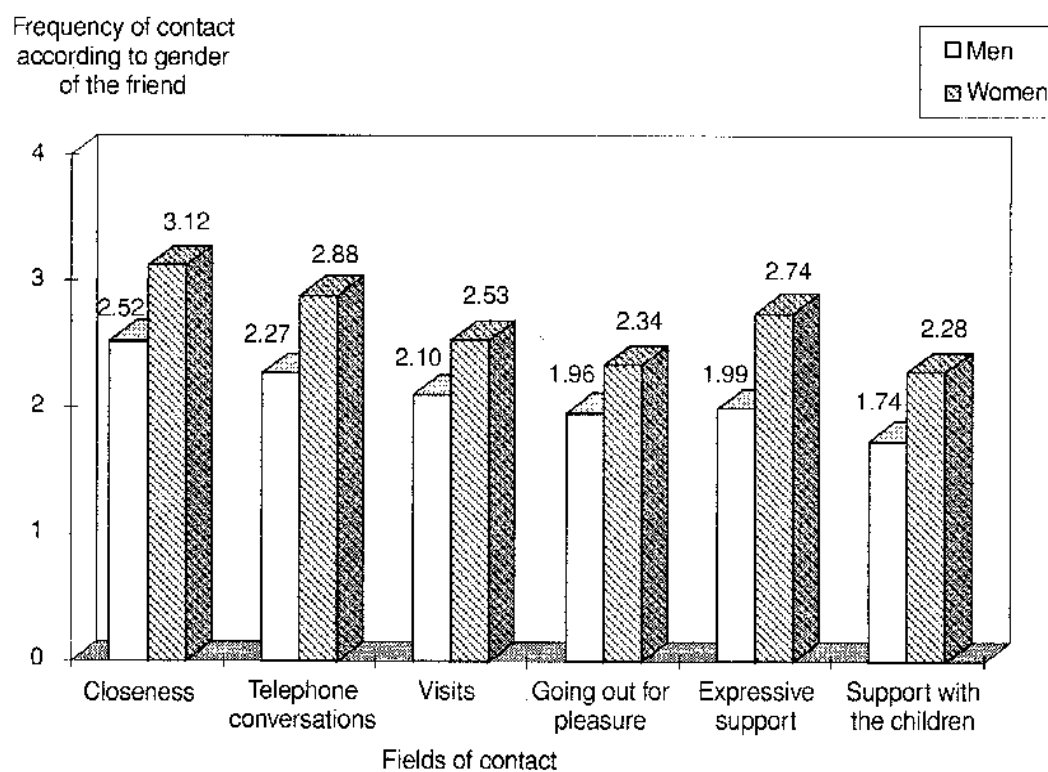


Figure 10 refers to examination of ties today. It was found that today the intensity of the participants' contacts and their levels of closeness are higher with women than with men in all the indicators except in practical (instrumental) support. A uni-directional MANOVA analysis was carried out with repeated measurements, the dependent variables being the indicators of the relationship in the 7 fields (closeness, telephone conversations, etc.) and the independent variable being the friend's gender. A significant difference was found between women and men across all the indicators of the contact: $F(5,79) = 18.17$; $P < .001$. Figure 10 presents the averages of the men and the women in the various relationship indicators.

2. In surveying the composition of the network from the aspect of the friends' family status, it was found that in the divorced mothers' network of friends today there are more unmarried (single/divorced/widowed) women and men or "individuals of married status" (that is, the relationship is maintained with only one member of married couples) than during the period of the marriage.

FIGURE 10. Averages of contact's level in the various fields according to the gender of the friends.

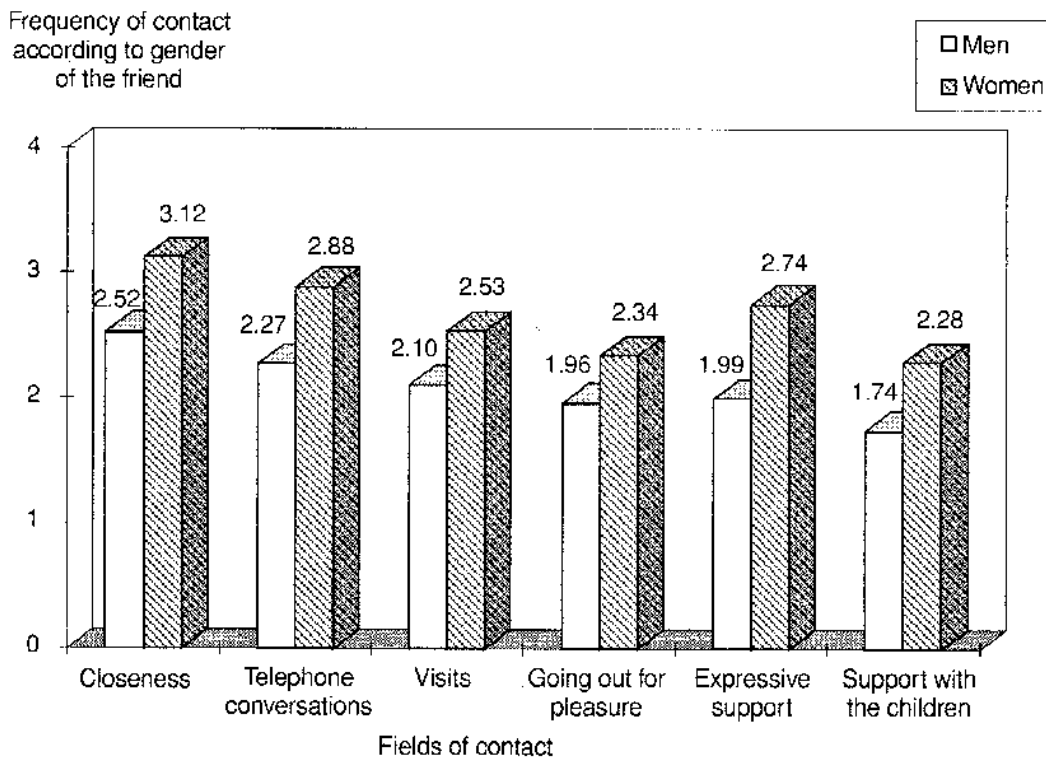


A comparison of Figures 11 and 12 clearly shows the marked increase in the percentage of unmarried women in the network today, likewise in the percentage of unmarried men. In addition, the participants were asked to indicate regarding all friends marked as "married" in the list of friends, whether they are in contact with both members of that couple or with only one of them (i.e., "a married individual").

Figure 13 shows that generally most of the friends in the participant's network are women. Among these there are more married women with whom the participant has contact only with them, and not with the partner (that is, "individual women of married status").

3. Study of the intensity of the contacts of the participants with friends according to their marital status (married/unmarried) showed that the intensity of the ties of divorced mothers with unmarried friends is higher today than with married friends. A MANOVA analysis was carried out 2×2 (gender \times family status) with repeated measurements. A significant difference was found between women and men: $F(7,38) = 11.76$; $P < .001$. In addition, a significant difference was found between the married and unmarried friends across the 7 indicators: $F(7,38) = 7.41$; $P <$

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.001. However, no interaction of gender x family status was found: $F(7,38) = 1.56$; $P > .05$. That is to say, the differences between the male married and unmarried friends are similar to the differences among the females.

Table 2 shows that in all indicators of contacts, the contacts with unmarried friends are closer and more intense than with married friends. Also when the participants marked their preferences, the research clearly indicates a preference for friends (women and men) who are unmarried rather than married couples and friends: $F(3,198) = 55.03$; $P < .001$.

Sources of Friendship

Ten sources of friendship were identified, e.g., childhood friends, friends from the community, friends from the army. It was found that after the divorce changes took place in the sources of friendship among the participants' friends. The divorced mothers' social network today has more friends from sources such as: "workplace" ($Z = 4.55$; $P < .001$), "studies" ($Z = 3.10$; $P < .01$), and "a shared event" ($Z = 3.21$; $P < .01$) than from other sources, in comparison with the marriage period. During the marriage, the "husband's friends" constituted the primary source of friends, while today this source is rated lowest ($Z = 6.43$; $P < .001$).

Figures 14 and 15 present averages of the ratings for sources of relationships in the social network during the marriage and today. It was found that divorced mothers have lost more friends who were brought to the marriage framework by the husband, as well as more couples with whom friendship was formed during the marriage, than friends whom the women had brought to the marriage framework.

Grading of the reasons why friends grow distant, as noted by the survey participants (from high to low): Discomfort in being without a permanent partner at social activities (43.3%); Fear of harming the union of the distancing person (37.3%); Friends' loyalty to the husband (29.9%); Fear there may be a need to help the women (10.4%); and Deliberate distancing by the divorced mothers (6%).

DISCUSSION

This discussion will address several of the research findings: the changes in the size of the network, the composition of the network,

FIGURE 11. Average percentages of group of married and unmarried friends in participants' network of friends during the marriage.

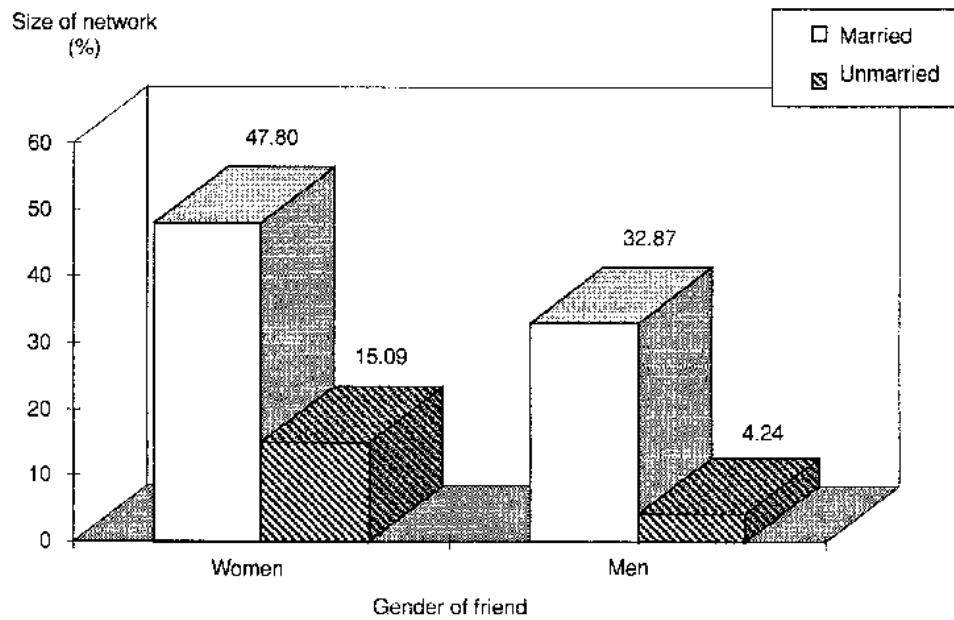


FIGURE 12. Average percentages of group of married and unmarried friends in participants' network of contacts today.

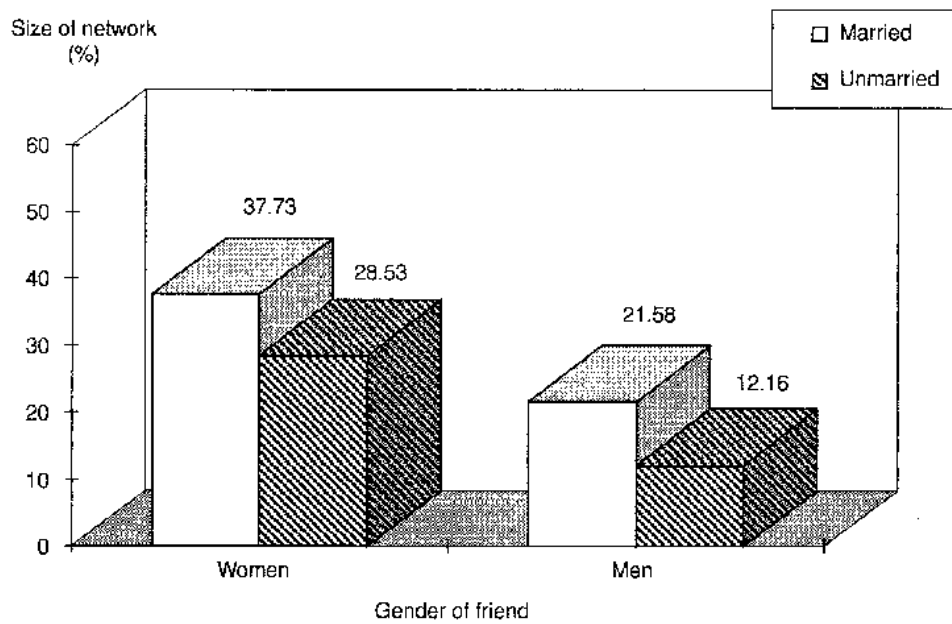


FIGURE 13. Average percentages of married men and women today according to the contact with both members of the couple or with the married individual.

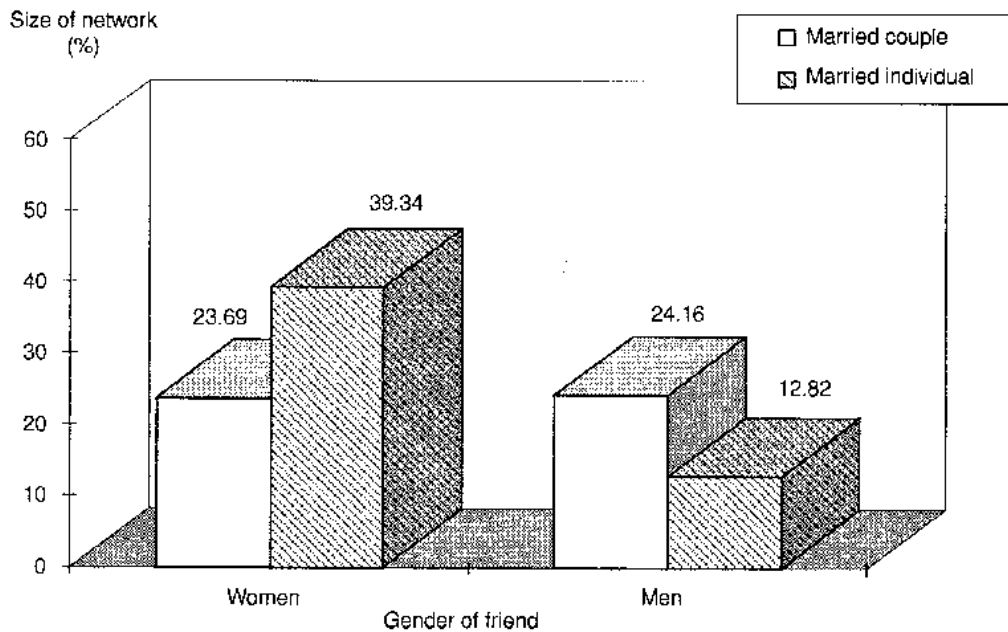


TABLE 2. Averages and deviations from the norm of the degree of contacts with married and unmarried friends in the social network today.

Indicators	Married		Unmarried		F(1,44)
	M	SD	M	SD	
Closeness	2.55	.78	3.31	.81	27.97**
Telephone conversations	2.26	.68	3.19	.85	50.18**
Reciprocal visits	2.27	.75	2.78	.77	21.40**
Going out	1.91	.74	2.72	.73	35.69**
Expressive support	2.19	.72	2.90	.78	25.39**
Instrumental support	1.99	.75	2.42	.93	10.19*
Support with children	1.92	.76	2.23	.78	8.44*

*P < .01; **P < .001

sources of the contact leading to friendship, the intensity of ties, and degrees of closeness. These changes will be discussed in connection with the period of the formation of the relationships and who formed them.

Size of The Network: As opposed to the data in many research surveys which report a reduction of the social network, this research indi-

cates a growth in the network. Previous research examined the network at a time close to the separation and up to a year after the divorce (Rands, 1988; Lin & Westcott, 1991; Duffy, 1993). However, it was found that growth and development take place in the social networks as time passes after the separation and divorce (Wilcox, 1986; D'Abate, 1993; Hughes et al., 1993). The present research investigated changes in the network 2-7 years after the divorce-which explains the network's growth.

The literature and the clinical documentation point out that the period of adjustment and re-organization after divorce-which also includes re-organization of the network of friends-lasts about 18-24 months (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Leslie & Grady, 1985; Carter & McGoldrick, 1989). From this, it is possible to conclude that the growth of the network is affected by the length of time that passes after the divorce and also by the process of adjustment and re-organization. Likewise, and also based on the research participants' responses, one may assume the existence of a sort of "curve of blossoming" of the network that reaches a certain peak, as the research found, 3-4 years following the divorce ($M = 3.69$). There may be some decrease later and a certain stabilization. A long-term survey that will examine the same population in a few years' time will be able to confirm or disprove this assumption.

Composition of the Network (according to gender and family status): The research findings indicate an orientation toward change in the composition of the network of friends and relationships today, in comparison with the period of the marriage. The direction of the change is clear, from married friends and couples to "unmarried" friends (single, divorced, widowed) and "individual married singles" (married friends where the connection is only with one of the couple).

The network today is comprised of more women than men (also in comparison with the period of the marriage) and the contacts with "unmarried" friends are closer and more intense than with married friends.

The research participants' preference for the company of unattached individuals-women and men-was found to be linked to their sense of loneliness. The greater the feeling of loneliness, the more they prefer to be in the company of "unmarried" individuals. One may relate these general findings to a person's propensity to belong to a peer group (Luxenberg, 1987; DeGraff & Flap, 1988; McKenry & Price, 1991). After the divorce, women naturally seek company with similar social characteristics to their own, so that they are able to be a part of a group and feel equal. A peer group is especially impor-

FIGURE 14. Average ratings in various categories of sources of relationship today.

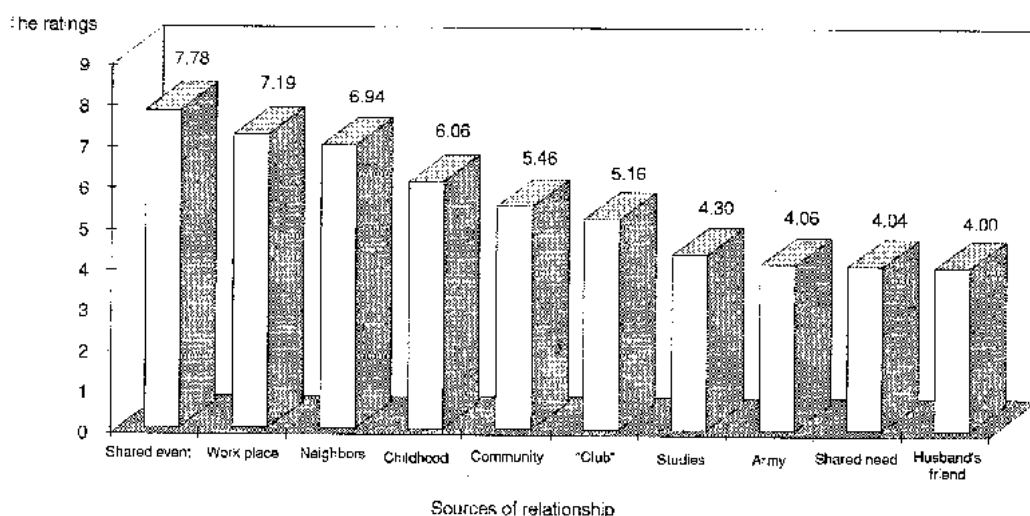
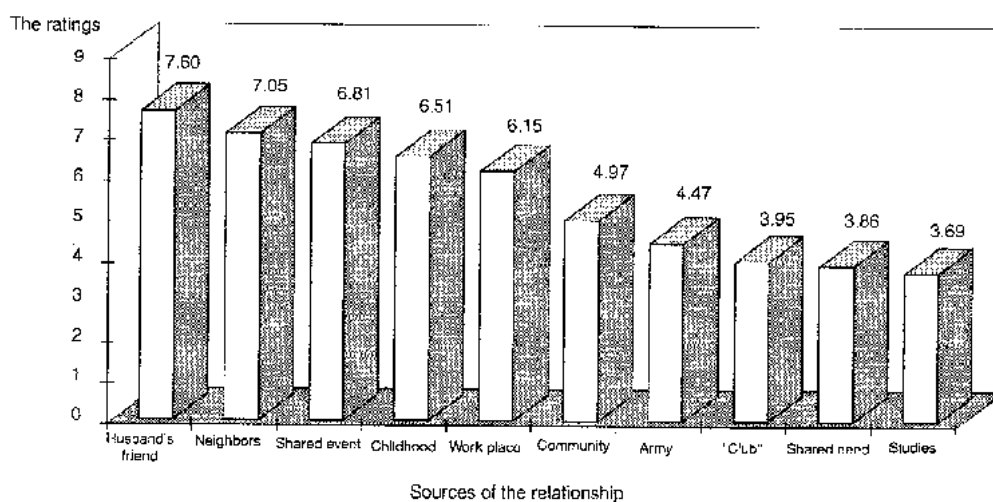


FIGURE 15. Average ratings in various categories of sources of relationship during the marriage.



tant to women, since divorce symbolizes for them the loss of their role and their identity, making it necessary for them to redefine themselves. These findings match research findings which found that the network of unmarried individuals has relatively homogeneous characteristics of age, gender, education, employment, etc. Divorced individuals, women more than men, change the composition of their

social network from married couples to a society composed more of single people and of the same gender (Shamgar-Hendelman, 1990; Rands, 1988; McLanahan et al., 1981; Lin & Westcott, 1991). The network after divorce is similar, though not identical, to what the individual had before marriage.

The need of the survey participants to link up with friends from the time when they were "unmarried" (single/divorced) is also clear when viewed against the background of studies that found that in order to recover, divorced mothers must widen their circle of social contacts and establish a network with similar characteristics to the network from their single days (Rands, 1988; D'Abate, 1993).

The presence of married individuals and couples in the network, as was found in the present study, is also clear when viewed against the background of the mapping and identification of the period and initiator of the relationship. When a couple or one of a couple is an old friend of the wife (from before the marriage), or a friend from the period of the marriage with whom the connection was made between that person and the wife and/or she brought him into the couple's shared network—such friends usually tend to maintain the connection with the wife during the "division" of the network of friends following the divorce. From this it will be understood that when the friendship is maintained with old friends who are married women, the friendship is mainly between the two women (i.e., with an individual woman of married status).

Sources of the Relationship: Mapping and identifying the sources of the relationship that led to friendship is of maximum importance. These reinforce the orientation that was found in everything connected to the network's composition and the intensity of its ties, an orientation that indicates a tendency to become part of a peer group from the viewpoint of gender and family status.

When compartmentalizing the varying sources for relationships, it was found that there has been a significant increase today in "workplace," "studies," and "a shared event" as sources for a relationship when compared with the period of the marriage. Likewise, the importance has grown of the sources "neighbors," "childhood friends," and "a club." These changes are connected to the women's need to make friends with people who are similar to themselves also in the spheres of employment, social activities, common friends, and occupations. Granovetter's explanation (1974, 1983), on the basis of the network theory, that individuals who are similar in various spheres tend to form a friendship from the moment they meet, constitutes an explanation of the above findings. In addition, all the sources of relationships, as stated

above, can answer the changing emotional and social needs of divorced mothers according to the Homans principle (1950), which states that the more people interact with one another, the stronger their feelings of friendship tend to be. Therefore, time spent together and common spheres of interest can explain some aspects concerning formations of the friendships through these very sources, in addition to the other factors mentioned.

It is worth noting that the survey participants' orientation after the divorce toward change in their leisure pursuits and activities outside the home clarifies the growth in the sources mentioned above. The change in the women's leisure pursuits also clarifies the connections with friends that originate in the source "club." According to their reports, participants are currently involved in various single-parent groups, singles' groups, and other groups that provide them with varied social activity and company that match their present needs.

An examination of the "childhood friends" source of relationships, shows that these friends usually retained the same intensity and closeness of contact with the survey participants as during the marriage. The ties sometimes became even closer following the divorce.

The change in "workplace" as the source of relationship, that became a central source for forming connections after divorce, is understood against the background of a review of research surveys that show that upon divorce, many women are forced to find employment (Darling et al., 1989; Caduri, 1994) or to work longer hours. In the present survey it was found that 39.4% of the research participants reported a transition to increased work hours. The relatively young women can channel their efforts toward developing or supplementing their professional identity and building up their economic independence. Naturally, the place of employment can constitute a source for the social ties that women need so much, especially as it has been found that the circle of colleagues at work is important for the professional and personal identity of women who are single parents as well as for their social status as the family head (Wiseman, 1975; Shamgar-Hendelman, 1990).

The source "husbands' friends," who constituted the primary source of friendship during the marriage, are today rated as the last source for friendship, which corresponds with the research findings on the "division" of the network of friends following the divorce. This change is reasonable since during the marriage most of the family friends were originally the husband's friends, or the result of shared friendships that were formed during the marriage.

Intensity of Contacts and Degree of Closeness: These were examined from a number of aspects:

1. The participants' contacts with a group of friends who were in their social network during the marriage and have also remained friends in the current network.
2. *The period of relationship:* Participants' ties with friends with whom the relationship was formed during different periods in their lives (before marriage/during the marriage/today).
3. *Initiator of relationship:* Participants' ties with the group of friends from the time of the marriage—the group with whom the connection was made with the wife, in comparison with the group shared by both of the couple.

It was found that there was a drop in the participants' connection with those friends who became included in the list of friends during the marriage. This decrease was found in all indicators of the connection.

Social activity during marriage is usually fitted to couples, which explains this change. Of the present research participants, 43.3% noted this reason as a factor for the decline or severing of social connection. Likewise, in many cases, the divorced woman is considered as a threat to friends' marital unity—by both wives and husbands—and stereotypes are attached to her that affect the social attitude toward her. Among the research participants, 37.3% noted this reason as a factor in the decline of social ties and the distancing of friends. Sometimes friends distance themselves because of conflicts of loyalty between the husband and the wife. Among the women who participated in the survey, 29.9% noted this reason for the decline and/or severing of social ties.

Social ties are developed between couples (Rands, 1988; Shamgar-Hendelman, 1990) and with the dissolving of the marital relationship, the foundation for such ties no longer exists. Also, it must be noted that during marriage many women belong to a combined network (Lin & Westcott, 1991). This affects their social standing after divorce and leads to a loss of social ties from the time of the marriage. Sometimes it is the women who distance themselves from friends, either because of the emotional and physical stress they undergo or because of their feeling that they are no longer welcomed by those friends (Gerstel, 1988; McKenry & Price, 1991). In this research it was found that 6% of the participants noted that it was they who distanced themselves on this basis.

Period of Relationship: Most of the indicators in this study show that today the lowest level of contact is with the friends made during the period of the marriage. The level of contact is higher today with friends in the other two groups—the wife's group of friends prior to the marriage ("old friends") and the group of friends made after the divorce ("new friends").

Initiator of the Relationship: An examination of the participants' ties today in comparison with the period of the marriage shows a rise in the closeness and intensity of relationships with the group of friends with whom the wife formed the connection, and a drop in those relationships formed by both of the marriage partners. This change is found in all the indicators, apart from help with the children.

The research findings show that assistance from friends (old and new more than friends from the period of the marriage) is mainly expressive and in such social fields as: going out for pleasure, reciprocal social visits and telephone conversations—i.e., in those fields directly connected to social involvement, information and social activity. In these fields there are today closer and more intense ties with friends with whom the relationship is based on belonging to a group that is similar to the research participants. In seeking social support for expressive needs, we seek someone who can understand our needs and express empathy for them out of the similarity in socio-economic traits, life-style, attitudes, and behavior (Lin & Westcott, 1991). This applies to old and new friends. The existence of the friends in the network and the network's growth are very important also because the more variety there is in the network, the more the women can be exposed to a wider variety of roles and people, develop a sense of autonomy, and augment their social activities, growth, and development (Leslie & Grady, 1985).

CONCLUSION

Different research indicates, only as a generalization, that significant changes take place in the lists and texture of the social network, from the first year after the divorce. The longer the time that passes, the greater the change. Previous research did not go into detail about the changes. The findings of the present research give details about these changes.

The findings of the research have enabled identification and categorized mapping of the sources of the relationship that led to friendship, the period when the friendship was formed (prior to marriage/during the

marriage/after the divorce) and who formed it (the wife/the husband/both of them). These research findings are important in order to illuminate the sub-network of friends as an independent network, with all its components, and in order to understand the processes that consolidate in it after and as a result of the divorce. This is the innovation in these research findings.

This research, and its attendant findings, has implications for various levels of professional intervention in work with divorced mothers, both in preparing therapists and divorced mothers for future changes in the network of friends and for enhancing the awareness of these changes, and also in developing support systems and group frameworks to help divorced mothers to adjust to their new social situation and develop their abilities and social skills.

NOTE

1. The term "social network" in this research refers to the network of friends.

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