

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS
AND DIVORCED MIDLIFE MALES' INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

LAEL HORWITZ

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By

LAEL HORWITZ

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INSTITUTE FOR CLINICAL SOCIAL WORK

We hereby approve the dissertation

THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS UPON DIVORCED MALE'S
MIDLIFE INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

by Lael Horwitz

Candidate for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work

<u>Herbert Rosenfeld</u> Chair's name*	<u>D.S.W.</u> Title	<u>4/30/83</u> Date	<u>Herbert M. Rosenfeld</u> Signature
<u>Eleanor Grayer</u> Committee member*	<u>Ph.D.</u> Title	<u>4/30/83</u> Date	<u>Eleanor D. Grayer</u> Signature
<u>Marion Solomon</u> Committee member*	<u>Ph.D.</u> Title	<u>4/30/83</u> Date	<u>Marion Solomon</u> Signature

Dedication

To my mother and father, Bubbles and Ruben Horwitz,
who have always been there when I needed them and to
whom I owe my love of learning, who kept me going when
I faltered and provided me with an awareness of the
needs of society and the contributions I could make.

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Man is here for the sake of other men above all,
for those upon whose smile and well being our own
happiness depends, and also for the countless unknown
souls with whose fate we are connected by a bond
of sympathy. Many times a day I realize how much
my own outer and inner life is built upon the labors
of my fellowman... and how earnestly I must exert
myself in order to give in return as much as I
have received.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the correlation between the social support networks which divorced midlife males utilize and the degree to which they establish high levels of intimacy in their romantic relationships. The participants included in the sample were 30 divorced and currently single men between the ages of 45 and 60. The single participants (at the time of the interview) were to have been divorced or legally separated for one year. Additional stipulations were placed on the men which required them not to be domiciled (living) with a woman. The participants were required to be dating at least one woman for a period of two months or longer. The participants were all required to be in what is considered the upper class professional and socio-economic groups.

The major hypothesis was that midlife divorced males who are more supported by their social network relationships and involvements will tend to have established higher degrees of intimacy in their romantic relationships.

The Social Support Questionnaire and the Weiss Intimacy Rankings were the primary instruments utilized in the study. Each participant was administered the Questionnaire by answering a series of questions regarding background demographic information, size and structure of his family, etc. The subject was then verbally asked questions about himself and his social support network. The intent of this portion of the interview was to determine the subject's sense of the supportedness in his own social support network. Finally each subject was administered the Weiss Intimacy Rankings, which measured each subject's relative degree of intimacy in his relationship with the woman towards whom he felt most involved at the time of assessment. Correlational analysis was performed by using the coefficient of correlation (r).

It was found that there was not a high correlation between these subjects' emotional supportedness by their social networks and the degree of intimacy manifested in their romantic relationships. The coefficient of correlation was .51. Although this correlation is not statistically significant, this study does indicate that social support networks may be a factor in the midlife male's creation of intimate relationships, though not as influential a factor as much of the literature on social supports and intimacy implies.

The findings of the study relatively corroborate the Kohutian theory which suggests that the impact of contemporary selfobjects, such as social support networks play a limited role in the person's capacity for intimacy. The study also indicates that other determinants, such as intervening influences arising from earlier developmental phases, may have overriding influences upon one's capacity for intimacy. Finally, the study suggests that in some cases strong involvements with friends and other social supports may not be enough to insure that a midlife male will successfully traverse the necessary adjustments involved in his intimate relationships.

The main conclusion of this study is that literature which postulates or implies a strong correlation between supportive social networks and the midlife male's capacity to renegotiate and create intimate relationships should be questioned and reevaluated. Another aspect of this interaction, however, is that the instruments used in this study have limitations which also require critical evaluation. The problems of support and its myriad sources, as well as the capacity for intimacy and its developmental antecedents, are extremely complex. Recommendations for future research are suggested on the basis of this awareness.

What is it that stirs such fear in Narcissus? He says, "May I die before I give you power over me." Why does he prefer death to a relationship with the nymph Echo? Why does he fear that she will gain power over him? The nymphs generally and this nymph particularly are rather benign and usually sweetly loving creatures, and yet Narcissus flees them in terror. Reflecting further on the myth, one finds that Echo has been an innocent chatterbox who was, according to the version one looks at, either wrongly accused by Hera of distracting her or of engaging in an affair with her husband Zeus, in yet another of his endless infidelities. Hera's jealous rage loosed on poor Echo left her unable to speak except to repeat whatever was said to her. I think in Hera we begin to see a power worthy of Narcissus' fear and loathing. Here I believe is the love relationship, the intimacy if you will, of the heavenly Mother, Hera, turned dark, and it is the fear of this dark, jealous, possessive aspect of the love relationship that too often stands in the way of intimacy. Narcissus rightfully fears that he will be overpowered by the instinctual force of love and snared by it, and he attempts to flee it, only to meet his appointment in Samara on the riverbank in the form of his own reflection. The story ends sadly for Narcissus. Just at moments when relationships have the potential of becoming intimate we become terrified of their potential for harming us. We fear that we will be overpowered by the destructive, jealous, possessive power of Eros. It is then that we wish to flee and perhaps should, because we do need to engage in profound self-observation, self-reflection, and introspection. That is, we need to look at ourselves. Narcissus' tragedy is that he gets stuck. He's unable to experience an encounter with the deeper layers of the psyche.

- from "Discussion of W.J. Kirman's 'Countertransference in Facilitating Intimacy and Communication,'" Modern Psychoanalysis 5 (1980): 147-148

CHAPTER I

Statement of the Problem

Psychosocial observers have increasingly noted the difficulties of many persons in establishing the intimate relationships with others which they crave; in fact, many theorists now indict contemporary culture as being basically oriented against the human desire for inhabiting durable, dependable, and genuine relationships with others (Lasch, 1979; Slater, 1970). Personal and clinical experiences (of this investigator and of colleagues) indicate that one sector of our society which is particularly concerned with issues of intimacy in relationships is that of single men who are in midlife (age 45 to 60; Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, and McKee, 1978). Often, these men are powerfully affected by their internal and interpersonal struggles concerning the creation of intimate relationships in their lives, and certainly those who are close to these men are affected by their struggles as well. With larger numbers of people now living longer lives, the median age of the population in this country is approaching the midlife phase of life. Therefore, it becomes more pressing, for our society generally and for clinical social workers in particular, to better understand the major intrapsychic and interpersonal needs of this age group (Brim, 1974). It also becomes increasingly essential for clinicians working with this population to refer to developmental paradigms which specifically address the phenomenology of adult development (Mann, 1979).

As the myth of Narcissus indicates, and as is emphasized by the quotation from Modern Psychoanalysis which prefaces this chapter, the flight from intimacy has multiple determinants. It may be that the person who has fled an intimate relationship has done so because of either neurotic or realistic appraisals of the dangers which intimate relating may entail. Conversely, intimacy may be avoided due to the person's legitimate need for self-observation and introspection. Midlife males, having experienced at least certain opportunities for intimate relationships, are often in a position of reappraisal, introspection, and either neurotic flight or mature delay of intimate involvements. Among these men there are concerns over intimacy which reflect both archaic psychological difficulties as well as quandaries which stem more directly from contemporary developmental, i.e., midlife influences.

This investigator and colleagues have observed that those midlife males who seem most supported in their non-romantic social involvements and relationships also seem to be more inclined to imbue their romantic relationships with intimacy and commitment. Additionally, formal research findings (e.g., Caligor, 1979; Vaillant, 1974) suggest that midlife males whose peer relationships are strong are better able to manage adaptively the multiple stresses of midlife development, including the renegotiation of intimate romantic relationships. As is indicated below, particularly in the review of literature on psychoanalytic developmental psychology, the midlife male's preoccupations with intimacy regard his capacity to "renegotiate" his intimate relationships in a way which responds adequately to his changing psychological,

social, and biological needs. The current study will explore the correlation between the social support networks which midlife males utilize and the degree to which they establish high levels of intimacy in their romantic relationships. It was the assumption of this investigator that empirical support of this hypothesized correlation would corroborate the significance of social supports for the mid-life male's capacity to create intimate relationships.

Definitions of Central Variables

The central variables under consideration in this research are "intimate relationships" and "social support networks." Both of these terms and many similar ones have been defined in a variety of confusing, contradictory, and varied ways in social science research to date. More extensive specification of both terms' usages in the current research is contained below, in the "Operationalization of Terms" section of Chapter III. For clarification of the following review of relevant literature, the central variables should be preliminarily defined. For the purposes of this study, "intimate relationships" refer to heterosexual romantic relationships which are relatively emotionally intense and intimate. "Social support networks" refer to the social sources which provide a sense of emotional supportedness to a given individual. Thus, the individual is assumed to be the best judge of the degree of support which he receives from others. In order further to define these variables the specific methodologies of assessment of each of them must be considered in detail; this consideration, and the assessment instruments used in this research, are included in Chapter III below.

Delimitations of the Research

This study is delimited in three significant ways. First, the population being investigated consists of midlife males. While it may be that both men and women confront similar wishes and difficulties regarding intimacy during midlife, these concerns may also be expressed differently by the sexes, owing to constitutional and/or conditioned dissimilarities. In this study, the capacities of men to create intimate relationships during midlife are operationalized and investigated. The advantage of this focus is that gender-determined differences in the subjects' creation of intimate relationships do not confuse the observed relationship between social support and intimacy.

Second, the population being investigated consists of midlife males who are divorced and who have begun new romantic relationships. This delimitation establishes a focus upon the creation of relatively new relationships which are at least potentially intimate. The alternative of investigating romantic relationships which had been established many years ago would obfuscate the research intended to examine the creation of intimate relationships. Long-established relationships would also tend to be evaluated by subjects in ways which intermix the attitudes of their own earlier developmental stages and the experiences of earlier phases of their relationships. Instead, the delimitation circumscribes a more specifically midlife sampling of the subjects' behavior: the creation of intimate relationships during midlife. The other advantage of this delimitation is that, by studying the experiences of divorced or legally separated men it becomes more likely that the subjects have at least a wish for achieving the capacity

for intimate involvements, since in the past they have each been married for a period of time.

It should be noted that although there is a substantial body of literature on the psychosocial phenomenon of divorce and its sequelae, there is very little published research on the capacities of divorced midlife individuals to establish new intimate romantic relationships. Nor are there empirical studies concerning the antecedents of the capacity for intimacy within this population. Moulton (1980) examined some of these issues in the lives of divorced men and women, but her study drew upon a small and homogenous sample, i.e., ten individuals engaged in intensive psychotherapies, and lacked statistical verification and controls.

The third delimitation consists of the population being investigated being within the upper social classes, which are Classes I and II in Hollingshead's schema of social positions; see Hollingshead and Redlich, 1958. This delimitation is made due to the contentions of other researchers that patterns of social contact, integration, and support differ considerably depending upon the social class of the individual whose experiences are being investigated (Farrel and Rosenberg, 1981). In this study, the men being investigated were chosen from a relatively homogenous socioeconomic class in order to minimize the complicating influence of class upon social integration or estrangement.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

Introduction to Review of Literature

A positive correlation between the sufficiency of social supports in the lives of midlife males and the establishment of intimacy in these males' romantic relationships is suggested by literature deriving from several theoretical bases. In this study, the perspectives of both psychodynamic and developmental orientations to intimacy and its problematic aspects are being considered; in other words, problems in establishing intimate relationships are being summarized both in terms of psychopathological deficits and developmentally phase-specific issues. In effect, findings from both of these perspectives are linked to considerations regarding the social milieu, or "the sufficiency of social supports" in the lives of these men. In the following review of relevant literature, four theoretical perspectives are summarized: (1) psychoanalytic developmental psychology, based upon the ideas of Bowlby (1969), Mahler (1975), Winnicott (1958), and others; (2) "Self Psychology," based upon Kohut's work (1971, 1977); (3) psychosocial identity theory, based upon Erikson's writings (1963, 1968); and (4) relatively atheoretical descriptive researches such as those reported by Caligor and Vaillant.

Psychoanalytic Developmental Psychology

The psychological capacity for creating intimate relationships can be clearly viewed from the perspective of psychoanalytic developmental psychology. "Intimacy" is, in this sense, a specific dimension

of the range of attachment behaviors which deeply structure human experience (Bowlby, 1969). In Mahler's work on "The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant" (1975), she and her co-workers hypothesize developmental phases of symbiosis and separation-individuation including a rapprochement subphase in the critical development of attachment experiences of children.

Three aspects of this developmental schema are particularly relevant for an individual's subsequent capacity to build an intimate relationship with another person. First, it is generally assumed that an infant's complete failure to bond to a caretaker will preclude later emotional attachments to others. Research findings (Giovacchini, 1976) indicate that infantile experiences during the symbiotic phase of psychological development are crucially influential antecedents of an individual's capacity to form intimate object relationships. They may also determine the particular qualities of these relationships. Second, during the separation-individuation phase the infant is, in the optimal case, provided with opportunities for gradual disillusionment and disillusionment with his or her external world, thus making the world fathomable and tolerable to the infant (Winnicott, 1951). Also relevant to the individual's ability to form intimate relationships is the infant's emerging "capacity to be psychologically alone" while actually in the presence of the good-enough mother (Winnicott, 1958).¹ Together, these processes also make possible the infant's differentiation of self-representations from object-representations, and make possible in the adult a dependable capacity for interpersonal intimacy (Shor and Sanville, 1978). Finally, the

child's experiences in coming to terms with his or her previously symbiotic mother during the rapprochement subphase will have major impact upon his or her later comfort in intimately relating to others. As Blacker (1977) has suggested, difficulties in intimate relationships which are grounded in problematic rapprochement experiences are characteristically indicated by preoccupations regarding autonomy and independence.

The developmental antecedents of the capacity to love and to create romantic intimacy in one's relationships seem to derive from a wide spectrum of psychological experiences which belong to "normal" development. Any and all of these experiences influence the individual's later capacity for intimate relating, and they do so in a sequential fashion, in which the effects of earlier development are relatively more influential in adult outcomes than are the later developmental vicissitudes. In order to illustrate this better, the contributions of different phases of psychological development must be considered in greater detail.

Shor and Sanville (1978) postulate that the original basis and motivation for being in love arises from the earliest phase of psychic life. During this phase, the infant has no sense of differentiation from others or even awareness of "others" as such, but does have a sense of perfect and all-providing "perfect primary love." In this experience, the unarticulated sensation, at least in cases of "good-enough" mothering, is that all portions of the infant's experiencing are perfectly fulfilled and satiated. This sensation, then, is the basis of a "core illusion" of the possibility of perfect love; moreover, it remains the motivation for adult attempts at loving

many years later, provided it was not permeated by excessive frustration and resentment (Shor and Sanville, 1978, p.55). The paramount value of this, according to Shor and Sanville, is that this illusion sustains an individual in his or her often frustrating search for "a satisfying oscillation between mutuality and autonomy," the components of adult intimacy (p.88).

Giovacchini (1976) states on the basis of his own clinical work with married clients that "intimacy and creativeness are the outcome of a comfortable symbiotic phase." He goes on to conclude that:

True intimacy is based upon the mutual capacity to project valued parts of the self upon the loved one and then to achieve pleasurable fusion. The fusion is gratifying and in a positive feedback fashion leads to higher levels of ego integration for each partner (p.435).

Thus, while Shor and Sanville attended to the earliest phase of psychic life, Giovacchini emphasizes a slightly later developmental contribution to the capacity for intimate relating.

The rapprochement subphase of separation-individuation is more centrally considered in an article by Blacker (1977). A number of therapeutic relationships with middle-aged men led him to observe that these men's severe marital problems seemed to be the remnants of "a fear of intimacy never resolved during infancy" and inadequate psychological separations from their mothers. These men evidence greatly-exaggerated concerns regarding their own omnipotence, dependency, and autonomy, as are appropriate to rapprochement-based deficits.

In his own summary article, Bergmann (1971) considers both the symbiotic and rapprochement contributions to the capacity to love. He notes the similarity of love experiences to experiences of the symbiotic phase in that they reawaken sensations of diminished boundaries between self and other. Bergmann further points out that the rapprochement subphase consolidates the capacity to be (psychically) alone in the presence of another, which is crucial for mature loving. In effect, then, the developmental antecedents of the capacity to love can be conceptualized as: (1) a sense of hopefulness arising from the "core illusion" of the earliest phase of life; (2) a capacity to project idealized aspects of the self onto the other, and to glory in these during moments of emotional fusion, arising from the symbiotic phase; and (3) the rapprochement-based capacity to feel autonomous while being in relationship with another, without being motivated to do so by excessive fears of deprivation or engulfment.

The common aspects of these developmental contributions to the capacity for intimacy (i.e., contending with the pulls of intimacy and autonomy in one's relationship with the maternal object-representations of symbiosis and rapprochement) are recapitulated during midlife. Levinson and his coworkers (1978) indicate that the male in midlife must actively deal with progressive disillusionments and with a number of life concerns which were previously polarized and must now be integrated in new ways. Among these formerly-polarized issues are a man's orientation towards masculine and feminine aspects of himself and of others, a continuum of concerns which evokes aspects of the man's childhood

experiences with his mother. Wortley and Amatea, in summarizing the work of Neugarten (1968) and Brim (1977), state that,

...a major task for the midlife person involves the negotiation of conflicting expectations for intimacy which many men and women experience as men become more oriented to relationships and feeling concerns, while women may be moving toward more externally oriented, active work and social directions. (1982, p.479)

This major task of renegotiating one's own and others' expectations of how intimacy is to be attained would likely produce psychological stress and strain in the midlife male. As Farrell and Rosenberg (1981) indicate, friends and other social supports would be expected to allay a portion of the anxiety and depression which would accompany this renegotiation. Moreover, they may provide peer resources and information helpful for dealing with this task.

"Self Psychology"

The literature of "Self Psychology" also presents a rationale for viewing the midlife male's social supports as facilitative of his intimate romantic relationships. Bach (1980) postulates that adult intimate romantic attachments crucially depend upon an individual's capacity to move flexibly between subjective and objective views of him or her self. Empathic attachments to others, whether in a therapeutic relationship or in some other socially supportive relationship, help the individual bridge the gap between these views of the self, and progressively to integrate and coordinate these perspectives.

The gradually-acquired capacity to synthesize a "subjectification" and an "objectification" of one's sense of self, and the capacity to shift from one to the other as is appropriate, can be facilitated by supportive interactions with other selves. Other persons, then, function in this regard for the self as points of reference, as mediators, and as sources of transitional experiences and perspectives (i.e., transitional between the self and the external world).

Sequences of psychological maturation which do not adequately foster such experiences deprive the individual of a sense of the potentially comfortable articulation of self and external world; often, these are evident in "dilemmas of self versus object in both the areas of loving and working," with sadomasochistically-tinged attempts at resolutions (Bach, pp. 193-194).

Kohut (1971, 1977) has focused particular theoretical and technical attention upon the myriad ways in which the qualities of human relationships encourage or inhibit the development of all psychological capacities. Certainly, the capacity for creating and sustaining intimacy in romantic relationships is an arena in which the influence of other relationships play a major role. In order to consider the problem of intimacy and its antecedents from a Kohutian perspective, it is helpful to begin by summarizing the overarching theory of psychological development, which forms the tenets of Self Psychology.

In his earlier writings (e.g., 1971), Kohut quite explicitly formulated two "lines" of psychological development: in the first (and more classical psychoanalytic) developmental paradigm, the child's

early and phase-appropriate "autoeroticism" is succeeded by a "narcissistic" phase, which is in turn gradually transformed into "object love." In the other, overlapping developmental paradigm, "autoeroticism" is followed by "narcissism" which then evolves into "higher forms and transformations of narcissism" (1971, p.220). (It is not crucial for the context being presented at this point that in Kohut's later writings he addressed himself more exclusively to the second of these paradigms.) The mechanisms which were postulated by Kohut as facilitating these developmental progressions (i.e., selfobjects and both the empathic comprehension and optimal frustration which they provide) have the cumulative effect of aiding an individual in accepting other persons as independent centers of perception and initiative. In other words, interaction of an individual with the selves of other persons enables him or her to move beyond a totally egocentric orientation, and to approach the goals of "object love" and "higher forms and transformations of narcissism." These "forms and transformations of narcissism" include personality attributes which are supportive of a capacity for intimacy, such as mature empathy, humor and creativity.

In his later work (1977) Kohut laid more emphasis upon the mature, psychologically healthy adult's ongoing need for the supports which contemporary selfobjects could offer. The clear implication of these statements is that selfobjects provide empathic comprehension for the individual's self, which then allows him or her to maintain a healthy narcissistic equilibrium and to empathize supportively with others. The model being described, then, is a synergistic one, in

which accurate empathy and secure varieties of self-esteem beget similar reactions within other persons. This is quite similar to the rationale of the current study, in that social supports are conceptualized as facilitating some of the constituents of a capacity for romantic intimacy.

Selfobjects, however, are not only friends, family members, and the meaningful involvements which people create in their work and avocational milieus; they are also objects of romantic interest, desire, and commitment. Kohut postulates, in fact, that every object of mature love functions partially as a selfobject, providing mirroring and opportunities for the self to idealize and adore the other (1977, 122n). Since these functions also occur in self-selfobject relationships which are primarily nonromantic (such as between friends), it may be inferred that a phenomenon which is generic for self-selfobject relating is a significant factor in the capacity for intimacy. Social relationships of a nonromantic but supportive nature, then, would be expected to foster an individual's ability to mirror others and to be a target for idealizations, which could in turn increase his or her comfortability in intimate relationships.

Beyond these aspects of Kohut's theory and inferences derived from it, he also addresses the specific narcissistic vulnerabilities of the individual at midlife. Kohut (1977) refers to the frequent buffeting of one's narcissistic equilibrium which occurs during middle age, often due to experiences of "empty depressions" and a sense of the meaninglessness of life. Though expectable, these experiences can greatly deplete the capacities for humor, wisdom, and creativity

(Kohut's "transformations of narcissism," capable of being used maturely and adaptively), which make possible deep and intimate relationships with others. At the same time, Kohut suggests that these developmental stresses can be alleviated by one's "self-objects," i.e. sources of empathic support, whether within the therapeutic relationship or within other socially supportive relationships.

Psychosocial Identity Theory

The writings of Erikson provide a theoretical framework which very clearly locates the developmental tasks of attaining a capacity for intimacy and a sense of one's own identity. Erikson (1963) states that an individual's capacity for intimacy ("the capacity to commit himself to concrete affiliations and partnerships and to develop the ethical strength to abide by such commitments" - p. 263) depends in large part upon an earlier consolidation of one's sense of his or her own identity. In Erikson's terminology, "identity" is a psychological experience of oneself which is predominantly based upon others' perceptions of the person's worth and constancy. Therefore, one's "identity," (which makes possible a capacity for "intimacy") is mediated by and dependent upon a person's embeddedness in a system of social supports. Erikson's paradigm demonstrates how the input and support of others increases an individual's capacity for intimacy. Encounters with intimacy prior to the consolidation of one's sense of identity are often too threatening to the individual, and thus one's intimate relationships may be overwhelmed by anxiety and doubt about one's essential identity. Erikson's schema is an epigenetic ordering of psychosocial developmental milestones, such that each stage depends

upon the outcomes of the preceding stages. The stage of "identity formation" precedes and serves as a basis for the subsequent establishment of a mature level of "intimacy formation" (Erikson, 1968).

Kacerguis and Adams (1980) empirically tested Erikson's hypothesized ordering of identity and intimacy. Their sample consisted of college students who responded to self-report questionnaires regarding their identity formation and intimate relationships. The investigators isolated an aspect of identity formation (i.e., "identity crisis resolution") which differs from that aspect of identity being examined in the current study. Within this perspective, Kacerguis and Adams' results partially supported Erickson's hypothesized epigenetic ordering of identity and intimacy. The strongest finding of the research, however, was that the consolidation of an individual's occupational identity importantly contributes to the person's attainment of a capacity for mature intimacy. It is germane to the purposes of the current study, of course, to note that one's successful consolidation of an occupational identity is necessarily derived from an embeddedness in a system of social supports and relationships, and that such a consolidation depends also upon others' viewing the person as worthy and reliable. The contribution of social supports and involvements towards the potential for intimate relating is thereby once more suggested by convergent research.

Atheoretical Research

A final perspective on the interaction between the sufficiency of one's social supports and one's establishment of intimate romantic relationships can be deduced from two descriptive and relatively

atheoretical research studies on male aging. Caligor (1979), on the basis of clinical findings from the psychotherapy processes of midlife males, states that strong involvements with friends are correlated with successful negotiation of midlife changes in many areas, including intimacy.

Based upon extensive longitudinal research of an empirical nature, Vaillant (1974) concludes that secure and long-term attachments to others outside of the family are correlated with a number of other indications of psychological health in the midlife male. A capacity for establishing intimate relationships could be reasonably expected to be one component of psychological health for midlife males.

CHAPTER III

Research Design and Methodology

Hypothesis and Relevance to Research and Theoretical Literature

The research and theoretical literature indicates the probability of empirical support for the main hypothesis of this study, which is that midlife divorced males who are most supported by their social support networks will tend to have established higher degrees of intimacy in their romantic relationships. Empirical support for this hypothesis, being assessed by statistical analysis of correlation, cannot be construed as showing that social support networks cause midlife males to establish intimate relationships. In fact, it may be that those midlife males capable of intimate relationships tend to develop more supportive social networks, or that supportive social networks enable midlife males to create more intimate relationships, or indeed both of these may be true. Empirical findings of a significant correlation between these variables cannot by themselves have a causal linkage between them, nor can findings of such a correlation demonstrate the sequence of interaction between the phenomena being studied.

At the same time, if a significant correlation is observed it is reasonable to make inferences regarding the sequence of phenomena in concordance with the relevant theoretical and research literature. The literature infers, in the case of the current study, that supportive social networks facilitate the capacity for intimate relating among midlife males.

From such a vantage point, empirical support of the hypothesis would, in keeping with the psychoanalytic developmental hypotheses of Bowlby, Mahler, Levinson et al. further corroborate the importance of supportive relationships for the midlife male's renegotiation of his own and others' expectations regarding intimacy. As was described above, this renegotiation involves the individuals' grappling with maternal object-representations which have largely derived from experiences during symbiotic and rapprochement phases of his development. Second, the support of the hypothesis would, in agreement with the "Self Psychology" hypotheses of Bach and Kohut provide confirmation of the importance of the midlife male's self-objects providing him with adequate emotional support. As reviewed above, this provision of support is particularly important considering the midlife male's encounters with varieties of narcissistic vulnerabilities which are common during middle age, and which may imperil his capacity for intimate relating. Finally, support of this study's research hypothesis would tend to corroborate the perspective of psychosocial identity theory, as postulated by Erikson. Based upon this theoretical perspective, one would anticipate that the midlife male's sense of his own "identity," as it is crucially confirmed and supported by others, undergirds his capacity for intimate relationships.

In order to investigate this hypothesis empirically, however, "social support networks" and "intimate relationships" must first be operationalized carefully and explicitly, so that these phenomena can be assessed for each research subject.

Operationalization of Terms and Materials Used in Assessment of Central Variables

As Hurd, Pattison, and Llamas, (1981) have stated, not all social networks are supportive, nor are any of them wholly supportive. In order to adequately assess an individual's network, an interactional function, in the present case "support," must be specified and investigated in terms of the sufficiency of both the network's functional and structural features.

The necessity of examining both qualitative and quantitative aspects of the networks being studied has been asserted by other researchers, such as Mitchell and Trickett (1980), and Wellman (1981). At the same time, it is very important to specify what varieties of "social support" are being researched, and to establish that the instruments which purport to assess these phenomena actually do so (Ware, 1982).² Since definitions of "social support" are extremely idiosyncratic depending upon the investigator's focus, it is essential to note that in the present study the focus is upon emotional support from a range of social sources. In this study, "social support network" is defined as the assortment of interpersonal sources which provide any or all of the following: information, advice, and feedback; a sense of social connectedness, acceptance, or belonging; and support to one's sense of self-esteem, or other forms of emotional support. These factors are assessed in the Social Support Questionnaire (see Appendix IV, Part A), which asks whether and to what degree these aspects of support occur for respondents.

A number of empirical measures of "intimate relationships" have been developed by various researchers. However, many of these have been developed for studying intimacy only in marital relationships, or in same-sex friendships. The current study requires an instrument which can measure the degree of emotional and romantic intimacy occurring in romantic relationships; further, the relationships which are to be studied are not necessarily marital or premarital relationships for the population being studied. For these specifications the Weiss Intimacy Rankings instrument seems best suited and is therefore used. (See Appendix IV, Part B.) This instrument is capable of assessing "intimate relationships" in a manner that allows the comparison of current relationships on the basis of the extent of intimate relating being manifested in the relationships (Weiss, 1978).

Data on the validity of the Weiss Intimacy Ranking (WIR) were described by Weiss as establishing both content validity and convergent validity of the instrument. Content validity, i.e., validation in reference to logical and theoretical constructs, was established by means of a search for the dimensions of intimacy as indicated by research literature, followed by a "pre-testing of the dimensions for their degree of importance and interrelation with one another" (Weiss, 1978, p.129). Content validity of the instrument was further established by means of administration of the instrument to a criterion sample of professional judges (p.129) who clarified the rank-ordering of the dimensions of intimacy. Convergent validity, i.e., validation in reference to other measures of intimacy, was established through the comparison of WIR scores to an independent measure of intimacy

in relationships; this yielded a correlation of .64 for the use of the WIR by men, with respect to their opposite-sex romantic relationships. The correlation was .72 (Weiss, 1978, p.131).

Description of Subjects

Thirty midlife divorced males, all currently involved in romantic relationships of at least two months' duration, were recruited from among the investigator's personal and professional acquaintances. It was necessary for these men to be involved in romantic relationships of at least minimal duration so that the Weiss Intimacy Rankings could be responded to by the subject with a particular current romantic relationship in mind.

As was described above (Chapter I), the research sample was intentionally delimited to include only divorced, midlife males from upper socioeconomic classes, which are Classes I and II in Hollingshead's "Index of Social Position" (Hollingshead and Redlich, 1958). These delimitations were made in order to minimize the intervening influences of gender, prior adult experiences in intimate relationships, and social class upon the central variables under investigation.

Additionally, men whose current romantic relationships were homosexual were excluded from the research sample. The Weiss Intimacy Rankings were standardized upon samples of men whose romantic relationships were of a heterosexual nature. Therefore, it was deemed appropriate to use the Weiss Intimacy Rankings with men whose sexual orientations were similar to those comprising the standardization sample.

Data Collection

Each appropriate subject who indicated a desire to participate in the study was personally interviewed by the investigator. First the subject was apprised of the approximate nature of the research, and of the relevant risks and benefits. Each subject then signed an Informed Consent Form. (Please refer to Appendix III.)

Next, each subject answered a series of questions regarding background demographic information, size and structure of his family, etc. (Please refer to questions 1 through 19, Part A of Appendix IV.)

The subject was then verbally asked questions about himself and his social support network (the Social Support Questionnaire Appendix IV, Part A). Since the intent of this portion of the interview was to determine the subject's sense of the supportedness he experienced in his own social network, each subject was instructed, prior to question 20:

For this question and for others asking you about support, please consider these ways of considering what support is: self-esteem support, emotional support, information, a sense of being accepted, advice, a sense of belonging, feedback, a sense of social connectedness.

Following this portion of the interview, each subject was handed a stack of cards, upon each of which was printed one of the sixteen (16) dimensions of the Weiss Intimacy Rankings. (Appendix IV, Part B.) Each subject was then verbally instructed:

Here are 16 cards which represent different attributes or qualities which some people consider important in interpersonal relationships. Would you please order these cards in terms of their importance in your relationship with the woman with whom you are currently most involved? Please put the most important on the top.

The investigator then recorded the order of the cards as they were arranged by the subject.

These steps comprised the formal interview. However, subjects often talked about thoughts and concerns which were evoked by the interview; the investigator made notes of these extemporaneous comments and associations, and also recorded other clinical impressions regarding the subjects.

Scoring of Assessment Materials

Part A of Appendix IV was employed to measure each subject's own sense of the relative supportedness he received from his social network. In other words, the subjects were directly asked about the sources and sufficiency of the emotional supports they experienced in social relationships. Accordingly, questions from Part A which proved to differentiate between different degrees of subjects' sense of supportedness were retained and became the basis of a cumulative sum, referred to as the "Social Support Total." These questions were questions 24 through 47, 49 and 50, and question 54. Of these, questions 39, 46, and 47 were scored on the basis of their indication of the cumulative social support available to the subject from a number of intrafamilial and extrafamilial sources.

On question 24 men were asked if they had any close male relationships. Those who answered that they had none were given a score of zero. Those who said they had one to two close male relationships were given a score of 1, and a score of 2 was given to men having 3 or 4 close relationships.

On question 25, men were asked if they currently felt supported by their close male relationships. Those who said they felt supported by their close male relationships were given a score of 1 and a score of zero was given to men feeling no support in their close male relationships.

On question 28, men were asked if they had any close female relationships. Those who said yes were given a score of 1 and those who had no close female relationships were given a score of zero.

Question 29 asked men if they felt supported by their close female relationships. Those who felt supported by their female relationships were given a score of 1 and those who felt no support were given a score of zero.

On question 32, men were asked if they currently had a confidant -- male or female -- who was clearly the closest person to them. Those men who answered that they had no confidants were given a score of zero. Those who said they had one to two confidants were given a score of 1, and a score of 2 was given to men having three or four confidants.

On question 33, men were asked how important was it to have a confidant. Those who answered "very important" were given a score of 3, and a score of 2 was given to men who answered "somewhat."

Men who answered "little" were given a score of 1 and those answering "not at all" were scored with a zero.

On question 34, men were asked how often they talked with their confidants by telephone. Those men who said they talked with their confidants one to two times a week were given a score of 1, and those who spoke to their confidants two to three times a week were given a score of 2. Men who spoke to their confidants five to ten times a week were given a score of 3, and men who spoke over ten times a week were given a score of 4.

On question 35, men were asked how often they talked with their confidants in person. Those who talked in person 1 to 2 times a week were given a score of 1, 3 to 5 times a week were scored 3. Those men who talked in person ten times a week were given a score of 4.

On question 36, men were asked how supported by their confidants they felt. Those who answered they felt "very much" supported by their confidants were given a score of 3, those who answered "somewhat" supported were given a score of 2. Men who reported minimal support were given a score of 1 and no support was scored with a zero.

On question 37, men were asked how supportive were their current family relationships. Those men who answered that their current family relationships were very supportive were given a 3, and those who reported their family relationships as somewhat supportive were given a score of 2. Men who reported minimal support from family relationships were given a score of 1 and a score of zero was given for no support from current family relationships.

On question 42, men were asked what activities or hobbies they did outside of work. Men who answered sports, tennis, theater, symphonies, travel, skiing, or other prosocial pursuits, were given a score of 2, and those men who said they read or fished or other solitary activities, were given a score of 1. Those men who said they had no hobbies or activities were given a score of zero.

On question 43, men were asked: "If you had a problem at work, with whom would you discuss it?" Those men who said they would discuss a problem at work with someone were given a score of 1. Those who would not discuss it with anyone were given a zero.

On question 46, men were asked with whom did they normally celebrate Thanksgiving dinner. Those men who said they celebrated it with family members were given a score of 1, and those celebrating it with a girl friend were also scored 1. Those men who said they celebrated with friends were scored with a 1. These scores were added. Those men not celebrating the holiday with anyone were given a zero score.

On question 47, men were asked with whom they normally celebrated High Holy days or Christmas. Those men who said they celebrated with family, a girl friend, and friends were given a score of 3, and those men who celebrated the holidays with friends and a girl friend were given a score of 2. Those men who celebrated with friends were given a score of one, and if they celebrated it with no one they were given a score of zero.

On question 49, men were asked if they belonged to a men's group. Those men who said yes were given a score of one, and those men who said no were given a score of zero.

On question 50, men were asked if there were others in their current life who are important sources of support for them in addition to the people already asked about. Those men who said yes they had other important sources of support were given a score of 1, and those men who said no were give a score of zero.

On question 54, men were asked if in their opinion counseling or therapy had been helpful. Those men who said yes, counseling or therapy had been helpful, were given a score of 1 and those men who said counseling or therapy had not been helpful were given a score of zero.

Part B of Appendix IV, the Weiss Intimacy Rankings (WIR), was employed to measure each subject's relative degree of intimacy in his relationship with the woman towards whom he felt most involved at the time of assessment. The WIR are scored, in keeping with Weiss' instructions, in the following manner. First, six of the intimacy dimensions are isolated as crucial intimacy indices of the male subject's opposite-sex romantic relationships. These dimensions are:

- "We feel a strong emotional attraction to each other."
- "Is someone I can confide in."
- "Is comfortable and easy to be with."
- "Provides sexual satisfaction."
- "Likes me."
- "Is supportive and accepting."

According to the rank ordering of each of these dimensions by the subject, a "level of intimacy" score, or "Degree of Intimacy" score, "was determined by the summation of inverted ranks of each appropriate dimension" (Weiss, 1978, p.126). This score provided the basis of correlation with the other central variable, as it was cumulatively summed into the "Social Support Total," described on page 26.

CHAPTER IV

Results

Description of Sample

The demographic characteristics of the sample of men interviewed for the study are described below. The significant trends and patterns in this data are elaborated in the following chapter.

The average age of the 30 male subjects who participated in the study was 53.0; the range of ages was between 45 and 60.

Eleven of the men, or 36.6% of the sample, lived in houses which they owned; five of them, or 16.6%, lived in condominiums they owned; two men, or 6.6%, lived in houses they rented; two more, or 6.6%, lived in condominiums they rented; nine men, or 30%, lived in apartments they rented; and one man, or 3.3% of the sample, lived in a guest house he rented.

Occupationally, six men were attorneys and five more were self-employed businessmen, three were professors, two were psychologists, two dealt in real estate and investments, and two more were writers who also worked as film producers. The other ten men's occupations were the following: advertising executive, insurance broker and owner of company, physician, actors' agent, executive president of a retail chain, president of a manufacturing corporation; administrative law judge; distributor of home furnishings; real estate developer, and corporate comptroller. None of the thirty men were unemployed.

The average years of education of these men was 18.03. One man had an M.D., six had Ph.D.'s, eight had L.L.B.'s, two had M.A.'s

and ten had bachelors' degrees. One had completed only high school, and two had not completed high school. One of these, Case Number 08, had so few years of education that, even with a very high occupational level, he did not fall within Hollingshead's Classes I or II. However, a determination was made that this subject should be retained in the sample because had it not been for his early life being disrupted by the Holocaust he would certainly have received more formal schooling. Of the other twenty-nine subjects, sixteen, or 55%, were in Class I, while thirteen, or 45%, were in Class II (Hollingshead and Redlich, 1958).

Of the thirty men, twenty-five were Jewish, thirteen active and twelve non-active; three were Catholic, one active and two non-active; one was Protestant, non-active; and one man referred to himself as an atheist.

The subjects had lived in Southern California an average of 27.5 years, with a range of 6 to 52 years. When they were asked whether they preferred women or men as their friends, fourteen (or 46.6% of the sample) preferred women, twelve (or 40%) preferred men, and four subjects (or 13.3%) responded that they preferred "both men and women."

Twenty-five of the men were legally divorced, and had been for an average 6.17 years; five men were legally separated, and had been for an average 4.9 years. Twenty-five men (or 83.3%) had had only one marriage, while five men (or 16.6%) had been married twice. The average number of marriages per subject was therefore 1.16.

The average duration of the subjects' most recent marriages was 15.03 years. Two men had been married for 28 years, four had been for 25 years, one had been for 24 years, two had been for 20 years, one had been for 19 years, two had been for 18 years, three had been for 17 years, one had been for 16 years, four had been for 15 years, one had been for 12 years, and two had been married for 10 years. Seven more men in their most recent marriages were married for less than 10 years: one for 7 years, one for 6 years, four for 5 years, and one for 3 years.

Twenty-one of the men (70% of the sample) had had no live-in relationships with women since their last marriage; six men (or 20%) had each had one live-in relationship, and three men (or 10%) had had two live-in relationships. The average duration of these men's most recent live-in relationships with women was 1.45 years.

Sixteen of the men (53% of the sample) had two children, five of the men (16.6%) had three children, three of the men (10%) had four children, three of the men (10%) had one child, and three of the men (10%) had no children. The average number of children, among those men who did have children, was 2.3. The average age of the men's children was 19.38 years. Twenty of the men (66.6% of the entire sample) had none of their children living with them when they were interviewed, and three of these men did not have children at all, while ten of the men (or 33.3% of the sample) had children living with them when they were interviewed.

All thirty of the men were engaged in at least some dating when they were interviewed. By definition of this sample, all thirty

men had been dating at least one particular woman for at least two months. Seventeen of the men, or 56.6% of the sample, were dating more than one woman when at the time of their interviews. Thirteen of the men, or 43.3% of the sample, were dating only one woman at the time of their interviews.

Results Obtained Regarding Subjects' Social Supports

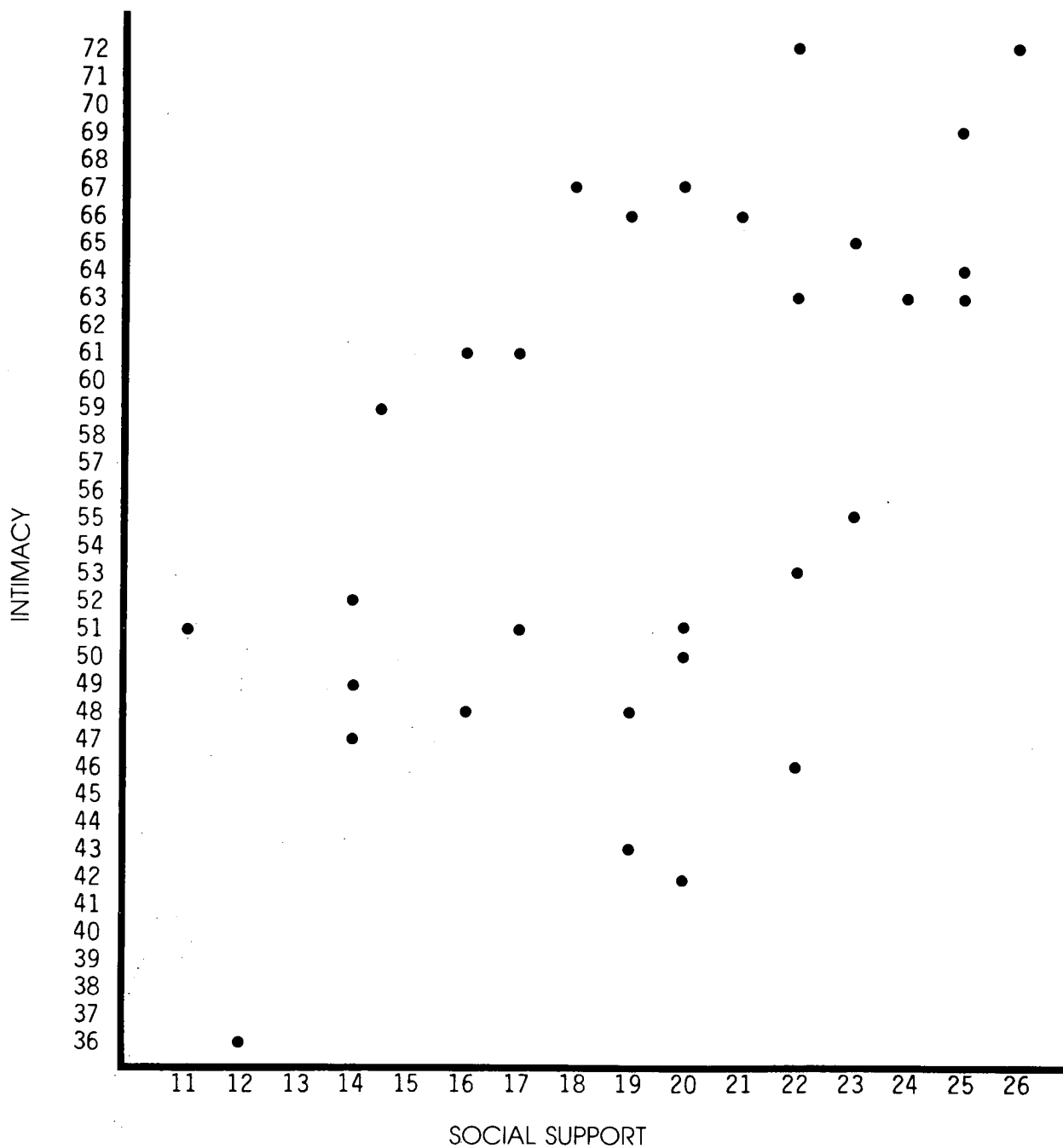
The range of values for subjects' Social Support Totals for this sample was between 11 and 26. The average Social Support Total was 19.35 for this sample. Please refer to Graph 1 for a breakdown of the number of subjects receiving different Social Support Total values.

Results Obtained Regarding Subjects' Intimate Relationships

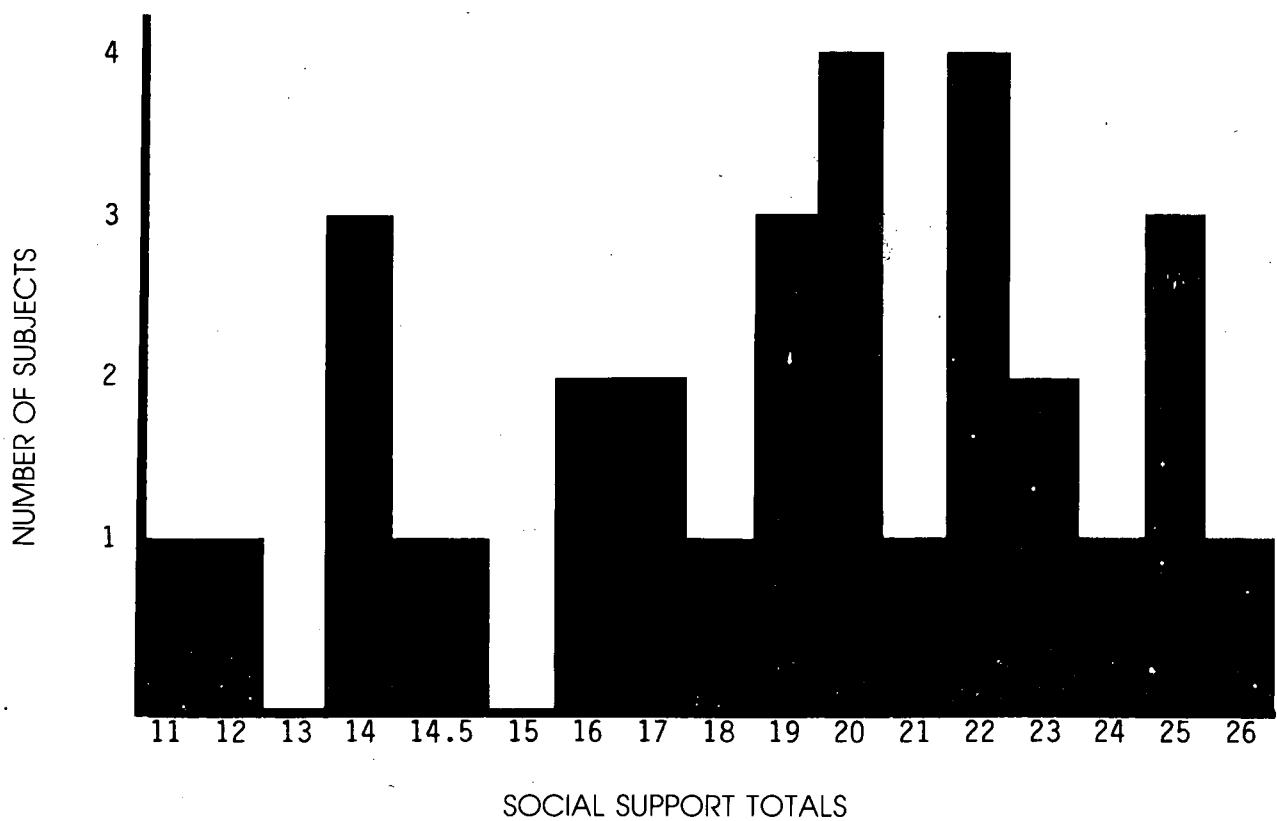
The potential range for scores on the Degree of Intimacy is between 21 and 81. In the study's sample of men, the observed range was between 36 and 72. The average Degree of Intimacy obtained for this sample of men was 59.0. Please refer to Graph 2 for a breakdown of the number of subjects receiving different "Degree of Intimacy" score values.

Statistical Results

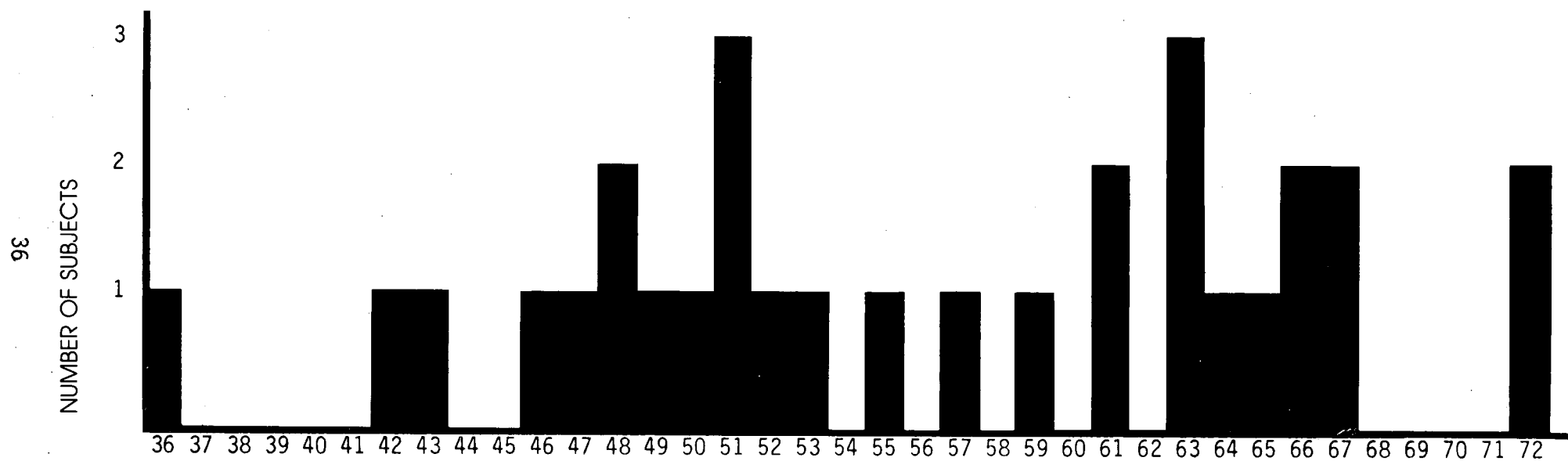
For this sample of subjects, the coefficient of correlation (r) between Social Support Totals and "Degree of Intimacy" score was .51. The correlation, therefore, is not statistically significant. Please refer to Graph 1 for a scattergram depiction of the correlation between social support and intimacy as it was observed in this sample.



GRAPH 1. SCATTERGRAM OF SOCIAL SUPPORT AND INTIMACY



GRAPH 2. NUMBER OF SUBJECTS AT
EACH SOCIAL SUPPORT SCORE VALUE



“DEGREE OF INTIMACY” SCORE VALUES

GRAPH 3. NUMBER OF SUBJECTS AT EACH
“DEGREE OF INTIMACY” SCORE VALUE

CHAPTER V

Discussion

Interpretation of Results

The men who participated in this study appear to have been a fairly conservative and traditional, family-oriented group of men in a number of ways. The average duration of their most recent marriages (15.03 years) was surprisingly long. Despite the fact that the average subject had been divorced or legally separated for 5.95 years, more than two-thirds of the sample (70%) had not had any live-in relationships with women since the end of their marriages. A full 90% of the sample had children of their own, and the average number of children for those men who did have children was 2.3. Finally, despite the fact that the subjects' average age was 53 years, one-third of them had some of their children living with them at the time they were interviewed for the study.

The hypothesis of the study, which contended that a high correlation existed between these subjects' emotional supportedness by their social networks and the degree of intimacy manifested in their romantic relationships, was not corroborated for this sample of subjects. The coefficient of correlation (4) was .51. Although this correlation is not statistically significant, it indicates that the social support network may be a factor involved in the mid-life male's creation of intimate relationships, though not as influential a factor as much of the literature on social supports and intimacy implies.

These findings, then, most directly call into question certain of the assertions made by Bach (1980), Kohut (1977), Erikson (1963), and Caligor (1979). Bach maintained that the individual who enjoys empathically-attuned relationships with others is thereby helped to integrate his or her views of the self, as a precondition of intimate relating. The findings of the present study, however, indicate a less absolute linkage between these two interactional experiences, since some men who have highly supportive social networks fail to create intimate romantic relationships.

Kohut's assertion that contemporary self-objects and the support they provide are important protectors of the individual's capacity for intimate relating seems open to question on the basis of this study's findings. Kohut estimated that contemporary self-object supports, by buffering the individual's narcissistic equilibrium from developmental stresses of middle age, would contribute to the person's ability to build and maintain intimate relationships. Of course, Kohut also pays considerable attention to the influence of the individual's childhood experiences with crucial self-objects: the findings of this study relatively corroborate this aspect of Kohutian theory, while suggesting that the impact of contemporary self-objects, such as social support networks, play a limited role in the person's capacities for intimacy.

Erikson was the theorist who most clearly linked the factors of social support, as antecedents to the developmental acquisition of "identity," and the attainment of intimate relationships in one's life. In a logical progression which anticipated Bach's ideas by

many years, Erikson felt that the individual's embeddedness in a system of social supports provided him or her with a sense of identity, which in turn made possible his or her intimate relating. The findings of this study, though, indicate that other determinants, such as intervening influences arising from earlier developmental phases, may have overriding influences upon one's capacity for intimacy. Alternatively, and in keeping with the Eriksonian purview, it may be that the findings of this study demonstrate the effects of other sociocultural interactions and influences in the lives of the subjects.

Caligor concluded from his own clinical experience that strong involvements with friends are correlated with the successful renegotiation of a number of mid-life (and age-appropriate) changes, including the renegotiation of intimate relationships. The present study's findings, though, argue that in some cases strong involvements with friends and other social supports may not be enough to insure that a mid-life male will successfully traverse the necessary adjustments involved in his intimate relationships.

Therapeutic Implications

Since the empirical evidence brought to bear upon the research hypothesis is not statistically significant in supporting that hypothesis, the most probable alternative explanations need to be evaluated. On the basis of the literature surveyed for this study, it seems most likely that an important factor determining an individual's capacity for intimacy is the cumulative effect of early life experiences and subsequent opportunities for the therapeutic amelioration of long-term interpersonal difficulties. The current study intentionally

excluded any formal assessment of this factor's influence, which may well have accounted for the finding of statistically insignificant results. The theoretical rationale of the study, while not denying the existence and influence of this factor, presumes that, across a range of subjects' psychological backgrounds and current statuses, social support would emerge as a common denominator found to be highly correlated with intimacy. The results, though strongly suggesting that social supports do play a role, clearly indicate also that other determinants need to be accounted for and assessed. It is obviously important for clinical purposes to understand these interactions, and the ways they shape clients' needs and responses to specific interventions, as thoroughly as possible.

Giovacchini (1976), and Blacker (1977) have directed attention towards the effects of childhood experiences within the symbiotic and separation-individuation phases, respectively, upon the person's adult capacity for intimacy. Both authors refer to clients' anxious preoccupations with autonomy and dependence in relationships as indicators of problems arising during those developmental phases. At the same time, both authors presume that the roots of healthy capacities for intimacy depend as well upon the experiences of those same periods. Giovacchini, Blacker, and Bach (1980) all contend that intensive therapeutic work is a viable approach to clients' problems such as these. One focus of this variety of clinical intervention is that of the therapists' necessary appreciation of the client's shifting experiences between psychic autonomy and dependence upon others. Blacker and Caligor (1979) both emphasize that the therapist

who works with clients such as these should be sensitive to the specific client's wish for support and ability to integrate the therapist's caring, since the client will feel smothered if he or she feels unable to assimilate the support the therapist has made available.

The investigator of the present study observed that a majority of the subjects responded to being interviewed with considerable enthusiasm and appreciated the opportunity to talk and to be heard. In fact, most subjects became discernibly open and relaxed within as early as twenty minutes of the interview session, including those few subjects who began the interviews in clearly hostile and distant moods.

One man was particularly articulate and expansive. He talked at length about the midlife struggles and dilemmas he had faced since his divorce. During the interview session, he spoke simply and eloquently of the need for societal sanctions, for "rites of passage" for the midlife individual. "We all go through these stages," he said, "and we all need more help; it's too bad the help isn't more universally available, and that it's necessary to seek out a therapeutic relationship."

A number of the subjects seemed to react in this way because the investigator, who was seen as a caring authority on midlife mental health, gave them full permission to talk. These men showed in a number of ways that they craved the attention to their struggles and the attendant feelings of being accepted and understood, which the interview afforded them. The implication of these encounters is that this population of men often feels needy of contact and understanding, both from friends and from professionally trained clinicians.

The subjects' responses to the Social Support Questionnaire proved to demonstrate a wide variety of attitudes to the issue of social supports. A large number of the men talked of their increased need for support; one man had quite intentionally created for himself a long-running support group of divorced men. Six of the men in this sample were members of the group, and they all found it to be highly important for their own well-being. Several men were very aware that they had begun to reach out for support from friends and family, often for the first time in their adult lives, immediately after having become divorced. Another discernible pattern was that subjects whose own families were extremely unsupportive were those who were most likely to work at creating and maintaining "artificial families" upon which they could rely.

A subgroup of extremely high achievers illustrated a very different orientation towards the issue of support. One of these men said, "I'm my own source of support -- nobody else can do it for me." Another of these men voiced the feelings which several other men only intimated: "I don't get support, I give it to everybody around me." Several men stated that their work commitments were the most supportive and dependable parts of their lives; in fact, it is this investigator's belief that, so great was their reliance upon this aspect of their lives, that a few of the men in this subgroup would have suicided in the aftermath of their divorces had it not been for their work responsibilities.

Slightly more than half of the men stated that their own psychotherapy experience had been critical sources of support both in the

past and in the present. The level of regard which this sample of men showed for therapy was generally high, and many indicated that friends of theirs had profited from therapy as well.

The remaining source of support which many of the men stated as being of paramount importance was their children. This investigator was impressed with the depth of feeling and commitment the subjects showed in regard to their children. In part, this was due to the support the children gave to their fathers. One man said that his daughter was literally "a life-support system to me after my divorce. She saved my life. My daughter presented me with an opportunity to work on an obligation to take care of her. It's not your freedom but your obligations that give your life direction and meaning; that lets you keep going." Just as critical, though less evident, was the fact that the men's children gave to many of them a sense of life's ongoing meaningfulness, and a buffer from loneliness and depression.

In fact, it seems evident that this study insufficiently considered the importance of children as sources of social support. The particular and specific effects of involvement with children in these men's lives needs to be understood better. It is evident that for a number of the subjects their children served as critical supports. It may well also be that this subgroup of the sample simply liked children to a greater than usual extent, and that for these men, relationships with their children offer them an arena for becoming more nurturant and caring. If this is the case, it would explain the investigator's observation that many of those men who were most involved with their

children also were most involved in their romantic relationships. Another way of perceiving this phenomenon is to speculate that for these men, dedicating themselves to their children's needs evokes in them an intrapsychic encounter with their own childhood experiences of being nurtured. If this were the case, it could be stated that involvements with their children enable the men once again to grapple with, and perhaps to resolve in a better manner, their relationships with their own mothers of symbiosis and rapprochement. This maturational advance would then in turn allow the men to be more comfortable and effective in their intimate relationships with women.

As was stated above, the investigator noted that a number of those subjects who seemed most capable of intimate romantic relationships were men who shared their residences with their own children. A more careful and empirically based examination of this clinical impression corroborated it for a portion of the sample. Of the four subjects with the highest "Degree of Intimacy" scores, three of these lived with their children; none of the four men with the lowest "Degree of Intimacy" scores lived with their children. Winnicott (1975) has written that the ability to play is related to the experiencing of life through one's "true self," rather than a "false self" which is primarily reactive and built up against impingements. Moreover, Winnicott felt that the interpersonal encounters we describe as "intimate relating" can only occur on the basis of a creative and "true" (or genuine) experiencing of one's own self. It may very well be that those fathers who live with their own children also stay more closely attuned to the human capacities for creative play, and that

their own predispositions for intimate relating are consequently enhanced.

Another clinical impression of the investigators concerned the orientations of different subjects towards their work responsibilities. The impression that workaholic tendencies were frequent among those subjects with clear difficulties in intimacy was suggested by the data: all four of the men with the lowest "Degree of Intimacy" scores fit the customary parameters of the workaholic syndrome. In contrast, the four men with the highest intimacy scores led lives which were considerably well-rounded, with a wide variety of interests and involvements.

The men interviewed for this study also had a number of interesting responses to the Weiss Intimacy Rankings portion of the interviews. In many instances, subjects had sudden insights into themselves and their relationships while they were rank-ordering the WIR cards (upon which 16 different dimensions of relationships are captioned). The great majority of subjects expressed their clear sense, when presented with the WIR task, that they were not in fact currently engaged in intimate relationships with women. One man worried over his rank-ordering of the cards for 25 minutes, then asked, "What am I in this relationship for, anyway?" Another man responded to the task more readily, and was dismayed by the results: "This relationship isn't any good for either of us. I'm getting out." Another man, examining the 16 cards in terms of his idea of a perfect relationship, wondered whether he might be a workaholic, and whether this may have contributed to his own divorce. The opposite end of this spectrum was represented

by a man who, intrigued by the WIR dimensions, said that he and his lover had talked about every one of these aspects in terms of their relationship. This subject was extremely interested in the purposes and contents of the study; he had heard about it from a friend, and he consequently contacted the investigator to ask to be included in the sample.

A number of more general reactions were also voiced in response to the WIR. Several men whose "Degree of Intimacy" scores were high stated that the rank-ordering of the cards was difficult for them because there was too much overlap between the dimensions described on the cards. Many of the subjects remarked that their relationships with women had become more reciprocal and egalitarian since their own divorces. Most of the men also indicated that the aspect of sexual attraction and satisfaction in their romantic relationships had become much less overriding for them relative to their romantic involvements earlier in life, while other aspects of their relationships had become relatively more important for them.

This investigator has also had the opportunity to use the WIR with an ongoing psychotherapy client. This man's consideration of the WIR card enabled him to become much more conscious of his own assumptions and prerequisites for romantic relationships and then to communicate these to the therapist in a way which made the feelings available for therapeutic exploration. The WIR can apparently be used with good result for clients who are somewhat resistant or who are not particularly introspective or articulate; with therapy clients

such as these, the instrument's effect of making aspects of their feelings conscious can have a major impact.

Finally, it should be stated that a few of the men interviewed for the study voiced some of their own conclusions regarding the developmental issues with which they were contending in many spheres of their lives. Several subjects stated that they had become much less preoccupied with acquiring money and power after becoming 50 years old, and that they were aware that they had become more concerned about their involvements with other people in their lives. A few men concluded that following their divorces they had decided their children's needs must come first, and that they could return to highly intimate relationships with women only after the obligations they felt towards their children's needs had been fulfilled. These possibilities are suggestive of the need for future studies on the developmental shifts and adjustments in the midlife male's patterns and attitudes towards a variety of relationships and commitments.

The clinical impressions and the empirical data outlined in this study both emphasize that therapeutic interventions based solely upon the inclusion of men such as these in "peer support groups" or "networks of support" are inadequate. Currently the use of social support networks and of other very short-term therapies, and research into their efficacy, are quite popular within the social sciences. In fact, the attention which is presently being expended upon these modalities, for a number of economic and sociopolitical reasons, practically warrants their being described as fads. On the other hand, the findings of this study suggest a more cautious attitude,

one in which a wider consideration of human needs and talents and a more balanced array of treatment modalities in response to these needs may be entertained. In short, for a certain number of men such as those interviewed in this study, more intensive treatment modalities than the simple offering of peer support are indicated.

Directions for Future Research

Future research upon the central variables of this study should first reconsider the assessment methodologies which were employed. The present findings, of a correlation which was not statistically significant though it approached significance, imply that the measures employed were reasonably valid. However, a large-scale research project which interviewed 300 or more men might be able to use inter-item analyses and other methodological refinements in order to standardize a more accurate and sensitive social support questionnaire. One issue which would need to be considered for the development of such a scale is the problem of the subjects' socially desirable response sets, or conversely, the tendency (which this investigator noted) of some subjects' reluctance to disclose the fact that they were emotionally supported, or the sources of their support. Another factor which should be considered in designing future studies is that of the duration of the romantic relationship, which may well influence the level of intimacy which is achieved. In the current study, this factor was not explored or controlled, and may have therefore skewed the results.

Similarly, future research could reconsider the Weiss Intimacy Rankings Instrument. One problematic aspect of this instrument is

its reliance upon the measurement of subjects' current and actual relationships. It may be that many clinicians and researchers could better comprehend subjects by use of an "actual relationship rank ordering" and an "ideal relationship rank ordering" of the cards. This might better appraise the real potential of a given subject for future, if not current, intimate relating.

In the current study, intentional delimitations were made in order to isolate better the central variables of interest. Adjacent future researches, however, might profitably examine the interplay of the same variables for both men and women, or for a broader age range, or for a broader socioeconomic range. This study only examined one articular subsection of the much larger potential population of subjects for investigation of the variables.

As was stated above, the findings of the current study point towards the probability that at least two adjacent directions of inquiry should be considered. The first of these has to do with whether or not mid-life males who live with their children are more capable of intimate relationships, than men who do not. The other direction of future investigation which is suggested concerns the effects of mid-life males' orientations to work upon their intimate relationships.

Epilogue

At the beginning of this study, one version of the myth of Narcissus was recorded. Considering the findings of the study, it seems pertinent once again to focus upon the mythical roots of the phenomenon of intimacy.

Narcissus rightfully fears that he will be overpowered by the instinctual force of love and snared by it, and he attempts to flee it, only to meet his appointment in Samara on the riverbank in the form of his own reflection. The story ends sadly for Narcissus. Just at moments when relationships have the potential of becoming intimate we become terrified of their potential for harming us. We fear that we will be overpowered by the destructive, jealous, possessive power of Eros. It is then that we wish to flee and perhaps should, because we do need to engage in profound self-observation, self-reflection, and introspection. That is, we need to look at ourselves. Narcissus' tragedy is that he gets stuck. He's unable to experience an encounter with the deeper layers of the psyche. (Discussion of Kirman, 1980, p. 148).

It seems reasonable at this point to speculate upon the orientations towards intimacy found among the men who participated in this study. The investigator's clinical impressions provide the basis for observing that a certain portion of the men seem to be, like Narcissus, "stuck" in characterological resistances to and defensiveness against encounters with intimacy. These men are apparently unable to resolve problematic aspects of the legacies of their symbiotic and rapprochement encounters with intimacy in the form of their mothers. Of these men, some anticipate intimate relationships with women as having "the potential for harming" them, either because the women threaten their resistances or because they take the men away from their involvements with work or their children.

...the capacity to be intimate with oneself... to develop a relationship between the ego and the non-ego portions of the psyche, furthers the establishment of the intimate relationships in life. In our culture and historically it is the female who embodies the capacity for relatedness, warmth, and loving. For men she is the anima, the woman within, who can provide a man with the warmth, acceptance, openness, and sensitivity which are so necessary for intimate relationships. The anima complex, as it is partly composed of experiences a man has had of women throughout his life, is strongly influenced by the experience with the personal mother. Where there has been a mother like Hera, powerful, domineering, quixotic, and possessive, a man will have an understandable tendency to flee -- as does Narcissus from the instinctual call for relatedness from men and women both. Intimacy, though desired, is terrifying and may feel, as it apparently does to Narcissus, like death. Love of the self satisfies the instinctual urge for relatedness and feels far safer and serves as a refuge from the conflict.

(Discussion of Kirman, 1980,)

Another subgroup of the men seem to be phase-appropriately opting out of intimate relationships for a period of time; they are engaging in a number of forms of "profound self-observation, self-reflection, and introspection." Of these men, a few of them have taken major parenting roles with their own children, and also are either currently in intimate romantic relationships or seem to be in a period of preparation for them. It may be best to consider these men as "pre-intimates," as men who are inclined towards and on the road to actual intimacy rather than towards Narcissus' fate. The deeply engaged commitments with their children which these men demonstrate may very well be the best form of working-through available to them. As such, their "intimate" commitments to their children may provide for these men an avenue of renegotiation and reconciliation with the first and fateful harbingers of intimate relating in these lives, their mothers.

Footnotes

¹ Winnicott's term, "good-enough mother," refers to a mothering caretaker who responds adequately enough to the infant's somatopsychological needs so that the infant can develop his or her own potentials and self experiences.

² Ware, John E. Personal communication, November 1982. Available through the Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, California.

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APPENDIX I

APPLICATION FOR THE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH PROJECT
INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Title of Research Project The Effects of Social Support Networks
Upon Divorced Males' Midlife Intimate Relationships

Principal Investigator Herbert Rosenfeld, Ph.D.
Investigator Lael Horwitz, M.S.W.

I have read the Policy and Procedures on the Participation of Human Subjects in Research Projects of this Institute and I will comply with their letter and spirit in the execution of the enclosed research proposal. In accordance with this policy and my best professional judgment, the human subjects participating in this study

(check one)

☐ are not "at risk"

☐ may be considered to be "at risk" and all proper and prudent precautions will be taken in accordance with the Institute protocols to protect their civil and human rights.

I further agree to report any changes in the procedure and to obtain written approval before making such procedural changes.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Herbert Rosenfeld, Ph.D.</u>
<u>Date</u>	<u>Lael Horwitz, M.S.W.</u>
<u>Date</u>	<u>Verneice Thompson, Ph.D.</u>

Appendix II.
Letters to Potential Subjects

January 7, 1983

Dear _____:

_____ has suggested I contact you as a possible candidate to interview for a special research project that I am conducting through the Institute for Clinical Social Work.

We are aware of the lack of research on a growing group in this community, the male in midlife who is trying to reorient himself following a divorce. If you would be willing to give forty-five minutes of your time, you will be adding a piece of much needed knowledge to this subject.

I would be glad to arrange an interview at your office, your home, or for privacy, at my West Los Angeles office. Please send in the enclosed card, or call 477-6957.

Sincerely yours,

Lael Horwitz, M.S.W.
Doctoral Candidate

Appendix III

Informed Consent Form

Institute for Clinical Social Work
921 11th Street, Suite 700, Sacramento, CA 95814

TITLE OF PROJECT: Male Midlife Relationships

INVESTIGATOR: Lael Horwitz, M.S.W.

This is to certify that I, _____,
hereby agree to participate as a subject in a program of investigation
under the supervision of The Institute for Clinical Social Work.

This study has been explained to me by Lael Horwitz, M.S.W., and
I understand that my participation involves the following special
procedures:

- Participating in an interview or filling out a personal data
sheet about myself and my social relationships. This will require
about 30 minutes of my time. If for any reason I choose not
to finish the interview or to end my participation, I will of
course be allowed to do so.

I understand that there is no immediate benefit to me from this procedure,
which is designed to provide a way of learning about divorced men's
social relationships.

I also understand that the potential psychological risks involved
in my participating in this study are extremely minimal, and are
approximately the same as would be involved in my discussing my social
relationships in an everyday conversation with a friend.

I also understand that my name will not be used in this study, that
my answers are confidential, and that the information provided by
me will become part of a large pool of statistical data in which
no one person can be identified.

Subject's Signature

Date

I, the undersigned, have explained this study to the above subject
and in my judgment he understands the nature of his participation.

Investigator's Signature

Date

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Part A SOCIAL SUPPORT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Name _____ Code # _____
Home Address _____ Phone _____
Business Address _____ Phone _____

2. Age _____ Code # _____

3. Residence:
- a. Own _____ b. Rent _____
- Other _____ (specify:)

4. a. _____ House b. _____ Condominium c. _____ Apartment

5. Occupation _____

6. Years of education completed _____

7. Highest degree received _____

8. Religion _____

9. Active? a. Yes b. No

10. How long have you lived here in Southern California? _____

11. Do you look more towards men or women as friends? _____

12. Current Marital Status:

- a. ___ Single (never been married)
- b. ___ Widowed c. How Long? _____
- d. ___ Divorced e. How Long? _____
- f. ___ Separated g. How Long? _____

13. Previous Marriages: a. Number b. Duration

14. Previous "live-in" relationships: a.Number _____ b.Duration _____
c. _____
d. _____

15. Children

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Ages</u>					
a. Male	b. _____	c. _____	d. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
e. Female	f. _____	g. _____	h. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____

16. Do any of your children live with you? a. _____ yes
b. _____ no

17. If yes, which ones? (a) _____
(b) _____
(c) _____

18. At this time, are you dating or involved with a particular woman or with more than one woman?

a. _____ yes (_____ one woman)
b. _____ no (_____ more than one woman)

19. Have you been seeing the particular woman, or any of the women mentioned above, for more than two months?

a. _____ yes
b. _____ no

FOR THIS QUESTION AND FOR OTHERS ASKING YOU ABOUT SUPPORT, PLEASE CONSIDER THESE WAYS OF CONSIDERING WHAT SUPPORT IS: SELF-ESTEEM SUPPORT, EMOTIONAL SUPPORT, INFORMATION, A SENSE OF BEING ACCEPTED, ADVICE, A SENSE OF BELONGING, FEEDBACK, A SENSE OF SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS.

20. Do you currently feel supported by your work relationships ?
- a. _____ yes
 - b. _____ no
21. Have these relationships existed in this way since before your separation?
- a. _____ yes
 - b. _____ no
22. Have these relationships existed in this way for you since before your separation, or have they become like this only since your divorce?
- a. _____ since before separation
 - b. _____ only since after separation
23. Have these relationships existed in this way for you since before your divorce, or have they become like this only since your divorce?
- a. _____ since before your divorce
 - b. _____ only since after divorce
24. Do you have any close male relationships?
- a. _____ yes
 - b. _____ no
25. Do you currently feel supported by your closer male relationships?
- a. _____ yes
 - b. _____ no

26. Have these relationships existed in this way for you since before your separation or has it become like this only since your divorce?
- a. ____ since before separation
 - b. ____ only since after separation
27. Have these relationships existed in this way for you since before your divorce, or has it become like this only since your divorce?
- a. ____ since before divorce
 - b. ____ only since after divorce
28. Do you have any close female relationships?
- a. ____ yes
 - b. ____ no
29. Do you currently feel supported by your closer female relationships?
- a. ____ yes
 - b. ____ no
30. Have these relationships existed in this way for you since before your separation or has it become like this only since your divorce?
- a. ____ since before separation
 - b. ____ only since after separation
31. Have these relationships existed in this way for you since before your divorce, or has it become like this only since your divorce?
- a. ____ since before divorce
 - b. ____ only since after divorce
32. Do you currently have a confidant -- male or female -- who is clearly the closest person to you?
- a. ____ yes
 - b. ____ no

33. How important is it for you to have such a confidant?

- a. _____ very
- b. _____ somewhat
- c. _____ little
- d. _____ not at all

34. If you do have such a confidant, how often do you talk with him or her?

By telephone: a. _____ 1-2x/week

b. _____ 3-5x/week

c. _____ 5-10x/week

d. _____ over 10x/week

35. In person: a. _____ 1-2x/week

b. _____ 3-5x/week

c. _____ 5-10x/week

d. _____ over 10x/week

36. How supported by your confidant do you currently feel?

- a. _____ very much
- b. _____ somewhat
- c. _____ minimally
- d. _____ not at all

37. Has this relationship existed in this way for you since before your separation or has it become like this only since your divorce?

- a. _____ since before separation
- b. _____ only since after separation

38. Has this relationship existed in this way for you since before your divorce or has it become like this only since your divorce?

- a. _____ since before divorce
- b. _____ only since after divorce

39. How supportive are your current family relationships?

- a. _____ very much
- b. _____ somewhat
- c. _____ minimally
- d. _____ not at all

40. Have these relationships existed in this way for you since before your separation or have they become like this only since your separation?
- a. ____ since before separation
- b. ____ only since after separation
41. Have these relationships existed in this way for you since before your divorce, or have they become like this only since your divorce?
- a. ____ since before divorce
- b. ____ only since after divorce
42. What activities or hobbies do you do outside of work? _____
- _____
43. If you had a problem at work, with whom would you probably discuss it? _____
- _____
44. Has this relationship existed in this way for you since before your separation or has it become like this only since your divorce?
- a. ____ since before separation
- b. ____ only since after separation
45. Has this relationship existed in this way for you since before your divorce, or has it become like this only since your divorce?
- a. ____ since before divorce
- b. ____ only since after divorce
46. With whom do you normally celebrate Thanksgiving dinner? _____
- _____
47. With whom do you normally celebrate High Holy Days or Christmas? _____
- _____
48. Do you belong to a country club? a. ____ yes b. ____ no
49. Do you belong to a men's club? a. ____ yes b. ____ no

50. Are there others in your current life who are important sources of support for you in addition to the people asked about above?
- a. _____ yes b. _____ no
51. If so, who are they?
- c. _____
51. Have these relationships existed for you in this way since before your separation or have they become like this only since your separation?
- a. _____ since before separation
- b. _____ only since after separation
52. Have these relationships existed for you in this way since before your divorce, or have they become like this only since your divorce?
- a. _____ since before divorce
- b. _____ only since after divorce
53. Are you currently in counseling or therapy?
- a. _____ yes
- b. _____ no
54. In your opinion, has counseling or therapy been helpful?
- a. _____ yes
- b. _____ no
55. Of all your relationships, which one do you find most supportive?
- a. _____ (Kind of relationship)
- Next most supportive?
- b. _____
- Third most supportive?
- c. _____
56. Would you like to receive a report on the findings of this study?
- a. _____ yes
- b. _____ no

Part B

WEISS INTIMACY RANKINGS

Interviewer: "Here are 16 cards which represent different attributes or qualities which some people consider important in interpersonal relationships. Would you please order these cards in terms of their importance in your relationship with the woman with whom you are currently most involved?"

Respondent is handed 16 cards, with the following 16 statements on them:

1. Has a similar or complementary personality.
2. Has similar interests.
3. Has similar attitudes (ideas, values, beliefs, morals, ethics).
4. Shares activities with me.
5. Likes me.
6. Is comfortable and easy to be with.
7. Is enjoyable, entertaining company.
8. Knows me well.
9. I respect her.
10. Is supportive and accepting.
11. Is dependable and trustworthy.
12. Would help me out in a crisis.
13. Is someone I can confide in.
14. Is physically attractive.
15. Provides sexual satisfaction.
16. We feel a strong emotional attachment for each other.

Interviewer notes respondent's ordering of cards.

LAEL HORWITZ

PH. D.

1983