LIFE TRANSITIONS, ROLE HISTORIES, AND MENTAL HEALTH

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Major life changes and role transitions are often treated as stressors that create a generalized demand for adjustment by the individual. Empirically, however, these transitions have been shown to produce a wide range of effects on mental health. Two kinds of models have been proposed to explain this variation: differential access to coping resources for dealing with stressful situations, and variation in the characteristics of transitions, such as their undesirability, foreseeability, etc. This paper emphasizes a logically prior issue: the role context within which the transition event occurs, specifically, the level of pre-existing chronic stress in the social role. The model tested envisions life transition events as nonproblematic, or even beneficial to mental health, when preceded by chronic role problems — a case where more “stress” is actually relief from existing stress. Nine transition events are studied: job loss, divorce, pre-marital break-up, retirement, widowhood, children moving out of the house, first marriage, job promotion, and having a child. Results support the hypothesis that prior role stress reduces the impact of life transition events on mental health for seven of nine events, with some differences in impact by gender. The findings provide a basic framework for interpreting the effects of varying types of life transitions, and argue against the presumption that life transitions are inherently stressful, suggesting instead a need to specify prior social circumstances that determine whether or not a transition is potentially stressful.

The majority of studies on the impact of stressful life events suggests only a modest correlation with mental health (Rabkin and Streuning 1976; Thoits 1983). The usual explanation is that the overall association masks a wide range of impacts in different segments of the population and across different types of events.

The search for the causes of the differential impact of life events has produced two major research traditions. One relies on the differential vulnerability argument (Kessler 1979; B.S. Dohrenwend 1973; Pearlin, Lieberman, Menaghan, and Mullan 1981) in which differences in coping resources or strategies, ongoing dispositional qualities, or social locations determine the impact of events. This approach has spawned a large sub-tradition focused on the buffering effects of social support (Cohen and Wills 1985). The second tradition contends that events vary in stressfulness because of differences in such characteristics as undesirability, uncontrollability, unpredictability, and event magnitude (Thoits 1983; B.P. Dohrenwend 1974). This tradition has been labelled the “trait” approach, and implies that we can identify the most important events using an array of event characteristics that specify stress potential.

In this paper, I address a logically and causally prior issue, namely, whether the potential for impact of an event is defined by the person’s accumulated experience in the role that is altered by the transition — what can be termed the “role history” prior to the event. Since it is not feasible to measure all facets of role history, I focus on the level of chronic and ongoing stress in the role, reflecting the configuration of demands, responsibilities, inequities, uncertainties, and interpersonal problems persisting through time in the role environment.

How does the prior role environment influence the impact of a life transition on mental health? Instead of being stressful, life events may at times be either nonproblematic or even

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beneficial by offering escape from a chronically stressful role situation — creating the apparent paradox of more “stress” functioning as stress relief. If this is the case, then concern about coping strategies and social support may be misplaced for some individuals experiencing life course transitions currently treated as “stressful” in the literature. If prior role circumstances largely determine the impact of the event, then it is a misspecification of the problem to look for factors which modify the impact of the “stressor” once it occurs.

A CONTEXTUAL APPROACH TO LIFE TRANSITIONS

Recently, a third, contextual approach to the problem of the differential impact of life events has appeared in the literature. The contextual approach uses information about the individual’s current life circumstances to specify the stressfulness of events. Brown and Harris (1978) used extensive information on social circumstances surrounding an event to score its “inferred threat.” The problem with this method is that the factors used to make this designation could be considered as separate variables with independent effects on mental health, and thus should not be incorporated into the measurement of life events (Dohrenwend, Link, Kern, Shrou~t, and Markowitz 1987). The contextual approach of Dohrenwend et al. (1987) uses five separate dimensions to describe the context of an event, such as the independence of the event from the individual’s psychological condition, the desirability of changes that followed, and the effect of the individual’s behavior on the event. These dimensions are treated independently of the scoring issue.

The approach in this paper also involves specification of the event context, but its main feature is the presence or absence of chronic role stress prior to the event. An essential starting point of my approach is the distinction between chronic stress and the more widely known “life event” form of stress. The latter refers to discrete, observable events which are thought to be threatening because they represent change. But many stressful situations cannot be treated as events, such as excessive levels of constant noise in the work place, regular and persistent disagreement with a spouse about childrearing, living with a chronically ill family member, or the pressure of financial debts. The stress in these situations derives more from the absence of change than the problem of too much change, and cannot be subsumed by the event tradition (Wheaton 1986).

Chronic stress is analogous to the stress model of physical mechanics (Smith 1987), rather than a model based on organismic responses to trauma (Selye 1956). Stress in physical mechanics involves a continuous “load” and slowly accumulating wear-and-tear, aspects of stress that are not captured by the ideas of change and crisis inherent in the event approach. Chronic stress, then, refers to continuous and persistent conditions in the social environment resulting in a problematic level of demand on the individual’s capacity to perform adequately in social roles (Wheaton 1986).2

Chronic role stress is likely to be a central feature in understanding individual differences in the experience of a life transition. The meaning of a divorce after a “bad” marriage will surely be quite different than a divorce after a “good” marriage. Getting fired from a job where you hate the boss or that is excessively dangerous will lead to different mental health consequences than getting fired from a secure, interesting job with ample opportunities for promotion. When a long-term alcoholic dies, his or her spouse is likely to feel some relief from the burden of a difficult caretaker role.

These examples suggest that the potentially harmful mental health consequences of transition events will be moderated, if not entirely eliminated or reversed, by the presence of prior chronically stressful role problems. This prediction involves testing for a negative interaction between potentially stressful life transitions and levels of prior stress in the same role. In this approach, life transition events are not treated as universal stressors. In fact, they may at times be opportunities for legitimate or fortuitous escape from a difficult situation.

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1 The use of the term ‘context’ here is specific to this tradition and does not imply a social network or a structural location approach.

2 The importance of this distinction is highlighted by the findings of recent studies which suggest that the effects of ongoing stress are as strong if not stronger than event stressors (Pearlin and Schooler 1978; Brown and Harris 1978; Kessler and Essex 1982; Wheaton 1983; Eckenrode 1984; Link et al. 1986; Krause 1986; Avison and Turner 1988). Thus, it is plausible that prior ongoing stress may be a central factor in understanding the stressfulness of a life transition.
This approach provides a generalizable model for the specification of the differential stressfulness of widely varying types of life transition events. Nine events are studied: divorce, premarital break-up, unemployment, retirement, widowhood, children moving out, getting married, job promotion, and having a child. These events are considered life transitions because they either denote exit from one role and entry into another, or they denote significant redefinition of role conditions. These transitions vary along a number of dimensions: some are major events, others are relatively minor; some are scheduled and predictable, others are unscheduled and less predictable; some include an element of volition, others do not; some are clustered at specific points in the life course, others are not.

Testing whether prior chronic role stress ameliorates the effect of a transition out of that role could be complicated by the possibility that role problems and the occurrence of a transition are highly related. In fact, this will not be the case, even for unscheduled or unforeseeable events. The determinants of job loss may have little to do with the individual’s work problems and a lot to do with problems of the economic system. Most divorces involve an initiator and another who is forced to accept the situation. The initiator is in a position to anticipate and prepare for certain aspects of the separation process, and is also more likely to be the one to see serious marital problems beforehand. The “victim,” on the other hand, is likely to be unprepared and, compared with the initiator, to have perceived marital problems to be less important. The two different perspectives will produce varying reports on the state of the marriage before a divorce. These built-in processes weaken the correlation between role problems and the event.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER APPROACHES

The contextual approach to the study of life transitions outlined in the previous section can be distinguished from other approaches in four basic ways: First, the usual predictions for the combined effect of chronic and event stressors involve either a stress accumulation effect in which the stress of events and chronic role problems work additively, or a stress overload effect in which chronic role problems aggravate the effect of life changes (Brown and Harris 1978). The latter hypothesis makes most sense when the role problem involves a different role than the one involved in the transition, a situation in which the transition cannot resolve the ongoing role problem.

Second, events such as divorce, unemployment, death of a spouse, and retirement are thought to be stressful regardless of the role context because they set in motion sequela which are themselves stressful and threaten the individual’s identity (Thoits 1983). The question, then, is whether the context of the event overwhelms the issue of adjustment to change. The theory that life transitions “have a life of their own” and thus are inherently stressful due to the relocation and transformation of identity is a common and alternative viewpoint.

Third, chronic role stress is causally prior to the coping and social support activated by the occurrence of the stressful event. But some aspects of support and coping exist as resources apart from the occurrence of stress, and these may be seen as alternative possibilities to the present model. These include structural aspects of support availability, perceived support, and coping resources such as aspects of personality or other dispositional characteristics existing prior to the transition.

Finally, the contextual approach to life transitions suggests that transition events should not be aggregated into an inventory indicating total event exposure (Holmes and Rahe 1967). Summing events can mask the variability in social circumstances that underlie the impact of each separate event, leading to the underestimation of the stressfulness of events for some and overestimation for others.

THE STATE OF THE EVIDENCE

Is the “stressful event as stress relief” model already present in the literature on individual events and transitions? A recent review of the literature on widowhood (Wortman and Silver 1989) finds no adequate explanation of the fact that a significant proportion of people dealing with death of a spouse do not experience grief. Prior role stress as a contingency predicting absence of grief in some cases has not been considered.

The notion that previous difficulties may mitigate the impact of a major life transition has been raised in the divorce literature. Kitson and Sussman (1982) predict that mental health problems following divorce will be lower among
those who suffered marital problems before the divorce. But their sample is composed entirely of the divorced, which does not allow for an assessment of variation in the effect of divorce contingent upon prior marital stress. Menaghan and Lieberman (1986) tested such an interaction and found none, but their marital problems measure was more a measure of distress created by the marriage than a direct measure of marital problems.

Kasl’s (1979) review of the literature on unemployment and retirement suggests a similar conclusion: although the effects of previous work environment have been considered, the importance of prior context has not been demonstrated. He concludes that “variations in post retirement outcomes are most convincingly seen as reflecting continuities of preretirement status” (1979, p. 185) and “variables reflecting aspects of the work role … are not powerful or consistent predictors of [mental health] outcomes” (1979, p. 186). The possibility that the effect of unemployment depends on the previous work environment is not considered. Subsequent research either emphasizes the role of social support as a stress-buffering resource (e.g., House 1981) or the main effects of unemployment (Kessler, House, and Turner 1987), although there is some recent concern with the effect of job conditions on the benefits of reemployment (Kessler, Turner, and House 1989).

Thus, while the hypothesis of this paper is implied in some life transition literatures, it is not specified as the generalized impact of preexisting chronic role stress, and even if it were, the basic prediction here has not been empirically demonstrated within or generalized across types of events.

DATA AND METHODS

Study Design and Sample

The data are from a national survey of Canadian adults 18 and older. A multi-stage, stratified cluster design was used, involving both a representative cross-section sample (N = 3288) and a follow-through of a random sub-sample of the 1977 cross-section as a panel with re-interviews in 1979 and 1981 (N = 1665). The panel component is analyzed in this paper. Problems due to attrition bias and panel selection are considered in the analysis.

This longitudinal study includes a multi-item measure of mental health (distress), tracks by year the occurrence of a number of life transitions and events, and provides comprehensive assessments of problems in selected role situations at each interview. Thus, role problems can be measured for the period prior to an event, and initial distress levels in 1977 can be controlled in all models. Any effect of distress on the perception or reporting of role problems, whether real or a measurement artifact, can be accounted for in the partialling of effects. Further, the sample is sufficiently large and heterogeneous to yield examples of relatively rare events. Only transitions that occur during the four-year course of the study are considered in the analysis.

Measures

Distress. Distress is an index comprised of 12 symptoms of depression and anxiety measured in 1977 and 1981. The symptoms are taken from well-known mental health scales, notably the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) and the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D), as well as items measuring general well-being. The items are broadly representative, including reported unhappiness, feeling in low spirits, self-reported “poor” state of health (thought to be as indicative of emotional as of physical problems), frequent unexplained headaches, pains in muscles and joints, sleeping problems, nervousness, feeling fearful often, feeling depressed, feeling tense, worrying a lot, and feeling hopeless about the future.

Items were coded to indicate symptomatic status by designating anyone in the upper 20 to 25 percent on frequency of occurrence (depending on the cutting point in the nearest response category) as a 1 and everyone else as 0, and then summed to create an index. This creates an approximate symptom metric which is useful in gauging effects. The distress index has an alpha reliability of .77 in 1977 and .83 in 1981.

Events and Problems. The interview included questions on the occurrence of a number of life and role transitions as well as probes to determine the year of occurrence. Measures of chronic role problems were derived from responses to items covering four areas: marriage, relation-

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3 Because interactions are being tested, all models were replicated with a distress index based on summing the ordinal responses in order to assess sensitivity of effects to coding of the outcome measure. None of the results were affected by this re-coding.
ships when unmarried, work, and parenthood (see Appendix). These items were repeated at each interview, so that the response in 1979 was used if a role transition event had not occurred and the response in 1977 was used if it had occurred by 1979, etc.

Marital problems is a 9-item scale emphasizing absence of affection, lack of fulfillment of companionship and sexual needs, limitation of freedom, insufficient sharing of parenting and household tasks, and overall dissatisfaction ($\alpha = .80$). The pre-marital relationship problems scale is largely composed of parallel items ($\alpha = .72$). The work problems scale includes twelve items, with an emphasis on unpredictable hours, exhausting work, excessive monitoring and supervision, boring work, low pay and absence of security, and unpleasant physical surroundings ($\alpha = .74$). The parental problems scale measures concerns about children with two items — dissatisfaction with the way they are growing up, not living up to hopes or expectations — and concerns about being a parent with two items — lack of enjoyment of the parent role, and feelings that parenthood limits freedom ($\alpha = .65$).

Each scale, except for the work problems scale, involves items with different response formats. Thus, total scores were standardized to a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one to facilitate comparison of results across cases and to simplify interpretation of interactions. The work problems scale was a simple count of problems, reflecting the dichotomous nature of the items.

The model to be tested assumes that these problems are chronic rather than situational. Stabilities of each role problem measure were calculated using the Wiley and Wiley (1970) specification of the three-wave single-indicator model, thus taking into account the unreliability of each measure. These stabilities were high in every case, with a correlation over two years ranging from .70 for work problems to .99 for relationship problems. Clearly, the problems measured represent chronically burdensome situations. In addition, these stabilities suggest the appropriateness of interpreting these role problems as a facet of role history.

Control Variables. In each model tested, a number of control variables were considered. These included controls for additive and interactive effects of some variables. A set of controls found to be generally important to outcome distress levels was used in initial models for each event, including sex, number of children, age of respondent, education, personal or family income, having a confidant (besides one’s spouse) to talk to about problems, distress in 1977, and reported income loss. Additional controls were used for particular events, including, for example, marital status when assessing the effects of job loss, and employment status when assessing the effect of divorce.

In the analysis of each event, commonly hypothesized interactions between the event and some of these controls were tested first. Significant interactions are incorporated in the results.

Analytic Strategy

In addition to the basic set of controls, three other kinds of factors were incorporated into the analysis: time since the event, re-entry into the same role, and bias due to attrition from the panel and explicit selection of sub-samples for analysis.

Because the number of cases was too small for some events, and the dating of events for years between interviews was unclear for others (e.g., job loss) a compromise approach was used in specifying time since event. This involved distinguishing between occurrences of each event between 1977-1979 and between 1979-1981 using two dummy variables for event occurrence in each analysis. In the case of three events — pre-marital break-ups, widowhood, and getting married — there were too few cases (less than 30) to assess differential effects by time since event. Tests on the other events showed that time since event made a clear difference only in the case of divorce. For other events, event occurrence is measured using a single dummy variable.

Re-entry into the same role was considered as an additional control wherever possible, since this might alter the impact of the original event. For example, re-marriage was controlled in the divorce analysis, getting a new job was controlled in the unemployment analysis, getting married was controlled in analysis of break-ups, re-marriage was controlled in the widowhood analysis, etc.

Finally, two kinds of sample selection bias

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In the case of divorce, for example, this included terms for divorce by income (by sex), divorce by number of children, divorce by the presence of a confidant, divorce by employment status (by sex), divorce by age (by sex), and divorce by the number of years married.
parameters were included in each model, using
procedures based on Heckman (1979) and Berk
(1983). To take into account possible bias due to
loss of panel members, factors predicting panel
membership were studied in the full 1977 cross-
section using logistic regression. The results
were used to derive a predicted probability of
panel membership for members of the panel,
and this variable was added to all models. In
addition, models predicting selection into the
various sub-samples used in the analysis were
developed, and the predicted probability of
nonelection for sub-sample members was also
controlled.

In the analysis of each event, a specific proce-
dure was followed for testing the predicted
interaction. First, the population at risk for an
event was defined (e.g., divorce — all persons
married at the beginning of the survey or who
married before 1979). Controls were screened
for each event transition analysis, first consider-
ing them additively and then as parts of possible
interactions competing with the interaction of
interest. Distress symptoms in 1977 were con-
trolled in all models, so that effects of events and
role problems can be interpreted as net effects
on changes in distress symptoms between 1977
and 1981. Each predicted interaction was tested
as a two-way term first, but in a number of cases
it was necessary to take into account further
specificity to describe differences in the appli-
cability of the predicted effect across segments
of the population.

The most general form of the equation esti-
mated in each analysis was as follows:

\[ S_{81} = a + b_1 C + b_2 S_{77} + b_3 E + b_4 O + \\
    b_5 (OE) + b_6 (CE) + b_7 (CO) + \\
    b_8 (OEC) + \text{etc.} \]

where \( S_{81} \) is distress in 1981, \( S_{77} \) is distress in
1977, \( C \) is a set of control variables, \( E \) is a
dummy variable for the transition event, and \( O \)
is the chronic role problem measure, measured
before any reported event. All interactions re-
ported are significant at the .05 level or less,
except where noted.

RESULTS

Job Loss

This analysis includes full-time workers in 1977
and those who started full-time work before
1979 (\( N = 877 \)), of whom 67 experienced invol-
untary job losses. Of these, 43 reported getting
a new job after the job loss. Besides the standard
set of controls mentioned earlier, the job loss
model also contains specific controls for the
effects of getting a new job after a period of
unemployment and interactions between a new
job and gender, and a new job and work prob-
lems in the previous job. Despite the independ-
ent importance of getting a new job, its effects
do not interfere with the effects of job loss.

The effect of job loss on mental health de-
pends on a number of factors. The final model
included two strong and interpretable 4-way
interactions. Each interaction involved three
components in common — job loss, prior work
problems, and gender, standing for a differentia-
ble impact by gender of work problems on the
experience of job loss. In addition, one interac-
tion has age as a fourth component (\( p < .01 \)),
reflecting the importance of stage in the life
course, and the other has marital status (\( p <
.001 \)). These interactions suggest that: 1) the
effect of age is to increase the effect of prior
work problems on reducing the impact of job
loss among men, while decreasing the effect of
prior work problems on job loss among women;
and 2) the effect of marital status is to decrease
the effect of prior work problems on the impact
of job loss among men, and increase the effect
among women. Although 4-way interactions
can be problematic, results for lower-order
models were much less interpretable. Both inter-
actions were highly significant, and they re-
mained so in alternative models.

To take both interactions into account, Table
1 shows the effect of job loss classified by levels
of all other variables involved: gender, marital
status, age, and prior work problems. The effect
of job loss is shown for all sub-group combina-
tions of the categorical variables involved in the
interactions (gender and marital status) and at
points on continuous variables either one stan-
dard deviation above and below the mean only
(work problems) or at these points plus the mean

5 The actual controls used in the final equation for
each event are available from the author upon re-
quest.

6 These effects indicate that getting a new job had
a beneficial effect among men but less of a benefi-
cial effect among women. Previous work problems
mitigated the positive impact of a new job.
level (age). Thus, in Table 1, "low" work problems corresponds to 0 problems, and "high" work problems corresponds to 3 problems, given a mean of 1.5 and an approximate standard deviation of 1.5. Age levels chosen represent -1 standard deviation (25), the mean of the sample (37), and +1 standard deviation (50).

Table 1 presents the effects of job loss as average differences in distress symptoms in 1981 between those experiencing a job loss and those that did not. Since these differences are adjusted for initial 1977 distress symptoms, they correspond to net changes in distress resulting from the job loss. In addition, Table 1 shows differences in the effects of job loss across levels of work problems, thus indicating where the hypothesis applies most clearly.

The number of cases in each marital status/gender group defined by the interactions varies from 12 to 27. While these numbers are small, they are sufficient for detecting the predicted contingencies. For most of the transition events studied, cases were well-distributed across subgroups involved in the interactions.

In every marital status/sex combination except unmarried women, a high level of prior work problems has an ameliorative effect on the impact of job loss in most age groups. For example, in early stages of the work career (age = 25), a two-standard deviation difference in work problems leads to a 1.62 reduction in the predicted symptom differential due to job loss among unmarried men, an insignificant increase of .51 among married men, and a large 3.67-point reduction in the symptom differential among married women. And at age 50, entering the later phases of the work career, there is an even stronger reduction in the job loss effect due to work problems among unmarried men amounting to 3.57 less of a symptom increase, an effect reduction of 1.44 among married men, and a smaller 1.35 effect reduction among married women.

7 Effects at the mean levels of continuous variables that further qualify the effect of role problems are included in all tables to facilitate interpretation of the interactions.
8 The significance tests for the interactions do not depend on sub-sample sizes smaller than those shown under each table, because the other variables involved are continuous. Further, the post-hoc tests use a confidence interval for group differences (event vs. nonevent) across a set of values on the role problems measure, and thus do not depend on the number of people at the exact points chosen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status, Sex, and Age</th>
<th>Work Problems</th>
<th>Effect Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unmarried men</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age = 25</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age = 37</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age = 50</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married men</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age = 25</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age = 37</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age = 50</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmarried women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age = 25</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age = 37</td>
<td>-.52</td>
<td>-.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age = 50</td>
<td>-1.04</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age = 25</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>-1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age = 37</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>-.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age = 50</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The number of cases experiencing a job loss are: unmarried men = 13, married men = 27, unmarried women = 12, and married women = 15. Effects are shown at two points on the work problems scale: "low," when work problems = 0, a point roughly one standard deviation below the mean; and "high," when work problems = 3, a point roughly one standard deviation above the mean.

This pattern suggests that there are significant and substantial stress relief effects among unmarried men at each age, among married women at younger ages and possibly among married men in older age groups. The stress-relief effect increases with age for men and decreases with age for married women. The size of the job loss effect is generally smaller for married men compared to unmarried men when job conditions were favorable, and generally larger when job conditions were difficult, resulting in attenuation of the stress-relief effect among married men. Only unmarried women show no evidence of a stress-relief effect, primarily because they are the only group that does not suffer a significant increase in distress from job loss even in the context of favorable job conditions, suggesting there is less of a problem in this group in the first place.
The weaker stress-relief effect among married men could reflect the influence of two factors: (1) married men who lose a "good" job may have more support from their wives than is available to unmarried men; and (2) the "male breadwinner" identity may dampen the stress-relieving effect of losing a "bad" job in this group. This would help explain the higher symptom increase among married vs. unmarried men in high stress jobs.9 In contrast, married women who have lost favorable jobs have greater distress while unmarried women do not, consistent with the fact that married women enter the work role more often by choice than single women. Thus, loss of the work role when the job is valued may have a greater impact.

Age has opposite implications for men and women in activating a stress-relief effect. Reductions in the effects of job loss due to work problems increase with age for men, and decrease with age for women. This is in part due to differences in the impact of losing a valued job among men and women. The effect of losing a "good" job decreases with age among women, possibly because of cohort-based changes in the value placed on work. Among men, the effect of losing a "good" job increases with age, probably reflecting the fact that there is more to lose and less hope at later stages of the career.

The effect of job loss on distress among those in low stress jobs is sizable. The standard deviation in distress in this sub-sample is just over 2, so changes in distress in excess of a standard deviation occur in a number of groups. Given the absence of significant effects of job loss on distress among those in high stress jobs, it appears that the idea that job loss is inherently stressful should be re-considered.

Divorce

Divorce is a very different kind of transition event because it is usually more permanent and may involve choice and anticipation. Like job loss, however, it is an unscheduled life transition and is considered a major life event.

The sample of 1065 initially married persons produced 60 divorces over the four-year period. Separate effects are shown in Table 2 for divorce between 1977 and 1979 and divorce in 1980-1981 for two reasons: the effects of earlier divorce had an independent, albeit smaller, effect on final distress compared to recent divorce in initial additive models, and both divorce variables interacted separately with prior marital problems. The interaction with recent divorce was three-way, involving both marital problems and sex, while the interaction between earlier divorce and marital problems applied to both sexes equally. This is important, since it indicates that there are only short-term sex differences in divorce to be taken into account. In addition, the effect of marital problems on the impact of recent divorce on distress depended separately on work status. One other contingency arose in the analysis of divorce. There was an interaction between recent divorce and number of children, indicating that the effect of divorce increased the greater the number of children, regardless of marital problems and sex.10 The results shown in Table 2 are from a model that incorporates all of these interactions plus controls. Results for nonworking husbands are not shown, since there were no divorces in this very small group.

Results in Table 2 show that the stress-relief hypothesis holds without qualification for earlier divorces and only for working wives in the case of recent divorces. Looking at the effects of recent divorce in this group, divorce generally has substantially larger impacts on distress when marital stress is low than when it is high. At the average number of children (2), for example, there is a 2.57 symptom increase in distress among divorced women when there was little prior marital stress compared to a 1.03 symptom increase when there was considerable marital stress. This represents a reduction of the symptom increase resulting from divorce equal to 1.54 symptoms. This effect, combined with the effect of children, leads to a great deal of variability in the impact of divorce on working wives. Divorce produces a 3.51 symptom increase in distress when there are four children

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9 Another possibility is that men are especially burdened by their parental financial responsibilities. I tested interactions of job loss with work problems, sex, and number of children, and found a barely significant interaction that indicated that children reduced the work problems effect among men. But this interaction was not significant when included with the other interactions already in the model, indicating that the interaction with children may be a spurious reflection of more basic interactions involving marital status and age, each an important background factor explaining the number of children.

10 The effect of re-marriage was initially included in divorce effect models and was significant (causing further distress!), but became insignificant when interactions were included.
and the woman thought she had a good marriage, compared to an insignificant .10 symptom increase when there are no children and the woman felt the marriage had problems.

On the other hand, there is no influence of marital stress on the effect of divorce among working husbands, although the effects of divorce on distress are substantial in both low and high stress situations. Among the employed, then, the effect of recent divorce appears to be more context-dependent for women than for men.

How can the negligible effect of recent divorce among housewives, regardless of marital problems, be explained? One possibility is that these women enter the labor force after the divorce, thus counteracting the deleterious impact of divorce on mental health, at least in the short run before the novelty of the new job wears off. While about 34 percent of continuously married women went from the housewife role into the labor force at some point over the four years, nearly 50 percent of housewives who divorced got a job after the divorce. More importantly, there is a two-way interaction between divorce and getting a new job among housewives. This interaction indicates that there are 1.24 fewer distress symptoms after divorce among housewives who get a job compared to those who do not.

While the magnitude of the effect of earlier divorce is smaller than for recent divorces, results indicate that previous marital problems have even greater import as time passes. The effect of earlier divorce is a .93 symptom increase when marital stress was low. This effect stands for at least a two-year lagged effect of divorce on distress symptoms. This effect is reversed to a -.83 symptom reduction in distress when marital stress was high before the divorce. This is a case, then, when a transition out of a stressful role has a beneficial effect on mental health, possibly acting as a catharsis that resolves the earlier problems. This effect occurs, not immediately, but after two years have passed.

Divorces are not described in the stress literature as having positive benefits to mental health under any circumstances.

The effect of marital problems on earlier divorce amounts to a reduction in impact of 1.76 symptoms for a two-standard deviation increase in marital problems — an effect slightly larger than the marital problems impact on recent divorce among working wives. Since the effect of earlier divorce refers to both sexes, this represents a convergence in the experience of divorce as time passes. In other words, it is not that the importance of marital problems has decreased with time among working wives; in fact, the contextual relevance of marital problems has increased with time among working husbands and housewives. Support for the hypothesis is thus targeted only in the short-run and unqualified by gender, work status, or anything else in the long-run.

The question is what kind of explanation of gender and role differences is consistent with these results, including the shift from short-term gender/work status differences to no differences over time. One possibility is that women may be suffering more stress across roles because they are also working. Even though women have been entering the labor force in large numbers, they still perform the major portion of housework and child care tasks (Ross, Mirowsky, and Huber 1983). This means that women

Table 2. Adjusted Mean Difference in 1981 Distress Symptoms Due to Divorce, by Level of Prior Marital Problems, Time Since Divorce, Sex, Work Status, and Number of Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Since Divorce, Sex, Work Status, Number of Children</th>
<th>Marital Problems</th>
<th>Effect Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earlier divorce</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>-.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent divorce</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working husbands:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># children = 0</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>1.67**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># children = 2</td>
<td>1.96*</td>
<td>2.60***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># children = 4</td>
<td>2.90**</td>
<td>3.54***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewives:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># children = 0</td>
<td>-.79</td>
<td>-.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># children = 2</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># children = 4</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>1.66*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working wives:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># children = 0</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># children = 2</td>
<td>2.57*</td>
<td>1.03*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># children = 4</td>
<td>3.51***</td>
<td>1.97**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .10  * * * p < .05  ** * * * p < .001

Note: The number of cases of earlier divorce (prior to 1979) is 27. There were 35 recent divorces (post-1979), 12 among working husbands, 13 among working wives, and 10 among housewives. Effects are shown at two points on the marital problems scale: “low” is one standard deviation below the mean and “high” is one standard deviation above the mean.
may have less "head room" for further stress accumulation.\textsuperscript{11} This explanation is consistent with initial differences in the relevance of marital problems between working and nonworking women, and it is also consistent with a trend to convergence in the importance of marital problems as time passes, since these three groups are also likely to converge on issues of total household burden and stress accumulation after the divorce (i.e., men assume more household tasks, housewives get jobs, and the situation of working women changes less).

\textit{Pre-Marital Break-ups}

An analysis of pre-marital break-ups allows us to look at a parallel situation to divorce, since the relationship problems measure is similar in item content to the marital problems measure. At the same time, a break-up is a relatively minor event compared to divorce, raising the question of the generality of the effect of prior role problems. The sample for this event consisted of 104 nonmarried persons in a relationship at the beginning of the study.\textsuperscript{12} There were 30 break-ups in these relationships over the four-year study, 21 of these subsequently entered a new relationship, and 22 out of the total sample of 104 eventually married.\textsuperscript{13}

Table 3 presents results for two models, one with controls for eventually marrying and entering a new relationship and one without. In both models, there is a significant two-way interaction between a break-up and previous relationship problems in the predicted direction for both sexes. There is also a significant interaction between breaking up and sex in the first model that became insignificant when controls were added.

\textsuperscript{11}This argument does not need to posit that women are suffering unusual levels of work stress, only that work stress plus higher levels of demand in domestic roles adds up to an excessive burden.

\textsuperscript{12}In order to generate a large enough sample for this analysis, it was necessary to define a relationship rather broadly. Everyone who had not been married and reported living with someone in a romantic relationship or going out with one person primarily in 1977 was included. Those who entered a relationship by 1979 could not be included because there was no way of verifying that the relationship reported in 1979 was the same as that designated by the "started new relationship in the last two years" question in 1979.

\textsuperscript{13}Most of these marriages were in relationships reported at the beginning of the study.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{llll}
\hline
& & \multicolumn{2}{c}{Effect} \\
& Prior Relationship Problems & Low & High & Difference \\
\hline
Without controls for marriage and new relationship & & & & \\
Men & .81' & -.39 & -1.20' \\
Women & 1.99*** & .79' & -1.20' \\
\hline
Controlling for marriage and new relationship effects & & & & \\
Men & -.04 & -1.46' & -1.42' \\
Women & .83 & -.59 & -1.42' \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Adjusted Mean Difference in 1981 Distress Symptoms due to Pre-Marital Break-ups, by Level of Prior Relationship Problems and Sex}
\end{table}

Results for the model without controls indicate a 1.20 reduction in the effect of a break-up on distress for a two-standard deviation increase in prior relationship problems. Results in the model with controls suggest that entering a new relationship or getting married reduces the absolute size of the break-up effect considerably, so that there are no detrimental mental health effects in these groups. In fact, among men, leaving a problematic relationship is beneficial. The relative effect of relationship problems is very similar to the first model, leading to a 1.42 reduction in the effect of a break-up for a two-standard deviation increase in prior relationship problems. Thus, the effect of role stress on the impact of relationship dissolution on distress holds in both married and unmarried relationships.

\textit{Later Life Transitions}

Table 4 presents results for three transitions that typically occur later in life: retirement, widowhood, and a child moving out of the house. Retirement is a scheduled event, unlike the previous events. Of a sample of 120 full-time workers 55 and over in 1977, 95 retired by 1981. The model predicts a reduced effect of retirement on distress contingent upon previous work problems. The final model for retirement takes into account a two-way interaction between retirement and income in 1981. A three-way
interaction between retirement, work problems, and gender indicated a strong effect of work problems on the impact of retirement among men, but little effect among women. Results show that two work problems (the difference between low and high) reduce the effect of retirement by 5.52 symptoms among men—the largest single effect for any event studied. At average income levels ($19,000), for instance, retirement after a job with low stress resulted in a 1.67 increase in symptoms, while retirement after a job with high stress resulted in 3.85 fewer symptoms compared to non-retirees. This pattern among men suggests the full manifestation of a cathartic effect: a detrimental effect in the low work stress group is transformed into a clearly positive effect on mental health in the group with high work stress. These results also suggest that retirement is less of a problem and more a relief from ongoing work stressors. Hypotheses about the importance of loss of identity and status do not seem to be borne out by the size and direction of effects.

The effect of prior marital problems on the impact of widowhood on distress is shown in the second panel of Table 4. Twenty-five people experienced the death of a spouse over the period of study. The effect of social support after the death is clearly evident: a very strong two-way interaction between widowhood and having a confidant reduced the effect of widowhood to nonsignificance.\textsuperscript{14} There was, in addition, a marginally significant two-way interaction between widowhood and previous marital problems in the predicted direction. Results show a .70 reduction in the effect of widowhood on distress symptoms comparing those with high vs. low marital problems. This means that, regardless of the presence of a current confidant, a problematic marriage reduces the distress and grief felt after a spouse’s death.

Finally, an analysis of the effect of a child moving out of the house in relation to previous problems with the parental role indicates that parents who enjoyed their children suffer a moderate increase in symptoms when a child moves away. But when there are problems with the parental role, the effect on distress vanishes.

All three later-life transitions support the basic hypothesis. Although these events vary from the major life event of death of a spouse to the rather minor event of a child moving out of the house, there is evidence of a stress-relief effect in each case.

\textbf{"Positive" Transitions}  
If role problems dampen the effect of "negative" life transitions, then they may also dampen the beneficial effect of "positive" transitions. To test this idea, three events were analyzed: getting married, having another child (second or later children are studied so that information

\textsuperscript{14}The strength of the effect of having a confidant is difficult to judge, since there were no widows without a confidant and only four widows without a confidant. Among those four widowers, however, symptom increases are uniformly high.

---

**Table 4. Adjusted Mean Difference in 1981 Distress Symptoms due to Later Life Transitions, by Level of Prior Role Problems and Additional Factors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transition and Additional Modifying Factors</th>
<th>Work Problems</th>
<th>Marital Problems</th>
<th>Parental Problems</th>
<th>Child Moving Out</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work Problems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Effect</td>
<td>Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income = $5,000</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>-4.63***</td>
<td>-5.52'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income = $19,000</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>-3.85**</td>
<td>-5.52'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income = $33,000</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>-3.06'</td>
<td>-5.52'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income = $5,000</td>
<td>-.20</td>
<td>-92'</td>
<td>-.72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income = $19,000</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>-14'</td>
<td>-.72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income = $33,000</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>-.72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowhood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men with confidant</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.75</td>
<td>-.70'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women without confidant</td>
<td>5.14***</td>
<td>4.44**</td>
<td>-.70'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women with confidant</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>-.70'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Moving Out</td>
<td>.44**</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.50'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{1} p < .10 \textsuperscript{2} p < .05 \textsuperscript{3} p < .01 \textsuperscript{4} p < .001

\textit{Note:} The number of cases for retirement are: men = 64 and women = 31; for widowhood: men with confidant = 8, women without confidant = 4, women with confidant = 13; for a child moving out, 234 out of 874 parents. As in previous tables, points on role problem scales are one standard deviation below and above the mean.
Table 5. Adjusted Mean Difference in 1981 Distress Symptoms due to “Positive” Transitions, by Level of Prior Role Problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transition</th>
<th>Relationship Problems</th>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting married</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>-.18</td>
<td>-1.08</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>-1.95**</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>2.02*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Problems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having another child</td>
<td>.43†</td>
<td>-.31</td>
<td>-74†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Problems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job promotion</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

† p < .10 †† p < .05 ††† p < .01

Note: In the relationships sample, the number who got married is men = 7, women = 23. Of 1183 parents, 79 had another child. There were 313 job promotions among 930 workers. Low and high points on role problem scales are one standard deviation below and above the mean respectively.

Problems with the parental role led to a reduction of this negative impact on mental health. One would expect that having another child when parental role problems already exist would lead to further distress, not less distress. Thus, these findings are not consistent with the general hypothesis.

Job promotion produced no effects on mental health, regardless of work problems. The reason may be the prevalence of job promotions (313 in a sample of 930) and their ritualistic meaning in a high proportion of cases. Some promotions are automatic and do not depend on individual performance. This may undermine the relevance of work problems to the effect of promotions.

DISCUSSION

Previous approaches to the stress of life transitions have either emphasized coping resources that mitigate the impact of an event or the “trait” characteristics of an event that determine its stressfulness. These approaches assume implicitly that the stressfulness of the event either enters as a universal or resides in the characteristics of the event itself.

The approach in this paper demonstrates that factors in the role history prior to the life transition have a major impact on its stressfulness. The stress potential of an event is neither an inherent characteristic of the event nor a result of “coping” strategies, but instead is a product of the social environment prior to the occurrence of the transition.16

The guiding premise is that chronic role stress at the time of an event, both as a feature of the social environment and as a reflection of past role history, plays a basic and substantial role. The major hypothesis is that role stress alleviates the impact of otherwise stressful transition experiences, as well as dampens the benefits of positive transitions. Across a total of nine events, six “negative” and three “positive,” four clearly scheduled and the other five less clearly scheduled, six “major” events (divorce, job loss, retirement, widowhood, marriage, and having another child) and three “minor” events (premarital break-ups, child moving out, and job promotion), some typical of later stages of the

15 The number of cases here is larger than in the previous analysis of break-ups because of fewer controls in the final model for the effect of marriage, resulting in fewer deletions of cases with missing data.

16 There are other features of the prior social environment one might consider, such as structural aspects of social support, and a full contextual approach should include these factors as well.
life course, others more typical of early stages, there was evidence consistent with the basic hypothesis in seven cases. On the whole, then, results indicate the need for a contextual approach in the study of life transitions.

At the same time, there were differences among events in patterns of support for the stress-relief effect. Table 6 reviews the evidence in terms of general, qualified, and absence of support. Retaining the distinction between earlier and later divorce, there are four cases of general support and four cases of qualified support. Only two events produced no support for the hypothesis — having another child and job promotion. The pattern of support by gender is interesting. Consistent with Thoits’ (1987) identity theory in which the importance of a role depends on its identity salience, work-related stress has more contextual relevance for men experiencing job loss or retirement, whereas relationship stress has more contextual relevance for women experiencing the interpersonal role events of recent divorce and marriage. This suggests a three-way conditional model in which identity salience is a further condition of the transition impact.

Support for the predicted effect across very different types of transitions has implications for the present approach. First, the effect of prior role stress operates independently of trait effects, since some trait differences are captured by the variation in the events studied. Indeed, trait effects can be seen in these data: major events generally have larger effects than minor events, and unscheduled events generally have larger negative effects than scheduled events.

Second, the effect of prior role stress on the impact of life transitions on distress is not just a reflection of the effects of choice since most of the events studied exclude choice. For example, job losses are only counted when involuntary, retirement is an inevitability in most cases, and, one hopes, choice never enters into the death of a spouse. Moreover, the notion that chronic role stress leads to or is highly related to event occurrence, even when the event has a volitional component, is not substantiated in these data. The highest correlation between any of the role problem measures and an event was .19 in the case of relationship problems and eventual break-up, and this is clearly one of the events influenced by choice considerations. The average correlation between role problems and events was .09, indicating the complexity of event occurrence.

Finally, the model provides an interpretive framework that can be applied to a wide range of individual events to aid in understanding differential responses to a given event. The range of impacts explained by the model in this paper is considerable, including not only the difference between substantial negative effects on mental health and no effect, but also positive benefits to mental health as well.

It is this picture of the “stressor” as nonstressful that is the basic message of these results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Pattern of Support</th>
<th>Support Restricted to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Qualified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. a) Earlier divorce</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Recent divorce</td>
<td></td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Pre-marital breakup</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Job loss</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Retirement</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Widowhood</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Child moving out</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Getting married</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Having a child</td>
<td></td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Job promotion</td>
<td></td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Patterns of Support for the Stress-Relief Hypothesis for Nine Events.
When life transitions occur in the context of a problematic role history, it is misleading to refer to the transition event as a “stressor.” Rather, there are times when removal from a difficult situation, via divorce or retirement or an unforeseen job loss, may be appropriate and what is needed.

**Blair Wheaton** is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Toronto. His recent work has focused on the relationship of chronic and discrete forms of stress within and across social roles. Together with colleagues in the Consortium for Research in Stress Processes, he contributed to a recent book on the transmission of stress between work and family. Wheaton is currently studying the effects of chronic stress in eleven areas of life and is developing an inventory of chronic stressors. Together with Jay Turner he is planning a longitudinal study in Toronto of the co-morbidity of psychiatric problems.

**Appendix. Role Problem Measures**

**Marital Problems**
1. Absence of love shown by spouse.
2. Spouse not interested in what you do or say.
3. Spouse doesn’t help enough around the house.
4. Spouse doesn’t spend enough time at home.
5. Don’t like the way that spouse deals with the children.
6. Marital dissatisfaction.
7. Marriage limits freedom.
8. Marriage does not satisfy needs for companionship.
9. Marriage does not satisfy sexual needs.

**Work Problems**
1. Excessive overtime work.
2. Work unpredictable hours.
3. Both mentally and physically tired after work.
4. Supervisor monitors work more than twice a day.
5. Work is boring.
6. “Dead-end” job.
7. Pace of work regulated by equipment.
8. Live too far (> 45 minutes) from work.
9. Physical surroundings at work unpleasant.
10. Job does not have security.
11. The pay is not good.
12. Job interferes with the rest of life.

**Relationship Problems**
1. Absence of affection from friend.
2. Friend not interested in what you do.
3. Not enough time spent together.
4. Friend doesn’t help you with things.
5. Dissatisfaction with relationship.
6. Relationship limits freedom.
7. Relationship doesn’t satisfy needs for friendship.
8. Relationship doesn’t satisfy sexual needs.
9. If I had to do it over, I wouldn’t have got involved.

**Parental Problems**
1. Dissatisfied with the way children are growing up.
2. Being a parent is hardly ever enjoyable.
3. Children not living up to hopes and expectations.

**REFERENCES**


