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**GENDER, DIVORCE, AND EXPECTATIONS OF SUPPORT
FROM ADULT CHILDREN**

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Abstract

This study uses a cohort of older adults from the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study to examine whether older adults' expectations of support from their children vary by gender and divorce. The results show that although a majority of older adults would turn to their children when needed, men are less likely than women to name their children as sources of support. For men, divorce is related to lower expectations of emotional support, financial assistance, and sick care; for women, divorce is correlated with a lower expectation of financial assistance only. Divorce widens gender differences in anticipated sick care. The passage of time since divorce is negatively associated with men's expected sick care. Some of the associations, however, are attributable to parent-child closeness and past exchanges with children. In sum, divorce is negatively related to older adults' expected support from children, and the negative association is stronger for men than for women.

Growing old is often accompanied by fewer social contacts, diminishing financial resources, and declining health. These changes have been shown to exert detrimental effects on older adults' well-being (Kahn and Pearlin 2006; Lynch, Kaplan, and Shema 1997; Ormel et al. 2002). In the face of these changes, many older adults turn to their children for assistance (National Academy on an Aging Society 2000). Past studies mainly have focused on the support that older adults receive from their adult children (e.g., Boaz, Hu, and Ye 1999; Checkovich and Stern 2002; Lin 2008; Wolf, Freedman, and Soldo 1997). Few studies, however, have looked at the support that older adults perceive to be available to them, but have yet to receive from their children (Hogan and Eggebeen 1995; Spitze and Ward 2000). Examining anticipated support is pivotal because many older adults, particularly those aged 65 to 74, are relatively healthy and have not developed debilitating illnesses. The well-being of these older adults is more likely to be influenced by the support that they perceive will be available when needed than by the support that they actually receive in the present. Past studies have shown that older adults who perceive support availability are able to cope with stressful events better and engage in more health-promoting behaviors than are people who perceive little or no support (Krause 1997a, 1997b; Ross and Mirowsky 2002; Shaw and Janevic 2004; Wethington and Kessler 1986).

Among the factors related to older adults' expectations of support from their adult children, gender and divorce are particularly important. Men and women face very different opportunities and challenges throughout the life course (Maccoby 1998). Compared with older women, older men are more likely to have completed 4 years of college, be married, and live above the poverty line (He et al. 2005). These differences suggest that older men typically possess more resources than older women and thus may be less likely than older women to feel the need to view their adult children as an important source of support.

Divorce may moderate gender differences in anticipated support from adult children. After parents divorce, children usually live with their mothers and their contacts with nonresident fathers tend to diminish over time, particularly after fathers remarry (Furstenberg and Cherlin 1991). Maternal custodial arrangement and reduced contacts may decrease divorced fathers' perceptions of the availability of support from their adult children. Parental divorce also affects mother-child relationships. After divorce, resident mothers may experience the stress of juggling the roles of caregiver and breadwinner, leading to strained relationships with their children (Campbell and Moen 1992; Pett, Vaughan-Cole, and Wampold 1994). Lack of parent-child closeness may make divorced mothers expect little support from their children in old age. Thus, through different mechanisms, divorce may weaken both older men's and older women's anticipation of support from their children. Studies thus far, however, have not examined whether and how divorce moderates gender differences in older adults' expectations of support from their children.

This study addresses the research gap by using a recent survey of the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study (WLS), which followed a group of high-school graduates for approximately 50 years. The data provide an excellent opportunity to examine whether older adults' perceptions of support vary by gender and divorce status. Three research questions are examined. First, do older men and women differ in their anticipation of support from their adult children? Second, to what extent does divorce affect men's and women's perceptions of support? Third, do parent-child closeness and past exchanges with children affect older men's and women's expectations of support, and to what extent do these covariates mediate the association between divorce and anticipated support?

Gender differences in the expectations of support from adult children

In the face of fewer social contacts, diminishing financial resources, and declining health, older adults often turn to their adult children for emotional support, financial assistance, and sick care (Field and Minkler 1988; van Tilberg 1998). Older men and women, however, may differ in their perceptions of how much support is available from their adult children. Because of different socialization processes in which boys are expected to be independent and impassive and girls are expected to be dependent and expressive (Barbee et al. 1993), men are less likely than women to seek help in times of need (Shumaker and Hill 1991). Consequently, older men may be less likely than older women to consider their adult children as potential sources of support. Moreover, because men, on average, spend less time taking direct care of their children than do women, men usually have weaker bonds to their children than women (Townsend 2002). Thus, older men may be less likely than older women to ask their children for support should the need arise. Finally, women generally marry at a younger age and have a longer life expectancy than men (He et al. 2005; Kreider 2005). As a result, older men can rely on their spouses for support, whereas many older women are widows and can only turn to their adult children for help. The differential age at marriage and life expectancy between men and women may lead to gender differences in the anticipation of support from their children. Previous studies have shown that older women are more likely than older men to name their children as potential sources of sick care (Spitze and Ward 2000), emergency aid (Hogan and Eggebeen 1995), and companionship outside the home (Connidis and Davies 1992).

Gender differences in divorce experiences

Divorce not only entails the dissolution of a spousal relationship, but also interrupts parent-child closeness (Ganong and Coleman 1999). After divorce, men and women face different living arrangements, financial constraints, and likelihood of remarriage. These differential consequences of divorce for men and women may further influence gender differences in perceiving possible support from their adult children.

Most children live with their mothers after parental divorce. Because mothers are usually the gatekeepers, men's ties to their children are likely to weaken after divorce (Furstenberg and Cherlin 1991). Additionally, after divorce, men are more likely than women to remarry (Kreider 2005). Remarried fathers tend to diminish their support to children because of new obligations to children acquired in subsequent marriages (Manning and Smock 2000). Because divorce reduces parent-child closeness more for fathers than for mothers, divorced men may count less on their children for aid in old age than divorced women.

Divorce also creates differential financial resources between men and women. After divorce, women are generally more financially disadvantaged than men (Hoffman and Duncan 1988). Some divorced women may need to rejoin the labor force to compensate for the lost income from their ex-husbands. The struggle between working and childrearing often poses significant strains on and conflicts in the relationships between mothers and their children (Campbell and Moen 1992; Pett, Vaughan-Cole, and Wampold 1994). The differential impacts of divorce on financial resources between men and women suggest that divorced women may perceive less availability of support from their adult children than do divorced men.

In sum, through different mechanisms, divorce disrupts parent-child closeness for both men and women. It remains unclear, however, whether such disruption is more detrimental for divorced men's or women's anticipated support from their children. Only two studies have

examined this issue, but each has its own limitations. Using the first wave of the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), Cooney and Uhlenberg (1990) examined the association between divorce and anticipated support from adult children. Their study, however, focused exclusively on fathers and did not differentiate among various types of assistance. Curran and her colleagues (2003), also using the NSFH, examined the association between divorce and anticipated support among older men and women. Their study, however, examined anticipated support from kin and did not look at support specifically from adult children. Thus, past studies offer little insight into whether and how divorce moderates gender differences in the expectations of support from children in old age.

Other covariates related to anticipated support

In addition to gender and divorce, other covariates relate to older adults' expectations of support from their children. Past experiences of exchanges between parents and their children may influence how parents perceive the availability of support. According to the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner 1960), parents who have provided support to their children may have a higher expectation of future support from their children, compared with parents who have provided little or no support (Cox and Rank 1992; Henretta et al. 1997). Parents who have received support from their adult children are likely to think that their children will continue providing assistance in the future when needed (Krause 1997b; Liang, Krause, and Bennett 2001; Wethington and Kessler 1986). Older adults' poor health is found to be positively associated with their perceptions of dependent on adult children, whereas older adults' educational attainment and economic resources are negatively correlated with their perceptions (Ha et al. 2006). Family composition (i.e., number of children) is hypothesized to be positively related to

older parents' anticipated support because exchanges of instrumental support are more frequent when parents have more children (Spitze and Logan 1990). Because women usually take on the role of caregiver, the number of daughters may differ from the number of sons in influencing how older adults envision the availability of support from their children.

The current study

The study advances previous research by examining older adults' expectations of support from their adult children, with particular attention to older adults' gender and divorce. On the basis of prior studies, I expected that women would be more likely than men to consider their children as potential sources of support. I also expected that divorce would be negatively associated with anticipated support from children for both men and women, but whether the negative association would be stronger for men or for women remained unclear. Last, I anticipated that some of the associations between divorce and anticipation of support would be attributable to parent-child closeness, parents' provision of support to their adult children, adult children's provision of assistance to their parents, and other demographic characteristics. The study contributes to our understanding of social support in old age, as few existing studies have examined the relationships among gender, divorce, and expectations of support from adult children.

Method

The analysis is based on a cohort of older adults who are on the brink of retirement in the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study (WLS). The WLS is an approximately 50-year longitudinal study of a random sample of 10,317 men and women who graduated from Wisconsin high schools in

1957. Survey data were collected from these graduates in 1957, 1964, 1975, 1993, and 2004, but only the most recent wave of data was used in the analysis because the majority of the respondents were approaching the age of 65, a starting point in late life.

The 2004 survey was administered by both telephone and mail. Excluding those who had died and those who were lost to follow up, the response rates were 88% and 83%, respectively (*Wisconsin Longitudinal Study Handbook* 2006). In 1993, the WLS asked about half of the respondents about their relationships with a randomly selected child. The question about parent-child closeness was measured again about the same randomly selected child in 2004. Therefore, the analysis restricted the sample to respondents who were asked detailed information about the randomly selected child in 1993 and 2004.

Of the 6,378 respondents who responded to both the telephone and mail surveys in 2004, the following respondents were excluded: (a) 457 who had no children, (b) 2,903 who were not selected at random in 1993 to answer detailed questions about a randomly selected child, and (c) 371 who had a randomly selected child that died between 1993 and 2004. Three additional respondents who had never married were excluded from the study because there were too few cases to sustain an analysis of this marital group. The final analytic sample consists of 2,644 high school graduates: 1,229 men and 1,415 women. Overall, the analytic sample is similar to the original 1957 sample in terms of family structure, sibship size, and parental socioeconomic status. Compared with the original sample, however, the analytic sample tended to have a better high-school academic performance, to have a higher IQ, and to be more likely to come from a farming background (results not shown, but available upon request).

The WLS data are well-suited for studying the association of anticipated support from adult children with gender and divorce among older adults. Very few surveys ask older adults

about their anticipated social support, and the surveys that have tend not to distinguish among various sources of potential support (e.g., Taylor and Lynch 2004). Additionally, although the Health and Retirement Study enables researchers to identify anticipated support from adult children, it asks only about expected assistance with personal care activities, such as eating or dressing (Godwin 2004). The WLS data provide a unique opportunity for researchers to examine how divorce affects older men's and women's anticipation of emotional support, financial assistance, and sick care from their adult children.

Dependent variables

In the mail survey, the WLS respondents were asked whom (other than a spouse) they felt they could ask for help if: (a) they had a personal problem and wanted to talk to someone about it (hereafter referring to emotional support); (b) they had to borrow \$250 for a few weeks because of an emergency (hereafter referring to financial assistance); and (c) they were sick and unable to take care of themselves for a week or more (hereafter referring to sick care). The response categories include: *no one; friends, neighbors, or coworkers; sons or daughters (age 19 or older); parents; brothers or sisters; grandchildren; or other relatives*. Because the study focuses on respondents' perceptions of support from their adult children, a dichotomous variable equal 1 if sons or daughters (age 19 or older) provided support and 0 otherwise was created for each type of potential support.

Explanatory variables

Respondents' divorce status was measured in three ways: whether respondents were divorced at the time of interview (as opposed to being married or widowed), whether

respondents had ever divorced, and the length of time since the first divorce among those who had ever divorced. Approximately one quarter of respondents had ever divorced, and more than 80% of them divorced only once (data not shown). Thus, a dichotomous measure of divorce experience (i.e., ever divorced), rather than the number of divorces, was used in the analysis, and the length of time since divorce was calculated using the date of first divorce for those who experienced multiple divorces. Respondents were asked how close they felt to their child, with the following possible responses: *not at all close* (coded 1), *not very close* (coded 2), *somewhat close* (coded 3), to *very close* (coded 4). Two types of past exchange experiences with children were measured: help respondents provided to their children and help respondents received from their children. Respondents were asked whether they had provided the following to their adult children during the past month: (a) advice, encouragement, moral, or emotional support; (b) help with transportation, errands, or shopping; (c) work around the house; and (d) childcare. At the same time, respondents were asked whether they received any of the following from their adult child during the past month (a) advice, encouragement, moral or emotional support; (b) help with transportation, errands, or shopping; (c) work around the house; and (d) computer or internet assistance. The response categories for each of these transfer questions were *yes* versus *no*. The study also took into account other demographic characteristics that are related to parental divorce, parent-child relationships, and anticipated support from adult children. These characteristics include educational attainment (in years), the numbers of biological or adopted sons and daughters, personal income, and self-reported health (1 = *very poor*, 2 = *poor*, 3 = *fair*, 4 = *good*, and 5 = *excellent*). Respondents' age and race were not considered in the analysis because the sample was based on a cohort of Wisconsin high-school graduates in 1957, and there

was little age and race variation in the sample (99% between the age of 63 and 66 in 2004 and 98% white).

Analytic strategy

Three analyses were conducted. The first analysis answers whether older women are more likely than men to consider their children as potential sources of support when they need someone to talk to, to borrow \$250 in case of emergency, or to take care of them during illness. Percentages and chi-square tests were used to examine whether parents' perceptions varied by their gender. The second analysis answers whether divorce has different associations with anticipated emotional support, financial assistance, and sick care for men than for women. The analysis consisted of two logistic regression analyses: one for the entire sample and the other for ever-divorced respondents only. These two samples were analyzed separately because one measure of divorce--the length of time since divorce--can be measured only among those who had ever divorced. The last analysis answers whether the association between divorce experience and anticipated support is attributable to respondents' feelings of closeness to their children, past exchange of support, and demographic characteristics. Logistic regressions were estimated to predict the likelihood of expecting a child to provide emotional support, financial assistance, and sick care, after taking into account important covariates, including parent-child closeness, help provided to and received from adult children, educational attainment, the numbers of sons and daughters available for support, personal income, and health. These logistic regression analyses were conducted separately for men and women, as well as for the entire sample and ever-divorced respondents, respectively. A multiple imputation procedure was used to deal with missing cases, in which the missing value for a single variable was imputed as a function of other

covariates in the analysis (Acock 2005; Royston 2004, 2005). To preserve the randomness of the imputed variables, the results described below are based on 10 random, multiple-imputed replicates. All estimates were obtained using the statistical package Stata Version 9.2 (StataCorp 2007).

Results

Table 1 answers the first research question by showing the percentage of older men and women who said that they would call upon their adult children in times of need. In general, 90% of men and 95% of women expected some kind of support from their children. Both men and women perceived the availability of support from their children most for sick care, next for financial assistance, and least for emotional support. There were, however, gender differences in the anticipation of support. Women were more likely than men to expect the receipts of emotional support (73% versus 61%), financial assistance (76% versus 70%), and sick care (83% versus 80%) from their children. These gender gaps are all statistically significant, suggesting that older men are less likely than older women to consider their children as sources of support.

[Table 1 about here]

Descriptive statistics of other variables used in the analysis are also summarized in Table 1, separated by men and women. A majority of respondents stayed married, and more women than men were divorced or widowed at the time of interview. Approximately one quarter of the respondents had ever divorced. The length of time since the first divorce among ever-divorced respondents ranged from 4 months to 45 years (data not shown), with an average of 26 years. Men in the sample, on average, had received more education than women (14 years versus 13 years). Women had more daughters than men, but there was no difference in the number of sons.

Overall, men had higher incomes than women (\$64,500 versus \$28,500). About 8 in 10 respondents, regardless of their gender, rated their health as *good* or *excellent*.

Most respondents said that they were either *somewhat close* or *very close* to their children, though women were more likely than men to report feeling very close. Seven in 10 respondents reported providing some type of support to their adult children. Both men and women helped their children most with advice or emotional support, followed by transportation, errands, or shopping; childcare; and work around the house. Compared with older men, older women were more likely to offer advice or emotional support, but less likely to assist with childcare or work around the house. Probably because most respondents were still relatively healthy, although a substantial number of respondents said they gave support to their adult children (69% for men and 72% for women), fewer respondents reported receiving help from the children (42% for men and 57% for women). Both men and women were most likely to receive advice or emotional support and least likely to receive help with transportation, errands, or shopping from their children, with providing assistance with work around the house and with computers or the internet in the middle. Except for help with computers or the internet, older women were more likely than older men to obtain support from their adult children.

Given that older men and women differed in their anticipated support from adult children, the next question is whether and how divorce moderates gender differences in anticipated support. Results shown in Table 2 answer this question. The first analysis used the entire sample to examine the associations of current marital status and ever having been divorced to respondents' expectations of support (shown in the upper panel). The second analysis used ever-divorced respondents to examine the associations of current marital status and the length of time since divorce to their perceptions (shown in the lower panel).

[Table 2 about here]

The upper panel indicates that respondents who were divorced at the time of interview did not differ from married respondents in their anticipation of emotional support, financial assistance, or sick care from adult children. Nevertheless, the experience of ever having been divorced affected perceptions of financial assistance for both men and women, but had associations with perceptions of emotional support and sick care for men only. Specifically, holding current marital status constant, ever-divorced men were less likely than never-divorced men to consider their children as potential sources of emotional support, financial assistance, and sick care by 36% (odds ratio = .64), 43% (odds ratio = .57), and 61% (odds ratio = .39), respectively. Whereas ever-divorced women and never-divorced women did not differ in their expectations of emotional support and sick care, ever-divorced women were 37% (odds ratio = .63) less likely than never-divorced women to count on their children for financial assistance. Moreover, when the association between divorce and anticipated support was examined across men and women, it was found that ever-divorced men were less likely than ever-divorced women to perceive the availability of sick care. Together, these results suggest that the experience of ever having been divorced may be more important than current divorce status in predicting anticipated support from children among older adults. It is plausible that time plays an important role in shaping the association between divorce and anticipated support. To explore this issue further, I examined whether the passage of time since divorce is related to expected support. The results, based on a subsample of ever-divorced respondents, are shown in the lower panel of Table 2.

Although the length of time since divorce was unrelated to ever-divorced respondents' anticipation of emotional support or financial assistance from their adult children, it was

negatively associated with ever-divorced men's anticipated sick care. Explicitly, each additional year since divorce was associated with a 3% (odds ratio = .97) reduction in the odds of men's anticipated sick care. For those men who remained divorced as opposed to being married at the time of interview, the odds of expected sick care was reduced by additional 43% (odds ratio = .57). In other words, men who divorced earlier in their lives and remained divorced at the time of interview were the most vulnerable group of older adults.

Past studies have suggested that older adults' closeness to children, the provision and receipt of support to and from children, and demographic characteristics are important covariates of anticipated support from adult children. Tables 3 and 4 answer the last research question: Are these covariates associated with expected support from adult children for both men and women, and to what extent do these covariates mediate the association between divorce and expected support? The results show that some covariates had significant associations with expected support for both men and women. In particular, anticipated emotional support was related to parent-child closeness and the receipt of advice or emotional support for both men and women. Expected financial assistance was positively correlated with the number of sons, parent-child closeness, and the receipt of advice or emotional support for men as well as for women. Moreover, for both men and women, perceived availability of future sick care was associated with the number of daughters, parent-child closeness, and the receipt of children's help around the house.

[Table 3 about here]

Other covariates, however, had different associations with anticipated support for men than for women. Specifically, men's expected emotional support was positively associated with the provision of advice or emotional support to children and the receipt of computer assistance,

but women's expected emotional support was positively correlated with the number of daughters. Additionally, for men, anticipated financial assistance was positively related to their education and the provision of advice or emotional support to children, whereas for women, anticipated financial assistance was positively associated with the number of daughters. Finally, men's expected sick care was positively related to the number of sons, the provision of emotional support and childcare to children, and the receipt of emotional support or computer assistance from children, but women's expected sick care was positively associated with their own incomes. Together, these findings suggest that which covariates are related to anticipated support depends on the type of support examined and respondents' gender.

Given that some of these covariates are related to expected support, the next important question is whether these covariates mediate the association between divorce and expected support. This question is addressed by comparing the results shown in Tables 2 and 3. These covariates did not significantly change the associations of the divorce status to the expectations of financial assistance and sick care. After taking into account these covariates, however, ever-divorced men were no longer less likely than never-divorced men to talk to their children if they had a personal problem. The finding implies that for men, the divorce experience significantly changed how close they felt to their children, whether they gave or received advice or emotional support to or from their children, and whether they received computer assistance from their children. The distant feeling and lack of exchange experience may lead ever-divorced men to expect little emotional support from their children when needed.

Table 4 illustrates a similar analysis, but focuses exclusively on ever-divorced respondents to examine whether the association between the length of time since divorce and anticipated support is mediated by the same set of covariates. Some covariates were associated

with anticipated support for both men and women. Specifically, anticipated emotional support was positively related to the receipt of advice or emotional support for both men and women. Additionally, perceived availability of future sick care was positively correlated with the number of daughters for men as well as for women.

[Table 4 about here]

Nevertheless, other covariates were differently associated with anticipated support for men than for women. In particular, anticipated emotional support was associated with closeness to children, the provision of advice or emotional support, and the receipt of transportation or errands among men, but none of these covariates was associated with women's anticipated emotional support. Moreover, men's expected financial assistance was positively related to education, health, closeness to children, the provision of advice or emotional support, and the receipt of emotional support or work around the house. Yet, women's expected financial assistance was related to the numbers of sons and daughters and the provision of work around the house. Finally, anticipated sick care was positively correlated with closeness to children and the provision of advice or emotional support for men, but neither of these covariates was correlated with women's anticipated sick care.

A comparison of the results shown in Tables 2 and 4 sheds light on whether some of these covariates mediate the relations between the length of time since divorce and anticipated support. The comparison shows that taking these covariates into account did not change how the length of time since divorce and current divorce status were related to ever-divorced respondents' expectations of emotional support or financial assistance. Both divorce measures, however, were no longer negatively related to ever-divorced men's anticipation of sick care. These results suggest that the association between the length of time since divorce and ever-

divorced men's perceived availability of sick care from children is mediated by the number of daughters, felt closeness to children, and the provision of advice or emotional support to children.

Discussion

Expectations of support from adult children play an important role in the maintenance of older adults' well-being. Using a cohort of older adults from the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study, this study examines whether perceived availability of support in late life differs by gender and divorce. The analysis shows that although a vast majority of older adults would turn to their children for help, men were less likely than women to name their adult children as potential sources of emotional support, financial assistance, and sick care. Additionally, having been divorced was negatively related to expectations of support for both men and women. Compared with never-divorced women, ever-divorced women were less likely to anticipate financial assistance from their children. Ever-divorced men were less likely than never-divorced men to expect emotional support, financial assistance, and sick care from their children. Moreover, having been divorced was more detrimental for men than for women: Ever-divorced men were less likely than ever-divorced women to perceive the availability of sick care. Among ever-divorced men, those who divorced earlier in their lives and remained divorced at the time of interview were least likely to expect sick care from their adult children. Some of the negative associations between divorce and anticipated support, however, were attributable to parent-child closeness, past exchanges with children, and the respondents' demographic characteristics.

While providing important insights into anticipated support in old age, this study has several limitations. First, the WLS sample consists of a single cohort of high-school graduates in

1957, thus the results cannot be generalized to other age cohorts and older adults who did not complete a high school degree. Second, the WLS sample is mostly white. As a result, the findings may not be applicable to other racial and ethnic groups. Last, because proximity has been shown to be related to parent-child exchanges (Checkovich and Stern 2002; Spitze and Logan 1990), which in turn affects older adults' perceptions of support availability, proximity is an important covariate influencing anticipated support. The WLS, however, does not have information on children's proximity to respondents' residences, and thus this covariate could not be taken into consideration in the analysis.

Despite these limitations, the study contributes to our understanding of how gender and divorce affect older adults' expectations of support from their children. The findings have several important implications. First, men are less likely than women to perceive their children as potential helpers when they are in need. This difference may reflect the fact that older men usually do not rely on their children for support, and at the same time, it also suggests that when the need arises, men may not turn to their children for help. Consequently, older men who need help may be vulnerable. Second, divorce is negatively associated with anticipated support, and the association appears to be more detrimental for men than for women. These findings imply that family education or counseling programs should be designed to help divorced parents, particularly fathers, maintain parent-child closeness and encourage subsequent exchanges of support. Finally, the length of time since divorce is negatively related to anticipated sick care for men, suggesting that the more time passes by, the less sick care fathers expect from their children. Thus, family education or counseling programs should be made available to fathers immediately after divorce.

Findings derived from this study point to important avenues for further research. First, it is imperative for researchers to understand why some parents expect to receive little or no support from their children and how they fare during times of crisis. Prior research has shown that divorced people are more likely than married people to be involved in exchanges with friends, neighbors, or coworkers (Liebler and Sandefur 2002), and unmarried men are more likely than unmarried women to rely on formal support (Spitze and Ward 2000). Yet we know little about the quality and quantity of support from nonkin networks or formal sources, and the extent to which they can substitute for support from adult children. Second, although prior studies have shown that expected support is positively associated with older adults' well-being, high levels of expected support may have unintended negative consequences for older adults. For instance, older adults may feel devastated when the amount of support they actually receive from their children is far lower than the amount of support they anticipate their children would provide in times of need. Such disappointment could harm older adults. Future studies should examine how the magnitude of the gap between actual support and anticipated support affects older adults' well-being. Last, this study is limited to a group of mostly white high-school graduates in Wisconsin. Thus, it would be interesting to see if similar study findings could be found among nonwhite older adults living in the United States and white older adults living in other countries. A comparison between white and nonwhite populations in the United States would help us understand racial and ethnic differences in expectations of support from adult children. A comparison between white older adults in the United States and white older adults in other countries may help identify important cultural differences in expected support.

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Table 1. Characteristics of WLS Respondents by Gender, 2004

	Men		Women		diff
	<i>M</i> or %	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i> or %	<i>SD</i>	
Expected any support	89.84		95.27		***
Expected emotional support	61.43		73.00		***
Expected financial assistance	70.06		75.76		**
Expected sick care	80.39		83.46		*
Current marital status					***
Married	89.34		77.17		
Widowed	2.44		11.38		
Divorced	8.22		11.45		
Ever divorced	24.98		23.89		
Years since divorce among those ever divorced	25.04	9.31	26.31	9.34	
Educational attainment (12 – 20)	14.02	2.53	13.29	1.97	***
Number of biological or adopted sons	1.46	1.02	1.54	1.07	
Number of biological or adopted daughters	1.42	1.03	1.54	1.13	**
Personal income	64452.84	86202.65	28537.54	44055.42	***
Self-reported health					
Very poor (1)	0.41		0.28		
Poor (2)	2.36		2.12		
Fair (3)	14.40		14.13		
Good (4)	62.98		62.61		
Excellent (5)	19.85		20.85		
Closeness to children					***
Not at all close (1)	2.03		1.13		
Not very close (2)	3.50		1.98		
Somewhat close (3)	30.19		21.64		
Very close (4)	64.28		75.25		
Gave any help to adult children	68.67		72.08		
Advice, encouragement, moral, or emotional support	53.46		63.39		***
Transportation, errands, or shopping	29.70		28.20		
Work around the house	26.36		20.21		***
Childcare	27.91		23.18		**
Received any help from adult children	42.31		56.96		***
Advice, encouragement, moral, or emotional support	23.68		42.12		***
Transportation, errands, or shopping	8.87		13.29		***
Work around the house	14.89		20.92		***
Computer or internet	18.39		19.36		
<i>N</i>	1229		1415		

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)

Table 2. Estimated Odds Ratios from Logistic Regressions of Older Adults' Expectations of Support on Divorce Experience by Gender

	Emotional Support			Financial Assistance			Sick Care		
	Men	Women	diff	Men	Women	diff	Men	Women	diff
Total Sample									
Current marital status									
Married (omitted category)									
Widowed	1.21	1.46		.92	.86		.55	1.98*	*
Divorced	1.12	.90		.86	.79		.69	1.16	
Ever-divorced	.64**	.74		.57**	.63*		.39***	.77	*
Log likelihood	-814.57	-820.07		-740.61	-774.58		-583.63	-630.01	
<i>N</i>	1229	1415		1229	1415		1229	1415	
Ever-divorced Sample									
Current marital status									
Married (omitted category)									
Widowed	.90	1.16		.69	.43		1.55	1.25	
Divorced	1.08	.88		.74	.62		.57*	1.11	
Years since divorce	.99	1.00		.98	.98		.97*	1.00	
Log likelihood	-211.25	-213.15		-204.72	-209.00		-191.11	-163.62	
<i>N</i>	308	338		308	338		308	338	

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)

Table 3. Estimated Odds Ratios from Logistic Regressions of Older Adults' Expectations of Support on Divorce Experience and Other Covariates by Gender, Entire Sample (1229 Men and 1415 Women)

	Emotional Support			Financial Assistance			Sick Care		
	Men	Women	diff	Men	Women	diff	Men	Women	diff
Current marital status									
Married (omitted category)									
Widowed	1.02	1.37		.83	.69		.39*	1.23	*
Divorced	1.29	.94		1.07	.74		.75	1.01	
Ever-divorced	.74	.73		.61**	.64*		.45***	.86	*
Education	.98	1.04		1.09**	1.08		.94	.93	
Number of sons	1.00	1.01		1.19*	1.28***		1.27*	1.17	
Number of daughters	1.08	1.21**		1.07	1.16*		1.73***	1.57***	
ln(Income)	1.06	.97		.93	1.14		1.00	1.23*	
Health	1.06	1.14		1.10	1.12		1.14	1.12	
Closeness to children	1.70***	1.71***		1.41**	1.47***		1.65***	1.52***	
Gave help to adult children									
Advice or emotional support	1.63**	1.18		2.21***	1.11	**	1.88**	1.13	*
Transportation or errands	.97	1.24		.75	.99		1.45	1.22	
Work around the house	1.19	1.13		1.24	1.47		1.10	1.01	
Childcare	.99	.82		1.19	1.00		1.70*	1.52	
Received help from adult children									
Advice or emotional support	3.78***	2.86***		2.52***	1.92***		1.83*	1.38	
Transportation or errands	.78	.89		1.20	1.30		.71	1.38	
Work around the house	1.16	.98		1.39	.97		3.10**	3.27***	
Computer or internet	1.59*	1.08		1.34	1.10		1.80*	1.08	
Log likelihood	-731.47	-755.88		-666.31	-731.40		-498.33	-570.05	

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)

Table 4. Estimated Odds Ratios from Logistic Regressions of Older Adults' Expectations of Support on Divorce Experience and Other Covariates by Gender, Ever-Divorced Respondents Only (308 Men and 338 Women)

	Emotional Support			Financial Assistance			Sick Care		
	Men	Women	diff	Men	Women	diff	Men	Women	diff
Current marital status									
Married (omitted category)									
Widowed	.28	1.34		.10	.37		.36	1.17	
Divorced	1.71	1.07		1.06	.70		.71	1.15	
Years since divorce	1.02	1.01		1.00	.98		.98	1.00	
Education	.99	1.02		1.22**	1.07		.95	1.00	
Number of sons	1.30	.97		1.27	1.47*		1.25	1.23	
Number of daughters	1.04	1.21		1.19	1.48**		1.46*	1.79**	
ln(Income)	1.09	.79		.98	1.16		1.06	1.21	
Health	1.20	1.29		1.58*	1.39		1.29	1.04	
Closeness to children	1.75**	1.40		1.40*	1.37		1.55*	1.15	
Gave help to adult children									
Advice or emotional support	2.59**	1.34		2.32*	1.66		2.49**	1.80	
Transportation or errands	.83	1.07		.91	.56		1.60	1.89	
Work around the house	1.71	.92		1.30	2.58*		.76	1.67	
Childcare	1.48	.90		.70	.81		2.08	1.33	
Received help from adult children									
Advice or emotional support	4.48***	4.35***		4.18**	1.69		1.70	1.07	
Transportation or errands	.26*	.57		4.06	.90		1.26	1.27	
Work around the house	1.64	1.16		5.34*	.68	*	3.44	1.40	
Computer or internet	1.66	.84		2.28	1.15		1.42	2.78	
Log likelihood	-174.87	-187.74		-159.13	-186.94		-159.59	-141.46	

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)