Social Integration and Social Support in a Life Crisis: Effects of Macrosocial Change in East Germany

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The breakdown of the former communist system in East Germany was a major critical life event for those who left that country as well as for those who stayed behind. When the borders were opened, a longitudinal study was launched to examine the psychological readaptation process. Some indicators of social changes of migrants compared to nonmigrants were available. At three points in time over 2 years, both groups reported on their social bonding and social support. Migrants readjusted well by making new friends. In particular, young men were socially active, and more same-sex than opposite-sex friendships were established. The group of young migrants reported having received the most support, in particular when they had a partner. Anticipated support, in contrast, was highest for young single women who did not migrate. Results contribute to the understanding of social dynamics that occur after a stressful relocation.

KEY WORDS: migrants; refugees; life crisis; friendship; social support; social networks.

Social integration and social support represent important issues in themselves, but in times of macrosocial transformation they deserve particular attention by researchers. They serve not only as factors to explain outcomes on mental and physical health but also have to be considered as dependent variables when the world changes and when people must reframe their lives. Human beings establish and change personal relationships throughout

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their life courses. However, in times of crisis, social bonds can dissolve, which would make a stressful reestablishment of networks necessary. This process has been documented by research on critical life events, coping with stress, and social support (cf. Albrecht & Adelman, 1987; R. A. Bell, 1991; L. H. Cohen, 1988; Duck & Silver, 1990; Eckenrode, 1991; Hobfoll, 1988). The breakdown of close dyadic relationships, for example, by divorce or death (Stroebe & Stroebe, 1983), has been studied extensively, but the consequences of network disruption of large groups by migration is not that well documented (Kim, 1987; Lin, 1988).

Migration can be considered a nonnormative critical life event (see L. H. Cohen, 1988; Montada, Filipp, & Lerner, 1992; Williams & Westermeyer, 1988). As with other critical events (such as accidents, losses, divorce, illness), the corresponding psychological crisis may have a tremendous impact on an individual's personality development, psychosocial functioning, and health. It is necessary to cope not only with daily hassles that arise after migration, especially crowded living conditions in camps or gyms upon arrival, but also with the threat of long-term unemployment and the need to establish a new social network. Thus, the migrants are disadvantaged not only by higher demands than previously but also by heightened individual vulnerability towards stress because they have to deal with the loss of their vocational and social ties as well (Hobfoll, 1988, 1989; Jerusalem & Schwarzer, 1989, 1992; Lazarus, 1991). After migration, people need to substantially reestablish their networks, including friendships and intimate relationships. The migrants lose their home environment— sometimes under dangerous circumstances—and are no longer sheltered by protective factors, such as family, jobs, and housing. According to Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources theory, people should act to reinstate losses where these occur. Network loss, then, would be followed by efforts to regain social contacts.

The present study represents the only psychological panel study that was launched early enough to cover the dynamics of social transformations in Germany. Its aim was to investigate social bonding and psychosocial adaptation of migrants compared to nonmigrants. Both groups faced a dramatic macrosocial change when the former communist system broke down in 1989. Both, those who left the country and those who stayed behind, had to readjust to a novel situation that brought changes in the political, economic, and social environment. More than 300,000 East German citizens left their country and moved to West Germany. As part of this exodus, over 50,000 migrants settled in West Berlin. Some came via the West German embassies in Warsaw, Prague, or Budapest, or fled the country under other dubious and dangerous conditions, whereas a larger number crossed the border after the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989. The aim

of this study was to investigate the psychosocial coping and adaptation proc-
esses of these migrants in their new environment compared to those who
stayed behind. The particular focus of this analysis was on social changes.

Conceptual Differences: Social Integration and Social Support

A well-established social network is a structural prerequisite of feeling
socially integrated and emotionally accepted (Fischer, 1982; Laireiter &
Baumann, 1992; I. G. Sarason, Sarason, & Pierce, 1990; Scott, 1991; Thoits,
1992; Verbrugge, 1977). *Social integration* refers to the mere existence of
a quantity of social relationships, and it comprises the size of a network,
such as number of relatives and friends, and the frequency of contact with
these people. The number of active social ties determines one's degree of
embeddedness, with social isolation being one extreme end point. *Social
support*, on the other hand, refers to the function and quality of beneficial
social relationships. Within this functional perspective, perceived availabil-
ity of support can be distinguished from the activation of support when
needed. *Perceived available support* denotes the anticipation of supportive
action if needed. *Received support* describes actual social encounters where
a network member has provided tangible help, affection, or other kinds of
support. Received support, thus, refers to the actual receipt of helpful
transactions, which can be emotional, instrumental, or material. Perceived
and received support differ in terms of the point in time when they become
important. Perceived support may be most important under normal, eve-
ryday circumstances where people can usually cope on their own or have
to rely on help of others to a limited degree only. A general sense that
one is loved and cared for by others and that these others would help once
they are really needed should contribute to psychological and physical well-
being (B. R. Sarason, Pierce, & Sarason, 1990). Also, during the initial
encounter of a stressful event the perceived availability of support might
help to reduce stress appraisal insofar as the balance between threat and
coping assets may be more favorable (S. Cohen, 1992). However, once sup-
port actually has to be mobilized, discrepancies can occur. At this point,
support receipt may differ from support expected prior to the event, either
because the network does not respond in an appropriate manner or because
the available support has actually been underestimated (Dunkel-Schetter
& Bennett, 1990; Dunkel-Schetter, Blasband, Feinstein, & Bennett, 1992).
     It is likely that men and women do not experience macrosocial
changes in the same way when it comes to social losses and social bonding.
Gender differences in social networks and social support have been dis-
cussed by various authors (Fusilier, Ganster, & Mayes, 1986; Greenglass,

1982; Thoits, 1992; Verbrugge & Wingard, 1987). Throughout the life course, women have more close friends than men (R. R. Bell, 1981). Commencing in childhood, girls tend to develop more intimate interpersonal relationships than boys do, although boys tend to gang together in larger groups (Belle, 1989; Maccoby, 1966; Wheeler & Nezlek, 1977). Adult women still have a greater number of close relationships and also seemingly more extensive social networks than men (Laireiter & Baumann, 1992; McFarlane, Neale, Norman, Roy, & Streiner, 1981). Furthermore, women provide more emotional support to both men and women, and they get more help in return (Kessler, McLeod, & Wethington, 1985). Explanations for these discrepancies have been found in gender differences in emotionality and emotional expressiveness. Women emphasize intimacy and self-disclosure in their friendships. They are generally more empathetic, expressive, and disclosing than men (R. R. Bell, 1981; Burke & Weir, 1977). It is commonly more acceptable for women to confide in others, whereas the same behavior on the part of men is interpreted as weakness. Women invest more of themselves in the lives of their family members and friends than do men.

Research Questions

The first issue addressed in this analysis pertains to *social reintegration*. Do people who have recently experienced a network disruption by migration readjust to their novel environment by making new friends? This can be examined by inspecting the absolute number of new male and female friends, and also by comparing social bonding of migrants to that of nonmigrants. Those who stayed behind should not develop more friendships within such a short time. Gender differences are scrutinized as well as age differences. Since same-sex friendship is commonly preferred, it was assumed that women would make more female friends and men more male friends. Since younger people are generally more active, it is expected that they would knit more ties than older people.

The second issue aims at *social support*. Coping and adaptation can be facilitated by tangible assistance and emotional attachment. Does social support vary in line with social network formation? Do people feel supported when experiencing a critical life event? A distinction is made here between received support and perceived available support since the first may depend on actual helpful transactions during this life crisis, whereas the other may reflect trust and belief in others. It is expected that migrants receive support when adapting to the West, whereas for nonmigrants no particular support should be extended. It was also expected that women

would receive and perceive more support than men. Support may also depend on age and partnership, but no specific hypotheses are established since research on this topic is inconsistent.

The present analysis is a small part of a large research project, the major results of which fill an entire book (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1994). Previous analyses have focused on the specific role of unemployment after migration and its consequences on physical health (Schwarzer, Jerusalem, & Hahn, 1994) and on anxiety and depression (Schwarzer, Hahn, & Jerusalem, 1993). In contrast, the present paper extends also to a comparison group of nonmigrating East Germans but is focused exclusively on the development of social relationships in both groups.

METHOD

In early November 1989, immediately before the opening of the Berlin Wall, a study was launched to gain more detailed knowledge about the adaptation and coping processes of East Germans during a period of macrosocial change. The project was designed as a longitudinal study with three measurement points over 2 years.

After their arrival in West Berlin, the East German refugees were individually contacted in 27 temporary living quarters or emergency shelters (such as school gymnasiums, container houses, or dilapidated hotels) and were asked "to take part in a psychological investigation on their adaption process in the west." Participation was voluntary and was guaranteed anonymous. Instead of indicating names or addresses, a numerical code on the questionnaire was used to correctly assign each person to the longitudinal data set. Addresses were used only for the retrieval of participants, without being linked to the data set. The selection criterion was to be an adult living in one of the 27 temporary quarters for East German migrants. A total of 1,057 migrants agreed to participate. Since 18 of them were younger than 18 years old and did not count as adults, the first-wave sample comprised 1,039 persons. The majority had dropped out by the end of the 2 years because they could no longer be tracked down by the research group. Since data collection was anonymous, mainly those who remained in temporary housing could be correctly identified. But many changed addresses more than once, which made it almost impossible to track them down later. After 2 years, at Wave 3, a subsample of 235 migrants was still available (216 with complete data). This longitudinal subsample which took part in all three waves did not differ from the initial sample in terms of the variables of the present analysis (gender, age, partner status, social support). Although there was a dropout rate of 77%, this does not pose a

serious threat to the validity of the results since no systematic attrition factors were identified. All efforts were undertaken to maintain the original sample, and even 21 participants who had left the city returned their follow-up questionnaire by mail. Panel studies, in particular when conducted with such a unique sample, and when anonymity is required and no incentives are offered, typically suffer from considerable attrition rates. We also explored whether specific conditions of the migration, such as timing, made a difference, but this was not the case.

Shortly afterwards, 508 East Germans in the cities of Chemnitz, Dresden, and Leipzig were given the same questionnaires. There was no access to other samples in different locations. This part of the study was conducted under the direction of the third author, who managed to follow up a subsample of 227 persons who responded at all three points in time (202 of them with complete data).

The first wave took place in Fall/Winter 1989/1990, the second-wave data were obtained in Summer 1990, and the third wave was collected in Summer 1991. The participants filled out a questionnaire that took about 1 hour, measuring, among other variables, number of friends since migration, received social support, and perceived available support.

Participants

The present analysis was carried out on the basis of 418 East Germans who had participated in all three waves and who had complete data sets for all variables under consideration. While 216 of them migrated to the West (114 men, 102 women), 202 stayed in the east (57 men, 145 women). At the onset of the study, the mean age of the 247 women was 28 years (SD = 10.4), and the mean age of the 171 men was 31 years (SD = 9.8). Their age ranged from 18 to 67 years. It was not possible to recruit samples from both regions that were identical in terms of demographic indicators. The Eastern sample included more women and was younger (28 years) than the Western sample (31 years). By definition, the migrants were without jobs and housing when they arrived at the refugee shelters in 1989.

The majority of migrants did not come to West Berlin alone. Many were accompanied by kin or friends, but they also left a considerable part of their network behind. Table I gives an impression about whom the migrants left behind. Most of them went away from parents and friends. More men than women also left spouses and children behind.

Of the women migrants, 36.1% came with spouse and child, and 16.7% came alone with their child. Thus, more than half were mothers

Table I. Network Losses: Whom the Migrants Left Behind

	% Men	% Women
Mother	75.2	67.6
Father	59.5	48.6
Brother(s)	48	49.5
Sister(s)	50.4	42.9
Spouse	7.4	3.8
Child(ren)	24	15.2
Friends	71.1	78.1

(Table II). Of the men, 35.2% came alone, compared to 18.5% of the women.

Migrating with a partner and having a partner at the first assessment wave is not the same. A "partner" here is defined as having an intimate, lasting relationship with someone (i.e., either a married or an unmarried partner counted), whereas those who were separated or divorced counted as singles. Many close relationships broke down during or shortly after the migration while new ones were established and, therefore, a high degree of social mobility took place. At Wave 1, 60% of the migrants had a partner, at Waves 2 and 3, 65.3 and 69%, respectively. Of those who stayed behind in East Germany, 69.3, 68.2, and 74.5% had a partner at the three waves, respectively. This indicates that during and after the critical transition there was an increase in the establishment of close relationships.

Measures

Social bonding was assessed in the following way: At each wave, it was asked whether the person had meet new friends in the West since

Table II. Network Members Who Accompanied Migrants

	% Men	% Women
Parent(s)	4.8	1.9
Brother(s) and sister(s)	0.8	1.9
Spouse and child(ren)	30.4	36.1
Spouse/partner (no child)	12	13
Child(ren)	0	16.7
Friend(s)	14.4	10.2
Others	2.4	1.7
Migrating alone	35.2	18.5

arriving and whether these were men or women. The options were 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 or more. This choice was preferred over an open format in order to avoid unrealistic numbers. It is of note that Germans usually report fewer "friends" than Americans, because unlike the American meaning of the expression, the term "friend" is understood as "close or best friends," which is a remarkable cross-cultural semantic difference. It would have been even better to let the respondents write down the initials and indicate the quality and function of the specific relationships, but the study was originally designed for other purposes, and the instrument, therefore, had to be very parsimonious.

For the social support construct, a distinction was made between *received support*, which denotes a retrospective assessment of actual behaviors, and *perceived support*, which denotes the anticipation of the availability of support in times of need. The first scale consisted of eight items, such as "Friends and relatives have helped me look for a job" ($\alpha = .81$). The second scale consisted of eight items, such as "There are people whom I can rely upon when I need help" ($\alpha = .87$). All items were endorsed on a 4-point Likert-type scale. Obviously, both scales have face validity. Moreover, while the first of these two psychometric scales had been designed for this specific research the latter had been validated beforehand in various projects and can be regarded as a sound instrument to tap perceived support (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1994).

The present assessment tools have their advantages and disadvantages. It is of particular importance that separate measures were chosen for social integration and for received and perceived support, which renders this procedure diagnostically superior to many other studies on social resources. On the other hand, for reasons of parsimony we could not assess source-specific supports, which would have multiplied the number of items by the number of sources (such as friends, family, boss).

It would also have been of value to make a detailed assessment of the motives for migration as well as the motives for not migrating. This was, however, beyond the scope of the study. Only a straightforward question was posed asking for three motives for migration, namely, political, economical, or personal reasons. Of the men, 81.5% reported political reasons, 49.2% economic reasons, and 41.1% personal reasons. Of the women, 71.3% reported political reasons, 49.1% economic reasons, and 50% personal reasons. Since more women came with spouse and/or child, this alone would be a personal reason, either by accompanying one's spouse or by following a spouse who had migrated shortly before. There were more single men among the migrants, and they had more political motives. These reports can be biased by social desirability or other distortions and are not further analyzed.

RESULTS

The data analysis was organized in three sections. First, correlations were computed to see how *family status* was related to social integration and social support. Second, the process of *social integration* was examined by employing the number of new male and female friends as dependent variables. Immigrants were contrasted to East German residents, women were compared to men, and different age groups were studied. Third, changes in received and perceived *social support* were investigated in the same manner.

Relationships Between Family Status, Social Support, and Bonding

To explore the sources of supportive interactions, social integration was correlated with the two kinds of social support. Unfortunately, no direct evidence of social interactions with various sources was available (e.g., with family, friends, colleagues) because the parsimonious assessment instruments did not include such information. Indirect evidence, however, can be inferred from correlations with family status (0 = no partner, 1 = partner).

Table III contains this information separately for migrants and nonmigrants. In the sample of migrants, moderate to high relationships between family status and support emerged, but no association with new friends showed up. This underscores that support from partners has been received and is being anticipated, and that those who are single make about the same bonding attempts as those who are with a spouse. This pattern did not replicate in the subsample of nonmigrants. No substantial relationships emerged among any of the variables. That is, their social support must stem from sources other than partners.

Social Integration

Because family status (partner vs. no partner) was unrelated to social bonding, this potential factor was left unconsidered for the subsequent analyses. A repeated measures ANOVA was computed with number of new *male* friends as the dependent variable. Migration status (2 levels), gender (2), and age (3) served as between-subjects factors, while time (3) was used as a within-subjects factor. The sample was divided into three groups, with the youngest including persons below 28 years, the intermediate with persons between 28 and 37, and the oldest with participants above 37 years.

Table III. Correlations Between Family Status, Social Support, and Number of New Friends

	Migrant sample			Nonmigrant sample		
	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 3	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 3
Received support Time 1	.21[b]	.21[b]	.16[a]	−.02	.09	.10
Received support Time 2	.27[b]	.27[b]	.33[b]	−.04	.04	.06
Received support Time 3	.19[b]	.28[b]	.26[b]	.07	.09	.16[a]
Perceived support Time 1	.21[b]	.19[b]	.18[b]	−.10	.04	.03
Perceived support Time 2	.23[b]	.26[b]	.27[b]	.01	.05	.12
Perceived support Time 3	.18[b]	.29[b]	.25[b]	.06	.10	.17[a]
Male friends Time 1	−.04	−.02	.11	−.11	−.10	−.02
Male friends Time 2	.02	−.06	−.13	−.05	.18	−.03
Male friends Time 3	−.02	−.00	−.07	−.03	−.06	−.02
Female friends Time 1	.17	.10	.21	−.21	−.09	−.17
Female friends Time 2	−.02	.01	.06	.02	−.13	−.07
Female friends Time 3	.09	.11	.05	−.11	−.03	.08

[a] $p < .05$.
[b] $p < .01$.

All four factors yielded main effects: Migration Status $F(1, 401) = 36.03$, $p < .01$, Gender $F(1, 401) = 7.82$, $p < .01$, Age $F(2, 401) = 12.52$, $p < .01$, and Time $F(2, 802) = 21.75$, $p < .01$. Social bonding appeared to be stronger for immigrants, men, and younger people. The following interactions emerged: Migration Status × Time, $F(2, 802) = 12.60$, $p < .01$; Gender × Age × Time, $F(4, 802) = 2.50$, $p < .05$; Gender × Migration Status × Time, $F(2, 802) = 3.17$, $p < .05$.

The same procedure was applied for number of new *female* friends as the dependent variable. All four factors yielded main effects: Migration Status, $F(1, 398) = 0.84$, $p < .01$, Gender $F(1, 398) = 10.46$, $p < .01$, Age $F(2, 398) = 11.81$, $p < .01$, and Time $F(2, 796) = 28.66$, $p < .01$. Again, social bonding appeared to be stronger for immigrants, men, and younger people. The following interactions emerged: Migration Status × Time, $F(2, 796) = 19.90$, $p < .01$; and Gender × Time, $F(2, 796) = 6.53$, $p < .01$.

Figure 1 (a and b) describes the effects of migration status and time. For those who remained in East Germany, no significant changes in social bonding were reported. This was expected because people who do not leave their familiar surroundings have no particular reason to make new friends within a short period of time. Migrants, however, who had experienced a network disruption recently, reported a remarkable increase in new social bonds after their critical transition to the West. This is true for new male and female friends, although the absolute number of new male friends is larger than that of new female friends. The interaction between migration

status and time is reflected by a "scissor effect": From one point in time to the next there is a continuously widening gap between the number of friends in both samples. The triple interaction between gender, migration status, and time referred to the fact that there were many more women than men in the nonmigrating sample, and that women made more female friends while men made more male friends, which is to be examined next.

Figure 2 (a and b) illustrates the effects of gender and time on social bonding. Initially, there were no differences in women and men when it came to bonding. Over time, more male and female friends were made, and for each dependent variable significant gender differences emerged. Men made more new male friends than female friends, and women made more female friends. Thus, there is a consistent pattern indicating that the number of same-sex friends exceeds the number of opposite-sex friends. In addition, for female targets, an ordinal Gender × Time interaction came into view, pointing to a widening gap between men and women when it came to social bonding (Figure 2a). Although the cell means for male targets (Figure 2b) seem to express the same phenomenon even more so, the corresponding Gender × Time interaction did not reach significance.

It was expected that the young would be more likely to secure a larger number of network members than the old. Quantity and quality of personal relationships usually differ not only by gender but also by age. Young people were most active in making friends. The oldest age group was the least active but still made new friends. The triple interaction between gender, age, and time on number of new male friends indicates that more young men than old men succeeded in bonding as time went by.

In sum, there was evidence that a great deal of networking took place during the observation period. Those who migrated to the West made new
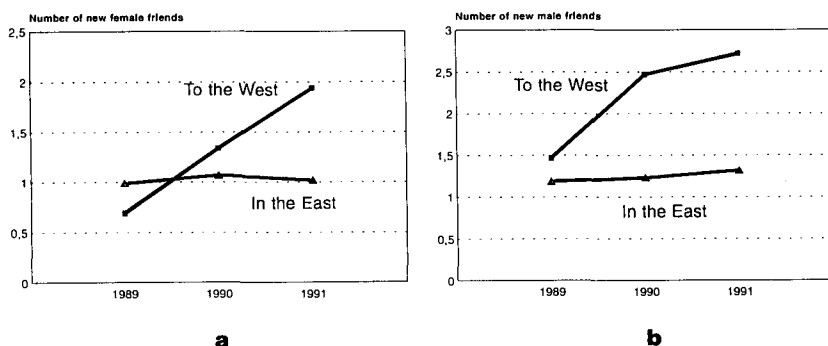

Fig. 1. Number of new female and male friends of migrants and nonmigrants.
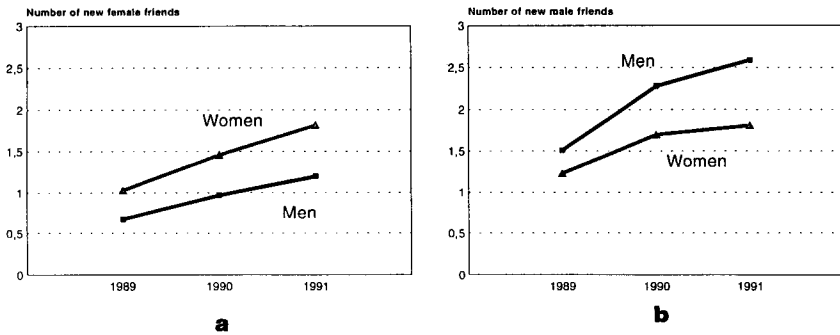
Fig. 2. Number of new female and male friends of women and men.

male and female friends. In particular, same-sex ties were established, and younger people were more active in this respect than older adults.

Social Support

Social integration is a prerequisite for social support. But an increment in network size does not necessarily result in more support. It is often sufficient to have one network member who provides help and attachment in times of need. Additional network members can be dispensable in many cases. Having a partner versus being single typically makes a difference when it comes to support. Thus, family status was included in the subsequent analyses. The following analyses aim at changes in received social support and perceived availability of support over time.

A repeated measures ANOVA was computed with *received social support* as the dependent variable. Migration status (2 levels), gender (2), age (3), and family status (2) served as between-subjects factors, while time (3) was used as a within-subjects factor. Two of the five factors yielded main effects: Family Status, $F(1, 376) = 17.87, p < .01$; and Age, $F(2, 376) = 14.54, p < .01$. Migration Status, Gender, and Time were not significant. Social support received was more frequently reported by younger people and by those with a steady partner. The following interactions emerged: Gender × Migration Status × Time, $F(2, 752) = 4.08, p < .05$; Gender × Migration Status × Time × Age $F(4, 752) = 3.64, p < .01$.

As a second step, a repeated measures ANOVA with the same design was computed with *perceived availability of support* as the dependent variable. Three of the five factors yielded main effects: Migration Status, $F(1, 380) = 15.92, p < .01$; Family Status, $F(1, 380) = 14.85, p < .01$; and Age, $F(2, 380) = 12.19, p < .01$. Time was not significant, and Gender also failed to reach the significant level ($p < .07$). Perceived availability of social support was reported more frequently by younger people, and those without a steady partner, less so by immigrants. The following interactions emerged: Migration Status × Time, $F(2, 760) = 5.62, p < .01$; and Migration Status × Family Status × Time, $F(4, 760) = 4.50, p < .05$.

Since the overall analysis suffered from small cell sizes, separate ANOVAs were computed with each of the four between-subjects factors as the basis for the following presentations. First, the effects of migration status and time on social support are described. Figure 3a shows social support received for immigrants compared to those who stayed in the East. There were no changes over time, but the nonmigrants reported significantly more support than the migrants. As was found in the above analysis, this effect was due to the circumstance that those in the East were younger and there were also more women. This phenomenon is reflected by higher-order interactions (Gender × Migration Status × Time, and Gender × Migration Status × Time × Age). The young women in the East were responsible for the higher Social Support levels. When these two factors, Gender and Age, were controlled, the East–West difference for received support vanished.

Perceived availability of support mirrored this finding but the East–West difference was more substantial (Figure 3b). The East Germans who remained embedded in their previous networks reported continuously the
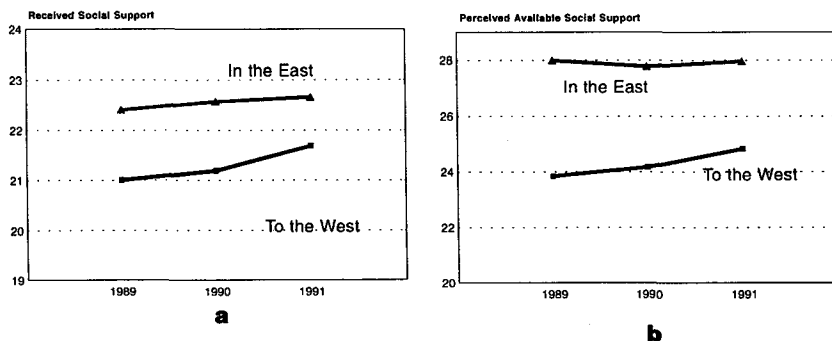

Fig. 3. Received and perceived social support of migrants and nonmigrants.

same high level of expectations for support, while the immigrants, in contrast, started out with low expectations and slowly developed a somewhat higher awareness of their support options.

Second, the effects of gender and time on social support are described (Figure 4, a and b). For received support, gender made a significant difference ($p < .01$). For perceived support, a corresponding tendency was observed ($p < .07$). This was in agreement with the theoretical assumptions since the literature documents superior support systems for women than for men. Levels of received support increased over time, but this was true for both sexes.

Third, the effects of age and time on social support are displayed (Figure 5, a and b). The younger the people were, the more support they
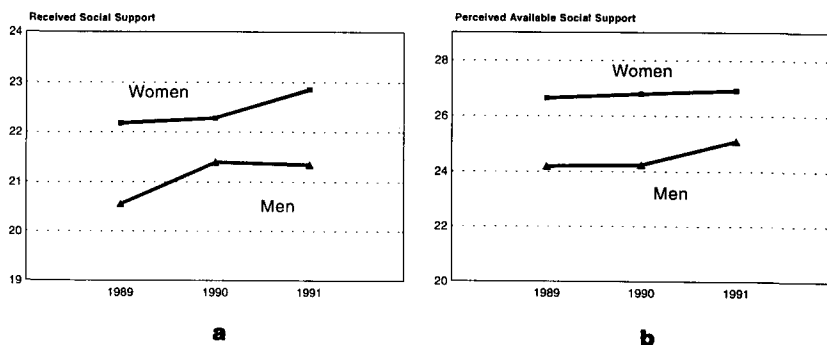

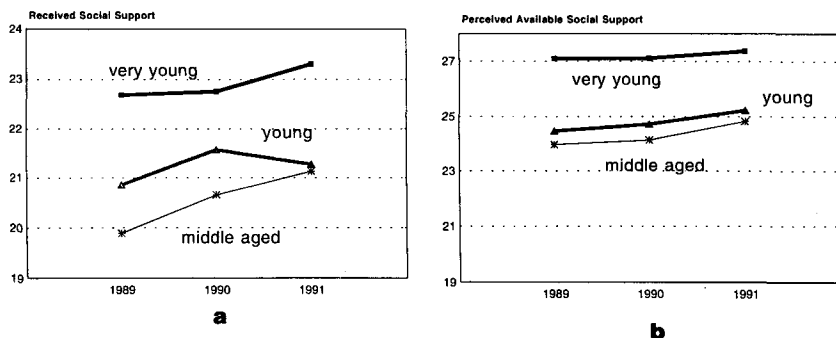Fig. 4. Received and perceived social support of women and men.

Fig. 5. Received and perceived social support broken down by age.

expected and received in this sample. This corresponds with the active net-
working of younger people as documented above. Chances are that the
expansion of social networks provided more opportunities for assistance
and attachment as reflected by the present data.

Finally, as given in Figure 6 (a and b), family status had an influence
on both kinds of support. However, puzzling results came into view. Being
involved in a romantic or marital relationship was associated with more
enacted support but less perceived availability of support. This can partly
be qualified by the triple interaction between family status, migration status,
and time. As time went by, more migrants became involved in intimate
relationships as part of their adjustment process while the overall level of
received and perceived support remained higher for nonmigrants.

DISCUSSION

In a crisis situation, active networking can represent an instrumental
way of coping. When challenges are faced, losses occur and social support
is needed, the mere existence of social ties is a crucial prerequisite for
instrumental coping. In this study, we found that an enlargement of net-
work size followed migration. Over 2 years, social bonding increased, but
this effect was based only on migrants, not on those who stayed behind.
The former had experienced a network disruption and were in a crucial
situation of life transition that required a reestablishment of social ties. In
contrast, those who stayed in East Germany remained at what might be a
"normal level" of social bonding activity. This is in line with data reported
by S. Cohen, Sherrod, and Clark (1986), who found attenuated test–retest
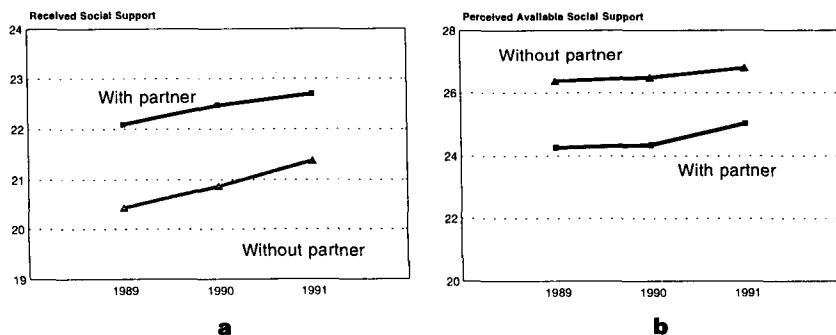
Fig. 6. Received and perceived social support broken down by family status.

correlations for several support and network measures among persons adapting to a new social environment. The present findings confirm what previous results and anecdotal evidence have shown: that the majority of immigrants readjusted well to the new situation (Schwarzer et al., 1993). Most of them did not happen to be passive or helpless victims of an overwhelming critical life event, but they were active agents of their own life change in facing the challenge of transition in a problem-solving manner and in rebuilding their social network. A prototype is the young male adventurer who already has or gains a partner and who establishes a resourceful buddy system within the 2 years after migration.

Migrants, although making more friends, did not report an increase of support, which is astonishing since a great deal of assistance, including tangible help, had been offered by the government and by relief agencies. Migrants, compared to nonmigrants, started out with low received support and low perceived available support. Obviously, there were differences between migrants and nonmigrants in terms of social resources, that is, migrants did not feel well embedded and assisted in the old system, which might have been one of the reasons they had left it in the first place. It has been shown that migrants left a considerable network behind, but it is not known how supportive this prior network really was. It is possible that prior social relationships were not close enough to prevent migration. Dissatisfaction with one's network might have even been on additional motive to leave East Germany. Unfortunately, the data base does not allow further exploration of this interesting issue.

Women and men formed ties with both women and men, but same-sex friendships were preferred. Women reported more received support and tended to perceive more available support, which was expected since the literature documents that, on the average, women provide, perceive, and receive more support than men (Burke & Weir, 1977; Cauce, Felner, & Primavera, 1982; Greenglass, Burke, & Ondrack, 1990; Henderson, Byrne, & Duncan-Jones, 1981; Hirsch, 1979; Kessler et al., 1985; Stokes & Wilson, 1984). On the other hand, this also depends on the sources of support (friends, family, or partner) and on various circumstances. It also implies higher costs for women, such as role conflict, stressful obligations, and so forth (Belle, 1982; Burda, Vaux, & Schill, 1984; L. H. Cohen, McGowan, Fooskas, & Rose, 1984; Harris, 1992; Rook, 1992; Thoits, 1992; Vaux, 1988). Unfortunately, the present data fail to further elucidate this issue because it had not been possible to obtain source-specific information. It is also of note that younger people made more friends and received more support than "older" ones (i.e., those above 37 years of age).

An unexpected result emerged when family status was differentially related to the two kinds of support. Having a partner boosted the amount of

support received, and, paradoxically, was associated with lower levels of per-ceived available support. This is reminiscent of the many discrepancies that can occur between perceived and received support (Dunkel-Schetter & Ben-nett, 1990). One can speculate that people who are in a partnership and who actually receive aid, in particular during and after a crisis situation, may rec-ognize this aid realistically and report it accordingly. In contrast, the same people who are in a stable intimate relationship for a while may come to realize that support also has its limits and that they mainly have to take care of themselves. How can being involved in a close relationship be associated with more enacted support but with less perceived availability of support? Experience with frequent social interactions may reduce positive illusions of support and promote modest and realistic expectations. It is also possible that support has nothing to do with the interactions within the relationship itself but that, for example, married couples actually receive more tangible help in the society than singles. From what was found one can conclude that perceived available support is somewhat disconnected from the actual expe-rience of the life transition. Living in the East, being a woman, being very young, and having no partner represents a pattern that is linked to high an-ticipation of support if needed. This might be similar to "support illusions" in those who have not yet undergone partnership stress, disappointments by others, and probably few if any life crises. Perceived support can be consid-ered an optimistic personality trait (B. R. Sarason et al., 1990), as long as reality has not hit. Received support, on the other hand, more accurately reflects what social transactions have occurred in the past. Again, this issue remains unresolved here because it is beyond the scope of the data set.

Interpretation of some of the above results is difficult due to several higher-order interactions. In particular the finding that family status was related to perceived support differently than to received support could also be reframed as a product of some moderators. When migrants form ro-mantic relationships over time while readjusting to their new environment, and if this becomes a source of support then this would be more or less reflected by perceived as well as received support; however, this can be masked by the presence of young female East Germans in the analysis who are not yet married but have a generally high expectation of support in times of need. Interactions deserve attention because they qualify the main effects, and higher-order interactions need to be considered because they might qualify first-order interactions that otherwise would be misinter-preted. But the issue here is the real existence of such interactions. In a four-way ANOVA, for example, 15 hypotheses are tested which implies the danger that the alpha level gets out of control. This is in particular the case if no specific interaction hypotheses were formulated. Thus, the sta-tistically significant higher-order interactions in the present study could very

well be spurious findings or Type I errors. Their real existence has not been demonstrated and any substantial interpretation has to be done with great caution.

The present analysis was further limited to effects on social bonding and support, but did not aim at further psychological effects. However, it is obvious that friendship and support can have beneficial effects on psychosocial adaptation, well-being, and health. Self-reported health was indeed superior in persons who received social support compared to those who lacked support. In particular, support was able to buffer the deleterious impact of prolonged unemployment (Schwarzer et al., 1994). However, the general improvement of well-being cannot be exclusively tracked down to specific sources because too many potential factors not under the control of the field researcher are typically involved in such kinds of transitions. Further analyses should deal with the possible effects of friendship on these variables.

The main limitation of this study lies in the lack of information about detailed social encounters that took place after migration. It would have been advantageous to know more about the frequencies of social contacts, ratings of social distance, and perceptions about the distinct roles that friends played in the coping and adaptation process. More data on the quality of interpersonal relationships and on the dynamics of the onset and offset of friendships are required to obtain a full understanding (Bradbury & Fincham, 1991; Clark & Reis, 1988; Jones & Perlman, 1991). Further studies on migrants' social bonding should take this into account.

This study provides an unusual research example of social changes after social network disruption by migration. Integrating into an unfamiliar community and foreign society can be considered a stressful experience that adds to other stressors of migration, such as unemployment, financial insecurity, and lack of housing. The East Germans under study have been successful in establishing new social ties, a process that occurred in conjunction with a continuous decline in anxiety and depression, as was found in a different analysis (Schwarzer et al., 1993). The study contributes to our understanding of migration stress and social resources. It has to be considered that all kinds of cognitive stress appraisals may be prevalent in a heterogeneous group of refugees or migrants. Some appraise the situation as harm or loss, others as threat, and still others as a positive challenge or even benefit (Lazarus, 1991). This heterogeneity of appraisals may be reflected within families when, for example, the husband decides to migrate in order to improve the family's life situation, whereas his spouse follows very reluctantly, regretting the loss of her social environment. The children may have different views. These appraisals can be further aggravated or moderated by the specific conditions when, for example, the actual process

of migration occurs under dangerous circumstances. Subsequent readjustment depends also on the expectancies associated with the decision to move and with the resources that were lost and gained. The present findings and anecdotal evidence suggest that the migrants, in particular the young men, coped well with self-imposed challenges. Network losses were reported, but the prior network may have been not very close emotionally and not supportive. Further studies need to measure how close the participants felt to those they lost. Moreover, being accompanied by others can be a mixed blessing. Others can be a burden or can be of assistance, or both. This, however, is not a unique phenomenon of this study, but generalizes to many other contexts where social integration emerges as a double-edged sword. It is indispensable to separate social integration from social support and to subdivide the latter into received and perceived available support, as was done in this study (Schwarzer & Leppin, 1991). But it was also found that this was not enough. Dimensions of support, such as emotional, tangible, or informational support, and sources of support should be measured in addition. In crisis situations, usually relief agencies are established and benefits are available that incorporate a different nature of support than what is typically transmitted in close relationships.

Process and context are essential components of the transactional stress theory of Lazarus (1991). One of the major advantages of the present study was its longitudinal design that allowed the examination of developmental trends over a large time-span, although more detailed process information would have been of value. But it is also of importance that context factors be more closely examined because they can interact with other factors. As was found in the correlation analysis, for example, migration status emerged as a moderator for the partner/support relationship. In migrants, support was positively related to having a partner. In nonmigrants, no significant relationship appeared. Family status is only one straightforward context factor, and others need to be taken into account too. In particular, for those who remained in East Germany, the changing context requires more attention. We know more about the conditions of migration than about macrosocial transformations that have affected life in the East. The network losses of the migrants represent the other side of the coin of the network impairment of East Germans who lost loved ones by migration.

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