A model of how five key facets of life events are related to one another and influence mental health and functioning was examined. The facets are the experience of control over, anticipation of, pleasantness from, stress generated by, and adjustment to life events. Multivariate analyses of data from 420 adult male respondents yielded results that were largely consistent with the hypothesized model. The results suggested that control over and anticipation of life events influenced the perceived stress produced by the events and the ability to adjust to them. In turn, it appeared that such stress and adjustment influenced mental health and functioning. The effects of control and anticipation on mental health and functioning were indirect only. Contrary to our hypothesis, control seemed to heighten perceived stress; but control, as well as anticipation, appeared to increase the ability to adjust. Whereas previous studies found no effect of desirable events on well-being, this study found that pleasant events had a beneficial effect. The discussion examines the implications of the findings for future research.

In the nearly 20 years since Holmes and Rahe (1967) published the Social Readjustment Rating Scale, there has been a voluminous literature on how life events influence health, adjustment, and well-being. This literature has produced considerable evidence that life events, particularly negative ones, are associated with poor physical and mental health (for a comprehensive review see Thoits, 1983).
This study deals with three questions that arise from this literature. First, why is the evidence for a link between the amount of control over and anticipation of life events and mental health so inconsistent (Thoits, 1983)? Second, how do multiple events have their deleterious effect on well-being? Are their effects additive as assumed by the current practice of summing life change (or stress rating) scores, or alternatively, do they interact with earlier events exacerbating the effects of later ones?

Third, what constitutes a negative event? There is considerable evidence that negative events have particularly deleterious effects on mental health (e.g., Fontana, Hughes, Marcus, & Dowds, 1979; Gersten, Langner, Eisenberg, & Orzek, 1974; Mueller, Edwards, & Yarvis, 1977; Ross & Mirowsky, 1979; Vinokur & Selzer, 1975). Despite the demonstrated importance of distinguishing between negative and positive events, there is still an absence of information on those basic properties of negative events that determine their adverse effects on well-being. In a similar vein, there is the question of why positive events are not found to have beneficial effects on well-being (or preventive effects on poor mental health), whereas negative events almost always appear to adversely influence mental health and well-being.

Each of the three issues mentioned above are elaborated on briefly. Then these issues are integrated into an interrelated set of hypotheses or a theory regarding the links among critical properties of life events and how they influence well-being. First, however, we define control, stress, adjustment, and well-being because they are prominent in the ensuing set of hypotheses.

In this study control refers to the person's ability to regulate the onset, intensity, and cessation of the life event (Cohen, 1980). The stress of a life event refers to a state of imbalance, or a misfit, between the demands posed by the event and the response capacity of the individual to meet the demands (e.g., French, Rodgers, & Cobb, 1974; McGrath, 1970). Conversely, adjustment refers to the extent to which the person has reached new person-environment fit in recovering from the stress or demands posed by the event. Finally, well-being is conceived of in two complementary ways: First, it is conceived of in terms of the person's emotional and role functioning, that is, the ability to handle interpersonal role relationships, problems and associated emotions. Second, it is conceived of as a low level of symptomatology associated with poor mental health.

**Why Don't Control Over and Anticipation of Life Events Influence Mental Health?**

A considerable body of research demonstrates that lack of control over stressors and inability to predict their onset interferes with people's abilities