

1990

## Factors Associated With Marital Adjustment In Remarriage

Randall David Martin  
*Indiana State University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholars.indianastate.edu/etds>

---

### Recommended Citation

Martin, Randall David, "Factors Associated With Marital Adjustment In Remarriage" (1990). *Full List of Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 814.  
<https://scholars.indianastate.edu/etds/814>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by Sycamore Scholars. It has been accepted for inclusion in Full List of Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Sycamore Scholars. For more information, please contact [dana.swinford@indstate.edu](mailto:dana.swinford@indstate.edu).

## **INFORMATION TO USERS**

**This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.**

**The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.**

**In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.**

**Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.**

**Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.**

# **U·M·I**

· University Microfilms International  
A Bell & Howell Information Company  
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA  
313 761-4700 800 521-0600



**Order Number 9120993**

**Factors associated with marital adjustment in remarriage**

**Martin, Randall David, Ph.D.**

**Indiana State University, 1990**

**U·M·I**  
300 N. Zeeb Rd.  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106



## VITA

Randall D. Martin was born on March 22, 1961 in Stamford, CT. He was raised in Ridgefield, CT. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology and English from Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, NC in 1983. He received a Master of Science degree in counseling from the State University of New York at Albany in Albany, NY in 1984. From 1984 to 1985 he worked as a family therapist at Parsons Child and Family Center in Albany, NY. In 1985 he entered the Ph.D. program in counseling psychology at Indiana State University in Terre Haute, IN. Throughout the doctoral program, he completed practica and held several part-time positions as an individual, group, couples, and family therapist. In 1989, he completed a full-time, year long internship at South Shore Mental Health Center in Quincy, MA. At the internship's termination, he joined that organization as a staff psychologist. He currently works on the Crisis Intervention Team in the Child and Adolescent Unit at South Shore Mental Health Center.



FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH MARITAL ADJUSTMENT IN REMARRIAGE

---

A Dissertation

Presented to

The School of Graduate Studies

Department of Counseling

Indiana State University

Terre Haute, Indiana

---

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

---

by

Randall D. Martin

August 1990

## APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation of Randall D. Martin, Contribution to the School of Graduate Studies, Indiana State University, Series III, Number 493, under the title Factors Associated with Marital Adjustment in Remarriage is approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree.

7/12/90

Date



Chairperson



Committee Member



Committee Member



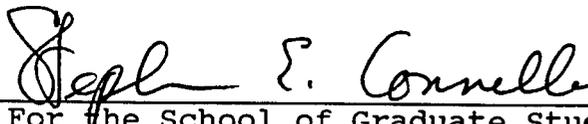
Committee Member



Committee Member

7/25/90

Date



For the School of Graduate Studies

## ABSTRACT

The empirical study of marital adjustment in remarriage has been inadequate to date. Much of the research in this field has lacked scientific rigor in terms of: 1) studying remarried families without differentiating between the various subtypes of stepfamilies; 2) utilizing non-standardized instruments to measure variables; and 3) omitting certain independent variables from consideration. This study addressed all three of the above concerns. It focused on one subtype of remarried families: simple stepfather families. It utilized standardized psychometric measurement devices. Lastly, it focused on several independent variables which had not been adequately studied.

The sample consisted of sixty-four remarried females. Subjects were recruited primarily through the Stepfamily Association of America and posted notices. All subjects were paid for their participation. The research design was a stepwise regression analysis. The criterion variable was marital adjustment. Six predictor variables were utilized: time between physical separation and remarriage; current combined yearly income; current amount of contact with ex-spouse; divorce adjustment (quality of contact with ex-spouse); family environment; and social support from friends. The data analysis yielded two factors (family environment and divorce adjustment) which were found to contribute significantly to the regression equation [ $F(2, 61) = 9.603, p < .0001$ ]. The regression equation accounted

for twenty one percent (21%) of the variance. Family environment and divorce adjustment were found to vary as marital adjustment varied. In addition, several statistically significant positive correlations were found: 1) family environment and divorce adjustment; 2) social support from friends and divorce adjustment; 3) social support from friends and time between separation and remarriage. No correlations were found between marital adjustment and 1) current combined yearly income; 2) social support from friends; 3) time between physical separation and remarriage; and 4) amount of contact with ex-spouse. The results suggest that healthy resolutions of previous relationships are important for the development of current relationships. An alternate explanation suggests that developing a positive marital relationship aids in the resolution of divorce grief. The results also highlight the strong relationship between marital adjustment and family environment in remarriage, suggesting that harmonious adult-child and adult-adult relationships go hand in hand. Other implications and recommendations for future research are cited in the body of the paper.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to thank all of those people who were supportive throughout the various stages of this project. The doctoral committee members, Drs. Elizabeth Schilson, J. Laurence Passmore, Reece Chaney, Frank W. Jerse, and Walter Sullins, were thoughtful, efficient, and responsive. The Indiana State University Counseling Department instructors and staff were invaluable in providing guidance and assistance. All of the subjects who volunteered their time are deeply thanked, as are the chapter presidents of the Stepfamily Association of America. The author appreciated the support of his close friends throughout this process. Lastly, the author wishes to express gratitude to his parents, David and Delores Martin, for their encouragement and love. This work is dedicated to my sister, Cynthia Jean Martin.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS . . . . .	v
LIST OF TABLES . . . . .	viii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
Developmental Importance of the Family System . . . . .	1
Need for Empirical Studies of Remarried Families . . . . .	2
Unique Developmental Hurdles of Remarried Families . . . . .	3
Greater Probability of Divorce in Remarried Families . . . . .	11
Relative Dearth of Research on Remarried Families . . . . .	11
Purpose of the Study . . . . .	12
Statement of the Problem . . . . .	19
General Hypothesis . . . . .	20
Operational Definitions . . . . .	20
Delimitations . . . . .	21
2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE . . . . .	23
Research on Marital Satisfaction in Remarriage . . . . .	24
Perceived Social Support from Family and Friends . . . . .	32
Perceived Family Environment . . . . .	37
Perceived Relations with the Former Spouse . . . . .	42

Developmental Theories of Remarriage . . . . .	50
Conclusions . . . . .	52
3. PROCEDURE . . . . .	55
Description of the Sample . . . . .	55
Research Design . . . . .	56
Instruments . . . . .	56
Null Hypothesis . . . . .	67
Data Collection . . . . .	68
Statistical Treatment . . . . .	68
4. RESULTS . . . . .	69
Characteristics of the Sample . . . . .	69
Stepwise Multiple Regression Data . . . . .	71
Correlations Between the Variables . . . . .	71
5. SUMMARY . . . . .	76
Summary of the Study . . . . .	76
Statement of the Problem . . . . .	79
Statement of Procedures . . . . .	80
Research Hypothesis Used . . . . .	81
Results . . . . .	81
Conclusions . . . . .	82
Implications . . . . .	83
Recommendations for Future Research . . . . .	88
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	90
APPENDIXES . . . . .	96
A. Demographic Questionnaire . . . . .	96
B. Introductory Letter . . . . .	99
C. Instructions to Subjects . . . . .	100

## LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1 Means and Standard Deviations of Criterion and Predictor Variables . . . . .	73
Table 2 Summary Table . . . . .	74
Table 3 Correlation Matrix . . . . .	75

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Developmental Importance of the Family System

Counseling psychology as a field has stressed the examination of normal developmental processes in peoples' lives. Rather than focusing on peoples' psychological deficits, the counseling psychologist tends to look at individuals' strengths, that is, their functional methods of coping. By examining peoples' reactions to stressors, counseling psychologists have been able to identify some that are more helpful than others, and they have been able to map out some of the normal developmental sequences in various populations. These developmental processes have been studied at the individual level, as in the works of Erik Erikson (1959) and Daniel Levinson (1978). They have also been studied at the familial level, as in the family life cycle works of Carter and McGoldrick (1980), Papernow (1984) and Sager, Brown, Crohn, Engel, Rodstein, and Walker (1983).

The family system has been recognized as the most influential support system for its members' emotional and cognitive development. As such, it is a vital area of

empirical inquiry for psychology and its related disciplines.

### Need for Empirical Studies of Remarried Families

Many clinical, theoretical and empirical models of family functioning have been developed. These models, however, have been constructed using mostly "clinical" families; that is, families that have been identified, by themselves or others, as needing psychological assistance. It has been acknowledged by several researchers that the study of "normal" families would be desirable, in order for researchers and clinicians (and ultimately families) to have a portrait of how most families deal with the stress engendered by many developmental tasks.

Studies of nonclinical families have become more popular in recent years, and these studies have indeed contributed to our knowledge of normal developmental processes. Despite these recent research endeavors, there are still some types of families which have been inadequately examined. One type of family which has suffered relative neglect in the research literature have been remarried families (Goetting, 1982; Esses & Campbell, 1984). Although the topic of remarriage is increasingly found in popular books and the media, these accounts are often based on "clinical" or anecdotal information. While there is no doubt that much of the "clinical lore" regarding remarried family dynamics has merit, the empirical validation of these conceptualizations has lagged behind.

There is a clear need for more experimental research to confirm (and disconfirm) hypotheses about remarried families espoused by the clinical and lay communities. Remarried families have increased in number and in frequency of occurrence in recent years, and projections predict that these trends will continue throughout the 1980's (Macklin, 1980). In fact, in 1984, remarriages represented 32 percent of all marriages in America (Price-Bonham & Balswick, 1980).

The specialized study of remarried families is warranted in that these families are emerging as a growing type of family constellation. Remarried families typically undergo many different and additional developmental stressors as compared to first-married families. It is generally assumed that these families seek counseling more often than first-married families; most clinicians would probably agree that remarried families are "overrepresented" in their caseload. In fact, Seagrave (1980), in an extensive review of the literature in the United States and Britain, found that the divorced utilize mental health services at a rate four or five times as great as the rate married persons do. Statistics show that the overwhelming majority of divorced people remarry. We often find these people utilizing mental health services.

#### Unique Developmental Hurdles of Remarried Families

In terms of their unique developmental hurdles and stressors, the following differences between remarried and nuclear families are gleaned from Treating the Remarried

Family (Sager, Brown, Crohn, Engel, Rodstein, and Walker, 1983). The authors discuss structural differences, differences in the purpose of the system, differences in the tasks of the system, differences in the nature of bonding, differences influencing the adults and children, and forces that impinge upon the remarried system.

Structural Differences:

- 1) A remarried family may consist of two adults with children who have been parented by only one of those adults.
- 2) Parental tasks are not exclusive to the marital dyad; these duties may be shared with a previous spouse.
- 3) The parent-child unit predates the marital pair, and bonds between parent and child are usually stronger than in nuclear families due to greater interdependence during the single-parent phase.
- 4) Members also may belong to another family system.
- 5) Membership in the family may not be as clearly defined as it is in a nuclear family (e.g., visiting children may be considered "part-time" family members). Family boundaries may also be legally blurred (e.g., in terms of stepparent-stepchild legal rights and obligations, etc.).
- 6) An increased number of significant others (e.g., in-laws, former in-laws) may have a supportive or divisive influence.

### Differences in the Purpose of the System:

1) Nuclear and remarried families share the goals of establishing an interdependent marital partnership. However, the remarried partner(s) attempts to achieve those goals against the backdrop of failure (divorce) or loss (death of former spouse), which may affect their adjustment to the current relationship.

2) Procreation, typically a goal in nuclear families, is not always a goal in remarried families. This can be a source of contention for many remarried couples.

### Differences in the Tasks of the System:

1) Both nuclear and remarried families attempt to consolidate the marital system and establish clear boundaries around the spousal dyad. This may be more difficult in remarried families due to the existence of the "remarried suprasystem" (Sager et al., 1983). The former spouse(s), child(ren), in-laws and others may continue to play an important role in one or both of the remarried partner's lives.

2) Partners in remarriage may be more likely to experience differences in life-cycle stages, and this may disturb the marital life cycle.

3) Partners in a remarriage may become "instant parents," whereas first-marriage partners usually move more slowly towards parenthood. Models for stepparent behavior are largely lacking in the media, except for negative "wicked stepparent" myths.

4) Clinical lore suggests that there are usually more conflicts around childrearing styles between remarried partners than between first-married partners. In addition, the stepchild may not accept parenting from her/his stepparent.

5) Remarried partners may need to deal with problems resulting from a) projections of former spouse onto current spouse, b) jealousy of new mate's former spouse, and c) loyalty conflicts (e.g., spending time with new spouse versus biological child). A child who has had the exclusive attention of his custodial parent during the single parent phase may react negatively to the attention being given by his parent to the stepparent. All of these problems may make intimacy difficult to achieve in the remarried relationship.

#### Differences in the Nature of Bonding:

1) The remarried family members' bonds with each other may be less resilient, since they have experienced failure and/or loss in the previous family. Fears of further loss may lead to a lesser investment of emotional energy.

2) Family milestones (e.g., birthdays, religious rituals, graduations, weddings, funerals, etc.), which typically enhance bonding in nuclear families, may have a different effect in remarried families. In the latter, milestones may heighten feelings of sorrow and loss for the nuclear family.

3) The remarried family has less of a sense of history

and continuity than the nuclear family. The nuclear family's history strengthens individual members' sense of family belonging; remarried families have less of this to aid in the bonding process.

4) Spontaneity is more difficult in remarried families as issues of time, money, and commitments are shared with persons outside the immediate system.

5) Remarried family members may not be given the support and acceptance by extended family members that is typically given to first-married families. This lack can impact the bonding process.

#### Differences Influencing the Adults:

1) In remarried families, it is possible that "unfinished business" regarding the ex-spouse will affect the spousal bond. This is further exacerbated by continued contact with the ex-spouse on matters of child support and/or visitation.

2) While nuclear family partners tend to bring transference influences based largely on parental introjections, remarried family partners have additional transference issues involving the former spouse.

3) Remarried partners may bring more realistic expectations for married life into the remarriage. Alternately, they may abide by "Brady bunch" myths of stepfamily unity.

### Differences Influencing the Children:

1) Children usually have no say in the decision to divorce. They often feel helplessness, anger, guilt, divided loyalties, insecurity, and identity diffusion. Their behavior may reflect an attitude of lack of commitment to the remarried family and may be evident in noncooperativeness and other problem behaviors.

2) Often the child(ren)'s roots are disrupted or displaced, geographically and socially.

3) The existence of stepsiblings may alter a child's ordinal position in the family, and this may lead to different (and sometimes problematic) role definitions.

4) The incest taboo is not as strong in remarried families.

5) In the single-parent stage, parents often put their children into spouse-like roles, utilizing the child as a confidant for their adult concerns. This encourages strong interdependence between parent and child, which may inhibit the consolidation of a functional remarried family system.

6) Adolescent children, in particular, may have trouble developing a sense of loyalty and belongingness to the remarried family. They sometimes come to be ignored in these systems.

7) The newness of the remarried system may make a child's role definition ambiguous and this can be anxiety-provoking.

8) Either or both biological parents may explicitly or

implicitly demand a child's loyalty, particularly in the separation and single parent stages and at the time of the remarriage. A child with loyalty conflicts may act-out (e.g., against the stepparent) or have intense feelings (e.g., hostility toward remarital relationship; anxiety and guilt if the child likes the stepparent; general anger at the remarried system for dashing the hope of parental reconciliation).

Forces that Impinge on the Remarried System:

1) Children may become messengers between the biological parents, and they may "consciously and/or unconsciously slant information to be destructive/helpful to a parent's new relationship. This much power is not in the child's best interest" (Sager et al., p.33).

2) Former spouses may help or hinder the remarried system's development. They may create conflict, guilt, and financial problems, especially with respect to the care of their children. Alternately, they may participate in co-parenting in such a way as to facilitate the remarried system.

3) Grandparents from the nuclear family often become more involved with their children and grandchildren during the single parent phase. They may develop a deeper bond than might otherwise have occurred, due to increased time spent with these family members. Consequently, when the remarriage occurs, it is sometimes difficult for these grandparents to accept a lesser role in the family. The

emergence of stepgrandparents may also affect the family in a positive or negative way.

4) Siblings of adults and intimate friends also often become more intensely involved with the single parent and her/his children during the single parent phase. Thus, these people are likely to have a negative or positive impact on the remarried system as well.

5) The court system and legal contracts influence the remarried family, in that they regulate alimony, child support, custody, visitation, etc. Stepparent and stepchild usually have no legal bond with each other.

6) Money problems take on added significance in remarried families, as one or both remarried spouses may be required to partially support the ex-spouse. This can be a source of resentment in the new marital relationship. Also, stepsiblings may have different standards of living due to the wealth of the noncustodial parent, and this may cause sibling rivalry.

As these authors have clearly documented, there can be vast qualitative differences between remarried families and first-married families. The life cycle tasks of each individual family member as well as of the system as a whole are more complex. It follows that the remarried families should be differentiated from first-married families, both in terms of psychological research and in terms of public perception. It is important to recognize the remarried family's unique situations.

### Greater Probability of Divorce in Remarried Families

Another reason for studying the marital relationship in remarried families is that most survey studies have noted that the probability of divorce is greater in remarriages than in first marriages (Clingempeel & Brand, 1985). This may be interpreted in different ways, however. Remarried partners may have difficulty accommodating all the additional stressors of the remarried situation and may choose to leave rather than deal with them. Conversely, remarried people may be more able to leave dysfunctional relationships and may find divorce a desirable option. Research into remarital relationships may add to a greater understanding of these couples' greater propensity to divorce.

### Relative Dearth of Research on Remarried Families

There has been a paucity of research on the remarried family; two writers note that "empirical investigations of this population have been surprisingly limited" (Esses & Campbell, 1984). By 1979, only a very small number of studies had been done on remarried families; the total samples included only 550 families (Esses & Campbell, 1984). Although there has been more research in recent years, the scientific investigation of remarried families is in its infancy.

Of the research that has been done, most has involved only survey or questionnaire data; standardized instruments have not typically been used (Esses & Campbell, 1984).

There is clearly a need for more adequate data samples from remarried families.

Writers have also pointed out that the research in this area has been limited in scope. Most research on stepfamilies has focused on intrapsychic variables of individual family members (e.g., reported self-concept); usually, this research has been on stepchildren.

Also, there has been little research on the development of the couple relationship, or on the interpersonal dynamics of the remarital relationship. The few studies which have been done have mostly relied on questionnaire answers, eschewing more rigorous measurement instruments.

The focus on intrapsychic variables, as opposed to interpersonal ones, has also resulted in a dearth of "whole family" research. There is a need to examine not only individual adjustment within stepfamilies, but whole family environment (Esses & Campbell, 1984).

#### Purpose of the Study

This study was designed to further enhance our understanding of marital relationships in remarried families. Much of the previous research compared remarried families to first-married families, and usually remarried families have been found wanting in some aspect or another. This may be an unfair comparison in light of the many developmental differences in these two types of families. Some authors have claimed that the comparison of remarried to first-married families reflects a bias against remarried

people (Esses & Campbell, 1984). These authors indicate:

From the questions that researchers pose, it is evident that investigators have often searched for the deleterious effects that stepfamily formation may have on its members. Themes of past research have concerned the quality of steprelationships, difficulties of the stepparent role, differences between remarried and "natural" families, and stepfamily adjustment. Furthermore, no studies are available which seek to examine positive coping mechanisms of these families and factors associated with stepfamily success. (Esses & Cambell, 1984, p.416)

The investigation of remarriage relationships and their correlates should help us further define the meaning of a "healthy" remarried family. It has been hypothesized that the role definitions of remarried family members are not well delineated by society, and that part of their problem in adjusting to their situation is that their roles are ambiguous or negatively stereotyped (Clingempeel, 1981; Cherlin, 1978). This study contributes to our understanding of "normal" development in stepfamilies, and may help paint a picture of healthy remarriage to which therapists and families can look.

In selecting which related factors will be studied in conjunction with the self-report of remarital adjustment, the literature was surveyed. Several demographic variables were used, in conjunction with variables measured by psychometric instruments.

Since income has been cited as a variable associated with remarital success (Knaub et al., 1984) and financial conflict has been found to correlate negatively with spousal satisfaction in remarriage (M. Hafkin, 1981), the combined

yearly income of the spouses was one of the factors included in this study.

Another demographic variable of interest was time spent between marriages in the single parent phase. Some authors think that too little or too much time between marriages bodes poorly for remarital success (Carter & McGoldrick, 1980; Sager et al., 1983; Hunt & Hunt, 1977). Carter and McGoldrick have suggested that a short interval between marriages would contribute to difficulty in making the transition to remarriage. Sager and his colleagues hypothesize that there is an optimum period of time between relationships:

. . . if remarriage occurs too soon, or the new relationship begins while the emerging partner-to-be is still with his first spouse, it is more likely that the old relationship will impede heavily on the new. If the single period is lengthy, and particularly if children are involved, it is more likely to be difficult to incorporate the new spouse into the parent-child dyad, hence paving the way for marital dysfunction. We concur with Hunt and Hunt (1977) that the optimum period for remarriage is three to five years after the initial separation. This allows time for the emotional divorce to proceed, to recover from ego injury and despair, and to experience a variety of relationships without clutching, out of fear or loneliness, onto the first person who comes along. (Sager et al., 1983, p.63)

Thus, time between physical separation and remarriage was considered as a variable in this study. This variable was split into three categories: less than three years; between three and five years; and more than five years. Separating the time between physical separation and remarriage into these three categories is theoretically consistent with the

hypotheses of the aforementioned authors.

Another demographic variable which was taken into account in this study was the structural complexity of the remarried family. If one considers gender, whether each partner was previously married, and whether or not there are custodial and/or noncustodial children, there are twenty-four possible configurations of remarried families (Sager et al., 1983, p.64). For our purposes, we will single out one type of stepfamily:

Simple stepfather stepfamilies:

In which a divorced mother (with custodial biological child(ren) ) marries a partner without child(ren) or with non-custodial child(ren). He may have been single or divorced prior to the current marriage.

Note that the family type above includes custodial children. This is necessary due to the aims of this study. Cherlin (1978) hypothesized that the greater the structural complexity of the stepfamily, the higher the probability of divorce and separation in the remarriage (Cherlin, 1978; Clingempeel & Brand, 1985). Conversely, one might assume that those in simple stepfamilies, as a group, would report higher marital satisfaction than those in complex stepfamilies. (Complex stepfamilies are those in which each spouse has been previously married and in which there are children in the household from each of the spouse's previous marriages.) This assumption has been supported by empirical research (Clingempeel, 1981; Clingempeel & Brand, 1985). This study will examine only one type of stepfamily (simple

stepfather families) in recognition of the fact that the structural complexity of a family may be associated with the spouses' rated marital adjustment. Simple stepfather families are the most prevalent form of stepfamily structure.

In addition to simple demographic variables, various qualitative variables were examined in this study. One particular area which is of great clinical and theoretical interest, but which has suffered empirical neglect, has been the remarried partner's adjustment to the relationship with her former spouse. Much is written in the theoretical literature about the importance of successfully resolving the grief process (sometimes termed "divorce grief") in order to healthfully participate in a new intimate relationship. Several authors have proposed models of divorce grieving (Wiseman, 1975; Bohannon, 1970). Fisher (1976) developed the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale to measure several aspects of divorce grieving (Saul & Scherman, 1984; Fisher, 1976). A survey of the literature reveals, however, that divorce grieving has not been studied in relation to remarriages.

Clingempeel and his colleagues have studied the quantity of contact with ex-spouse as it relates to marital quality, but they have not measured the quality of those contacts (Clingempeel, 1981; Clingempeel & Brand, 1985). Clingempeel originally found that moderate amounts of contact with ex-spouse correlated with better marital

quality in remarriages. Later research did not replicate this finding; that is, amount of contact with ex-spouse did not differ with marital quality. These different findings might be explained by sample differences or other uncontrolled variables. They may have been better explained had he examined not only quantity but quality of contact. This study explored the "quality" dimension via the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale, which measures divorce grieving and other qualitative aspects of a divorced partner's ongoing adjustment to her relationship with her former spouse.

In addition to studying the interpersonal aspects of the spousal and ex-partner relationships, two other relationship dynamics were studied. One was perceived whole family environment. As mentioned before, family environment has been generally neglected in the remarriage literature. Perceived family environment was measured from the point of view of the biological parent. Certain subscales of the Moos Family Environment Scale (FES; Moos and Moos, 1986) were used to examine aspects of the family environment.

The relationship of the stepparent and stepchild has not been studied extensively, but some studies have been completed on these dyads. These relationships are of interest because they are often problematic, due to the many unique emotional and developmental hurdles in remarriage (Pink & Wampler, 1985). Research has also found gender and age differences with regard to stepchild adjustment and

stepparent-stepchild relations. For example, one study found that higher marital quality in stepmother families was associated with "more positive stepmother-stepson relationships and better stepson adjustment, but less positive stepmother-stepdaughter relationships and poorer stepdaughter adjustment" (Brand & Clingempeel, 1985 [p.140]). It has been found that adolescents generally have a more difficult time adjusting to remarriage, as compared to younger children. The stepparent-stepchild relationship was indirectly assessed in this study, utilizing the Relationship Dimensions subscales of the Moos Family Environment Scale (Moos & Moos, 1986). Due to the nature of the available sample, only the biological parent's sense of the overall family environment was surveyed. The perceived family environment instrument was used to this end because no specific stepparent-stepchild relations instrument has been developed, and because the instrument was to be given to the biological parent only.

Lastly, the relationship between the remarried mother and her social environment was explored. This variable was examined using the variable of "perceived social support" or "attitudinal environment" which is defined as "perceived support from others (i.e., children, relatives, friends, and the community in general)" (Knaub, Hanna, & Stinnett, 1984, p.52). In a study on perceived remarried family strengths, Knaub et al. (1984) found three variables to be significant contributors to family strength: attitudinal environment

(social support), income, and professional help sought after remarriage (Knaub et al., 1984). The inclusion of this variable was warranted in light of their findings. Because social support from family members is included in the "cohesion" subscale of the Family Environment Scale, the researcher isolated social support from friends (excluding family members) as an independent variable. This variable was measured using the Friends Subscale of the Social Support Appraisals Scale (SS-A; Vaux, Phillips, Holly, Thomson, Williams, and Stewart, 1986).

#### Statement of the Problem

Previous research on the couple relationship has been limited, and that which has been completed has generally been deficient in terms of using reliable and valid measurement instruments. In addition, certain interpersonal variables have not been adequately studied. In particular, these include:

- 1) the remarried spouse's relationship with her ex-spouse, in terms of quality (ie., divorce adjustment) in relation to marital adjustment;
- 2) the woman's perceived family environment in relation to her perceived marital adjustment;
- 3) the woman's perceived social support from friends in relation to her perceived marital adjustment.

This study addresses these variables, as well as the demographic variables of the remarried spouses' combined yearly income, time between the female's physical separation from her ex-spouse and remarriage, and amount of contact the female currently has with her ex-spouse.

### General Hypothesis

The following general hypothesis was predicted:

Remarital adjustment in simple stepfather families can be predicted utilizing the following variables as predictors. A combination or subset of the predictor variables will significantly contribute to the regression equation.

- 1) Amount of contact with the female partner's ex-spouse. This is the quantity of contact with ex-spouse variable.
- 2) Divorce adjustment (of the female). This is the quality of contact with ex-spouse variable.
- 3) Perceived family environment (of the female).
- 4) Perceived social support from friends (of the female).
- 5) Remarried spouses' current combined yearly income.
- 6) Time between physical separation and remarriage (of the female).

The dependent measure of marital adjustment was the female spouse's total score on the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976).

### Operational Definitions

Marital adjustment was defined by the individuals' total scores on the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976).

Family environment was defined by the individuals' scores on the Relationship Dimension subscales of the Moos Family Environment Scale (FES; Moos & Moos, 1986).

Divorce adjustment was defined by the individuals' total scores on the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale (FDAS; Fisher, 1978).

Perceived social support from friends was defined by individuals' Friends Subscale scores on the Social Support Appraisals Scale (SS-A; Vaux, Phillips, Holly, Thomson, Williams, & Stewart, 1986).

The amount of contact with the ex-spouse was determined by a demographic questionnaire.

The spouses' current combined yearly income was determined by a demographic questionnaire.

The female's amount of time after physical separation but before remarriage was determined by a demographic questionnaire.

#### Delimitations

The generalization of the study is limited. The particular sample obtained is not representative of remarried families in general, in that it was not randomly obtained. The sample was also limited by cultural homogeneity, in terms of the geographic and ethnic limitations on the sample.

Generalization is also limited due to the particular assessment instruments used. All instruments rely on subjects' self-report, and therefore were open to "social desirability" responding.

Lastly, generalization was restricted due to a number of uncontrolled variables which were not examined. These variables may contribute significantly to marital adjustment. The multiple regression equation delineates the

degree of variance explained by the specified variables, as well as the variance explained by unspecified variables.

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In order to fit this study into the larger scheme of the remarried family literature, the following chapter surveys studies and writings on this body of research. It covers longitudinal and cross-sectional studies on the factors associated with marital satisfaction in the remarried couple's relationship. These factors include both demographic and psychological factors.

The demographic factors which have been studied in relation to remarital satisfaction include:

- socioeconomic status
- presence of biological children or stepchildren
- age of children
- religious orientation and activity
- comparisons between different subtypes of stepfamilies
  - one stepparent versus two stepparent
  - stepfather versus stepmother
  - mutual children versus no mutual children
- cohabitation prior to marriage
- joint custody
- relocation to a new home upon remarriage
- help sought for problems (involvement in psychotherapy)
- quantity of contact with former spouse.

The psychological factors which have been studied in relation to remarital satisfaction include:

- perceptions of role divisions/divisions of tasks
- perceptions of self-esteem/psychological adjustment
- perceptions of orientation toward negative life stress
- perceptions of financial problems/conflicts

perceptions of sexual problems/conflicts  
perceptions of relations with children/stepchildren  
perceptions of relations with parents/stepparents  
perceptions of relations with former spouse  
perceptions of conflicts over disciplining children  
perceptions of social support/attitudinal environment  
perceptions of orientation towards social interdependence  
perceptions of family environment/strengths.

This chapter is organized in such a way as to highlight some of the factors cited above as they relate to this study. The general heading "Research on Marital Satisfaction in Remarriage" will include a broad overview of the major studies on this topic. The following subsections are treated separately due to their direct relation to the study's hypothesis: perceived social support from family and friends; perceived family environment; and perceived relations with the former spouse. A summary of developmental theory on remarriage is included as well.

#### Research on Marital Satisfaction in Remarriage

Very few longitudinal studies on remarried couples exist; those that do have tended to use demographic or questionnaire formats, forsaking standardized measures. In 1984, there were "no published studies examining these families from a longitudinal perspective" (Esses & Campbell, 1984, p. 416).

Vemer, Coleman, Ganong, and Cooper (1989) published a meta-analytic review of the literature on marital satisfaction in remarriage. These authors examined thirty-four previous studies on this topic in terms of five comparisons: first marriage versus remarriage; remarried men

versus remarried women; stepfathers versus stepmothers; simple versus complex stepfamily households; and couples with residential stepchildren versus couples without residential stepchildren. The article includes a critique of this body of literature as well, with suggestions for future research.

A summary of Vemer et al. (1989) follows. People in first marriages generally reported greater marital satisfaction than people in remarriages, but the authors note that the difference appears to be miniscule and is not substantial. They note that researchers have typically not discerned between second marriages and multiple marriages, and suggest that marital satisfaction may be different for multiple marriers versus those remarried only once. They state "the inclusion of multiple marriers in the remarried group would probably lower the satisfaction scores" (Vemer et al., 1989, p.721).

This meta-analysis indicated that remarried men tend to report more satisfaction with their marriages than remarried women, but only slightly so. They note that these findings parallel those regarding first marriages. They add that in future studies it would be helpful to differentiate women who had children or became stepmothers from women who became part of a childless couple, as most of the cited studies did not include that data.

Vemer et al. (1989) found no difference in reported marital satisfaction between stepfathers and stepmothers.

This finding is based on a small number of studies which typically had small sample sizes, however. The authors also suggest that additional variables, such as number and age of children and where the children reside, should be included in future comparisons between remarried men and women.

These authors also found that previous studies have indicated no significant differences in marital satisfaction of remarried couples who had residential children and those who did not. They suggest that in future studies more careful assessments should be made regarding "age and gender of children, length of marriage, residence of children from all previous relationships, reproduction in remarriage, relationship with former spouse, custodial status of children...and changes in physical custody" (Vemer et al., 1989, p.722).

Vemer et al. (1989) also surveyed the literature comparing marital satisfaction where one partner is a stepparent (simple stepfamily) versus where both partners are stepparents (complex stepfamily). They found no significant differences in marital satisfaction, with one exception: Clingempeel (1981) reported greater happiness among couples in simple stepfamilies. The authors state "rather than comparing the two types of households, future researchers might investigate the factors that contribute to marital satisfaction in each type of household" (Vemer et al., 1989, p.723). These authors add that future research would do well to "focus more on perceptions, values, and

affect variables rather than simply on demographic and structural characteristics" (Vemer et al., 1989, p.723).

Guisinger (1984) investigated parental and couple factors in sixty-three remarriage relationships in a combined cross-sectional/longitudinal study (Guisinger, 1984). Seventeen of the couples were studied longitudinally as newlyweds and again in their third year of marriage. The dependent measures were interviews and questionnaires. Both men and women's marital satisfaction decreased over time. Women who were most satisfied with their marriages at both times tended to report higher self-esteem; more satisfaction with the division of household tasks and child care; better relationships with the stepchild; and described the former wife in more favorable terms. Men who were most satisfied with their marriages at both times tended to report more satisfaction with couple decision-making; a good relationship with their child; a less negative evaluation of their former wives; and higher self-esteem. Of particular interest for this study is both spouse's greater acceptance of their own and the other's former spouse.

Studies on the correlates of marital satisfaction in remarriage are important in that the developmental processes for first marriages and remarriages are quite different. The remarried couple has several additional stressors with which to cope, especially if there are children involved. Albrecht, in a 1979 study on correlates of marital happiness in remarriage, found that "traditional correlates of marital

happiness among the first-married - such as presence of children, religious homogeneity, and social class - are . . . relatively poor predictors of marital happiness among the remarried" (p.857). This study included a section on the major problems identified in the remarriage. The most prevalent problems cited were "financial problems," followed by "emotional problems." Two problem groups tied for third: "sexual problems" and "spouse's former marriage" (p.862). Other problems were listed, but the ones listed above were far and away the most frequently cited. In terms of this study, it is important to note the salience of the "spouse's former marriage" category. It seems that unresolved conflicts and feelings from the previous marriage greatly affect the remarried couple's marital quality. Albrecht did note, however, that little overt argument is reported regarding the former spouse; seventy-seven percent reported that they never had such arguments, twelve percent reported that this seldom occurred. Less than two percent reported frequent disagreements over prior relationships (p.863). One might argue that resolution of divorce grief and overt arguments about the former spouse are two different things. Lack of grief resolution may show up in subtler ways (e.g., projection, transference).

Couples with children from the present union did not differ much in satisfaction compared to those without children from the present relationship. The more recent research of Ganong and Coleman (1988) replicates these

findings. Those authors note "measures of family affect and closeness between stepparents and stepchildren and between biological parents and children did not differ in those [step]families having mutual children as compared to [step]families who had not had a child of the remarried union" (Ganong & Coleman, 1988, p.695).

Albrecht also found that "religious identification and activity of spouse are only weakly related to the degree of satisfaction" and that none of these correlations were significant in terms of current marital satisfaction (Albrecht, 1979, p.864).

In all, Albrecht found that only twenty-three percent of the variance is explained by the fifteen independent variables used to predict marital satisfaction. He takes this to mean that "many of the assumed correlates of marital satisfaction among the first married are not particularly effective in explaining marital satisfaction" among the remarried (Albrecht, 1979, p.865). This study isolates at least one factor, resolution of divorce grief, as significantly related to marital adjustment in remarriage. Albrecht's study underscores the importance of studying marital satisfaction in remarriage; it is clearly a "different animal" than first marriage.

N. Hafkin (1981) did a descriptive study in which she attempted to isolate factors affecting remarried marital satisfaction. Ninety couples were assessed using a demographic questionnaire and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale.

A forward selection regression analysis was used to combine eight predictor variables: social position; religion; frequency of religious activity; sex of stepparent; age of stepchildren; presence/absence of a child from the present relationship; relocation to new home; and contact with the non-custodial biological parent. While the regression equation did not account for a significant proportion of the variance of marital satisfaction, some variables in the stepmother group did significantly predict satisfaction. These variables were: relocation; age of children (younger); being Jewish; being Protestant; having no religion; and absence of child from the present relationship. Within the stepmother-stepfather group, social position and presence of child from present relationship significantly predicted satisfaction.

M. Hafkin's 1981 study found two significant correlates of remarital satisfaction. Spousal satisfaction correlated negatively with stepcouple conflict over discipline ( $r = -.30$ ). Satisfaction also correlated negatively with financial conflict ( $r = -.57$ ).

James and Johnson (1988) completed a study addressing the relationships between social interdependence, psychological adjustment, orientation towards negative life stress, and marital satisfaction in second marriages. Three types of social interdependence were demarcated: cooperative interdependence (a positive correlation among persons' goal attainments); competitive interdependence (a

negative correlation among their goal attainments); and individualistic efforts (no correlation among persons' goal attainments). The researchers utilized self-designed scales to measure the type of social interdependence. They note that cooperation (including cooperative interdependence), as compared with competitive or individualistic experiences, "has been found to promote more positive interpersonal relationships, greater social support, higher self-esteem, more accurate communication, higher levels of trust, more prosocial behavior, more accurate perspective taking, and greater achievement and success" (James and Johnson, 1988, p.288).

Psychological health was defined as "the ability (attitudes, cognitive capacities, and behavioral skills) to be aware of and manage effectively one's interdependent relationships with others" (James and Johnson, 1988, p.288). Psychological health was measured utilizing the MMPI. Orientation towards negative life stress was defined as "the negative life changes a person perceives in his or her life" (James and Johnson, 1988, p.288). This variable was measured using the Life Experience Survey. Marital satisfaction was measured utilizing the Marital Satisfaction Inventory. The authors found a consistent relationship between competitiveness and psychological pathology for both males and females. Wives' cooperativeness was positively correlated with marital satisfaction, as was husbands'. As one might expect, both wives' and husbands' competitive and

individualistic orientations were positively correlated to marital dissatisfaction. In addition, in both sexes' competitive and individualistic orientations correlated positively with indices of psychological pathology and with a tendency to appraise life events as negative.

#### Perceived Social Support from Family and Friends

This section concerns studies which examined perceived social support from family and friends in relation to marital satisfaction and several other dependent variables. A number of studies have found that psychological distress (and hence marital satisfaction) is negatively related to network size, satisfaction with social support, and frequency with which spouse/partner is named as a provider of support (Kurdek, 1989, p.1048). Level of social support in remarried couples may be especially crucial, as Ihinger-Tallman and Pasley (1986) found that couples in which both partners were remarried received fewer visits from their own relatives and in-laws than couples in which only one partner was remarried. Other studies have revealed differences in perceived social support when comparing first-married families to remarried families.

Kurdek (1989) examined social support and psychological distress in first-married and remarried couples. He utilized the Social Support Questionnaire to measure social support and the Global Severity Index of the Symptom Checklist 90-Revised to assess psychological distress. Results indicated that couples in which both spouses were

remarried nominated members of their family of origin or in-laws infrequently as providers of support. Kurdek found, however, that remarried couples did not differ from first-married couples on size of support network; frequency with which spouse, friends, kin, and coworkers were named as providers of support; and overall satisfaction with perceived levels of support. The author hypothesized that family members and in-laws of remarried couples "may be reticent to provide support because previous provisions of support have likely occurred in the context of interspouse conflict" (Kurdek, 1989, p.1051). Thus, remarried partners may rely more heavily on social support from spouse, friends, kin and coworkers than first-married couples. Across all types of couples, Kurdek found that psychological distress was negatively related to the frequency with which spouse was named as provider of support and satisfaction with social support.

A second study by Kurdek (1989b) examined three individual difference variables and their relation with marital satisfaction in remarried and first-married families. The three variables were satisfaction with social support (measured by the Social Support Questionnaire); the importance of equality in the relationship (measured by the Survey of Relationship Values); and instrumentality and expressiveness (measured by the Bem Sex Role Inventory). Kurdek found that marital quality is similar between first marriages and remarriages when time in the relationship is

considered. He also found that satisfaction with social support and high expressiveness were strong predictors of relationship quality across type of couple and spouse. Kurdek suggests "satisfaction with social support and expressiveness set the stage for harmonious spousal and familial interactions. Having a responsive social support system may enable one to be buffered against the stresses associated with marital relationships" (Kurdek, 1989b, p.1062).

Knaub, Hanna, and Stinnett (1984) conducted a descriptive study on perceptions of family strengths, marital satisfaction, and adjustment to remarriage. Their approach of looking at remarried family strengths is relatively novel. They noticed that while the "family strength" or "healthy family" literature has been growing in recent years, these studies have targeted primarily intact families. As remarried families are becoming more prevalent, the need to study factors associated with functional remarried families is obvious. Knaub and her colleagues studied eighty remarried families with children using the Remarried Family Inventory questionnaire. A multiple regression analysis indicated that three factors were significantly related to the overall "family strength score": attitudinal environment (perceived positive support from family, friends and society); gross family income; and help sought after remarriage. Families who had high attitudinal environment and gross family income scores, and

who did not seek help after remarriage, rated themselves as the strongest. The study also found a high degree of correlation (+.82) between marital satisfaction and family strength. Most often mentioned areas of conflict included "discipline and handling of the children (35%), followed by financial difficulties (30.6%) and various interpersonal concerns (23.1%)." Specific "stepfamily" concerns (i.e., ex-spouse; relationships with stepchildren and non-custodial children) were mentioned by 16.3% of the respondents. Thus, at least a portion of marital partners had ongoing conflicts with former spouses.

Knaub et al. mention in their discussion section that the family strength scores of their sample were relatively high. They suggest that perhaps their sample characteristics could account for these high scores: the short average duration of the remarriages (3.3 years), the comparatively low numbers of children in these families, or the young age of the children could have contributed to the high strength scores. Alternately, the authors comment that "it is also entirely possible that the high scores reflected what has been reported as being an unwillingness to reveal anything other than happiness and satisfaction within a remarried situation." This phenomenon might best be described by Boszormenyi-Nagy's term "pseudomutuality" (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1985, p.85). Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory could also explain this phenomenon: "Given the fact that the earlier marriage has

resulted in divorce while the current marriage is still intact, it would certainly be more cognitively consistent to believe that the current marriage must be better" (Albrecht, 1979, p.861). It seems apparent that in future studies, this phenomenon should be explored, perhaps by using better standardized dependent measures.

Some additional findings of the Knaub et al. study are of note. Contrary to some previous research on intact and remarried families (Bernard, 1956; Stinnett & Sauer, 1977; Stinnett, Sanders & DeFrain, 1981; N. Hafkin, 1981), neither degree of religious belief nor denomination were significant contributors to family strength or satisfaction. This finding supports Duberman's (1975) research in which religious orientation was not significant (Knaub et al., 1984) in relation to marital satisfaction. Also, contrary to Duberman's (1975) findings, having a child together was not associated with successful adjustment in the Knaub et al. study.

Cohabitation prior to remarriage was also a variable of interest in this study. In the regression analysis, cohabitation did not emerge as significantly related to family strength. The cohabitating group did, however, score significantly higher than the non-cohabitating group on four factors: positive communication; closeness; promoting the other's welfare; and happiness with the remarriage. Another study found that cohabitation prior to remarriage was not associated with lower marital satisfaction, although

cohabitation prior to first marriage was (Demaris, 1984).

### Perceived Family Environment

Few studies have focused on the perceived whole family environment in remarried families, despite numerous theories which suggest that family environment is a critical factor with regards to individual family members' well-being and marital satisfaction. Peek, Bell, Waldren, and Sorell (1988) studied patterns of functioning in remarried and first-married families. These authors utilized several indices of family functioning: the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales II; the Family Environment Scale; the Family Assessment Device; and Lowman's Inventory of Family Feelings. Their findings indicated that first-married and remarried families were similar in terms of patterns of family functioning, but different in terms of levels of functioning. Stepfamilies indicated lower levels of functioning in family cohesion, family flexibility and openness, and interaction skills. Stepfamily levels of functioning were similar to first-married families on the factors of organization of family tasks and activities, control through rules, and conflict. The authors hypothesized "contrasted with stressful past experiences, somewhat reduced affect and openness and even less adequate interaction in parent-child relationships may seem relatively minor to parents in stepfamilies and thus have little impact on the marital relationship" (Peek et al., 1988, p.706). Peek et al. suggest that lower levels of

functioning in stepfamilies may emanate from the complexity of relationships within the family and between the family and its variegated extended family network. For example, "lower levels of cohesion in stepfamilies...would likely reduce the disloyalty and stress stepfamily members might feel as they continue to have contact with the other biological parent or previous spouse" (Peek et al., 1988, p.707).

Ihinger-Tallman (1984), after summarizing research on the remarried, espoused the opinion that "stepparent-stepchild relationships are more critical for family happiness than the marital relationship" (p.484). Indeed, it does seem that the stepparent-stepchild relationship is of crucial importance, both for marital and whole family adaptation.

Brand (1986) completed a study on the interdependencies of marital and parent-child relationships in remarried families. This study involved stepfather families only. Rating scales, questionnaires and behavioral measures (i.e., coding of videotaped interaction tasks) were utilized to assess forty stepfather families with children aged nine through twelve. Brand found that "more positiveness in the marital relationship (higher proportions of positive communications and greater perceived marital quality) was associated with greater stepfather positiveness (both perceptions and behaviors) toward both stepsons and stepdaughters." She noted that this is consistent with

similar research findings in intact nuclear families.

Brand (1986) also found that custodial mothers' marital quality was related to stepchildrens' perceptions of and behaviors toward stepfathers. The childrens' perceptions and behaviors did not correlate significantly with stepfathers' marital quality. Greater marital quality of mothers was associated with less stepchild positiveness toward stepfathers. This finding has been borne out in other research as well. Brand and Clingempeel's (1987) study on marital quality and stepparent-stepchild relationships indicated that "higher marital quality was associated with poorer adjustment of stepdaughters," whereas more positive marital quality correlated with more positive stepmother-stepson relationships and better psychological adjustment of stepsons (p.144). The researchers suggest a fascinating hypothesis for these differential findings. First, stepmother families with girls are relatively rare, as "girls are rarely awarded to fathers after a divorce . . . and they may be awarded to their fathers most often when their relationships with biological mothers are especially problematic" (Brand & Clingempeel, 1987, p. 144). Second, "as a result of these [poor mother-daughter relations] and the greater socialization of females toward nurturant and parenting roles . . . girls may acquire an almost 'wife-like' relationship with their fathers during the single-parent stage" (p.144). As a result of this close father-daughter bond, the new wife may find herself in competition

with her stepdaughter for the father's time and affection. In addition to these factors, the stepdaughter may see a positive marital relationship as "more threatening to the hopes of parental reconciliation and the reestablishment of close mother-daughter ties" (Brand & Clingempeel, 1987, p.144). Moreover, the stepdaughter may perceive that a positive relationship to her stepmother may preclude a positive relationship with her mother. Brand & Clingempeel call this the "competition between mothers" scenario. Other writers, citing empirical research, have noted that generally "girls have greater difficulty adjusting to a stepparent than boys do" (Ihinger-Tallman, 1984, p.484).

Positive stepson adjustment may be associated with positive marital quality due to more appropriate father-son relationships during the single-parent phase (Brand & Clingempeel, 1987, p.145). "Consequently, a more positive marital relationship may be perceived as an additional support system rather than as a greater encroachment upon the father-son relationship" (Brand & Clingempeel, 1987, p.145).

The general portrait painted by the literature, therefore, has been that stepmother families exhibit more problems in adjustment than stepfather families. Stepmothers generally report less marital quality and more difficult stepparent-stepchild relations (particularly with stepdaughters) than stepfathers. Morris' (1985) study on marital satisfaction and perceived stepfamily integration

supports these observations. Using the Marital Satisfaction Inventory and a questionnaire, she found that stepmothers perceived lower marital satisfaction, lower personal integration into the family, and lower family functioning. Conversely, stepfathers were the least distressed members of all the stepfamily groups studied.

There is some evidence, however, that the stepfather-adolescent stepchild relationship can be quite problematic. Pink and Wampler studied these relationships utilizing FACES (Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales) to measure general family functioning, and subscales of the Relationship Inventory and the Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale to measure parent and adolescent perceptions of parent-child relationships. They compared stepfamilies to intact families on a number of variables. All stepfamily members reported less cohesion and adaptability than intact families. Stepfamily members also reported lower regard of the stepfather toward the adolescent and lower regard and unconditionality of the adolescent toward the stepfather. Also, "contrary to expectation, a high amount of contact with the biological father was more positive than either a moderate or low amount of contact in terms of the regard of the stepfather toward the adolescent" (Pink & Wampler, 1985, p.332). The findings of this study, in combination with other studies, suggest that a high amount of contact with quasi-kin may be associated with positive stepfather-adolescent stepchild

relations but negative marital relations. The findings are also consistent with the general literature on stepfamilies which suggest that "adolescent stepchildren have the most problems" (Pink & Wampler, 1985, p.333). In particular, the stepfather-stepdaughter relationships were perceived as more troubled than stepfather-stepson relationships in this study.

A study on joint custody of children and remarital adjustment further complicates the matter of contact with the nonresidential family and its effects on the stepfamily. Compared to couples with sole custody of their stepchildren, couples with joint custody indicated that they had more conflicts around communication and childrearing (Bredefeld, 1985). The joint custody spouses interacted more with their ex-spouses, and hence "were more adversely affected since they must negotiate more complex roles and more permeable boundaries due to the greater involvement of the joint custody father with his child and ex-spouse" (Bredefeld, 1985). On the positive side, joint custody couples reported more satisfaction with their children. They also appreciated the time alone with their new spouse. In terms of child adjustment, both joint and sole custody children exhibited good adjustment to the remarriage.

#### Perceived Relations with the Former Spouse

Theorists and clinicians often liken the divorce process to the grieving for a lost object. Wiseman (1975) proposed a five stage model of divorce grieving which

includes 1) denial; 2) loss and depression; 3) anger and ambivalence; 4) reorientation of lifestyle and identity; and 5) acceptance and a new level of functioning.

Heatherington (1979), in a descriptive study utilizing interviews, found that the most difficult period in the divorcing process was during the year following the divorce.

Spivey (1978) found similar results: women reported that maladjustment was highest between six months to one year following the filing for a divorce. Spivey found a leveling off of stress and maladjustment after three and one half years, to the point where these indicators mirrored continuously married women.

Saul and Scherman (1984) conducted a study on divorce grief and personal adjustment for single and remarried individuals. The dependent measures used were the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale and the Personal Orientation Inventory. The basic finding was that there were no significant differences in reported grief or adjustment between remarried and single individuals.

Despite the fairly significant grieving period, most people remarry within a few years after a divorce. About three quarters of all divorced females and five sixths of divorced males remarry within five years after their divorce (James & Johnson, 1988, p.289). This suggests that a large number of people marry while in the midst of the divorce grief process. Saul points out that many theorists have suggested that remarriage is an index of positive divorce

adjustment, yet there is little empirical evidence to support this claim (Saul & Scherman, 1984). They note that none of those researchers examined those who remarry while still in the grieving process; the assumption was that those who remarry have transcended their divorce grief (Saul & Scherman, 1984). Yet those who see families clinically often encounter remarried individuals who have clearly not finished grieving their former spouse. Authors have noted that grief-related issues such as dealing with the varieties of biological, step, and ex-spousal roles, incomplete mourning, and loyalty conflicts can be expected as typical developmental processes in remarried families (Dahl, Cowgill & Asmundsson, 1987). Additionally, Ihinger-Tallman (1984) suggests that "the time and emotional problems involved in severing spousal bonds is one indicator of the strength of those bonds. Thus, paradoxically, studies of the exchanges between ex-spouses may identify key elements that bond spouses to one another" (Ihinger-Tallman, 1984).

The impact of the remarried person's relationship with her ex-spouse on her marital satisfaction in remarriage, and relationship with her children and stepchildren has not been a frequent focus of psychological inquiry. Yet it has clearly been acknowledged by the lay and professional presses that "few relationships seem to have as much potential for anger, hatred, and violence as that between former partners" (Guisinger, Cowan, & Schuldberg, 1989, p.447). Some studies have indicated that continued

hostility between spouses is the factor most often cited by fathers for decreased involvement with their children (Guisinger et al., 1989, p.447). In fact, research suggests that many of the problems associated with children of divorce may be explained by intraparental conflict rather than by the separation per se (Guisinger et al., 1989, p.454).

As Guisinger, Cowan and Schuldberg (1989) note, "previous researchers have examined remarried couples without . . . considering the interaction of the couples' relationship with the ties to the previous marriage" (Guisinger, Cowan, and Schuldberg, 1989, p.453). The studies cited below by Guisinger, Cowan, and Schuldberg (1989), Clingempeel (1981) and Clingempeel and Brand (1985) are some of the only in-depth attempts to research the impact of the remarried persons' relationships with their former spouses on remarital satisfaction.

Guisinger, Cowan, and Schuldberg (1989) studied the marital quality of remarried fathers in relation to their self-esteem, mutual role arrangements with their current wife, and relationships with their former spouse and children. This study was a combined longitudinal and cross-sectional design with measures being given at one and at three-to-five years. Both members of the remarried couple were administered questionnaires. Marital satisfaction was measured using the Locke-Wallace Short Marital Adjustment Test. Role behavior and role satisfaction was measured by

the Who Does What? questionnaire. Relationship quality with former spouse and children was measured with the Remarriage Questionnaire, the Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory, and the Adjective Checklist. The latter instrument was also utilized as a measure of self-esteem.

The study found that most fathers did not identify their children as the major source of stress in their marriage. Significantly, newlyweds identified the children's mother (the father's former spouse) as the major source of stress in their marriage. The authors note anecdotally "when given the opportunity to talk about their concerns during the interview, many couples were extremely preoccupied about their relations with the children's mother" (Guisinger et al., 1989, p.450). Husbands most commonly checked adjectives to describe the ex-spouse like defensive, dissatisfied, emotional, resentful and confused; wives checked adjectives like emotional, bitter, irresponsible, argumentative, complaining, and defensive. The couples' views of the husbands' former wives changed little over time. The following correlations were significant with relation to marital satisfaction. Fathers' sole legal custody was negatively correlated with marital satisfaction in the first but not the third year for both husbands and wives.

Husbands' marital satisfaction was associated with wives' satisfaction with division of chores, and their own satisfaction with decision making. These correlations

continued over time. Partners whose perceptions of role divisions were more discrepant tended to report less happiness with their marriage.

Wives' positive relationship with the child correlated with marital satisfaction for both partners. Wives who were more resentful of their stepchildren in the first year of marriage were more dissatisfied three years later.

Greater marital satisfaction was reported for both husbands and wives when they reported relatively more favorable evaluations of the former wife. More specifically, the authors state "By three-to-five years, men with higher marital satisfaction tended to have wives who described the former wife with significantly more favorable adjectives and fewer unfavorable adjectives. By three-to-five years, wives' marital satisfaction was strongly associated with their own more positive view of the children's mother and with their husbands' higher communality ratings of his former wife" (Guisinger et al., 1989, p.452). Thus the data suggest that an ongoing negative relationship with the former spouse may be related to marital dissatisfaction for both partners in the remarriage.

Clingempeel has done several studies on remarriage (Clingempeel, 1981; Clingempeel & Brand, 1985). His dissertation involved a study of marital quality in stepfather families as it relates to the partners' amount of contact with "quasi-kin." Bohannon coined the term

"quasi-kin" to refer to "former spouses, husbands and wives of former spouses, and blood kin of former spouses" (Bohannon, 1970, p.401). Clingempeel cites Cherlin's (1978) "incomplete institution" hypothesis for a theoretical justification of his dissertation. Cherlin posited that remarriages are difficult to adjust to, in part, because of an "absence of societal role prescriptions to regulate steprelationships and interactions with [former spouses]" (Cherlin, 1978, p.322). Cherlin also hypothesized that the greater the structural complexity of the stepfamily, the higher the probability of divorce and separation in the remarriage (Cherlin, 1978; Clingempeel & Brand, 1985). Clingempeel used two self-report and two behavioral measures of marital quality (Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale; Areas of Change Questionnaire; audiotaped discussion tasks). A multivariate analysis of variance revealed two main effects: 1) type of family (stepfamily subtype) and 2) frequency of contact with quasi-kin (former spouses).

Persons in "complex" stepfather families (in which both partners had children from previous marriages, but only the wife had custody) reported significantly lower marital quality compared to those in "simple" stepfather families (in which only the wife had children from a previous marriage).

Partners with "moderate" amount of contact with former spouses exhibited better marital quality compared to those with "high" or "low" amounts of contact. Note that while

Clingempeel had data on the quantity of contact with former spouses, he did not pursue the measure of the quality of those relationships.

In an extension of the study cited above, Clingempeel and Brand (1985) examined the relationship between frequency of contact with quasi-kin, structural complexity of the remarriage (i.e., simple and complex stepfather families; simple stepmother families); and marital quality in the remarriage. As mentioned, Clingempeel's previous study suggested a "curvilinear relation between frequency of contact with kin and marital quality," that is, moderate contact appeared optimal (Clingempeel & Brand, 1985, p.402). He hypothesized that moderate levels of contact with quasi-kin might constitute an optimal permeability of family boundaries. The authors note that this finding mirrors those found by other researchers in relation to amount of contact with kin. They add: "Hess and Waring (1978) have coined the term Goldilocks Effect to refer to a 'just right' or moderate level of contact which satisfies needs but does not interfere with the marital relationship" (Clingempeel & Brand, 1985, p.402; Hess & Waring, 1978). The Goldilocks Effect is consistent with family systems theories which posit that too much contact with family of origin (enmeshment) or too little (disengagement) is negatively correlated with marital quality. It might be argued that the remarried family boundaries should retain moderate contact with both kin (both partners' families of origin)

and quasi-kin for optimal mental health.

Clingempeel and Brand (1985) replicated Clingempeel's former study using different measures (Dyadic Adjustment Scale; Life Experiences Survey; Marital Interaction Coding System [videotaped discussion tasks]) and different samples (adding simple stepmother families). Findings supported Cherlin's structural complexity hypothesis: the families with more complex structures exhibited lower marital quality than those with simpler structures. The authors' tentative conclusion is that couples in complex stepfamilies confront greater role conflicts (e.g., lack of societal role prescriptions to help them understand how best to relate to quasi-kin) which may disrupt the current marital relationships.

While the structural complexity finding supports Clingempeel's 1981 research, the Goldilocks Effect was not replicated in this study. The low, moderate and high "frequency of contact with quasi-kin" groups did not differ on marital quality. The authors did not thoroughly analyze the reasons why the Goldilocks Effect did not replicate; they cite the possibilities of differences between samples or differences on unexplored variables.

#### Developmental Theories of Remarriage

Ihinger-Tallman (1984) has taken steps toward summarizing empirically-based information which has been reported on positive conditions for family reformation. She tallies the following variables which should be considered:

- 1) boundary maintenance: clear boundaries around the parent-stepparent unit are needed.
- 2) power-authority structure: spousal agreement regarding stepfamily structure must be evident; the nonresidential parent should be considered in some decision-making.
- 3) communication structure
- 4) role structure: stepparent should be nurturant and not assume a disciplinarian role; adult roles should be clearly designated.
- 5) member's well-being
- 6) member's adjustment
- 7) quality of relationships
- 8) degree of consensus: consensus on rules, roles, rituals and goals should exist.
- 9) degree of conflict

Ihinger-Tallman (1984) posits that these conditions, if they are on the healthy end of the continuum, foster the bonding process between stepparent and stepchild. As we have seen, the bonding process is important in marital and family satisfaction. She adds that family formation and reformation variables are virtually identical, with the exception that in remarried families, the following additional variables exist:

- 1) presence of already born children
- 2) former spouse and the problems of breaking emotional bonds
- 3) attitudes and experiences which have changed during the divorce and/or single-parent phase (e.g., different marital expectations)

### Conclusions

Although there is not a wealth of empirical information

available on remarried families, one can see that a tapestry has begun to be woven. It is known that remarried families undergo developmental stages and experiences that are absent from those of first-married families. The more complex structural makeup of these families, coupled with the emotional hurdles of grieving the loss of the original family and bonding within the new one, make adjustment in remarried families more challenging for their members.

While it is known that stepfamilies are different, researchers need to continue to attempt to specify how they differ from first-married families. In addition, because there are so many subtypes of stepfamilies, there is a need to further understand how these subtypes differ from one another.

It is apparent that the American family in the 1980's and beyond will include a large proportion of remarried families. Rather than bemoan the loss of the first married family, the helping professions need to learn how to accommodate the needs of these contemporary family forms. Psychological research on remarried families can facilitate our understanding of individual and family adjustment within these families, and possibly lead to helpful interventions for mental health professionals.

The research on remarried families is growing, but not at a pace that reflects their presence in our society. Furthermore, many of the studies to date, some of them preliminary and descriptive, have lacked empirical rigor.

There is a need to utilize more empirically-based, standardized measurement instruments in studies of these families.

In terms of the content areas studied, it seems that most studies have concentrated on individual family member characteristics, especially regarding stepchildren. Studies focusing on interpersonal relationships, like the remarital couple and the stepparent-stepchild relationship, are more rare. Studies involving relationships with former spouses are even more infrequent. This study isolated the quality and quantity of the relationship with the former spouse and assesses their impact on the current marital relationship. As Ihinger-Tallman notes, "the nature of continued contacts with a former spouse can have a significant impact on subsequent adjustments to remarriage" (Ihinger-Tallman, 1984, p.487). The study also isolated other variables which have been found through empirical research and psychological theory to play important roles in remarried family adjustment. For example, very few studies have examined perceived whole family environment, perceived social support, and time between physical separation and remarriage. The demographic variables of quantity of contact with former spouse and income have been included because previous research has found those factors to be significantly related to marital satisfaction in remarriage. This study focused on the above mentioned variables,

all of which have been hypothesized to have an impact on remarried family adjustment.

## Chapter 3

### PROCEDURE

#### Description of the Sample

The sample of stepfamilies used in this study was delineated by the following characteristics. The remarried families were a subset of the simple stepfather variety in which the female spouses had been previously married, and the male spouse may or may not have been previously married. The female had at least one of her biological children from her previous marriage(s) living with her and her current husband; thus, the male was a stepfather (simple stepfather families). Either partner may have had noncustodial children (biological children who live elsewhere) as well as custodial children. In addition, the couple may have had biological child(ren) between themselves.

The family members may or may not have been involved in psychotherapy at the time of the study or in the past. This lack of differentiation between a "clinical" sample (in which family members are currently in psychotherapy) and a "non-clinical" sample (in which family members are not currently in psychotherapy) enabled a broader and more diverse sample. It is suggested that such a sample is more

representative of the remarried family population than either a clinical or non-clinical sample alone would have been. Remarried families were recruited directly from the community, via a print advertisement in the Stepfamily Bulletin, introductory letters which were posted throughout the community and sent to all Chapter Presidents of the Stepfamily Association of America (SAA), as well as by word of mouth. A copy of the introductory letter is contained in Appendix B. A total sample of sixty four (64) volunteer females was used.

### Research Design

The study was descriptive in nature. It involved a stepwise regression equation involving the scores of the female spouse. In the regression equation marital adjustment was the predicted variable. Several predictor variables were used in an attempt to find covariation between the variables in the equation and remarital adjustment. Ultimately, a regression equation (which accounts for a proportion of the criterion variable) was formed.

### Instruments

#### Marital Adjustment

The criterion variable, marital adjustment, was measured using the female spouse's total score on the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976).

This scale is a 32 item self-report inventory of

marital adjustment. Factor analysis has revealed four interrelated dimensions: Dyadic Consensus (the degree to which the couple agrees on matters important to the relationship); Dyadic Cohesion (the degree to which the couple engages in activities together); Dyadic Satisfaction (the degree to which the couple is satisfied with the present state of the relationship and is committed to its continuance); and Affectional Expression (the degree to which the couple is satisfied with the expression of affect and sex in the relationship) (Spanier & Filsinger, 1983, p.157).

The DAS has been used in a wide variety of studies involving marital relationships. Spanier and Filsinger (1983) provide norms on total and subscale scores for eight different studies, which include married, cohabitating, and gay samples. They note that "an insufficient number of studies have employed the DAS on currently distressed couples for us to be able to talk definitively about norms for distressed couples" (p.162).

The DAS and its subscales have internal consistency reliabilities as follows: Dyadic Adjustment, .96; Dyadic Consensus, .90; Dyadic Cohesion, .86; Dyadic Satisfaction, 1983, p.162). Similar coefficient alphas were reported by husbands and wives.

Content validity was determined by judges, based on a theoretical definition of "marital adjustment" developed by Spanier and Cole (1976) after they had done a literature

review. Marital adjustment is conceptualized as "a process, the outcome of which is determined by the degree of: (1) troublesome marital differences; (2) interspousal tensions and personal anxiety; (3) marital satisfaction; (4) dyadic cohesion; and (5) consensus on matters of importance to marital functioning (Spanier & Filsinger, 1983, p.156)." Criterion-related validity data is provided in that the scale was able to discriminate between married and divorced samples in studies by Spanier and Margolin (Spanier, 1976; Margolin, 1981). The DAS has the construct validity of conforming to a theoretical structure (Spanier & Filsinger, 1983, p.162).

The DAS is given individually to marital partners. While "couple scores" can be derived using various methods, the authors suggest that this practice is not theoretically or empirically justified. Available norms are based on individual scores. There is no fixed cutoff point to delineate "normal" from "distressed" couples, due to the inadequate norms for distressed couples. Spanier and Filsinger suggest that one could examine scores in terms of their statistical difference from the present norms.

Time Between the Female's Physical Separation and Remarriage

This variable was measured by a demographic questionnaire administered to the female spouse (see Appendix A). In this study, "separation" was defined by the date that the couple permanently ceased living together.

Legal separation date was not considered. The variable was split into three categories: less than three years; between three and five years; and more than five years.

Remarried Spouses' Current Combined Yearly Income

This variable was measured by a demographic questionnaire administered to the female spouse (see Appendix A). The variable was split into five categories: less than \$10,000; between \$10,001 and \$15,000; between \$15,001 and \$25,000; between \$25,001 and \$50,000; and more than \$50,000.

Female Spouse's Current Amount of Contact with Ex-spouse

This variable was measured by a demographic questionnaire administered to the female spouse (see Appendix A). The variable was split into low, moderate and high amount of contact categories. Low amount of contact was defined as questionnaire answers which predominately indicated contact in the "none" or "once a year" categories. Moderate amount of contact was defined as questionnaire answers which predominately indicated contact in the "once every 6 months" and "once a month or more" categories. High amount of contact was defined as questionnaire answers which predominately indicated contact in the "once a week or more" and "daily" categories.

Although some previous research has indicated that the amount of contact with the former spouse is related to marital adjustment in a curvilinear fashion, other research

has indicated no relationship between these two variables. Due to the inconsistent research results on the relationship between these variables, amount of contact with former spouse was entered into the regression equation in the hopes of further clarifying its relationship to marital adjustment.

Female Spouse's Quality of Contact with Ex-spouse:  
Divorce Adjustment

This variable was measured using the female spouse's total score on the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale (FDAS; Fisher, 1978). The FDAS consists of 100 short statements to be answered on a 5-point scale: always, usually, sometimes, seldom, and never.

The FDAS contains subscales entitled: feelings of self-worth, emotional disentanglement from love relationship, feelings of anger at former love partner, symptoms of grief, level of social trust, and social self worth. Means, standard deviations and internal reliabilities for each scale are provided. Fisher notes that numerous doctoral dissertations have used the FDAS (Fisher, 1988).

The Kuder-Richardson internal reliability of the FDAS total score was reported as .92 (Saul & Scherman, 1984); Fisher later reported alpha internal reliability of .985, and notes that the subtests alpha internal reliabilities ranging from .87 to .95 (Fisher, 1988, personal communication).

Fisher has compiled norms from several different studies in which the FDAS was used. He has norms for white, middle class subjects (n=100); norms for participants in the Fisher Divorce Adjustment and Personal Growth Seminar from eight states (n=497); and norms for a non-clinical group in an attempt to get a representative sample of the total population (n=474). He has differentiated the samples by sex, age, length of time separated, pre- and post-seminar, "dumpers" versus "dumpees" versus "mutuals," legal status, income level in previous marriage, numbers of children, ages of children, divorce versus non-divorced family of origin, custody arrangements, present circumstances (remarried, living together, no partner), educational background, and Caucasian versus Spanish-American subjects.

#### Female Spouse's Perceived Family Environment

This variable was measured using the female spouse's derived scores on the Relationship Dimensions subscales on the Moos Family Environment Scale (FES; Moos & Moos, 1986). The subscale scores of Cohesion, Expressiveness, and Conflict were combined to form a single derived score. The Cohesion score was added to the Expressiveness score. The Conflict score was then subtracted from the summed Cohesion plus Expressiveness score. The use of the Cohesion plus Expressiveness minus Conflict scores has been gleaned from previous research precedents; this combination of subscales has been termed the Family Relationships Index (FRI; Abbott & Brody, 1985; Holahan & Moos, 1981; Holahan & Moos, 1982).

This derivation was utilized in an attempt to extract a single powerful score from the Relationship Dimensions of the Family Environment Scale. The Family Environment Scale does not contain a total score; it contains ten separate subscales. The Family Relationships Index (FRI) has been called a measure of "additional information on the emotional quality of the marital relationship not assessed by the [Dyadic Adjustment Scale]" (Abbott & Brody, 1985); the FRI is also purported to measure "family support" (Moos & Moos, 1986).

The Moos Family Environment Scale is a 90-item, true-false questionnaire designed to measure the interpersonal relationships among family members, directions of personal growth which the family emphasizes, and the basic organization of the family.

The internal consistencies (Cronbach's Alpha) for each of the ten FES subscales are all in the acceptable range, from moderate (Independence; Achievement) to substantial (Cohesion; Organization; Intellectual-Cultural Orientation; Moral-Religious Emphasis) (Moos & Moos, 1986).

The intercorrelations of the subscales, based on voluminous sample data, indicate that the subscales measure distinct though somewhat related aspects of family social environments (Moos & Moos, 1986).

Test-retest reliabilities were calculated using 47 family members who took form R twice with an 8-week interval between testing. They are in an acceptable range, from .68

(Independence) to .86 (Cohesion). Test-retest stabilities were measured for other samples: 35 families for a 4-month interval and 241 families for a 12-month interval. Moos and Moos (1986) state that "coefficients were relatively high for these time intervals" (p.20). Additional data in the FES Manual indicates that profiles are "quite stable over time intervals of as long as a year (Moos & Moos, 1986, p.20)."

Content and face validity are evidenced in the test development. The test authors used definitions of specific constructs as a base, and then prepared items to fit the construct definition. Independent raters later examined the items and judged whether they fit into their respective constructs. In addition, empirical criteria were also used in item selection (e.g., item-subscale correlations).

The construct validity of the FES subscales is supported by numerous studies. FES cohesion is positively related to perceived support from family members and marital adjustment (Moos & Moos, 1986). FES expressiveness and conflict are also related to analogous scales of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale. FES expressiveness and cohesion have been shown to have significant correlations with the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale ( $r=.40$  and  $r=.38$  respectively;  $p < .01$ ) (Waring, McElrath, Lefcoe, & Weisz, 1981); this moderate correlation suggests that these subscales measure something distinct from, but related to, marital adjustment. Also, one study found that high family

cohesion and expressiveness and lack of conflict were significantly related to reports of emotional, social and sexual intimacy (Moos & Moos, 1986).

To further support construct validity, one study found a significant correspondence between professional staff ratings of families and the patients' and wives' reports of family cohesion, expressiveness, conflict, and religious emphasis (Moos & Moos, 1986).

In terms of discriminant validity, the FES subscales have not been found to be related to measures of different constructs (Moos & Moos, 1986).

Of particular interest for this study will be the Relationship Dimensions of the FES. The Relationship Dimensions include the following subscales:

- 1) Cohesion: the degree of commitment, help, and support family members provide for one another.
- 2) Expressiveness: the extent to which family members are encouraged to act openly and to express their feelings directly.
- 3) Conflict: the amount of openly expressed anger, aggression, and conflict among family members.

The remaining seven subscales of the FES were not utilized as part of this study. The Personal Growth Dimensions subscales (Independence, Achievement Orientation, Intellectual-Cultural Orientation, Active-Recreational Orientation, Moral-Religious Emphasis), as well as the System Maintenance Dimension subscales (Organization, Control) were deemed not to be as crucial to the prediction of remarital adjustment as the Relationship Dimensions

subscales. The basis for this judgment was conceptual, empirical and pragmatic.

Conceptually, the System Maintenance Dimensions subscales appear to relate more directly to child management concerns than to the remarital subsystem. This is also true of the Personal Growth Dimensions subscales of Independence, Achievement Orientation, Intellectual-Cultural Orientation, and Active-Recreational Orientation.

Empirical evidence for the exclusion of the Personal Growth Dimensions subscales and the System Maintenance Dimensions subscales in this study is gleaned from Waring et al. (1981), who found no significant correlations between these subscales and marital adjustment as measured by the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale.

Pragmatically, the use of more than one derived score from the FES would have made the number of subjects required unweildy. The entire FES was given to subjects so that further analysis may be performed as a future research project. This was also necessary to preserve the psychometric integrity of the instrument.

#### Female Spouse's Perceived Social Support from Friends

This variable was measured using the female spouse's Friends subscale scores from the Social Support Appraisal Scale (SS-A; Vaux, Phillips, Holly, Thomson, Williams, & Stewart, 1986). The SS-A is a 23-item self-report instrument which measures subjective appraisal of social support.

The authors developed the SS-A utilizing the conceptual definitions of social support appraisal put forth by Thoits (1982), Cobb (1976), Kaplan, Cassel and Gore (1977), and Turner, Frankel, and Levin (1983). For these authors, perceived social support consists of "beliefs that one is loved, respected, and esteemed by and involved with family, friends, and others" (Vaux et al., 1986, p.200). It is hypothesized that this perceived social support develops out of "the subjective appraisal of information provided by the existence of supportive relationships and the occurrence of supportive interactions" (Vaux et al., 1986, p.200).

The SS-A yields three scores: SS-A total, SS-A family, and SS-A friends. A series of studies utilizing diverse samples of subjects (college students, middle aged female students, fathers, adolescents, and various adult samples) were used in computing reliability and validity data. Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficients were as follows for student and community samples respectively:

The family and friend subscales were deemed distinct, as they had only moderate correlations with each other for both student samples (mean  $r = .51$ ) and community samples (mean  $r = .52$ ) (Vaux et al., 1986, p.206). The Friends subscale only was utilized in this study because the Family subscale was analogous to the Cohesion subscale of the Family Environment Scale. By utilizing the Friends subscale of the Social Support Appraisals Scale, it was hoped that this variable would have provided information on the female

spouses' perceived support systems outside of the family system. Thus it was posited that the SS-A Friends subscale scores would have provided additional predictive utility in the regression equation in relation to the Family Environment Scale derived score.

In terms of convergent and divergent validity, the SS-A "shows predicted relationships with a range of measures of support appraisals, support resources, personality characteristics, and psychological distress; these relationships are as strong or stronger than those reported for other support appraisal measures" (Vaux et al., 1986, p.216).

#### Null Hypothesis

The null hypothesis was as follows. No combination or subset of the predictor variables cited below will significantly contribute to a regression equation with the criterion variable being marital adjustment. Marital adjustment was defined as each individual's total score on the Dyadic Adjustment Scale.

Predictor variables:

- a) demographic question: measuring time between physical separation and remarriage.
- b) demographic question: measuring amount of contact between the subject and her ex-spouse.
- c) total score on the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale: measuring divorce adjustment.
- d) demographic question: measuring total combined yearly income of the current husband and wife.
- e) total score on (Cohesion plus Expressiveness minus

Conflict subscales) of the Family Environment Scale: measuring perceived family environment.

f) total score on the Friends subscale of the Social Support Appraisals Scale: measuring perceived social support from friends.

### Data Collection

Names of prospective participants were gathered by the researcher through print advertising and word of mouth. Indications of interest in the study were received from all over the United States. Questionnaire packets with subject instructions, informed consent forms, and randomly-ordered research instruments were mailed to prospective participants. Participants filled out the forms in their homes and returned the completed packets to the researcher using enclosed pre-stamped envelopes.

### Statistical Treatment

A stepwise multiple regression analysis was performed, using marital adjustment (DAS total scores) as the criterion variable. The predictor variables were the female's:

- a) time between physical separation and remarriage
- b) amount of contact with ex-spouse
- c) divorce adjustment
- e) total combined yearly income of husband and wife
- f) perceived family environment
- g) perceived social support from friends.

## Chapter 4

### RESULTS

#### Characteristics of the Sample

The sample of sixty four (64) remarried females was obtained through letters to the presidents of chapters of the Stepfamily Association of America; a print advertisement in the Stepfamily Bulletin (a national stepfamily newsletter); and flyers distributed to local clinicians, clinics, and various community centers. The sample is non-random in nature and may not be considered representative of the simple stepfather family population as a whole.

The means and standard deviations of the criterion and predictor variables may be found in Table 1. These measures of central tendency indicated that the majority of the sample consisted of individuals who had mean current combined yearly incomes between \$25,001 and \$50,000 (n=29) or above \$50,000 (n=32). A small minority of couples reported incomes between \$10,001 and \$15,000 (n=2) and \$15,001 and \$25,000 (n=1). No couples reported combined yearly incomes under \$10,001. By most standards these income levels would place the individuals in the middle or upper middle class in terms of socioeconomic status.

The data also indicate that the mean level of education for these individuals was between the categories of "some college" (n=24) and "college degree" (n=13). Also, there were a surprising number of subjects who indicated they had graduate degrees (n=18). Those who indicated they had high school degrees (n=7) or had not completed high school (n=2) were less well represented in this sample. Thus the subjects tended towards a more highly educated status than perhaps the population would reflect.

Most of the subjects had utilized psychotherapy, and indicated that their most recent therapy experience was either individual (n=15), marital (n=17) or family therapy (n=23). Only nine (9) subjects indicated that they had not ever been involved in therapy.

The average time between physical separation and remarriage was less than five years (n=41). For many participants, remarriage occurred within three years of the separation (n=27), although several indicated they remarried between three and five years (n=14). The distribution was bimodal, however, as individuals who had more than five years between separation and remarriage were also well represented (n=23).

The mean and modal amount of contact with the ex-spouse for these subjects fell into the "moderate" category. The distribution indicated that moderate contact with their ex-husband was the arrangement for most of the women in this study. The numbers of subjects falling into each category

is as follows: "low" contact (n=15); "moderate" contact (n=33); and "high" contact (n=16).

#### Stepwise Multiple Regression Data

A stepwise multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine which independent (predictor) variables contributed significantly to the dependent variable, marital adjustment. The regression equation, which included the six predictor variables outlined in chapter three, yielded two factors (family environment and divorce adjustment) which were found to contribute significantly to the regression equation [ $F(2,61) = 9.603, p < .0001$ ]. The resulting regression equation accounted for twenty one percent (21%) of the variance. Family environment and divorce adjustment were found to vary as marital adjustment varied. A summary table of these results is in Table 2.

#### Correlations between the Variables

As part of the stepwise regression analysis, a correlation matrix was performed. Although the research hypothesis did not include hypotheses involving correlations beyond the stepwise regression equation, the significant correlations are listed here as additional data. Several statistically significant correlations were found, both between the predictor variables and the criterion variable, and between various predictor variables. For a complete listing of the correlation matrix, see Table 3.

Correlations between Predictor Variables and the Criterion Variable

The females' perceived family environment (as measured by the Family Relationship Index of the Family Environment Scale) was significantly positively associated with their marital adjustment (as measured by the Dyadic Adjustment Scale) ( $p < .01$ ).

In addition, the females' divorce adjustment (as measured by the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale) was significantly positively associated with their marital adjustment ( $p < .01$ ).

Correlations between Predictor Variables

Subjects' perceived family environments were significantly positively associated with their divorce adjustments ( $p < .05$ ).

Subjects' perceived social support from friends (as measured by the Friends subscale of the Social Support Appraisals scale) was significantly positively associated with their divorce adjustment ( $p < .01$ ). Perceived social support from friends was also significantly positively associated with time between physical separation and remarriage ( $p < .05$ ). As social support increased, so did the length of time between separation and remarriage.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of Criterion and Predictor Variables

	Mean	Standard Deviation
DAS	114.50	18.36
FES	47.75	33.74
SSA	49.31	5.53
FDAS	415.75	44.36
TIME	1.94	.89
INCOME	4.42	.69
CONTACT	2.02	.70

DAS = Dyadic Adjustment Scale (criterion)

FES = Family Environment Scale (predictor)

SSA = Social Support Appraisal Scale (predictor)

FDAS = Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale (predictor)

TIME = Time between separation and remarriage (predictor)

INCOME = current yearly income of both spouses (predictor)

CONTACT = amount of contact with ex-spouse (predictor)

Table 2. Summary Table

		Multiple R		.48934		
		R Square		.23945		
		Adjusted R Square		.21452		
		Standard Error		16.27253		
Step	MultR	Rsq	F(Eqn)	SigF	Variable	BetaIn
1	.4072	.1658	12.323	.001	FES	.4072
2	.4893	.2395	9.603	.0001	FDAS	.2844

Analysis of Variance

	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square
Regression	2	5085.49292	2542.74646
Residual	61	16152.50708	264.79520

F = 9.60269  
Significant F = .0002

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Beta Weight</u>	<u>T</u>
(variables in the equation)		
FES	.32202	2.752
FDAS	.28444	2.431
(Constant)		2.925
(variables not in the equation)		
SSA	-.12174	-1.014
TIME	.12593	1.113
Income	-.01163	-.103
Contact	-8.17603	-.017

Table 3. Correlation Matrix

	DAS	FES	SSA	FDAS	TIME
DAS	1.000				
FES	.407**	1.000			
SSA	.033	.103	1.000		
FDAS	.381**	.299*	.368**	1.000	
TIME	.191	.061	.246*	.171	1.000
INCOME	-.002	-.045	.157	.084	.148
CONTACT	-.009	-.101	.187	.110	-.024

	INCOME	CONTACT
DAS		
FES		
SSA		
FDAS		
TIME		
INCOME	1.000	
CONTACT	.118	1.000

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

## Chapter 5

### SUMMARY

#### Summary of the Study

The burgeoning phenomenon of remarriage in the United States is something which both the public and mental health professionals need to deal with in these modern times. Despite remarriage's prevalence in today's society, media and professional interest in stepfamilies remains marginal. Information dispersed about stepfamilies has tended to be anecdotal, as opposed to empirically based. Theory and research in the field of psychology and its related disciplines regarding stepfamilies has primarily been based on clinical lore. Most early research on remarried individuals and families used non-standardized, researcher-developed questionnaires and interviews, partly because instruments with more rigorous psychometric properties had not been developed for use with the stepfamily population.

Critiques of previous stepfamily research noted that the early studies on remarriage tended to treat all stepfamilies as if they were cut from the same cloth. Today there is recognition that there are many different subtypes of stepfamilies, and that each subtype warrants research

specifically targeted toward it. Common sense indicates that stepfather families are different from stepmother families; simple stepfamilies (with one stepparent) are different from complex stepfamilies (with two stepparents); stepfamilies with primarily residential children are different from stepfamilies where the children visit on the weekends.

Critics also noted that most of the early research on remarried families tended to unfairly compare these families to first-married families. People familiar with remarriage understand that numerous developmental differences between these two types of families exist. Academic and clinical circles are now recognizing that remarriage is an enduring institution, and that it must be studied in its own right.

Critics named other factors within each stepfamily subtype which have not been adequately studied, such as age of family members, gender of children and stepchildren, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, length of marriage, number of times married, reproduction within the remarriage, and relationships with the former spouses.

The empirical research which had been done tended to be traditional in character: researchers focused on intrapsychic constructs of individual family members (most often the stepchildren). Research tended to avoid inquiry into the interpersonal environment; thus, examinations of the marital dyad, family environment, and friendship networks were rare.

Research on marital adjustment in remarriage indicated that factors which could predict marital adjustment in first-married couples did not usually predict adjustment well for remarried couples. It was clear that different sets of predictor variables were needed. Some studies found useful predictor variables such as socioeconomic status, family environment, and social support. Additional research into more adequate predictor variables was needed.

Research and theory focusing on people's responses to divorce heightened interest in theories around coping with relationship losses. Several authors posited theories of what constituted healthy and unhealthy methods of coping with the loss of one's partner by separation and divorce. Terms like "divorce grief" and "divorce adjustment" were used to describe the post-divorce coping responses of divorced persons. Consistent with other theories of loss, these theories suggested that the loss of the former partner must be adequately resolved lest it interfere with the development of future healthy intimate relationships.

Concurrent with this surge of theories about divorce and remarriage came better psychometric tools to measure interpersonal relations. Fisher developed the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale, which examines how people are coping with their divorce (Fisher, 1978). Spanier developed the most often utilized measure of marital adjustment, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976). Moos & Moos developed the Family Environment Scales

to monitor various areas of family functioning (Moos & Moos, 1986). To measure social support from family and friends, Vaux and his colleagues developed the Social Support Appraisals Scale (Vaux, Phillips, Holly, Thomson, Williams, and Stewart, 1986). As previously noted, all of these instruments have established acceptable reliability and validity standards.

Research on family environments and social support networks flourished. New data began to emerge from these studies suggesting that both of these interpersonal environments had a powerful impact on marital adjustment. These studies pointed the way towards stepfamily research which incorporated information about the adults' perceptions about the family and friendship networks, and these networks' reciprocal impact on marital relationships.

#### Statement of the Problem

There is a need for additional empirical research into marital adjustment in remarriage. Much of the previous research in this field has lacked scientific rigor in terms of: 1) studying remarried families without differentiating between the various subtypes of stepfamilies; 2) utilizing non-standardized instruments to measure variables; and 3) omitting certain independent variables from consideration.

This study addressed all three of the above concerns. It focused on one specific subtype of remarried families: simple stepfather families. Research on this subtype is especially important, as it is the most prevalent form of

stepfamily. This study utilized standardized psychometric measurement devices with acceptable reliability and validity data. Lastly, the study focused on several independent variables which had not been adequately studied in terms of marital satisfaction, namely, quality and quantity of contact with former spouse, length of time between separation and remarriage, and social support from friends. The other independent variables studied, family environment and income, were included because research had indicated these factors could be important correlates of marital adjustment. By utilizing these six variables, replications of previous findings could be analyzed, and the utility of some predictor variables never before used could be discovered.

#### Statement of Procedures

A sample of sixty-four remarried females was recruited via letters sent to all chapter presidents of the Stepfamily Association of America (SAA) throughout the United States, a print advertisement in the Stepfamily Bulletin (the national newsletter of the SAA), letters posted throughout the local community, and word of mouth. The sample was non-random in nature. All subjects were remarried females with children from their previous marriages currently living with them. Their husbands may or may not have been previously married, but these men did not have children from their previous marriage living with them currently. Thus the sample consisted of simple stepfather families.

The research design was a stepwise regression analysis. The dependent (criterion) variable was marital adjustment, as measured by the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976). Six independent (predictor) variables were utilized: time between the female's physical separation and remarriage; remarried spouses' current combined yearly income; female's current amount of contact with ex-spouse; female's quality of contact with ex-spouse; female's perceived family environment; and female's perceived social support from friends. The first three independent variables were measured using a demographic questionnaire. Quality of contact with ex-spouse was measured using the total score of the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale (FDAS; Fisher, 1978). Family environment was measured using the Family Relationships Index of the Family Environment Scale (FES; Moos & Moos, 1986). Social support from friends was measured using the Friends Subscale of the Social Support Appraisals Scale (SS-A; Vaux, Phillips, Holly, Thompson, Williams, & Stewart, 1986).

#### Research Hypothesis Used

The research hypothesis was as follows: No combination or subset of the predictor variables would have significantly contributed to a regression equation with the criterion variable being marital adjustment.

#### Results

The stepwise regression equation yielded two factors

(family environment and divorce adjustment) which were found to contribute significantly to the regression equation [F (2, 61) = 9.603,  $p < .0001$ ]. The resulting regression equation accounted for twenty one percent (21%) of the variance. Family environment and divorce adjustment were found to vary as marital adjustment varied. The null hypothesis, that no combination or subset of the predictor variables would significantly contribute to the regression equation, was rejected.

### Conclusions

One can conclude the following statements based on the the data gleaned from this study.

1) A significant stepwise regression equation was formed using the predictor variables of family environment and divorce adjustment. This equation was able to predict the criterion variable, marital adjustment.

2) Marital adjustment was positively correlated with divorce adjustment.

3) Marital adjustment was positively correlated with family environment.

4) Marital adjustment was not correlated with the amount of contact with ex-spouse.

5) Marital adjustment was not correlated with length of time between separation and remarriage.

6) Marital adjustment was not correlated with income.

7) Marital adjustment was not correlated with social support from friends.

8) Divorce adjustment was not correlated with amount of contact with former spouse.

9) Family environment was positively correlated with divorce adjustment.

10) Social support of friends was positively correlated with divorce adjustment and time between separation and remarriage.

### Implications

The results of this study point to some interesting hypotheses about remarried families. The research context limits the generalizability of these conclusions to families with certain characteristics, but the study nevertheless has begun to examine paths not well worn.

The females studied were American, mostly moderate to high income, highly educated, therapy-wise, volunteer subjects who were paid for their participation, and who tended to be involved in stepfamily support groups. This study examined only the female's point of view in terms of marital satisfaction and the predictor variables. Lastly, these findings are based on the measurement of the criterion variable (marital adjustment) using the Dyadic Adjustment Scale alone. This scale, although frequently used as a measure of dyadic adjustment, may not accurately represent a person's adjustment within a relationship. More complex measurement instruments might have yielded different data on the criterion variable.

This rather specific subgroup of simple stepfather

families yielded results which may provide stepping stones to future research. For these subjects, marital adjustment was positively related to divorce adjustment. One possible explanation of this finding is that healthy resolutions of previous relationships are important for the development of current relationships. An alternate way of explaining the marital adjustment-divorce adjustment relationship would be to assume that developing a positive marital relationship aids in the resolution of divorce grief.

It is interesting that while divorce adjustment did show a relationship with marital adjustment, the amount of contact with ex-husbands showed no such relationship. This finding is contrary to Clingempeel's original study and consistent with his later results which indicated no relationship between amount of contact with ex-spouse and marital adjustment (Clingempeel, 1981; Clingempeel & Brand, 1985). These findings suggest that the quality of the relationship with the ex-spouse has more impact on the current marital relationship than whether or not there is frequent or infrequent contact with this ex-spouse.

This study found no relationship between divorce adjustment and amount of contact with former spouse, suggesting that divorce adjustment does not hinge on the amount of contact with the ex-spouse. These women may have had little, moderate or high contact with their ex-husbands and it seems that the amount of contact did not clearly impact upon the quality of their relationship with these

former partners. In conjunction with the positive marital adjustment-divorce adjustment relationship cited previously, this suggests that the quality of the relationship with the ex-spouse is more impactful on the current marital relationship than the mere quantity of contact with the ex-spouse.

Family environment appears to have been a crucial variable in terms of marital satisfaction. Those who rated their families as having more cohesion, more expressiveness, and less conflict were more pleased with their marital relationship. This result comes as no surprise, as the reciprocal impact of current relationships is well known in clinical lore. The importance of harmonious adult-child relations in these simple stepfather families is highlighted in these results. It seems obvious that both adults, when entering into a stepfamily situation, should pay close attention to fostering workable parent-child and stepparent-stepchild relationships in order to maximize their potential for positive marital relations.

Current family environment also emerged as positively related to the female's divorce adjustment. One might hypothesize that a woman who enters a remarriage with a healthy measure of divorce adjustment tends to contribute to a more cohesive, more expressive, and less conflict-ridden household. Alternatively, one could suppose that a positive family environment works as a catalyst with the divorce adjustment process, moving it along towards a healthy

resolution of the divorce process.

Marital adjustment did not relate to social support from friends in this study. It appears that the women relied more heavily on social support from their remarried families than they did on their friends. This result supports the notion that our families are our primary source of social support, with friends being a distant second, at least in terms of its impact on our intimate relationships. The social support of friends, however, was positively related to the women's divorce adjustment and time between separation and remarriage. It appears that women felt more social support from friends when they had a time gap between their separation and remarriage. Perhaps friends are more sought out by divorced women who have not linked themselves to a new partner relatively quickly after their separation. It makes sense that support from friends would be associated with divorce adjustment, presuming that most of the adjustment to a divorce occurs while these women are single and unattached in the early post-separation stage.

Marital adjustment was not related to income in this study. These results may be an artifact of the sample, given the homogeneity of the middle to upper-middle class grouping. Perhaps income was not a significant factor in this study because lower and lower-middle class families were not well represented. Lower income groups would typically be expected to exhibit more financial stress and more conflict over finances, which has been found to be

negatively associated with marital and family adjustment (M. Hafkin, 1981; Albrecht, 1979; Knaub, Hanna & Stinnet, 1984). In addition, the way in which the income data were categorized may have skewed the results.

Contrary to the hypothesis of several writers, the length of time between separation and remarriage was not found to be related to marital adjustment in this study. Hunt and Hunt (1977) as well as Sager et al. (1983) hypothesized that the optimum time between separation and remarriage is three to five years. In this study, there was no difference in marital adjustment in women who remarried in less than three years, between three and five years, and more than five years. This study, however, did not control for length of remarriage. If this variable had been taken into account, the results might have been different. Also, the way in which this variable was categorized in the data analysis may have skewed the results.

In terms of working with remarried couples and families, the results of this study suggest that clinicians pay close attention to the divorce adjustment of the previously married spouse(s). Work around resolving the former relationship may be an important cornerstone in individual or marital therapy with adults. Ongoing heated conflicts between ex-spouses may indicate unresolved issues. The results of this study suggest that individuals should focus more on the quality of contact with the ex-spouse (as opposed to focusing merely on the amount of contact), as the

quality of contact is more strongly related to marital adjustment. Since correlational data does not imply causation, however, it would be a mistake to suggest that resolving the former relationship necessarily predates the development of a positive marital relationship. It may be that successful remarriage experiences serve to heal the former relationship. This deduction implies that a clinician might do well to focus her energies on strengthening the current marital relationship, and that the resolution of the former relationship would follow the development of a successful remarriage.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

In terms of future research on the topic of marital adjustment in remarriage, the following suggestions in terms of content and process might aid in developing further research.

Other samples with differing demographic makeups should be studied to further ferret out the differences in types of simple stepfather families. Families of differing ethnic, cultural, and lower and upper socioeconomic makeups should be studied, compared, and contrasted. People who have less formal education (for example, those with high school educations or less) need to be examined more in depth. Families who have not utilized mental health professionals have also not been adequately studied.

It would be helpful to further delineate and isolate demographic characteristics to make for more homogeneous

sample groups. For instance, variables such as length of marriage, number and age of children, residence of children from all previous relationships, presence of biological children in the current union, and number of times married should be equated or accounted for in future studies.

Vemer et al. (1989) urged more focus on perceptions, values, and affect variables (as opposed to demographic variables) in future research. This must be done in several ways. This study examined only one family member's perceptions. In the future, inquiry into multiple family members' perceptions would yield more comprehensive data, especially in terms of interpersonal processes. Secondly, the way in which these perceptions, values, and affect variables are assessed should go beyond paper-and-pencil instruments and move into the use of more sophisticated behavioral measures, such as assessment procedures utilizing videotaped couple and family interactions.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abbott, D.A. & Brody, G.H. (1985). The relation of child age, gender, and number of children to the marital adjustment of wives. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 77-84.
- Albrecht, S.L. (1979). Correlates of marital happiness among the remarried. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 857-867.
- Bernard, J. (1956). Remarriage: A study of marriage. New York: Russell & Russell.
- Bohannon, P. (1970). Divorce chains, households of remarriages, & multiple divorcers. In P. Bohannon (Ed.) Divorce & after: An analysis of the emotional and social problems of divorce (pp. 127-139). New York: Doubleday.
- Brand, E. (1986). The interdependencies of intrafamilial dyads: Marital quality and parent-child relationships. Dissertation Abstracts International, 46, 8, 2797-B.
- Brand, E. & Clingempeel, W.G. (1987). Interdependencies of marital and stepparent-stepchild relationships and children's psychological adjustment: Research findings and clinical implications. Family Relations, 36, 140-145.
- Bredefeld, G.M. (1985). Joint custody and remarriage: Its effects on marital adjustment and children. Dissertation Abstracts International, 46, 3, 1233-B.
- Carter, E. & McGoldrick, M. (1980). The Family Life Cycle. New York: Gardner Press.
- Cherlin, A.J. (1978). Remarriage as an incomplete institution. American Journal of Sociology, 84, 634-650.
- Clingempeel, W.G. (1981). Quasi-kin relationships and marital quality in stepfather families. Dissertation Abstracts International, 42, 4, 1599-B.

- Clingempeel, W. G. & Brand, E. (1985). Quasi-kin relationships, structural complexity, and marital quality in stepfamilies: A replication, extension, and clinical implications. Family Relations, 34, 401-409.
- Cobb, S. (1976). Social support as a moderator of life stress. Psychosomatic Medicine, 38, 300-314.
- Dahl, A., Cowgill, K. & Asmundsson, R. (1987). Life in remarriage families. Social Work, Jan/Feb, 32(1), 40-44.
- Demaris, A. (1984). A comparison of remarriages with first marriages on satisfaction in marriage and its relationship to prior cohabitation. Family Relations, 33, 443-449.
- Duberman, L. (1975). The Reconstituted Family: A Study of Remarried Couples and Their Children. Chicago: Nelson-Hall.
- Erikson, E. (1959). Identity & the Life Cycle. New York: International Universities Press.
- Esses, L. & Campbell, R. (1984). Challenges in researching the remarried. Family Relations, 33, 415-424.
- Fisher, B. (1988). Personal communication.
- Fisher, B. (1978). When Your Relationship Ends: The Divorce Process Rebuilding Blocks. Denver: Eastwood Printing.
- Furstenberg, F. & Spanier, G. (1984). Recycling the family: Remarriage after divorce. Sage: Beverly Hills, CA.
- Ganong, L. & Coleman, M. (1988). Do mutual children cement bonds in stepfamilies? Journal of Marriage and the Family, 50, 687-698.
- Goetting, A. (1982). The six stations of remarriage: Developmental tasks of remarriage after divorce. Family Relations, 31(2), 213-222.
- Goldenberg, I. & Goldenberg, H. (1985). Family Therapy: An Overview. Brooks/Cole: Monterey, CA.
- Guisinger, S. (1984). The first years of the second marriage: Changing parental and couple relations in the remarriage family. Dissertation Abstracts International, 45, 9, 3071-B.

- Guisinger, S., Cowan, P. & Schuldberg, D. (1989). Changing parent and spouse relations in the first years of remarriage of divorced fathers. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 51, 445-456.
- Hafkin, M.I. (1981). Associative factors for stepfather integration within the blended family. Dissertation Abstracts International, 42, 11, 4578-B.
- Hafkin, N.F. (1981). Factors affecting satisfaction in the stepfamily couple. Dissertation Abstracts International, 42, 5, 1960-A.
- Heatherington, E.M. (1979). Stress & coping in divorce: A focus on women. In J.E. Gullahorn (Ed.) Psychology & Women: In Transition. Washington, D.C.: Winston & Sons.
- Hess, B.B. & Waring, J.M. (1978). Parent & child in later life: Rethinking the relationship. In R.M. Lerner & G.B. Spanier (Eds.) Child influences on marital & family interaction: A life span perspective (pp. 241-273). New York: Academic Press.
- Holahan, C.J. & Moos, R.H. (1981). Social support and psychological distress: a longitudinal analysis. Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 90(4), 365-370.
- Holahan, C.J. & Moos, R.H. (1982). Social support and adjustment: predictive benefits of social climate indices. American Journal of Community Psychology, 10(4), 403-413.
- Hunt, M. & Hunt, B. (1977). The Divorce Experience. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Ihinger-Tallman, M. (1984). Epilogue. Family Relations, 33, 483-487.
- Ihinger-Tallman, M. & Pasley, K. (1986). Remarriage and integration within the community. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 48, 395-405.
- James, S. & Johnson, D. (1988). Social interdependence, psychological adjustment, and marital satisfaction in second marriages. Journal of Social Psychology, 128(3), 287-303.
- Kaplan, B.H., Cassel, J.C., & Gore, S. (1977). Social support and health. Medical Care, 15, (Suppl.), 47-58.
- Knaub, P.K., Hanna, S.L. & Stinnett, N. (1984). Strengths of remarried families. Journal of Divorce, 7(3), 41-55.

- Kurdek, L. (1989). Social support and psychological distress in first-married and remarried newlywed husbands and wives. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 51, 1047-1052.
- Kurdek, L. (1989b). Relationship quality for newly married husbands and wives: marital history, stepchildren, and individual-difference predictors. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 51, 1053-1064.
- Levinson, D. (1978). The Seasons of a Man's Life. New York: Knopf.
- Macklin, E.D. (1980). Nontraditional family forms: A decade of research. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 42(4), 905-922.
- Margolin, G. (1981). Behavior exchange in happy and unhappy marriages: A family life cycle perspective. Behavior Therapy, 12, 329-343.
- Moos, R. & Moos, B. (1986). Family Environment Scale Manual, Second Edition. Consulting Psychologists Press: Palo Alto, CA.
- Morris, L.J. (1985). A comparison of marital satisfaction and stepfamily integration in stepmother and stepfather remarriages. Dissertation Abstracts International, 46, 5, 1695-B.
- Papernow, P. (1984). The stepfamily cycle: An experiential model of stepfamily development. Family Relations, 33, 355-363.
- Peek, C., Bell, N., Waldren, T. & Sorell, G. (1988). Patterns of functioning in families of remarried and first-married couples. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 50, 699-708.
- Pink, J.E. & Wampler, K.S. (1985). Problem areas in stepfamilies: Cohesion, adaptability, and the stepfather-adolescent relationship. Family Relations, 34, 327-335.
- Price-Bonham, S. & Balswick, J. O. (1980). The noninstitutions: Divorce, desertion, and remarriage. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 42(4), 959-972.
- Sager, C.J., Brown, H.S., Crohn, H., Engel, T., Rodstein, E. & Walker, L. (1983). Treating the Remarried Family, New York: Brunner/Mazel.

- Saul, S. C. & Scherman, A. (1984). Divorce grief and personal adjustment in divorced persons who remarry or remain single. Journal of Divorce, 7(3), 75-85.
- Seagrave, R.T. (1980). Marriage & mental health. Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy, 6, 87-198.
- Spanier, G. (1976). Measuring dyadic adjustment: New scales for assessing the quality of marriage and similar dyads. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 38, 15-28.
- Spanier, G. & Cole, C. (1976). Toward clarification & investigation of marital adjustment. International Journal of Sociology of the Family, 6, 121-146.
- Spanier, G. & Filsinger, E. (1983). The dyadic adjustment scale. In E. Filsinger (Ed.) Marriage and Family Assessment. Sage: Beverly Hills, CA.
- Spivey, P. (1978). Maladjustment, Personality Characteristics & Stress in Divorced Women. Unpublished Dissertation, University of Oklahoma.
- Stinnett, N., Sanders, G. & Defrain, J. (1981). Strong families: A national study. In N. Stinnett, J. Defrain, K. King, P. Knaub & G. Rowe (Eds.) Family Strengths 3: Roots of Well Being. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press.
- Stinnett, N. & Sauer, K.H. (1977). Relationship characteristics of strong families. Family Perspectives, Fall, 3-11.
- Thoits, P.A. (1982). Conceptual, methodological and theoretical problems in studying social support as a buffer against life stress. Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 23, 145-159.
- Turner, R.J., Frankel, B.G. & Levin, D. (1983). Social support: Conceptualization, measurement, and implications for mental health. In J.R. Greenley (Ed.) Research in community mental health. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Vaux, A., Phillips, J., Holly, L., Thomson, B., Williams, D., & Stewart, D. (1986). The social support appraisals (SS-A) scale: Studies of reliability and validity. American Journal of Community Psychology, 14(2), 195-219.
- Vemer, E., Coleman, M., Ganong, L. & Cooper, H. (1989). Marital satisfaction in remarriage: a meta-analysis. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 51, 713-725.

Waring, E., McElrath, D., Lefcoe, D., & Weisz, G. (1981).  
Dimensions of intimacy in marriage. Psychiatry,  
44, 169-175.

Wiseman, R.S. (1975). Crisis theory and the process of  
divorce. Social Casework, 55(4), 205-212.

APPENDIX A

Demographic Questionnaire

All information obtained will be kept strictly confidential.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Sex:  Male  Female

For the questions below, please check all answers that apply.

Your level of education: (check one)

- did not complete high school \_\_\_\_\_
- high school graduate \_\_\_\_\_
- vocational training and/or  
attended some college \_\_\_\_\_
- college degree \_\_\_\_\_
- graduate/professional degree \_\_\_\_\_

Please enter the following information about your biological children and stepchildren:

"Residential" means the child lives with you now and that you have legal custody of the child.

"Nonresidential" means that the child lives primarily with someone else and that you do not have legal custody.

	sex	age	residential	nonresidential
biological children:	_____	_____	_____	_____
with current spouse	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____

	sex	age	residential	nonresidential
biological children:	_____	_____	_____	_____
with former spouse	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____

	sex	age	residential	nonresidential
stepchildren:	_____	_____	_____	_____
(children of	_____	_____	_____	_____
current spouse)	_____	_____	_____	_____

Are you currently undergoing counseling/psychotherapy for problems not directly related to your marriage or family life (e.g., job stresses; psychological distress caused by physical illness; mourning the loss of someone or something)?

yes \_\_\_ no \_\_\_

Have you undergone counseling/psychotherapy in the past for individual, marital or family problems?

yes \_\_\_ no \_\_\_

If yes, please check the following items which apply to your most recent counseling experience:

approximate length of treatment:

less than 3 months \_\_\_ more than 3 months \_\_\_

type of treatment:

individual \_\_\_ marital \_\_\_ family \_\_\_

Have you had more than one experience as a client in counseling/psychotherapy?

yes \_\_\_ no \_\_\_

On what date did you separate with your former spouse?

month \_\_\_\_\_ year \_\_\_\_\_

On what date did you get remarried?

month \_\_\_\_\_ year \_\_\_\_\_

How much personal contact do you currently have with your former spouse?

(Check all that apply - pick the pattern that most describes the situation.)

	telephone calls	letters/ cards	face-to-face discussions
daily	___	___	___
once a week or more	___	___	___
once a month or more	___	___	___
once every 6 months	___	___	___
once a year	___	___	___
none	___	___	___

How much contact do you have with your nonresidential biological children?

(Check all that apply - pick the pattern that most describes the situation.)

	telephone calls	letters/ cards	visitation
daily	___	___	___
once a week or more	___	___	___
once a month or more	___	___	___
once every 6 months	___	___	___
once a year	___	___	___
none	___	___	___

What is the total combined yearly income for you and your spouse?

less than \$10,000	_____
between \$10,001 and \$15,000	_____
between \$15,001 and \$25,000	_____
between \$25,001 and \$50,000	_____
more than \$50,001	_____

## APPENDIX B

## Introductory Letter

An Invitation to Participate in a  
Paid Study on Remarried Couples

I am currently doing a study on remarried couples, and I would like to ask your help. The helping professions are in great need of more information about remarried families. Should you choose to participate in this study, you will be "helping the helpers," and in turn you will help people in remarried families. Your participation could be very beneficial, and will be deeply appreciated.

The study simply involves completing a series of questionnaires in less than an hour's time. The questionnaires will be sent to you through the mail, and you will return them to me using an enclosed, self-addressed, stamped envelope. All information will be kept strictly confidential. Upon receipt of your questionnaires, I will mail you a check for \$5.00. In addition, a summary of the research results will be available once the study is completed.

You are eligible to participate if you meet the following criteria: You must be a previously-married female with children from the previous marriage currently living with you and your current spouse.

Thank you for signing up! You will hear from me soon.

[Please return this sheet to the following address or call me.]

Name

Address

Randall D. Martin, M.S.