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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Susan Montgomery Brinn entitled "Relationship Patterns Among Men and Women from Stepfather Families." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Psychology.

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We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:

Associate Vice Chancellor
and Dean of The Graduate School

RELATIONSHIP PATTERNS AMONG MEN AND WOMEN FROM STEPFATHER FAMILIES

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Susan Montgomery Brinn

May, 1994

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated
to the memory of my father,
Robert Pershing Montgomery.

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ABSTRACT

This research examined differences in relationship patterns between men and women in stepfamilies and men and women in biological families. Previous studies have generally reported more distant relationships with parents for respondents in stepfamilies. Findings on relationships outside the home have been contradictory; some research observed no effect on peer relationships for subjects from stepfamilies, still others reported more difficulty in relationships and greater risk for delinquency among this population. In order to measure relationship differences, three psychometric scales and the social network list were administered to 215 college students (63 stepchildren and 152 biological children). Results indicated that stepsons experienced more loneliness and less peer attachment than respondents from biological families, but stepdaughters reported being less lonely and closer to peers than respondents from biological families. Women, in general, were less lonely than men. Participants from stepfamilies endorsed less family satisfaction and less parent attachment than participants from biological families. On the social network, stepchildren listed more people on their social network than children from biological families did; in

particular, stepchildren included more extended family than subjects from biological families. In conclusion, stepchildren are more distant from their families than are biological children, and stepdaughters appear to compensate with relationships outside the home more effectively than stepsons do.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION 1

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE 7

Demographics of Divorce and Remarriage 7

Stereotypes of Stepfamilies and Their Significance 16

Methodological Issues in Research on Families of Divorce and Remarriage 25

Findings of Psychological Research on Stepparenting 39

The Impact of Family Conflict 40

Post-Divorce Adjustment 53

Parents' Adjustment 54

Children's Adjustment 67

Research Trends in the Study of the Stepfamily 98

Boundaries in the Stepfamily 102

Stages in Stepfamily Development 115

Remarital Satisfaction 121

Choosing to remarry 121

Marital satisfaction among

remarriage families 129
Well-being in remarriage 136
Review of the Literature on Stepfamily Functioning 139
Stepfamily expectations 140
Early adjustment in the stepfamily 144
Stepfamily functioning 148
Stepfamily alliances and coalitions 166
Stepfamily Conflict 169
Adjustment of stepmothers and stepfathers 170
Children's impact on remarriage families 179
Children's adjustment to stepfamily living--behavioral aspects . . 184
Children in remarriage--self-image and emotional adjustment . . . 199
Children's adjustment to remarriage--cognitive abilities 207
Children's long-term adjustment to remarriage 210
Stepfamily complexity: relationships with stepsiblings and

stepgrandparents 215
Stepfamily complexity:
relationships with the
noncustodial parent 219
Conclusion 225

3. METHODS 226
Participants 226
Procedure 226
Measures 226
Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale 227
Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment 229
The Family Satisfaction Scale 230
Social Network List 231
Biographical Questions 232

4. RESULTS 234
Primary Analyses 235
Psychological Variables 235
Structural Variables 239
Secondary Analyses 241
Biographic Analyses 241
Correlational Analyses 243
Psychological Characteristics 243
Loneliness 243
Family Satisfaction 247

Parent and Peer Attachment 248
Structural Characteristics 249
Size of social network 249
Immediate/extended family 250
Analyses of Stepfather Families 250
Level of family conflict 250
Age when entering stepfamily . . . 253
Visitation with the noncustodial parent 253
Serial families 256

5. DISCUSSION 259
Relationship Variations 259
Stepfamily Issues 269
Level of Conflict 269
Age at Remarriage and Serial Marriages . . . 270
Visitation with the Biological Father 270
Limitations of the Present Study 271
Conclusion 273

REFERENCES 275

VITA 310

LIST OF TABLES

1. Comparisons of family and gender groups on the psychometric measures 236

2. Comparisons of family structure and gender groups on psychological dimensions of the social network 237

3. Comparisons of family and gender groups on structural characteristics of the social network . 240

4. Comparisons of family and gender groups on biographic variables 242

5. Correlations between relationship variables and psychological social network variables 244

6. Correlations between relationship variables and structural social network variables 246

7. Comparisons of relatives on the Social Network List 251

8. Comparisons on individual conflict items by family type and gender 254

9. Comparisons of age at time of parent's remarriage on the psychometric measures 255

10. Correlations between frequency of visitation with noncustodial parent and relationship measures . . 257

11. Comparisons of stepchildren whose parents have married twice or more 258

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Until recent decades, the relationship between fathers and their children has been relatively neglected by psychologists, and the role of father surrogates and stepfathers has hardly been studied at all. This paper will address the association between the presence of stepfathers for children and adolescents and their experience of relationships both within and outside the family. Relationships have been shown by research to be integral to psychological adjustment and satisfaction with one's life. Without them, people experience comparatively greater emotional and physical stress.

Our first experience in relationships usually occurs within our family of origin. We learn trust and develop expectations about how others will interact with us based on the reactions of our immediate family in the early months and years of life. To some extent, our later interactions and expectations about relationships emerge from these experiences. If our family life has been consistent and generally rewarding then our following relationships should

be similar. Further, we should be equipped to adapt to the more difficult relationships that confront us with equanimity, based on the resources we acquired from an accepting family. However, if our early family interactions were unstable, frustrating, and neglectful, then we will be less prepared to deal with the vicissitudes of future relationships.

The field of psychology has typically focused on the mother's role in a child's social development, but has been slower to investigate the father's or father surrogate's contribution. Interest in the father's role in child development was a relatively neglected topic in psychology until the 1950s. Although Freud addressed it earlier with the Oedipal conflict, most writers on child development, including Freud, have emphasized the mother's role. However, out of the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s and the complementary men's movement currently in vogue, attention has focused on the differences between the sexes and their developmental origins, including the influence of the father or other older males as role models for young boys.

In Freud's (1961a; 1961b; 1961c) view the father's role in child development begins with the Oedipal or phallic stage which occurs for the child between the ages of three and six approximately. During this stage the child is attracted sexually to the other sex parent, but must repress

these feelings in order to avoid the anger of the same sex parent. The child moves from introjection and imitation of the same-sex parent to identification and begins to try to become like that parent. Later theorists such as Erikson (1968) and White (1959) postulated a more positive, less fearful, relationship between parent and child. They wrote of the child's motivation toward competence during middle childhood which would lead the child to imitate and identify with the parent, a quite different formulation from Freud's which had been based on fear and other negative emotions.

Typically, the father is seen in developmental theories as the parent who encourages competence and orients the child to the world outside the home. Drawing from Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory, researchers noted that infants seemed to be attached to both their mother and their father (Lamb, 1979). Similarly, Winnicott expanded his concept of "holding" to include the idea that the father holds both the mother and the infant, and thus plays a vital part in early childhood development (Winnicott, 1965; Muir, 1989). Other object relations theorists, such as Mahler, observed that the toddler, who begins to turn his or her interest to others outside the mothering dyad, will become attached to the father as the socializing agent (Neubauer, 1989). Research in sex role identification and in differential treatment by each parent suggests that the father's contribution is unique, although some fathers are able to

become nurturant like mothers, especially when she is not available (Lamb, 1979).

In addition to theories of child development, changes in family demographics and structure are relevant to the study of stepchildren. In the United States, from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, the father's role was largely that of economic provider and at least nominal head of the household (Coontz, 1992). Divorce was relatively rare until the mid-twentieth century, although its incidence rose from the time statistics on it were first gathered in 1867. With the advent of the industrial economy, most middle class fathers worked outside the home, while mothers usually managed the daily household affairs. The concept of the nuclear family, a relatively new phenomenon which emerged in the mid-nineteenth century, emphasized the particular contributions of each parent, based on sex roles, to the child's development. However, by the 1960s sociologists discerned a trend toward the end of patriarchy in families and the beginning of a more equalitarian arrangement (Cherlin, 1978). Taking note of the concomitant rise in the dissolution of marriage, Cherlin (1981) was one of a number of social commentators who tried to elucidate the origins of the escalating divorce statistics. He conjectured that "changes in attitudes toward divorce followed changes in divorce behavior," and thus did not fuel the rising divorce rate at least until the

early 1970s. Similarly, Coontz (1992) stated that new attitudes toward divorce "did not arise until marital behaviors had already changed substantially."

What did provoke the rise in the divorce rate? Cherlin looked to the increased participation of women in the labor market, a trend that may, in turn, have arisen from the lower earning potential of young men in the 1960s. Coontz observed that "the dramatic rise in maternal employment seems to have preceded feminist values," and was spurred on by inflation in the 1970s that made two incomes essential for a young family to buy a house. Other plausible contributors to the escalation in the divorce rate were the marriage squeeze, which referred to there being fewer marriage-eligible men than women, and improved contraceptives (Cherlin, 1981).

Many children who have experienced parental divorce also see their parents remarry. How many children are affected by these family transitions? Stepfamilies have been common in the United States since the colonial era, but it was not until the mid-1940 that more stepfamilies were formed after divorce than after the death of a parent. Currently almost one of every two marriages ends in divorce; the rate of divorce following remarriage is slightly higher. Approximately three-quarters of the women who divorce and five-sixths of the men who divorce will remarry (Glick & Lin, 1986). One out of every four or five children under

the age of 18 in the United States currently lives in a stepfamily; fully 60% of children will live in a single-parent household before they are 18 years old (Norton & Glick, 1986). Between one-quarter and one-half of these children will experience multiple transitions (Furstenberg, Nord, Peterson, & Zill, 1983).

Since the 1970s, researchers have looked more intensely at the father's role in his children's development and examined the effects of his absence as the divorce rate continued to rise. If the father is not present on a daily basis, then is the child's development affected in ways that cannot totally be compensated for by the mother? And what is the impact, if any, of being in a stepfather family? Research on these issues will be examined in the review of the literature. The current study is an investigation of relationship patterns of children who have lived in stepfather families compared with children who live with their biological parents. Some studies have compared the child's relationship with his stepparents and the degree of family cohesion and adaptability, but few have looked at peer relationships except for delinquency. Consequently, the research presented here examines peer attachment, feelings of loneliness, and breadth of the social network as well as family satisfaction and parent attachment among college students from biological families as compared to stepfamilies.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature review attempts a comprehensive examination of stepfamily characteristics and processes. First is a discussion of the demographics of divorce and remarriage and an examination of the stereotypes of stepparents, followed by a section on methodological issues and problems in research on stepfamilies. The rest of the review looks at family processes, beginning with the impact of marital conflict, adjustment to separation and divorce, and finally the transition to remarriage and stepfamily living.

Demographics of Divorce and Remarriage

When we speak of the high rates of divorce and remarriage and the prevalence of stepparenting, we must ask what the numbers are. The number of children growing up in the United States without a father resident in the household has been rising dramatically since divorce statistics were first gathered in 1867. The divorce rate rose from 0.3 in 1867 to its high point of in 1979 of 5.3 per 1,000

population (Glick & Lin, 1986). It has remained at that level or declined slightly in the 1980s. Current estimates of divorce project that as many as two of every three marriages will end in separation or divorce (Martin & Bumpass, 1989). Remarriage has generally followed the same pattern as divorce, with the same dip during the Great Depression and the same peaks after World War II and during the late 1960s, at the beginning and end of an era commonly called the "baby boom." However, at that point the two diverge somewhat: while divorce continued to rise in the 1970s, the remarriage rate fell from the end of the 1960s to 1982. More people were choosing either to cohabit or to live in one-parent households rather than remarry (Glick & Lin, 1986).

Remarriage and stepparenting are not new phenomena born of the past few decades. Rather, both have been commonplace in the United States since the colonial period (Ihinger-Tallman, 1988). However, in colonial days remarriage usually occurred after one's spouse died. The relatively poor state of medical science was unable to intervene in disease and childbirth with much success, and either parent might die at an early age (Hareven, 1978). Both New England (Demos, 1970) and Virginia (Morgan, 1975) experienced frequent widowhood and remarriage. In fact, Virginia was referred to by one of its leaders as "a colony of widows" (Morgan, 1975). The prefix "step-" is derived from a root

word meaning bereavement and evolved to connote "replacement," which it clearly was when a stepfamily was formed upon remarriage after one of the natural parents had died. Divorce was relatively rare in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and when it did happen, the children were usually placed in their father's custody.

In the mid-1940s for the first time, more remarriages followed divorce than followed death of spouse as the divorce rate accelerated contemporaneously with World War II, and that proportion of remarriages after divorce versus after death has continued to rise. The actual meaning of stepparenting is more ambiguous after divorce, because the new spouse is not a replacement but an addition to the natural parent who has moved elsewhere. Not only has stepparenting after divorce become common only recently; the same is true of the nuclear family, consisting of mother, father, and children, which is a middle and upper class phenomenon which solidified only in the mid-twentieth century. It does not have the long tradition we often assume (Ihinger-Tallman & Pasley, 1987). Further, the traditional family, composed of a mother and father who are married, their children, with strong ties to extended members such as grandparents, is still in the majority, but it is not the consensus experience it was in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Glick (1979) projected that only 56% of the children in the United States would live

with both of their biological parents by 1990.

Based on statistics, we can surmise that Americans have not lost faith in marriage. Four out of every five persons who divorce eventually remarry. Men are slightly more likely to remarry than women (84% versus 77%), and the gap between the husband and his second wife's age is even greater than it was between him and his first wife, i.e., men marry even younger women the second time around (Glick & Lin, 1986). This fact helps explain why women are less likely to remarry than men, but other factors such as the woman's education, income, and number of children also contribute to women's lower remarriage rates vis à vis men. Remarriage rates have declined since 1965 when they were at their highest and have stabilized according to the most recent data (Glick & Lin, 1986).

Some generalizations about women who divorce and remarry help us understand the trends. Both the divorce and remarriage rates for women are highest in the youngest age group, from 15 to 29 years old, but older women are remarrying more often than before, just as the age of women entering their first marriage is also older (Glick & Lin, 1986). Although younger women have the highest remarriage rate, it declined between 1975 and 1980 for both those with and without children. If women do remarry, it will usually be within two years of their divorce from their first marriage, and young mothers are more likely to remarry than

those without children (Glick & Lin, 1986). According to Spanier & Glick (1980) and Renne (1971), women who have children and are less well educated are more likely to remarry than women who are more educated and/or have no children. When parents divorce, custody is awarded to the mother in approximately 90% of the cases; joint custody, father custody, and placement in another home (e.g., foster home, other relative's home) account for the other ten percent. Although maternal custody still prevails, fathers who are older and who have older sons (e.g., 15 to 17 years old) are more likely to have custody (Norton & Glick, 1986).

For children, these trends point to an increasing likelihood that they will grow up in a nontraditional family. By 1984, one of every five families with children under 18 years old was a single-parent family (Norton & Glick, 1986). The possible combinations are several, e.g., an unmarried mother, a mother who marries for the first time after the birth of her first child, parents who are divorced, and a divorced mother who remarries (Hernandez, 1988). About 25% of all children live in one-parent households, usually with their mothers (Norton & Glick, 1979). Mother-only families tend to have at least three siblings, a number which is associated with a diminished likelihood of remarrying (Norton & Glick, 1986). Not all households headed by mothers are products of divorce or widowhood. One in six white children and three of five

black children born in 1985 had an unmarried mother (Hernandez, 1988). Put another way, mother-child families are the rule among one-half of the black families but only one-sixth of the white families (Norton & Glick, 1986). In fact, current research suggests that blacks have a more successful adjustment to single parenthood than whites (Fine & Schwebel, 1988). Mother-child families are also becoming more common among younger women who have chosen to bear children without marrying. However, most unmarried mothers eventually marry by the time they are 35 years old.

Being a single parent correlates with lower educational attainment for both fathers and mothers, although the educational levels have improved since 1970 (Norton & Glick, 1986). In particular, there has been a 300% increase in the number of college-educated women who are single parents. Almost 90% of fathers in one-parent homes and almost 70% of mothers are employed outside the home. Men who head one-parent families fare much better economically than do women in the same position. The median annual income for these men in 1983 was almost $20,000, while for women it was just over $9,000. Children living with their mothers were more likely than those with their fathers to be living below the poverty level (60% versus 26%). These families are also more likely to live in the center of large cities, to rent their residence, and to move more often (Norton & Glick, 1986).

All these statistics tell us something of the quality of life in one-parent families, with some important distinctions based on sex and race. However, such a static image loses sight of the transitional or fluid nature of family life in which later marriages, remarriages, and reconciliations alter their status yet again. For example, although just one in five children currently lives in a single parent household, 60% of the children born in 1986 are expected to live in one for at least some time before they reach the age of 18 (Norton & Glick, 1986). For many children, living in a single-parent family is transitory, and some will experience not only remarriage of their custodial parent, but also a second divorce. Furstenberg, Nord, Peterson, and Zill (1983) noted the number of family transitions many of the children in their study had experienced: thirty-seven percent of the children whose custodial parent remarried also witnessed the ending of that marriage in divorce. Furstenberg, et al., pointed out that this statistic does not take into account more temporary, less formal relationships the custodial parent may enter into. White children are less likely to experience family disruption, but once they do they are more likely to experience several, since their parents have a higher probability of remarriage than do black parents.

The estimated number of children living with a stepparent ranges from one-tenth to one-third of the total

population of children under 18 years of age. The wide discrepancy in the range may reflect the controversy about whether to count children who reside in a one-parent household but whose noncustodial parent has remarried. Drawing from a variety of projections, Hernandez (1988) estimates that of children born since the late 1970s, at least 50-75% will spend at least one year in a one-parent family, and 33-50% will have a stepfather, and therefore a two-parent family, for at least one year. According to statistical projections by Moorman and Hernandez (1989), stepfamilies tend to have less income, have parents who are younger in age, and have less education than parents in intact families. Although they have a lower income, Renne (1971) reported that stepfamilies are more likely to have both parents working than intact families. In contrast, Bachrach (1983) found stepparents to be older rather than younger than biological parents in her study. A potential complication in grouping for analysis in demographic and economic studies (as well as ones which look at one-parent versus two-parent families) arises from the fact that many children living with one parent, especially a never-married mother, are likely to have another adult relative, such as a grandmother, uncle, or aunt, in the home who can care for them and offer emotional support (Hernandez, 1988). However, between 60 to 80% of children with unmarried mothers have only the one parent available. According to

Hernandez (1988), income is highest for families with two parents, whether biological or stepfamilies, next highest for those whose mothers are divorced, and lowest for those where the mother has never married. The pattern is the same for both white and black families, but the actual income at each stage is lower for blacks (Hernandez, 1988). Demographic analyses clearly indicate a different lifestyle socially and economically for most stepfamilies and single-parent families, as compared to intact families. Financial and educational resources are generally scarcer than in intact, biological families. In addition, in any family where both parents must work or where there is only one parent to cover both child care and employment, intangible, emotional resources are more likely to be strained (Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982; Herzog & Sudia, 1973).

Popular notions abound that remarriages are even more likely to end in divorce than first-time marriages. Statistics indicate that there is only a slight difference, however, with 47.4 first-time marriages eventually divorcing compared to 48.9 remarriages (Furstenberg & Spanier, 1984). On the other hand, Furstenberg and Spanier noted that there is more to the numbers than meets the eye. For example, because the remarried population is older, they have less opportunity to divorce. Their marriages are more likely to end with the death of a partner in the first 25 years than first-time marriages. However, remarriages end in divorce

far more quickly than first marriages; they are twice as likely to end within the first five years. Furstenberg and Spanier suggested that remarriages are more fragile, because its participants see themselves as more likely to fail.

Martin and Bumpass (1989) found that remarriages were no more likely to end in divorce than first marriages, but noted that people who married early were more likely to divorce, remarry, and divorce again. The authors suggested that there may be some personality or social factors for people who marry as teenagers. Similarly, McLanahan and Bumpass (1988) found that women who have lived in one-parent families as children were more likely to marry early, bear children early, and to divorce, suggesting a pattern acquired through socialization rather than from economic deprivation or stress. These women were less likely to remarry within five years of separation or divorce.

Stereotypes of Stepfamilies and Their Significance

Most young children growing up in Western culture hear the fairy tales from the Grimm brothers and others retold by their parents or depicted in movies. Often the stories are embellished with graphic descriptions, exaggerated faces, and a variety of voices. The immense popularity of these stories and their survival to the present day suggest that they serve some function, just as myths do, in understanding the world around us. Given the prevalence of stepfamilies,

we must ask what is their purpose and message? How much of an impact does the image of the wicked stepmother have on people today who are likely either to be in a stepfamily or know others who are? A number of researchers and clinicians increasingly assert that these stories engender attitudes and prejudices that make stepfamily adjustment more difficult than it should be.

The stepmother appears in a number of fairy tales, such as Cinderella, Snow White, and Hansel and Gretel. In each case, she is wicked, competitive, jealous, and conniving. The children in the stories are at her mercy as she seeks to kill or suppress them. But they always prevail over her in spite of their comparative lack of size or obvious power. Bruno Bettelheim, in The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales (1977) discussed at length the function of these stories from a psychoanalytic perspective. Briefly, he viewed the portrayal of the wicked stepmother as a case of intrapsychic splitting. Drawing on Freud's description of splitting as a defense, Bettelheim reasoned that the child is subconsciously aware of his dependence on his mother to supply most of his basic needs. Yet the child also sees Mother become angry and frustrated with him at times and may himself be terrified. Unable cognitively and emotionally to deal with this transformation in the person he loves, he splits off and denies or represses the "bad" mother. Bettelheim wrote, "It [splitting] is not only a

means of preserving an internal all-good mother when the real mother is not all-good, but it also permits anger at this bad 'stepmother' without endangering the goodwill of the true mother, who is viewed as a different person" (1977, p. 69).

One author (Radomisli, 1981) took issue with several of Bettelheim's arguments. In counterpoint, Radomisli observed that the need to see the world in dualities (e.g., good vs. evil) is not limited to children and primitive cultures, a perspective confirmed by anthropologists (e.g., Hallowell, 1955; Douglas, 1978). Radomisli did not quarrel with the concept of splitting as a theme in fairy tales, but with Bettelheim's conjecture the child will later outgrow the need to conceptualize the world in dualities. Splitting, in psychoanalytic thinking, is seen as a stage in the cognitive and emotional development of children from as early as 2 months old and should yield to the perception of whole object suffused with ambiguity by the age of three years. Those people who in adulthood are unable to conceptualize good and bad residing in the same object are often diagnosed as Borderline Personality Disorder. However, Radomisli observed that, if this timetable of development is correct, then children between the ages of three and eight, when fairy tales have their greatest appeal, would no longer need such dualism, unless splitting is actually a human cognitive pattern, and not just an early childhood one.

Radomisli went a step further and asserted that not only do we all use dualities to classify our world throughout our lives, but the splitting in fairy tales may be more for the sake of the mother telling the stories to her children than for the children. The fantasy of the wicked stepmother "protects the mother's feelings and authority" (Radomisli, 1981). He noted that "The child's interests are, of course, also being served--but because the mother is content and secure, not because outlets for bad feelings are supplied" (1981). He further believed that the stereotype of the wicked stepmother derived from fairy tales has become more damaging than useful, as stepfamilies become more prevalent (1981).

While stepmothers absorb most of the disparaging treatment, stepsiblings are not exempt. Cinderella's jealous, mean-spirited stepsisters are a vivid example (Radomisli, 1981). However, stepfathers are rarely portrayed at all, a fact both Bettelheim and Radomisli attributed to their being away at work and, therefore, less engaged in interaction with the young child as compared to the mother.

Recently, several research studies have undertaken an assessment of the portrayal of stepfamilies in a variety of print media to see if the negative stereotypes persist. Their interest stems from concern about the "deficit" model that is often used in research on stepfamilies (Ganong &

Coleman, 1984), which implies that the stepfamily is a lesser version of the more preferable intact, two-parent family. In an examination of the popular culture, one group of researchers chose self-help books, magazine articles, and adolescent fiction featuring stepfamilies as a primary focus (Coleman, Ganong, & Gingrich, 1985). Although they found some strengths and positive features of stepfamilies in each of the three types of literature, both the self-help books and the magazine articles had a predominantly negative tone, stressing the difficulties and problems in stepfamily living. Adolescent fiction was far more positive in its portrayal of stepfamilies, although its message was also more subtle and required inference on the part of the reader. Some of the reputed strengths of stepfamilies from the self-help books were countered in adolescent fiction. For example, fictional stepchildren did not feel they received more attention with the addition of a new parent, but instead missed the close, exclusive relationship they had enjoyed with their natural parent before remarriage (Coleman, Ganong, & Gingrich, 1985).

A second study of stepfamily images was conducted by Pasley and Ihinger-Tallman (1985) who examined popular magazines over four decades, from 1940 to 1980. They found that most articles were directed at either a general audience or women, and contained reports of personal experience and advice. Particularly in the 1940s, the

articles took a romantically optimistic view of stepfamily life, but after that decade the percentage of writings from this perspective steadily declined. One possible reason for the decrease in optimism is a rise in the availability of data from empirical studies. However, most popular articles continued to cite clinical sources more frequently than empirical studies. Parent-child and stepparent-stepchild relationships received the most attention across the decades. Although not dealing with stereotypes per se, the authors observed that the currents of national opinion are reflected in popular literature. They assert that recent attention focused on stepfamilies may be a result of alarmist concerns about the deterioration of the family, the excesses of feminism, and the overgeneralizations of clinicians who see stepfamilies who are already disturbed.

In an examination of stereotypes in academic literature, Nolan, Coleman, and Ganong (1984) examined 26 textbooks commonly used in college courses on marriage and family. They found that most of them treated the subject of stepfamilies more briefly than cohabitation and communal living, both of which are far less common than stepfamilies in today's society. In addition, these texts relied more on clinical or self-help sources rather than empirical studies on stepfamilies. The resulting tone of the textbook presentations was in the deficit model of these families as a lesser version of the nuclear family. The authors

conceded, however, that at the time of their survey there was a dearth of empirical research of good quality on stepfamilies.

A number of clinicians (e.g., Schulman, 1972; Jacobson, 1979) writing on stepfamilies caution that the tendency to adhere to stereotypes can become a "self-fulfilling prophecy" (Merton, 1957), so that stepparents may find themselves being cold, distant, and jealous as described in the literature. On the other hand, some stepparents may be so afraid of fitting the stereotype that they are reluctant to be assertive and exercise discipline when it is needed. Research indicates that for stepmothers, not surprisingly in light of folklore, this is often the case (Clingempeel & Brand, 1985). Salwen (1990) argued that the typical mother's role is at the heart of the stepmother's problem and recommended that the father, as the natural parent, assume a nurturing role instead.

A few studies over the last few decades have attempted to examine how different segments of the population envision stepfamilies. (We will defer discussion of research on intrafamily perception, i.e., how stepfamily members perceive one another, until later in this paper, when we look at adjustments within stepfamilies.) Ganong, Coleman, and Mapes (1990) performed a meta-analysis of 26 articles looking at family structure stereotypes and found that the traditional nuclear family was more positively perceived

than other family configurations. Bryan, Coleman, Ganong, and Bryan (1985) ascertained responses of 375 counselors from social work and counseling psychology to vignettes describing interactions in various family configurations. Results demonstrated that counselors with less than two years experience saw both stepparents and adolescent stepchildren as less potent, less active, and less well-adjusted. Counselors with more experience did not exhibit this bias. The authors speculated that either 1) experience breeds caution, or, 2) congruent with other research on stereotyping, exposure, in this case to stepfamilies, erodes the veracity of stereotypes. A drawback to the study and, hence, the generalizability of its findings, is the composition of the population. Of the 375 subjects, 257 of them were either graduate or undergraduate students in counseling psychology or social work, raising the question of whether or not they could actually be considered counselors as yet.

Research on college students also found significant stereotyping. Fine (1986), surveying 175 college students, 30 of whom were stepchildren, discovered that "the magnitude of these stereotypes is quite robust, existing for both stepfathers and stepmothers and across males and females from nuclear, single-parent, and stepparent families." He added, however, that stepparents were only perceived as in the average range rather than negative, while natural

parents were well above average. Students from stepfamilies rated stepmothers significantly higher than students from intact families who gave stepmothers the lowest rating. Fine believed that some acquaintance with nontraditional families might have benefited these young people so that they were more empathic and mature in their assessments. In contrast, Bryan, Ganong, Coleman, and Bryan (1986) concluded from their study on 696 undergraduates, 76% of whom were from nuclear families, that "stepparents were seen more negatively than both married and widowed parents," but similar to "divorced and never-married parents, two groups that have been stigmatized in our society." The lowest ranking of all in their research went, surprisingly, to the stepchild, who acquired his or her position through no action of one's own. In another study, Ganong and Coleman (1983) also found that college students saw the prefix "step-" as pejorative. Based on the adjectives that the students identified with stepparenting, the authors concluded that stepparents are perceived as "aloof, uncaring, unloving, and cruel," while stepchildren were seen as "abused, neglected, and unwanted." However, the authors went on to speculate, beyond the evidence from their research, that these perceptions in society might provoke a self-fulfilling prophecy among stepparents.

In another study, Touliatos and Lindholm (1980) attempted to look at children's behavior and its

relationship to family type, but it seems more likely that they examined teachers' stereotypes instead. The researchers asked teachers to provide background information such as family type (i.e., intact, single-parent, or stepparent) and behavioral ratings for 3,644 children in kindergarten through eighth grade. They found that the children from single-parent, stepfather, and stepmother homes exhibited more behavioral problems, according to their teachers, than children from intact homes. However, the measures were not independent since teachers provided both the information on the family and then rated the children. No effort was made to assess the family type of the teacher or to account for a bias on the teacher's part toward children from broken and reconstituted homes. In other words, the study may be contaminated by teachers' attitudes and biases rather than solely measuring the child's behavior. The authors acknowledged that the family type variable could account for only 1% of the variance in most aspects of the study.

Methodological Issues in Research on Families of Divorce and Remarriage

Methodological issues have limited the utility and generalizability of the research on families of divorce and remarriage (For a recent overview, see Coleman & Ganong, 1990). Some of these problems may be attributed to the

novelty of the topic and the inevitable evolution of conceptualization in a new field of research that only began to flourish in recent decades; other problems are inherent in research design in general. Before discussing findings in the literature on single-parent families and stepfamilies, some of the methodological problems and how they have influenced current thinking on nontraditional families will be examined.

It would, of course, be impossible to set up a perfectly designed research study. Lack of sufficient time and financial resources, geographical restraints, and instrument limitations are just a few of the reasons. Nonetheless, Achenbach (1978) has proposed some issues to be considered in studying childhood psychopathology, which have also often been problems in stepfamily research. Among these are the tendency to draw longitudinal conclusions from cross-sectional data, the need for well-standardized measures, the need for long-term follow-ups, and the need to consider interactions between variables.

Most research on the effects of divorce and remarriage is cross-sectional, which has the advantages of being convenient and inexpensive. However, although associations and relationships may be established by cross-sectional studies, they are not sufficient to understand the developmental processes. Because most studies are cross-sectional and focus on a single group, it is impossible to

ascertain the direction of causality (Kanoy & Cunningham, 1984). The tendency to rely on this research to infer changes over time is called "imputed stability" by Herzog and Sudia (1973). For example, cross-sectional studies report behavioral problems for children of family disruption without acknowledging that these may be temporary rather than long-standing personality patterns. Only three extensive longitudinal studies on family disruption have been done, one by Hetherington and her colleagues in Virginia, another by Wallerstein and Kelly in northern California, and a third by Guidubaldi, but more are needed (Kitson & Raschke, 1981). A fourth study is currently underway in Pennsylvania by Clingempeel and Hetherington. Results from these studies have highlighted trends that change for these families over time. For example, behavioral problems that appear immediately after the divorce may diminish within a couple of years (Hetherington, et al., 1982), especially for those who were preschool age at the time of the divorce (Wallerstein, 1984).

The measures used in many studies of divorced families and stepfamilies often have limited generalizability. They are typically constructed by the researchers for the project at hand and do not have established construct validity or reliability. Given that a researcher's assumptions about families will guide their choice of instruments and later interpretations about their findings, it seems especially

important to reduce the risk of unintentional bias by choosing measures that have established reliability and validity, rather than designing one's own instrument and assuming naively that the results are what one planned. Examples of individually designed measures include open-ended interviews and parochial questionnaires (Esses & Campbell, 1984), although some of these have resulted in well-respected studies (e.g., Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). A few of the measures used have had reliability assessed in pilot studies, but there is surprising confidence among many researchers, without accompanying data, that their instrument accurately assesses the dimensions they want to study. Esses and Campbell (1984) observed that most family assessment tools currently used are "psychometrically inadequate." In addition, most of the measures used in studies on one-parent families and stepfamilies are of the self-report variety, raising questions of social desirability. However, limited and unrefined as these instruments may seem, "some of the most cogent insights" about stepfamilies derive from these studies (Rosenfeld & Rosenstein, 1973). More recently, researchers are advocating the use of multi-modal measures, such as having subjects complete self-report instruments as well as performing a task that may be videotaped (e.g., Clingempeel & Brand, 1985). Some, however, question whether interactions in a laboratory setting which are videotaped

resemble real-life interactions.

Samples tend to be small and nonrandom (Esses & Campbell, 1984), and are often drawn from a clinical population or are taken from volunteers who are self-selected. A number of studies use convenience samples, particularly undergraduate psychology students, and derive results which cannot be generalized. Clinical populations will usually have a higher level of psychopathology than people who have not sought professional help. Also, in some studies only one family member, usually the mother or one of the children in a divorced family or stepfamily, is surveyed precluding a more complete and complex picture of the family. Fathers and stepfathers are the least likely to be surveyed, presumably because they are less willing or less available (Phares, 1992; Robinson, 1984). Many studies feature small sample sizes ranging from only a handful of families (e.g., Mowatt, 1972, used three stepfamilies) to between 10 to 20 stepfamily members. Typically participants are exclusively white and middle-class. Esses and Campbell (1984) asserted that there has been insufficient data on the composition of the stepfamily population to be able to construct a representative population. A more accurate perspective should include multiple family members as well as multiple measures (Clingempeel & Brand, 1985; Esses & Campbell, 1984; Robinson, 1984). However, efforts to obtain representative samples of divorced and stepfamilies have met

with limited success. Many of the studies that survey a representative sample were conducted to examine a number of variables and do not ask as cogent a list of questions as research directed specifically at these families. Some studies have failed to use any control or comparison group (Robinson, 1984), making their conclusions difficult to evaluate.

Variables selected to be examined inextricably influence one's research findings. The selection of variables is a conceptual issue which helps to determine the measures chosen and ultimately the conclusions reached (Kanoy & Cunningham, 1984). In many early studies, the primary predictor of results in studies of divorced families and stepfamilies has been family structure, largely because the studies have been designed to treat divorce as a discrete event which delineates the differences between intact and single-parent or stepparent families (Ganong & Coleman, 1984). One consequence has been that what often looks like an effect of family structure may actually be the cause. The second most common predictor in these studies was reason for parental absence, i.e., death or divorce. Ganong and Coleman (1984) noted that a variety of independent variables are feasible in stepfamily research, such as custody, age at dissolution, and number of years in a single-parent family, but many are not considered in spite of their possible significance. Dependent variables

examined are far more numerous, spanning various aspects of personality, social, and cognitive development (see Ganong & Coleman, 1986, for an extensive list). Herzog and Sudia (1973) performed an extensive survey of the literature on children in fatherless families and concluded that often too few variables were controlled so that what appeared to be the result of father absence was more likely the effect of lower socioeconomic status and the stress of being a single parent. In addition to the methodological problems cited previously, they criticized the use of misleading research models. Among these were "imputed unity" (e.g., perceiving a characteristic as a single phenomenon rather than dual continua, such as masculinity and femininity) and "imputed symmetry" (e.g., having a father is not necessarily the exact opposite of not having a father). Shinn (1978) in a review of the effects of father absence on cognitive development, observed that many studies failed to establish that father absence per se caused the cognitive deficits found among children. Instead, there were other variables, particularly socioeconomic status, that could have accounted for much of the variance, but were not included in the studies she examined. Stevenson and Black (1988) conducted a meta-analysis of the research on the impact of father absence on sex-role development and found that "the best-controlled studies produced a non-significant effect-size estimate." Studies which were well-controlled dealt with

the duration of the absence and with the presence of surrogate models, unlike a majority of research in the field. These authors also noted that unpublished studies might be well designed and tended to find fewer significant effects. The greatest impact of father absence on sex role development was on preschool boys who appeared less masculine than father present boys. However, among the older boys it was the father-absent ones who acted more masculine. The authors observed that in this culture, the influences of SES and race are difficult to untangle because racial prejudice works to keep minorities in the lower classes. They found little or no effect for father's death on sex-role development.

In some studies on families of divorce, the concept of father absence has been poorly defined. Although fathers may be absent for a variety of reasons such as death, divorce, separation, and desertion, a number of studies have treated all instances of father absence as homogeneous. Death, divorce, and desertion would each be expected to have a different impact on the remaining family with respect to how the father is remembered and whether he will be seen again. Further, some fathers are absent only temporarily as in the case of marital separation and service in the armed forces. In studies where father absence is treated as a single condition, all children from father-absent families are usually compared to a control group of children whose

biological father is still in the home. This approach obscures possible differences attributable to temporary father absence or differences deriving from cases in which the father may be seen on a regular basis as in separation and divorce. Also, older studies on single- and stepparenting tended to emphasize the likelihood of adjustment problems and psychopathology among the whole group of children not living with their natural fathers without looking at other covariables such as family income. Similarly, researchers have often failed to take into account the availability of father surrogates in the home (Stevenson & Black, 1988). Another possibility only recently addressed concerns those homes where the father is physically present but "psychologically absent" (Boss, 1977; Boss & Greenberg, 1984).

In discussing the problem of insufficient definition of father absence, Rosenfeld and Rosenstein (1973) proposed that six facets concerning parental absence and two concerning the family must be considered when conducting research in this area, in order to be sure that the results are meaningful. The six aspects of parental absence were: precipitating cause of the absence, parent identity, duration of absence, frequency of absence, amount of contact, and kind of contact. In addition, they suggested that the family unit and its members and which areas of their lives are affected by parental absence should be

specified in the study.

Another methodological problem involves possible researcher bias when single-parent families or stepfamilies are compared to nuclear, intact families, in studies that look primarily for effects of family structure. Early studies on families of divorce and remarriage were designed in this mode. Nontraditional families are often found wanting, and other potential intervening variables are not examined. Among these intervening variables are cohort effects, economics, and family conflict. In the case of remarriage families, Ganong and Coleman (1988) observed that such studies employ a "deficit comparison" model to the detriment of the stepfamily. Herzog and Sudia (1973) pointed out that much of the research on father deprivation and one-parent families was conducted in this manner. They termed the tendency to cast family structure into categories of intact versus broken an "imputed dichotomy," and noted that stepfamilies have been variously cast into either one group or the other in some studies. In research where control groups are used, they are usually drawn from nuclear families, and the studies then point out the ways in which the nontraditional family falls short of the standard, in such areas as family cohesion for stepfamilies and regard for parents in both single-parent and stepfamilies. Ganong and Coleman (1984, 1986) asserted that nuclear families are not an appropriate control group for research on stepfamily

dynamics. In studies looking at family cohesion and parent bonding, their point is well taken, because stepfamilies are significantly and perhaps unavoidably different from nuclear families on these dimensions. It seems intuitive and obvious that stepfamilies would rarely have either of these qualities to the same degree that nuclear families do. Some observers of stepfamily research have asserted that in this research design stepfamilies are portrayed as deviant and pathogenic rather than simply different when compared to the intact biological family (Esses & Campbell, 1984). However, Clingempeel, Brand, and Ievoli (1984) attempted to avoid the problem by comparing stepfather and stepmother families to each other and concluded that they were not appropriate comparison groups.

Conceptualization of studies on divorce and remarriage has recently begun to focus on the effects of a series of transitions and redefinition and to attempt an examination of the process of family interaction (Kanoy, Cunningham, White, & Adams, 1984). These authors found that variables related to quality rather than quantity of family interaction were the best predictors of children's responses (Kanoy, Cunningham, White, & Adams, 1984). For example, children who see their divorced father only a few times a year would appear in a low frequency category in most research on contact with the noncustodial parent. However, they may instead visit with him for several weeks or months

at a time and, therefore, have a richer relationship with him than children who see their father weekly, but only for brief, often superficial visits (Tropf, 1984).

One result of the deficit-comparison model, or the broken versus intact approach, is the failure to perceive or examine positive outcomes of divorce and remarriage (Demo & Acock, 1988; Esses & Campbell, 1984; Furstenberg & Spanier, 1984). Although, as Hetherington, Cox, and Cox (1982) observed, there were no victimless divorces, a number of children and parents were able to eventually emerge from the situation with some gains. For children, there were both added responsibilities and privileges (Weiss, 1979). For parents, there could be the rise in self-esteem that comes from training for employment and getting a job, which has not been adequately studied (Demo & Acock, 1988). Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) at follow-up found a number of divorced mothers who had flourished at new careers, but whose children still appeared to be struggling with the losses incurred in the divorce.

Just as every thesis has its antithesis, articles have appeared in the last decade which openly tout the positive aspects of stepfamily life, such as "Children of Remarriage: Perceptions of Stepfamily Strengths" (Knaub & Hanna, 1984). In these analyses, the impact of the loss of a parent and usually of the family's home and a substantial part of the income were often minimized. It is perhaps a carry-over

from the feminist assumptions of the 1960s and 1970s that what is good for the mother is automatically good for the children and that children are resilient. Both of these are true in a number of cases, but they are not observations that can be accurately generalized to the population at large. One of the primary questions asked by clinicians and researchers is whether stepfamilies are significantly different from nuclear families, so that they require innovative approaches in research and therapy.

Research on stepfamilies has derived from either clinical or empirical approaches with little integration between the two (Ganong & Coleman, 1984, 1986). Clinical studies have tended to use smaller samples or to be case studies. Their population has generally been more psychologically troubled by virtue of being in a clinical setting and might not be representative of stepfamilies, most of whom do not seek professional help (Ganong & Coleman, 1986; Robinson, 1984). However, both types of studies tend to compare stepfamilies with intact families and involve nonrepresentative samples. No matter what the similarities and differences, the two types of studies, empirical versus clinical, tend to pay little attention to one another's work, and there is little fruitful interchange between the two.

Theoretical perspectives most often employed in studies on divorce and remarriage are family-systems and

psychodynamic, with the family systems approach currently in favor. Clinical studies are more typically theory-based than empirical studies. Esses and Campbell (1984) observed that research on stepfamilies has been hampered by the lack of an adequate theoretical model of how these families function. That is, neither the psychodynamic or family systems approach can be easily applied to stepfamilies and single-parent families, because neither has substantially addressed the effects of parent absence and replacement. According to Ganong and Coleman (1986, 1988), writers from the psychodynamic school began the trend in stepfamily studies called "deficit comparison." As psychodynamic theorists see it, the father's presence is essential for resolution of the Oedipal complex in which the boy comes to identify with his father and thereby acquires a masculine orientation and develop a moral sense of right and wrong. Also, out of this complex, the boy develops a superego, and begins to internalize a sense of right and wrong. These are indeed important aspects of a boy's development, but they may not be as dependent on the presence of a nuclear family as has been assumed, and they ignore the role of the father in a daughter's development. It has been argued that there are often many models for social and moral development among adult males, who may be relatives or show special interest in a boy, and among peers. Although theory may help explain one's research hypotheses and findings, it can be

problematical when results do not conform to expectations. For example, Barclay and Cusumano (1967) did not find the differences on overt measures of masculinity between boys whose fathers were absent and those whose fathers were present. Yet the authors concluded, by inference, that the lack of difference was due to the fatherless boys being more dependent, passive, and identified with females, so that they compensated on tests of masculinity as a reaction formation to their fathers being unavailable. Without any corroborating data, the authors set up a no-win situation for the father-absent group.

Findings of Psychological Research on Stepparenting

A review of the literature on remarriage and stepparenting would be incomplete without a brief look at the steps that precede the formation of the new family. First of all, unlike most nuclear families, every stepfamily has experienced the loss, either by divorce or death, of a crucial figure. As noted in the discussion of demographics, most remarriages today follow divorce as compared to earlier eras of history when they typically occurred after the death of a spouse. In the case of divorce, this loss often occurs psychologically long before the actual separation and divorce decree. On the other hand, some intact families endure the psychological absence or neglect of one or both parents without the marriage ever dissolving. Following

the recommendation by Hetherington, Stanley-Hagan, and Anderson (1989) that researchers focus on marital changes as processes rather than discrete events, we will survey the current state of the art on family transitions beginning with studies of the impact of family conflict on child development and parent-child relationships and moving through the successive steps of adjustment to divorce for parents and children, patterns of noncustodial parent contact with children, and issues which arise in remarriage. Remarriage issues include marital satisfaction, stepparent-stepchild relationships, and a host of potential problems from the mixing of two cultures, especially divided loyalties and discipline. Research on remarriage and stepparenting has been plagued by a variety of methodological problems discussed above, and where contradictory findings can be explained by problematical research design and measures, these will be noted.

The Impact of Family Conflict

One topic that has begun to interest researchers in the past two decades is the impact of family conflict, especially marital conflict, on child development. It has been convenient in many studies to dichotomize family status into intact versus divorced, without acknowledging the fact that some intact marriages are unhappy and laden with conflict and that divorce can actually break the cycle.

Unhappy spouses remain together for a number of reasons, e.g., adherence to religions that do not sanction divorce, "for the sake of the children," personality characteristics such as masochism or dependency, etc. Longitudinal studies such as Hetherington et al.'s and Wallerstein and Kelly's have observed that conflict usually precedes divorce, sometimes by many years, and may even be exacerbated after separation and divorce, at least for the first few years. A recent meta-analysis affirmed that the interparental conflict perspective best predicted children's adjustment after divorce, although no one perspective predominated to the exclusion of others (Amato, 1993).

Before surveying the studies on family conflict, a note of caution is in order. Family conflict is not necessarily bad and may be an essential part of living together. That is, people in relationships constantly must confront differences and negotiate them. Some couples avoid this task by adopting a stance of pseudomutuality, in which they act in agreement on the surface and are reluctant to air differences. These relationships, however, are unhealthy, and areas of contention do not disappear (Visher & Visher, 1978). Instead, they fester and reappear in symbolic ways, often in disagreements over management and discipline of the children. Systems theory and dialectics both function on the basis of there being problems or incongruencies which are in opposition to the current system and must be either

incorporated or opposed. Sprey (1969) observed that "It is increasingly evident that equilibrium or harmony is not necessary for the continuation or stability of families." In fact, for him, family harmony is a problematic state of affairs rather than a normal one, and families are best studied in a conflict framework. Families function best when they have the ability and motivation to negotiate in "a mutually satisfactory manner" (Sprey, 1969). To do this, they must have a set of shared rules. In families lacking this set of rules, "family members are often set to destroy the opposition rather than coming to terms with it" (Sprey, 1969). It is a small step from Sprey's position on family functioning to the social exchange views in which strategy, bargaining, and exchange come into play. Later in this essay, we will look at stepfamilies from this point of view.

As researchers have become more sophisticated in their view of family conflict, they have found that ongoing and unresolved conflict rather than separation and divorce per se have the worst consequences for children. In an early study, Nye (1957) compared children's adjustment in broken and unhappy, unbroken homes, by surveying both adolescents and parents. He found that "as a group, adolescents in broken homes show less psychosomatic illness, less delinquent behavior, and better adjustment than do children in unhappy unbroken homes." He noted no differences between the two groups in adjustment to school, church, or tendency

to have delinquent companions. He also found no differences between adjustment to parental divorce as compared to parental death or other reasons for parental absence. Finally, he observed that both stepfamilies and one-parent families fared better in adjustment than unhappy, unbroken families.

McCord, McCord, and Thurber (1962) also found a significant effect for parental conflict, rather than parental absence, in the tendency for boys to become involved in gang delinquency. They studied data gathered from 1939 to 1945 to determine the effects of father or mother absence on male children. They found little support for the theory that paternal absence was associated with delinquent gang activities, but observed that "a significantly higher proportion of those boys whose parents continued to live together despite considerable overt conflict" were involved in delinquency. Also, a higher proportion of boys with parent substitutes in the home (e.g., stepfathers) than those from tranquil homes were delinquents. They concluded that it is the absence of a generally stable home environment rather than father absence per se that was associated with criminality in the young boy. They also found an effect for conflict in the home on measures of feminine-aggressive behavior and on sex anxiety.

Rutter (1971) concluded from a study of the impact of separation on children in Great Britain that the reason for

separation from a parent, rather than the separation itself, was associated with child behaviors. Delinquency rates were double for boys whose parents were separated or divorced compared to boys who lost a parent to death. Rutter postulated that this difference was explained by the fact that boys whose parents were separated or divorced would have witnessed significantly more discord and disharmony than boys whose father died. According to Rutter's research, problems in adjustment developed when there was a poor remarriage, when there was a long-term, unhappy first marriage, or when there was a poor marriage plus impaired personal relationships for one of the parents. Separation itself led to short-term distress but not to a long-term disorder, and separation for reasons of physical illness or holiday had little effect on the child, in comparison to those from a conflictual home. In a second study, Wolkind and Rutter (1973) looked at the association between being "in care" (i.e., in a children's home or in a foster home) and behavioral disturbance. They found no association with maternal deprivation, but instead concluded that the time in care was "no more than a brief episode in a long history of deleterious influences acting on the child," i.e., ongoing family conflict. They noted that boys tended to be more vulnerable to the effects of family discord. While they found an association between family discord and antisocial behavior, how the association is mediated is not yet known.

Similarly, Hess and Camara (1979) found that in both divorced and intact families, the quality and nature of relationships among family members were more potent influences on child behavior than was marital status. Parental discord generally forced a child to take sides and led to confusion and distress. Most salient for the child was the existence of a close relationship with one or both parents rather than just the parents with one another. In their study of 16 divorced families and 16 intact families, they found no significant differences in social behavior between the two groups of children and no differences in the quality of interaction among family members. Level of aggressive behavior was predicted by level of parental harmony, mother-child relationship, and father-child relationship more than by the fact of divorce. They concluded that "it is the quality of relationship between the child and parents that is most crucial in divorced families." If the relationship remained good between a child and both parents in spite of divorce, then the child received lower scores on aggression and stress and higher scores on work effectiveness and social interaction with peers, when compared with children who had a poor relationship with both parents. Further, a positive relationship with one parent had some mitigating effects, but was not as good as having it with both parents.

Ellison (1983) used Hess and Camara's research format

to assess the relationship between parental harmony and children's psychosocial adjustment. She studied 20 families, 10 divorced and 10 intact, surveying the mother, father, and child in each case for a total of 60 subjects. She did find a significant correlation between divorced parents' assessment of parental harmony and their child's assessment of their own psychosocial adjustment. This was not true for intact families. Two potential problems with the study are that she did not look at other relationship configurations, i.e., between child and parent, and she used only Hess and Camara's interview format without any other measures.

In 1982, Emery reviewed studies on the impact of interparental conflict on children and concluded not only that conflict is more detrimental than separation, but also that the effects are enduring. Children, particularly boys, from high conflict homes tended to be undercontrolled. Girls tended to show no obvious effect in some research, while a few studies found some evidence of overcontrol for girls. He divided the research on the topic into three categories. The first included studies that found more problems among children who experienced parental divorce rather than parental death in contrast to Nye's (1957) results. The second group of studies observed that children from broken homes who had witnessed little or no conflict had fewer problems than those from conflictual, unbroken

homes. In the third group Emery included research demonstrating that those children of divorce whose parents continued to quarrel had more problems than those where the divorce period was relatively conflict-free. He considered interparental conflict "a frequently overlooked third variable" in studies of the association between divorce and ongoing child behavior problems and noted the similarity in features between the behavior of children of divorce and those from discordant, intact families.

Emery (1982) went further to examine how marital turmoil might lead to childhood disorders. He evaluated the impact of disruption of attachment bonds, modeling, altered discipline practices, and other less researched models such as stress, taking on the symptom, and child effects. In looking at the recent research, he surmised that modeling and altered discipline practices have the most logical and statistical support, although more research is needed before the others can be ruled out.

In a provocative study, Block, Block, and Gjerde (1986) found behavioral markers among children whose parents later divorced which indicated that some characteristics of children that are seen to be the result of divorce may actually be present as much as eleven years before the marriage ends. Theirs was a longitudinal study which surveyed a heterogeneous sample of families using independent measures at ages 3, 4, 5, 7, 11, and 14. Of the

101 families surveyed when the target child was 14 years old, 60 of the original group were still intact and 41 were divorced or separated. In families where there had eventually been a divorce, the boys at 3 years old were significantly more troubled by lack of impulse control and were emotionally labile, stubborn, and restless. With peers and parents, they stretched the limits in social situations, were inconsiderate, were disorderly in dress, and tried to take advantage of others. At the age of 7, these boys were still unreflective and unresponsive to reason, uncooperative, uncompliant, and unresourceful in initiating activities. In addition, they became anxious if the environment became unpredictable, but they were not easily victimized. The authors concluded that "boys from subsequently divorcing families are undercontrolled up to 11 years prior to the dissolution of their parents' marriage." They also noted that fewer boys' families divorced than girls' families, a trend observed by other researchers as well. Hetherington et al. (1979), for example, speculated that although boys saw more parental conflict than girls, the parents of boys were more reluctant to separate, because the mothers did not want the responsibility of managing sons by themselves. The mothers' concern was well placed as we shall see when we examine sex differences further in the section on post-divorce adjustment. For girls, Block et al.'s (1986) study showed a slightly different pattern: at

3 years old, the girls from families that will later divorce were more resilient than those from intact families, but at 4 and 7 they had declined in resiliency and their behavior was less controlled. The authors asserted that "boys' behavioral problems cannot be a function simply and solely of maternal custody, since the boys' behavioral problems were present years before the divorce occurred, when the father was still nominally present." Using the findings of Margolin and Patterson (1975) that sons were more likely to be disciplined by both parents than were daughters, and of Hetherington et al. (1979) that discipline of children became more inconsistent as a marriage broke down, they speculated that boys were more likely to get inconsistent messages from feuding parents and were more likely to model their fathers' aggressive behavior. In conclusion, Block et al. drew from the work of Hetherington et al. (1979) to observe that "psychological separation between the children and the departing parent often occurs gradually over the years preceding the divorce," although this is not to diminish the pain that the actual physical leaving of the parent has for the child.

Wallerstein and Kelly (1980, also Kelly & Wallerstein, 1976) observed that children whose parents were able to separate without substantial negative conflict made the best adjustment, while those who witnessed considerable antagonism experienced loyalty conflicts and made poor

adjustments which persisted for years after the actual separation took place. In a review of studies, many of them already cited here, Longfellow (1979) observed that "living with two parents whose relationship is conflict-ridden is much more damaging to the child's adjustment than simply living with a single parent." She concluded that whether or not marital conflict led to separation, divorce, or an ongoing war within an intact family did not matter. In any of these contexts it put the child at greater risk for psychiatric problems. Hodges, Wechsler, and Ballantine (1979) in a study of intact and divorced families with preschoolers found no significant differences in child behavior between the two groups, but did find that the worse the quality of the marriage as rated by the parents, the higher the child's score on total pathology.

Grych and Fincham (1990) proposed an extensive framework for children's response to marital conflict. Using recent research results from Cummings and Campos, to cite a few examples, they asserted that a child deals with conflict between his parents by incorporating the following components: primary and secondary processing, distal and proximal contexts, coping behavior, and affect. Properties of conflict episodes which will influence the impact of a particular episode on a child are its intensity, content, duration, and resolution. Their framework is more comprehensive than Longfellow's or other predecessors, and

several aspects of their model are related to research on families of divorce and on stepfamilies. For example, as part of the distal context the authors included the perceived emotional climate of the family. The child's view of emotional climate in his family is influenced by the presence or absence of a good parent-child relationship as a buffer to conflict, a concept based on research by Garmezy, Emery, and Rutter. The concept of a parental buffer has been incorporated into Hetherington et al.'s research on family relations after divorce. Also, the child's temperament, as studied by Compas, Kagan, and Chess and Thomas, may affect both the development of parent-child relationships and thereby the emotional climate of the family. This research by Compas, Kagan, and Chess and Thomas has influenced Hetherington, et al., in their effort to understand parent-child relationships before and after divorce.

Grych and Fincham (1990) also included studies on gender differences in response to parental conflict. Thus far, research has shown that boys were usually aggressive when confronted with conflict, while girls tended to become distressed when they observed conflict between strangers. Girls were also likely to try to intervene. However, in marital disputes girls did not show distress and were unlikely to intervene. Grych and Fincham noted that the child's stage of development as well as gender play a

significant role in how the child will perceive and interpret marital conflict with respect to causality, intentionality, and attributions. In their discussion of coping behavior, they distinguished between problem-focused strategies, typical of younger children, versus emotion-focused strategies, employed by more mature children. Emotion-focused strategies consist of changing one's response to the situation, usually after more direct problem-focused strategies have failed, and are dependent on more advanced cognitive development. From Emery's research, the authors noted that "successful attempts by the child to intervene in the conflict are likely to be maintained if they are functional for the family system, even though they may be maladaptive for the child," and were more likely to be used by younger children. Older children in this framework, as in Longfellow's, were more able to extricate themselves from blame, but they were also more adept and aware, than younger children in considering the future implications of parental conflict, such as divorce. Grych and Fincham's review and proposed framework help us to understand some of the correlations found in earlier research, such as the relationship between children's behavior problems and marital conflict as well as some attributions by children which are both faulty and resistent to intervention. Hetherington et al. have begun to incorporate a number of similar approaches in their research

in order to obtain a more process-oriented understanding of precisely what transpires in the course of family dissolution.

Post-Divorce Adjustment

Given that there is usually at least some degree of conflict and ill will between divorcing spouses, we now turn to the question of how they and their children adjust to the new family arrangement. Often the separation, rather than the divorce, is the line of demarcation, so to speak, in the dissolution of the family. One parent has moved out, and new roles are inevitable. The resident parent and often the children assume new responsibilities, while the nonresident parent faces more freedom but loses the daily flow and contact with the people he or she has been close to for years. As Hetherington et al. (1976) observed, "We did not encounter a victimless divorce." Although the following discussion is divided into two sections, one on the adjustment of the parents and another on the adjustment of the children, it is an artificial division in many respects. Ultimately the adjustments of all the family members, particularly those who live in the same household or who maintain frequent contact are interwoven. However, for convenience, we will look first at the passage of the parents through separation and divorce and then at the effects of divorce on children.

Parents' Adjustment

According to some researchers (Spanier & Casto, 1979; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980), there were actually two overlapping adjustments to be made almost simultaneously by the divorcing couple: one to the dissolution of the marriage and the other to setting up a new lifestyle. Based on their interviews with 50 couples, Spanier and Casto concluded that establishing a new lifestyle was more problematic for most people than marital dissolution. For the partner who experienced the separation as sudden and unexpected, there were more emotional problems initially. Similarly, the greater the attachment to one's former spouse, the more difficult was the adjustment (Weiss, 1976; Spanier & Casto, 1979). At the time of separation and divorce, both partners typically experienced many, sometimes contradictory, emotions toward each other and their marriage. These feelings included euphoria, sadness, loss of self-esteem, relief, regret, and a sense of failure (Hetherington, et al., 1982; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Visher & Visher, 1978). Some who seemed to have few problems initially and reported feelings of freedom, excitement, and eagerness had dropped into despondency and anxiety several months later (Spanier & Casto, 1979). When children were involved, the situation was complicated by the need for communication between the former spouses. Although feelings between the two were unresolved, interaction was

essential if they were to cooperate in arranging visits and other aspects of their children's care.

Given the lability of emotions enumerated here, we can surmise that the tone and frequency of their communication could be highly variable. Weiss (1976) described the attachment bonds that he had observed previously married couples use in order to remain in contact with one another. In his study, even hostile exchanges brought some satisfaction, because they allowed some level of engagement or contact to continue, even though it might seem provocative and unhealthy. According to Goldsmith's (1980) research of partners who had been apart for a year or more, emotional preoccupation with one another by former spouses had dissipated, although she noted that there were stories of people who remained attached in some manner for many years. She found evidence of caring feelings and friendly interaction among former partners, which she considered normative. She cautioned that such instances not be interpreted as a maladaptive inability to separate as long as the boundaries were mutually agreed upon. In these cases, former partners were able to talk about more than their concerns about the children, but romantic, sexual involvement was unusual in her sample. On the other hand, in divorced families where there had been substantial conflict, former spouses had difficulty negotiating a comfortable relationship even concerning the children.

Ongoing conflict after divorce is not uncommon (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Similarly, in post-divorce interviews with parents, Fulton (1979) found that 75% of the parents reported that their children saw or overheard parental fights and arguments.

Social isolation is likely to be a fact of life for both former spouses in the early weeks after separation. However, research indicates that the more social interaction a separated person has with family, friends, and community, then the fewer the adjustment problems (Spanier & Casto, 1979). McLanahan, Wedemeyer, and Adelberg (1981) found that single parents tended to set up one of three types of networks: family of origin, extended, or conjugal. Each of these had advantages and disadvantages, and single parents might shift from one type to another over time. For example, a woman might rely primarily on a male companion in a conjugal network soon after her divorce, but later move to an extended network of other single parents as she established a career.

In another study, Raschke (1977) found that higher levels of social participation were related to lower levels of stress among Parents Without Partners members. After the divorce, the majority of single mothers, in particular, were isolated from essential support, perhaps because they were often tied down caring for small children, although some did manage to develop deep friendships, especially with other

single mothers (Longfellow, 1979).

The emotional adjustment of single mothers is often stressful, because in many cases they must take on full-time work in addition to their responsibilities for children and the household. Longfellow (1979) observed that single mothers of preschoolers were most vulnerable to depression of all single mothers no matter whether they were divorced or widowed. They were least likely to be working outside the home and were more likely to remain socially isolated. Although having to work could be stressful, it also put one in contact with others who might be a significant source of support (Longfellow, 1979). In another study, Colletta (1983) interviewed 24 moderate income one-parent families, 24 low income one-parent families, and 24 moderate income two-parent families in an effort to ascertain the specific stressors in being a single parent. In addition to financial stress from minimum wage jobs and an absence of child support from the father, low income one-parent families also had stressful living arrangements (often they moved in with extended family), employment stress (low-paying jobs and difficulty taking time off for sick children), and community service stress (trying to get temporary aid for food and housing). Stress brought on by father absence included there being only one adult to take care of managing housework, schedules, and shopping, with almost no time to themselves.

Longfellow (1979) similarly argued that the stresses on the single mother are a significant factor in her post-divorce adjustment. Single mothers must take on the work of two, which "inevitably will lead to some shortchanging somewhere along the line." Emotional and financial stresses compound her plight. It is not surprising then that she might become a less consistent disciplinarian, as Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) and Hetherington, Cox, and Cox (1982) have reported. Single mothers seemed to lapse into a passive-aggressive form of discipline by letting some objectionable behaviors go uncorrected for a time and then suddenly becoming angry and punitive. Longfellow linked this pattern to Hetherington, et al.'s discovery that divorced mothers, especially those with preschool boys felt depressed, angry, and incompetent two years after their divorce. She observed that a number of studies report that divorced and separated mothers were more likely to have psychiatric symptoms.

Fathers fare relatively poorly emotionally after divorce, too. In Hetherington's longitudinal study (Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1976), she found that fathers at two months, one year, and two years after the divorce settled into a pattern of working more and spending less time at home. At one year after the divorce, the father was in a frenzy of activity, which included dating actively and taking various courses for self-improvement. Their

lifestyle operated on a more haphazard schedule than that of married men, as they slept, ate, and did routine household chores at irregular hours. However, Raschke and Raschke (1979) found that older divorced males tended to be more socially active and also reported lower stress than either younger divorced males and all divorced females. At two months after divorce, two-thirds of the divorced couples in Hetherington, Cox, and Cox's study (1976) described their exchanges with one another as conflictual. These feelings abated over time, especially where there were new intimate relationships for one or both of them. Hostile feelings associated with the divorce eased more quickly for the men than for the women.

Atkins (1989), however, observed that divorced men were nine times more likely to enter a hospital for psychiatric treatment compared to their married counterparts. Among women, divorced women were three times more likely to be hospitalized psychiatrically compared to married women. Atkins further noted that divorce seemed to reactivate the divorced fathers neurotic or characterological problems, and they might regard their children as transitional objects, in Winnicott's terms, to help them adapt. Depression in the divorced men he treated clinically seemed to derive from two different sources, depending on the man's history. Some men became depressed when they could no longer engage their former wives in hostile conflict, similar to the pattern

Weiss (1976) described. These men used their wives as a "sadistic outlet" and became emotionally paralyzed when she managed to elude their strikes. The second group of divorced men were depressed as a result of accepting the guilt for the failure of the marriage whether or not it accurately fell to them.

With respect to their children, divorced fathers as a group in Hetherington's study maintained a high level of contact with them at two months after divorce, on par with married fathers, but contact dropped steadily and dramatically over the next two years (Hetherington, et al., 1976). However, many divorced fathers found it difficult to stay in touch with their children, because it was painful to be reminded of the distance between them. Goldsmith (1980) observed that noncustodial fathers expressed feelings of dissatisfaction that derived from a sense of being excluded from knowledge about their children by their former wives. For a time, the loss of their families and homes deprived them of a sense of identity and rootedness that affected their work and their social relationships (Hetherington, et al., 1976). Arditti's (1992) research indicated that father's who saw their children less frequently were less satisfied with their visits, and that those fathers who paid higher child support seemed to have a positive regard for their former spouses. She also found that those fathers who felt they had good visits with their children reported

having less self-esteem.

Many studies point to the change in economic status when a couple divorces. For example, Day and Bahr (1986), using the National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Experience, found that female per capital income decreased substantially after divorce, while male per capita income increased substantially. These differences could not be attributed solely to number of dependents, although having dependents was more detrimental to the financial status of women than of men; the problem may also relate to many of these women entering the labor force later and in lower echelon jobs than men. Nonpayment of child support is a common problem for single mothers. For example, although 94% of the mothers interviewed by Fulton (1979) were awarded child support by the courts, only 48% were receiving what the court ordered two years later. Although few fathers experienced financial problems to the extent that their wives did, those who paid adequate child support, and especially those who remarried, felt the effects of helping to maintain two households rather than one (Day & Bahr, 1980). Still, for most divorced men the economic situation is quite different in comparison to women. In fact, Spanier and Casto (1979) discovered that divorce actually left a man as well or better off financially. Perhaps some of this shift could be attributed to men not paying child support, but Norton and Glick (1986) reported that divorced men who

have custody of one or more children have a higher per capita income even than two-parent families.

Parental concern and discipline is often diminished by the stresses of the separation and divorce period. Parents who otherwise might be very conscientious about their children's welfare and consistent in their discipline become more variable and erratic at least for a time. Of seven parental tasks Fulton (1979) investigated, the only one that single mothers said had been done more often by the husband than the wife was discipline. Her findings may lend some understanding to the poor discipline techniques observed between newly separated mothers and their children (Hetherington, et al., 1979; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Colletta (1983) found that the single child-rearing practice most highly related to stress was restrictiveness, and that mothers undergoing the greatest total stress tended to be more demanding of their children. Interestingly, mothers in Fulton's study (1979) claimed that they were better disciplinarians after the marriage than they had been during it, but there could be a response bias operating here.

Like the mothers, the fathers' disciplinary effectiveness with their children seemed compromised by marital dissolution. Just as the mothers had done, fathers made fewer maturity demands of their children, communicated with them less, and were less consistent in their interactions (Hetherington, et al., 1976). In addition, the

fathers were less nurturant and more detached toward their children over time. In contrast to the mother's pattern of being restrictive and punitive early on and then lightening her approach, the father was permissive and indulgent early on, but progressively became more restrictive, although never as restrictive as the married father.

Research demonstrates that close communication concerning the children is conducive to the mental health and better functioning of the entire family, including the noncustodial parent. For example, Hetherington, et al., reported that the most salient feature of a mother's effectiveness in interactions with the children was the "mutually supportive relationship of the divorced couple and the continued involvement of the father with the child" (Hetherington, et al., 1979). However, Fulton (1979) observed that only one in five custodial parents she interviewed acknowledged that there was a steady pattern of visitation, and 40% of the mothers had withheld their children from visits with their father at least once. The mothers' actions may have been correlated with the poor statistics on child support payment noted above from her study, but Fulton did not attempt to correlate the two. Consulting with the other parent on issues concerning the children occurred only in a minority of the cases, despite the advice of therapists and the findings of research that this connection is important for the children's self-esteem

and efforts to deal with divided loyalties (Fulton, 1979). Interestingly, each former spouse in her study saw himself or herself as being more accommodating and supportive of the other spouse than they felt the former spouse was toward them (Fulton, 1979).

Many studies on adjustment to divorce survey the mother only and do not attempt to make contact with the father. Ahrons (1983) discovered in her research on 54 pairs of ex-spouses that "how involved fathers are with their children one year postdivorce depends on whom you ask." Fathers generally perceived themselves to be more involved than the mothers perceived them to be. She found that the parental relationship, especially their anger, guilt and parental respect significantly affected the fathers' involvement with the children. Her results suggest that "the attenuation of the father-child relationship may be related more to father's relationship with mother and her respect for his parenting rights and responsibilities than to his love and caring for his children." Paired with Hetherington's findings on how the father's support of the mother in divorced families enhanced her effectiveness with the children, it is clear that both the parents need each other's support in order to have a good, affectionate, productive relationship with their children. It is unfortunate that they rarely are aware or willing to acknowledge this need. Further, as we shall see when we

discuss children's understanding of divorce, preadolescent children are especially unlikely to be able to unravel and make sense of their parents behavior during marital separation and are likely to feel rejected or used by both parents when the level of conflict and animosity is high between the couple.

How has the recent move toward joint custody affected the divorced father's involvement with his children? Bowman and Ahrons (1985) in a longitudinal study found that having joint custody status by court order was the only significant predictor of father-child contact and activities and of shared responsibility and decision in divorced families. This was true even though the level of conflict surrounding the divorce for the joint-custody group was equivalent to that of the mother-custody control group. Ahrons (1979, 1980) had previously found that joint-custody arrangements were amicable and resulted in equally shared responsibility with respect to the children. In fact, Goldsmith (1984) advocated that a change in society's conceptualization of post-divorce families to recognize "coparenting," because true single-parenting is a rare phenomenon. Ahrons and Perlmutter (1982) used the term "binuclear family" for cooperation between divorced mothers and fathers. Goldsmith (1980) saw divorce as more a reorganization than an absolute dissolution of family relationships. However, it seems that there is a wide variation on patterns of involvement by the

noncustodial parent. Over time after divorce, a number of noncustodial parents lost all significant contact with their children and no longer felt that they were an important influence (Hetherington, et al., 1976; Spanier & Furstenberg, 1982; Furstenberg & Nord, 1985). On the other hand, some parents in spite of divorce continued to collaborate and work as a united and peaceful team where their children were concerned. As we shall see later in the discussion of the impact of divorce on children, those who have adjusted best typically have parents with a good post-divorce relationship that has emphasized the children's needs above the parents' differences (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Beal, 1979).

Parents often have difficulty assessing accurately how their children are coping after the separation, even when they are the resident parent. It is likely that part of the problem is that the parents are absorbed in their own struggle to adjust to changes in lifestyle. For example, in Fulton's (1979) study, the parents seemed to downplay the effects of marital dissolution on their children. Almost none of the parents interviewed by Fulton (1979) sought professional help for their children, leading the author to conclude that perhaps the effects of contested divorce on children were not so deleterious as often projected. However, later in the same essay, she noted that about 70% of the parents had observed one or more psychosomatic

symptoms in at least half of their children at the time of separation, and the same percentage of parents felt that the divorce had had an impact on their children, with most of those thinking that it was negative. Fulton felt that the mothers tended to project their own feelings onto the children, hence "the more distressed the mother, the more distressed she perceived her children to be." However, it is also possible that the children truly were doing poorly especially in the immediate aftermath of separation. It would be difficult for a child to flourish while the primary or only parent with whom he had contact was depressed and anxious (Rutter, 1971). Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) described a very different pattern that also tended to put custodial mothers out of touch with their children's lives. The authors talked with a number of women who had excelled academically, vocationally, and psychologically in the years following their divorce. These women had gained substantially in confidence and self-esteem, but readily conceded that their children had been unintentionally but undoubtedly neglected during this period.

Children's Adjustment

The impact of divorce on children is substantially different than it is on their parents. The immediate crisis of divorce results in at least temporary upheaval for any child (Hetherington, et al., 1979; McCord, McCord, &

Thurber, 1962). Many children find out at the last moment that one of their parents is moving out. In the emotionally charged atmosphere, it is not uncommon for them to be unable to get direct answers from parents about what is going on and what will happen to them in the next few weeks or months. At least one of the parents exercised a choice and had some control in the separation. For children, there is an overwhelming sense, especially at the outset of having no control in the often rapid changes in their family. And often things do not stabilize rapidly. Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) initially set a one year time frame for their study assuming that at the end of the year the family members would have rebounded sufficiently. Instead they found that even fifteen years later, the effects of the divorce were being felt by a number of their research participants. In Fulton's (1979) study, a surprising 53% of the children had moved at least two times in the two years after divorce. Further, 39% had moved from one parent to another at least once. With respect to household responsibilities, children felt that as much or more was expected of them than in intact families, a condition Weiss termed "growing up a little faster" (Weiss, 1979; Furstenberg & Nord, 1985). On the other hand, many of these children manifested immature and dependent behavior typically seen in children younger than themselves (Hetherington, et al., 1982).

Marital dissolution and the surrounding conflict and change potentially have many effects on children. Among them are sex-role development, cognitive development, behavioral instability, and emotional sequelae. How a child will be affected appears to result from is a combination of age, gender, temperament, as well as the child's place in the family, his or her relationship to each parent, and the larger context of expanded family and societal attitudes (Kurdek, 1981). In the following section, we will examine research concerning each of these issues focusing primarily on patterns of child adjustment as influenced at the micro level of the child's personality and the parents' ongoing relationship to each other and to the child.

Focusing first on the child's cognitive development, researchers have noted variable patterns of understanding, similar to those postulated by Grych and Fincham (1990) concerning marital conflict and children. The child's age, or more accurately their level of maturity, at the time of separation, helps determine what sort of meaning he or she assigns to the events around them. Longfellow (1979) drew on the work of Selman and others in the field of child cognition and applied their concepts to the findings of Wallerstein and Kelly (1975, 1976). Although there did not seem to be any ideal age for marital dissolution from the child's perspective, children who were younger than five years old at the time of the divorce seemed to cope more

poorly during the immediate aftermath than did those who were older (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Longfellow postulated that preschoolers had the most difficult adjustment because they were in the age of egocentric reasoning. They believed that they shared the blame for the divorce with their parents and that somehow they have been divorced as well. By early latency when subjective reasoning has developed, children could talk more freely about their feelings but did not yet understand that people could hold seemingly contradictory feelings about one person such as love and anger at the same time. Late latency children, who have attained self-reflective reasoning, could admit to intense anger toward their parents but would often hide their feelings from others. They could hold contradictory feelings toward their parents but were unable yet to integrate them. In addition, with their new awareness of how others may view them, they were more likely to feel shame about the divorce. By adolescence, a person was able to take the perspective of another person and gain some distance from the events around them. They still cared for and related to others but were more objective about their role and responsibility in what was really their parents' problem.

How a child understands the parents' separation has an impact on his or her behavior. As we noted earlier from the research findings of Block et al. (1985), children's

behavior was likely to have been a factor in family functioning years before the actual separation occurred. It is also difficult to determine which came first: marital conflict or a child's problem behavior. Either way, the situation typically becomes worse once one of the parents has moved out. There seems to be an interactive effect between the parents' relationship and well-being and the child's struggle for understanding and control. For example, as Longfellow (1979) and Colletta (1983) have noted, at the same time that single mothers were attempting to cope with isolation and financial woes, their very young children were having the most difficulty understanding and interpreting their parents' divorce. These children were cognitively incapable of extricating themselves from blame and responsibility and they were unable to recognize and label their intense feelings about these events beyond their control. Other studies on preschoolers described similar results. Hetherington, Cox, and Cox (1982) observed that divorced mothers were more erratic and punitive in their dealings with their preschool children when compared to mothers from intact families, while the boys in particular were more disorderly and disobedient. By two years after the divorce, mother-daughter interactions had stabilized, and mother-son relations were improved from their low point at one year post-divorce, but they were still strained and unstable. Guidubaldi and Perry (1984) found among

kindergartners that single-parent status and socioeconomic status were the best predictors of social and academic performance, with children from single-parent homes and lower socioeconomic status having the most difficulty. However, Hodges, Wechsler, and Ballantine (1979) reported from their survey of 52 families with preschoolers, 26 divorced and 26 intact, that few significant differences between the two groups were obtained. The authors, surprisingly, did not find more aggressive play, a relationship between behavior problems and recency of the separation, or better adjustment for the child if he saw his father more frequently. In fact, children who saw their fathers more frequently tended to cooperate less with their mothers and be more aggressive at preschool. The authors speculated that one explanation for their findings contradicting those of Hetherington, Cox, and Cox (1982), may be an artifact of the difference in geography and ambience of their study populations. The Hodges study took place in Boulder, Colorado, where divorce was fairly common (60%), whereas it was probably not as prevalent and hence would be a more difficult adjustment among Hetherington's Virginia population.

Latency-age children and adolescents from single-parent homes have also been reputed to have more behavior and personality problems according to the lore, theory, and some research. Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) observed that these

children expressed anger at their parents, sadness at their family's separation, and either rebelliousness or withdrawal in their interactions with others. Santrock (1977) surveyed 45 father-absent and father-present fifth grade boys and found that father-absent boys were perceived by their teachers as being more masculine, aggressive, disobedient, and independent than father-present boys. Early father absence was associated with higher disobedience, while later father absence correlated with aggressiveness. Santrock speculated that the former pattern was more detrimental because it portended a possible antisocial tendency. However, other studies have noticed more androgynous and/or feminine behavior on the part of boys in their mother's custody (e.g., Blanchard & Biller, 1971; Hetherington, et al., 1982). In a clinical study of the records of 400 children at a Michigan psychiatric service, Kalter (1977) found that children of divorce presented for treatment at twice the rate that they occur in the general population. He found that boys under 7 years old from families of divorce expressed their hostility in aggression against their parents. Latency-age boys continued to be aggressive toward their parents in divorced families, but also became aggressive toward their siblings. By adolescence, these boys took their animosity and hostile behavior outside the home as they were significantly more involved in legal problems. On the other hand, girls whose parents had

divorced experienced more internalizing or subjective psychological symptoms during latency than did girls from intact families. They also showed more aggressive behavior against their parents than did girls from intact homes. During adolescence, they were more likely to exhibit problems in sexual behavior and to be involved in drugs. Indeed, there has been a long-standing debate concerning the association between delinquency in adolescence and father absence (Herzog & Sudia, 1973; Biller, 1982).

From a family systems perspective, Beal (1979) described the means by which a divorcing family diverted attention from the parents' difficulties and inappropriately focused on one child. Beal observed that "child focus is a mechanism in which family members deal with stress by focusing their anxiety on one or more children." His research examined the divorce experience of forty families, whom he divided into those with a mild degree of child focus and those with a severe degree of child focus. Similar to boundary problems in stepfamilies, there was emotional fusion across generational lines, as these parents would often involve the children inappropriately in their arguments. However, they were much less willing to explain the arrangements and circumstances of the divorce which involved the children to them. Consequently these children often experienced physical symptoms, had psychiatric evaluations, and had problems at school and with friends.

Being involved involuntarily in their parents' disagreements but uninformed about decisions that affected them left these children confused, anxious, and perplexed. Visitation arrangements were usually chaotic, and the children were not assured of access to the noncustodial parent. Beal felt that in some cases the intense parental conflict was shifted to the same level of conflict between the custodial parent and a child of the opposite sex, similar to Hetherington et al.'s (1982) findings of ongoing conflict between single mothers and their sons. The families with severe child focus also maintained less contact with extended family, so that their children lost the support and nurturance that could be provided by these relatives. In contrast, children from divorces with mild levels of child focus were usually better informed of divorce arrangements that involved them and had parents who were willing to keep their disagreements between themselves rather than confiding inappropriately in their children or trying to solicit their loyalty. Bohannan (1985), however, noted that children who have not observed conflict between their parents suffer the most in the early stages of separation, but not later on. According to Beal, children from family of mild levels of child focus generally retained good contacts with the noncustodial parent and with extended family.

In assessing children's adjustment to separation and divorce, parents may not be the most reliable source when

evaluating their children, because parents may be struggling with depression and guilt. In the first case, the parent who is angry or depressed may project their own feelings onto their children. Fulton (1979), in her survey of recently divorced parents in Minnesota, found evidence that parents may have been both denying their own feelings and projecting them onto their children. On the other hand, parents might minimize or deny their children's difficulties to assuage their sense of responsibility for their offsprings' unhappiness. For example, a frequently cited study by Kurdek and Siesky (1979) asked divorced parents about their child's adjustment. The authors acknowledged in their conclusion that their sample and methods made the validity of their findings uncertain. One result they reported was that "most children were not seen as harboring hopes of their parents' reconciliation," but clinicians and researchers who interact with the children themselves consistently maintain that most children from divorced families do hope for reconciliation (e.g., Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Visher & Visher, 1989). The parents in Kurdek and Siesky's study also perceived that their children did not experience conflict over self-blame, adjustment to the new family situation, or visits with the noncustodial parent, but other authors, who interviewed children, did find that blame, divided loyalties, and resentment of the new family configuration deeply troubled children

(Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Lutz, 1983; Hetherington, et al., 1982). It is doubtful that children commonly confide these problems to either of their parents who may still feel angry about the divorce and generally seem unavailable to their children emotionally during the first year of separation. In an intriguing study, Michaels (1989) examined the child's tendency to idealize the absent father. She found it a common experience, similar to the observations of Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989). She noted that children were able to maintain a mental attachment to the father in fantasy that persisted even when the child rarely, if ever, saw him. Further, although the child's fantasy image might be significantly influenced by the mother's views of him, mother's influence alone could not account for the child's negative fantasies about him.

How does divorce affect parent-child relationships? In approximately 90% of divorces involving children, custody is awarded to the mother. As we observed in the discussion of parents' adjustment to divorce, fathers tended to stay in close touch with their children during the first few months after divorce, but in many families contact diminished over time (Hetherington, et al., 1976). A surprising number of children had no contact with their father at all. Despite the efforts of some fathers to stay involved in their children's lives, "the father's role is defined as much by omission as by commission" (Seltzer, 1991). In some

instances the father's disappearance consists of abandonment, but in others it is a complicated response to the mother's hostility and his own emotional pain of losing the opportunity for daily interaction with his children. Furstenberg and Nord (1985) analyzed responses from over 2000 children between the ages of 7 to 11 who took part in the National Survey of Children. Almost half of the children had not seen their noncustodial parent in over a year and only one in six saw that parent on a weekly basis. Visits tended to be brief, seldom, and distant in emotional content. Contact was usually social in tone and rarely involved routine parenting responsibilities on the part of the noncustodial parent. Telephone conversations were rare as well, and letter writing was all but nonexistent. Nonresident mothers fared better in their relationships with their children than the fathers but they also did not establish frequent and consistent patterns of contact. Interestingly, the relationship with the mother, whatever the custody arrangement, was considered strong and satisfactory, but the relationship with the noncustodial father lacked the affection and firm guidelines the children wanted whether they saw their fathers often or infrequently. Despite the lack of contact and exchange with the noncustodial parent, children reported few problems in their relationship and almost half said they wanted to be like that parent. According to Furstenberg and Nord, reports of

joint and cooperative parenting were rare in practice. Communication between parents was infrequent, possibly to diminish the level or opportunity for conflict, but it left the custodial parent usually complaining of being overburdened. Using the Child Health Supplement to the 1981 National Health Interview Survey, Seltzer and Bianchi (1988) found that frequency of contact with the noncustodial parent was highest when the child had recently lived with that parent and when the child did not live with a stepparent or other substitute caretaker. However, measuring frequency of contact does not do justice to noncustodial parents who live far away, but make provisions for one or two lengthy visits per year. Unlike Ahrons (1980) who observed that children of divorce seemed to be able to acquire new stepparents without abandoning their biological ones, these authors concluded that children were not likely to maintain ties to more than two parents or parent-figures at a time. Patterns of maternal custody and infrequent visits by the noncustodial father were common among divorced parents in Sweden (Hwang, 1987) and Australia (Russell, 1987), as well.

In a study of 100 college students whose parents were divorced at least 7 years earlier and 141 from intact families, Fine, Moreland, and Schwebel (1983) found that divorce primarily affected the father-child relationship in a negative manner. However, several factors lessened the impact of divorce on the father-child relationship:

remembering a healthy family life before the divorce, successful adjustment of the child before the divorce, a higher socioeconomic status, and a good relationship between the ex-spouses after the divorce. The latter point accentuates the mother's role after the divorce in that she can help set the stage for an amiable relationship. The mother-child relationship also suffered in divorced families even though the mother usually had custody, probably as a result of the added stressors of employment, financial concerns, and diminished time to spend with the children. As in Hetherington's long-term study, daughters had more positive regard for their mothers than sons did.

Father custody occurs in only about 10%-12% of the divorce settlements and has rarely been studied. In the best known research, Santrock and Warshak (1979; Santrock, Warshak, & Elliott, 1982), conducted a multimethod study of 40 latency-age boys and girls from divorced families and 20 children of the same age from intact families, and found that children living with the opposite sex parent were not as well adjusted as those living with the same-sex parent, i.e., boys did better when living with their fathers and girls did better with their mothers. Boys living with their divorced fathers were warmer, had higher self-esteem, were less demanding and more mature and sociable than those from intact families. These results provide an intriguing piece of the puzzle concerning the poor relationship between

divorced mothers and their sons (Hetherington, et al., 1982). In fact, Santrock and Warshak noted that boys were more demanding of their custodial mothers than girls were and girls were more demanding of their custodial fathers than boys were. However, in addition to differences by custodial arrangement, the authors also found that the child's competent social behavior was associated with authoritative parenting whether in mother or father custody. The mothers Hetherington et al. observed tended to vacillate between being authoritarian and permissive, and did not achieve a consistent authoritative style until approximately two years after the divorce.

Another study on father custody was conducted by Turner (1984) who interviewed 26 divorced fathers who gained custody of their children through contested court cases. Turner did not study characteristics of the children but of the adults involved, and he performed no statistical operations on the data, so results are impressionistic. He divided the fathers into two groups. One group had been actively involved with their children since birth and sought custody immediately upon separation. They also had enjoyed a good marital relationship, were reluctant to see it end, and maintained amiable relations with the former spouse. The second group consisted of fathers who had not been closely or actively involved with their children during the marriage and had waited approximately two years before

seeking custody. They were provoked into filing for custody, because their former wives denied or restricted visitation and because the former wives were neglectful or abusive toward the children. Further, their marriages had been troubled from the outset, and they viewed separation as a positive, desirable move.

Another perspective on the influence of the parent-child relationship and divorce adjustment concerns the impact of a good relationship with just one of the parents. McCord, McCord, and Thurber (1962), in an early study on the effects of father absence, found that a mother's emotional disturbance affected sons only if there was no father present. Similarly, Rutter (1971; Wolkind & Rutter, 1973) observed in his research that if a child had a good relationship with one parent, it could mitigate some of the effects of family conflict. He called this situation a "buffer," i.e., a close relationship with one parent which could protect the child from deleterious effects of a bad relationship with the other parent or a mentally ill parent. Applying Rutter's concept to divorce, Hetherington, Cox, and Cox (1982; also Hetherington, 1991) found that the buffer effect worked only when the protective parent was the custodial parent. Unfortunately, a divorced father who was supportive and sympathetic still could not be an effective buffer when he was the noncustodial parent (Hetherington, et al., 1982). Still to be investigated are the potential

effects of scholastic attainment, employment of an adolescent (or divorced mother), structure, and relationships outside the home (Rutter, 1979) in making a child less vulnerable to the stresses of marital disruption.

The impact of father absence after marital separation and divorce is a much-studied aspect of parent-child relations. Early research on the subject assumed that deviations in a child's development after divorce could be attributed to the lack of a male role model. Studies examining the effects of father absence usually implied that the father plays a distinctive role in the family which the custodial mother either cannot or does not fill. It is a complex debate which seems to have some support from current research such as the longitudinal studies by Hetherington et al. and by Wallerstein and Kelly. Whether it is the stress and diminished family time for the separated mother, or an actual difference in approach to parenting by fathers, or both, that signifies a different developmental path for children of divorce is not resolved. Longfellow (1979) surveyed the literature on the effects of divorce on children and decried, perhaps too strongly, the "cherished notion that prolonged absence of a father from a household does irreparable psychological harm to the growing child." However, father absence has made significant contributions to the study of children and divorce, primarily by opening the debate on developmental effects of family structure on

children.

Research on the effects of father absence is too extensive to survey in depth here, but perhaps some examples of these studies will suffice. Identification theory, social learning theory, and role theory have provided the conceptual basis for most of the studies on father absence. Researchers looking at father effects found that father identification contributed formation of moral standards but not to rule conformity (Hoffman, 1971b), that father absence was associated with sex-role identity and personal adjustment only for boys who lost their fathers by death or divorce before age 5 (Covell & Turnbull, 1982), that black male (but not female) infants with minimal interactions with their fathers were lower on developmental scales as well as social responsiveness, secondary circular reactions, and preferences for novel stimuli (Pederson, Rubenstein, & Yarrow, 1979), and that fear of failure in college students was greatest for males whose fathers had died (Greenfeld & Teevan, 1986). Contradictory findings are not unusual in very similar studies looking at father absence following parental divorce. For example, Hoffman (1971a) discovered that father-absent boys scored lower for internal moral judgment, maximum guilt following transgressions, acceptance of blame, moral values, and rule conformity. But Santrock (1975) found that there were few differences in moral behavior between father-absent and father-present latency-

age boys. Both controlled for IQ, SES, and age. Santrock speculated that the difference derived from an urban versus rural population or the fact that his studies measured specific moral behaviors in different situations. Extensive reviews of the literature on father absence are found in Biller's works (1970, 1974, 1982).

Herzog and Sudia (1973), in a comprehensive review of work on the effects of father absence, pointed out that research has focused on fathers as sex role models for their sons and on the lack of paternal supervision and discipline. Research in these areas has not yet proved that boys without fathers are either more effeminate or overly aggressive or that discipline must come from a father, rather than, say, a mother or grandmother to be effective. More recently, Brenes, Eisenberg, and Helmstadter (1985) cited an unpublished meta-analysis, conducted by Stevenson and Black of 33 studies on the effects of father absence on the sex role development of boys under 6 years old. The authors concluded that boys who lived with their mothers only were not different in sex role orientation from boys from two-parent families, but they were less masculine in sex role preference and more masculine in sex role adoption including aggression and independence. In their own study of 41 preschoolers, Brenes, Eisenberg, and Helmstadter (1985) found that children with single mothers tended to have more knowledge of stereotyped conceptions about sex roles,

especially the masculine role which may be more salient to them, and to be less sex-typed in their choice of toys. Boys from these families were not more feminized in their play behaviors, and none of the children from single-mother homes showed evidence of disturbance of gender identity. These findings contradict those of other researchers (e.g.,Biller, 1970, 1974) who did find differences in sex role preference and adoption for boys without fathers.

Although the debate on whether the father plays unique role in his children's development remains unresolved, it is clear that often studies citing father absence as the problem have failed to focus on intervening variables (Herzog & Sudia, 1973; Longfellow, 1979). Probably the most overlooked variable influencing family functioning in the single-parent family has been its disadvantaged economic status, particularly when the mother has custody. Sixty percent of one-parent families headed by mothers are in poverty (Norton & Glick, 1986). More recently researchers have begun to approach studies on divorce with an awareness of the complexity of the events that surround the breakup. It is a time often marked by conflict, geographical moves, confusion, distancing from both parents, and loneliness, as well as the loss of a parent. In fact, a study by Hodges, Wechsler, and Ballantine (1979) found that the strongest predictors of maladjustment for children from the divorced families were having younger parents, limited financial

resources, and geographic mobility. The authors summed these results together to conclude that not divorce itself but the cumulative stress of these three factors might present a more difficult adjustment for children.

A number of research studies have reported cognitive deficits among children, especially boys, who are raised in one-parent families. In general, the results have been attributed to the lack of a father in the home. Herzog and Sudia (1973) and Shinn (1978) conducted extensive reviews of the literature on the effects of father absence on children's cognitive development, with Shinn's articles overlapping the work covered by Herzog and Sudia by only 25%. Both reviews asserted that the identification hypothesis was not supported by the better designed studies, and that there were many potential intervening variables. For example, Shinn concluded that financial hardship, high levels of anxiety, and especially low levels of parent-child interaction contribute to the poor performance of children from single-parent families. However, sex role identification per se did not play a significant role. Results of most studies did support the view that "children's interaction with their parents fosters cognitive development and that a reduction in interaction hinders it" (Shinn, 1978).

Earlier work tended to focus on the effect of father absence on cognitive development without attending to other

intervening variables. Carlsmith (1964) compared Scholastic Aptitude Test scores for young men whose fathers were temporarily gone during World War II and those whose fathers had been consistently present in the home. He found that young men who experienced temporary father absence were significantly more likely to have Verbal scores higher than their Math scores, which he characterized as a female pattern. In contrast, males without father absence typically scored higher on the Math section. Lessing, Zagorin, and Nelson (1970) administered the WISC to 311 boys and 122 girls from 1960-1966 and found that father-absent children scored significantly lower on Block Design, Object Assembly, and Performance IQ no matter what their sex or social class. However, the authors noted that Maccoby had earlier challenged the identification hypothesis by asserting that Performance subtests of the WISC are more vulnerable to stress and that children without fathers were likely to be under greater stress than those from intact families. When looking at working class children, those who were father-absent scored lower on Verbal, Performance, and Full Scale IQ than father-present children in the same class. Lessing et al. thought that this "massive reaction" reflected the families having to focus on necessities with little energy or time left for intellectual interests. They did not feel that their results lent strong support to the identification hypothesis. Hetherington, Camara, and

Featherman (1983) found only small differences between children from intact versus single-parent homes on IQ tests and standardized achievement tests, but found greater discrepancies in the school grades between the two groups. Further, they found that boys were more affected than girls, especially in the areas of quantitative aptitude and achievement. Studies by Biller and his colleagues adopted Parsons's social learning approach to explain the father's importance to the child's development and the changes that seemed to occur when the father is not in the home. Blanchard and Biller (1971) in a study both lauded and panned for its design attempted to examine both father absence vs. presence and father nurturance vs. neglect. They found that the academic performance of third graders with highly available fathers was superior to the other three groups, while the boys whose fathers were absent since an early age "were clearly underachievers." They observed no significant relations between academic performance and age, socioeconomic status, sibling distribution, maternal availability, maternal employment, reason for father absence, of availability of a stepfather. Their results emphasized the importance of father nurturance and availability in addition to father presence in a boy's development. Santrock (1972) studied the relationship between reason (e.g., death, divorce) and age of father loss among boys and girls as measured by IQ and achievement test

scores administered in the third and sixth grade. He concluded that father absence by separation, divorce, or desertion had its most negative impact if it happened when the boy was between birth and two years old. Father absence by death was more damaging when it occurred between the ages of six and nine for the son. Girls were not significantly affected in cognitive performance by father loss in his study. Zajonc (1976) in a study of family configuration and intelligence, observed that an individual's intelligence is the "average of all members' absolute 'contributions,'" and that intelligence "manifests the most dramatic changes when there is an addition to or departure from the family." Hence, loss of a parent lowered intelligence, while remarriage, especially when the child was young, had a beneficial effect on intelligence.

A slightly different approach to adjustment of children of divorce was taken by Polit (1984) in her study of how marital dissolution affected only children. She studied 110 families, consisting of four configurations: single-parent with one child, single-parent with two children, single-parent with three children, and two-parent with one child. Single-parent families were one to two years beyond the divorce. Interestingly, the greatest distress and sibling rivalry was found among single-parent families with two children. These children were also more likely to be incommunicative emotionally and sensitive to criticism. In

contrast, only children from single-parent families were most comfortable with adults, and they were generally as shy or alienated from their peers as their counterparts from multi-child homes. Polit's results contradicted those of Weiss (1979) which observed that multi-child families afforded support among siblings, whereas the only child had to deal with an angry or distraught parent alone. However, Polit noted that the highest refusal rate for participation in her study was among the one-parent/one-child group.

What are the long-term effects of divorce on children? Is their adjustment affected only briefly or are there more permanent sequelae? Landis (1960), in a survey of university students, found that children's adjustment to divorce was determined largely by their age at the time of divorce and by their perception of whether or not their family was happy. Those who had perceived their family to be happy were surprised by news of the divorce and had more difficulty adjusting to the family disruption. Only 22% of his respondents among a university population remembered their predivorce homes as being conflictual, but this group also adapted better to the divorce in the long run. They reported feeling more secure and happy after the divorce whereas the subjects from happy predivorce homes were significantly less happy and secure postdivorce. With respect to their parents, subjects felt closer to their mothers, but more distant from their fathers after the

divorce. Children from unhappy predivorce homes felt more "used" by their parents during and after the divorce. These children also reported a greater effect on attitudes toward marriage, and indicated that they would be more cautious and discriminating in choosing a marital partner as a result of their parents' experiences. Families that were perceived as happy before dissolution were the ones most likely to experience remarriage and the children were least likely to feel "used" by the parents' in their marital struggles. Confirming other studies on adolescent perceptions (e.g., Lutz, 1983), these subjects said that their parents' divorce did not affect their associations with friends. Landis found no effect on child outcome by sibling order or number of siblings but he did find an age effect. Just as Wallerstein (1984) concluded, the younger the child was at the time of the divorce the better the long-term adjustment. Although younger children (children who were between 5-8 years old at the time of divorce in Landis's study and those who were even younger in Wallerstein and Kelly's study) might show more severe immediate responses to marital dissolution, they seemed to develop a healthy amnesia for the more difficult times and were able to adapt without lingering rumination about their parents' separation.

In another study on long-term adjustment, Kulka and Weingarten (1979) examined the results of two national cross-sectional surveys and found relatively few differences

between children from divorced versus intact families. They concluded that "contrary to much of the literature and popular thought, these early experiences have, at most, a modest effect on adult adjustment." Because the surveys were conducted 20 years apart, the authors were also able to look for cohort effects in adjustment to parental divorce. Although global measures of adjustment were remarkably similar between the children from divorced and intact families, those who experienced divorce observed that childhood or adolescence had been the most unhappy time of their lives, and remained a focal point of the past unless a more recent crisis had emerged to displace it. Looking specifically at psychological adjustment, the authors noted that the divorce might provide "a framing experience against which other experiences are consciously or unconsciously measured." Those younger respondents with divorce in their background were more likely to have felt close to having a nervous breakdown, believed they had poorer physical health, and were more stressed. That these differences were not significant in the older group suggests that some effects may abate with the passage of time. There was also evidence, congruent with the research of Hetherington, Cox, and Cox, that males found parental divorce more difficult to cope with than females even over the long term. Kulka and Weingarten also discovered that both sexes, but especially females were more likely than counterparts from intact

families to seek professional help. Interestingly, however, there was not a significant difference for the incidence of depression or feelings of personal efficacy, self-esteem, or life satisfaction between the respondents from divorced versus intact families.

Kulka and Weingarten (1979) also examined marital happiness and attitudes between children from divorced and intact families. Paradoxically, those from divorced families reported both normative levels of marital happiness and satisfaction and more problems and inadequacy in marriage. The authors speculated that coming from conflictual homes might sensitize children of divorce to aspects of the marriage which those without a similar background might overlook. They also found evidence that females from divorced families were less likely to feel that marriage contributed to their most salient values, while men were at least as likely or more likely than those from intact marriages to endorse the fulfillment to be derived from marriage. However, men from divorced families seemed less invested in parenting, while women were more invested in parenting than those from intact families. The authors speculated that investment in parenting might be tied to whether or not one's same sex parent was available on a daily basis. They found little evidence for a strong intergenerational transmission of marital instability. Like Rutter (1979), they suggested that children of divorce over

time brought new methods of coping and adaptation to bear on their situation, and could feel a measure of success in having faced a crisis of major proportion without deleterious effects. Divorce could then be viewed as a positive event as readily as a personal failure.

Glenn and Kramer (1985) also studied the long-term effects of parental divorce on children and reported more significant negative findings than Kulka and Weingarten. Using eight General Social Surveys conducted between 1973 and 1982 by the National Opinion Research Center, they studied responses of 16-year olds and compared the responses of those who lived with one biological parent (and possibly a stepparent), because the other natural parent had died or was divorced, and those who lived with both biological parents. Both men and women from families of divorce reported being "not too happy" significantly more than those from intact families. Other differences for children of divorced families included men and women being less satisfied in the community where they currently lived and with their family life, and women noting more problems in self-reported health and less satisfaction with their health and friendships. In addition, women from families of divorce were more likely to divorce their spouses. One problem of the study is that those who experienced parental death or divorce are grouped with those who were in stepfamilies. Another difficulty is that the age at the

time of divorce was not known. Both these variables can play a role in subsequent adjustment to divorce.

In a meta-analysis, Amato and Keith (1991) reported that divorce "has broad negative consequences for quality of life in adulthood," including relationship difficulties and educational achievement. These effects were greater for whites than blacks and were greater in earlier studies than recent studies. However these effects were not large in any case. (See Allen, 1992, for a rebuttal of Amato's views.)

Several studies indicate that children of divorce, when they begin to date and marry, have a different pattern of courtship behavior than children of intact families. Hetherington (1972) discovered that adolescent daughters of divorced parents were more flirtatious and less withdrawn around males than were daughters from intact homes and from single-parent homes where the father had died. Kulka and Weingarten (1979) observed that children of divorce were less likely to marry. Booth, Brinkerhoff, and White (1984) surveyed over 3500 college students and found that children of divorce were as likely to date and enter long-term relationships as those from intact families. They were also more likely to have had premarital sex and to be cohabiting than the controls which the authors speculated might come from observing their parents after the divorce. The offspring of divorce experienced comparatively less satisfaction in heterosexual relationships if there had been

post-divorce conflict (as compared with conflict during divorce) and a decline in parent-child relations. They did not find an effect for age of the child at the time of the divorce, for sex of the child, or for lack of a father or parental role model. On sex of the child, however, it should be noted that two studies (Mueller & Pope, 1977; Carlson, 1979) found significant differences for daughters from divorced homes and subsequent courtship and marital behavior, while another study (Greenberg & Nay, 1982) found no differences in those from divorced versus intact homes.

In conclusion, there are many perspectives on the impact of separation and divorce on children, with only a few of them presented here. Research has demonstrated an effect for marital dissolution on distinct areas of the child's life, including emotional, cognitive, and social/behavioral dimensions. Further, the effects are manifested differently depending on the child's gender and age at the time of separation. Research on the impact on children over time are contradictory, but there is some evidence that separation and divorce constitute a family crisis with long-term consequences. Kurdek (1981), in his attempt to construct an integrative schema for examining how children deal with divorce, observed that ultimately adaptation is an individual phenomenon, consisting of the nesting of the child's adjustment within the context of family, community, and larger culture. Optimistically, he

noted that "there are multiple pathways to healthy divorce adjustment." For most children of divorce, their efforts to cope and adapt continue when they are confronted with remarriage of one or both parents.

Research Trends in the Study of the Stepfamily

Much of the early research on stepfamilies began more as an afterthought in studies on father absence which included a stepfamily group in addition to the mother-only group and the control group of the nuclear family (e.g., Nye, 1957; Carlsmith, 1964). A few books were published on stepparenting and stepchildren in the 1950s in response to the rise in the rates of divorce and remarriage after World War II (e.g., Smith, 1953; Bernard, 1956; Goode, 1956). However, two articles have provoked substantial research in stepfamilies, one by Bowerman and Irish (1962) and the other by Cherlin (1978), and will serve as focal points in this essay.

Bowerman and Irish (1962), in "Some Relationships of Stepchildren to Their Parents," reported the findings of their research on teenagers in North Carolina, Ohio, and Washington. They reported that "for the majority of our subjects stepparents had not been able to attain the same level of affection and degree of closeness as had real parents." They also found a curvilinear pattern to stepparent acceptance: younger and much older children took

in the new stepparent more readily than adolescents did. There was also a tendency for stepfathers to be better accepted than stepmothers and a tendency for children to identify with the same-sex parent or stepparent more often than with the opposite-sex parent. According to their study, stepparents fit into the family better if the previous marriage had ended in divorce rather than by death of a partner, although Bernard (1956) had found the opposite. This finding led the authors to concur with Goode (1956) who had cautioned that processes within these families rather than structural differences, such as broken vs. unbroken, are most instructive. Stepchildren in Bowerman and Irish's study were more prone than children from intact families to feel parental discrimination and rejection, especially from the stepparent, with the stepmother being the lowest in their esteem. Stepchildren's relationships with their parents were "marked by greater levels of uncertainty of feelings, insecurity of position, and strain" than those of children in intact families. The authors concluded that stepfamilies were "more likely to have stress, ambivalence, and low cohesiveness." Among children, stepdaughters had a more difficult time adjusting to the new family configuration than stepsons, and stepmothers were perceived more negatively than stepfathers. These findings have sparked much of the research since the article's publication. There were a number of

methodological problems in the study, particularly in comparing the three groups surveyed on different measures, but it was the conclusions that stirred debate. The number of studies which have examined family cohesiveness in stepfamilies is surprising, given that greater distance in stepfamilies seems almost intuitive and "distancing rules" in them have a function in reducing the push for too much intimacy too soon (Whiteside, 1983).

In the second pathbreaking article, Cherlin (1978) wrote that the stepfamily is an "incomplete institution," meaning that it lacks the social sanctions, or institutionalization, that the nuclear family enjoys and is in uncharted waters as far as roles and responsibilities are concerned. Cherlin believed that the higher divorce rate for remarried adults can be attributed the complexity and lack of guidelines in remarried families with one or two sets of children from previous marriages. The family network, or "quasi-kin," as Bohannan (1970a) called it, is expanded both quantitatively in the number of possible relationships and physically across several households, as ex-spouses along with aunts, uncles, and grandparents from the previous marriage are still connected to the children and remarried spouse. In addition, there are few laws or consensus mores that regulate stepparent-stepchild relationships. In 1992, that is still true in most states. An article on family law in the People's Republic of China

observed that the Chinese revision in 1980, which spelled out stepfamily rights and responsibilities, could be used as a model in the United States (Engel, 1985). Although Cherlin made a strong case for the lack of institutionalization of remarriage, Price-Bonham and Balswick (1980) asserted that divorce and remarriage have begun "to develop identifiable patterns of regularity, i.e., a first step toward institutionalization." However, these authors acknowledged that remarriage still needs more elucidation of stepparenting, financial obligations, and status recognition.

Actually Cherlin did what most provocative thinkers do by summing together a number of ideas that were being bandied about but not integrated and stated directly. In particular, he drew on the work of Fast and Cain (1966), who wrote that the "organizational disturbance in stepfamilies is inevitable" and observed that "particular areas of family functioning [appear] to be especially vulnerable to disfunction." From their therapy with fifty families, Fast and Cain asserted that "the social structure of the family normally provides a source of impulse control and regulation of interpersonal relationships," but with the introduction of someone who was at once a parent, a stepparent, and a nonparent the rules were altered. They believed that even the most motivated and well-intentioned stepparent "cannot succeed totally."

Cherlin's argument is not consistent with the history of the American family, however. As noted earlier, the family of the last two decades is considered to be more like the family in colonial America, and the nuclear family of the 1950s is seen as an aberration. Stepfamilies and remarriage are not new phenomena arising in the 1960s and 1970s. Both were common in the colonial era, although they usually followed the death rather than divorce of a spouse. Coontz (1992) argued that if traditions and guidelines either did not exist or have been forgotten since previous eras then it may indicate that our culture is not comfortable with variant, multiple family forms, or that our institutions for dealing with different family types have been lost.

Throughout the rest of this essay, we shall see how these two articles, by Bowerman and Irish and by Cherlin, have influenced the research questions and directions since they were published.

Boundaries in the Stepfamily

A number of social scientists have addressed Cherlin's premise, both empirically and theoretically. Writers looking at the theoretical implications have discussed boundary problems in stepfamilies, from both a physical and psychological standpoint. Fast and Cain (1966) noted that incest barriers, generational lines, "the abrogation of the

primary husband-wife bond, and a blurring of the differential relationships of stepfather as husband and father were all boundary issues not addressed in laws or unwritten sanctions, as they are for the nuclear family." In the research to be reviewed later in this paper, we shall see that boundary issues underlie such issues as loyalty conflicts, discipline, family alliances or coalitions, and sexuality, to name a few.

Boundaries in families refer to "those factors that contribute to the sense of identity differentiating the members of one group [or family] from another" (Walker & Messinger, 1979). Among the factors are shared experience, space, property, ritual activities, and beliefs (Walker & Messinger, 1979). For stepfamilies, there are four crucial boundary areas to be negotiated: membership, space, authority, and time (McGoldrick & Carter, 1980). Boss (1977; Boss & Greenberg, 1984) made an important contribution to the concept of psychological boundaries when she studied families with fathers missing in action in Vietnam. She found that a number of these families experienced physical absence but psychological presence which led to boundary incongruity as to whether or not the father was still in the family. She further examined psychological presence by distinguishing between instrumental vs. expressive presence. In the case of instrumental presence, families with fathers missing in

action continued to draw money from the his paycheck, because he was still considered alive and part of the armed forces. Boss found that instrumental presence was not associated with family dysfunction. However, expressive presence, consisting of maintaining family integrity rather than beginning to close the father out of the system, was associated positively with children's adjustment but negatively to the mother's functionality (e.g., getting a job, going back to school, having close relationships, planning for remarriage). Boss concluded that "the resolution of the ambiguity between who is in and who is out of the family system in crisis may be a critical variable in determining whether or not there can be orderly replacement in that system and subsequent function or dysfunction" (Boss, 1977). Psychological presence of family members who are not residing with the stepfamily underlies some of the stress and loyalty conflicts these families experience.

Boundary shifts are essential but difficult in the remarried family (Hetherington, et al., 1979; Walker & Messinger, 1979, Wallerstein & Kelly, 1976; Weiss, 1979). Walker and Messinger (1979) termed the boundaries of the remarried family "more permeable," as new members are taken in and relationships of all sorts are adjusted into a new configuration. Compared with a first-marriage family, the remarried family lacks both a common household residence of natural parents and children and a focus of parental

authority in one setting. Often a stepfamily has more than one source of economic subsistence. They also lack their own rituals and symbols, or "sentimental order," which help maintain family boundaries (Stern, 1978).

The transition from single-parent household to a stepfamily involves a shift in responsibilities across generational boundaries or from natural parent to stepparent. With one less adult in the household after separation, the single parent commonly confides in the children and expects more responsibilities in housekeeping, babysitting, and other chores than is typically true in intact families (Weiss, 1979). Some of these are accepted willingly and are appropriate, especially for adolescents. However, others, such as the single parent complaining about the absent parent, discussing financial and custody arguments, or asking more than the child is capable of doing, are inappropriate and potentially damaging to the child. It often deprives him or her of a needed feeling of security and strong personal regard for both parents and probably himself or herself (Weiss, 1979; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). The child's tendency to take more responsibility for household work after the parents separated continues even into the remarriage (Furstenberg & Nord, 1985), which may contribute to an imbalance in the system of social exchange. Children of divorced parents typically receive more freedom along with the added

responsibilities, but research indicates that children in remarried families have comparatively less freedom.

When feelings of loss and the need to grieve after separation are not addressed, they will affect the success of remarriage, as unreconciled anger and sadness and a sense of failure linger (Goetting, 1982; Goetting, 1979; Visher & Visher, 1989; Walker & Messinger, 1979). In some cases, separated adults experience euphoria alternating with depression (Hetherington, et al., 1982, Weiss, 1976). Immediately after separation, boundaries stay in flux as the couple may even attempt reconciliation or continue to have occasional sexual relations. Weiss (1976) observed that often both partners feel significant distress, regardless of who initiated the separation. He attributed the distress to an awareness that "all marriages, happy or unhappy, make an important contribution to the well-being of the partners," and to an ongoing sense of attachment in a manner suggested by Bowlby (1969). Attachment is different from loneliness because it has a specific desired object and can be maintained by proximity alone. Hence, Weiss concludes that the expressions of anger directed at the spouse can be seen as an effort to keep the relationship alive through maintaining proximity "through infusions of hostility" (Weiss, 1976).

It is not uncommon for some single parent homes to pull even more closely together during the period after

separation, although the best accommodation is the maintenance of partially open or permeable boundaries (Walker & Messinger, 1979). As a new period of courtship begins, these tight boundaries are threatened. For children, the adjustment is especially painful, because it forces them to come to terms with the loss of the nonresident parent as well as adapt to a new adult. Further, the single parent may welcome help from a new adult, but be reluctant to accede discipline and authority to him or her.

Time and individual personalities play a large role in evolving a new order with new boundaries in the stepfamily. Studies on stepfamily development note that the first one and a half to two years after remarriage are often spent in negotiation and adjustment, including the forming of new alliances, family rituals, and a history of shared experiences (Papernow, 1984; Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1985; Nelson & Nelson, 1982; Giles-Sims, 1987). During this time of adjustment, two myths, that remarriages are characterized by a wicked stepmother and "instant love," must be confronted by stepfamilies in order to proceed with adaptation to a new order (Schulman, 1972). According to Walker & Messinger (1979), it may be best that there are not prescribed laws or sanctions concerning remarriage households, because that would deprive stepfamilies of the opportunity to work out their own solutions gradually.

Stepfamily boundaries are adjusted in three stages: exploration, expansion, and commitment, according to Nelson and Nelson (1982). In the exploratory phase, the new marital partners and the stepparent and child get to know one another. As a sense of trust develops, they move into expansion where they find common interests and goals. In the final stage, commitment, they achieve a sense of solidarity and interdependence. However, commitment is hampered when roles are unclear or when one of the members holds a primary commitment to someone outside the immediate household, as a child with a parent elsewhere. Further, the new stepparent may have biological children residing with his former wife and, therefore, be reluctant to become involved with his resident stepchildren. Accustomed to acting as a unit, the new stepchildren and often the formerly single parent may leave the stepparent out of discussions and activities. Both of these inhibit the formation of functional boundaries for the remarriage family (Pasley, 1987). In addition, the remarried couple must establish boundaries around their own unit as partners if the marriage is to survive and function well, according to Walker and Messinger (1979).

Although there are many potential boundary conflicts and problems, none is more damaging than sexual abuse perpetrated by a stepparent against a stepchild. Sexual attraction between stepparent and stepchild has been called

the Phaedra complex by psychoanalysts (Adams, Milner, & Schrepf, 1984). In a review of research and theory on child abuse in stepfamilies, Giles-Sims and Finkelhor (1984) observed that stepfathers are overrepresented among child abusers and among sexual abusers in particular. However, stepfamilies also tend to be in the lower socioeconomic strata where reported cases of abuse are more prevalent. The authors call for more research on the subject with controls for household size and income levels (Giles-Sims & Finkelhor, 1984). Another reason for the high rate of sexual abuse among stepfamilies may be looser boundaries which mean less loyalty and therefore less inhibition to report the offense to authorities. However, this has not been studied empirically. Giles-Sims and Finkelhor also describe five theoretical explanations for the frequency of sexual abuse in stepfamilies: social-evolutionary, normative, stress, selection, and resource theories. Among these, stress theory and resource theory are related and are the easiest to test empirically. Social-evolutionary theory is the most pessimistic, because it places the blame on biology and the gene pool, two difficult areas to alter when trying to expunge the phenomenon of abuse (Giles-Sims & Finkelhor, 1984). Here, too, more research is needed before any theory can be promoted as predictive of sexual abuse.

Related to boundary issues is the effort to analyze stepfamily adjustment and development by applying social

exchange theory, equity theory, and balance theory. Social exchange theory, first proposed by Thibaut and Kelley (1959), applies economic market principles to human relationships, and proposes that people will experience cost or punishment in return for some reward in their dealings with other people. High interdependency or mutual dependency is characteristic of close relationships, that is, profits outweigh what one expects to receive and believes he could receive elsewhere (Nelson & Nelson, 1982). One stays in relationships where one perceives relatively equal exchanges. When equity is not present, one compares the current situation to alternative ones and may choose to leave.

Employing an economic analysis of search costs and exit costs, similar to exchange theory, to the costs of marriage, divorce, and remarriage, Becker, Landes, and Michael (1977) found that a number of factors, such as earnings and number of children under age 6 influenced the probability of divorce and remarriage. The higher the divorced male's earnings then the more likely it was that he would remarry. Similarly, the length of the first marriage was positively associated with the probability of remarrying. Also, the presence of children, no matter how many, reduced the chances that the custodial parent would remarry. Remarriage became less likely for people the older they were at the dissolution of the first marriage. Surprisingly, level of

education neither influenced the probability of marital dissolution or of remarriage, according to Becker et al.

Stepparents often encounter difficulties in achieving a satisfactory exchange upon remarriage. They are especially prone to feel that their efforts are unappreciated and unrewarded. Nelson and Nelson (1982) observed that "When the transition is made from a nuclear to a stepfamily, the process is often accompanied by a complexity of interactions and a system of exchanges unparalleled to any other type." For example, the stepmother may find herself in an unbalanced exchange as she attempts to overcompensate with her husband's children so as not to be labeled the wicked stepmother. She is especially likely to feel underrewarded if she has to neglect her own children in the process. The stepfather is able to take a more distant position in the early remarriage family (Hughes, 1991), but the stepfather's problems in exchange terms often come about as he tries to find his role as disciplinarian and authority figure. Perceptions of one another may shift or evolve as the children resent the stepfather's intervention and are aware of the lack of history of interaction with him. Unlike the nuclear family, the reconstituted family has no "habitualized behaviors," which consists of a history and certainty of how particular situations will be handled (Nelson & Nelson, 1982). The stepfather who has children living elsewhere may resent the demands of his stepchildren

and feel guilty about the lack of time and attention he can spend on his own children. In fact, Hobart (1991) found that exchange imbalances in the remarried family were likely to involve finances, discipline, and the new wife's relationship with her husband's children. Hobart also noted that remarried men were more likely to give in during spousal arguments than first-married men. Like Cherlin, these authors point to the lack of institutionalized prescriptions or solutions to stepfamily problems.

Boundary issues over divided loyalties afflict the children and the former spouse in addition to the stepparents. Applying balance theory or social exchange theory to children's quandaries about loyalty and affiliation to their biological and stepparents provides a vivid demonstration of the emotional complexity of divorce and remarriage. The contact that children maintain with both biological parents after divorce has been called a "permeable boundary" (Walker & Messinger, 1979; Visher & Visher, 1989). Research indicates that as ambivalent and even painful as these boundaries may be for various stepfamily members, it is important for the children's welfare that they remain open. Wallerstein and Kelly (1975) reported that being able to maintain contact with both biological parents resulted in better adjustment and mental health in children of divorce. One study found that from the adolescent's perspective, divided loyalty was the most

difficult transition in remarriage, ranking it above discipline (Lutz, 1983). Nelson and Nelson (1982) asserted that children should be able to form associations with adult family members, both within and outside the immediate household, without competition.

Former spouses must maintain communication after remarriage if the children are to spend time with each of them. Boundaries may be tight and communication perfunctory, or there may remain some warmth and respect from the previous relationship they shared. In her research, Goldsmith (1980) introduced the concept of "coparenting" between former spouses. She found that "maintenance of friendly 'kin' type interaction, separate from parenting, is normative among former spouses." However, she also found instances of the father being completely out of the picture and of former husbands who were very dissatisfied with the small amount of involvement and information concerning the children that they were able to gain from their former wives. Upon remarriage of his or her former partner, the ex-spouse experienced new feelings of rejection, loss, and competition (Nelson & Nelson, 1982). Goetting (1979) examined former spouses' assessment of what is appropriate to ask or expect of each other in relationship to their parental responsibilities, and cast her analysis of their responses in social exchange terms. She found that informing the previous spouse about

emergencies such as ill health of the child was almost unanimously acceptable, while asking the former husband to care for the children beyond their previous agreement was least acceptable. Female respondents were less accepting of former spouse interaction than men were, consistent with Duberman's (1973) findings. Similarly, Hughes (1991) found stepmothers more likely to be jealous of the former wife than were stepfathers of the former husband. Stepfathers, like fathers in the nuclear family, could be more detached and less intensely involved. Participants in Goetting's study felt that it was appropriate for the former wife to buy a Father's Day card to be sent by her small children, but not for the former husband to send a Mother's Day card, which would presumably be from him and therefore more intimate. Similarly, respondents agreed that fathers could ask for extra visiting time, but that mothers should not ask for extra financial support, especially if it would benefit her directly. In the former case, children having extra time with their father could be beneficial, or profitable, to all involved by giving the mother time on her own to spend as she wishes in addition to being advantageous to the father and children. However, the father sending extra money would be a loss to him without any obvious compensation or gain. Finally, divorce was seen as more painful and damaging to a woman because maintenance of the home is a female responsibility. Consequently, she

experiences more stress, or punishment, from divorce, and is prone to be less accepting of former spouse interaction (Goetting, 1979).

Equity theory also applies to the relationship of the stepfamily to the rest of society. Jacobson (1979) asserted that stepfamilies suffer from the "three Ds," denial, denigration, and disorientation. The first two of these are responses that the offender gives the victim in equity theory: deny that a problem exists and/or denigrate or demean the victim. The final "D," disorientation, refers to Cherlin's assertion that stepfamilies lack sufficient guidelines and models.

Stages in Stepfamily Development

Having examined the boundary and social exchange issues that occur in the transitions of divorce and remarriage, what are the predictable stages of stepfamily development? What kinds of expectations, negotiations, and adjustments take place? How long is the process? One of the most useful frameworks proposed comes from the research of Papernow (1984). After interviewing over 100 stepparents and a variety of professionals who have frequent contact with stepfamilies, she described a seven-stage cycle based on Gestalt therapy and interview data. She noted that in remarriage the family must move from the enmeshment typical of single-parent families to a new structure consisting of

"a weak couple subsystem and a tightly bounded parent-child alliance." For those accustomed to biological families, this structure appears pathological, but it is the "starting point" for normal stepfamily development (Papernow, 1984).

The early stages were fantasy, assimilation, and awareness. Fantasy was a universal experience for adults in stepfamilies according to Papernow. Although this stage was often recalled with shame by stepfamilies, at the beginning the expectations were as powerful as they were unrealistic. Often they contained themes of rescue, healing, and "instant love" (Schulman, 1972) among the new family members, along with the myths of instant adjustment and the re-created nuclear family (Jacobson, 1979). Children, on the other hand, were confronted with the incontrovertible realization that their fantasy of reunion between their parents and their wish to be rid of the newest person in the household would not occur.

Assimilation, the second phase, referred to the intent of the stepfamily to take in the new member. However, actual assimilation or "taking in" has not yet happened. Instead the new stepparent typically encountered a barrage of negative feelings including jealousy, resentment, confusion, and inadequacy as they attempted to enter the tight boundary around the single-parent family. The children usually felt an intense loyalty conflict toward their biological parent as they made a place for the

stepparent. As Papernow observed, "while divorced or widowed adults may be eager to move on, children often struggle for many years with their grief over the breakup of their original family." Often, this stage was experienced by all family members as a time when they knew something was wrong but were unable to figure out just what it was.

During the third stage, awareness, things became clearer. Members began to put names on their feelings and lose some of the sense that it was their fault that things were not working out as they had imagined. In particular, stepparents were less self-accusatory and were willing to tell others what they were experiencing. The resident parent also grew in awareness of obligations both to children and the new marital relationship. For the most part all three of the early stages were private and unspoken among stepfamily members, and the family structure remained unchanged.

The middle stages, proposed by Papernow, consisted of significant activity in contrast to the muted communication and inactivity that preceded them. In stage 4, mobilization, conflict and chaos appeared to be the rule as differences were hotly aired. Fights seemed to be over trivial matters, but actually the issue at stake was whether "the biological subsystem will continue to function as it has, or the family will change its structure" (Papernow, 1984). A substantial number of stepfamilies, having

experienced divorce, apparently feared this level of conflict and remained in a state of "pseudomutuality" (Visher & Visher, 1989).

In the fifth stage, the remarried couple moved into action and established their own family system. They decided which old ways to retain while creating new rules, rituals, and boundaries, especially around the couple themselves and the stepparent-stepchild relationship. At the same time, children usually retained loyalty to two households and learned to appreciate and respect the differences between them. Arriving at the action stage took about four years on the average.

In the later stages, the stepfamily solidified their identity. The sixth stage, called contact, was the time of increasing intimacy and authenticity. Problems continued to arise, but they were worked through more rapidly, because there was real contact and resolution. Stepparents assumed a significant role in family functioning, which was devoid of competition with the biological parent, and maintained an intergenerational boundary between the stepparent and child. Further, the spouse sanctioned the stepparent's role which, at its best, incorporated unique aspects of the stepparent's personality.

Papernow noted that very little has been written about the final stage, resolution. During this period, the stepfamily issues were no longer figural, but had

stabilized. It was also a time of grieving on the part of the stepparent who acknowledged a special role, but realized he could never replace the biological parent. By now the stepfamily has given up the persistent fantasy of being like a biological family. The stepparent is an "intimate outsider" (Papernow, 1984).

Papernow observed that therapeutic intervention on the family level is not practical until the middle stages. Couples must work through the early stages at the individual level, and many choose its superficial peacefulness to achieving real family solidarity. The stepfamily must coalesce without the opportunity to come together as a couple before children are born, and they lack the luxury of learning to be parents slowly and together. Instead, they must accomplish all this rapidly and in the presence of one or more children who already have an idea of how things have been done in the past.

Both clinicians and researchers have written about the elements that they find most helpful in achieving these stages toward healthy stepfamily functioning. Visher and Visher (1989) provided therapeutic guidelines for helping stepfamilies overcome some of the obstacles to couple solidarity. They also recommended coparenting, that is, a parenting coalition consisting of both biological parents and one or two stepparents, so that children do not suffer from low self-esteem or rejection. Therapy for stepfamilies

having difficulty is outlined in great detail by Sager, Brown, Crohn, Engel, Rodstein, and Walker (1983), based on an extensive clinic they have developed for remarried families. An empirical study by Anderson and White (1986) examined interaction and relationship patterns in both functional and dysfunctional nuclear families and stepfamilies. The researchers found that functional stepfamilies and functional nuclear families shared four features: good marital adjustment, strong bonds between the biological parent and child, little if any desire to exclude family members, and family decisions that were mutual and without ongoing acrimony. Functional stepfamilies were distinguished from functional nuclear families in two ways. Functional stepfamilies had less intense interpersonal involvement between the stepfather and child, and displayed a stronger tendency toward the existence of parent-child coalitions. These findings suggest that, contrary to conclusions in previous research beginning with Bowerman and Irish, the lower level of cohesion in stepfamilies is typical and adaptive, rather than a deficit.

Some stepfamilies are unable to progress to a high and adaptive level of functioning and remain stuck in Papernow's early stages. For example, Mowatt (1972) described three stepfamilies seen in group therapy, all of whom seemed well-intentioned but had had considerable problems in making the transition to satisfactory family functioning. The topics

discussed most frequently in the group were discipline and the enforcement of rules. The stepfathers spoke about role confusion and agreed among themselves that usually their wives expected them to discipline the stepchildren but then would intervene on the children's behalf. In fact, "three-cornered 'games'" were common, usually with the stepfather being the scapegoat. McGoldrick and Carter (1980) described a variety of common triangles in stepfamilies who came for therapy. Mowatt observed "a pervasive feeling of disenchantment" in the marriages, especially as fantasies that the stepfather would rescue the family both emotionally and financially met with reality. Previous spouses were often used as weapons in marital arguments, and the three stepfathers seemed to feel an unspoken rivalry toward their stepsons and attraction toward adolescent stepdaughters. Mowatt noted other patterns of family history and interpersonal dynamics, but a sample of three families cannot be generalized without much more research.

Remarital Satisfaction

Choosing to remarry. The decision to remarry would appear to be a difficult one given the painful feelings about divorce and the possibility of this relationship also breaking up, but statistics indicate that Americans clearly have not lost faith in marriage in general, based on rates of remarriage. As noted earlier, a substantial majority,

between 75-83%, of those who were previously married will choose to remarry, rather than remain single. As Messinger (1984) noted, even people who described themselves as nontraditionalists felt their relationships and their interactions with other family members functioned better once they were legally married rather than living together. Yet many of these marriages will also end in divorce. Slightly more remarriages end in divorce than first-time marriages, but most divorces after remarriage are among couples who lack a history of long-term commitment and who both bring children from a previous marriage into the new relationship (White & Booth, 1985). Remarriages do have more obstacles to overcome than most first-time marriages. In this section, we will look at patterns of remarriage as they relate to previous marital status, number of children, and income. We will also examine estimates of marital satisfaction in remarriages, incorporating much of the research inspired by Cherlin's (1978) article on remarriage as the incomplete institution.

If divorce requires a number of individual and family adjustments, so does remarriage. The courtship for remarriage may be either a stressor or a resource for the single-parent family, depending on how it is viewed by the individual members (Rodgers & Conrad, 1986). Goetting (1982) proposed six stations of remarriage, patterned after Bohannan's (1970) work on the six stations of divorce. The

stations consist of the various developmental steps people remarrying should make on six different dimensions. They are topical adjustments rather than temporal ones like Papernow's, and all remarrying people do not face the same tasks. The first station is emotional remarriage, which involves dealing with feelings of loss, rejection, and failure from the divorce and the fear that remarriage may end the same way. Psychic remarriage, the second station, concerns the shift from personal freedom and autonomy gained from the divorce and accepting one's conjugal identity as part of a couple again rather than an individual. Next is community remarriage, or the change in one's community of friends and often means the shift from close, personal friendships acquired after divorce to relationships with couples that are less intimate. Parental remarriage, Goetting's fourth station, refers to becoming a stepparent to the spouse's children by a previous marriage, and "may be the most difficult developmental task of remarriage." The fifth station, economic remarriage, is often complicated by the existence of children from a previous marriage, especially since, as Goetting notes, child support payments become even more erratic when the mother remarries. It is further complicated by the husband's paying child support for his children by former marriage. Goetting observes that the problem is more one of financial instability and resource distribution than it is insufficient funds. Her

final station, legal remarriage, concerns the lack of legal guidelines over many aspects of remarriage, such as the stepfather's responsibility for stepchildren and the disposition of the children if the custodial parent dies. Goetting also noted that some people may not be through the six stations of divorce (Bohannan, 1970) before electing to undertake remarriage and its adjustments, further complicating the new union.

In 1987, there were 4.3 million stepfamilies among the 11 million remarried families in the United States (Glick, 1989). What distinguishes people who remarry from the average population? Most people who remarry spent seven years in their first marriage, although a large number spent only two or three years in the first marriage (Spanier & Glick, 1980). A higher proportion of men than women remarry (Spanier & Glick, 1980). Time between divorce and remarriage averages three years for women.

Women who were married the first time for less than five years were more likely to remarry within five years of their divorce. Therefore, these women were often still in their twenties when they entered their second marriage, highlighting the tendency for younger women to remarry and to do so more rapidly than older women (Spanier & Glick, 1980). Women who remarry also have fewer children, have less than a college education, and are more likely to have been divorced than widowed (Spanier & Glick, 1980). Whether

or not a woman has children affects her likelihood of remarriage differently depending on her age. If she divorces before age 25, then being childless enhances her chances of remarriage (Koo & Suchindran, 1980). However, after age 35 her likelihood of remarriage decreases if she has no children, while children have no effect on chances of remarriage when the woman is between 25 to 34 (Koo & Suchindran, 1980). Interestingly, these authors found no effect for the number of children on chances of remarriage. On the other hand, Spanier and Furstenberg (1982) did not discover an association between the presence of children and the likelihood of remarriage, which they attribute to their more restricted age range. Women who were financially secure are less likely to remarry than those who were insecure, according to Ambert (1983). Financial security generally correlated with higher self-esteem and sense of autonomy in women, who therefore seemed less willing to enter marriage a second time although they indicated that they were as interested in having relationships with men as financially insecure women (Ambert, 1983). Little research has been done on characteristics of men who remarry, but one study indicated that a man's long-run permanent income positively affected his chances of remarriage while his absolute earnings, earnings instability, and earnings relative to peers, which are often factors in marital dissolution, had little effect on remarriage (Wolf &

McDonald, 1979).

The literature is mixed on the question of whether there are qualitative differences between the first and second marriages, i.e., whether what was learned from the first experience can be used to help one be wiser in subsequent relationships. Goetting (1982) proposed at least four explanations for why people remarry. These were romantic love, social exchange, social norms, and norm ambiguity and role instability. She drew primarily on the work of Goode (1956) in explaining role instability, or lack of clear roles and expectations in stepfamilies, a view that anticipated Cherlin (1978). Garfield (1980) thought that the new relationships developed at a slower pace, were erratic in intensity, and were more practical and realistic. Bittermann (1968), however, observed from her survey of clinical cases in Florida that "the majority [of remarried couples] appeared to move into the second marriage almost as impulsively as they had contracted the first." Although there was the opportunity to assess mistakes from the first marriage, she concluded that the second marriage was usually a repetition of the first and that often powerful, unconscious forces were at work in the second marriage as well (Bittermann, 1968). Brody, Neubaum, and Forehand (1988) argued that serial marriages, i.e., three or more marriages following divorce, probably have serious, but not yet well delineated, consequences on children and that

parents who engaged in such a pattern likely were immature, impulsive, and psychologically troubled. In related research, Dean and Gurak (1978), using data from the 1970 National Fertility Survey, found that some women tended to marry men quite different from themselves in both their first and second marriages. The low marital homogamy of these women included educational status, age at marriage, and religiosity. The authors noted that the low level of homogamy for the second marriage might be a reflection of the marriage market and that, given the couple's potential for greater maturity the second time around, the projections of high divorce rates for remarriage might have to be revised (Dean & Gurak, 1978). Alternatively, Dean and Gurak speculated that the low homogamy might signal a more divorce-prone population among the remarried. It is not just low religious homogamy among the remarried but the presence of religious strictures against divorce among many people in their first marriage that make the statistics questionable (Halliday, 1979). In a rebuttal to Cherlin, Halliday argued that the differential between first and second marriages likely to end in divorce results in part from an inflated numerator when calculating the number of first marriages likely to end in divorce.

Several recent studies indicate that men and women who remarry have applied some of the lessons learned from difficulties in the first marriage (Albrecht, 1979;

Weingarten, 1980; Smith, Goslen, Byrd, & Reece, 1991). Halliday (1979) proposed that people in second marriages had "chosen new spouses with similar conceptions of what marriage should be" and were more mature. Drawing on the work of Carol Gilligan and her colleagues, Smith et al. (1991) found that both sexes were more interested in achieving balance between self interest and the other's interest in their second marriages. However, for men, this new orientation meant a shift from self interest being higher in the first marriage, while for women there was a shift from being overly concerned with the other's interest to incorporating more self interest. The authors concluded that traditional sex-role expectations were a first-marriage phenomenon, and that men and women who remarried arrived at a higher level of moral reasoning albeit from different perspectives. They conceded that their sample, drawn from six counties in North Carolina and enlisted by word of mouth, might not be representative. In addition, there were the problems of reconciling their findings with the divorce rate for remarriages and of assessing whether or not responses to a test of ethics and morality accurately reflects actual behavior in the home.

Peters (1976) surveyed 48 remarried couples in a Canadian city to determine differences in mate selection between their first and second marriages. He found that parental approval of the marriage and propinquity, or

geographic proximity, were the two most significant factors in choice of a marital partner for both groups. The importance of proximity coincided with Becker, Landes, and Michael's (1977) finding that people generally would not go great distances to find a remarriage partner because they wanted to keep search costs at a minimum. Remarried couples said that rationalism was more important in the second marriage, while romanticism had been more important in the first marriage. Peters noted that unfortunately he did not define "rationalism" or "romanticism" well enough to ascertain what respondents had in mind when they endorsed one or the other. Remarried subjects with children acknowledged that the child-stepparent relationship had influenced their choice of a spouse.

Marital satisfaction among remarriage families. In a meta-analysis of marital satisfaction in remarriage, Vemer, Coleman, Ganong, and Cooper (1989) outlined five areas of interest: first marriage vs. remarriage, men vs. women, stepmothers vs. stepfathers, residential vs. nonresidential children, and simple vs. complex remarriages (i.e., both partners in the marriage are stepparents). The only significant differences they found, both of which were "minuscule," were that men were happier than women in remarriage just as was the case in first marriages and that people in first marriages typically reported greater

satisfaction. However, they noted that it was often not clear whether the remarriage was the first or a later remarriage, in which case there might be some personality and behavior variables that would lower remarriage satisfaction.

Marital satisfaction is, nevertheless, generally as high in remarriages as in first time marriages, but the issues and problems in second marriages are different. Research has established that married people are happier, in general, than single people, and the same is true of remarried people (Glenn, 1981). However, Glenn and Weaver (1977), using statistics from the General Social Surveys conducted by the National Opinion Research Center, found that remarried men were "better satisfied" with their marriages than remarried women were. Their research did not allow for an explanation of the gender difference. Nevertheless, among married men, those who were in their first marriage were on the whole more satisfied in their marriages than men who had divorced and were now remarried (Glenn & Weaver, 1977). Glenn (1981), analyzing the same data base, incorporated data on blacks as well as whites and noted that both black and white women who have divorced and remarried reported lower marital happiness than those women who are still in their first marriages. Black men who had remarried, however, claimed greater marital happiness than those who been married once and not divorced. Glenn

speculated that the availability of fewer men for divorced women of the baby-boom era meant that these women had perhaps married men the second time around who were less acceptable or appealing. In contrast, Weingarten (1980)'s analysis of data from the 1976 National Survey of Modern Living found that remarried women were more likely than remarried men to describe their mood as "very happy," while remarried men were more likely than any other group to say that they were "not too happy." Peters's (1976) study of 48 remarried couples in Canada found that most of them rated their second marriage as "happy."

In a longitudinal study, Kurdek (1991) found that marital distress over the first three years of married was predicted by slightly different phenomena for men and women. For men, less education, less time living together, and maintaining separate finances were salient. For women, less education, low financial resources, living with stepchildren, and high emotional investment were among the predictors. In addition, a poor conflict-resolution style foretold problems. In another study, Kurdek (1989) found that individual differences such as satisfaction with social support and expressiveness were positively related to marital satisfaction among remarried couples.

Looking for differences in self-perception between remarried and first-married people, Weingarten (1980) found that "the remarried are remarkably similar to first-marrieds

in most aspects of morale and dissimilar primarily with respect to past distress and feelings of role inadequacy." In other words, the previous experiences of separation and marital dissolution had left a legacy of pain, sense of failure, and self-doubt among the remarried that was not generally shared by those in their first marriage.

Because second marriages tend to be less homogamous than first marriages, it is not surprising that correlates of marital happiness in first marriages are not strong predictors of success the second time around (Albrecht, 1979). For example, religious activity and congruity were positively but weakly related to marital happiness among the remarried people Albrecht surveyed in eight western states, whereas religion was a stronger factor in first-marriage satisfaction. In Peters's (1976) study of 48 remarried couples, most of whom stated their marriages were happy, religious affiliation had declined for both Protestants and Catholics between the first and second marriages. Similarly, findings on social class and occupation were inconsistent in predicting marital happiness in Albrecht's study, and length of marriage was a consistent predictor of marital happiness, but not at the level of statistical significance. Demaris (1984), studying data on over 300 recently married couples, found that there were no differences between first and second marriage couples on marital satisfaction or the tendency to cohabit before

marriage, but first marrieds who had cohabited were significantly lower in marital satisfaction than other first marrieds. For remarrieds there was no effect for cohabitation.

What about Cherlin's (1978) assertion that children from a former marriage complicate boundaries and structure in remarriages and, therefore, make these marriages less stable? In Albrecht's (1979) study, the presence of children was found to be positively but not strongly related to satisfaction in the second marriage, even if the children were from the previous marriage. Similarly, Weingarten (1980) concluded that remarried partners who had never had biological children with their current spouse are able over time to feel that children the spouse brought into the marriage helped the couple feel closer to one another. Similar to findings by Albrecht (1979) and Weingarten (1980) that the presence of children in remarriage was not a deficit, Spanier and Furstenberg (1982) discovered that remarried spouses with children had neither greater or lesser well-being than those without them. Kurdek (1989) reported that the presence of children in a remarried family was a positive experience, but only if both spouses in the couple were remarrying. In other words, if it was a first marriage for one of the partners, then children were more likely to be detractors.

Not all research found children to be an asset in

remarriage. White and Booth (1985) found that the presence of stepchildren, especially when both partners had children by a previous marriage, rather than marital happiness, was the primary predictor of dissatisfaction and divorce in remarriage. Knaub, Hanna, and Stinnett (1984) observed that almost half of the 80 stepfamilies they interviewed mentioned relationships with stepchildren as the aspect they would most like to change in their family. Crosbie-Burnett (1984), in a survey of 87 stepfather households, found that step relationships which were satisfactory to both the stepparent and stepchild were more highly associated with family happiness than was the marital relationship. Her findings might be qualified, because they were based on an upper middle-class white population in San Francisco, but they suggested that at least among some remarried populations marital success might depend as much on good relationships between the stepfather and stepchildren than between the marital partners. In contrast to Crosbie-Burnett's emphasis on the role of the children, Duberman (1975) concluded from her study of stepfamilies that stepfamily closeness depended upon the strength of the couple's relationship. Ishii-Kuntz and Ihinger-Tallman (1991) found that although first-married biological parents reported more satisfaction in parenting than stepparents or remarried biological parents, there were no significant differences among the three groups in marital and global

life satisfaction. In a later section, we will take up the subject of children's impact on remarriages.

Difficulties in the second marriage were primarily financial with emotional and sexual problems being ranked second and third, according to Albrecht (1979). Similarly, Renne (1971) noted that remarried partners must contend with issues of alimony, child support, and divided attention between former and current families. By comparison, in first marriages, problems, in the order ranked by respondents, were infidelity, no longer loved each other, emotional problems, and financial problems (Albrecht, 1979). In fact, remarriage significantly affected the economic status of both partners, but in very different ways. It will be recalled that most men were generally as well or better off financially after their divorce than during their first marriage, whereas women tended to be much worse off after divorce (Norton & Glick, 1986). Generally, their situations are reversed in remarriage with women having a slightly higher income level than men, which could not be attributed to race, age, or level of education (Day & Bahr, 1986). Day and Bahr (1986) explained their finding by using crisis theory which states that the amount of resources available can moderate the level of disorganization a person experiences, thus remarriage provides more resources for women but not for men.

Well-being in remarriage. Well-being is closely related to satisfaction, but refers more specifically to physical and psychological adjustment and functioning. Renne (1971) found that happily remarried people reported fewer physical complaints than divorced people and than those who remained in unhappy first marriages. In fact, she concluded that, based on her survey of marital and physical status in Alameda County, California, "divorce and remarriage select the healthier members of the unhappily married population." That is, those who were physically healthier were more likely than those who were sickly to undergo the disruption of divorce and remarriage. However, Weingarten (1980) found that remarried respondents reported more physical symptoms, were more prone to use alcohol and medication, and acknowledged experiencing difficult, overwhelming times more frequently than first-married people. She interpreted these results as an indication that "certain scars remain" after divorce, although the overall impression from her findings was that the remarried were on par with first-marrieds in well-being and psychological adjustment as a whole. For example, remarried people acknowledged more feelings of inadequacy than first marrieds, but Weingarten attributed these feelings to the having recognized mistakes made in the first marriage and learning from them and to the difficulty in handling a reconstituted family (Weingarten, 1980). On the other hand,

remarrieds shared high levels of self-acceptance, self-esteem, personal efficacy, and zest with first-marrieds. They noted no higher levels of worry, anxiety, or immobilization than the control group. However, they reported being more likely to feel dissatisfied with how they spent their time (Weingarten, 1980). Weingarten used sex, education, and length of marriage as controls in her study, and found that the latter two control variables accounted for most of the differences between remarrieds and first-marrieds. For example, couples who had been remarried for more than ten years looked very much like first-marrieds. Similarly, by controlling for educational level which is a better predictor of status than income, she found that the difference in marital happiness between remarrieds and first-marrieds in her study and in Glenn and Weaver's disappeared. As we shall see in numerous aspects of remarried and stepfamily life, time to adapt is crucial when taking any measure of stepfamily adjustment, no matter which family member is being examined.

In 1985, Weingarten, in an update of her previous study, observed that remarried people reported less stress and strain than divorced people, but more stress and strain than first-marrieds. The well-being of the remarried respondents and the self-confidence and self-esteem of the divorced respondents rebut the assertion that psychopathology is a general condition of people who

divorce. Nevertheless, Weingarten stated that adjustment after divorce was aided by being remarried because our culture is structured for married people.

Spanier and Furstenberg (1982) examined remarriage and well-being in a longitudinal study and concluded that remarriage was not associated with enhanced well-being. Rather, they reported that divorced people claimed enhanced well-being three to four years after the divorce no matter what their marital status at that time. However, they did find that those who report higher well-being after divorce were more likely to remarry and that the quality of the second marriage was positively related to well-being. Spouses who were surprised by the divorce and who did not initiate the dissolution of their marriage took longer to remarry. Overall, the authors observed that the remarried were a heterogeneous group, and they found no statements that could be generalized to the whole remarried population concerning well-being.

The relationship between former spouses after one or both of them remarries typically varies by gender and is influenced by the tenor of their earlier relationship, according to research. Cherlin speculated that this relationship was one of several in remarriages that might make second marriages more difficult and complex. With respect to gender, men adapted more readily to their former wife's remarriage, than women did to their former husband's

remarriage (Hetherington et al. 1982; Fulton, 1979). No explanation of this phenomenon has been tested empirically, but Hetherington et al. (1982) speculated that women were less accepting of their former spouse's remarriage because a woman's identity was more likely to be related to her feeling of success in being married and establishing a home, while men drew their identity primarily from their work. Conflict was likely between former spouses if they had had a conflictual relationship in the past, even though they usually interacted with each other less once one of them has remarried (Egan, Landau, & Rhode, 1979). In Egan et al.'s study, three areas of conflict predominated: visitation, child support, and custody. Concerns about these areas or the use of them to continue contact was exacerbated as the ex-spouse watched loyalties and priorities shift to the new marriage.

Review of the Literature on Stepfamily Functioning

Having taken note of the stages in stepfamily formation and the differences a remarried couple encounters between first and subsequent marriages, we now turn to a topical discussion of the results of empirical studies and the advice of clinicians who work with stepfamilies on a regular basis. Areas drawn from the literature include early stepfamily adjustment, reports from stepmothers and stepfathers concerning role expectations and adjustments,

children's adjustment to stepfamily living, and relationships with the nonresidential biological parent and other kin.

Stepfamily expectations. Stepfamilies often come into existence with high expectations on the part of the remarrying couple that are unrealistic and even embarrassing to recall later (Papernow, 1984). These expectations include a desire to function like and resemble a nuclear family (Messinger & Walker, 1981; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1983) and feelings of "instant love" between stepparent and stepchild (Schulman, 1972). Often these expectations come to light when adoption of the stepchild is being considered by the stepparent (Wolf & Mast, 1987). Kompara (1980) observed that socialization of the children is already partially accomplished before the remarriage, and because the new stepparent may have different values and expectations, there is often conflict and/or adjustment. Age similarity between the remarried spouses lessens the potential for conflicting expectations, according to Kompara, but in stepfamilies the age difference between the two partners tends to be more diverse. Further, she noted that even if one has been a parent before, one does not necessarily have the skills to be a successful stepparent.

Using the concept of negative cognitions made popular by Beck, Rush, Shaw, and Emery (1979), Fine and Schwebel

(1991) outlined potential sources and content of stepparent stress based on beliefs and experiences that might impede healthy stepfamily functioning. Sources included societal norms (cf. Cherlin, 1978) and one's family of origin and present family. They observed that "when individuals impose dysfunctional cognitions upon their actual experiences as stepfamily members, disappointment, associated stress, and poorer adjustment may result."

From the clinician's point of view, Rallings (1976) observed that neither the rights nor duties of a stepparent are defined by law: "The mores reflect a curious kind of ambivalence rooted in the traditional bias in favor of the natural parents rearing their children in an intact home, contrasted with an awareness that increasingly this is not the case." It is assumed that the stepfather will assume duties toward his wife's children out of love for her and will warm to the task over time. But in the worst case scenario, he may be the sexual and economic exploiter of the wife's child. Rallings was critical of the lack of "anticipatory socialization" for the role of stepfather, so that one becomes an instant father with no place to turn for guidance, information, or a model. The author depicted a "naive male" who moves into a "complex new web of social relationships" and who may easily fall prey to self-fulfilling prophecy or ambiguous role expectations.

The lack of anticipatory socialization for stepparents

and their tendency to have unrealistic expectations of the new marriage are products of our culture according to Mead (1970) and Maddox (1975). Mead noted that children are encouraged to depend on the stability of the home and are left bereft when it falls apart. Similarly, Maddox observed that there is little guidance for stepparents, because society has given up the unworkable ideal of indissoluble marriage but has replaced it with another unworkable ideal which states that "an unbroken happy home is essential for a child's sound emotional development."

Giles-Sims (1984) studied the expectations and actuality of stepparenting by interviewing one member from each of 99 remarried families. Seventy-one of her subjects were women, but she did not specify whether they were biological mothers, stepmothers, or both. Using an in-depth interview, she found that stepparents were expected to share in child-rearing duties less than natural parents, and that actual sharing of decisions on the stepchild with the stepparent occurred in less than one-third of the families. She also found that stepparents were likely to be sanctioned if they refused to raise a stepchild, but not as strongly as a natural parent would have been. Giles-Sims concluded that role ambiguity described by Cherlin and others still prevails and that stepfamilies function better when role expectations are articulated rather than assumed. It is not clear whether her interviews took place with the family in

which the child or children primarily live and whether she was interviewing the stepparent or natural parent in the stepfamilies. As we saw in the section on divorce and one-parent families, perceptions and expectations can differ greatly depending on who is interviewed.

Keshet (1990) used data from 57 remarried couples gathered by Spanier and Furstenberg on their views and expectations about stepfamilies. She found the presence of a factor called "biological ties," based on responses to 4 items on the survey, which was endorsed by those who lacked flexibility in their remarriage relationships and believed that the nuclear family was the ideal family form. Respondents expressed a notable lack of consensus in their view of stepfamilies which supports Cherlin's contention that there is insufficient institutionalization for the stepfamily. A gender difference emerged with men being more likely than women to see stepfamilies as troubled environments for raising children. Some questions failed to achieve a consensus view among the survey group as a whole and even between members of the same couple, accentuating the lack of agreement on some basic issues. In conclusion, Keshet observed that there are differences between remarriage and intact families which should not be ignored, especially in treatment. In general, remarried spouses tend to have high, idealistic expectations for their new family that are bound to need adjustment and negotiation, and

further, their views may vary within their family as well as the community.

Early adjustment in the stepfamily. Early stepfamily adjustment has been described more extensively by clinicians than by empirical research. A number of articles by various psychotherapists (e.g., Jones, 1978; Visher & Visher, 1978; Podolsky, 1955) discussed this critical period based on impressions of stepfamilies who presented themselves before mental health professionals because they were experiencing difficulties at home. In addition to high expectations, the new stepfamily must confront several areas of vulnerability not shared with the nuclear family: permeable external boundaries, structural ambiguities and contradictions within the family, low optimism left from previous losses and failures, lack of support from extended family, and lack of a social network (Whiteside, 1981). The first obstacle in forming a stepfamily may be the negative connotation of the prefix, "step-" (Visher & Visher, 1978; Schulman, 1972). Empirical studies have generally confirmed the bias against stepfamilies (Fine, 1986; Parish, 1981b; Nunn & Parish, 1987), although it was not clear that family structure was the culprit. Rather, it might be that family conflict, disruption, and loss contribute to the lower self-image of children and adolescents from stepfamilies and to the prejudice among the general population. Research on adult

children from families of divorce and remarriage suggests that the impact of family disruption, while sometimes severe at first, dissipates over time (Kulka & Weingarten, 1979; Wilson, Zurcher, McAdams, & Curtis, 1975, Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982). However, Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) argued convincingly that even well-adjusted children from disrupted homes felt that divorce affected them emotionally and psychologically for years afterward. Although clinical articles cited social stigma as an issue, studies of adolescent adjustment to remarriage indicated that having a different family name from their parents and possible social stigma of living in a stepfamily were minor concerns (Lutz, 1983).

Early adjustment in the stepfamily is difficult by almost all accounts. Even when expectations are negotiated to realistic proportions, it is best if roles are defined clearly yet allowed to change and evolve over time, particularly ones concerning discipline (Mills, 1984). Stepfathers, for example, should nurture the children in a manner appropriate to their developmental age, but are advised to restrain from disciplining stepchildren at an age appropriate level, because it will more likely cause resentment and rejection rather than formation of affectionate ties (Mills, 1984; Stern, 1978, 1984). The dilemma arises, however, when children, particularly boys, have become used to permissiveness or erratic discipline

from their mothers in the period following separation and divorce (Hetherington, et al., 1982, Goldstein, 1974). Goldstein observed that the expectation that the father will be the ultimate enforcer of discipline in most families, leaves the new stepfather in an awkward position of being unable or reluctant to set limits in the face of difficult behavior by stepchildren. In fact, Hetherington et al. (1982) found that stepfathers often did assert themselves, because they were unable to sit back and do nothing as their stepchildren provocatively misbehaved.

A similar view of the role ambiguities in early stepfamily adjustment emerged from the research of Guisinger, Cowan, and Schuldberg (1989) on remarried fathers and their new wives. The authors reported that difficulties seemed to arise when stepchildren are male, when child care and other tasks became areas of contention, when spouses did not view the children in a similar manner, when the wife had a problematic relationship with the children, and when there was a chronically hostile relationship between the former spouses.

Bray (1988) has published one of the few empirical studies that specifically examines how stepfamily members adjust in early remarriage. Bray found that, in the first six months of remarriage, boys in stepfamilies showed increased intellectual performance and less life stress, but also had the most behavior problems when compared with boys

in intact families. Their adjustment was enhanced when there was more cohesion and emotional bonding with both their mother and stepfather. Girls, however, adjusted better when they experienced less emotional bonding and affective involvement with their mothers. Gaining a new stepfather often meant additional male support for boys, but loss of some of mother's attention for girls. Bray interpreted these results as congruent with Hetherington, et al.'s, in that children adjusted better when the mother played the primary role while the stepfather was less active. Bray also concluded that stepfamilies in this study were similar to those in Bowerman and Irish's (1962) study which reported stepfamily relationships to be less cohesive, more problematic, and more stressful than those in intact families.

A different sort of study by Ishii-Kuntz and Coltrane (1992) examined the mechanics of household functioning in stepfamilies. These researchers found that husbands in remarried families performed significantly more cooking, meal cleanup, shopping, laundry, and housecleaning than did once-married husbands. The difference was attributed to Cherlin's concept of the "incomplete institution," which might weaken gender-based notions of household labor. Still, these remarried husbands were not doing significantly more of the total household labor as compared to first-married husbands.

Stepfamily functioning. As noted earlier, Bowerman and Irish's (1962) discovery that stepfamilies were less cohesive and affectionate, based on the responses of stepchildren, stimulated abundant research on how stepfamily functioning differs from that of intact families. Most of the studies discussed in this section address Bowerman and Irish's findings, either implicitly or explicitly. Recently there has been a shift in the emphasis of research from family structure to family process. In general, the change has meant a less pejorative tone toward stepfamilies and less discussion of perceived deficits vis à vis the intact family. However, debate still persists over whether stepfamilies are similar to or very different from intact families. Most researchers and clinicians now seem to think that even if stepchildren's outcomes are similar to those from intact families, the family processes initiated upon remarriage are divergent and more complex. We have already noted the changes in boundaries and stages that stepfamilies must confront as they begin to function as a unit. Many of their interactions and rules emerge through "trial and error" (Pasley, 1985). Adjustment to stepfamily living is estimated to take between two and four years by many writers (e.g., Papernow, 1984; Hetherington et al., 1982). Mills (1984) calculated that adjustment generally may be figured as twice the age of the stepchild upon remarriage, so that a five-year old child will have adjusted by the time he is ten

years old. The following discussion is a description of the studies on various facets stepfamily functioning.

Peek, Bell, Waldren, and Sorell (1988) investigated patterns of functioning in remarried versus first-married families. With just over 100 families in each of their groups, they found that stepfamilies demonstrated significantly less cohesion between parent and child, less flexibility and openness, and lower levels on several interaction skills. However, stepfamilies were neither lower nor higher than first-married families on organization of family tasks and activities, on the effort to control through rules, or on conflict. According to Peek, et al., stepfamilies did experience less flexibility and openness and had fewer interaction skills, all areas with implications for family functioning. Stepfamilies might be more complex in terms of number of possible relationships as Cherlin posited, but in Peek et al.'s study, they demonstrated fewer patterns of functioning and had a less complex and flexible repertoire of interaction patterns than intact families. Even though they functioned at different, lower levels than intact families, Peek, et al., noted that previous research indicated that stepfamilies, both adults and children, were as well adjusted as first married families. The authors offered several explanations for these puzzling findings. First, they conjectured that compared to the earlier post-divorce stress of stepfamily

members, the current levels of affect, openness, and interaction were minor considerations. Second, these lower levels might actually be optimal in stepfamilies, where, for example, a high degree of cohesion might also make concerns about divided loyalty more stressful.

Anderson and White (1986) compared stepfamilies and nuclear families, both functional and dysfunctional, for differences in interaction and relationship patterns. They examined 63 family triads, with 189 total subjects, and found that both functional nuclear families and stepfamilies had good marital adjustment, strong positive bonds between biological parent and child, fewer (if any) stated desires to exclude a family member, and the ability to make decisions that were acceptable to all family members. Dysfunctional stepfamilies and nuclear families had stronger parent-child coalitions and fewer mutual decision-making skills. Interestingly dysfunctional stepfamilies had better marital adjustment than dysfunctional nuclear families. Fathers in functional nuclear families had more positive father-child involvement than the other three groups. While children in functional stepfather families had less involvement with their stepfathers than in the functional nuclear families, both the functional groups reported more positive father-child interaction than did either group of dysfunctional families. There were more parent-child coalitions in functional and dysfunctional stepfamilies and

in dysfunctional nuclear families than in functional nuclear families, but again functional stepfather families had weaker coalitions than dysfunctional stepfather families. Functional stepfamilies had stepfather-stepchild relationships that were mutually positive but not as intense as in nuclear families. Based on informal conversations during the study, some stepfathers apparently pressed for premature cohesion whereas the better relationships emerged from an acceptance of distance and gradual evolution of closeness. Strong coalitions that excluded the stepparent characterized dysfunctional families.

Pink and Wampler (1985), in a study of 28 stepfamilies and 28 intact families who were white middle- or upper-class, found that stepfamilies reported lower cohesion, lower adaptability, lower regard, and less unconditionality than those in the control group. Mothers both desired and perceived the most cohesion, while adolescents both desired and perceived the least; fathers and stepfathers occupied the intermediate position. Interestingly, stepfathers felt there was more negative and less positive communication than did biological fathers, but adolescents rated communication the same regardless of family structure. Female adolescents in stepfather families felt less regard toward them by the stepfather than did females in intact families. In contrast to Clingempeel's (1981) early finding of a curvilinear effect for contact between child and nonresident biological

parent in stepfamilies, the authors found that those stepchildren with the highest degree of contact with their biological father also received the highest regard from the stepfather. Although stepfamilies were found to function more poorly than intact families, they were not more dissatisfied, suggesting to the authors that the greater distance between members of a stepfamily was functional. Pink and Wampler found no effect for length of time remarried or for length of time between divorce and remarriage and better family functioning.

In contrast to Pink and Wampler's assertion that distance might be more functional for stepfamilies, Waldren, Bell, Peek, and Sorrell (1990) found that high levels of stepfamily cohesion and adaptability were needed more by these families than by intact families to assist in coping with stress and problems. Their results confirmed that stepfamilies typically had lower levels of cohesiveness and adaptability compared to intact families. Of the three coping strategies examined, counseling, participation in organizations, and reliance on relatives, stepfamilies under high stress were significantly more likely to have sought counseling. On the other hand, these stepfamilies as a whole were less likely than intact families to participate in community organizations such as churches or to rely on relatives for feelings of self-sufficiency or support. However, women in stepfamilies did tend to rely on religion

and relatives as coping strategies.

Perkins and Kahan (1979) surveyed 20 stepfather families and 20 intact families with children between 12 and 15 years old. They concluded that stepfamilies did not function as well as biological families and that a lack of understanding of other family members perspectives prevailed although these same members were often in agreement about how they saw the family as a whole. Mothers in stepfamilies appeared to be unaffected by family relationship problems in their perceptions of their husband and their child, regarding both of them positively even when the stepfather and child were in conflict. The authors described this phenomenon as a "dual-family subsystem," implying a different organization than is found in intact families toward which family therapy is oriented. One difficulty in this study is the lack of definitions for concepts such as adjustment, satisfaction, and functioning. Because they share a common family history, it is hardly surprising that biological fathers were perceived by their children as more powerful and better than stepfathers were by their stepchildren. Also, children of divorce often idealize the missing parent. Similarly, stepfathers in this study rated their stepchildren as less good than biological fathers did their children. Family satisfaction was perceived as lower for stepfamilies by all members of the stepfamily equally.

A study by Giles-Sims and Crosbie-Burnett (1989)

specifically examined relationships in stepfather families with adolescents using normative-resource theory, a variation of social exchange theory. They found that families where adolescents were perceived to hold substantial power in decision-making were characterized by shorter length of marriage, older adolescents, and the adolescent being female. In general, mothers held more power in decision-making than the stepfathers or adolescents, but the stepfathers' position was improved by his providing greater financial resources and by his previous parenting experience. Discipline was observed by all three groups to be the most difficult area of negotiation.

Landau, Egan, and Rhode (1978) interviewed over 50 couples some of whom were remarried in an effort to compare the stress levels of living in a reconstituted family to stress in intact families. The chief problems they identified in remarriage were the husband-wife relationship, the relationship of the new stepfather to the wife's child, and the child's adjustment to changes in his or her relationship to the father and the stepfather. Based on their data, the authors concluded that discomfort and trauma to the child were "inevitable," confirming Bowerman and Irish's findings. In particular, older children were "constantly searching for proper accommodating behavior." Further, they experienced "anguish, puzzlement, and fear" as

they tried to interact in and make sense of their changed environment.

Ganong and Coleman (1987b) examined stepfamily relationships to determine whether stepdaughters react more negatively than stepsons in interactions with their biological parent and stepparent and whether stepmothers are seen as more emotionally distant by their stepchildren than stepfathers. Their study was inspired by Bowerman and Irish (1962) and used eight of Bowerman and Irish's questions on the Closeness to Parent Instrument, a brief questionnaire designed by Ganong and Coleman. However, in an effort to a avoid the deficit-comparison approach, Ganong and Coleman did not employ a nonstepfamily control group. Surveying 126 stepchildren between the ages of 15 to 22 years old, they found, not surprisingly, that adolescents preferred their custodial parent over the stepparent, that fathers from stepmother families showed more love and attention than stepfathers did, that boys in stepmother families felt less close to their stepmothers than children in other family types do toward their mothers, and that children in stepmother households were closer to their fathers than children in stepfather families were to their stepfathers. On the other hand, some of their unexpected findings were that subjects with stepmothers felt that she favored other children more than stepfathers did, that stepchild subjects had no significant feelings of rejection, that adolescent

girls wanted to emulate their stepmothers more than girls in stepfather families wanted to emulate their mothers, and that children generally felt close to their stepparents no matter how many years the family had been together. Several findings bear emphasizing because they are as yet unresolved. For example, stepdaughters with stepfathers had the most extreme, least positive response to their stepparent, especially on questionnaire items concerning emotional closeness. However, on those items related more closely to actual parenting behavior, they had no significant reaction. Also, stepmothers were not seen as more emotionally distant than stepfathers, as some studies, including Bowerman and Irish, have indicated. Finally, there was no discernable difference in feelings toward stepparents depending on whether the subjects had experienced the death of a parent or a divorce by their parents.

In research on early adolescents' adaptation to being in a stepfamily, Vuchinich, Vuchinich, Hetherington, and Clingempeel (1991) found that girls had more difficulty adjusting to the stepfamily arrangement than boys did. In particular, the authors targeted the interactions between the stepdaughter and stepfather which usually consisted of avoidance or withdrawal by the stepdaughter rather than open conflict. In contrast, the stepfathers were seen as more positive and less directive toward the children than were

fathers in biological families.

Pino (1981) compared remarried couples in clinical treatment, remarried couples in a support group, and remarried couples who had not sought professional help. Pine found that the stepfamilies in treatment had more problems in the areas of affection, power, satisfaction, and freedom and had less support from their families and ex-spouse. The children were negative to the original divorce among all three groups, but they were also opposed to the remarriage only in the treatment group.

A number of studies focus more specifically on the adjustment and perception of the children in stepfamilies concerning cohesion, stress, and closeness to parents. Kennedy (1985) examined 631 undergraduate students from intact, single-parent, and stepfamilies for confirmation or refutation of Bowerman and Irish. He found that students from all three structures fell within the normal range of family cohesion, with remarried and single-parent families being lower, in the "separated" category, while those from intact families fell within the "connected" range. Adolescents from stepfamilies also indicated higher stress but were lower on clinically significant family relationship problems than those from one-parent families. Both these groups also expressed less satisfaction with their family life than did those from intact families.

Halperin and Smith (1983) surveyed 70 stepchildren and

70 children from intact homes who were in 5th and 6th grades in Alabama to ascertain the children's perceptions of their fathers and stepfathers. They found that stepchildren perceived both their stepfathers and their biological fathers more negatively than children from intact homes perceived their fathers. However, the authors acknowledged that a possible response bias existed, as evidenced in the almost identical means in how stepchildren rated their stepfathers and biological fathers. Their findings concurred with those of Bowerman and Irish. In an effort to interpret the findings of lower attachment to stepfathers and lower cohesion in stepfamilies, the authors employed role theory and systems theory and observed that confusion and conflicting loyalties are part of family transitions. Further, the authors observed that although stepchildren's ratings were significantly more negative than children from intact families, they were negative only in the comparative sense; actually they were similar to those from intact families and were less than one standard deviation apart. The authors noted that many factors influence the adjustment within a stepfamily, leading to a wider range of positive scores among the stepchildren for both their father figures.

Amato (1987) compared family functioning in stepfather families with that in intact families for both primary school children and adolescents in Australia. He surveyed 402 school children from Australia and found that children

in the primary grades reported less support from their stepfathers than from their biological fathers. Primary-age children who had been in stepfamilies three and four years rated their stepfamilies as less cohesive than children from intact families did. On the other hand, adolescents from stepfather families indicated that they felt as much support from their stepfathers as adolescents from intact families received from their fathers. Stepchildren saw their stepfathers taking on a more parental role over time; those who had been in stepfather families six years or more reported as much support from their stepfathers as children in intact families. Adolescents reported that their stepfathers tended to back off from exercising parental control, but younger children described their stepfathers as more active in controlling the children's behavior. However, the discipline scores for stepfathers never achieved the same level as fathers in intact families. Amato (1987) also reported that stepchildren appeared to continue to hold more responsibility than children in intact families without having the extra autonomy given children in one-parent families. Amato questioned whether stepchildren might be resentful of the inequity.

In contrast to Bowerman and Irish, Lutz (1983) suggested that stepfamily life, from the adolescent's perspective, might not be as stressful as much of the literature intimates. She surveyed adolescents to ascertain

what they perceived to be the most stressful aspects of living in a stepfamily. They responded that divided loyalty was most stressful with discipline issues rated second. However, she cautioned that discipline might be difficult in any rating by adolescents no matter what their family's structure. She also noted that professionals have tended to emphasize problems of discipline, which is probably of more concern to parents rather than divided loyalty. Similar to Clingempeel and Segal's (1986) findings, the adolescents she questioned were not bothered by moving between two households. Contributors to stress for adolescents in stepfamilies were the presence of stepsiblings and the lack of opportunity to visit the noncustodial parent. Lutz also found that the stepfather-stepson relationship was less stressful than the stepfather-stepdaughter relationship and that adolescents who had lived in a stepfamily less than two years reported more stress than those who had lived in one more than two years. Finally, social attitudes toward subjects as a result of living in a stepfamily were the least stressful experience.

Strother and Jacobs (1984) also investigated stress among adolescents in stepfamilies by surveying 63 young people between the ages of 13 and 18. Overall their findings were congruent with Lutz (1983). They found that stepfamily living in general was not very stressful. The area of greatest difficulty was discipline which was rated

between slightly and somewhat stressful. However, as noted earlier, problems of autonomy and control are adolescent issues no matter what the family type. The adolescents also acknowledged stress over not being able to visit the nonresident biological parent. Least troubling to them were social issues such as having a different last name from their remarried parent. Interestingly, in a sort of "honeymoon" effect, they reported more stress after two to four years in a stepfamily rather than in the first two years.

Brand, Clingempeel, and Bowen-Woodward (1988) studied stepmother and stepfather families in Philadelphia that had children between 9-12 years old to ascertain the effects of the marital relationship between the biological parent and stepparent on psychological adjustment of the children. They found that a positive relationship between the father and stepmother was related to better psychological adjustment for the stepsons, but was associated with poorer psychological adjustment for stepdaughters. Their results were congruent with Hetherington et al.'s findings that boys seemed to benefit from the presence of an authoritative stepparent and from greater marital satisfaction between the mother and stepfather whereas girls did not. Brand et al. reported no significant findings for stepmother families.

Knaub and Hanna (1984) found that most of the 44 stepchildren they surveyed believed that their stepfamily,

which had existed for an average of a little more than four years, functioned well. Subjects, who ranged from 10-24 years old with a median of almost 13 years old, replied that they had known the stepparent well before the remarriage (77%) and said that they loved the stepparent (63%). However, only two variables were associated with perceived family strength: adjustment of the stepfamily as a whole and lack of cohabitation before remarriage. Interestingly, boys were more likely to wish that they could live with their other biological parent but also scored significantly higher than girls on four of the eight family strength components. The authors interpreted this finding as an indication that girls were more likely to "remain in an undesirable situation and attempt to improve it" rather than moving on. However, another way of looking at the results is that the boys seemed to appreciate another male's presence in the home but especially desired the company of their biological fathers. Girls, on the other hand, might resent sharing their mother with a new male. They did not find an effect for gender on perceived family strength, but they did for age. Children who were younger at the time of remarriage reported less conflict with the parents in the home and were less likely to want their biological parents to marry again. The authors conceded some of their results may have been skewed by social desirability. The one instrument used in the study was designed by the authors and apparently not

tested for validity with respect to social desirability.

Some studies have attempted a more serious look at stepfamily adjustment, especially the poor outcome for adolescents. Garbarino, Sebes, and Schellenbach (1984), in their research on a clinical sample of 62 families who were at risk for destructive parent-child relations during adolescence, found that stepfamilies were significantly represented in the group at risk for destructive interactions. In fact, <u>all</u> the stepfamilies in the study were in the high-risk group. Families in this group were described as chaotic and enmeshed, and interactions within them were more punishing and less supportive. A rating of abusive, as opposed to nonabusive, interactions by the adolescent correctly identified 100% of the at-risk families; the adult rating was not as predictive. High risk families were more coercive, both physically and psychologically with adolescents, and these adolescents had a history of both external and internal developmental problems and lower social competence. Garbarino, et al., did not indicate how long the stepfamilies had been together, nor did they obtain a history of prior problems. It could be that these stepfamilies were similar to those in the Block et al. (1986) study, in which child problems associated with family conflict had been brewing for years. Garbarino, et al., used sociobiology, especially the lack of parental investment, and social-psychological phenomena,

such as interaction patterns and cognitive attributions, to explain the overrepresentation of stepfamilies in the high risk group.

Brown, Green, and Druckman (1990) conducted a study comparing stepfamilies with an adolescent who were in therapy for child-focused problems to stepfamilies with an adolescent in the household who had not sought help. They found that stepparents in both groups demonstrated the same degree of authoritative and nurturant behavior, but the children in treatment were less receptive than those not in treatment. This finding suggests that style of parenting is not always the focal issue in successful stepfamily adjustment. Stepparents in the non-treatment group were more satisfied with their role, which according to the authors derived from their greater role clarity. Unlike Goldstein's (1974) observation that many stepfamilies tended to resort to "pseudomutuality" rather than deal openly with conflictual issues, those stepfamilies with a symptomatic child in Brown et al.'s study had high levels of overt conflict and low levels of expressiveness. Both groups in Brown et al.'s study were more idealistic about how families should function on a measure called ENRICH than was its normative population, but both sets of couples also had a stronger, more functional marital relationship than the norm. The finding of a good marital bond but difficulty in the relationship between a child and the adults in a

stepfamily has been found in other studies, such as Crosbie-Burnett (1984) and Anderson and White (1986). Brown et al. concluded that "the emotional and behavioral problems of stepchildren are associated most strongly with dysfunctional role and conflict management processes within the custodial stepfamily household," and not with unresolved emotional divorce or coparenting difficulties between the former spouses. What is not yet understood is why some children reject the stepparent's overtures and why their families have lower levels of expressiveness.

Financial functioning is usually more complex in stepfamilies because child support is often being received by one partner and perhaps paid out to a former spouse by the other partner. In Tropf's (1984) study, when fathers remarried, they tended to increase their voluntary support toward their children. However when the mothers remarried, the fathers decreased support. Thirty-five percent of these fathers felt that the stepfather should assume most or total support of the children.

Money management is often a primary concern in studies of marital happiness. Fishman (1983) described two patterns for managing finances that he found in a survey of 16 middle-class stepfamilies in a Northeastern city. He noted that second marriages often involved the merging of two separate economies rather than the evolution of a single economy as in a first marriage. The first pattern was the

"common pot" in which all resources were pooled for household expenses. It followed the principle of the common good. It was most likely to be used in cases of financial hardship or when there were few or no demands from former spouses. The second pattern, called the "two pot" approach, allowed each member of a couple to safeguard his or her individual resources for personal use for their biological child. It was frequently used when there was a former wife to support, when there was financial conflict, or when the family was financially affluent. The common pot approach tended to unify families while the two-pot pattern accentuated biological loyalties and personal autonomy.

Stepfamily alliances and coalitions. In the traditional family systems approach, coalitions within a family are considered a sign of dysfunction. However, stepfamily functioning almost naturally lends itself to the existence of alliances or coalitions, because at least one partner brings children with whom there may be a strong bond. These patterns were called "cleavage patterns" by Bernard (1956) in her early work on stepfamilies. The most common alliance is a cross-generational coalition between the biological parent and his or her children. Weiss (1979) has observed how strong these ties could become during the period following marital dissolution, especially if the single-parent family has felt under siege during the process

of separation and divorce. Mills (1984) advised that the parents in the remarried family make a conscious effort to shift boundaries, so that the parents become a coalition with the biological parent being the disciplinarian. However, the formation of a strong couple bond leaves the child from a previous marriage confronting yet another loss as the parent sides with the stepparent. The alliance by the couple reestablishes generational boundaries while the stepparent is able to form a friendly coalition with the stepchild. A slightly different approach to the parental coalition is advocated by Kent (1980) who proposed the formation of a strong parental bond in remarriage, but also stressed the importance of implementing a form of mutual-decision making which gives all family members an opportunity to voice their opinions.

Mills (1984) and Nadler (1983) asserted that stepfamily conflicts over discipline, a common problem, might actually serve to divert attention from problems between the remarried couple. Many complaints about discipline might have alliance issues at the core. For example, stepfathers often complained about receiving mixed messages from the biological mother about discipline. Nadler (1983) expressed the need for intervention and support, but then defended the child once the stepfather intervened (Messinger, Walker, & Freeman, 1978; Mowatt, 1972).

One child, in particular, may become the scapegoat for

unresolved conflicts between the biological parent and stepparent (Schulman, 1972, 1981). However, Schulman (1972) cautioned that at times the presence of a scapegoat may be a positive, unifying force, allowing stepsiblings to bond for example, rather than the rigidified pattern usually seen in intact families. According to clinicians, the scapegoated child is typically the one who felt closest to the nonresidential parent (Schulman, 1981) or who most resembles the nonresidential parent (Goldstein, 1974).

Filinson (1986) examined alliances within stepfamilies, one-parent, and intact families. Mothers were the only family members interviewed, and they were asked to name all the people in their family and to list preferences and the amount of time spent with each other. Neutral alliances were the most common alliance among all family types, and these were usually between the mother and a child who has legitimate dependency needs. Defensive alliances in which the excluded member sought exclusion, and the rest of the family defensively formed a unit against the "self-isolating and combative" member, was more common in stepfamilies than in nonstepfamilies. Filinson concluded that the most severe problems were found in stepfamilies, but "stepfamilies were not distinguished by the presence of alliances which disturbed family unity." Finally, Filinson observed that the data presented did not support contentions of interference from an absent parent, ambiguity of roles, or

lack of commitment among family members, as primary factors in the formation of alliances. Similarly, Anderson and White found coalitions in both functional and dysfunctional stepfamilies, but noted that dysfunctional stepfamilies had the strongest coalitions and the poorest communication patterns.

Stepfamily Conflict. Conflict is as likely and probably more likely in remarried families, because tension often builds as various family members negotiate new relationships with each other. Conflict itself can be creative, depending on how it is managed. Gaughan (1982) observed that the more emotionality governs a couple's conflicts, the less functional the relationship is likely to become. He also cautioned, however, that avoidance of conflict is the worst approach since the differences will reemerge in the same form or in another form in the future.

Dysfunction and conflict arise from two common stepfamily strategies (Goldner, 1982). One is the forcing of closeness or pseudomutuality by the parents in the remarriage, as if they were seeking to restore a sense of the "lost intimacies" of the nuclear family. The second strategy is a direct opposite, that is, the preservation of two separate households under the same roof upon remarriage. Here is the problem of coalitions at its worst.

Conflict in stepfamilies is distinctly different than

conflict in intact families, according to Hobart (1988). He found that a remarried wife felt more affection for her own children than she did for her husband's, but the remarried husband did not have a similar bias for his children from a previous marriage as opposed to his new wife's. Hobart (1988) observed that "different (step)parent-child relationships have dissimilar effects on spousal relationships in remarried families without parallel in first-married families." Further, he noted that the "preeminent relationship" for a man in a remarried family was the one with his spouse, but for a woman, her relationship with her children and former husband were more influential. Conflict in remarriage often focuses on finances, discipline, and the husband's children by his previous marriage, and features the wife playing a more dominant role (Hobart, 1991). Hobart (1988) suggested that the husband is the more marginal character in remarried families, while the wife plays a central role resulting in a family systems configuration quite different from that of the healthy nuclear family.

Adjustment of stepmothers and stepfathers. Mythology and folklore give one perspective on stepparenting, but what is it really like to be a stepparent? Studies indicate that the experience of being a stepmother is not exactly the same as being a stepfather. For example, demographically

stepfathers are more likely to have live-in stepchildren, while stepmothers more typically have visiting stepchildren (Glick, 1980). But there are qualitative and emotional differences as well as some similarities.

Ambert (1986) examined the experiences of both stepmothers and stepfathers. She found that stepmothers with live-in stepchildren reported a high level of marital happiness. However, these same stepmothers also acknowledged a high degree of ambivalence about having live-in stepchildren. On the one hand, those stepmothers with live-in stepchildren felt closer to them than did stepmothers who had stepchildren who visited, but all stepmothers felt that they bore the brunt of an inequitable situation. In most families, stepmothers were responsible for both child care and household functioning because they were female, even though they did not have as strong a bond to the children as their husbands. Some balance or equity seemed to be achieved when the stepchildren resided with them, allowing stepmothers the opportunity to establish emotional bonds with them. If the stepchildren were between two and twelve years old and lived with the other parent, stepmothers were less satisfied with their marriage and reported more conflicts with their husbands. Often the coparental role was shared by the husband and his former wife, consequently excluding the stepmother. If the husband's children visited occasionally, the fathers would

ally with their children against the stepmother. However, fathers tended to establish a coalition with their new wives if the children lived with his new remarriage household.

In contrast to stepmothers, stepfathers in Ambert's study (1986) did not report significant differences in their feelings about stepparenting that were associated with the stepchild's place of residence, but they were most satisfied maritally when the stepchildren were grown and on their own. Having children who were born into the remarriage increased the stepfather's good feelings toward his live-in stepchildren, but it created a distance between stepmothers and their live-in stepchildren. The stepfathers' greatest concern seemed to be a conflict of loyalty between feelings for their live-in stepchildren versus feelings for their biological children who lived elsewhere. Stepfather issues of loyalty and attachment to live-in stepchildren were alleviated when their own children lived with them. Palisi, Orleans, Caddell, and Korn (1991) also found that stepfathers whose biological children lived with them had a better relationship with their stepchildren. Their results were congruent with Marsiglio's (1991) findings that fathers were most active with their biological children in play, projects, and private talks when compared to stepfathers with stepchildren. These studies showing that stepmothers and stepfathers performed their parenting roles better in more complex families consisting of at least two sets of

children contradict Cherlin and much of the clinical literature on stepfamilies. It would be a more complex situation by Cherlin's definition, but one that helped rather than hindered the stepfather's adjustment. Stepfathers whose children live elsewhere are just as likely as stepchildren to feel loyalty conflicts when they are able to be a close and accessible father to their new wife's children but not to their own. Also, fathers who have custody of their own children in remarriage may have greater interest and parenting skills to begin with.

Ambert concluded that visits by stepchildren were disquieting and divisive for both stepmothers and stepfathers in comparison to having live-in stepchildren. In very similar findings, Clingempeel and Segal (1986) reported that stepparents preferred live-in stepchildren to stepchildren who visit, but that stepmothers expressed reservations in both cases because more of the responsibility for child care and supervision fell to them than it did to the biological father or to a stepfather.

Length of time in remarriage was associated with adjustment to the stepfather role. Palisi, Orleans, Caddell, and Korn (1991) found that stepfathers who had been with their current spouses the longest, were better adjusted to the stepfather role. Of course, length of time married also signals greater happiness in the remarriage in general, suggesting that there may be underlying personality traits

that contribute to satisfaction and adjustment in various roles. In any case, it seems that stepfathers who were able to take their time getting to know the child fared best (Stern, 1978; Collins, 1988). Stern (1978) recommended becoming a friend to the child first. Capitalizing on Fast and Cain's (1966) warning that a stepparent is sometimes a nonparent, Collins (1988) advised that it would be "better to choose a relationship with the children that could not be described as a purely parental one." Burgoyne and Clark (1982) observed that the stepfathers in their study were generally highly reflective and self-conscious when considering their relationships with their stepchildren, perhaps explaining the sense of inadequacy that Weingarten noted. The stepfathers in Burgoyne and Clark's research tacitly acknowledged that their thoughtful approach was a legacy of the first marriage and an example of their sense of some responsibility for the multiple transitions required of the stepchildren. Sager, Brown, Crohn, Rodstein, and Walker (1980) cited research by Bohannan which indicated that stepfathers often felt more negative about their performance than the mother and stepchildren did. In particular, the stepchildren and mothers in Bohannan's study rated the stepchildren's relationship with the stepfather as highly as the biological children's relationship with their father in the control group.

Marsiglio (1992) found in his survey of 195 stepfathers

that more than half of them disagreed with the conventional notion that it is harder to love stepchildren than one's own children, but about a third of his respondents acknowledged that they were more a friend than a parent to their stepchildren. Those stepfathers who endorsed more "fatherlike" perceptions were more likely to have biological children as well as stepchildren in the home, were father figures to the younger children, and were happy with their partner. Of particular interest was the apparently positive influence of the stepfather being a father figure and emphasizing conformity to outside authority and obedience in having a good relationship with his stepchildren, because most other studies have found that a more distant and benevolent approach works best. Only stepfathers were surveyed; it may be the case that the stepchildren would have been less positive on this issue.

Hetherington (1988) observed that while stepsons seemed to accept their stepfathers, stepdaughters did not. In fact, even when the stepfather was warm and authoritative, rather than neglectful or authoritarian, the stepdaughters remained hostile and rejecting. Both the stepfather and stepdaughter progressed to a stance of disengagement over time, as the stepfather became impatient and hostile in the face of ongoing rejection.

Never-married men who become stepfathers seem to adjust better than those who were previously married. White and

Booth (1985) did a study of divorce after remarriage which would seem to confirm Cherlin's contentions about stepfamily complexity and instability. They found that remarriages which included one spouse who had never been married before were as likely to succeed as first marriages, but when both partners were remarrying then the union was twice as likely as a first marriage to result in divorce. Interestingly, clinicians asserted that never-married men who marry women with children from a previous marriage were less likely to be happy in stepfamilies than men who had been married before (Schulman, 1972; Messinger, Walker, & Freeman, 1978). However, research indicates that never-married men can be successful stepfathers and second husbands (Roberts & Price, 1987). Among the 16 couples interviewed by Roberts and Price, the husbands who instantly became fathers in the remarriage were perceived by their wives as more communicative and empathic than their first husbands. The decision to marry was based in part on the mother's assessment of the man's potential as a stepfather.

In a study of 32 stepmother and stepfather families, Clingempeel, Brand, and Ievoli (1984) looked for differences in adjustment associated with the sex of the stepchild or the structural complexity of the family and found "few differences in the quality of stepparent-stepchild relationships." Structural complexity is derived from Cherlin and, in this research, referred to the stepparent

having children from the previous marriage and/or to the stepparent and custodial parent having had a child born to the remarriage. The most significant adjustment problems occurred in the stepfather-stepdaughter relationship. In a task that was videotaped, stepdaughters exhibited a lower proportion of positive verbal behaviors toward their stepfathers than stepsons did, and the negative behaviors of stepdaughters toward their stepfathers approached significance as well.

In another study looking at comparative adjustment in stepfather versus stepmother families, Clingempeel and Segal (1986) found few significant differences in adjustment. Their study group consisted of 40 stepfather families and 20 stepmother families with children between the ages of 9-12 years old. They found no significant differences in adjustment by gender of the stepchild or frequency of visits with the nonresident parent. Similarly, they found no relationship between total time in a stepfamily household and the quality of the stepfather-stepson relationship. Stepmothers did not fare as well as stepfathers, however, leading the authors to conjecture that stepmothers, influenced by negative cultural stereotypes may try harder and sooner than stepfathers to take on the parental role.

One of the worst outcomes in stepparent adjustment is described by Nadler (1983). She observed the "stepparent disavowal syndrome," a more extreme reaction to

stepparenting than anger, in her structured group sessions for stepparents in California. The syndrome consists of feelings of intense rage, inability to be in the stepchild's presence, and a desire to withdraw totally from interaction with the stepchild. It arises from two sources. First, the syndrome develops from conflicting roles in which the biological parent abdicates the role of disciplinarian to the stepparent. Second, disavowal of stepparenting is compounded by the stepparent's fear of communicating his or her feelings. Nadler gained demographic data on only 50 of her 120 group participants, but of the 50, 36 were women and all were stepmothers, perhaps indicating that stepmothers do have a more difficult transition or are more willing to seek help than stepfathers. Hetherington (1991), however, found a similar phenomenon among stepfathers who, after approximately two years of negativity from a stepchild, would "disengage, give up on the relationship, and remain detached from or avoid contact with their stepchild."

Looking specifically at the stepchild's attachment to stepparents versus their nonresident parent, White, Brinkerhoff, and Booth (1985) found that respondents from stepfamilies acknowledged two times as much attachment to their stepfathers as to their biological fathers with no effect for age at parent's remarriage. They also determined that attachment to one's biological father versus one's stepfather was mutually exclusive. The authors surveyed

2,135 college students to ascertain their parent-child relationships after marital disruption, including subjects whose parent(s) remarried. Although disruption and remarriage generally had a slightly negative effect on a child's network of parental relations, there were some interesting discoveries. For example, remarriage had no effect on the mother-child bond but it lessened the attachment to the father, even if he was the custodial parent. In cases of remarriage after the death of the father, the child became more attached to the mother but less attached to the stepfather than in remarriage after divorce. If the stepfather brought children of his own into the remarriage, then the adolescent's regard for both mother and stepfather declined, but his/her regard for the biological father increased. However, when halfsiblings were born to the remarriage, regard for the new family went up, while positive feelings toward the nonresident father dropped. If the adolescent had a strong attachment to the mother, then he/she was likely to form a strong attachment to the stepfather. The lowest attachment ratings in the study fell to the stepmother. Finally, the less frequent the contact with the father, then the lower attachment reported to both mother and father.

Children's impact on remarriage families. Cherlin (1978) speculated that remarriages which incorporate

children from a previous marriage are inherently more complex than biological families. As a result, stepfamilies confront more hardship in defining their relations with one another successfully. Glenn and Weaver (1977), in an empirical study on marital satisfaction, acknowledged the strain of the stepparent-stepchild relationship which serves as a negative influence in remarriage, but neither their study nor Renne's (1971) on remarriage and physical health addressed the issue of children directly. As noted earlier, Albrecht (1979) did not find the presence of children from the current or previous marriage a detriment to marital satisfaction among remarrieds. Weingarten (1980) similarly found that remarrieds did not differ from first marrieds in affirming that having children fulfills a person's important values and that having children does not interfere with what one wants to do. However, remarried people were more likely to feel inadequate in family role performance, especially in having satisfying contacts with children who hold membership in more than one household. Weingarten interpreted this finding as a complement to Bowerman and Irish's (1962) report that stepchildren felt lower affection toward both their biological and stepparents than did children from intact families.

Becker, Landes, and Michael (1977) found that children from a prior marriage tended to increase the probability of the current marriage ending in divorce. On the other hand,

they noted that children born in the remarriage discouraged dissolution of that marriage just as they did in the first marriage. Weingarten (1980) found that remarried parents were more likely than any other category of married people to feel that children draw spouses further apart, while remarried couples who did have biological children were less likely to see children as a divisive factor. Weingarten (1980) also observed that remarried men were less invested in parenting than other groups she analyzed, a finding which coincided with her earlier study (Kulka & Weingarten, 1979) showing that adult male children of divorce were less invested in parenting than female children of divorce or adult children from intact families. She speculated that their attitude could be related to the fact that many remarried men lost contact with their children, but more research is needed to discern whether the attitude precedes the loss of contact or is a defensive response to being unable to see one's children often.

Duberman (1973, 1975) examined stepfamily relationships among 88 remarried families in Cleveland, Ohio. She found that stepfathers had better relationships with their stepchildren than did stepmothers, and this effect was increased when the stepparent had never been married before. The age of the stepfather had no measurable influence on his relationship to his stepchildren, but the younger a stepmother was the more likely she was to establish warm

relationships with her stepchildren. Duberman was surprised by the high quality of stepparent-stepchild relationships in general and by the finding that 64% of the families scored in the excellent range on the Parent-Child Relationship measure. Further, these same families tended to score in the excellent range on the measure of Family Integration, somewhat different than Bowerman and Irish and a number of other studies looking at stepfamily functioning. She found no effect for gender of the child and no effect for age, except that when the child is over 13 years old in a stepmother family then relations were somewhat poorer. Protestant stepparents generally had better relationships with their stepchildren than did Catholics, Jews, or atheists.

White and Booth (1985) noted that when both spouses in a remarriage had been married before, they were more likely to be stepchildren, and those remarriages where both had stepchildren were the most endangered of all in the remarried category. Further, the authors discovered that there was no difference in marital satisfaction between first marriages and single or double remarriages until the presence of stepchildren was factored in. Stepchildren led to a significant decrease in the quality of family life and of parent-child relationships. Finally, they found that stepchildren were more likely than their counterparts from intact families to leave home between the ages of 14 and 19,

by a margin of 51% to 35%. However, the authors did not say whether they accounted for the fact that stepchildren, as a rule, tended to be older than children from intact homes and whether they might leave in order to live with the other biological parent. Hetherington (1991) noted this pattern even among 9- and 10-year old stepchildren, especially boys, who were more disengaged from their families than children from intact families. Stepchildren, like those from divorced families, were more likely to spend time alone or with their peers than with their families. Clinicians, too, see extrusion of children from the home as more common among stepfamilies (Schwartzberg, 1987).

Zill (1988) found that mother-stepfather families had fewer problems with children's adjustment in general than did father-stepmother families, because the child's bond to the biological father was weaker than to the mother, and stepfathers were more prone to take a passive role early on than stepmothers. However, if the child saw the nonresident biological parent on a regular basis, it resulted in fewer problems in stepmother families and no change in stepfather families.

Hetherington (1991) found that a close marital bond in a remarried family and active participation in parenting by the stepfather was related to "high levels of conflict and negativity" between the stepchild and both the mother and the stepfather. This situation was worse with stepdaughters

than with stepsons. However, stepfathers who slowly developed an authoritative role in parenting also assumed a supportive role toward both the mother and the stepson, which in turn usually led to a reduction in the number of coercive interactions between the mother and son. In fact, mothers whose husbands were authoritative parents became "more firm, consistent, warm, communicative, and demanding of mature behavior" following their more erratic parenting style postdivorce. For those stepfathers who unwittingly entered as active, coercive enforcers, there was no improvement in the stepson's relationship with his mother or with the stepfather. Maritally, the situation worsened if the mother and stepfather became alienated over discipline problems, because the stepfather was less likely to confide in anyone else or seek help outside the marital relationship. In general, Hetherington observed that problems in remarriage were more common if the stepchild was difficult in temperament, a finding that may mesh with the study by Block, Block, and Gjerde (1986) noting the behavioral problems of children as much as 11 years before divorce.

Children's adjustment to stepfamily living--behavioral aspects. The literature on children's adjustment to the remarriage of their parents is mixed. Some studies report either few problems or even improvement in stepchildren's

adaptation, while others note significant difficulties, to the extent that some stepchildren appear to fare worse than children from either intact or single-parent families. Some early studies on single-parent and stepfamilies focused on delinquency, an emphasis that continues in diminished form today. Intervening variables in the ease of adjustment include the child's age at the time of remarriage, gender, custodial arrangements, level of conflict in the home, and relationship with the nonresidential natural parent.

The age of the child plays a substantial role in his or her adjustment to the remarriage of a biological parent (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989; Mills, 1984). Generally, the younger the child the more receptive he or she is to a new parent. One obvious reason is the shorter shared history with both biological parents and probable shorter time in a single-parent family than would be the case for adolescents. Perhaps less tangible but just as important, the adolescent has more advanced cognitive abilities, which include better memory of the first family and a greater sense of loyalty. Gender differences in adjustment are not consistent, but usually point to easier adjustment to stepfather and stepmother families by boys than by girls. For some stepchildren, remarriage of their parent provides a respite from conflict during and after the previous divorce; for others the new household is yet another battlefield. Custodial and visiting arrangements play a role depending on

gender of the child, which parent has remarried, and frequency and duration of visits. Related to these arrangements is the relationship to the nonresidential parent. There is some debate as to whether frequent contact with the other biological parent undermines the stepfamily's cohesion, in studies replicating Bowerman and Irish, and whether it increases the complexity of the stepfamily's structure and functioning, in studies attempting to address Cherlin's assertions. Virtually all clinicians acknowledge that children have a more difficult adjustment to make than do the remarried couple, because the marriage was not the children's choice but the couple's.

Zill (1988), using data from a nationwide health survey, found that children from stepfamilies had more behavioral, emotional and physical problems than children from intact families. In addition, they had problems to a lesser degree in academic performance. Zill also found that behavioral problems were more likely to be observed in stepchildren from low income families and among those stepchildren in father-stepmother homes when the first marriage ended by divorce rather than death. In mother-stepfather homes, there was no difference in behavior based on whether the biological father was dead or had divorced. In general, stepchildren were quite similar to children from one-parent families, except that those in stepfamilies tended to have fewer learning problems and better physical

health. However, there were intervening variables which influenced results on stepchildren, with parents' level of education being one of the strongest. Those parents in remarriage families with a higher level of education were more active and sensitive as well as being better problem solvers, implying that the adjustment of stepchildren in those families was enhanced and behavioral problems were minimized. Zill did not find that age and sex of the stepchild were predictive of behavior problems, but he did note two weak findings that were age-related. First, in mother-stepfather families, marital disruption occurring during early childhood led to more behavior problems for stepchildren in later childhood. Second, marital disruption that occurred during a child's early adolescence was associated with more problems than when disruption took place in middle childhood.

Baydar (1988) reported some unusual findings that contradict research done elsewhere. Using the National Survey of Children data, Baydar concluded that parental remarriage had more effects on children's behavior and emotional well-being than did parental separation. In contrast to Hetherington and a number of other researchers, this author reported that divorce was not more difficult for boys than for girls and that the negative effect of separation was not stronger just after the separation occurred. However, entering a stepfather family was

associated with inability to concentrate, being withdrawn, and unhappiness for boys and girls and with increased restlessness for boys. This effect was short-lived, lasting only a few years.

In a study of families of Vietnam veterans, Dahl, McCubbin, and Lester (1976) compared behavior of the children in families who were reunited with their fathers, those in which the father did not return, and those where the father did not return and the mother had remarried. They found that children from families in which the mother had remarried did not function better overall than those who remained fatherless and were more likely to be withdrawn and show antisocial tendencies. They concluded that the "addition of a new father may present its unique stresses and does not immediately offset the deleterious effects of prolonged separation" from a male role model. However, the authors also noted that their sample was quite small, consisting of 10 male and 4 female children in each of the three groups, and might not be representative.

In a large study on adolescents, Peterson and Zill (1986) extracted data from the National Survey of Children conducted in 1981 on 1,400 children between 12 and 16 years old to examine the effects of marital disruption on parent-child relationships and behavior problems in children. They found that antisocial behavior was lower for boys in remarried families when compared to those living with a

single mother, but for girls antisocial behavior was much higher in a remarried family than when living with the mother alone. On the other hand, impulsive and hyperactive behavior was higher for boys whose mothers had remarried when compared to boys with single mothers. Finally, behavior problems at school were particularly high for both girls and boys whose mother had remarried. Peterson and Zill speculated that some of the difficulties of children in remarried families might resolve with time, a dimension not taken into account in their study.

Specific effects of remarriage on adolescent behavior emerged from several studies. Newcomer and Udry (1987) found that family transitions especially separation and divorce predicted greater sexual activity and a general loss of control of the remaining parent over the child. Children from stepfather families were on the continuum between those with both biological parents and those with a single mother. In a prospective longitudinal study of substance abuse patterns among adolescents by family structure, boys were found to abuse drugs and other substances most frequently when they were in a single-mother home while girls were most likely to be substance abusers when their mothers remarried (Needle, Su, & Doherty, 1990).

Impulse control was a problem for children, but not adolescents, from remarried families in research conducted by Amato and Ochiltree (1987). The authors speculated that

the deficit in impulse control for younger children in stepfamilies might result from going through multiple family transitions. They did not analyze their data by gender.

The association between social relationships and family structured was the topic of a study by Burchinal (1964) who surveyed 1500 families with seventh or eleventh graders in Iowa. Burchinal concluded that there was little difference in social relationships across family type, and noted that adolescents from intact families did not fare significantly better than any of the others. However, boys from mother-only families and mother-stepfather families scored lower on measures of social relationships, and boys from father-stepmother families had fewer friendships. These results meshed well with those by Nye (1957) and Landis (1960) indicating that some other variable such as family conflict could be more influential than family structure alone.

Santrock, Warshak, Lindbergh, and Meadows (1982) also examined the effects of remarriage on social behavior among children and parents by comparing 12 remarriage families with 12 single-parent families and 12 intact families. They found that boys in stepfather families showed more warmth, higher self-esteem, less anxiety, and less anger than boys in intact families and were more mature in their behavior than children in single-parent families. In addition, the mothers in stepfamilies were more verbally expressive and more attentive toward their sons than mothers in intact

families. Also, stepfathers were more attentive and used more authoritative parenting, as described by Baumrind (1971), than did fathers from intact families. However, daughters in remarried families showed more anger toward their mothers, and their mothers had less meaningful verbal interaction with the daughters when compared to remarried mothers of sons and to stepfathers of both boys and girls. In addition, the authors found that stepfathers were more controlling and demonstrated more parental maturity than remarried mothers. By contrast, single mothers tended to exercise less control and to be more permissive than parents in either remarriage or intact families, a finding similar to Hetherington, et al. (1982). The authors qualified their findings by noting that there was more conflict and less marital happiness in the intact families and in the remarriage families with daughters when compared to the other family types in this study. Another disadvantage of this study is the small size of each of the groups.

Research on clinical populations shows an overrepresentation of stepchildren. Kalter's (1977) clinical study on children of divorce found behavioral problems among stepchildren as well. In Kalter's (1977) clinical study, boys from remarried families who were 12 years old and up demonstrated more aggression against parents, more conflict with the law, and, interestingly, fewer medical or somatic complaints when compared to

children from intact homes. There were no significant findings for stepsons under age 12. Kalter speculated that the presence of a stepfather seemed to curb a boy's anger during latency, but the anger reemerged during adolescence and was directed at both the boy's family and community. Among the girls studied, there were also no significant effects for those under 12 years old in stepfamilies. However, for girls over 12 multiple problems appeared: aggression against parents and peers, drugs, and sexual behavior. Within this same age group, stepdaughters had significantly fewer subjective symptoms than girls from intact families, and demonstrated a greater tendency to run away than girls in divorced families.

An early study seeking differences between children from stepfamilies versus single-parent homes found no significant differences between the two groups at the .05 level but still noted some troubling tendencies among stepchildren (Perry and Pfuhl, 1963). The authors compared adolescents in remarriage homes with those in single-parent homes on three dimensions: delinquency, psychoneurotic tendencies, and school adjustment. A surprising 41% of those from single-parent homes and 33% of those from remarriage homes fell into the high delinquency category. The authors also observed that, when using the 0.1 level of significance, substantially more of the adolescents from single-parent homes had good adjustment on the

psychoneurotic dimension than did those from remarriage homes, in contrast to Kalter's clinical finding that stepchildren tended to act out rather than express internalized, subjective complaints. Stepchildren in Perry and Pfuhl's study were almost evenly divided into "good," "medium," and "poor" on psychoneurotic adjustment which was measured by the number of psychosomatic complaints endorsed from a list of 15 items. The data was gathered from students in grades 9-12 in three Washington state communities in 1955, before the meteoric rise in the divorce rate.

A longitudinal study of children in the first and third grades by Kellam, Ensminger, & Turner (1977) found that those from mother-only families were at the greatest risk in terms of social maladaptation and psychological well-being, and that children from mother-stepfather families fared only slightly better by comparison. In contrast, the presence of a grandmother in a mother-only home was almost as effective as growing up in a home with both biological parents. The authors concluded that the absence of the father was less a factor than the aloneness of the mother. However, their research did not address why the stepfather was not as effective as the grandmother. Problems in social adaptation and psychological well-being intensified over time for those children who were at risk in the first grade.

Similarly disturbing findings emerged in another, more

recent, nonclinical study by Dornbusch, Carlsmith, Bushwall, Ritter, Leiderman, Hastorf, and Gross (1985), who surveyed a national representative sample of adolescents to test the relationships among family structure, patterns of family decision making, and deviant behavior. Although stepfamilies were not the focus of this study, the authors reported that males in stepfather families were as deviant in behavior as those from mother-only families and more deviant than those in extended mother-only families (e.g., a grandmother present in the home) or intact families. Females in stepfather families, on the other hand, were less deviant than those in mother-only families. These findings are in sharp contrast to a number of other studies that indicate easier adjustment for males than for females in stepfather families. Dornbusch, et al., observed that "something about the internal processes of step-parent families has a stronger negative impact on male adolescents than on female adolescents." Looking at family processes, they found that adolescents in mother-only households were less likely to make decisions using direct parental input and were more likely to be engaged in deviant behavior, even when family income and level of parental education were controlled. Apparently the addition of a stepfather to the family did not effectively alter this pattern in most cases. To put these findings in perspective, they noted that previous research indicated that when there was a high level

of demand by the parent and a high level of responsiveness from the child, then the child developed social responsibility and self-assertion. In patterns of decision making, females from mother-only families did not assert their autonomy until age 16 or 17, but for males the tendency to make their own decisions without parental input began at age 13 and persisted throughout adolescence. However, they also found that the presence of a grandmother in a mother-only household meant better social adaptation, less deviance by the children, and control in the household on the order of that found in intact families. From their data, the authors could not pinpoint whether the extra adult (but not a stepfather) increased surveillance, appropriate teaching, or social support for the single mother.

Researchers, such as Steinberg (1987), have used Dornbusch et al.'s findings as a springboard for studying the relationship between family structure, including stepfamilies, and deviance. Steinberg (1987) examined the relationship between family structure and the susceptibility to antisocial peer pressure among adolescents. In a study of 865 children in the 5th, 6th, 8th, and 9th grades in Madison, Wisconsin, he found that family structure did affect susceptibility to antisocial peer pressure, with children from stepfamilies being most susceptible when compared to those from one-parent and intact families. Effects were also found for gender with boys being more

susceptible and for age with 8th graders being more vulnerable than children from the other three grades. He also looked at patterns of permissiveness and found that for boys, single-mother families were most permissive and biological families were least. For girls the pattern varied depending on both age and family structure. In biological and single-parent families, older girls were treated with more permissiveness than younger ones, while in stepfamilies, the parents were more permissive with younger girls than with older ones. Coming from a biologically intact family was significant for being less susceptible to peer pressure only among ninth graders and especially among girls. Steinberg suggested that the presence of an additional adult in the household had a deterring effect only when it was a biological parent, similar to Dornbusch et al.'s findings that it must be a biological relative. Steinberg also observed that children from broken and reconstituted homes were more susceptible not just as a result of patterns of family decision making; instead, lack of parental monitoring and emotional autonomy from parents might be implicated. Steinberg concluded that these adolescents were more autonomous and less involved with their parents, making them more receptive to peer pressure.

Henggeler (1989) in a study on delinquency in adolescence, cited Steinberg's (1987) findings that adolescents living in mother-only or stepparent families

were more susceptible to negative peer pressures and took part in more deviant behavior than those from intact homes. Henggeler observed that the common thread was not family structure among adolescent delinquents but rather the presence of three variables: low family affection with high family conflict, ineffective and inept parental control strategies, and antisocial behavior in parents. If Henggeler is correct, then stepfamilies are more likely to have delinquent children primarily if there are differences concerning discipline between the parent and stepparent, and if there is emotional distance combined with frequent unresolved disagreements. Perhaps not as frequently found but most predictive, according to Henggeler was the presence of an adult who engaged in antisocial behavior.

Research by Kurdek and Sinclair (1988) found that adjustment problems among adolescents in 7th and 9th grades were positively related to family conflict and to externalized coping strategies, rather than to family structure. Adjustment, which included high goal-directedness, low degree of psychopathology, and few school problems, was enhanced by family support in the forms of cohesion, expressiveness, and personal growth and by social support from friends. The authors surveyed 234 adolescents in the 7th and 9th grades from three different family structures and found no effects for family structure, gender, or grade. Similar to Zill's (1988) study, there was

an effect for education. The higher the stepfather's level of education, the less likely the adolescent would have severe maladjustment or school problems. The authors concluded that family-process variables were more reliable predictors of adolescent adjustment than was family structure.

A study in England examined behavioral problems among a group of younger children. Wadsworth, Burnell, Taylor, and Butler (1985) tested 12,000 5-year old children born in England between April 5-11, 1970 for an association between family structure and developmental and behavioral outcomes. They found that children from stepfamilies, when compared with those from intact families, were more likely to be poor, have mothers with little education, have younger siblings, and have more antisocial scores even when mediating variables were taken into account. They also noted that an earlier study they conducted found that children from stepfamilies were more likely to have accidents at play and around the home.

Hetherington (1991) observed an effect for time in the behavior of stepchildren in the Virginia Longitudinal Study. Immediately upon remarriage, behavioral problems escalated for both boys and girls, especially if the stepchildren were in early adolescence and therefore beginning to work on issues of sexuality and autonomy. The relationship between divorced mothers and their sons was especially conflictual,

but upon the mothers' remarriage there was a difficult period of approximately two years during which the boys "exhibited high rates of aversive behavior," followed by a settled period in which the sons' behavior closely resembled that of boys from nondivorced, or intact, families. Interestingly, stepsons known for being "temperamentally easy" were the ones who were the "most resistant, acrimonious, and negative initially." Hetherington attributed this behavior to those boys' feelings of confidence and capability. However, after two years, the temperamentally difficult stepsons were still negative while the easy stepsons had adapted and realized "the benefits of a new relationship with an adult male." Externalizing behavior would be expected among temperamentally difficult boys in response to the increased stress of conflict with their mothers and adjustment to a stepfather. The stepsons in her study were latency-age and early adolescence. It is difficult to know whether personality characteristics, age, or some other intervening variables account for the differences in behavior between her study and those describing delinquent adolescents in remarriage families.

Children in remarriage--self-image and emotional adjustment. As a result of the sequence of marital transitions in their families, stepchildren carry both emotional feelings of loss and anger and an unsettled sense

of who they are and how they see themselves. Obviously, children's behavior, discussed in the previous section, is one way unresolved feelings are expressed. Others carry the burden internally in the forms of depression and low self-esteem. As we noted earlier, the children's ages at the time of marital disruption influence how they perceive the breakup and their role in it. The younger the child, the more likely he or she is to feel responsible for the divorce or death, but no child is immune from altered emotions or self-concept. Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) warned that scars have remained among children and adolescents in their study for as much as 15 years after the initial breakup. Some children were able to note the impact of the family transitions without remaining bogged down by anger or loss, while others struggled or gave in to an emotional quagmire that left them unable to take positive steps for themselves. Remarriage itself often triggers "the reemergence of emotional and behavioral problems in girls and an intensification of problems in boys" (Hetherington, 1991). Kellam, Ensminger, and Turner (1977) found that psychological well-being was lower for children from mother-stepfather families than for children from mother-grandmother and mother-father families, and the problems intensified over the two years of the research. From the clinician's point of view, Stanton (1986) noted the importance to a child's self-image of allowing him or her to

maintain a connection following remarriage to the family of origin, especially the noncustodial parent, grandparents, and other relatives.

In Peterson and Zill's (1986) study of adolescents and marital disruption, they reported that boys living with their divorced mothers were especially depressed and withdrawn, while boys living with remarried mothers were significantly less depressed and withdrawn in comparison. The results suggest that the introduction of the stepfather makes a difference, but the authors cautioned against such an inference, because the study was cross-sectional and the sample size was small. On the other hand, consistent with Santrock, Warshak, Lindbergh, and Meadows's (1982) findings, girls in single-mother homes in this study were depressed and withdrawn, but those whose mothers remarried were even more depressed and withdrawn.

Sessa and Steinberg (1991) observed that the development of autonomy in adolescence may be influenced by the age when marital change occurs. If divorce and/or remarriage take place during preadolescence or early adolescence, then it may initiate the autonomy process through concomitant changes in the parent-child relationship. If marital transitions occur prior to adolescence, then the nature of the whole psychosocial task in altered, especially by absence of the father who may be idealized or deidealized beyond the usual transformation of

seeing one's parents as humans during adolescence. In order to cope, the young person may disengage from the family and even from friends. The situation is exacerbated if the mother has become erratically authoritarian in her parenting and the stepfather is also disengaged from the family process. Anderson, Hetherington, and Clingempeel (1989) found that the child's maturity level on the threshold of adolescence was an important factor in adjusting to remarriage, with the more mature children making the smoothest adjustment. Both these studies employed Steinberg's (1989) hypothesis that adolescents distance themselves from their families during this stage of development.

Pasley and Healow (1988) also examined the effects of remarriage on adolescent self-esteem by surveying 416 high school students in eastern Washington. Feelings of self-worth were higher when the adolescent reported at least a moderate level of family cohesion and adaptability, but high self-worth was not associated with family structure or gender of the subject. Similar findings were reported by Raschke and Raschke (1979) who discovered that family conflict had a negative effect on a child's self-concept, but type of family did not. With respect to stepfamilies, Pasley and Healow (1988) reported that the longer the adolescent had spent in a single-parent household, the less time in a stepfather family, and the more functional he or

she rated the stepfamily's functioning, then the more powerful, confident, and competent the young person perceived himself to be. However, paradoxically, those adolescents who rated their stepfamily as dysfunctional reported higher feelings of self-worth. Among adolescents from stepfather families, males felt more powerful than females. Adolescents of both sexes reported feeling a loss of autonomy and independence in stepmother families. Possibly, this finding derives from stepmothers who tended to assume a parental role more quickly than stepfathers, but there may be other issues as well.

In another study, Amato and Ochiltree (1987) surveyed competence in children and adolescents in three family types, intact, step-, and single parent families. Stepchildren scored lower in self-esteem, as well as reading ability and impulse control, while children from intact families were lower in everyday skills performance. They did not find the gender or time effects that Hetherington et al. (1982) have reported. They concluded that stepchildren were at a disadvantage in comparison to children from one-parent families who showed no deficits at all, and noted the possible "debilitating effects of gaining a new parent, rather than losing an old one."

Zill (1988) found that the psychological well-being of stepchildren was associated with having parents in the stepfamily with a high level of education who were

presumably more flexible and resourceful in their management of the children. Income did not have the same effect: the stepfather's presence could significantly raise the family's income without making the child's psychological well-being better or worse.

Oshman and Manosevitz (1976) found that the presence of a stepfather helped to mitigate the effects of father absence in their study of 125 undergraduate males. Looking primarily at affect and ego identity, they reported no differences between the father-present and stepfather-present groups, although both of these differed from the father-absent group, which scored lower on these dimensions.

In a retrospective study, Kaplan and Pokorny (1971) examined the impact of family structure, including remarriage, on self-image among a random sample of 500 adults in urban Texas. Those subjects whose parent remarried when the child was 8 years old or older, were more likely to express self-derogation, but this finding was not significant. In addition, adjustment to stepfamily living was more difficult in general for older children. Subjects who were black had a lower self-image when they were raised by their mother and stepfather and had little or no contact with their biological father. Kaplan and Pokorny's findings indicated that there are complex interactions between gender, race, and SES that affect self-image.

Hetherington (1989), reporting on her Virginia

Longitudinal Study after six years, observed that individual characteristics such as temperament, parenting styles, and extrafamilial factors often served as buffers for children as they followed their parents through various family transitions. Timing, especially the age of the child at the time of remarriage, gender of the stepchild, and carefully titrated levels of disengagement on the part of both the stepchild and the stepfather were significant predictors of stepfamily functioning.

Parish, with his colleagues, conducted a host of studies concerning children's self-image and its relationship to living in a stepfamily. In all the following studies, Parish's Personal Attribute Inventory is the primary measure. Nunn and Parish (1987) reported a lack of correlation between a stepchild's self-concept and his/her evaluation of the stepfather. Parish and Nunn (1988) found that negative or conflictual family processes correlate with negative evaluations of a child's parental figures, including stepparents, one's self, and one's sense of control. In a study of children in 5th through 8th grades, Parish and Dostal (1980a) observed that stepchildren generally reported self-concepts that correlated with their assessments of their mother and stepfather, but not with their assessment of their biological father. However, when the divorce happened less than 2 years before the survey, children's self-concepts strongly correlated with their

assessment of their mother and more moderately correlated with their assessment of both their biological father and stepfather. In another study by Parish and Dostal (1980b), the authors reported that children from remarried families evaluated their themselves and their fathers more positively and their mothers less positively than did children of single-parent homes. The authors speculated that the findings are evidence of a wish for reconciliation between their biological parents that will not be fulfilled, because the mother has remarried. In a similar study, Parish and Nunn (1981) found that children from unhappy homes had self-concepts that were significantly associated with their evaluations of their mother, stepfather, and especially with their father, whereas children who rated their homes as happy had self-concepts that did not correlate with their evaluations of their mother, father, or stepfather. The authors interpreted the lack of relationship in happy homes to mean that the children's needs were being met and therefore the children felt more autonomous, but a number of other interpretations could be offered as well. In contrast to studies showing an association between a child's lower self-concept and living in a stepfamily, Johnson and Hutchinson (1989) did not find an effect for family structure among almost 200 adolescents surveyed. In another study, Parish (1981a) found a concordance between children's self-concept and their view of their mother regardless of

family configuration, but the concordance between the children's view of themselves and their perception of their father diminishes upon divorce and remarriage of one of the parents, especially the mother. Boyd, Nunn, and Parish (1983) and Parish (1981b) observed similar findings of lower self-concept and regard for father among undergraduates whose parents had divorced, whether or not they later remarried. In the latter study, undergraduates whose divorced family was described as unhappy, as opposed to happy, held their father in higher regard, perhaps as evidence of idealization. Parish and Taylor (1979) and Young and Parish (1979) found that for latency, adolescent, and college age students, the presence of a stepfather boosts self-concept for stepchildren almost to the same level as children from intact families and seems to provide a measure of security. However, in other studies (Parish, 1982; Parish & Copeland, 1979) the authors concluded that children in stepfamilies were more fearful of rejection than those from intact and single-parent families and were therefore more dependent.

Children's adjustment to remarriage--cognitive abilities. The cognitive abilities of children from single-mother families seem to increase with the advent of a stepfather. The effect is especially strong for boys. Carlsmith's (1964) study of the cognitive differences

between late adolescent males whose fathers were absent temporarily during World War II and those males whose fathers were not absent inspired research on cognitive effects of father absence and stepfather presence.

Lessing, Zagorin, and Nelson (1970) found that boys and girls with father surrogates had scores on the WISC which were intermediate between those for children from intact families and those for children from single-parent homes. The authors conjectured that the addition of a father surrogate serves to alleviate stress, stabilize the home, and provide a male model. They concluded that cognitively children with father surrogates did not differ significantly from children living with both biological parents.

Santrock (1972) also noted a positive effect on intelligence scores and achievement tests for boys whose mothers had remarried in the first five years of the boys' lives. Father-absent girls showed a similar, significant cognitive deficit when compared to father-present girls, but their cognitive abilities did not rebound with the addition of a stepfather. Santrock allowed that there may be mediating variables, especially the mother's attitude, in a child's adjustment to remarriage and subsequent cognitive achievements. Similarly, Zajonc (1976), in his landmark study on family influences on intelligence, found that remarriage resulted in improved intellectual performance for stepchildren especially if it occurred early in the child's

life. He reasoned that remarriage restored an essential adult presence that had been missing after death or divorce.

Chapman (1977) examined the effects of father absence and the presence of a stepfather on cognitive performance among college students. He found that father absence was associated with greater field dependence and lower SAT scores for males but was attenuated by the presence of a stepfather. As with Zajonc and Santrock, Chapman noted that the younger the son at the age of remarriage then the stronger the stepfather's effect. In contrast with Carlsmith's (1964) results, verbal scores were affected more than quantitative scores by father absence. Interestingly, Chapman did not find an effect for father absence among the females in his study.

Looking at competence levels among children and adolescents from remarried, single, and intact families, Amato and Ochiltree (1987) found that stepchildren scored lower than those from other family types in reading skills. It is not immediately clear why they would score lower than children from single-parent families, where the parent would presumably be at least as stressed as remarried parents in having time to read to the children. On the other hand, Zill (1988) found that stepchildren, in general, had more learning problems than children from intact families but less than those from single-parent families. In addition, children from stepfamilies with well-educated parents were

less likely to have learning problems, than those from stepfamilies in which the parents had lower levels of education.

Children's long-term adjustment to remarriage. A number of books and articles by researchers and clinicians have observed that stepchildren show a progressive adjustment to remarriage and stepfamily living, with the first two to four years being the most difficult for parent and child alike. To test the long-term adjustment of stepchildren, Wilson, Zurcher, McAdams, and Curtis (1975) drew from two large survey data banks to determine whether there were differences between those respondents raised in stepfather families and those respondents raised in intact, or biological-parent, families. From one of the surveys, they ascertained that respondents from stepfather families were younger, more likely to be Protestant than Catholic, and had better educated stepfathers. More of the respondents from intact families felt that most people were helpful and fair and were satisfied with their family life. However, the two groups did not differ on political characteristics or the tendency to be involved in crime or delinquency. Interpersonally, the two groups were equally likely to be married, with no significant differences in age of marriage, marital happiness, or marital disruption. On well-being, the two groups gave similar scores on personal

evaluation, general happiness, general assessments of life, and assessment of and satisfaction with health. Respondents from stepfather families generally had lower educational attainment and lower total family income than those from intact families. From the second survey, only one finding reached statistical significance: respondents from stepfather families again had lower educational attainment. When mental ability and parental socioeconomic status were factored in, this finding was no longer significant. However, Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) observed that children in divorced and stepfather homes were less likely to go to college because often both their fathers and stepfathers were unwilling to help finance their higher education, even when the resources were clearly available. The second survey analyzed by Wilson, et al., revealed that respondents from stepfather families did not differ from respondents raised in intact families in discussing the future with their parents, in how they thought their parents would feel if the respondent dropped out of high school, made bad grades, did or did not receive a high school diploma, or was having behavioral problems at school. There were no significant differences between the two groups with respect to crime and delinquency. They also reported no differences in personal evaluation, including self-esteem. The authors concluded that "a child's experience with a 'broken home' and (if entered) a subsequent reconstituted

family can be a predominately positive, predominately negative, or mixed experience, depending upon a wide array of pre-existing, transitional and adaptive factors." In contrast to studies such as Steinberg (1987) and Dornbusch et al. (1985), they also conjectured that "It is possible, though there is no way of demonstrating it with the present data, that the presence of a stepfather is a stabilizing element of social control within the family."

Nock (1982), using data from the General Social Survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center, surveyed over 8,000 adults to assess the impact of family structure on feelings of trust and confidence, estrangement or anomie, and general satisfaction and happiness. Respondents answers were based on their living arrangements at the age of 16. Nock found that adults from households where their parent remarried after divorce and those from unremarried widow households did not differ significantly from those living with both biological parents at age 16. Those whose mothers were divorced and not remarried were more distrustful of others and saw others as self-centered. Respondents whose father was widowed but not remarried placed self-reliance over trusting others. Surprisingly, in comparison to Wilson et al.'s findings, respondents from broken or disrupted families experienced less estrangement in general. Further, they were no different than those from intact families in satisfaction with friendships or family life. Nock

concluded that some combinations of family disruption and new living arrangements actually seemed to contribute to greater trust and positive attitudes toward others. That is, some people seemed to be strengthened by the experience in the long run.

On the other hand, Spreitzer and Riley (1974) found that children from stepfamilies did not fare as well in marital relationships. In fact, in their study of singlehood, they found the highest rates of divorce among those who were raised by a biological parent and a stepparent of the opposite sex. However, all those from such a family chose to marry as opposed to other family types in which at least some children chose to remain single.

Ganong, Coleman, and Brown (1981) surveyed a college student population to determine whether there was an association between their family structure and their marital attitudes. They found that adolescents who had lived in a stepfamily had a more positive attitude toward divorce than either children from single-parent or intact families. Also, males from stepfamilies were less favorable toward marriage than males from either of the other two groups. Stepfamily adolescents believed that people marry to escape loneliness and for financial security, in contrast to those from intact families who thought people marry for love and companionship. In findings that did not achieve statistical

significance, subjects from stepfamilies also expressed more negative views toward marriage than those from intact families, but expressed more concern for happiness when they marry. They also described poorer family integration than those from intact and single-parent homes. Similar to Bowerman and Irish (1962) but in contrast to Peterson and Zill (1986), children from remarriage families reported more distant relationships to their parents. Interestingly, Ganong et al. concluded that their findings did not support a relationship between family structure and attitudes examined.

In a similar study conducted a few years later, Coleman and Ganong (1984) found that attitudes toward divorce among college students were affected by family structure. Of their almost 1,200 subjects, those students from mother/stepfather families and from mother-only families were more favorable toward divorce than students from other family configurations. Those who rated their families as highly integrated had more positive attitudes toward marriage regardless of family structure. Marriage role expectations were not significantly influenced by the students' family structure, gender, or degree of family integration. The authors also reported no differences in attitudes with regard to stepmother versus stepfather household or length of time in a stepfamily. They concluded that marital attitudes and expectations were complex in

their formation and did not seem to be developed through social learning alone. Although they were looking at attitudes and expectations, they also found an effect for family structure on family integration. The authors observed that over half the stepfamily respondents considered their stepfamilies as either close or moderately close, while most subjects from intact families rated their homes as close. The surprising exceptions were females in stepmother families and females in father-only families, both of whom ranked their families as primarily close.

Kiecolt and Acock (1988) found that adults from single-parent, remarriage, and intact families hold similar views in general toward traditional gender-role behavior. Women whose mothers were employed had more liberal gender-role attitudes than men whose mothers worked outside the home. Also, those adults who spent their adolescence in households headed by divorced mothers thought that women should have more political power.

Stepfamily complexity: relationships with stepsiblings and stepgrandparents. Stepsibling relationships are on the frontier of current research on stepfamilies, and results are mixed. Duberman (1973, 1975) found in a survey of 88 remarried families that stepsiblings living in the same household were more likely to have excellent relations than those who lived in different households. Proximity seemed

to breed greater affection and regard, in stepfamilies as well as in other relationships. If the remarried couple had a child of their own, then relations between stepsiblings were more harmonious. Stepsiblings also got along better with each other when the stepfather had less education and when he was younger, according to Duberman, but she only had 8 subjects in the working class category for this correlation, which was in contrast with some findings by Zill (1988) on stepfather education and income. Duberman also observed that the feelings a first-born experiences of jealousy at the birth of a new baby were likely to be experienced by more than one child in a complex, reconstituted family. Finally, she found that stepsiblings of the opposite sex were more likely to get along than those of the same sex, an interesting finding with respect to the sexual tension that is hypothesized to exist in a stepfamily. For example, one article described a remarried family with both an adolescent boy and girl who were attracted to each other. The problem was resolved only when the girl moved out of the household (Rosenberg & Hajal, 1985).

Hetherington (1988) found that same-sex stepsiblings were able to get along better than opposite-sex stepsiblings, and also found a gender effect. Any male sibling or stepsibling seemed to be more aggressive and engaged in more negative behaviors in general than did

females. However, female stepsiblings were less warm and seemed to be disengaged when compared to female siblings in either intact or single-parent homes.

Rosenberg and Hajal (1985) described the characteristics of stepsibling relationships based on their clinical experience. They noted the instantaneous quality of the new relationships and the consequent lack of shared history and loyalties, which might bring tensions. In addition, these children have witnessed fluid boundaries, depending on whether stepsiblings reside in the same household, and changes in family size, position, and role. Other areas were sexual issues, the commonality of loss, and incongruence in tasks, e.g., the case of an adolescent trying to separate from the family while remarriage calls for forming new attachments. Each of these changes has the potential to be adaptive or maladaptive, depending on the child's personality, the past, and the approach taken by the parents. For example, instantaneous relationships and fluid boundaries as a stepsibling visits briefly or lives with a new stepsibling full-time might encourage the development of new interactive skills and flexibility when dealing with issues of attachment and commitment. The authors noted that ultimately adjustment to stepsibling relationships and remarriage could help or hinder children of divorce in achieving Wallerstein's sixth task, that of achieving realistic hope regarding relationships.

As noted above in the discussion of Duberman's study, half-siblings, i.e., those born to the remarriage may help or hinder stepfamily formation. Ambert (1986) found that stepmothers felt that having a child of their own made them resent visiting stepchildren more. From the child's point of view, Zill (1988) found that stepchildren with halfsiblings had more problems than those without. On the other hand, adolescents studied by Lutz (1983) felt that the more stepsiblings they had, the more stressful the family life, but the same adolescents felt that the birth of a halfsibling increased their attachment to the stepparent.

Ganong and Coleman (1988) looked specifically for the effects of children born in the remarriage on stepfamily adjustment. After interviewing 105 stepfamilies, 39 of whom had children born in the remarriage, the authors reported no significant differences between remarried families with mutual children and those without on marital adjustment, family affect, handling of disagreements, frequency of conflict, marital problems, and disagreements over rules for children. Demographically, stepfamilies in which the stepfather was young or had not been married previously were more likely to have children.

The presence of stepgrandparents is yet another addition to the complexity of remarriage. Sanders and Trygstad (1989) found that stepgrandparents could establish good relationships with stepgrandchildren, but the best

predictor of the strength of that relationship is the stepgrandchild's view of the stepparent rather than their regard for grandchild-grandparent relationships. Predictably, biological grandchildren in the control group reported stronger relationships, more contact, and more regard for their biological grandparents than did the stepgrandchildren.

Henry, Ceglian, and Matthews (1992) observed that there was a difference in the behavior of stepgrandparents when compared to biological grandparents, based on reports by the children's mothers. Not surprisingly, there was more warmth and acceptance toward the biological grandchildren than toward the stepgrandchildren in the early years of stepfamily formation.

Stepfamily complexity: relationships with the noncustodial parent. Frequency of contact between the noncustodial biological parent and both the child and the custodial parent is affected by the remarriage of either parent. Clingempeel (1981) hypothesized that the more frequent the contact with the noncustodial parent then the more structurally complex the stepfamily would be and the lower the quality of the marital relationship. His first study (Clingempeel, 1981) revealed that there was an optimal level of contact with the noncustodial parent which correlated with high marital satisfaction for the

stepfamilies surveyed. Either too frequent or too seldom visits for the child with the noncustodial parent resulted in lower marital satisfaction for the remarried couple. He termed the curvilinear results the "Goldilocks effect."

In a subsequent study, Clingempeel and Brand (1985) tried to replicate these findings, but they did not find a similar correlation between frequency of contact with quasi-kin and marital satisfaction. The authors did report that there was lower marital quality (i.e., fewer positive behaviors) during the videotaped tasks when the stepfamily was more complex. They attributed this finding to the greater role conflicts especially for stepfathers who had biological children living with the former wife, a result also reported by Ambert (1986).

Weston and Macklin (1990) focused on the relationship between the wife's contact with her former spouse and remarital satisfaction to see if they could replicate Clingempeel's (1981) findings. They concluded that high levels of contact by the wife with her former spouse were associated with greater remarital satisfaction when role expectations were realistic and consensual and when the boundaries were clearly defined. Generally, the more contact the wife had with her former husband, the more involved he remained in parenting their children. This finding was congruent with other research (e.g., Hetherington, et al., 1982) that shows that the divorced

and/or remarried mother's relationship with her children is best when she has the support of the biological father. The authors suggested that the ongoing contact could clarify roles and boundaries among all the parties rather than confuse them. Weston and Macklin's findings indicated a linear rather than curvilinear relationship (cf. Clingempeel) between former spouse contact and remarital satisfaction.

Effects of remarriage on contact between the child and noncustodial parent are mixed in the research. Two longitudinal studies, Hetherington, et al. (1982) and Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) found that contact between divorced father and his children declined steadily in most cases over time. Seltzer and Bianchi (1988) also reported that the presence of a stepparent reduced the frequency of contact with the absent parent in their study. However, Peterson and Zill (1986) reported in their study that the remarriage of the mother was related to some improvement in the child's relationship both to her and to the nonresident father.

Furstenberg (1988) found that the remarriage of the noncustodial parent was more disruptive to children than remarriage of the custodial parent. For example, remarriage of the noncustodial parent reduced the frequency of visits between a child and that parent, a decline that often began in the early months after separation and divorce.

Furstenberg argued that the lack of contact between the biological parents was sparse enough to call it "parallel parenting" rather than "coparenting" as proposed by Ahrons (1983) and Goldsmith (1980). According to Furstenberg, a child's relationship with his or her stepfather was not adversely affected by contact with the nonresident father. However, Furstenberg did find that children seem to adjust more easily to having two fathers than to having two mothers. He also noted that visiting patterns in his study were heavily influenced by the level of child support provided and by the nonresident parent's geographic distance from the child.

Tropf (1984) cautioned against studying visiting frequency but not duration. In a survey of 101 divorced fathers, he found that although visiting frequency between a child and the nonresidential parent decreased upon remarriage of either biological parent, the length of the visits increased. Over the years after divorce, one parent might have to leave the proximity for employment or other reasons, making longer, less frequent visits more practical. Fathers reduced the number of telephone contacts with their children when they remarried, but telephone contacts increased between the father and child when the mother remarried. Tropf interpreted the decline in visiting frequency after the remarriage of either or both parents as a reordering of roles à la Cherlin rather than a decline in

paternal interest or involvement. Remarriage of the ex-wife had a more negative effect on visiting frequency than the remarriage of the father, as was true in Furstenberg et al. (1983). In contrast to Furstenberg et al. (1983), Tropf did not find a significant association between visiting frequency and child support, but he noted that fathers who stopped or missed payments did not visit as frequently as those who maintained regular payment. Catholic fathers visited more often than Protestant fathers, whether they were separated, divorced, or remarried. Higher social class was also associated with more frequent visits. Some of Tropf's findings may be a result of using a volunteer sample who might be more conscientious in maintaining paternal ties than a more random sample would be.

In a wide-ranging study of the effects of marital disruption of the life course of children, Furstenberg, Peterson, Nord, and Zill (1983) surveyed over 1,000 children in 1976-77 and again in 1981 to examine the impact of marital disruption on their life course. The mother's remarriage had the greatest effect on frequency of visitation by the father, reducing it from 29% or more of fathers visiting weekly to less than 20%. Also, a father was more than twice as likely to visit his children on a weekly basis if he had not remarried. If both parents had remarried, then only 11% of those children had weekly contact with their fathers, compared to 49% when neither had

remarried. In contrast to Hetherington et al.'s (1982) findings, the length of time since the initial disruption had little effect on the amount of contact between nonresidential parent and child. The authors concluded that coparenting was quite rare, and that instead "the predominant pattern, at least for whites, involves the replacement of the biological parent with a sociological or stepparent."

Two studies, Lutz (1983) and Strother and Jacobs (1984), reported that adolescents found it more stressful not to be able to visit their nonresident biological parent. These young people preferred to have frequent contact and the responsibility for negotiating between two families and households, even if it made their lives more complex. It is a reminder that post-divorce arrangements and needs are quite different for children and their parents.

Furstenberg and Nord (1985) noted that when stepchildren in their study were asked to list family members, they were likely to list both their biological father and stepfather, a finding at odds with Seltzer and Bianchi (1988) who concluded that children were not likely to maintain ties with more than two parents or substitute parents at a time. In contrast, Furstenberg and Nord observed that "Children appear to accumulate rather than replace fathers, particularly when the father outside the home maintains an active presence in the child's life."

Whether family cohesion conflicts with the need for permeable boundaries (e.g., Visher and Visher, 1989), which allow for close relationships with nonresidential natural parents, is not clear, but it seems that there may be an underlying variable, perhaps lack of conflict, which works to create close bonds both to the nonresidential parent and to the stepparent in high-functioning families.

Conclusion

Although much research has been done in the last two and a half decades on stepfamily relationships, there is still much to be learned. In particular, a pattern emerges in the relationship between children of divorce and their mothers that is disrupted by the remarriage. For sons, the outcome may be positive or negative and is determined by factors not yet clearly delineated. For daughters, the transition is more negative, but again the reasons are not yet understood. Other than advice from the clinicians about approaching the parenting role slowly when becoming a stepparent, we know little about why some remarriages seem to be positive events for the family members while other remarriages have a negative impact or minimal impact on the participants. A goal for future research is to discover the ingredients and processes that spell the difference between eventual integration or disruption of the remarriage family.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Participants

Participants in the present study consisted of 215 men and women, recruited from undergraduate psychology classes. They were awarded nominal course credit for their participation. The average age of the respondents was just over 21 years and ranged from 18 to 35 years. There were 107 males (75 sons with both biological parents, 32 stepsons) and 108 females (77 daughters with both biological parents, 31 stepdaughters).

Procedure

Measures

Each participant completed a questionnaire containing four separate measures: the UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, Peplau, and Cutrona, 1980), the Family Satisfaction Scale (Carver and Jones, 1992), the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armsden and Greenberg, 1990), and the Social Network List (Hirsch, 1980). These scales were chosen to sample constructs important to research in family and

relationships.

The questionnaire was constructed to assess quantitative and qualitative aspects of family and social relationships. It examined attachment to parents and peers, feelings of loneliness, satisfaction with one's family life, and the social network with respect to size, reciprocity, trust, etc. This approach was chosen in order to examine general statements about one's relationships as well as specific issues with various individuals in the social network.

Part of the questionnaire sought demographic information on the respondents such as age, gender, marital status, and ethnicity. Questions about parents' marital status, number of siblings, father's income, father's educational level, and religious activities were included to identify stepchildren and nonstepchildren and in order to explore other biographical differences among participants that might prove relevant to the central variables of the study.

Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale

According to Peplau and Perlman (1982), loneliness refers to unmet needs for intimacy, to cognitive processes such as the perception and evaluation of one's deficient social situation, and to insufficient social reinforcement. It is not necessarily synonymous with social isolation.

Although loneliness is correlated with depressed mood and personality attributes such as low self-esteem and low risk-taking, research indicates that loneliness accounts for unique variation beyond common measures of mood and personality (Russell, 1982).

The UCLA Loneliness Scale, a global, unidimensional measure developed by Russell et al. (1980), is the most widely used measure to assess loneliness (Russell, 1982). It consists of twenty Likert-type self-report items, ten of them indicating satisfaction with one's social relationships and the other ten expressing dissatisfaction. Previous research has supported the internal consistency of the Revised version of the scale. For example, estimates of coefficient alpha have been as high as .94. Gender differences have been unreliable, and research has suggested that scale scores were not significantly contaminated with social desirability (Russell, et al., 1980). Both convergent and discriminant validity were suggested in validation studies. For example, convergent validity on the UCLA Loneliness Scale was demonstrated as students who came to a campus clinic for treatment of loneliness scored significantly higher on the original version than students who were sampled in undergraduate psychology classes (Russell, Peplau, & Ferguson, 1978). Discriminant validity was supported demonstrating that alternative measures of loneliness were more strongly related to UCLA scores than

were measures of affiliation motivation, social risk taking, and negative affect (Russell, et al. 1980).

Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment

Building on the work of John Bowlby on infant attachment, Armsden and Greenberg (1987) created a self-report scale, the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) to assess attachment by adolescents to their parents and peers. They devised 53 questions, assessing the behavioral and affective/cognitive dimensions of attachment in a 5-point Likert format, which sought to measure psychological well-being, life satisfaction, and self-esteem. Twenty-eight items address the relationship with parents; twenty-five items assess peer relationships.

Results were classified into three scales each for parents and peers: Trust, Communication, and Alienation. The alpha for these six scales ranged from .91 to .72, suggesting adequate reliability. Armsden and Greenberg divided their subjects into two groups, High Security and Low Security, based on their scores on the three scales. The quality of the adolescents' attachment was related to well-being as well as to depression/anxiety and resentment/alienation.

Studies of validity were conducted by having subjects complete a number of established measures: the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (Fitts, 1965), scales from Bachman's

(1970) Affective States Index, the Family Environment Scale (Moos, 1974), and the Life Events Checklist (Johnson and McCutcheon, 1980). Proximity seeking was assessed using the Family and Peer Utilization factors from the Inventory of Adolescent Attachment (Greenberg, et al., 1984) and a demographic questions about the participants' families.

The Family Satisfaction Scale

Many scales have been devised to try to assess family functioning, but frequently they focus on family structure. Such an approach generally places stepfamilies automatically in a deficit situation. The Family Satisfaction Scale (FSS) devised by Carver and Jones (1992) is a 20-item self-report measure which looks at qualitative aspects such as satisfaction or happiness with one's family of origin rather than taking a primarily structural approach to family.

The FSS has been found to be a reliable measure with a coefficient alpha of .95 in tests of both college students and adults. It also has been found to be stable over time with a test-retest correlation of .88. A difference was found between males and females, as men reported greater satisfaction with their family of origin than did women. Validity was assessed by using the Family Assessment Measure and the Family Environment Scale. Strong correlations were found on most items examining positive emotional components of family interactions and relationships. In addition,

scores on all relationship dimensions and most of the personal growth dimensions assessed by the Family Environment Scale correlated with scores obtained on the FSS (Carver & Jones, 1992).

Social Network List

Interest in the role of one's social network has risen in recent years as research has shown social support to be a valuable buffer against the negative effects of stress. The word "network" implies social relations that are interwoven from belonging to several different groups that may intersect or overlap. As Mitchell and Trickett (1979) noted, the "concept of social network presents one way of cutting across these formal boundaries and examining the total social field within which the individual is embedded."

Hirsch (1979) was the first to use a list of one's social network in order to analyze relationships. Hirsch's basic approach was expanded in Jones (1984) and Jones and Moore (1987). On the Social Network List employed in the current study, respondents listed the initials of up to 15 significant others and provided their gender, the nature of the relationship (e.g., friend, sister), ethnicity, and the length of time in years they had known the people. They were then asked to rate on a 4-point Likert scale (1=false, 4=true) each of the persons according to the following twelve statements: "I am similar to this person"; "I

confide in this person"; "I have betrayed this relationship"; "I can turn to this person for help when I need it"; "I am satisfied with this relationship"; "I often have disagreements with this person"; "I love this person"; "I have been betrayed by this person"; "I often regret this relationship"; "I look up to and/or identify with this person"; "I resent this person sometimes"; and "I can depend on this person."

Biographical Questions

Respondents were also asked to provide demographic and biographical information about themselves. They were asked to give their age, gender, marital status, ethnic group, level of education, occupation, family income, father's level of education, stepfather's education (if applicable), and frequency of religious practices. Respondents were also asked to indicate whether they grew up with their mother and father, mother and stepfather, stepmother and father, mother only, father only, or to specify what other arrangement obtained. If their parents were not together then respondents were asked whether there had been a divorce, separation, the death of one or both parents, or other situation unspecified, and at what age for the respondent this had happened. They were further asked to state how long either their parents or parent and stepparent had been married and the age of the respondent when this happened.

If their parents were divorced, they were asked to estimate how often they saw the noncustodial parent. If they had lived in a stepfamily, they were asked to give the number of years they had spent in a single-parent family and whether their parent had remarried more than once. As to siblings, respondents were to list brothers and sisters and their ages. They were also asked whether they had stepbrothers or stepsisters and whether they lived in the same home as the respondent most of the time.

Based on previous research on children from stepfather families and on questions raised during the course of the literature review, several findings were expected from the measures administered:

1. Individuals from stepfather families are expected to differ on qualitative aspects of both family and peer relationships from individuals from biological families.
2. Individuals from stepfather families are expected to be similar to individuals from biological families on structural characteristics of relationships, such as number of relationships, length of time, percentage of immediate family, etc.

Further comparisons of the data are exploratory, and, therefore, no hypotheses are generated concerning these.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Analyses for the present study were divided into two categories. The first category, Primary Analyses, involved comparisons between types of family structure and gender on psychological variables obtained from the four psychometric measures and the social network list administered to respondents. On the other hand, Secondary Analyses consisted of comparisons of participants from intact biological families with participants who had lived in stepfamilies on measures of SES, father's education, and number of siblings and correlations of measures obtained from psychometric vs. social network measures. Further secondary analyses consisted of efforts to elucidate characteristics of stepfamily dynamics and to investigate differences in the social network composition by family type and gender. Primary analyses addressed the central hypotheses in the study regarding differences in relationship patterns between children from biologically intact families and children from stepfamilies. On the other hand, secondary analyses were conducted to detect more specific differences between gender

and family structure groups from the data set. Biographic comparisons, conducted as part of the secondary analyses, attempted to ascertain the comparability of the children from biological families to children from stepfamilies. Unless noted otherwise, all comparisons consisted of a series of 2 x 2 analyses of variance using the variables of gender (men vs. women) and family structure (biological vs. stepfather).

Primary Analyses

Psychological Variables

Comparisons of subjects on the four psychometric variables are presented in Table 1 and comparisons of participants by the psychological variables on the Social Network List are presented in Table 2. Both tables are organized by family type and gender. Several of the results were statistically significant. Family effects were observed for the Family Satisfaction Scale and the Parent subscale of the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment. On the Family Satisfaction Scale, men and women from biological families indicated greater satisfaction with their families than did men and women from stepfamilies. Similarly, on the Parent subscale of the IPPA, men and women from biological families endorsed greater parent attachment than did men and women from stepfamilies. As noted in Table 2, there were no significant family effects on the psychological dimensions

Table 1

Comparisons of family and gender groups on the psychometric measures.

	Means				F Ratios		
Variable	BS	BD	SS	SD	Fam.	Gen.	Int.
Lone.	35.81	34.03	40.66	32.32	1.04	6.76**	4.37*
Family	72.41	70.62	64.47	66.68	11.04**	.14	1.24
Parent	106.44	105.58	95.25	102.42	4.95*	.26	1.53
Peer	95.95	101.88	95.84	106.61	1.13	14.03**	1.26

Notes: df = 1, 210. * = p. < .05; ** = p. < .01. BS = biological sons; BD = biological daughters; SS = stepsons; SD = stepdaughters; Fam. = family type; Gen. = gender; Int. = interaction; Lone. = The UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980); Family = The Family Satisfaction Scale (Carver & Jones, 1992); Parent = Parent Attachment, Peer = Peer Attachment, The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987).

Table 2

Comparisons of family structure and gender groups on psychological dimensions of the social network.

	Means				F Ratios		
Variable	BS	BD	SS	SD	Fam.	Gen.	Int.
Similarity	3.24	3.29	3.09	3.22	1.60	1.22	.19
Confide in	3.33	3.38	3.31	3.31	.29	.11	.05
Betrayal of	1.64	1.64	1.70	1.47	.27	1.21	1.27
Turn to/help	3.56	3.61	3.50	3.67	.00	2.27	.63
Satisfaction	3.50	3.42	3.28	3.52	.52	.86	3.41
Disagreements	2.22	2.08	2.17	1.97	.49	2.05	.06
Love	3.58	3.83	3.66	3.88	1.08	14.68**	.05
Betrayal by	1.50	1.50	1.68	1.47	.63	1.13	1.27
Regret	1.22	1.24	1.23	1.19	.10	.03	.31
Idealization	3.34	3.37	3.03	3.34	2.97	3.07	1.86
Resentment	1.68	1.57	1.79	1.78	1.99	.28	.25
Depend on	3.60	3.62	3.56	3.70	.07	1.13	.65

Notes: df = 1, 186. * = p. < .05; ** = p. < .01. BS = biological sons; BD = biological daughters; SS = stepsons; SD = stepdaughters; Fam. = family type; Gen. = gender; Int. = interaction.

of the Social Network List.

Comparisons of gender groups yielded several significant findings. Results from the four psychometric measures, presented in Table 1, indicated that men were lonelier than women and were less attached to their peers than women. Although there was not a significant gender effect, it should be noted that men in stepfamilies were notably less attached to their parents than any of the other three groups. On the Social Network List (see Table 2), a gender effect was observed for love toward persons listed, with women as compared with men indicating, on average, greater love of persons listed. None of the other analyses, i.e., similar to, confide in, betrayal of, turn to for help, satisfaction with relationship, disagreements with, betrayal by, regret relationship, idealization of, resentment of, or depend on, yielded significant effects.

An interaction between family type and gender was found on the UCLA Loneliness Scale with men from stepfamilies endorsing the greatest degree of loneliness and women from stepfamilies endorsing the lowest degree of loneliness. An examination of the means suggests that the interaction is a result of the particularly high mean for men from stepfather families and the comparatively low mean for women from stepfather families. The means for the other two groups (i.e., men from biological families and women from biological families) are close to the means obtained by

Russell, Peplau, and Cutrona (1980) on the Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale.

Structural Variables

Structural characteristics of the social network are presented in Table 3. Mean statistics are given for the number of individuals listed in the social network, the number of years each individual has been known, and the age of persons listed. Percentages are given for the proportion of immediate family members (i.e., mother, father, stepmother, stepfather, brother, sister, stepbrother, stepsister, etc.), the proportion of extended family members (i.e., grandparents, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, etc.), and the proportion of friends listed on the social network list.

The social network of respondents from stepfather families differed significantly from the social network of respondents from biological families on two variables: size of social network and percent of extended family listed. The social network list of the respondents from stepfather families contained significantly more people than the social network list of those from biological families with stepchildren listing more than ten people and biological children listing less than nine. The difference in the size of the social networks is accounted for primarily by the listing of more extended family members by respondents from

Table 3

Comparisons of family and gender groups on structural characteristics of the social network.

	Means				*F* Ratios		
Variable	BS	BD	SS	SD	Fam.	Gen.	Int.
Size	8.05	9.51	10.03	10.84	7.61**	5.34*	.29
M Length	12.56	11.75	10.67	11.51	2.95	.00	1.76
M Age	31.11	30.37	31.83	31.46	.90	.34	.04
% Men	.57	.41	.58	.38	.25	50.30**	.66
% Imm. Fam.	.41	.38	.40	.36	.08	1.00	.06
% Ext. Fam.	.07	.08	.12	.14	5.37*	.37	.06
% Friends	.52	.54	.47	.49	2.16	.37	.02

Notes: *df* = 1, 214. * = *p*. < .05; ** = *p*. < .01. BS = biological sons; BD = biological daughters; SS = stepsons; SD = stepdaughters; Fam. = family type; Gen. = gender; Int. = interaction; Imm. Fam. = immediate family; Ext. Fam. = extended family.

stepfather families than by respondents from biological families. There was also a gender effect for size of the social network list, with women listing more people than men. In addition to the gender effect for size of the social network, there was also a difference by gender for the percent of men listed. That is, men listed a greater percentage of men in their social networks than women did.

There were no significant differences in length of time respondents had known people on the social network list, age of persons on the list, percent of immediate family listed, or percent of friends listed.

Secondary Analyses

Biographic Analyses

Respondents were compared on a number of biographic variables in order to assess the comparability of the sample by family type and gender. The results of the biographic analyses are presented in Table 4. Differences in father's education, religious attendance, and number of siblings were not significant on either dimension of family type or gender. However, differences by age, education of the respondent, age of siblings, and family income were significant by family type. Respondents from stepfather families were younger by approximately one and a half years. They also had less education than respondents from biological families. Further, those from stepfather

Table 4

Comparisons of family and gender groups on biographic variables.

	Means				*F* Ratios		
Variable	BS	BD	SS	SD	Fam.	Gen.	Int.
Age	21.73	21.70	20.22	19.94	7.35**	.04	.04
Educ.	14.72	14.62	14.03	14.26	7.69**	.01	.80
F's Educ.	16.07	15.82	15.65	14.77	2.54	1.04	.48
Fam. Inc.	2.29	1.91	1.66	1.13	11.36**	4.97*	.12
Rel. Att.	45.82	43.16	34.42	39.16	1.82	.00	.43
Siblings	1.55	1.56	1.22	1.42	1.88	.19	.31
Sib. Age	21.55	23.17	17.98	18.80	10.29**	1.54	.11

Notes: *df* = 1, 210. * = *p*. < .05; ** = *p*. < .01. BS = biological sons; BD = biological daughters; SS = stepsons; SD = stepdaughters; F's Educ. = father's education in years; Fam. Inc. = family income; Rel. Att. = religious attendance in days per year; Sib. Age = mean age of siblings; Fam. = family type; Gen. = gender; Int. = interaction.

families reported a lower family income than did those from biological families. In addition, those from stepfather families reported younger average age of siblings by approximately three years.

Correlational Analyses

Two sets of correlational analyses were performed on the data. First, psychological variables from the social network and the psychometric measures were correlated for biological families and stepfather families separately. Second, the structural variables from the social network and the psychometric measures were separately compared among respondents from biological families and from stepfather families. These results are reported in Tables 5 and 6.

Psychological Characteristics

Loneliness. A number of correlations between loneliness and psychological variables were significant for individuals both from biological families and stepfather families, as reported in Table 5. For both family types, loneliness was negatively associated with feelings of similarity, satisfaction, and idealization, and with the sense that one could turn to for help or depend on people listed in the social network. Loneliness was positively associated for both family types with regret and having been betrayed by persons on the social network list.

Table 5

Correlations between relationship variables and psychological social network variables.

	Biological Families				Stepfamilies			
Variable	Lone.	Family	Parent	Peer	Lone.	Family	Parent	Peer
Similarity	-.46**	.35**	.41**	.36**	-.52**	.28**	.50**	.24
Confide	-.38**	.39**	.44**	.35**	-.17	.27*	.33*	.06
Betrayal of	.19*	-.10	-.06	-.13	.26	-.19	-.25	-.36**
Turn to/help	-.46**	.30**	.36**	.32**	-.38**	.32*	.33**	.33*
Satisfaction	-.48**	.43**	.38**	.33**	-.55**	.57**	.54**	.35**
Disagreements	.16	-.08	-.06	-.16	.35**	-.33*	-.29*	-.28*
Love	-.33**	.18*	.18*	.18*	-.21	.08	.20	.08
Betrayal by	.41**	-.27**	-.24**	-.25**	.38**	-.35**	-.36**	-.37**
Regret	.36**	-.24**	-.26**	-.21	.31*	-.50**	-.44**	-.16
Idealization	-.31**	.27**	.34**	.28**	-.28*	.20	.37**	.34**

Table 5 (continued)

	Biological Families				Stepfamilies			
Variable	Lone.	Family	Parent	Peer	Lone.	Family	Parent	Peer
Resentment	.51**	-.43**	-.41**	-.41**	.22	-.36**	-.34**	-.31*
Depend on	-.41**	.35**	.37**	.30**	-.34**	.46**	.40**	.34**

Notes: * = p. < .05; ** = p. < .01. Lone. = The UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980); Family = The Family Satisfaction Scale (Carver & Jones, 1992); Parent = Parent Attachment, Peer = Peer Attachment, The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987).

Table 6

Correlations between relationship variables and structural social network variables.

	Biological Families				Stepfamilies			
Variable	Lone.	Family	Parent	Peer	Lone.	Family	Parent	Peer
Size	-.25**	.23**	.20*	.19*	-.21	.21	.18	.30*
Mean Length	-.06	.13	.09	-.12	-.14	.04	.14	.06
Mean Age	.16	.04	-.02	-.25	-.12	-.04	-.05	-.13
% Men	.16*	.05	-.04	-.15	.18	-.14	-.07	-.19
% Imm. Fam.	-.03	.07	.05	-.08	-.04	.01	.03	-.08
% Ext. Fam.	.02	.14	.08	-.04	-.03	-.05	.04	.14
% Friends	-.17*	-.01	.01	.19*	.06	.04	-.06	-.04

Notes: * = p. < .05; ** = p. < .01. % Imm. Fam. = % Immediate Family; % Ext. Fam. = % Extended Family; Lone. = The UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980); Family = The Family Satisfaction Scale (Carver & Jones, 1992); Parent = Parent Attachment, Peer = Peer Attachment, The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987).

Several correlations were significant for individuals from biological families but not for those from stepfamilies. Respondents from biological families who reported high scores on loneliness were also less willing to confide in and were less likely to love people on their social network list. Respondents from biological families who scored high on loneliness also reported resentment and having betrayed people in their social network. On the other hand, respondents from stepfamilies with high scores on loneliness were more likely to have disagreements with people in their social network.

Family Satisfaction. For respondents from both family types, family satisfaction was correlated with feelings of one was similar to, could confide in, could turn to for help, satisfaction with the relationship, and could depend on people they had listed on the social network as noted in Table 5. Family satisfaction was negatively related to having been betrayed by, regret, and resentment for both family types.

For respondents from stepfamilies, family satisfaction was negatively associated with disagreements with people on the social network. Respondents from biological families who reported high scores of love and idealization for those in their social network also reported higher levels of family satisfaction.

Parent and Peer Attachment. A number of strong positive correlations were found between responses to items on the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment and psychological variables on the social network list as illustrated in Table 5. Respondents from both biological families and stepfamilies who had strong parental attachment also reported feelings of similarity, satisfaction, and idealization. There were strong associations between parent attachment and a sense that one could confide in, depend on, and turn to those listed for help. People from both family types who were low in parent attachment reported significantly greater betrayal by, resentment of, and regret for relationships listed. Respondents from biological families who endorsed high parent attachment also acknowledged feelings of love more frequently for those in their social network. A negative correlation was found for respondents from stepfamilies between parent attachment and disagreements with people in the social network.

Correlations between peer attachment and social network variables produced some interesting results. Respondents from both family types who endorsed high peer attachment reported higher satisfaction, dependability, turning to for help, and idealization, and reported less resentment and betrayal by people on the social network list. In contrast, only respondents from biological families demonstrated an association between high peer attachment and love. And

people from stepfamilies who endorsed high peer attachment were significantly less likely to have betrayed those on their social network list.

Structural Characteristics

Results of the correlations between relationship variables from the psychometric tests and structural variables from the social network list are found in Table 6.

Size of social network. All correlations between number of people listed in the social network and the psychometric variables were significant for biological families. That is, for respondents from biological families, there was a negative correlation between the number of people listed and reports of loneliness, and a positive correlation between number of people listed and family satisfaction and attachment to parents and peers. For stepfamilies only peer attachment was associated with length of the social network.

Two other correlations were significant for respondents from biological families. Those who reported high peer attachment listed a larger percentage of friends on the social network list, and those who had low scores on loneliness listed a larger percentage of friends on the social network.

Immediate/extended family. As noted earlier, stepchildren had significantly longer social network lists and listed more extended family. Comparisons of the specific relatives listed are found in Table 7. Family effects were present for a number of relationships. Stepchildren listed their fathers significantly less often than did biological children, but stepchildren listed grandmothers and aunts more often than did biological children. In addition, their relationships included stepfathers, stepmothers, and stepsiblings which the biological children did not have. A trend toward listing cousins was found for stepdaughters, but not stepsons.

Analyses of Stepfather Families

Several questions were derived from the current literature on stepfamilies and family relationships, including the level of family conflict, the effect of the child's age at time of remarriage, patterns of visitation with the noncustodial parent, and the impact of serial marriages by one's parents.

Level of family conflict. Four specific items, two from the Family Satisfaction Scale and two from the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment, were selected to analyze level of family conflict. An analysis of variance was performed on each of them and the results are presented

Table 7

Comparisons of relatives on the Social Network List.

	Means				F Ratios		
Variable	BS	BD	SS	SD	Fam.	Gen.	Int.
% Brother	.06	.06	.06	.04	.95	.35	.26
% Sister	.08	.07	.04	.06	3.06	.00	1.05
% Mother	.12	.10	.12	.09	.84	4.20*	.22
% Father	.12	.11	.07	.08	9.86**	.42	.75
% Cousin	.02	.02	.01	.04	1.47	1.56	2.05
% Aunt	.01	.01	.02	.03	9.53**	.01	.09
% Uncle	.01	.00	.01	.01	.26	2.73	1.48
% Stepfather	.00	.00	.06	.05	126.98**	.44	2.18
% Stepmother	.00	.01	.01	.03	12.02**	5.00*	1.47
% Grandmother	.01	.02	.05	.05	18.46**	2.04	.43
% Grandfather	.02	.01	.01	.02	.07	.93	.69
% Son	.00	.01	.00	.00	.52	.67	.57
% Daughter	.00	.01	.00	.00	.23	2.78	1.13
% Husband	.00	.01	.00	.01	.01	4.17*	.01
% Wife	.00	.00	.00	.00	.07	1.91	.07
% Nephew	.00	.00	.00	.00	.40	.97	.40
% Niece	.00	.00	.00	.00	1.63	4.00*	1.66
% Stepbrother	.00	.00	.01	.01	14.27**	.02	.36
% Stepsister	.00	.00	.01	.01	7.72**	.10	.57
% In-laws	.00	.01	.01	.00	.10	.60	2.40

Table 7 (continued)

Note: df = 1, 214; * = p < .05; ** = p < .01; BS = biological son; BD = biological daughter; SS = stepson; SD = stepdaughter; Fam. = family type; Gen. = gender; Int. = interaction.

in Table 8. On the items stating that "There is too muchconflict in my family" and "I feel angry with my parents," stepchildren were more likely to concur than were biological children. The other two items, "I am never sure what the rules are from day to day" and "I get easily upset at home," there was a trend for stepchildren to endorse these more often than biological children but it was not significant.

Age when entering stepfamily. Because the literature suggests that the child's age at the time of remarriage predicts adjustment to the new stepparent (e.g., Mills, 1984; Hetherington, et al., 1982) with adolescents having a more difficult transition than younger children, a t-test was performed for age at the time of remarriage with the four psychometric variables. The data were divided into two age groups (less than 13 years old, 13-20 years old). The results are found in Table 9. No significant differences were found between the two groups on the relationship measures.

Visitation with the noncustodial parent. Various studies have reported effects for amount of contact between stepchildren and the noncustodial parent. In this study, respondents were asked about frequency of visits with their noncustodial parents in the past and at present. The

Table 8

Comparisons on individual conflict items by family type and gender.

	Means				F Ratios		
Variable	BS	BD	SS	SD	Fam.	Gen.	Int.
I am never sure what the rules are from day to day. (FSS)	4.37	4.14	3.91	4.10	2.90	.58	1.89
There is too much conflict in my family. (FSS)	3.89	3.77	3.03	2.94	20.17**	.47	.01
I get easily upset at home. (IPPA)	3.61	3.29	3.13	3.19	2.30	1.46	1.06
I feel angry with my parents. (IPPA)	4.11	3.88	3.38	3.52	9.95*	.54	1.09

Note: df = 1, 214; * = p < .05; ** = p < .01; BS = biological sons; BD = biological daughters; SS = stepsons; SD = stepdaughters; Fam. = family type; Gen. = gender; Int. = interaction; FSS = Family Satisfaction Scale (Carver & Jones, 1992); IPPA = Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987).

Table 9

Comparisons of age at time of parent's remarriage on the psychometric measures.

	Means		*t* Ratios
Variable	<13 yrs. old	13-20 yrs. old	
n	37	18	
Lone.	36.70	34.72	.66
Family	63.97	67.39	-.96
Parent	96.41	102.00	-.90
Peer	100.81	101.89	-.24

Notes: *df* = 53; * = *p*. < .05; ** = *p*. < .01. Group 1 = < 13 years old; Group 2 = 13 to 20 years old; Lone. = The UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980); Family = The Family Satisfaction Scale (Carver & Jones, 1992); Parent = Parent Attachment, Peer = Peer Attachment, The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987).

results are found in Table 10. Fifty-seven respondents indicated the number of days per year they currently seetheir noncustodial parent, and sixty-two respondents indicated the number of days per year they customarily saw their noncustodial parent in the past. For both groups the number of days was correlated with the four relationship measures. Frequent current visits with the noncustodial parent were associated with greater family satisfaction and parent attachment and with lower scores of loneliness. There were no significant relationships between past visitation patterns and the four measures.

Serial families. Recent literature suggests that there may be a relationship between serial marriages (i.e., 3 or more marriages) by the child's parents and adjustment and relationship problems in the child (Brody, Neubaum, & Forehand, 1988). A one-way analysis of variance was performed among stepfather families on the four psychometric measures based on whether or not their parent had been married three times or more. The results are given in Table 11. Of the 64 respondents, fifteen reported parents who had engaged in serial marriages. No significant differences were found between the two groups on the relationship measures.

Table 10

Correlations between frequency of visitation with noncustodial parent and relationship measures.

	Visitation Frequency	
Variable	Present	Past
Lone.	-.24	.09
Family	.27*	.10
Parent	.31*	.09
Peer	.22	.08

Notes: * = p. < .05; ** = p. < .01. Lone. = The UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980); Family = The Family Satisfaction Scale (Carver & Jones, 1992); Parent = Parent Attachment, Peer = Peer Attachment, The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armsden & Greenberg, 1988).

Table 11

Comparisons of stepchildren whose parents have married twice or more.

Variable	Means		F Ratios
	2 Marriages	>2 Marriages	
n	49	15	
Lone.	35.65	36.00	.01
Family	66.94	64.27	.56
Parent	99.16	102.00	.18
Peer	100.92	103.60	.35

Notes: df = 1, 62. * = p. < .05, ** = p. <.01. 2 Marriages = parent married 2 times; >2 Marriages = parent married 3 or more times. Lone = The UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980); Family = The Family Satisfaction Scale (Carver & Jones, 1992); Parent = Parent Attachment, Peer = Peer Attachment, The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987).

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The present study examined the differences between young adults from stepfather families and young adults from biological families with respect to personality and relationship issues. Previous research has reported inconsistent results: some studies have found significant differences between children from stepfamilies and children from biological families, whereas other studies describe similar patterns for both groups. Results from the present study suggest that stepfamilies do have some distinctive characteristics, but in other areas children from these families are very much like children still living with both biological parents.

Relationship Variations

The most notable finding in the comparisons of psychological variables was the degree of loneliness endorsed by males from stepfather families. It is known that men generally report more loneliness than women (Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980), but in the present study

the effect was even more exaggerated for men from stepfather families. This finding was surprising in light of the literature which suggests that sons adjust well to their mother's remarriage in comparison to daughters (Hetherington, et al., 1982). Prior to remarriage, from the time of separation and divorce and perhaps preceding it, sons typically have a difficult and antagonistic relationship with their mothers (Hetherington, et al., 1982), while daughters tend to regard their mothers positively (Fine, et al., 1983). Upon their mother's remarriage, sons gain another male with whom to identify in the new stepfather. They also show increased intellectual performance and less life stress after their mother's remarriage, but they may still have some behavior problems (Bray, 1988).

Stepdaughters in the present study also do not conform to the findings of previous research which indicates that stepdaughters will respond poorly to the new stepfamily (Bray, 1988; Hetherington, 1992). In this study, stepdaughters as well as stepsons were less attached to their parents and indicated less family satisfaction than sons and daughters from biological families, but stepdaughters were the least lonely and the most attached to their peers of all four groups. According to earlier studies, stepdaughters, who have usually enjoyed a close relationship with their mothers during the single parent

phase, have difficulty adjusting to the new family arrangement when their mothers remarry (Bowerman & Irish, 1962; Clingempeel, et al., 1984; Hetherington, 1992). After remarriage, they become sullen, withdrawn, and hostile toward both their mothers and their new stepfathers. The findings of the present study are congruent with previous research on stepdaughters with respect to their having less satisfaction with family relationships compared to biological sons and daughters. However, the means for stepdaughters were higher than those for stepsons, suggesting that, at least in this sample, the stepdaughters seemed to be more content with their stepfamily than stepsons.

Stepdaughters, unlike stepsons, seemed to turn to others outside the home to compensate for whatever difficulties they might be having with their stepfamily. Both biological daughters and stepdaughters endorsed less loneliness and more peer attachment, with stepdaughters indicating that they were even more oriented toward relationships with others than any of the other three groups. Previous research found that stepdaughters often do disengage from the family, but they are then more likely to become involved in substance use and antisocial or delinquent behaviors (Hetherington, 1992, Kalter, 1977, Perry & Pfuhl, 1963). The current study did not specifically look at the latter factors, but it may be that

the fact that it was a college population would make it somewhat less likely that delinquent and antisocial behaviors would be prevalent.

Perhaps the stepsons' greater loneliness and the stepdaughters' greater attachment to peers may be explained by relating Steinberg's (1989) distancing hypothesis to Bowerman and Irish's contention that stepfamilies are not as close as biological families. That is, according to Steinberg, adolescents must distance themselves from their parents in order to move toward the responsibility and autonomy of adulthood. As Hetherington (1992) observed, this process may be exacerbated for stepchildren who may already feel some alienation with the addition of a new parent.

Results from the present study, taken together, suggest that males may be especially vulnerable to the stepchild experience in ways not measured by other studies. Men may be, in general, less adaptive to relationship changes than women, and their parents' divorce may be an interpersonal disruption from which they do not completely recover even if their mother remarries (e.g., Dornbusch, et al., 1985). The loss of traditional family commitments may be compounded for them by their lack of interpersonal resources to compensate for such a loss. Dornbusch, et al. (1985), concluded, from their study of deviance, that "something about the internal processes of stepparent families has a stronger negative

impact on male adolescents than on female adolescents." In addition, the withdrawal or removal from the family by adolescents which Steinberg (1989) noted, was more pronounced for males than for females. This deficit in relationships and adaptability was evident in the current study in the results of the loneliness scale, which measures a sense of universal malaise that makes it difficult for one to trust others or to feel that others are worth getting to know.

Such vulnerability may arise, in part, from the consequences of divorce, which include discomfort and trauma (Landau, et al., 1978) as well as financial constraints, anxiety, and low parent-child interaction (Shinn, 1978), although that does not explain the differential impact on men versus women in stepfamilies. It is also known that, over the long term, divorce is more difficult for sons than for daughters, so that in adulthood they have more psychological sequelae from their parents' divorce but are less likely to seek professional help (Kulka and Weingarten, 1979).

Comparison of the social network list characteristics, however, indicated that both men and women from stepfather families listed more people on their social network list than men and women from biological families. The difference was in the listing of more extended family members by the stepchildren, which can be explained, in part, by the

addition of new relatives in forming a stepfamily, especially the stepfather and stepsiblings. Further, children from stepfather families are more likely to include grandmothers and aunts than are children from biological families. There was also a trend for stepdaughters to include cousins among their close relationships. The importance of extended family relationships may derive from support extended to the single-parent families once the nuclear family has separated. Types of support which affect the children may include emotional nurturance, child care, shelter, and financial assistance. The finding that people from stepfamilies list more extended family among their social network is intriguing, however, in view of previous research which observed that the single-parent family, in contrast to intact nuclear families, often withdraws from family and social networks (Papernow, 1984), except in cases where they move in with extended family which leads to a different set of stressors (Longfellow, 1979). It may be that while living with and depending on the extended family is stressful for the single parent, it is an asset for the children after divorce and separation. Another possibility is that with the restoration of a two-parent family and the passage of time from the immediate pain of the breakup of the original family, connections to various extended family members are reestablished at some level.

Even though people from stepfamilies listed more

extended family than people from biological families, the difference does not necessarily contradict the findings of greater loneliness and alienation for stepsons on the psychometric measures. Instead, it more likely points up the difference between qualitative and quantitative measures and the importance of using both types. That is, although stepfamily offspring may list more people, the relationships themselves, particularly for the men, may not be as satisfying as they are for those who list fewer but perhaps more intense relationships. Put another way, stepsons indicated that they had more relationships than did biological sons or daughters, but they may feel less connected and satisfied with these relationships, especially in comparison to the females in the study. With respect to intensity of relationships, women were also more likely acknowledge that they loved people in their social network than men were.

Not surprisingly, the present study also found that men and women from biological families were more satisfied with their families and more attached to their parents than men and women from stepfamilies. Intuitively, it makes sense to acknowledge that there is likely to be less satisfaction and parent attachment by children in a stepfamily, because they know the stepparent less well and there have probably been negotiations, difficult at times, to incorporate the various styles and beliefs into the new family. Biological families

generally encounter these battles earlier and without the introduction of new adults into the nuclear family system. It would be difficult for stepfamilies to achieve the same satisfaction and attachments in a few years that biological families have built from the inception of the marriage and the birth of the children. These results were consistent with much of the research on stepfamilies. The landmark study by Bowerman and Irish (1962) concluded that stepfamilies lacked the closeness and acceptance of biological families. Similarly, Cherlin (1978) asserted that stepfamilies lack the institutional norms of biological families and hence must learn to function without clear guidelines or expectations. These findings have been reiterated in work by Bray (1988), Peek et al. (1988), Perkins and Kahan (1979), and Ganong and Coleman (1987b).

Overall, however, fewer differences were found between the two family types on the psychometric measures and the psychological variables than the literature suggests (Tables 1 and 2). Children from stepfather families did not appear as psychologically distressed or as alienated from their families as they have in other studies. Also, the pattern of endorsing psychological variables on the social networks of men and women from stepfather families resembled those of men and women from biological families. That is, both groups tended to endorse similar items with approximately the same intensity. This finding also held up when applied

to correlations between the social network and the measures of loneliness, family satisfaction, and parent and peer attachment (Table 5). For example, those respondents who stated that they felt similar to and were satisfied with people on their social network list also acknowledged low levels of loneliness and high levels of family satisfaction and parent and peer attachment, regardless of family type. This pattern seems to speak to the reliability of the measures chosen. It may also be the result of looking at family and peer relationships in a way that few other studies have. That is, except for Burchinal (1964), few, if any, studies have examined relationships outside the home except to look at delinquency. The relative lack of significant results may also be an artifact of using a college sample, indicating that stepchildren who are able to go to college may be different than those who are not.

Some trends in the correlational analyses did point to a difference between the two family groups, however. For children from stepfather families, there was a significant correlation between frequent disagreements with people in their social network and high scores on loneliness and low scores on family satisfaction and parent and peer attachment. In contrast, children from biological families had no significant correlations between disagreements with those in their social network and their degree of loneliness, family satisfaction, or parent and peer

attachment. On the other hand, children from biological families who expressed love toward those in their social network had lower loneliness scores and higher scores for family satisfaction and parent and peer attachment. Stepchildren showed the same trends but these were not significant. This finding suggests that affiliation is greater and perhaps easier for men and women from biological families, whereas men and women from stepfather families experience more alienation and contentiousness in their relationships.

Other differences between the two family types were specific to just one measure. Children from biological families, but not those from stepfamilies, were more likely to endorse similarity with and confiding in those they relate to and high peer attachment. On the other hand, children from biological families who were lonelier were less likely to confide in their relationships; stepchildren had the same trend but it was not significant. Biological children who were lonelier were also more likely to resent those in their social network, but stepchildren were not to a significant degree. Biological children who were satisfied with their families expressed more idealization of their relationships than did stepchildren, suggesting some degree of disenchantment in stepchildren that has not occurred for biological children. Finally, for biological children, having betrayed someone was correlated with

loneliness, while for stepchildren having betrayed someone was associated with low peer attachment. Often these effects were in the same direction for both groups but only one group achieved significance, and some of them may be the result of small sample size for the stepfamily group.

Stepfamily Issues

Level of Conflict

Level of conflict, an important issue in family functioning, appears to be higher among the stepchildren than among the biological children. Stepchildren were significantly more likely to endorse items stating that "There is too much conflict in my family" and "I feel angry with my parents." There was also a trend for them to feel that they were unsure about what the rules were from day to day, which indicates some inconsistency or disagreement among family members, and to get easily upset at home. Whether stepfamilies are experiencing both adolescent rebellion and the problems of a parent relatively new to the family or just one of these difficulties is not clear. This finding may also help explain the greater loneliness among stepsons and the greater connection with peers among stepdaughters, as efforts to distance themselves from conflict at home.

Age at Remarriage and Serial Marriages

In this study, there appear to be few variations among the stepchildren. For all stepchildren in the sample, age at the time of the parent's remarriage and number of times the parent had remarried did not signal more loneliness, less family satisfaction, or less attachment to parents or peers, although the literature suggests that children who are younger when their parent remarries adjust better (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1990; Mills, 1984) and that children whose parents marry more than twice are more likely to be different psychologically from those whose parents marry twice (Brody, et al., 1988). It may be that in sampling a college population, the participants come from stepfamilies that are functioning at a higher level than those that cannot find the resources for the children's higher education, although higher socioeconomic status is not always associated with better psychological adjustment.

Visitation with the Biological Father

Current visitation patterns with the noncustodial parent, in this case the father, did correlate with family satisfaction and parent attachment. As time spent with the biological father increased, stepchildren endorsed greater family satisfaction and parent attachment. Loneliness was also somewhat lower for stepchildren who saw their fathers more often. Interestingly, a similar relationship was not

found between past visitation frequency and the measures used in this study. Despite the general tendency for visits with the father to diminish or disappear over time, these results affirm the findings of previous researchers (Furstenberg & Nord, 1985; Ahrons, 1980; Seltzer & Bianchi, 1988) that the ongoing presence of the noncustodial father in the child's life has a positive influence on the development of successful social relationships. Such contact was especially desired by adolescents (Strother & Jacobs, 1984; Lutz, 1983).

Limitations of the Present Study

Several limitations qualify the results of the present research. First, comparability between the children from biological families and those from stepfather families was achieved on some dimensions but not on others. Father's level of education was not significantly different for the two family types, but a related variable, family socioeconomic status, was higher for biological families than for stepfather families. Stepfather families could be burdened by the stepfather's alimony and/or child support payments, by lower job status, by loss of child support for children in the current stepfamily, or by some other variable not accounted for here. Day and Bahr (1986) found that men were financially better off after divorce, but women were better off after remarriage. There have been few

studies of stepfamily economics, and more are certainly needed. It has also been noted that it is more difficult for a child of divorced parents to go to college, the source of this sample, than for a child from a biologically intact family.

The sample also varied by family type of the participants in age and in the amount of education. Children from biological families were older and had finished approximately one more semester of their studies than the stepchildren. These differences are difficult to explain, because samples were drawn from volunteers from the undergraduate general psychology classes at a large university. Both family types were comparable in number of siblings and in attendance at religious services, although each of these was lower for stepfamilies.

Other limitations derive from methodological problems. As just noted, the participants were drawn from a college population and were volunteers, i.e., they were not a random sample. Another limitation may be the use of self-report measures exclusively, although each of the four instruments used in this study has been tested for social desirability, reliability, and validity.

Finally, the present study is limited by its cross-sectional design and relatively small sample size. The cross-sectional approach misses the change over time that occurs in families. By the time the men and women from

stepfamilies have reached college, they are likely to have witnessed many family transitions. Some of these may have been conflictual and traumatic. Even where transitions are relatively smooth, a significant loss of frequent, almost daily, contact with the biological father has usually occurred. In some cases, he has withdrawn even further. Some stepchildren may have a supportive, nonresident biological father, but must deal with a difficult remarriage by either the mother or father that involves having to negotiate a relationship with a stepparent who is new and relatively unfamiliar at best and incompatible and abusive for the stepchild at worst. In sum, even when we can surmise that stepchildren have had different experiences and relationships than children from biological families, we are unable to know precisely which events and processes in their past were responsible for the differences. Some information about intervening variables was available from the questionnaire. However, to calculate age at divorce, age at remarriage, presence of stepsiblings, and other potential analyses would diminish the power of the primary analyses, especially when the sample size is relatively small.

Conclusion

Despite the limitations of the present study it adds to our understanding of differences in relationships between men and women who have been in stepfamilies and those who

have not. In particular, this study suggests the following conclusions:

1. Men who live in stepfamilies seem to have more tenuous relationships than women from stepfamilies and men and women from biological families. Although stepsons maintain connections to extended family just as stepdaughters do, the stepsons typically experience greater loneliness than any other group studied here.
2. Women from stepfamilies appear to adapt more readily than men from stepfamilies to family transitions by relying on friends and extended family to compensate for changing relationships in the home.
3. Women in stepfamilies have peer relationships that are strong or stronger than men in stepfamilies or men and women in biological families.

Why men in stepfamilies are especially vulnerable in their relationships and the subtleties of their relationship differences remain to be studied. Even though these young men may welcome the advent of a new male when they acquire a stepfather, some need is unmet. Based on the results of this study, it may be partially explained by the positive influence on social relations of ongoing contact with the absent father.

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