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COUPLES' BELIEFS IN MYTHS ABOUT
MARRIAGE, REMARRIAGE, AND PARENTING

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was (a) to explore what couples who are making the transition to marriage believe about marriage, remarriage, and parenting, (b) to determine any differences between males and females, and first married couples and remarried couples in beliefs about marriage, remarriage, and parenting, (c) to determine any interaction effects between the variables of gender and marital status for beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, or parenting, and (d) to investigate the predictive power of sociodemographic variables on couples' beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting.

The convenience sample for this study included 75 ($N = 150$) couples preparing to make the transition to marriage from two Tennessee counties: Knox County and Hamilton County. Sociodemographic data indicated that 48% of the couples in the sample were preparing for their first marriage and 50% were preparing for a remarriage. The majority of the sample were White Americans, had completed a college degree, were employed full-time, and were aged 20-29 years. The average length of engagement for the couples was 0-6 months. In addition, 43% of the couples making the transition to marriage had children.

In the present study, data analyses revealed no significant gender or marital status (i.e., first married couples versus remarried couples) differences

or interaction effects between the variables of gender and marital status for the sample. Regression analyses indicated that (a) the model that included educational level was predictive of beliefs in myths about marriage for the total sample and for females, (b) the model comprised of educational level, income level, and age was predictive of beliefs in myths about remarriage for the total sample, (c) the model that included educational level was predictive of beliefs in myths about remarriage for males, and (d) the model for beliefs in myths about parenting for the total sample, males, or females contained no significant sociodemographic predictors.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Rationale	3
Purpose of Study	4
Objectives of the Study	5
Theoretical Basis for the Study	5
Nominal Definitions	10
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	12
Marriage Myths	14
Remarriage Myths	18
Parenting Myths	21
Summary of Literature Review	25
III. METHOD	27
Selection of the Sample	27
Description of the Sample	29
Instrumentation	31
Marriage and Family Quiz	31
Validity and Reliability of the Marriage and Family Quiz	38
Scoring the Marriage and Family Quiz	40
Personal History Inventory	41
Procedures	41
Data Collection	41
Data Management	42
Data Analyses	43
Operational Definitions	45
Hypotheses of the Study	46
IV. RESULTS	48
Descriptive Statistics	48
Males	54
Females	55
Test of Hypotheses 1	56
Test of Hypotheses 2	58
Test of Hypotheses 3	58
Test of Hypotheses 4	60
Males	64
Females	64

CHAPTER	PAGE
V. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION	68
Conclusions from the Study	68
Discussion	69
Males	75
Females	75
Implications for Theory	76
Implications for Research	78
Implications for Practice	80
Limitations of the Study	83
Summary	86
REFERENCES	88
APPENDICES	97
APPENDIX A	98
APPENDIX B	103
APPENDIX C	104
VITA	113

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
1. Sample Means, Ranges, Standard Deviations, and Cronbach's Alpha on Scales from Marriage and Family Quiz	49
2. Item Means, Standard Deviations, and Percentages of Participant Agreement with the Myth	50
3. Analysis of Variance for Beliefs in Myths about Marriage (The Marriage Scale)	57
4. Analysis of Variance for Beliefs in Myths about Remarriage (The Remarriage Scale)	59
5. Analysis of Variance for Beliefs in Myths about Parenting (The Parenting Scale)	61
6. Stepwise Regression Model of Sociodemographic Predictors of Beliefs in Myths about Marriage, Remarriage, and Parenting for the Sample	63
7. Stepwise Regression Model of Sociodemographic Predictors of Beliefs in Myths about Remarriage for Males	65
8. Stepwise Regression Model of Sociodemographic Predictors of Beliefs in Myths about Remarriage for Females	67

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

According to the United States Bureau of the Census (1992), approximately 2.4 million couples are married each year. In contrast, the same census reported that approximately 1.2 million couples divorce each year. Ganong and Coleman (1994) reported that almost one-third of divorced individuals remarry within a year of their divorces. In fact, half of all reported marriages involved at least one previously married partner (Bader, Sinclair & Microys, 1990; Ganong & Coleman, 1994). Therefore, one might ask the question: Why do we as a society believe so strongly in the institution of marriage, yet have so much difficulty with it?

Carter and McGoldrick (1989) hypothesized that failure to renegotiate family status is the main reason for marital failure. Renegotiation is critical during the couple's transition from being single to being married. Many people consider marriage as the joining of two individuals. However, Carter and McGoldrick (1989) suggested that marriage really represents the changing of two entire systems combining together to overlap in developing a third subsystem. Marriage is a very real and intimate bond in which people come to know each other in ways they have never known another person before (Arond & Pauker, 1987). In contemporary society, marriage is considered to be both a

companionate relationship and a working partnership (Houts, Robins, & Huston, 1996). It is, indeed, a challenging and ongoing task of adult life.

Marriage represents a life cycle transition that is both normative and anticipated and yet has the potential to be highly stressful (Boss, 1988). According to McGoldrick (1989), becoming a couple is one of the most complex and difficult transitions of the family life cycle, even though it is often perceived as the easiest and one of the most joyous. This romanticized view of the transition to marriage and subsequently to parenting may contribute to the difficulties unrealistic expectations can foster.

One explanation for the current high divorce rate and the prevalence of marital dissatisfaction in the United States may be that couples have idealistic and unrealistic expectations of marriage (Larson, 1988). They may expect a spouse to simultaneously be a friend, a confidant, a fulfilling sex partner, a counselor, and a parent. Epstein and Eidelson (1981) found that unhappy couples possess unrealistic expectations about marriage that can harm their chances for developing marital satisfaction. Therefore, an area of particular significance to the success or failure of a couple's transition to marriage is the concept of marital myths, beliefs, or expectations (realistic versus unrealistic).

All societies tend to romanticize and idealize situations, perhaps as a way of both undertaking challenges and surviving difficult conditions. Therefore, society's contemporary myths of marriage can present a newly married couple with many impossible duties and unrealistic expectations associated with marriage and family relations. Myths about remarriage and

parenting also abound in contemporary America. If a newly married couple possesses distorted and unrealistic beliefs about marriage, remarriage, and/or parenting, the possibilities for happy and stable marital and familial relationships seem reduced unless these illusions and unrealistic expectations are revised.

Rationale

There is little empirical data on either a couple's first year of marriage or a couple's preparation for marriage or even about how couples' relationships change as they progress through courtship and into marriage (Holman & Li, 1997; Huston, Surra, Fitzgerald, & Cate, 1981; Larson, 1988). Much of the past research dealing with attitudes, expectations, and beliefs about marriage sampled only college students (Carter & Morris, 1997a; Holman & Li, 1997; Larson, 1988; Salts, Seismore, Lindholm, & Smith, 1994; Intons-Peterson & Crawford, 1985; Fine & Hovestadt, 1984) and not couples who were indeed in the process of preparing for or experiencing the transition to marriage. Although there are a few studies that sampled couples who were engaged or preparing for marriage (Abbott & Koopman-Boyden, 1981; Craddock, 1987), it is apparent that more research with this population is needed.

According to many researchers, there is a clear directive for family life educators to develop and implement programs that address the most salient needs of couples making the transition to marriage, whether it be a first marriage or a remarriage (with or without children) (Crosbie-Burnett &

Giles-Sims, 1994; Morris & Carter, 1997; Skopin, Newman & McKenry, 1993).

These salient issues or needs of couples making the transition to marriage need to be examined empirically. Such examination would likely give a more detailed and specific view of couples' attitudes, expectations, and beliefs about marriage, remarriage, and parenting as they are actually making the transition to marriage.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore what couples who are making the transition to marriage believe about marriage, remarriage, and parenting. This study also sought to determine if there were any differences between males and females, and first married couples and remarried couples in beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting. In addition, this study sought to determine any interaction effects between the variables of gender or marital status for beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting among the couples sampled. Further, the relative influence of sociodemographic variables on couples' beliefs about marriage, remarriage, and parenting also was examined. Data were collected from couples preparing to make the transition to marriage using a survey questionnaire that focused on three basic areas of beliefs (i.e., marriage, remarriage, and parenting) that can impact the marital transition.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study was to explore and describe the beliefs about marriage, remarriage, and parenting that characterize couples who are making the transition to marriage. The primary objectives for the study were to examine:

1. Any differences in beliefs about marriage, remarriage, or parenting when comparing gender and marital status (i.e., first married or remarried), and interaction effects between gender and marital status within the sample (i.e., male/first married versus male/remarried, female/first married versus female/remarried; male/first married versus female/first married, male/remarried versus female/remarried).
2. The predictive power of selected demographic variables (i.e., gender, age, educational level, employment status, income level, marital status, marital history, length of engagement, reason for termination of last marriage, presence of children, and number of children) for beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting.

Theoretical Basis for the Study

Theoretically, this study has been grounded on and guided by the tenets of family developmental theory, specifically the life cycle perspective of Betty Carter and Monica McGoldrick (1989), as well as Alfred Adler's theory of Individual Psychology. Specifically, Carter and McGoldrick's life cycle

perspective was used to characterize the transition to marriage. Adler's theory was used to illustrate the origin and impact of beliefs on a couple as they make the transition to marriage.

The family life cycle perspective addresses the nodal events related to the passage of social time and associated role changes of family members using a framework of developmental stages and tasks or transition periods process which are times of particular stress for the family system (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989; Duvall, 1971; Hill & Rodgers, 1964). Although marriage is a family life cycle transition that is normative and anticipated, previous researchers have suggested that the individual and the family system still experience a great amount of stress and difficulty in negotiating this transition (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989; Hadley, Jacob, Milliones, Caplan, & Spitz, 1974). An overview of the complete family life cycle is not required due to the specific focus of this research project. Therefore, only the "The Joining of Families Through Marriage: The New Couple" stage, included in Carter and McGoldrick's (1989) family life cycle perspective, is characterized. Their approach is highlighted because of its unique focus on the emotional processes and second-order changes or developmental tasks associated with each transition throughout the family life cycle.

The key emotional process in making the transition to couplehood requires that the couple make a commitment to a new system. This can be difficult because the partners must leave their family of origin, give up their previous independence, and begin to function as a couple (Carter &

McGoldrick, 1989). In addition, second-order changes in family status are required in order for the couple to proceed developmentally. They must renegotiate relationships with family and friends in view of the new marriage (McGoldrick, 1989).

The stress that a couple experiences while making their transition to couplehood can be conceptualized as both a horizontal and vertical "flow of anxiety" (Carter, 1978). The horizontal flow of stress includes the anxiety produced by the stresses on the couple as they move forward through time, coping with the transition to marriage. In contrast, the vertical flow of stress includes the patterns of relating and functioning that have been transmitted generationally to each member of the dyad from their families of origin. When these vertical and horizontal stressors converge the degree of anxiety engendered by their convergence determines how well the couple will manage the transition to marriage (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989).

The horizontal flow of stress in Carter and McGoldrick's model (1989) is developmental in nature. Therefore, the life cycle transition to marriage, which may also include a transition to remarriage and/or parenting, can be conceptualized as a horizontal stressor. The vertical flow of stress in the model includes an individual's "legacy" from his or her family of origin including the family patterns, myths, and expectations with which an individual has grown up. Therefore, an individual's or couple's beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting can be conceptualized as a vertical stressor which impacts the horizontal stressor (i.e., the transition to marriage, remarriage, and

parenting). According to Carter and McGoldrick (1989), the point at which the horizontal stress (i.e., transition to marriage, remarriage, and parenting) intersects with a vertical stress (i.e., beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting), there is a quantum leap in anxiety in the system.

Marriage requires that two people renegotiate together a variety of issues they have previously defined individually or that were defined by their family of origin (McGoldrick, 1989). The changing role of women, the frequent marriage of partners from widely different cultural backgrounds (i.e., exogamy or heterogamy), and the increasing physical distances between family members also are placing a much greater burden on couples as they make the transition to marriage (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989).

Carter and McGoldrick (1989) have characterized the process of the transition to marriage using a developmental perspective. Specifically, this developmental process (transition to marriage) is viewed from a Bowenian Family Systems perspective. This perspective of family development is intergenerational in nature. In addition, Individual Psychology (Dreikurs, 1953), when applied to the transition to marriage, is similar to Carter and McGoldrick's (1989) Bowenian perspective in that both emphasize family context and family history. However, Individual Psychology is somewhat different in its perspective of looking at the factors that influence an individual's goals, choices, and decisions.

According to the tenets of Individual Psychology, marriage is part of the three tasks that the human community sets for every individual. These three

tasks include work (i.e., contributing to the welfare of others), friendship (i.e., social relationships), and love (i.e., intimacy, including the most intimate union: marriage) (Dreikurs, 1953). Adlerians believe that these three tasks are crucially important to the individual and society because neither can achieve fulfillment without successful attempts at dealing with the demands of these tasks. Alfred Adler (Manaster & Corsini, 1982) defined the third task, love or marriage as "the most intimate devotion toward a partner, expressed in physical attraction, in comradeship, and in the decision to have children . . . marriage is about cooperation" (p. 63).

Individual Psychology, specifically its focus on the role and process of cognition, illustrates the way in which an individual develops his/her beliefs about marriage, remarriage, and parenting. According to Manaster and Corsini (1982), people operate in terms of their phenomenology--perceptions, ideas, beliefs, values. Adler believed that both emotion (feelings) and behavior (actions) were secondary to cognition. Hence, Adlerians believe that one's thoughts, based on one's intentions, precede one's feelings and behaviors.

Throughout life, an individual assembles series of conclusions about what life is about through the process of thinking, acting, and then feeling. These combined conclusions form a collection of personal concepts that represent an individual's deepest views of self, others, and life (Manaster & Corsini, 1982). This collection represents an individual's belief system: beliefs about self, life, and relationships.

Manaster and Corsini (1982) stated that over time every individual develops a series of beliefs about self, others, and life that forms that individual's essential philosophy on which his/her life style (i.e., personality, behavior, and goals) are based. However, beliefs are not always the result of realistic or logical thinking. According to Adler, an individual's beliefs often have been based on mistaken ideas about life. Specifically, an individual's beliefs, their basic tenets, rules, and ideas, may be based on myth and mistaken conclusions. These unrealistic beliefs usually are not known to the individual; however, they are dearly held and highly resistant to change (Manaster & Corsini, 1982). Adler believed that everyone had some mistaken ideas or unrealistic beliefs about self, life, and relationships. Hence, it can be hypothesized that couples preparing for marriage possess some beliefs about marriage, remarriage, and parenting that are simplifications or distortions of reality.

Nominal Definitions

1. Transition: A process that begins with the termination/ending of a developmental phase/stage and includes the initiation/launching/introduction of a new developmental phase/stage (Bridges, 1980).

2. Transition to marriage: A critical point that occurs in the family life cycle just prior to marriage that is accompanied by particular developmental tasks and stressors (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989; Duvall, 1988).

3. Beliefs: An individual's attitudes and expectations, whether they are based on myth or fact (i.e., unrealistic versus realistic), about the roles, relationships, and processes associated with marriage, remarriage, and parenting (Larson, 1988).

4. Myth: A simplification or distortion of reality that is based on a lack of experience or information (Nichols & Schwartz, 1997).

5. Accepted true statement: An undoubted or self-evident truth (Webster's Dictionary, 1995).

6. Expectation: The rules or norms based on one's beliefs about marriage and family roles and relationships, acquired through the socialization process, that govern behavior for self and others (Huston & Geis, 1993; Larson, 1988; Larson & Holman, 1994; Manaster & Corsini, 1982).

7. Marital myth: A simplification or distortion of reality associated with marriage and marital issues that is based on a lack of experience or information (Nichols & Schwartz, 1997).

8. Marital status: Status defined by an individual's participation in or lack of participation in a previous marital relationship (i.e., first married versus remarried).

9. Gender: An individual's state of being male or female.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Benokraitis (1993) suggested that there is a great deal of consensus among the general public on what makes a good marriage. Information from national polls have indicated that what people consider to be very important in marriage (i.e., love, sexual fidelity, and the ability to talk about feelings) has been fairly similar over the past two decades (Roper Organization, 1990). For many couples, marriage holds the promise of permanence and primariness (i.e., sexual exclusivity). Unfortunately, these expectations for marriage are often in sharp contrast to the realities of contemporary couples.

In 1992, there were approximately 2.4 million new marriages and 1.2 million new divorces in the United States. In about half of all existing marriages, one or both persons have been married at least once before. Nearly 70% of divorced men and 60% of divorced women remarry. Half of all remarriages in 1992 occurred within 4 years of the divorce. The rate of divorce for second marriages is close to 60%. This percentage rises with each subsequent remarriage. Because the rate of remarriages is increasing, there are presently an estimated 11 million remarried families in the United States (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992). These demographic data illustrate that the contemporary reality of marriage and family for many couples often does not fulfill an expectation for permanence.

In marriage, couples soon realize that they must reconcile their dreams and illusions of the ideal relationship with the reality that there is no perfect match and that conflicts are inevitable. Couples will face a variety of issues in the transition to marriage that are impacted by their expectations including, but not limited to work and family issues, financial issues, intrafamily issues (including extended families), communication conflicts, lifestyle clashes, and divergent goals (Arond & Pauker, 1987; Olson & DeFrain, 1994). As Arond and Pauker suggested, "Love is blind, but marriage isn't" (p. 64).

Where do these expectations come from? Sager (1986) suggested that each person brings into marriage very specific ideas about what they expect from their spouse and what they themselves are willing to give. He explained that these expectations are rooted in our family patterns and in the yearning to experience the love, closeness, and nurturance that may or may not have been experienced with our original caretaker(s). McGoldrick (1989) stated that family myths and attitudes about marriage are passed down through the generations making the transition to marriage proportionately smoother or more difficult for the couple. Likewise, Marlars and Jacobs (1992) suggested that the family of origin is the environment where children learn to develop their own ideals of what families and marriage should be. Therefore, whether the family structure is maintained or disrupted because of separation, divorce, or death, the concept that the children of that family hold about their own future marriage and family relations may be affected (Wallerstein, 1987).

Marital expectations are formed throughout life. The ways in which people have been brought up and their family experiences have influenced their views and attitudes about marriage (Rice, 1996; Strong & DeVault, 1995). Because marriage involves the complex and demanding intertwining of two lives, the expectation for the ideal or easy marriage or the all-giving spouse leads to certain disappointment (Arond & Pauker, 1987). According to Olson and DeFrain (1994), one of the major reasons newlywed couples found the transition to marriage so difficult was that they typically were idealistic. These couples have experienced premarital relationships that often were fueled by and founded on myths. They expected their marriage to meet all of their previously unmet needs in an almost effortless relating.

In her book Necessary Losses, Viorst (1986) discussed the losses and gains a couple makes as they move through the developmental process of the transition to marriage. Specifically, she focused on a couple's illusions of and expectations for marriage. "But when it comes to love, we stubbornly cling to our illusions--to conscious and unconscious visions of how things should be. When it comes to love--to romantic love and sexual love and married love--we have to learn again, with difficulty, how to let go of all kinds of expectations" (p. 204).

Marriage Myths

Underlying these marital expectations are beliefs in a variety of myths about marriage (Crosby, 1985b). A myth is defined as a widely held belief that

is not universally supported by the facts (Larson, 1988). According to Nichols and Schwartz (1997), myths are simplifications or distortions of reality. They serve a protective function by keeping individuals from having to face certain painful truths. An individual's beliefs in myths is often based on a lack of experience or information. Unfortunately, these discrepancies between myth and reality occur when we fail to question our most basic suppositions about marriage and marital relationships.

In their classic book, The Mirages of Marriage, Lederer and Jackson (1968) stated that "both individual experience and statistical surveys make it clear that almost everyone suffers severe disappointment within a few months after marriage" (p. 78). They suggested that one of the main reasons for this is that the institution of modern marriage has been based on many marital myths, or false assumptions about intimate relationships. Lederer and Jackson have identified seven major myths of marriage including: (a) people marry because they love each other; (b) most married people love each other; (c) love is necessary for a satisfactory marriage; (d) there are inherent behavioral and attitudinal differences between females and males, and these differences cause most marital troubles; (e) the advent of children automatically improves a difficult or an unfulfilled marriage; (f) marriage cures loneliness; and (g) if partners fight, they have a poor marriage. Each society has its own mythology concerning the marital relationship, complete with rituals, beliefs, expectations, norms, and symbols (Thurer, 1994). A particular idea of what constitutes a

good marriage is only that, an idea that is both objective and subjective in nature.

Larson (1988) suggested that a person's beliefs about marriage and how marital satisfaction is achieved may significantly affect one's expectations of marriage. According to Larson, gender and individual level of idealization affect beliefs in myths about marriage. Larson's research indicated that women believed in myths to a lesser degree than men and, further, both males and females with romanticized attitudes and views believed in myths more than those who had less romanticized attitudes.

Husbands and wives typically bring to marriage a mixture of gender-related attitudes and beliefs that, in turn, create marital behavior patterns that contain a variety of traditional and nontraditional elements (Duck, 1993; Huston & Geis, 1993; Thoits, 1992). However, traditional assumptions about marital responsibilities often do not reflect marital reality, and disagreements over establishing new roles in marriage are prevalent (Bader & Sinclair, 1983; Schwartz, 1994).

Rice (1996) suggested that a couple will have a more satisfying and successful marriage if they share common expectations about the roles of husband and wife and if they can appreciate diversity in personal habits. Further, Rice stated that marital compatibility is enhanced if couples develop a high degree of consensus and similar attitudes and values about things that are important to them.

Salts, Seismore, Lindholm, and Smith (1994) asserted that women have more favorable attitudes toward marriage than men. Likewise, Ganong, Coleman, and Brown (1981) indicated that females hold more favorable attitudes toward marriage and are more egalitarian in their marital role expectations than are males. In addition, Craddock (1983) and Schwartz (1994) found that couples who possessed and practiced congruent egalitarian expectations within marriage reported significantly higher levels of satisfaction in the area of personality issues, communication, conflict resolution, leisure activities, contributions to domestic labor, income management, and affection and intimacy levels. Thus, achieving a successful transition to couplehood in our time, when we are trying to move toward the equality of the sexes (educationally and occupationally), may be extraordinarily challenging. The changing roles of women and men have been seen as one of the most influential forces affecting the marital transition (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989).

The cultural ideal or myth of marriage is still that men should be in the "superior" hierarchical position. The husband "should be" taller, older, and more educated and have more income-generating power (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989).

The cultural ideal for the wife of the 1990s includes a "double shift" of caring for the husband, kids, and house, while also earning an income, and never expecting more for herself (Hochschild, 1989). Carter and McGoldrick (1989) suggested that, although women tend to anticipate marriage with enthusiasm, it has not been as healthy a state for them as for their husbands

when epidemiological data are examined. They pointed out that men typically approach marriage with much ambivalence and fear of being ensnared, but do better psychologically and physiologically in the married state than women.

Olson, McCubbin, Barnes, Larsen, Muxen, and Wilson (1989) reported that newlywed couples in their study indicated that work/family strains (e.g., new job/career, new job responsibilities) were the number one ranked stressor challenging newly formed marriages. Bielby and Bielby (1989) stated that women were more concerned with family and marital roles than with their work or occupational roles, whereas men placed greater importance on work roles than on family and marriage roles. Although employed wives reported increased levels of self-esteem, self-concept, and self-worth (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983), employment seemingly "spills-over" into how the couple uses leisure and recreational time, the process of developing couple intimacy, and the physical stamina of the couple by reducing energy levels that subsequently increases the stress levels of dyadic relationships (Arond & Pauker, 1987). Arond and Pauker explained that love and work have oppositional goals, with love reducing boundaries and work increasing boundaries.

Remarriage Myths

Newly remarried couples experienced many of the same processes and influences that first married couples did even though remarried couples were usually older and more experienced and had somewhat more realistic expectations (Rice, 1996; Strong & DeVault, 1995). According to Peek, Bell,

Waldren, and Souell (1988), first marriages and remarriages were more alike than different. Kurdek (1990) explained that there are few differences in the relationship quality between first married newlyweds and remarried newlyweds. Ganong and Coleman (1994) suggested that marital satisfaction in remarriages, just as in first marriages, declines over time.

Further, it is certainly true that more advanced planning would be helpful in first marriages, and it is an even more essential ingredient for successful remarriage. The need for family life education for remarried couples has been mentioned repeatedly in the literature (Chilman, 1983; Fitzpatrick, Smith, & Williamson, 1992; Ganong & Coleman, 1994; Pasley, 1985; Rolfe, 1985; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1983; Walsh, 1992; Visher & Visher, 1992). This education is critical due to the challenges remarried couples may face in their transition to marriage. These challenges include: creating a unique family style, renegotiating family relationships, developing a solid marital bond, defining the stepparent role (if applicable, as it is in a great majority of situations), dealing with boundary ambiguity, and coping with economic issues and unrealistic expectations (Fitzpatrick, Smith, & Williamson, 1992; Carter & McGoldrick, 1989).

Rice (1996) suggested that remarried newlyweds believe that being married to a second spouse is going to be similar in some ways to being married to the first one. Remarried newlyweds have a great hope that they will not repeat past mistakes, but there is usually some fear that the hurts of the previous marriage will occur (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989). However, spouses

often have replicated the mistakes of their first marriage in remarriage because at some level they expected the interactions and processes to be the same (Furstenburg, 1982; Kalmuss & Seltzer, 1986). The inability to give up the ideal of the first marriage or first family and move to a new conceptual model (i.e., remarriage) has been shown to be a predictor of difficulty in making the transition to remarriage (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989).

Although divorced individuals sometimes have different expectations of their new marriages (Strong & DeVault, 1995), there are no clear and unambiguous models for remarriage in society; therefore, marital roles were often are complex in a remarriage (Garfield, 1981). Denial of prior loss and the failure to resolve the intense relationship issues of the first marriage or family may precipitate difficulty in the transition to remarriage. Further, the additional stresses of previous marital patterns (i.e., failure and pain), age, ethnicity, and presence of children can affect the newly remarried couple's marital success or failure (McGoldrick & Carter, 1989). According to Booth and Edwards (1992) and Ganong and Coleman (1991), the probability of divorce is slightly greater for remarriages than first marriages, especially when controlling for the number of remarriages. Burr, Day, and Bahr (1993) have suggested that the probability of divorce increases for the individual with each subsequent remarriage. The complexity of simultaneously negotiating marital and usually parental roles may contribute to the increased probability of divorce in remarried couples (Goetting, 1982).

Parenting Myths

Parenting is a challenge for both remarried couples and first married couples. Strong and DeVault (1995) stated that parenthood, more than marriage, signifies "adulthood--the final, irreversible end of youthful roles" (p. 311). Bradt (1989) suggested that no transition in the family life cycle brings about more profound change or challenge to the nuclear and extended family than the addition of a new child to the family system. According to Aldous (1996), the coming of children forces couples to take on adult domestic responsibilities that they have not encountered before. Consequently, parenthood, although often desired, brings great change to couple's lives (Aldous, 1996).

Carter and McGoldrick (1989) suggested that the key emotional process in the transition to parenthood involves the acceptance of new members into the system. The second-order changes in family status required to proceed developmentally through this transition include the adjustment of the marital system to make space for child(ren); the joining of the couple in childrearing, financial, and household tasks; and the realignment of relationships with extended families to include parenting and grandparenting roles.

The abrupt transition from a nonparent to a parent role may create considerable stress (Strong & DeVault, 1995). Many of the stresses felt by new parents closely reflect struggles related to gender roles (Scott & Alwin, 1989). Therefore, although a couple may have an egalitarian marriage and

expectations for shared parenting before the birth of the first child, the roles usually shift toward being more traditional once a child is born (Strong & DeVault, 1995). The ideas that parenthood "belongs" to women and that men are second-class citizens when it comes to taking care of children are mistaken beliefs that support this shift toward more traditional gender roles in parenting (LaRossa, 1986).

Most parents have idealized notions, or beliefs based on myth, about the best ways to raise children (Rice, 1996). In practice, reality does not coincide with idealism (Dressel & Clark, 1990). Unfortunately, upon becoming adults, individuals are bombarded with messages (realistic and unrealistic) about the meaning of parenthood and about what is and what is not proper parental conduct (LaRossa, 1986). Due to romantic notions about parenthood, people go through a process of some degree of disenchantment when they have children (LeMasters & DeFrain, 1989). Because child-rearing philosophies change from one generation to the next, parents often have to sort out conflicting advice (Dail & Way, 1985). Husbands and wives often differ with one another on their basic philosophies of child-rearing, which can create marital conflict and confusion for the child (Gilbert, Hanson, & Davis, 1982; Schwartz, 1994). Carter and McGoldrick (1989) pointed out that disparities in values about gender role ideology are most apparent in the context of parenting children.

Family relationships can become quite complicated in remarriages when one or both spouses bring children from a previous marriage (Rice,

1996). According to Glick (1989), there were an estimated 11 million remarried families with children in the United States. The joining together of two families in a second or a subsequent marriage can add considerable complexity to a family system. The built-in ambiguity of boundaries and membership defies simple definition and clarification, and our culture lacks any established patterns or rituals to help us handle the complex relationships of acquired family members (McGoldrick & Carter, 1989).

According to Olson and DeFrain (1994) and Strong and DeVault (1995), many stepfamilies falsely have assumed that they are like nuclear families. However, many researchers have suggested that stepfamilies are significantly different from intact families (Ganong & Coleman, 1994; Papernow, 1993; Pill, 1990). Many of the remarried family's difficulties can be attributed to the attempt on the part of the family to use the roles and rules of intact families as a guideline (McGoldrick & Carter, 1989). These unrealistic expectations, which are based on beliefs in myths about parenting and family life, are a major source of dissatisfaction and conflicts that are difficult to manage in stepfamilies (Visser & Visser, 1988).

Common myths held by members of remarried families include the belief that remarried families are functionally equivalent to intact families, that remarried family members should immediately love one another, and that stepfamily adjustment should be attained quickly (Visser & Visser, 1988). Endorsement of these myths may lead to unrealistic expectations (Fine, Kurdek, & Hennigen, 1992; Walsh, 1992). These expectations can produce

feelings of guilt and anger, as well as low self-esteem, for adults in remarried families (Walsh, 1992). Likewise, as Fine and Schwebel (1991) suggested, the wide gap between expectations and reality often have produced disappointment and frustration.

In addition, a lack of awareness of the emotional difficulties of remarriage for children has been shown to be a predictor of difficulty in the transition to remarriage (McGoldrick & Carter, 1989). Research findings have suggested that areas of particular stress for stepfamilies include conflicts over discipline and other childrearing practices and financial resources (Bachrach, 1983; Coleman, Ganong, & Goodwin, 1994; Fine & Schwebel, 1991; Olson & DeFrain, 1994; Whitsett & Land, 1992).

According to many researchers, there is a clear directive for family life educators to develop and implement programs that address the most salient needs of newly married couples as they experience their first marriage, a remarriage, or parenthood (Crosbie-Burnett & Giles-Sims, 1994; Holman & Li, 1997; Morris & Carter, 1997; Skopin, Newman, & McKenry, 1993). These salient issues or needs of newly married couples need to be examined empirically.

Morris and Carter (1997) found in their review of scholarly literature that much of the research dealing with attitudes, expectations, and beliefs about marriage has sampled only college students (e.g., Larson, 1988; Holman & Li, 1997; Salts et al., 1994; Intons-Peterson, & Crawford, 1985; Fine & Hovestadt, 1984) and not couples who are indeed in the process of making the transition to marriage. Although there are a few studies that sampled couples who were

engaged or preparing for marriage (Craddock, 1987; Abbott & Koopman-Boyden, 1981), more research with this population is needed. As stated by Holman and Li (1997), such examination likely would give a more detailed and specific view of couples' attitudes, expectations, and beliefs about marriage and partners.

Schumm and Denton (1979) pointed out that virtually all premarital programs have been designed without input from the premarital couples themselves. In addition, research has shown that the topics covered in most marriage preparation programs have been based on the ideas of clinicians and researchers rather than on those of the clients or consumers of such programs (Silliman & Schumm, 1989).

Summary of Literature Review

It seems apparent from this review of literature that the transition to marriage or remarriage is a complex and challenging process. Specifically, a couple's beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting can significantly impact the process of their transition to couplehood. Research has been conducted identifying marriage, remarriage, and parenting myths and determining the degree to which single adult men and women believe in these myths (Epstein & Eidelson, 1981; Fine, Kurdek & Hennigen, 1992; Larson, 1988; Morris & Carter, 1997). However, research in this area using a sample of couples actually preparing for marriage, remarriage, and parenting has been lacking. Therefore, it was the intention of this study to further understanding of

the beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting of couples who are preparing for marriage.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Selection of the Sample

Couples applying for a marriage license in the state of Tennessee through the offices of the Knox County Clerk and the Hamilton County Clerk were invited to participate in a study called The B.E.S.T. Families: Newlywed Project. The questionnaire developed for The B.E.S.T. Families: Newlywed Project contains (a) The Marriage and Family Quiz (Carter & Morris, 1997b) (Appendix A), which assesses an individual's beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting, as well as a personal history inventory and (b) letter of informed consent (Appendix B).

The criterion for eligibility for the study was that the couple be in the process of applying for a marriage license. The sample for this study included both first married and remarried couples. The original intent of this study was to use a random sample of couples applying for a marriage license in both Knox County and Hamilton County, Tennessee. However, there were several problems with the sample selection process. First, the researcher was allowed no personal contact with the couples applying for a license. The staff at each County Clerk's office handled all survey distribution and collection for this study. Therefore, the researcher was afforded no opportunity to encourage

couples to participate in the study (e.g., personal conversation; telephone follow-up). Second, there were problems with the consistent distribution of surveys and return envelopes by the County Clerks' staffs to all couples who were applying for a marriage license in each county. Therefore, the staffs in both of the County Clerks' offices did not give every couple who applied for a marriage license in Knox or Hamilton Counties a survey to complete or an envelope in which to return the survey. The third problem with sample selection concerned the elapsed time between a couple's application for marriage and actual marriage date. The majority of couples applying for a marriage license in the designated counties made application only one week before their actual marriage date. Because of time constraints associated with a couple's pending marriage (e.g., wedding plans, rehearsals, housing relocations, parties, the actual wedding, etc.), it must be assumed that many couples were not afforded the time to complete and return the surveys before their stated wedding date. Due to these problems with the sample selection process, this study has used a convenience sample of couples applying for their marriage licenses in the counties designated.

Most studies have sampled couples or individuals anticipating the transition to marriage (Abbott & Koopman-Boyden, 1981; Craddock, 1987; Fine & Hovestadt, 1984; Holman & Li, 1997; Intons-Peterson & Crawford, 1985; Larson, 1988; Salts et al., 1994) rather than couples actually in the process of making the transition to marriage, remarriage, and/or parenting. Therefore,

although the ideal of a complete random sample was not met, this study still possesses merit on the basis of its sample group.

Description of the Sample

A convenience sample of couples who applied for a marriage license in Knox and Hamilton Counties in the state of Tennessee participated in this study. Fifty-two (52) couples in Knox County, out of the 2315 couples who applied for marriage licenses, and 23 couples out of the 861 couples who applied for marriage licenses in Hamilton County, agreed to participate in the study. Twenty-three couples from Hamilton County agreed to participate in the study. In sum, a total of 75 couples ($N = 150$) completed and returned the informed consent forms and surveys, indicating their agreement to participate in the study. This low rate of participation may be partially explained by the difficulties experienced in the sample selection process discussed above.

Descriptive analyses of the demographic data provided by the couple participants indicated that 85% were White American, 6% Black American, 2% Native American, 1% Asian American, 1% Latin American, and 5% did not specify race. The mean age range of the couples participating was 20-29 years. Specifically, 4% were below 20 years of age, 41% were 20-29 years of age, 24% were 30-39 years of age, 11% were 40-49 years of age, 11% were 50-59 years of age, 5.5% were 60 years of age and over, and 3% did not specify.

The educational level reported by the participants as the highest attained indicated that 1% had completed middle school, 38% had completed a

high school degree, 6% had some technical/vocational training, 43% had completed a college degree, 10% had earned graduate degrees, and 2% did not specify. Participants indicated their employment status as 6% unemployed, 12% employed part-time, 67% employed full-time, 11% having other employment statuses (e.g. self-employed, retired), and 4% did not specify. The reported personal income level of the participants indicated that 11% had an income level of \$1-\$9,999, 19% had an income level of \$10,000-\$19,999, 30% had an income level of \$20,000-\$29,999, 19% had an income level of \$30,000-\$49,999, 4% had an income level of \$50,000-\$100,000, 2% had an income level over \$100,000, and 15% did not specify.

Couples reported their length of engagement in months as follows: 23% engaged for 0-3 months, 34% engaged for 4-6 months, 8% engaged for 7-9 months, 14% engaged for 10-12 months, 14% engaged for over 12 months, and 7% did not specify. The marital status reported by the participants indicated that 48% were preparing for their first marriage while 50% were preparing for a remarriage. Two percent (2%) of the couples did not specify a marital status. A report of participant marital history indicated that 48% had not been married previously, 27% were preparing for a second marriage, 13% were preparing for a third marriage, 5% were preparing for a fourth marriage, 3% were preparing for a fifth marriage, and 4% did not specify. In addition, participants reported the reason for termination of their last marriage as follows: 48% had not been married previously, 6% death of their spouse, 39% divorce, 2% annulment, and 5% did not specify.

Forty-three percent (43%) of the participants preparing for marriage had children. Specifically, 17% had one child, 15% had two children, 5% had three children, 3% had four children, 1% had five children, and 1.5% had six children.

Based upon statistics that focus on trends in marriage in the U.S. (Glick, 1989; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1994), which cited that (a) each year approximately 54% couples are marrying for the first time and 46% are remarrying and (b) the median age at marriage for males is 25.5 and for females 23.7, the sample for this study was fairly representative of the U.S. population.

Instrumentation

Marriage and Family Quiz

Beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting were measured by 48 closed-ended statements about marriage, remarriage, and parenting. The first 20 items constituted the Marriage Quiz as developed and used by Larson (1988) and are listed as follows:

1. A husband's marital happiness is usually lower if his wife is employed full time than if she is a full-time homemaker.
2. Today most young, single, never-married people will eventually get married.
3. In most marriages, having a child improves marital happiness for both husband and wife.

4. The quality of the couple's sex life is the single best indicator of overall marital happiness.
5. The number of divorces in the United States increased between 1960 and 1980.
6. A greater number of wives are in the work force today than in 1970.
7. Marital happiness for a wife is usually lower if she is employed full time than if she is a full time homemaker.
8. If my spouse loves me, he/she should know what I want and need to be happy.
9. In a marriage in which the wife is employed full time, the husband usually does an equal share of the housekeeping.
10. For most couples, marital happiness gradually increases from the first year of marriage through retirement.
11. No matter how I act, my husband/wife should love me because he/she is my spouse.
12. One of the most frequent problems in marriage is poor communication.
13. Husbands usually make more lifestyle changes after marriage than do wives.
14. Couples who lived together before marriage usually report greater marital happiness than do couples who did not.

15. I can change my husband/wife by pointing out his/her inadequacies, errors, and so forth.
16. Couples who marry when one of both partners are under the age of 18 are more likely to divorce than are those who marry when they are older.
17. Either my spouse loves me or does not love me; nothing I do will affect the way my husband/wife feels about me.
18. The more a husband/wife discloses positive and negative things to his/her spouse, the greater the marital happiness of both spouses.
19. I must feel better about my husband/wife before I can change the way I act toward him/her.
20. For most couples, maintaining romantic love is the key to marital happiness throughout life.

The remaining 28 items were developed by Morris and Carter (1997) and include statements about marriage, remarriage, and parenting based upon reviewing the literature on myths contained in several marriage and family textbooks (Benokraitis, 1993; Lamanna & Riedmann, 1988; Olson & DeFrain, 1994; Rice, 1990; Strong & DeVault, 1995). Items 21- 48 are as follows:

21. Extramarital sex usually results in a divorce for the married couple.
22. Couples who enjoy a close, intimate relationship with each other are more likely to be dependent.
23. The more a husband/wife disagrees with his/her spouse the greater the chance the husband/wife are rejecting them as a person.

24. A sexual fantasy about another person other than your husband/wife is a clear indication that your marriage is in serious trouble.
25. Commitment to your spouse is by far the most important factor in a happy, long-term marriage.
26. The frequency of and satisfaction with sexual activity in later marriage is very similar to the quality of sexual activity during earlier years of marriage.
27. A spouse with a persistent lack of interest in sex is probably having an affair with another person.
28. Husbands/ Wives should never share their marital problems with other people.
29. Couples with a strong religious faith usually don't divorce.
30. Children that grew up in divorced families are poor risks for long-term marriage.
31. Husbands/ Wives that request prenuptial agreements do not trust their new spouse.
32. A husband/wife that physically abuses their partner before marriage usually does not abuse the spouse after marriage because of increased feelings of confidence and security.
33. Relations with friends and family do not change much when you marry.
34. In a long-lasting marriage, intense passion changes over time.

35. The number of remarriages that end in divorce is lower than first marriages because remarried couples are more experienced.
36. If you love your husband/ wife and he/she loves you, your spouse will love your children from your previous marriage.
37. In remarriages, certain feelings left over from the breakup of the previous marriage can affect the current relationship and create difficulties.
38. Deciding who and what to spend money on is not usually a problem for remarried couples.
39. Over time, there is little difference in the reported levels of marital happiness of couples in first marriages and couples in remarriages.
40. People who were happily married before their spouse died tend to not be as happy with their second husband/wife.
41. The relationship problems people had in their first marriages are usually the same problems they have in their second marriages.
42. If a husband/wife have an unhappy marriage, having a baby will generally improve their marriage.
43. Parenting today is more difficult than ever before.
44. Parenting children is generally fun and easy.
45. The arrival of a baby doesn't affect the life of the father as much as the mother.
46. To be a good parent all you have to do is love your child.
47. Disciplining stepchildren is usually not difficult for remarried couples.

48. Your children will feel as happy about your remarriage as you do.

These 48 items constituted the Marriage and Family Quiz. Thirty-six of the items were myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting. The other 12 items (i.e., 2, 5, 6, 12, 16, 25, 26, 34, 37, 41, 43, 45) were considered accepted true statements about marriage, remarriage, and parenting. These 12 accepted true statements were included on the quiz to control for response style and to disguise the nature of the scale. In addition to the 5 accepted true statements about marriage included in Larson's (1988) instrument, 7 more accepted true statements about marriage, remarriage, and parenting were added to the 36 myths to total 48 items on the Marriage and Family Quiz.

The 36 myths included in the instrument were categorized into three separate subscales according to content. The marriage subscale included items specifically dealing with marital beliefs (i.e., 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 39). The remarriage subscale included items specifically dealing with remarriage beliefs (i.e., 35, 36, 38, 40, 48). The parenting subscale included items specifically dealing with parenting beliefs (i.e., 42, 44, 46, 47). Theoretically, the subscales (i.e., marriage, remarriage, and parenting) were conceptualized as the horizontal stressors or life cycle changes of marriage, remarriage, and parenting. The specific items in each of the three subscales (i.e., myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting) were conceptualized as the vertical stressors that impact the horizontal stress associated with the transition to marriage, remarriage, and parenting (Figure 1).

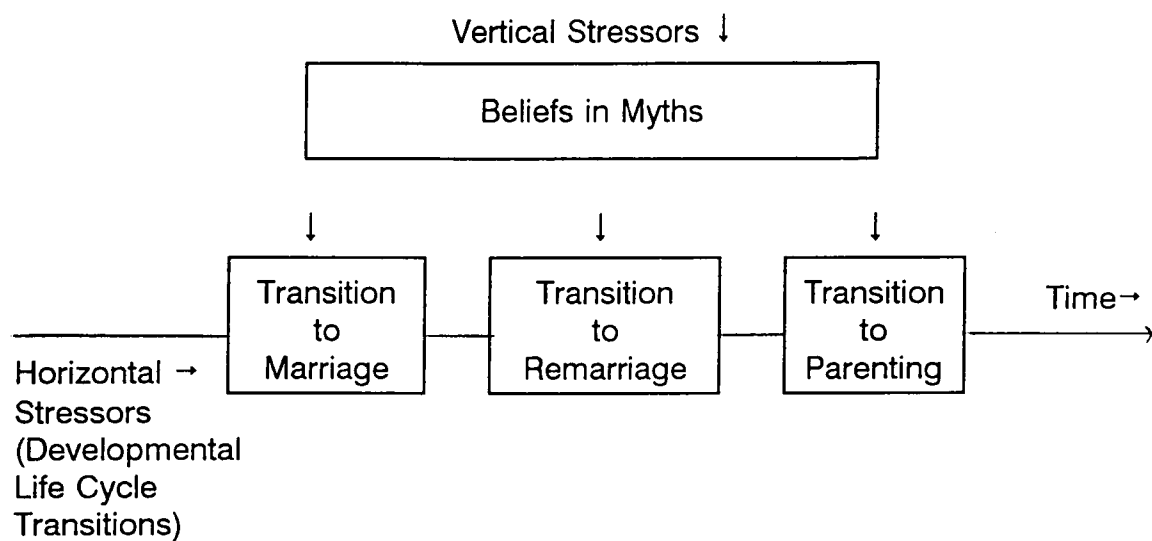


Figure 1. Model of Horizontal and Vertical Stressors
*Adapted from Carter and McGoldrick, 1989

Validity and reliability of the Marriage and Family Quiz. Acceptance of a statement as a myth was based on empirical research data that suggested the statement is not true (Appendix C). In addition, all 48 statements were reviewed by a group of 32 family life professionals in order to determine the content validity of each statement for use in the Marriage and Family Quiz. Each statement was categorized by the professionals as being a statement about marriage, remarriage, or parenting in order to establish content validity. Items 1-34 and 39 were considered to be statements about marriage by at least 70% of the family life professionals. Items 35-38 and 40-41 were considered to be statements dealing with remarriage by at least 70% of the professionals. Items 42-46 were identified as statements about parenting issues by at least 70% of the family life professionals. However, the professionals had some difficulty with agreement on a category for Items 47 and 48. Item 47 was considered by 56% to be a statement about parenting while 31% believed it to be a statement about remarriage. Item 48 was identified by 44% as a statement about remarriage; by 31% as a statement about marriage; and by 25% as a statement about parenting. Based upon the plethora of support from literature that specifically designated these statements in terms of content, the researcher decided to classify Item 47 as a statement about parenting and Item 48 as a statement about remarriage.

Larson (1988) noted that internal consistency reliability for the Marriage Quiz was $r = .70$ (Cronbach's alpha)(Cronbach, 1951), and test-retest reliability was $r = .89$. In order to test the reliability of the Marriage and Family Quiz,

each statement was graded by the professionals on a 4-point Likert-type scale denoting the degree of confidence (i.e., not confident, somewhat confident, confident, and very confident) that each statement was an ill-founded belief or myth held by the general public. Recognizing that this present study contains a different sample and additional items and scales from that found in Larson's (1988) previous study and that it would be inappropriate methodologically to be psychometrically dependent on a previous study, Cronbach's alpha procedures (Cronbach's alpha) (Cronbach, 1951) were performed. Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal reliability or consistency of the items in an index (Vogt, 1993). It ranges from 0 to 1 and indicates how much the items in an index are measuring the same thing. According to Carmines and Zeller (1979), Cronbach's alpha is, by far, the most popular of reliability estimates.

For the pilot study, the Marriage and Family Quiz produced the following alpha coefficients denoting the professional's degree of confidence in each scale: the 15 items from Larson's Marriage Quiz (1988) ($r = .83$); the marriage scale (i.e., the combination items dealing with marriage on the quiz) ($r = .88$); the remarriage scale ($r = .60$); and the parenting scale ($r = .75$). With the exception of five individual items (i.e., Items 18, 30, 33, 39, and 48), at least 70% of the family life professionals showed a significant degree of confidence that each of the statements was a myth held by the public about marriage, remarriage, or parenting. During the pilot test of the instrument, several family life professionals indicated their indecision about their confidence with these five items. The degree of confidence for the five items in question were as

follows: Item 18 (62%), Item 30 (69%), Item 33 (68%), Item 39 (60%), and Item 48 (60%).

Given that (a) fewer than three (out of $N = 32$) professionals determined whether or not an item met the original criteria (i.e., 70% degree of confidence), (b) Cronbach's alphas for each subscale were not different with the items included versus deleted, and (c) at least 60% of the family life professionals showed a significant degree of confidence in Items 18, 30, 33, 39, and 48 as myths held by the public about marriage, remarriage, or parenting, these items were not deleted from the instrument.

In addition, the instrument was reviewed by a group of adults ($N = 25$) participating in a "singles group" in a local church in order to determine and enhance the readability and participant comprehension of the instrument. No significant changes were made as a result of their review.

Scoring the Marriage and Family Quiz. The Marriage and Family Quiz consists of 36 myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting and 12 accepted true statements about marriage, remarriage, and parenting. Participants used a 4-point Likert-type scale (i.e., strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree) to answer each statement on the quiz. To score the Marriage and Family Quiz, Items 2, 5, 6, 12, 16, 25, 26, 34, 37, 41, 43, 45 should be eliminated (accepted as true statements) and the remaining number of items agreed with by the participant (i.e., agree or strongly agree on the Likert-type scale) should be computed. The range of scores on the overall quiz

is 0-144. The range of scores for each separate subscale is as follows: the marriage scale (0-108), the remarriage scale (0-20), and the parenting scale (0-16). The higher the participant's score, the greater is his/her level of belief in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting.

Personal History Inventory

An instrument was designed to collect sociodemographic and familial data. Information was requested pertaining to gender, age, race, educational level, employment status, income, marital history, marital status, reason for termination of any previous marriage, length of engagement, presence of children, and number of children.

Procedures

Data Collection

Two identical questionnaires, informed consent forms, letters of introduction to the project, and a stamped pre-addressed return envelope were given to each couple as they applied for their marriage license in the offices of the Knox County Clerk and the Hamilton County Clerk. If they chose, the couple could complete the questionnaires immediately while in the office of the County Clerk. If the couple chose to take the questionnaires home, they were requested to complete their work in one sitting, to complete each form independently, to avoid comparing and/or discussing items and responses until completing their work, to not change any of their responses in the event of

such discussions after completing the survey, to complete the surveys before the date of their marriage, and to mail the surveys in the envelope provided.

Surveys were distributed and collected from July 1, 1997 to February 15, 1998 in Knox County, Tennessee. A total of 2315 couples applied for a marriage license in the Knox County Clerk's office during this time period. Surveys were distributed and collected from December 5, 1997 to February 15, 1998 in Hamilton County, Tennessee. A total of 861 couples applied for a marriage license in the Hamilton County Clerk's office during this time period. Due to difficulties in sampling (i.e., inconsistent distribution of surveys and envelopes), an accurate response rate was impossible to calculate.

Data Management

As the surveys were returned by the participants, the researcher verified that the couples had completed the informed consent forms and the proper questionnaires. Identification numbers were assigned by the researcher to each completed survey denoting individual and couple membership. Data were entered into the computer based upon a previously constructed codebook by the research team. Data entry was verified by the double checking of surveys randomly selected by two other persons.

Upon completion of the data entry process, missing data cases were determined through frequency distribution procedures. According to Cohen and Cohen (1983), missing data cases may be handled in several ways including dropping subjects, dropping variables, and working from a missing-

data correlation matrix. These methods are criticized variously on grounds of loss of information, loss of statistical power and precision of estimates, and dependence on the assumption of the randomness of occurrence of missing data, which, when false, results in biased or nonrepresentative results (p. 289). One method not subject to these criticisms involves the construction of a missing data dichotomy that directly represents that aspect of the factor and then plugging the blanks in the factor with any constant, specifically, the mean of the values present for that aspect. This method for handling missing data runs no risk of a mistaken randomness assumption, nor of producing an inconsistent correlation matrix. It hews realistically to the population actually sampled, missing data and all. Therefore, in this study, any item containing more than 2% (e.g., 5 or more missing cases per item) of missing data received substituted values equivalent to the item mean (Cohen & Cohen, 1983).

Because of the small sample in this study, the researcher chose the method specified above by Cohen and Cohen to handle missing data cases. Any items that needed to be recoded or reversed were transformed. All items were re-run utilizing frequency procedures to verify that they were accurately handled for further data analyses.

Data Analyses

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was the computer program used for all analyses. Descriptive and inferential statistics

were used to compute, organize, clean, and test hypotheses pertaining to the survey's variables. Descriptive procedures included frequencies that were used to determine the mean, sum, range, and standard deviations of each of the items and subscales. Inferential statistics procedures included ANOVA procedures to determine any specific gender and marital status interaction effects within the sample according to the criterion variable of beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting, regression procedures (e.g., stepwise variable selection method) to test the form of relationship of the criterion variable beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting as predicted by the predictor variables, and scale procedures for reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha to determine the internal consistency for each subscale in the instrument (i.e., marriage, remarriage, and parenting).

Regarding the stepwise variable selection method, the researcher is aware that some criticisms have been issued against its usage in explanatory research. Arguments for not using the stepwise procedure focus on the entering of variables into a regression equation due to the uniqueness of the variable. Thus, the temptation arises in allowing the computer, rather than theory, to control for the selection of variables (Cohen & Cohen, 1983).

Warnings offered in the Cohens' text are well worth heeding if it is the researcher's sole intention of completely depending upon stepwise procedures for all explanatory analyses. It might be counter offered, however, that when a research area is exploratory, rather than explanatory, that a method of utilizing stepwise regression procedure would guide the researcher both theoretically

and empirically in the exploratory research process of building a regression model.

Based on the way in which the sample was selected (i.e., by a government agency providing marriage licenses), there was no feasible way for the researcher to control the sample selection procedures.

Primary data analyses for the study included testing four null hypotheses. The first tested was that there were no gender or marital status (i.e., first married couples versus remarried couples) differences in the criterion variable of beliefs in myths about marriage. The second tested was that there were no gender or marital status (i.e., first married couples versus remarried couples) differences in the criterion variable of beliefs in myths about remarriage. The third tested was that there were no gender or marital status (i.e., first married couples versus remarried couples) differences in the criterion variable of beliefs in myths about parenting. The fourth tested was that the criterion variable of beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting could not be predicted by sociodemographic variables.

Operational Definitions

The following definitions were used to conceptualize and transform data into subscales for data analyses in the study.

Beliefs in myths about marriage as a vertical stressor was defined as the sum score of the marriage subscale of the Marriage and Family Quiz with a higher level of belief in myths about marriage being concomitant with higher

scale scores; whereas, lower reported level of belief in myths about marriage being concomitant with lower scale scores. The marriage subscale contained 27 items (e.g., Appendix A, Items 1, 3, 4, 7-11, 13-15, 17-24, 27-33, 39) with possible scores ranging from 0 to 108.

Beliefs in myths about remarriage as a vertical stressor was defined as the sum score of the remarriage subscale of the Marriage and Family Quiz with a higher level of belief in myths about remarriage being concomitant with higher scale scores, whereas lower reported level of belief in myths about remarriage being concomitant with lower scale scores. The remarriage subscale contained 5 items (e.g., Appendix A, Items 35, 36, 38, 40, 48) with possible scores ranging from 0 to 20.

Beliefs in myths about parenting as a vertical stressor was defined as the sum score of the parenting subscale of the Marriage and Family Quiz with a higher level of belief in myths about parenting being concomitant with higher scale scores; whereas, lower reported level of belief in myths about parenting being concomitant with lower scale scores. The parenting subscale contained 4 items (e.g., Appendix A, items 42, 44, 46, 47) with possible scores ranging from 0 to 16.

Hypotheses of the Study

The hypotheses for this study are presented in null hypothesis format and were as follows:

1. That there were no gender or marital status (i.e., first married couples versus remarried couples) differences in subjects' degree of beliefs in myths about marriage as measured by the Marriage and Family Quiz.

2. That there were no gender or marital status (i.e., first married couples versus remarried couples) differences in subjects' degree of beliefs in myths about remarriage as measured by the Marriage and Family Quiz.

3. That there were no gender or marital status (i.e., first married couples versus remarried couples) differences in subjects' degree of beliefs in myths about parenting as measured by the Marriage and Family Quiz.

4. That participants' degree of beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting as measured by the Marriage and Family Quiz were not predicted by sociodemographic variables including gender, age, educational level, employment status, income level, marital status, marital history, reason for termination of any previous marriage, presence of children, and number of children.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Summary scores on the subscales (i.e., the marriage scale, the remarriage scale, and the parenting scale) administered were tabulated for the sample in this study. The possible range of scores for each subscale was as follows: the marriage scale (0-108), the remarriage scale (0-20), and the parenting scale (0-16). In the present study, the mean for the sample on the marriage scale was 65.17 with individual scores ranging from 49 to 98. The mean for the sample on the remarriage scale was 11.43 with individual scores ranging from 5 to 18. The mean score for the sample on the parenting scale was 7.57 with individual scores ranging from 0 to 16 (Table 1).

Given that the Marriage and Family Quiz is a new instrument, the internal consistency reliability for each of the subscales was tabulated using Cronbach's alpha procedures (Table 2). In two earlier studies, the internal consistency reliability of the marriage scale used in the Marriage and Family Quiz was $r = .70$ (i.e., the first 15 marriage myths in Larson's (1988) Marriage Quiz used in the Marriage and Family Quiz) and $r = .88$ (Morris & Carter, 1997). In addition, Morris and Carter reported the internal consistency reliability for the remarriage scale as $r = .60$ and the parenting scale as ($r = .75$).

Table 1

Sample Means, Ranges, Standard Deviations, and Cronbach's Alpha on Scales from Marriage and Family Quiz

Scale	Sample			Males			Females			Cronbach's alpha
	Mean	SD	Range	Mean	SD	Range	Mean	SD	Range	
Marriage myths Range (0-108)	65.17	8.64	49-98	65.35	6.94	51-84	65.00	10.11	49-98	.80
Remarriage myths Range (0-20)	11.43	2.00	5-18	11.48	1.70	8-16	11.39	2.28	5-18	.47
Parenting myths Range (0-16)	7.57	2.20	4-14	7.68	2.10	4-13	7.45	2.30	4-14	.64

Table 2

Item Means, Standard Deviations, and Percentages of Participant Agreement with the Myth

Scale	Sample			Males			Females		
	Mean	SD	% of agree- ment with myth	Mean	SD	% of agree- ment with myth	Mean	SD	% of agree- ment with myth
Marriage myths									
1	2.12	.83	28	2.13	.81	29.3	2.11	.86	20.0
3	2.49	.80	51.4	2.60	.75	57.3	2.39	.84	45.3
4	1.98	.81	18.7	1.97	.73	17.3	1.99	.89	20.0
7	2.14	.87	26.0	2.17	.76	25.4	2.11	.98	26.6
8	2.45	.96	44.0	2.51	.96	49.3	2.40	.96	38.6
9	2.73	.78	60.7	2.79	.76	66.7	2.67	.79	54.7
10	2.87	.68	69.3	2.75	.66	62.7	2.99	.69	76.0
11	2.35	.92	41.3	2.27	.88	38.7	2.43	.96	44.0
13	2.38	.72	40.0	2.43	.66	44.0	2.33	.78	36.0
14	2.39	.91	48.7	2.31	.88	45.4	2.48	.94	52.0
15	1.77	.84	15.3	1.85	.80	17.3	1.69	.87	13.4
17	1.87	.81	17.4	1.89	.80	18.7	1.84	.82	16.0
18	3.11	.63	88.0	3.11	.61	89.4	3.12	.66	86.7
19	2.45	.73	47.3	2.41	.72	46.7	2.49	.74	48.0
20	2.73	.72	66.6	2.73	.72	65.3	2.73	.72	68.0
21	3.21	.80	79.3	3.13	.81	76.0	3.29	.78	82.7
22	2.57	.85	52.0	2.63	.78	54.6	2.52	.92	49.3
23	2.47	.72	47.4	2.51	.74	49.3	2.44	.70	45.3
24	2.55	.82	46.0	2.59	.77	46.7	2.51	.86	45.4
27	2.21	.74	29.3	2.24	.69	28.0	2.19	.78	30.6
28	2.59	.80	46.7	2.60	.81	46.0	2.59	.79	45.3
29	2.58	.73	53.3	2.56	.66	54.6	2.60	.79	52.0
30	2.27	.66	34.7	2.29	.67	36.0	2.24	.65	33.3

Table 2 (continued)

Scale	Sample			Males			Females		
	Mean	SD	% of agree- ment with myth	Mean	SD	% of agree- ment with myth	Mean	SD	% of agree- ment with myth
31	2.63	.84	53.4	2.65	.81	52.0	2.61	.87	54.7
32	1.49	.78	8.0	1.51	.74	6.7	1.48	.81	9.3
33	2.27	.64	30.6	2.21	.64	25.3	2.32	.64	36.0
39	2.48	.63	48.6	2.51	.60	53.3	2.45	.66	44.0
Remarriage myths									
35	2.38	.76	44.0	2.35	.71	40.0	2.41	.81	48.0
36	2.60	.79	52.6	2.56	.76	48.0	2.64	.83	57.4
38	2.25	.66	28.0	2.32	.66	32.0	2.17	.67	24.0
40	2.29	.63	32.0	2.31	.57	33.3	2.28	.69	30.6
48	1.91	.67	16.0	1.95	.66	13.4	1.88	.70	18.7
Parenting myths									
42	1.73	.76	13.4	1.88	.77	18.7	1.51	.72	8.0
44	2.05	.81	22.7	1.99	.76	20.0	2.11	.85	25.3
46	1.91	.84	17.4	1.93	.83	17.4	1.88	.85	17.4
47	1.89	.76	17.3	1.88	.66	13.3	1.89	.86	21.3

In the present study, the internal consistency reliability for each of the subscales in the Marriage and Family Quiz were as follows: the marriage scale ($r = .80$), the remarriage scale ($r = .47$), and the parenting scale ($r = .64$). The internal consistency of the marriage and parenting scales were comparable to the other studies that have used this instrument (Larson, 1988; Morris & Carter, 1997). However, the alpha for the remarriage scale in this study does not compare with other studies.

In addition, specific item means, standard deviations, and the percentage of participants agreeing with each of the marriage, remarriage, and parenting myth items were tabulated for the sample in this study. The items or myths that appeared to be the most and least agreed with by the sample were identified (Table 2). A lower percentage of agreement indicated a lesser belief in the myth, while a higher percentage of agreement indicated a greater belief in the myth.

In the sample, the myth items that received the lowest percentages of agreement (i.e., under 20% agreement), which indicated a low degree of belief in the myth, were as follows: Item 4: "The quality of the couple's sex life is the single best indicator of overall marital happiness." (18.7%), Item 15: "I can change my husband/wife by pointing out his/her inadequacies, errors, and so forth." (15.3%), Item 17: "Either my spouse loves me or does not love me; nothing I do will affect the way my husband/wife feels about me." (17.4%), Item 32: "A husband/wife that physically abuses their partner before marriage usually does not abuse the spouse after marriage because of increased

feelings of confidence and security." (8%), Item 42: "If a husband/wife have an unhappy marriage, having a baby will generally improve their marriage."

(13.4%), Item 46: "To be a good parent all you have to do is love your child."

(17.4%), Item 47: "Disciplining stepchildren is usually not difficult for remarried couples." (17.3%), and Item 48: "Your children will feel as happy about your remarriage as you do." (16%).

In the sample, the myth items that received the highest percentages of agreement (i.e., over 50% agreement), which indicated a high degree of belief in the myth, were as follows: Item 3: "In most marriages, having a child improves the marital happiness for both husband and wife." (51.4%), Item 9: "In a marriage in which the wife is employed full-time, the husband usually does an equal share of the housekeeping." (60.7%), Item 10: "For most couples, marital happiness gradually increases from the first year of marriage through retirement." (69.3%), Item 18: "The more a husband/wife discloses positive and negative things to his/her spouse, the greater the marital happiness of both spouses." (88%), Item 20: "For most couples, maintaining romantic love is the key to marital happiness throughout life." (66.6%), Item 21: "Extramarital sex usually results in a divorce for the married couple." (79.3%), Item 22: "Couples who enjoy a close, intimate relationship with each other are more likely to be dependent." (52%), Item 29: "Couples with a strong religious faith usually don't divorce." (53.3%), Item 31: "Husbands/Wives that request prenuptial agreements do not trust their new spouses." (53.4%), and Item 36:

"If you love your husband/wife and he/she loves you, your spouse will love your children from your previous marriage." (52.6%).

Summary scores on the scales administered, as well as specific item means and the percentage of participants agreeing with each of the marriage, remarriage, and parenting myths were tabulated for the sample based on gender (Table 2).

Males

For the present study, the mean score for males on the marriage scale was 65.35 with individual scores ranging from 51 to 84. The mean score for males on the remarriage scale was 11.48 with individual scores ranging from 8 to 16. The mean score for males on the parenting scale was 7.68 with individual scores ranging from 4 to 13 (Table 1).

The percentage of males agreeing with each of the marriage, remarriage, and parenting myth items were tabulated for the sample in this study. The items or myths that appeared to be the most and least agreed with by males were identified (Table 2). A lower percentage of agreement indicated a low belief in the myth, while a higher percentage of agreement indicated a high belief in the myth.

For males, the myth items that received the lowest percentages of agreement (i.e., under 20% agreement), which indicated a low degree of belief in the myth, were as follows: Item 4 (17.3%), Item 15 (17.3%), Item 17 (18.7%), Item 32 (6.7%), Item 42 (18.7%), Item 46 (17.4%), Item 47 (13.3%), and Item 48

(13.4%). The myth items which received the highest percentages of agreement (i.e., over 50% agreement) among the males which indicated a high degree of belief in the myth were as follows: Item 3 (57.3%), Item 9 (66.7%), Item 10 (62.7%), Item 18 (89.4%), Item 20 (65.3%), Item 21 (76%), Item 22 (54.6%), Item 29 (54.6%), Item 31 (52%), and Item 39: "Over time, there is little difference in the reported levels of marital happiness of couples in first marriages and couples in remarriages." (53.3%).

Females

For the present study, the mean score for females on the marriage scale was 65 with individual scores ranging from 49 to 98. The mean score for females on the remarriage scale was 11.39 with individual scores ranging from 5 to 18. The mean score for females on the parenting scale was 7.45 with individual scores ranging from 4 to 14 (Table 1).

The percentage of females agreeing with each of the marriage, remarriage, and parenting myth items were tabulated for the sample in this study. The items or myths that appeared to be the most and least agreed with by females were identified (Table 2). A lower percentage of agreement indicated a low belief in the myth, while a higher percentage of agreement indicated a high belief in the myth.

For females, the myth items that received the lowest percentages of agreement (i.e., under 20% agreement), which indicated a low degree of belief in the myth, were as follows: Item 15 (13.4%), Item 17 (16%), Item 32 (9.3%),

Item 42 (8%), Item 46 (17.4%), and Item 48 (18.7%). For females, the myth items which received the highest percentages of agreement (i.e., over 50% agreement) which indicated a high degree of belief in the myth were as follows: Item 9 (54.7%), Item 10 (76%), Item 14: "Couples who lived together before marriage usually report greater marital happiness than do couples who did not." (52%), Item 18 (86.7%), Item 20 (68%), Item 21 (82.7%), Item 29 (52%), Item 31 (54.7%), and Item 36 (57.4%).

Test of Hypothesis 1

The first null hypothesis was that there were no gender or marital status (i.e., first married couples versus remarried couples) differences in beliefs in myths about marriage.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) procedures were performed in order to determine any gender or marital status differences in beliefs in myths about marriage, as well as interaction effects between the variables of gender and marital status. No significant main effects for gender or marital status differences in beliefs in myths about marriage were found. In addition, there was no significant interaction found for the variables of gender and marital status (Table 3). These findings support Hypothesis 1.

Table 3

Analysis of Variance for Beliefs in Myths about Marriage (The Marriage Scale)

Marriage scale-- Belief in marriage myths	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Main effects					
Combined	138.593	2	69.297	1.094	.338
Marital status	82.359	1	82.359	1.300	.256
Gender	54.424	1	54.424	.859	.355
2-Way interactions					
Marital status *gender	4.073	1	4.073	.064	.800
Model	141.819	3	47.273	.746	.526
Residual	8992.926	142	63.330		
TOTAL	9134.744	145	62.998		

All effects entered simultaneously.

N = 146 (n = 73 males; n = 73 females; n = 72 first married couples; n = 74 remarried couples).

Test of Hypothesis 2

The second null hypothesis was that there were no gender or marital status (i.e., first married couples versus remarried couples) differences in beliefs in myths about remarriage.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) procedures were performed in order to determine any gender or marital status differences in beliefs in myths about remarriage, as well as any interaction effects between the variables of gender and marital status. No significant main effects for gender or marital status differences in beliefs in myths about remarriage were found. No significant interaction was found between the variables of gender and marital status (Table 4). Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

Test of Hypothesis 3

The third null hypothesis was that there were no gender or marital status (i.e., first married couples versus remarried couples) differences in beliefs in myths about parenting.

Analysis of variance procedures (ANOVA) were performed in order to determine any gender or marital status (i.e., first married couples versus remarried couples) differences in beliefs in myths about parenting, as well as any interaction effects between the variables of gender and marital status. As hypothesized, no significant gender or marital status main effects in beliefs in myths about parenting were found in the sample. In addition, no significant

Table 4

Analysis of Variance for Beliefs in Myths about Remarriage (The Remarriage Scale)

Remarriage scale-- Belief in remarriage myths	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Main effects					
Combined	9.605	2	4.803	1.230	.295
Marital status	8.135	1	8.135	2.084	.151
Gender	1.379	1	1.379	.353	.553
2-Way interactions					
Marital status *gender	7.206	1	7.206	1.846	.176
Model	16.524	3	5.508	1.411	.242
Residual	554.222	142	3.903		
TOTAL	570.747	145	3.936		

All effects entered simultaneously.

N = 146 (n = 73 males; n = 73 females; n = 72 first married couples; n = 74 remarried couples).

interaction was found between the variables of gender and marital status (Table 5). These findings support Hypothesis 3.

Test of Hypothesis 4

The fourth null hypothesis was that the participants' degree of beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting as measured by the Marriage and Family Quiz were not predicted by a model including the sociodemographic variables of gender, age, educational level, employment status, income level, marital status, marital history, reason for termination of any previous marriage, presence of children, and number of children.

Multiple regression analyses were performed using the stepwise method of variable selection to test the hypothesis that a model comprised of 10 sociodemographic variables (i.e., age, gender, education, employment status, income level, marital status, marital history, presence of children, number of children, and reason for termination of last marriage) did not predict beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting. Three separate models were run by regressing each subscale (i.e., marriage, remarriage, and parenting) on the ten sociodemographic variables. These analyses were conducted separately for the total sample, as well as for both males and females individually.

Due to the predominance of White Americans (85%) and the high percentage of couples engaged for six months or less (57%) in the sample, race and length of engagement were used only as descriptive variables in the

Table 5

Analysis of Variance for Beliefs in Myths about Parenting (The Parenting Scale)

Parenting scale-- Belief in parenting myths	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Main effects					
Combined	2.969	2	1.485	.297	.743
Marital status	1.949	1	1.949	.000	.984
Gender	2.965	1	2.965	.594	.442
2-Way interactions					
Marital status *gender	.300	1	.300	.060	.807
Model	3.296	3	1.099	.220	.882
Residual	708.868	142	4.992		
TOTAL	712.164	145	4.911		

All effects entered simultaneously.

N = 146 (n = 73 males; n = 73 females; n = 72 first married couples; n = 74 remarried couples).

study since variance was greatly restricted on these variables. Therefore, the sociodemographic variables of race and length of engagement were excluded from the regression analysis.

The model predicting beliefs in myths about marriage for the sample included the single sociodemographic variable of educational level (Table 6). Educational level, a continuous variable, ranged from 1 to 6 on a Likert-type scale. A "1" represented the lowest educational level completed (i.e., elementary school) and a "6" represented the highest educational level completed (i.e., graduate degree). The model predicting beliefs in myths about marriage was significant ($F = 4.75$, $p = .031$), accounting for 4% of the variance in belief in myths about marriage. Educational level related negatively to beliefs in myths about marriage ($B = -.20$).

The model predicting beliefs in myths about remarriage for the sample included the sociodemographic variables of educational level, income level, and age (Table 6). Income level, a continuous variable, ranged from 1 to 6 on a Likert-type scale. A "1" indicated the lowest income level (i.e., \$1-\$9,999) of the participant and a "6" indicated the highest income level (i.e., over \$100,000) of the participant. Age range of the participants, also a continuous variable, ranged from 1 to 6 on a Likert-type scale. A "1" represented the lowest age range (i.e., under 19 years old) and a "6" represented the highest age (i.e., over 60 years old). The model predicting beliefs in myths about remarriage was significant ($F = 4.98$, $p = .003$). Educational level, income level, and age accounted for 13%

Table 6

Stepwise Regression Model of Sociodemographic Predictors of Beliefs in Myths about Marriage, Remarriage, and Parenting for the Sample

Model	Beliefs in marriage myths				Beliefs in remarriage myths			
	Beta	F	R ²	Tolerance	Beta	F	R ²	Tolerance
Educational level F = 4.75* R ² = .04	-.20	-2.18*	.04	1.00				
Educational level					-.35	-3.31**	.05	.75
Income level					.30	2.74**	.09	.68
Age F = 4.98** R ² = .13					-.20	-2.11*	.13	.90

*p < .05 **p < .01

Model for Beliefs in Myths about Parenting contained no significant sociodemographic predictors.

of the variance in beliefs in myths about remarriage. Both educational level ($B = -.35$) and age ($B = -.20$) related negatively to beliefs in myths about remarriage. Income level ($B = .30$) related positively to beliefs in myths about remarriage.

The parenting myths variable (i.e., beliefs in myths about parenting) was regressed on the sociodemographic model. There were no significant sociodemographic predictors found in the model for beliefs in myths about parenting for the sample.

Males

There were no significant sociodemographic predictors found in the model for beliefs in myths about marriage or parenting for males. Beliefs in myths about remarriage were predicted by a single sociodemographic variable included in the model tested.

The model predicting beliefs in myths about remarriage for males included the sociodemographic variable of educational level (Table 7). The model predicting beliefs in myths about remarriage was significant ($F = 4.67$, $p = .035$) accounting for 8% of the variance in belief in myths about remarriage among males. Educational level related inversely to beliefs in myths about remarriage ($B = -.28$).

Females

For females, there were no significant sociodemographic predictors in the model for beliefs in myths about remarriage or parenting. Beliefs in myths

Table 7

Stepwise Regression Model of Sociodemographic Predictors of Beliefs in Myths about Remarriage for Males

Model	Beliefs in remarriage myths			
	Beta	F	R ²	Tolerance
Educational level F = 4.67* R ² = .08	-.28	-2.16*	.08	1.00

*p < .05

about marriage were predicted by a single sociodemographic variable included in the model tested.

The model predicting beliefs in myths about marriage included the sociodemographic variable of educational level (Table 8). The model predicting beliefs in myths about marriage was significant ($F = 4.50$, $p = .039$) accounting for 8% of the variance in belief in myths about marriage among females. Educational level related inversely to beliefs in myths about marriage ($B = -.28$).

Based on the significant findings in the regression analyses, Hypothesis 4 was only partially supported.

Table 8

Stepwise Regression Model of Sociodemographic Predictors of Beliefs in Myths about Remarriage for Females

Model	Beliefs in remarriage myths			
	Beta	F	R ²	Tolerance
Educational level F = 4.50* R ² = .08	-.28	-2.12*	.08	1.00

*p < .05

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The analyses of the data in the present study revealed a high degree of beliefs in specific myths about marriage and remarriage for the sample. Data analyses indicated that there were no gender or marital status differences or interactions in beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, or parenting. The results also revealed that both beliefs in myths about marriage and remarriage for the total sample, as well as males and females individually were predicted by models comprised of sociodemographic variables. With regard to beliefs in myths about marriage, educational level was the most influential predictor for both the total sample and for the females. With regard to beliefs in myths about remarriage, it seemed that educational level was also the most influential predictor for the total sample and the males. Income level and age were also significant predictors of beliefs in myths about remarriage for the total sample. Further, the results revealed that beliefs in myths about parenting were not predicted by any sociodemographic variables.

Conclusions from the Study

1. There was a high degree of beliefs in specific myths about marriage and remarriage for the sample.

2. There was a low degree of beliefs in myths about parenting for the sample.
3. There were no significant gender differences in beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, or parenting.
4. There were no significant differences in beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, or parenting with respect to marital status (i.e., first married versus remarried) of the participants.
5. The model comprised of educational level was predictive of beliefs in myths about marriage for the total sample.
6. The model comprised of educational level, income level, and age range was predictive of beliefs in myths about remarriage for the total sample.
7. The model comprised of educational level was predictive of beliefs in myths about marriage for females.
8. The model comprised of educational level was predictive of beliefs in myths about remarriage for males.
9. There were no significant sociodemographic predictors of beliefs in myths about parenting for the total sample, males, or females.

Discussion

The results from the study supported both the anecdotal notion as well as the empirical findings that couples making the transition to marriage believe in myths about marriage and remarriage. It may be inferred that the high percentage of agreement (i.e., indication of belief in myths about marriage and

remarriage) within the total sample and for subgroups of males and females is indicative of couples' idealized attitudes and unrealistic expectations associated with the transition to marriage. As suggested by Arond and Pauker (1987), Carter and McGoldrick (1989), and Larson (1988), both males and females had romanticized attitudes and beliefs in myths about marriage and remarriage.

Further, it has been suggested that first married couples as well as remarried couples are idealistic about marriage and possess beliefs in myths about marriage and remarriage (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989; Fitzpatrick et al., 1992; Olson & DeFrain, 1994; Peek et al., 1988; Rice, 1996). Based on the results from the present study and those from past research, it may be inferred that the majority of couples who make the transition to both marriage and remarriage possess beliefs in a variety of myths associated with marriage and remarriage.

Do beliefs in myths about marriage and remarriage serve a purpose during a couple's transition to marriage? What is the functionality of beliefs in myths? A certain degree of beliefs in myths about marriage and remarriage may serve a protective function for couples. For example, if couples realized or were faced with the reality that marriage, even their own marriages, were imperfect and would at some time experience stress and distress, couples may be discouraged from or perhaps more reticent to enter into the commitment that marriage requires. Beliefs in myths about marriage and remarriage may make marriage and commitment more attractive and compelling to individuals. However, if a couple clings to their beliefs in myths about marriage and

remarriage after exposure to information, education, or life experiences that are contrary to the myths, their beliefs in myths no longer serve a protective function but become negative influences on the couple's relationship and a couple's transition to marriage.

The low degree of belief in parenting myths in the present study does not support the anecdotal notions that most parents have idealized beliefs about childrearing that are based on myths (Dressel & Clark, 1990; LeMasters & DeFrain, 1989). This result may be partially attributed to the large number of remarried participants in the sample who had already experienced parenting and have had experiences contrary to myths. Since the majority of the respondents were college-educated, an exposure to parenting education in their academic experiences also may have contributed to the low degree of beliefs in myths about parenting among the sample.

The results from the present study do not support the anecdotal and empirical literature that suggests that there are gender differences in beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting. Past research and anecdotal literature has indicated that there are significant differences between males and females in their beliefs about marriage, remarriage, and parenting (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989; Larson, 1988; Ganong et al., 1981; Gilbert et al., 1982; Salts et al., 1994; Schwartz, 1994).

The lack of gender differences in beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting in the present study may be linked to the changing roles of women in contemporary society (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989). As

women achieve greater parity and equity in education, employment, and income and when both men and women become somewhat more egalitarian in their expectations for marriage (Craddock, 1983; Huston & Geis, 1993; Schwartz, 1994), there may be less disparity in their beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting. In addition, as suggested by Hare-Mustin and Murecek (1990), the perception of male-female differences in our culture may be far greater than the actual differences themselves. Within group differences may be of greater import than between group differences.

The lack of group differences (i.e., marital status) in beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting in the present study seems to support the anecdotal and empirical literature that has suggested no significant differences between first married and remarried couples in the transition to marriage.

According to Ganong and Coleman (1994), Kurdek (1990), and Peek et al. (1988), first marriages and remarriages were more alike than different with respect to relationship quality, degree of idealization, and marital satisfaction. Furstenburg (1982) and Kalmuss and Seltzer (1986) have suggested that couples making the transition to remarriage expect the interactions and processes of their remarriage to be similar to or better than their first marriage. It may be inferred that remarried couples do not "let go" of many of the illusions and myths they possessed in their first marriages. They cling to an ideal of the perfect marriage and pursue subsequent relationships (i.e., remarriages) to fulfil that ideal rather than revising expectations.

Because past studies have not tested a model of sociodemographic variables as predictors of beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, or parenting, this study explored the possible effects of sociodemographic variables on beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting. Therefore, there is not an empirical context in which to compare the present results to earlier findings.

The results of this study indicated that beliefs in myths about marriage and remarriage were predicted by sociodemographic variables. The variance in beliefs in myths about parenting for the total sample as well as for both the subgroups of males and females was not explained by sociodemographic variables. The lack of a model of sociodemographic predictors for beliefs in myths about parenting may be attributed in part to the small number (i.e., four) of parenting myths included in the instrument as well as to the simple content of each myth. The small number of items addressing parenting myths may not have adequately identified the degree of beliefs in myths about parenting in the sample. In addition, regardless of sociodemographic factors (e.g., educational level, employment status, presence of children, etc.), the simplicity or "common sense" content of the four parenting myths may have made them more readily identifiable as myths as opposed to accepted true statements by the total sample. Thus, the significance of sociodemographic factors in predicting beliefs in myths about parenting may have been diminished.

With respect to the model predicting beliefs in myths about marriage for the sample, educational level was the sole predictor. It would seem that

educational level is a powerful predictor of beliefs in myths about marriage for couples making the transition to marriage. Educational level's negative relationship with beliefs in myths about marriage may indicate that greater academic and personal experience results in a decrease in beliefs in myths about marriage. These experiences may include both formal instruction as well as incidental learning from peer interaction and observation.

The model predicting beliefs in myths about remarriage for the sample included educational level as well as income level and age of the participant. Both educational level and age were related negatively to beliefs in myths about remarriage. Based on these results, it would seem that participants who had greater academic experiences (i.e., educational level) and more life experiences (i.e., age) tended to believe less in myths about remarriage. Income level was related positively to beliefs in myths about remarriage. It may be inferred that as an individual's income level increases so might his or her idealistic view of the world and expectations for a companionate rather than institutional model of marriage. This higher degree of idealism may contribute to a higher degree of beliefs in myths about remarriage. In addition, a higher income level may be a useful resource for couples who may be coping with the stresses in their transition to remarriage that are associated with a high degree of beliefs in myths about remarriage. An individual may be able to sustain a higher degree of beliefs in myths about remarriage and the stress associated with these beliefs due to his or her higher level of coping resources (i.e., income level).

Males

For males, sociodemographic variables did not seem to explain the variance in beliefs in myths about marriage. Males have not experienced the same drastic role changes in terms of sociodemographics (i.e., major increases or decreases in income level, employment status, and education level), therefore, sociodemographic variables may have less impact on male beliefs in myths about marriage. Changes for men perhaps have occurred in more relational or affiliative area of life (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989). Thus, models including variables related to these experiences could perhaps offer some explanation of variations in beliefs about marriage.

The results of the study revealed that educational level was a powerful predictor for males' beliefs in myths about remarriage. Educational level was related negatively to beliefs in myths about remarriage in this model. Therefore, the more academic and personal experiences a male achieves in an educational context, including greater opportunities for exposure to information about remarriage issues, the lower his belief in myths about remarriage.

Females

The present study revealed that educational level was the sole sociodemographic predictor of females' beliefs in myths about marriage. Educational level was related negatively to beliefs in myths about marriage. Therefore, it would seem that as women achieve greater parity in educational experiences they believe less in myths about marriage.

For females, sociodemographic variables did not explain the variance in beliefs in myths about remarriage. Because marriage is central to a woman's identity (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989), the effects of a divorce and the ideal of a better remarriage may make the success of the remarriage even more salient to a woman's identity. Therefore, females may have a tendency to hold on to illusions and myths about remarriage, regardless of sociodemographic factors (e.g., income level, educational level, employment status, or age).

Implications for Theory

Implications for theory can be drawn from the present study. According to tenets of Adler's Individual Psychology, an individual's beliefs about marriage may be based on myth and mistaken conclusions. Adlerians have proposed that individuals have mistaken ideas or unrealistic beliefs about self, life, and relationships (Manaster & Corsini, 1982). Many times because of the "private logic" that shapes goals and intentions, experience is shaped to fit private logic rather than revising private logic and intentions in the light of experience. The present study supports this theoretical view of an individual's beliefs in myths about relationships, particularly the marital relationship. The high degree of beliefs in myths about marriage and remarriage among the sample of couples making the transition to marriage in this study can be partially explained using Adlerian theory.

The results from this study also can be supported with Carter and McGoldrick's (1989) theory of horizontal and vertical stressors in the changing

family life cycle. Indeed, the couples making the transition to marriage in this study were experiencing the horizontal flow of stress that is indicative of a life cycle change (i.e., marriage or remarriage). The high degree of beliefs in specific myths about marriage and remarriage among the sample would be considered a vertical flow of stress. In addition, vertical stressors in the context of the present study would include for remarried participants not only family of origin legacies, but also legacies from their former marriage or marriages.

The point at which these two flows of stress intersect is one of increased stress and anxiety in the system. Therefore, it seems likely that those participants in the study who possessed a higher degree of beliefs in specific myths about marriage or remarriage might experience greater amounts of stress within their relationship as they make the transition to marriage.

Further, the lack of gender differences found in this study supports Carter and McGoldrick's (1989) view of the changing role of women in our culture and its possible effects on the transition to marriage. They have indicated that the changing role of women was the most influential factor affecting the transition to marriage currently. Within the past generation, women have experienced greater parity in employment, income, and education as well as greater independence and freedom from traditional female roles. These advancements and/or changes in female status and roles are indicative of the increasing equity in terms of sociodemographic factors among men and women in our culture. Hence, the changing role of women as well as the

greater equity among men and women may have lessened the so-called "gender gap."

Implications for Research

Implications for research can be developed from this study. First, future research which targets couples making the transition to marriage during the marriage license application process should take every precaution to avoid the sampling difficulties experienced in the present study. Sampling strategies for future research with this population in this specific situation might include: (a) personal contact with the couples applying for a marriage license in order to encourage couples to participate in the study (e.g., personal conversation; telephone follow-up), (b) incentives for more consistent distribution of surveys and return envelopes by any outside sources (e.g., government agencies) used to distribute and collect data, (c) monetary incentives to encourage couples' participation, and (d) the development of creative methods through which the survey can be distributed and returned in the short time between a couple's application for marriage and actual marriage date.

Second, because the sample for the present study did not represent the ethnic diversity in the population of couples making the transition to marriage, its findings should be generalized to racially diverse couples making the transition to marriage with caution. Diversity in race and culture may influence beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting. Therefore, future

research should strive for a more diverse representation of ethnic and racial backgrounds in samples.

Third, because of the increasing number of remarriages and remarried families in our culture (Ganong & Coleman, 1994; Glick, 1989), future research using the Marriage and Family Quiz might benefit from the addition of more items which focus on beliefs in myths about remarriage and parenting.

Additional use and subsequently examination and analysis of the Marriage and Family Quiz would help to further identify its strengths and limitations as a psychometrically sound measure of couples' beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting.

Fourth, future research might also benefit from further study of couples' beliefs in the accepted true statements about marriage, remarriage, and parenting included in the quiz. A high percentage of disagreement with an accepted true statement might indicate an individual's lack of belief in an accepted truth or reality concerning marriage, remarriage, or parenting issues. Results from the present study revealed a high percentage of disagreement (i.e., over 50% disagreement) among the sample with the following accepted true statements: Item 26: "The frequency of and satisfaction with sexual activity in later marriage is similar to the quality of sexual activity during earlier years of marriage." (57%), Item 41: "The relationship problems people had in their first marriages are usually the same problems they have in their second marriages." (59%), and Item 45: "The arrival of a baby doesn't affect the life of the father as much as the life of the mother." (75%). Exploration of couples' beliefs in

accepted true statements about marriage, remarriage, and parenting would help to identify further couples' beliefs about marriage, remarriage, and parenting as they make the marital transition.

Based on the results of the present study and on the lack of research which has focused on this particular area and population, there is a critical need for future research to further explore beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting among couples making the transition to marriage. Such examination would likely give a more detailed and specific description of couples' beliefs about marriage, remarriage, and parenting. Because the variance in beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting was not fully explained by sociodemographic factors, further examination of possible predictors of beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting is also needed. An extension of influential factors beyond sociodemographic variables would add to this area of inquiry.

Implications for Practice

The results of this study support the need cited in the literature (Carter & Morris, 1997a; Crosbie-Burnett & Giles-Sims, 1994; Fitzpatrick et al., 1992; Ganong & Coleman, 1994; Morris & Carter, 1997; Skopin et al., 1993; Walsh, 1992; Visser & Visser, 1992) for the development and implementation of family life education programs which target couples making the transition to marriage and focus on dispelling beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting.

Data analyses in the present study indicated that education was a significant factor in predicting beliefs in myths about marriage and remarriage among couples making the transition to marriage. Therefore, it seems reasonable that exposure to family life education programs (e.g., public or private education, community-based education) that educate individuals specifically about marriage and remarriage myths could decrease beliefs in myths.

The need for family life education programs that dispel myths associated with marriage and remarriage was also demonstrated by the high percentage (50% or more) of agreement (belief in the myth) among the sample with ten of the myths about marriage and remarriage. Similar to past studies (Carter & Morris, 1997a; Larson, 1988), there was a high percentage of the sample in the present study that believed in myths about marriage and remarriage. The following myths about marriage and remarriage received the highest percentage of agreement among the sample: Item 3, Item 9, Item 10, Item 18, Item 20, Item 21, Item 29, Item 31, and Item 36. In addition, Item 39 and Item 14 received a high percentage of agreement for the males and for the females in the sample respectively.

Educational efforts should perhaps be focused on dispelling myths associated with the following issues:

1. The effect of children on marital satisfaction (Item 3).
2. The trends in division of labor in households in which both partners work full-time (Item 9).

3. The changes in marital satisfaction over the life span (Item 10).
4. The effects of cohabitation on marital satisfaction (Item 14).
5. The effects of different kinds of self-disclosure on marital satisfaction (Item 18).
6. The type of love that leads to marital satisfaction over the course of the marriage (Item 20).
7. The effects of extramarital sex on the marital relationship (Item 21).
8. The effects of religion and religious faith on marital stability (Item 29).
9. The effect of divorce on a child's later marital success (Item 31).
10. The dynamics of family relationships within remarried families (Item 36).
11. The effects of remarriage on marital satisfaction (Item 39).

The low percentage (less than 22%) of agreement (belief in the myth) among the sample with the parenting myths may indicate that family life educators are doing a more adequate job of dispelling myths associated with parenting. It may be inferred that marriage and remarriage are issues that are many times taken for granted in family life education curricula; therefore, ill-founded beliefs associated with marriage and remarriage are not adequately challenged.

Limitations of the study

Some limitations are noted concerning this study. Important limitations concern the sample, method of data collection, and instrumentation used in the study. The convenience sample used in the study is a limitation in terms of sample size and sample representativeness in terms particularly of race. It is also influenced by volunteer bias that may have resulted in a somewhat more homogeneous sample that potentially may not be fully representative of the broader population of couples making the transition to marriage. It may be inferred that volunteer bias could have resulted in a sample that consisted of those who are somewhat different from the broader population with respect to beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting in general.

In addition, volunteer bias could have resulted in a sample that consisted of those who are somewhat different from the broader population with respect to race, education level, income level, and employment status. An examination of the sample means shows a predominantly White American, college-educated, middle-class, full-time employed sample. It may also be that those who completed the Marriage and Family Quiz were less busy, and perhaps less defensive, about the questions being asked. Therefore, the generalization of the findings of the present study to all couples making the transition to marriage should be made with caution.

Another limitation of this study was the sole dependence on self-report measures in the study. The use of one method of data collection increases the

risk of measurement error influencing the results of the study. In addition, self-report measures do not allow for adequate checks on data quality. This limitation might be overcome through methods that employed observation or interviewing formats. Certainly the depth of information about transition to marriage would be greater if interviews were conducted with couples making the transition to marriage. Hopefully, more qualitative studies of couples making the transition to marriage will occur.

The instrumentation used in this study also possesses some limitations. These limitations are associated with the development of the Marriage and Family Quiz.

First, the internal consistency reliability for each subscale in the instrument needs to be addressed. Although the alphas on the marriage scale and the parenting scale in the present study were comparable to other studies (Carter & Morris, 1997a; Larson, 1988), the alpha for the remarriage scale was lower when making the same comparison.

The lower reliability of the remarriage scale in the present study may be contributed in part to the composition of the sample. The present study used a sample of couples making the transition to marriage while other studies have used samples of college students. In addition, both in the development of the instrument and in the present study, the reliability of the subscales was based on content of the items and not on factor analysis. Future research using the Marriage and Family Quiz should include factor analysis to determine if the factors are psychometrically differentiated.

A second limitation of the instrumentation includes the categorization of each statement about marriage, remarriage, or parenting as a myth or an accepted true statement as fact. In the development of the instrument, the categorization of a statement as a myth or an accepted true statement was determined by a group of family life professionals and supported with anecdotal, theoretical, and empirical literature. However, this method of categorization is not without potential problems. Family life professionals, although having expertise in their chosen fields, can be biased. In addition, literature can be found that may dispute the categorization of a statement as a myth or an accepted true statement. Therefore, the categorization of the items in the Marriage and Family Quiz, both myths and accepted true statements, should be reviewed and subjected to further analysis.

Third, the imbalance of remarriage and parenting items when compared to marriage items on the quiz is a limitation of the instrument. Future use of this instrument with samples of couples making the transition to marriage may be enhanced if additional items dealing with beliefs in myths about remarriage and parenting are included.

The strengths of this study must be noted as well. First, this research used a sample of couples actually making the transition to marriage. Past research exploring beliefs about or expectations for marriage, remarriage, and parenting has relied on samples of college students and married couples or individuals (Carter & Morris, 1997a; Holman & Li, 1997; Larson, 1988; Salts, Seismore, Lindholm, & Smith, 1994; Intons-Peterson, & Crawford, 1985; Fine &

Hovestadt, 1984). Thus, this research has helped to provide a more detailed and specific view of the transition to marriage as well as couples' beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting.

A second strength of this study was its use of the lens of gender in data analyses and conceptualization of results. This study's focus on exploring gender differences and similarities in beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting, in couples making the transition to marriage contributes to an understanding of the salience of gender issues for this developmental transition.

Third, the focus on exploring group (i.e., first married couples versus remarried couples) differences and similarities in beliefs in marriage, remarriage, and parenting in couples making the transition to marriage is a strength of this research. The comparisons of beliefs in myths between first married couples and remarried couples made in this research have not been addressed in other studies. Therefore, the results of this study may enhance our understanding of the complexities of both first marriages and remarriages- their similarities and differences.

Summary

This study explored beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting among couples making the transition to marriage. This study examined both gender and group (i.e., first married couples versus remarried couples) differences in beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and

parenting. It was found that no significant gender or group differences in beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting were present for the sample.

The predictive power of a model containing ten sociodemographic variables for beliefs in myths about marriage, remarriage, and parenting was also was examined. It was found that educational level was the sole significant predictor of beliefs in myths about marriage for the total sample and for females. Educational level, income level, and age of the participant were significant contributors to the model predicting the sample's beliefs in myths about remarriage. Educational level was also the sole predictor for males' beliefs in myths about remarriage. There were no significant predictors for beliefs in myths about parenting.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY QUIZ

People have many ideas about marriage, remarriage, and parenting. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following ideas about marriage and family using the following agreement scale.

- 4 = Strongly Agree
- 3 = Agree
- 2 = Disagree
- 1 = Strongly Disagree

_____ 1. A husband's marital happiness is usually lower if his wife is employed full-time than if she is a full-time homemaker.

_____ 2. Today most young, single, never-married people will eventually get married.

_____ 3. In most marriages, having a child improves marital happiness for both husband and wife.

_____ 4. The quality of the couple's sex life is the single best indicator of overall marital happiness.

_____ 5. The number of divorces in the United States increased between 1960 and 1980.

_____ 6. A greater number of wives are in the work force today than in 1970.

_____ 7. Marital happiness for a wife is usually lower if she is employed full time than if she is a full time homemaker.

_____ 8. If my spouse loves me, he/she should know what I want and need to be happy.

_____ 9. In a marriage in which the wife is employed full time, the husband usually does an equal share of the housekeeping.

_____ 10. For most couples, marital happiness gradually increases from the first year of marriage through retirement.

_____ 11. No matter how I act, my husband/wife should love me because he/she is my spouse.

_____ 12. One of the most frequent problems in marriage is poor communication.

_____ 13. Husbands usually make more lifestyle changes after marriage than do wives.

_____ 14. Couples who lived together before marriage usually report greater marital happiness than do couples who did not.

_____ 15. I can change my husband/wife by pointing out his/her inadequacies, errors, and so forth.

_____ 16. Couples who marry when one of both partners are under the age of 18 are more likely to divorce than are those who marry when they are older.

_____ 17. Either my spouse loves me or does not love me; nothing I do will affect the way my husband/wife feels about me.

_____ 18. The more a husband/wife discloses positive and negative things to his/her spouse, the greater the marital happiness of both spouses.

_____ 19. I must feel better about my husband/wife before I can change the way I act toward him/her.

_____ 20. For most couples, maintaining romantic love is the key to marital happiness throughout life.

_____ 21. Extramarital sex usually results in a divorce for the married couple.

_____ 22. Couples who enjoy a close, intimate relationship with each other are more likely to be dependent.

_____ 23. The more a husband/wife disagrees with his/her spouse the greater the chance the husband/wife are rejecting them as a person.

_____ 24. A sexual fantasy about another person other than your husband/wife is a clear indication that your marriage is in serious trouble.

_____ 25. Commitment to your spouse is by far the most important factor in a happy, long-term marriage.

_____ 26. The frequency of and satisfaction with sexual activity in later marriage is very similar to the quality of sexual activity during earlier years of marriage.

_____ 27. A spouse with a continued lack of interest in sex is probably having an affair with another person.

_____ 28. Husbands/ Wives should never share their marital problems with other people.

_____ 29. Couples with a strong religious faith usually don't divorce.

_____ 30. Children that grew up in divorced families are poor risks for long-term marriage.

_____ 31. Husbands/ Wives that request prenuptial agreements do not trust their new spouse.

_____ 32. A husband/wife that physically abuses their partner before marriage usually does not abuse the spouse after marriage because of increased feelings of confidence and security.

_____ 33. Relations with friends and family do not change much when you marry.

_____ 34. In a long-lasting marriage, intense passion changes over time.

_____ 35. The percentage of remarriages that end in divorce is lower than first marriages because remarried couples are more experienced.

_____ 36. If you love your husband/ wife and he/she loves you, your spouse will love your children from your previous marriage.

_____ 37. In remarriages, certain feelings left over from the breakup of the previous marriage can affect the current relationship and create difficulties.

_____ 38. Deciding who and what to spend money on is not usually a problem for remarried couples.

_____ 39. Over time, the reported levels of marital happiness of couples in first marriages and couples in remarriages is the same.

_____ 40. There is not a difference in the marital happiness of people who remarry after divorce when compared to those who remarry after the death of their spouse.

_____ 41. The relationship problems people have in their first marriage are usually the same problems they have in their second marriage.

_____ 42. If a husband/wife have an unhappy marriage, having a baby will generally improve their marriage.

_____ 43. Parenting today is more difficult than ever before.

_____ 44. Parenting children is generally fun and easy.

_____ 45. The arrival of a baby doesn't affect the life of the father as much as the mother.

_____ 46. To be a good parent all you have to do is love your child.

_____ 47. Disciplining stepchildren is usually not difficult for remarried couples.

_____ 48. Your children will feel as happy about your remarriage as you do.

PERSONAL HISTORY INVENTORY

1. Gender _____ Male _____ Female

2. Age
 under 20 _____ 30 - 39 _____ 50 - 59 _____
 20 - 29 _____ 40 - 49 _____ 60 plus _____

3. Check your ethnic/racial background? (optional)

_____ White American _____ Asian American
 _____ Black American _____ Native American
 _____ Latin American _____ Other _____ (please specify)

4. Check the highest education level completed

_____ Elementary (Kindergarten - 5th grade)
 _____ Technical/Vocational
 _____ Middle School (6th - 8th grade) _____ College
 _____ High School (9th - 12th grade) _____ Graduate Degree

5. Check your employment status?

_____ No employment _____ Part-time employment
 _____ Full-time employment _____ Other

6. Check which income best describes your yearly, personal, pre-tax income level?
- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ \$1 - \$9,999 | ☐ \$30,000 - \$49,999 |
| ☐ \$10,000 - \$19,999 | ☐ \$50,000 - \$100,000 |
| ☐ \$20,000 - \$29,999 | ☐ over \$100,000 |
7. Number of this marriage for your (first, second, etc.) _____
8. If previously married, check how the last marriage ended?
- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| ☐ Not previously married | ☐ By death |
| ☐ By Divorce | ☐ By Annulment |
9. In total months, how long have you been engaged?
- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| ☐ 0 - 3 months | ☐ 10 - 12 months |
| ☐ 4 - 6 months | ☐ over 12 months |
| ☐ 7 - 9 months | |
10. After your wedding do you plan to live in this area? ☐ yes ☐ no
11. Do you have children? ☐ yes ☐ no
12. If so, how many? _____

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

We are asking you to help us learn how couples preparing for marriage/remarriage view a variety of issues involving marriage and family. We hope that having more information of this nature will help us better address the needs of newly married and remarried couples and families. We are hoping that you will agree to complete this survey.

Anticipated benefits for you may involve a better understanding of yourself and your perceptions of your relationship. We would like for you to understand our commitment to the following safeguards in your interest:

1. Once the completed surveys are returned, the confidentiality of information about you will be maintained by the use of code numbers on all materials.
2. The data gathered will be reported in summary form with no reference to you personally. This consent form will be detached from the surveys and a code number will be assigned to the survey. After detachment, names and code numbers will not be cross-referenced. Individual data and participant identities will not be shared with anyone.
3. We do not anticipate that participation in our project will involve risks for anyone, but if responding to the questionnaire creates concern for you, we will be happy to refer you to a trained professional. In addition to the insight you may gain from reflecting on yourself and your relationship, the group results from this study may be of interest to you and will be available to you upon your request.
4. Once you have completed the survey, please mail it back to us in the return-addressed stamped envelope provided. You may also choose to return your survey directly to the personnel working in the Marriage License Office.
5. Answers to questions you may have about the procedures or content of this study are available from:

Susan Alford Carter, M.Ed. and/or M. Lane Morris, Ph.D.
c/o The University of Tennessee, Knoxville
115 Jesse Harris Building, Knoxville, TN 37996-1900, (423) 974-5316

YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ THIS FORM AND
AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX C

RESEARCH FINDINGS ON THE MARRIAGE AND FAMILY QUIZ ITEMS

As defined earlier, a myth is defined as a widely held belief that is not supported by the facts (Larson, 1988). A belief about marriage, remarriage, or parenting may be ill-founded because there is little or no evidence in the empirical research literature on marriage that the belief is true. Therefore, evidence for one's beliefs about marriage should always be critically examined (Larson, 1988).

The brief discussion of each item and the references for each item were not intended to be a complete review of the literature on a particular subject. Therefore, some of the most pertinent and contemporary research on each subject is briefly explained to justify why each item was considered an accepted true statement or a myth.

1. **A husband's marital happiness is usually lower if his wife is employed full time than if she is a full-time homemaker.**
Recent research shows there is no consistent or significant difference in the marital satisfaction of husbands or wives based on the employment status of the wife (Fendrich, 1984; Hoffman, 1986; Kessler & McRae, 1982; Locksley, 1980; Piotrkowski, Rapaport, & Rapaport, 1987; Smith, 1985; Staines, Pleck, Shepard, & O'Connor, 1978; Wright, 1978).
2. **Today most young, single, never-married people will eventually get married.**
Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the proportion of the United States adult population marrying at least once varied only slightly between 94% and 96% (Glick, 1979, 1984).

3. **In most marriages, having a child improves marital happiness for both husband and wife.**

Most studies have shown a decrease in marital satisfaction for one or both spouses when a child is born (Feldman, 1971; Harriman, 1986; Hicks & Platt, 1970; Luckey & Bain, 1970; Rollins & Galligan, 1978; Rubin, 1976; Russell, 1974; Ryder, 1973).

4. **The quality of the couple's sex life is the single best indicator of overall marital happiness.**

Studies have shown that couple communication as the key predictor of overall marital satisfaction; satisfaction with sex life is considered desirable but not always essential (Quinn & Davidson, 1986; Snyder, 1979; Tavis & Jayaratne, 1976).

5. **The number of divorces in the United States increased between 1960 and 1980.**

The number of divorces increased from 33.2% in 1960 to 53% in 1980 (Saxton, 1983; U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, 1980).

6. **A greater number of wives are in the work force today than in 1970.**

Between 1970 and the end of 1983, the number of married women in the labor force grew from 41% in 1970 to nearly 54% in 1983 (Bureau of Labor Statistics News, 1983).

7. **Marital happiness for a wife is usually lower if she is employed full time than if she is a full time homemaker.**

(See answer to Item 1.)

8. **If my spouse loves me, he/she should know what I want and need to be happy.**

This is called the "ESP myth"- expecting my partner to know instinctively what I want and need. In reality, a person must communicate wants, needs, and expectations in order to get those needs met (Crosby, 1985a; Eisenberg, 1981; Jacobson & Margolin, 1979).

9. **In a marriage in which the wife is employed full time, the husband usually does an equal share of the housekeeping.**

Research has shown that housework is largely women's work whether or not the wife holds an outside job (Berardo, Shehan, & Leslie, 1987; Coverman, 1983; Gerken & Gove, 1983; Gove & Peterson, 1980; Walker & Gauger, 1970).

- 10. For most couples, marital happiness gradually increases from the first year of marriage through retirement.**
Many studies have shown that marriage tends to become less satisfying over the years as couples move from the preparenthood stage of marriage into the parenthood stages. This period of lower satisfaction is followed by increases in satisfaction after the children grow up and leave home (Anderson, Russell, & Schumm, 1983; Feldman & Feldman, 1977; Miller & Meyers-Walls, 1983; Olson, McCubbin, Barnes, Larsen, Muxen, & Wilson, 1982; Renne, 1970; Rollins & Cannon, 1974; Rollins & Feldman, 1970; Treas & Bengtson, 1987).
- 11. No matter how I act, my husband/wife should love me because he/she is my spouse.**
A person usually loves his/her spouse because the spouse's behavior meets the person's needs. Assuming someone can love another person simply because he/she exists is unrealistic (Eidelson & Epstein, 1982; Fish & Fish, 1986; Jacobson & Margolin, 1979; Jacobson & Martin, 1976; Lazarus, 1985; Wills, Weiss, & Patterson, 1974).
- 12. One of the most frequent problems in marriage is poor communication.**
Marriage therapists' reports of the most frequent marital problems they encounter show that lack of communication is one of the most frequently reported marital problems (Burn, 1984; Geiss & O'Leary, 1981).
- 13. Husbands usually make more lifestyle changes after marriage than do wives.**
Most studies show that wives make more adjustments to marriage and find marriage more stressful than husbands (Bell, Daly, & Gonzalez, 1987; Bernard, 1972; Chickering & Havighurst, 1981; Glenn, 1975; Rhyne, 1981; Rollins & Galligan, 1978; Spanier, Lewis, & Cole, 1975).
- 14. Couples who lived together before marriage usually report greater marital happiness than do couples who did not.**
No significant differences in marital satisfaction have been found between married couples who cohabited before marriage and those who did not (DeMaris & Leslie, 1984; Jacques & Chason, 1978; Macklin, 1978; Newcomb, 1979; Newcomb & Bentler, 1981; Ridley, Peterman, & Avery, 1978; Watson, 1983; Watson & DeMeo, 1987).
- 15. I can change my husband/wife by pointing out his/her inadequacies, errors, and so forth.**
Studies suggest that this "negative tracking" behavior is characteristic of unhappy couples and only leads to further dissatisfaction and

unhappiness in marriage (Jacobson & Margolin, 1979; Jacobson & Martin, 1976).

16. **Couples who marry when one of both partners are under the age of 18 are more likely to divorce than are those who marry when they are older.**

The divorce rate for teenage marriages is three to four times higher than for later marriages (Howard, 1971). Couples married as teenagers report more tension and higher rates of marital dissatisfaction than those who marry later (Lee, 1977).

17. **Either my spouse loves me or does not love me; nothing I do will affect the way my husband/wife feels about me.**

How much love and satisfaction one feels toward a spouse depends heavily upon that spouse's behavior (Fish & Fish, 1986; Jacobson & Martin, 1976; Stuart, 1976).

18. **The more a husband/wife discloses positive and negative things to his/her spouse, the greater the marital happiness of both spouses.**

Research shows that the quality of self-disclosure is an important interacting variable in the relationship between quantity of self-disclosure and marital satisfaction (Holman & Brock, 1986; Schumm, Barnes, Bollman, & Bugaighis, 1986).

19. **I must feel better about my husband/wife before I can change the way I act toward him/her.**

Research does not support the notion that feelings must change before one's behavior can change (Coyne, 1981, 1986; Jacobson & Martin, 1976; Lazarus, Coyne, & Folkman, 1982; Stuart, 1976).

20. **For most couples, maintaining romantic love is the key to marital happiness throughout life.**

Most research on love and marriage suggests that there is a change in the type of love in marriage from a romantic, passionate love early in marriage to more companionate love later in marriage (Berscheid & Walster, 1978; Cimbalo, Faling, & Mousaw, 1976; Coleman, 1977; Crosby, 1985; Duvall & Hill, 1960; Fogarty, 1985; Goldstine, Lerner, Zuckerman, & Goldstine, 1977; Lederer & Jackson, 1968; Reedy, 1978; Reedy, Birren, & Schaie, 1981; Rubin, 1970; Swenson, Eskew, & Kohlhelpp, 1981; Treas & Bengtson, 1987; Walster & Walster, 1978). Most couples identify companionate love rather than romantic love as the kind of love that helps maintain marital satisfaction over the life-span (Sporakowske & Hughston, 1978; Stinnett, Carter, & Montgomery, 1972).

21. **Extramarital sex usually results in a divorce for the married couple.**
Extramarital sex is an important factor in many cases of divorce; however, it does not always ruin or erode marital quality. It can sometimes be used as an opportunity for growth in the marriage (Masters, Johnson, & Kolodny, 1995).
22. **Couples who enjoy a close, intimate relationship with each other are more likely to be dependent.**
There is a vast difference between forming an intimate relationship with another separate person and using a couple relationship to complete one's self and improve one's self-esteem by seeking fusion (McGoldrick, 1989).
23. **The more a husband/wife disagrees with his/her spouse the greater the chance the husband/wife are rejecting them as a person.**
Marital anger and conflict are necessary forces and a challenge to be met rather than avoided in the early years of marriage (Lamanna & Riedmann, 1991).
24. **A sexual fantasy about another person other than your husband/wife is a clear indication that your marriage is in serious trouble.**
Sexual fantasies serve important functions in our lives; a person's use of a particular type of fantasy does not necessarily mean that he or she wishes to act it out (Masters, Johnson, & Kolodny, 1995).
25. **Commitment to your spouse is by far the most important factor in a happy, long-term marriage.**
Commitment to the success of the marriage and to your partner (and the sacrifices that commitment may entail) is an essential component in the formation of a strong marriage and family (Mace, 1980; Stinnett & DeFrain, 1985; Strong & DeVault, 1995).
26. **The frequency of and satisfaction with sexual activity in later marriage is very similar to the quality of sexual activity during earlier years of marriage.**
In general, coital frequency rates decline with the length of marriage, however, some couples develop better sexual relationships as time goes by and may be just as or more coitally active and sexually satisfied as they were in the early years of marriage (Masters, Johnson, & Kolodny, 1995).

- 27. A spouse with a continued lack of interest in sex is probably having an affair with another person.**

Inhibited sexual desire (ISD) is a type of sexual dysfunction marked by a very low interest in sexual behavior. Sex therapists suggest that ISD accounts for three out of ten cases in many clinics (Leiblum & Rosen, 1988; Lief, 1977; Masters, Johnson, & Kolodny, 1995; Schover & Lo-Piccolo, 1982).

- 28. Husbands/Wives should never share their marital problems with other people.**

A characteristic of a strong marriage and/or family is the ability to be open to resources outside itself. A couple must be able to acknowledge their vulnerabilities and ask for and receive assistance in their time of need (i.e., counseling, family life education programs, or church groups) (Stinnett & DeFrain, 1985; Strong & DeVault, 1995).

- 29. Couples with a strong religious faith usually don't divorce.**

Although divorce rates are lower for couples who are religious and attend church regularly compared to those couples with no religion and no church attendance, there is still a high dissolution rate of marriage among many religious denominations and interfaith marriages (Glenn & Supancic, 1984; Rice, 1996; Strong & DeVault, 1995).

- 30. Children that grew up in divorced families are poor risks for long-term marriage.**

It is not clear how today's young adults may be affected by parental divorce (Strong & DeVault, 1995). It seems that it is not divorce per se that creates long-range disturbances but, the specific circumstances emanating from the separation (i.e., the loss of a parent, ongoing conflict between parents, quality of postseparation life, and number and degree of other stress-inducing changes resulting from the separation (Peck & Manocherian, 1989).

- 31. Husbands/Wives that request prenuptial agreements do not trust their new spouse.**

Many couples write marriage contracts in order to avoid some of the conflict and power struggles that marriage can bring (Benokraitis, 1993).

- 32. A husband/wife that physically abuses their partner before marriage usually does not abuse the spouse after marriage because of increased feelings of confidence and security.**

Research has shown that if aggression (i.e., psychological and/or physical) has been present in the premarital relationship it will most likely be evident after marriage (Kelly, Huston, & Cate, 1985; Murphy &

O'Leary, 1989). Eighty percent of women report having experienced sexual aggression in a dating relationship (Polonko, 1990).

33. Relations with friends and family do not change much when you marry.

Marriage symbolizes a change in status among all family members and generations and requires that the couple negotiate new relationships as a twosome with many other subsystems: parents, siblings, friends, and etc. (Arond & Pauker, 1987; Benokraitis, 1993; Carter & McGoldrick, 1989; McGoldrick, 1989; Strong & DeVault, 1995).

34. In a long-lasting marriage, intense passion changes over time.

The general belief is that the romantic, passionate love that permeates the marital relationship in the early years of marriage gradually fades as the idealization of one's partner fades and disillusionment is bred when a spouse's limitations and faults become apparent (Breiner, 1980; Jacobson & Margolin, 1979; Lederer & Jackson, 1968). This does not mean romantic love totally disappears or may not reappear later in marriage (Knox, 1970; Munro & Adams, 1978; Spanier, 1972). (See Item #20).

35. The percentage of remarriages that end in divorce is lower than first marriages because remarried couples are more experienced.

Divorce rates in remarriages tend to be somewhat higher than in first marriages (Booth & Edwards, 1992; Rice, 1996; Strong & DeVault, 1995).

36. If you love your husband/ wife and he/she loves you, your spouse will love your children from your previous marriage.

The expectation that parents should love all their children equally and that children should love both parents equally in a stepfamily is unrealistic and can produce guilt, anger, and low self-esteem when not fulfilled (Kelley, 1992; Walsh, 1992).

37. In remarriages, certain feelings left over from the breakup of the previous marriage can affect the current relationship and create difficulties.

If feelings from the breakup of the previous marriage (i.e., divorce) have not been adequately dealt with, these unresolved issues can be emotionally reactivated during the transition to remarriage and become problematic (McGoldrick & Carter, 1989; Visher & Visher, 1977).

38. Deciding who and what to spend money on is not usually a problem for remarried couples.

Financial problems are particularly bothersome for remarried couples (Bachrach, 1983; Coleman, Ganong, & Goodwin, 1994).

39. Over time, the reported levels of marital happiness of couples in first marriages and couples in remarriages is the same.

Longitudinal studies indicate that, in general, marital quality is lower and divorce rates higher for those who have lived through more than one marital career, compared with those married for the first time (Booth & Edwards, 1992; Burr, Day, & Bahr, 1993; Ganong & Coleman, 1991; Rice, 1996; Strong & DeVault, 1995).

40. There is not a difference in the marital happiness of people who remarry after divorce when compared to those who remarry after the death of their spouse.

Generally, widows or widowers who were happily married before are more inclined to compare a second mate unfavorably with a first mate than are divorced people (Rice, 1996).

41. The relationship problems people have in their first marriage are usually the same problems they have in their second marriage.

Research indicates that there are few differences in relationship quality between first marriages and remarriages (Kurdek, 1990; Masters, Johnson, & Kolodny, 1995; Peek, Bell, Waldren, & Souell, 1988).

42. If a husband/wife have an unhappy marriage, having a baby will generally improve their marriage.

Having a child tends to put tremendous pressure on an intimate relationship (LeMasters & DeFrain, 1989; Olson & DeFrain, 1994); therefore, marital happiness tends to decrease during the childrearing years (See Item 10).

43. Parenting today is more difficult than ever before.

Standards for childrearing have gotten higher, making the challenge for today's parents even greater (LeMasters & DeFrain, 1989).

44. Parenting children is generally fun and easy.

Children bring heavy responsibilities and drain a couple's energy, finances, and time (LeMasters & DeFrain, 1989).

45. The arrival of a baby doesn't affect the life of the father as much as the mother.

Both parents experience psychological, relational and lifestyle changes after the birth of the baby (Olson & DeFrain, 1994). However, due to

multiple role demands, mothers seem to experience greater stress than fathers after the arrival of a baby (Harriman, 1983; Strong & DeVault, 1995; Ventura, 1987).

46. **To be a good parent all you have to do is love your child.**
Love helps parents put up with many difficulties they encounter in childrearing; however, success at parenting also requires hard work and good parenting skills (LeMasters & DeFrain, 1989).
47. **Disciplining stepchildren is usually not difficult for remarried couples.**
Conflicts over discipline and childrearing is an area of particular stress in a stepfamily; stepchildren may be harder to discipline in the early years of remarriage (Coleman, Ganong, & Goodwin, 1994; Fine & Schwebel, 1991; Pasley, Dollahite, & Ihinger-Tallman, 1993; Whitsett & Land, 1992).
48. **Your children will feel as happy about your remarriage as you do.**
The steprelationship is potentially the most troublesome to stepfamilies because of many complicating factors including acceptance of the stepparent and problems in assimilating stepparents into preexisting single-parent systems (Coleman et al., 1994).

VITA

Susan Alford Carter was born in Cleveland, Tennessee, on June 8, 1965. She attended public schools in Cleveland, Tennessee and Marietta, Georgia and graduated from Walton High School in May 1983. She completed her Bachelor of Arts degree majoring in Psychology in 1987 and teacher certification in 1989 at Lee College in Cleveland, Tennessee. Upon graduation she was employed for three years at Bradley County High School in Cleveland, Tennessee as a social studies teacher. In 1990, she married T. Scot Carter. In 1991, she began Master of Education studies at the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga. After graduation in 1993, she was employed for two years as a guidance counselor at Lakeview-Ft. Oglethorpe High School in Ft. Oglethorpe, Georgia. In 1995, the couple celebrated the birth of their first daughter named Kaitlyn Devyn, who was born on April 5, 1995.

In the fall of 1995, the author began Ph.D. studies at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in the Child and Family Studies Department. The author is a member of the National Council on Family Relations, American School Counselors Association, Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society, and the Kappa Delta Pi Honor Society. In addition, the author is expecting the birth of her second child in April 1998.