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Families of remarriage constitute a growing number of American families. The spiraling divorce rate of the 1970s was accompanied by a concomitant increase in the number of remarriages. Forty percent of American families today contain at least one spouse that has been previously married, thus studying relationships within families of remarriage is crucial to understanding the experiences of both children and adults in American families.

This study uses a life-span perspective to examine the qualitative accounts of 62 women 43 of whom divorced, spent some time as a single parent of at least one child, and remarried and 19 of whom had divorced and did not remarry. Some of those women also had a remarriage end in divorce.

Both qualitative and quantitative analysis techniques were used to both explore relationships within families of remarriage, and differences between those women that remarried and those who remained single parents. Quantitative analyses revealed that women who did not remarry were better educated and had more conflict with their former spouse over time. Women who were younger when they became a single parent for the first time, had more children, had jobs rather than careers, and had less education reported more marriages overall.

Qualitative analyses showed that particular problem areas in families of remarriage centered around the adjustment period between the children and the new partner, finances, and communication. Remarriages that failed were characterized by problematic relationships between children and their mother's partner.

As this was predominantly a white, middle-class sample, generalizations to other populations should be made with caution. Directions for future research are discussed.

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Families

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FORGING NEW PATHS: LIFE COURSE TRANSITIONS FOR AMERICAN WOMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Families of remarriage constitute a growing number of American families, as the spiraling divorce rate of the 1970s was accompanied by an increase in the number of remarriages (Coleman & Ganong, 1990). In the 1980s 40% of marriages each year were remarriages for one or both partner (National Center for Health Statistics, 1991). Rather than abandoning belief in the institution of marriage, it appears that individuals are choosing to establish new marriages after previous unsatisfactory experiences (Furstenberg & Spanier, 1987). The increased number of families of remarriage and this potential for new avenues of research on relationships is as yet underexplored in family research (Coleman & Ganong, 1990).

This study seeks to examine families of remarriage through the accounts of 62 women who divorced and experienced spent some time as a single parent. The 43 women who subsequently remarried are examined and compared to the 19 women who divorced and never remarried. All of the participants were parents of at least one child from their first marriage. These women participated in qualitative interviews examining their experiences both as

single parents, and as partners in a new family formed through remarriage.

The focus of this study is on relationships in families of remarriage; examining both relationships within the family of remarriage, and relationships with the former spouse. Individuals who remarry believe they are making new beginnings in their lives. These new beginnings remain subtly influenced by past experience, and previous mistakes may impinge upon current interpersonal interactions. As Furstenberg and Spanier (1987) have noted, remarried individuals perceive their remarriage as very different from past marital experiences.

Part of the process of differentiating between a previous unhappy marital relationship and a remarriage may include developing specific strategies for compartmentalizing marital experiences and forming new approaches to integrating family members. Methods these women use to develop relationships in the new family and the new marital dyad may reveal specific strategies that women in families use to strengthen the family unit, and increase the potential for family stability. These strategies may be important to women who have experienced marital dissolution in the past, and may be conscious or unconscious.

Demographers have noted that 40% of American families contain at least one spouse who has been previously married

(Coleman & Ganong, 1990; National Center for Health Statistics, 1991). Sixty-five to seventy percent of women who divorce remarry (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989; Norton & Moorman, 1987). Most of these families include children, and demographers have estimated that of children born in the 1980's, 35% will be raised in a family containing a step-parent at some point before they reach age 18 (Glick, 1990). Thus, the relationships in families of remarriage have become important keys to understanding the experiences of both adults and children in American families.

Historically, many families in America were families of remarriage (Mintz & Kellogg, 1988; Price & McHenry, 1988). However, as historians of the family have noted, these families of remarriage were usually formed through the death of one of the spouses (Price & McHenry, 1988). Often a man remarried when his spouse died in childbirth. Disease also took a heavy toll, especially in areas of the country where the climate was conducive to outbreaks of cholera and other water borne disease (Mintz & Kellogg, 1988). Thus, although many families were families of remarriage, these new family constellations occurred after the death of a spouse. Inasmuch as the experience of widowhood is very different from the experience of divorce, historically families of remarriage faced vastly different challenges than today's families of remarriage.

Marriage, parenthood, divorce, and remarriage are all transitions for the individual during the life course. Because the socio-cultural setting impacts the occurrence and timing of these changes, this study uses the life course perspective to examine these experiences, reported through the accounts of a cohort of women. In addition, social exchange theory is used to illuminate the creation of relationships between the new family members through the perspective of the wife and mother.

Theoretical Basis

The Life Course Perspective

The life course perspective focuses on the life-span experiences of individuals, and places them in both socio-historical and personal-historical contexts. As Elder (1978,) has stated, the life course is "a concept of interdependent careers that vary in synchronization". Although the life-course perspective reflects some family life cycle principles, it goes beyond the set stages of life cycle theory to focus on synchrony between individual and family transitions, the relationships between transitions and the historical time of these transitions, and the effects of prior life course transitions on present experiences (Haraven, 1978; Elder, 1978).

This perspective seems especially appropriate for the study of families of remarriage through the accounts of a group of women, from similar backgrounds, who have experienced a similar set of transitions. As some researchers have suggested, perhaps the life course transition to remarriage following divorce is becoming a normative transition (Ambert, 1989; Carter & McGoldrick, 1989). However, this transition, while approaching normative in terms of prevalence, may still be viewed as non-normative by most individuals.

The transition to remarriage may be perceived as non-normative because, as Cherlin (1981) has remarked, remarriage creates a variety of family structures with considerable ambiguity about who constitutes kin. Reflective of this ambiguity, families of remarriage have no socially established norms on how to address kin members, much less interact with them. Despite the introduction of new terms in the professional literature for families of remarriage, (i.e. "reconstituted families"), there are no new terms for step-parents, step-siblings, or step-grandparents. Lack of terminology, as well as lack of consensus on how these family members should relate, are reflective of underlying norms that reflect the cultural perception that remarriage as well as divorce is non-normative.

The life course perspective also accommodates the notion of continuing change within the family unit. As Haraven (1978, p.1) noted, "rather than viewing the family as a static unit, they (life course researchers) examine it as a changing entity over the life course of its members". As the marital unit develops a shared view of the world, what Berger and Kellner (1964) have termed "nomos-building", the life course perspective allows opportunity for change and growth. Thus the life course perspective is very compatible with the individual moving in and out of different family configurations, and examining a variety of transitions within individuals lives.

The concepts of transitions, time and timing, cohort, and the social-historical setting are key principles in the life course perspective. The life course perspective purports to examine transitions by following individuals and their movements through time, ever conscious that time includes not only a temporal dimension, but also the notions of social and historical time. Some researchers have suggested that social and historical circumstances have contributed both to the rise in divorce and remarriage rates (Cherlin, 1981, 1991; Price & McHenry, 1988). The cohort of women born in the ten years labeled the "baby boom" generation has an exceptionally high divorce rate (Norton & Moorman, 1987). Sample participants include a large number of women from this particular cohort, which

allows for an examination of factors that might be related to their marital behavior.

A related concept is that of cohort. As individuals pass through the life course, they are also part of a group of individuals, of the same age, who face social challenges unique to individuals in their age group at that point in historical time, Elder's (1974) work on children of the Great Depression demonstrated how the impact of experiences of the Depression affected different cohorts of children in contrasting ways. Thus the social and historical setting and the changes occurring in these times impact the life course of individuals.

Women who experience divorce, single parenthood, and remarriage experience a set of transitions unique to the last 25 years. Before the 1970's, this particular set of transitions in women's lives were not likely to occur. If, as Ambert (1989) has suggested, these changes have become normative, then this process has occurred within the last two decades. As Spanier and Furstenberg (1987, p. 47) have stated,

"... changing patterns of divorce and remarriage are related to the emergence of more flexible life-course sequences".

The ways in which these changes are played out in the life course of women constitute an important area for research into the lives of women and their families.

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory explores human relationships in terms of the costs and rewards of the relationship to the individual, and in terms of resources, or what the individual brings to the relationship. This theory is often used in family studies for focusing on the marital dyad and the exchanges the couple transact throughout the course of their relationship. Social exchange is also useful in illuminating the process of relationship dissolution as well as relationship formation, since the dissolution is a mirror opposite of the formation process (Duck, 1982), although former spouses still tend to have contact through the co-parental relationship.

All relationships have both costs, or expenses, and rewards, or benefits. Costs include not only the time, energy, and money the individual invests in the relationship (Foa, 1971), but also opportunity costs, or the alternatives they have given up for that relationship (Levinger, 1979). Rewards or benefits are comprised of what the individual stands to gain from having the relationship. Some rewards may be unique to that particular relationship (Levinger, 1979). Although people may or may not consciously weigh the costs and rewards of their relationships, social exchange theory presumes that some type of assessment occurs.

Individuals also assess their rewards and costs in terms of other relationships which may be available. Part of this assessment also includes comparing a relationship to the alternative of not being in a relationship (Levinger, 1979). A basic tenet of exchange theory is that people chose to remain in a particular relationship because that relationship has a balance of rewards and costs acceptable to the individual and in keeping with what the individual believes they deserve, or what is perceived to be "realistically obtainable" (Sabatelli, 1988). When, over time, the costs of a relationship consistently outweigh the benefits, social exchange suggests the individual may choose to leave the relationship. However this process may also be influenced by other factors, including barriers to leaving the relationship.

Social exchange theory has produced related sub-theories, including equity theory (Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978). A desire for equity, or fairness, occurs both within the relationship and at the individual level. Marital partners expect their partner to invest in the relationship to a similar level to their own investment. This is seen as equitable, and results in a level of comfort for both partners. If one partner invests a great deal more than the other, then equity theory presumes that both partners will be uncomfortable, especially the individual who is "under-benefitted".

People solve inequities by a number of strategies, such as increasing the rewards in the relationship for themselves and their partners, changing expectations for their partner's behavior, or, in extreme cases, leaving the relationship. It may be that past experience with a different partner affects both expectations and individual behavior. For example, if a woman found that her first spouse did not invest in leisure activities with her and their child, she might expect that a remarried spouse would also not be interested in trips to the zoo, park, or other child centered activities. If her remarried spouse was interested in such activities, she might be reminded of her original expectations in her first marriage, and again re-adjust her expectations.

Social exchange theory is useful in examining the interpersonal interactions within the marital dyad as well as between the remarried spouse and the children. After experiencing the social, emotional, and financial costs of divorce, women may be especially motivated to substitute new expectations and interpersonal strategies to increase the rewards and reduce the costs of the marital relationship both for themselves and their partners. These negotiations and mechanisms may be especially important to understanding the impact of remarriage transitions in the lives of women and their families.

Conclusion

This study integrates the life-course perspective and social exchange theory to investigate the lives of 62 women who divorced, and spent some time as a single parent of at least one child. Forty-three of these women went on to remarry, whereas 19 women did not remarry. Although this study focuses on the experience of remarriage, the comparison group of women who did not remarry provides the opportunity to assess factors which may be related to remarriage choices. This study investigates the marital transitions of a cohort of women who came of age when cultural values related to marriage and partnering were changing rapidly.

CHAPTER II REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study examines transitions in the life course including divorce, single parenthood, cohabitation, and remarriage. Heretofore these transitions have been presumed to be especially stressful, non-normative life course transitions. Much of the literature in the fields of divorce and single parenthood focuses on how these transitions produce negative consequences for families (Amato, 1993; Wallerstein, 1985; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989), while ignoring the potential for positive change in the lives of family members. This focus on the potential pathology of divorce, single parenthood and remarriage has been echoed in popular literature, the therapeutic community, and social policy (Leo, 1993; Popenoe, 1993; Whitehead, 1993).

Inasmuch as divorce, single parenthood, cohabitation, and remarriage offer opportunities for growth and development as well as may produce stressful changes, this study will review the literature on divorce, single parenthood, cohabitation, and remarriage from the perspective that a clearer picture of these life course transitions will emerge if attention is drawn to both positive and negative aspects of the transitions. Because the focus of this study is on women and their families, and the perspective of the mothers is used in analyses, this

review of the literature will center on the literature on women and their children, rather than on children, or non-custodial fathers.

Any study of life course transitions must also ground itself in social and historical time. Since the late 1960s profound changes in divorce, single parenthood, cohabitation, and remarriage rates have transpired (Cherlin, 1981, 1991; Glick, 1990; Norton & Glick, 1986). Because the particular cohort of analysis in this study is unique in social-historical time, this literature review begins with an investigation of demographic factors impacting the study cohort of American women.

Relationship History and The Life Course

Demographic Factors

Much of the literature on divorce and remarriage has used population data and examined how factors such as wives' education and employment, age at first marriage, religion, number and gender of children, and past marital history of the spouse impact propensity to divorce and remarry (Glen & Supanic, 1984; Glick & Lin, 1986; Kitson, Babri, & Roach, 1985). Such analyses provide important information to elicit further investigation, however a conclusion that divorced women with higher levels of

education are less likely to remarry (Glick & Lin, 1986) does not suggest causal pathways. Divorced women with more education may be less likely to remarry because they feel less financially stressed, because they have fewer potential eligible partners, or because they have greater personal social and emotional resources to draw from.

The literature also has not focused on cohabitation as a potential alternative to remarriage, or a possible pathway to remarriage. Single parenthood may be a long term choice some women might make especially if they have left a particularly conflict laden marriage, however single parenthood is sometimes seen by researchers as attributable primarily to demographic factors such as the lack of available marital partners (Guttenberg & Secord, 1983). Demographic factors associated with divorce, cohabitation, and remarriage must be interpreted in terms of correlation rather than causation.

Because this study focuses on the transitions women make in and out of marriage, the first important element to consider in examining relationship history is divorce. Specific demographic factors in the research literature associated with divorce include: age at first marriage, timing of childbearing and presence of children, education of the marital partners, length of marriage, past marital histories of the partners and homogeneity of socio-economic and religious backgrounds of the marital partners (Glen &

Supanic, 1984; Glick & Lin, 1986; Kitson, Babri & Roach, 1985). Some of these factors may also be influenced by social and historical timing factors.

Researchers have consistently noted that a younger age at first marriage is strongly related to marital dissolution (Glen & Supanic, 1984; Teti & Lamb, 1989), and may also be a factor in propensity to remarry. The findings that early age at first marriage is related to divorce and early age at divorce is related to subsequent remarriage (Glick & Lin, 1986) , have been linked to a number of possible related factors. For example, some researchers believe that individuals who marry early are immature, and not ready for the interpersonal demands of maintaining a marital relationship (Teti & Lamb, 1989). As individuals mature they may become more selective of potential marriageable partners. Other researchers (Booth & Edwards, 1992) have suggested that economic factors associated with early marriage confound analyses. Marital partners may be faced with serious economic difficulties that impinge upon their ability to form lasting relationships with marital partners.

The presence of children may affect both divorce and remarriage. Social exchange theorists have suggested that children are an attraction to the marriage for marital partners (Levinger, 1979), however issues of timing and sequencing of childbearing, and gender of children may

confound demographic analyses. Morgan and Rindfuss (1985), in their analysis of marital cohorts found that children did provide a measure of marital stability, however the timing of childbearing made a difference in that stability. Parents who postponed conception until after marriage had the greatest marital stability.

Although the presence of children from a previous marriage has been assumed to be a barrier to remarriage, especially for a mother with several children, Norton and Moorman (1987) have noted that when age of the mother at time of divorce and number of children are considered, the mother's age at divorce has the greater effect, while the number of children from the first marriage has little or no effect. Thus the commonly held belief that children from a previous marriage will diminish a woman's chances of remarriage does not appear true. Instead, a woman's age and the subsequent marriage market, known as the potential pool of likely partners, are more likely to impact a woman's opportunity for remarriage.

Cohort Effects

Less emphasis in demographic research has been placed on cohort effects, although the works of both Cherlin (1981, 1991) and Norton and Moorman (1987) have suggested that profound demographic changes may be linked to

particular cohorts of women. Cherlin's original study Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage (1981) examined the trends implicit in the 1970s, a period of rapid social change in terms of divorce and remarriage. More recently he has cautioned that a new pattern of cohabitation, marriage, divorce, cohabitation, and remarriage is in the process of being established in cohorts of American women. Cherlin (1991, p.vi) wryly noted in the preface to his 1991 edition of Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage,

"If there were a truth-in-labeling law for books the title of this edition should be something long and unwieldy like Cohabitation, Marriage, Divorce, More Cohabitation, and Probably Remarriage".

This pattern may be especially true of those women who came of age in the 1960s and early 70s, when social values were in a state of rapid change.

This cohort of American women was the first cohort faced with the ramifications of the "sexual revolution" in the 1960s, and the resulting shift in social values. The availability of effective birth control, in combination with changing social norms about sexuality, profoundly influenced the experiences of these women as they moved into adulthood. Cohabitation became much more socially acceptable, and many more women and their partners chose cohabitation as either an alternative or precursor to marriage (Cherlin, 1991; Macklin, 1983). This may very

well be the first cohort of women to appraise cohabitation as a viable choice in forming relationships.

In their study of marriage, divorce and remarriage trends in American women, Norton and Moorman (1987) predicted that the cohort of women born in the first ten years of the baby boom would have the highest incidence of divorce among cohorts of women from 20 to 54 years of age. Norton and Moorman (1987, p.5) stated,

"Women currently in their 30s will probably establish record high proportions ever divorced, as nearly one-third of ever-married women 35 to 39 in 1985 had already ended a first marriage by divorce".

The expanding numbers of women who serve as heads of households in this cohort has come about more in response to the experience of divorce than out-of-wedlock births (Norton & Glick, 1986). Although there has been an increase in out-of-wedlock births during the 1970s and 1980s, the greatest number of single parents in this cohort became single parents through divorce. Norton and Glick (1986) have noted that in the time period from 1970 to 1984, divorced single parent mothers as a group increased 300% and were a total of 46% of all single mother headed households. Most of the members of the Single Parent Substudy were divorced and became single parents during this time period, and can perhaps be seen as

representative of the experiences of this cohort in social and historical time.

As numbers of ever divorced women increase, a concomitant increase in numbers of remarried women and redivorced women can also be expected, however Norton and Moorman (1987) have cautioned that the overall remarriage rate is dropping, and have predicted that this cohort of women will not meet the usual remarriage rate of 70%. Age begins to figure into the equation, as older women have a diminished opportunity to find marital partners, because men tend to marry younger women, and men do not, on average, live as long as women. This cohort of women and their children have an increased chance of forming and maintaining single parent households over time.

Although demographic analyses tell us the who, what, and when of divorce, single parenthood, cohabitation, and remarriage rates for cohorts of American women, they do not inform as to how and why these changes occurred. Divorce, single parenthood, cohabitation, and remarriage are not simply events affected by the marriage market, age cohorts, and child-bearing histories, but also interpersonal events, reflecting the hopes and disappointments of people. Marriage is also an institution impacted by changing social mores, in which the marriage agreement may be seen as more of a conditional commitment than a lifelong relationship (Furstenberg & Spanier, 1987). In order to examine the how

and why of divorce, single parenthood, cohabitation, and remarriage an examination of factors in those transitions and the interpersonal relationships must ensue.

The Divorce Transition

A large body of literature supports the notion that divorce is a traumatic transition for individuals and families (Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1978; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Wallerstein, 1985; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). Children are presumed to be especially negatively impacted by the divorce transition; indeed, the current controversy in "family values" focuses on the issue of the suitability of alternative family environments relative to the two biological parent family (Amato, 1993; Demo, 1993; Popenoe, 1993; Thompson, 1993; Whitehead, 1993). Single parent families are still termed "broken homes", not only in the popular literature but also by respected family researchers and demographers (Bumpass & Sweet, 1989). The family values furor has lost sight of the fact that divorce and single parenthood are often preferable alternatives for both parents and children to enduring family interactions characterized by interpersonal conflict (Collins, 1991; Mintz & Kellogg, 1988).

Divorce is often not a mutual decision, but rather a decision on the part of one partner that may be

communicated either consciously to the partner, or at a subliminal level. The divorce initiator may not be the person who actually files for divorce, but rather the initiator may use overt and covert means to persuade the partner to leave (Vaughan, 1986). A number of researchers have established that the individual who initiates the end of the marital relationship or at least perceives they have initiated the divorce, has improved psychological outcomes over the non-initiator (Newman & Langer, 1981). This relationship has been hypothesized to relate to feelings of control over the divorce. Thus, there are significant psychological advantages to perceiving oneself as divorce initiator. Glick (1990) has reported that women are the divorce initiators 75% of the time.

Divorce as Crisis

A large body of literature supports societal perceptions that divorce is a major life crisis in adult lives (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). Researchers in stress and coping literature rank divorce as a highly stressful life event, more stressful than loss of employment, death of a close family member, or being sent to jail (Holmes & Rahe, 1967). Divorce often requires a redefinition of self, as women lose the identity

of spouse, and may gain new identities, such as the family breadwinner (Fassinger, 1989).

The first two years after divorce are considered especially stressful for divorced mothers and their children (Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1978; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Weiss, 1979). During this time period researchers have identified a chaotic style of family relationships, with generational boundaries being broached (Weiss, 1979), and difficulties surrounding re-establishing the parameters of parenting, such as scheduled bedtimes, and family chores. For such time as the chaotic period lasts, divorced mothers and their children may face divorce as a crisis.

Divorced mothers may find themselves as the only financial support of their children, as well as the only available parent. Fassinger (1989) found that women who were from more traditional marriages, where women did not have responsibility, were most likely to be proud of their ability to function as the family breadwinner after divorce. These more traditional women, however, were also most concerned about not having the time necessary to be as involved in their children's lives as they believed optimal for children's well-being.

Divorce as Relief

Although the literature on divorce has focused on divorce as a personal crisis, some researchers have identified divorce as a relief, and an opportunity for growth (Chiriboga & Catron, 1991; Collins, 1991; Spanier & Thompson, 1987). Leaving a relationship characterized by violence or psychological abuse can lead to profound feelings of relief. The divorcing individual may feel that the marital relationship is empty of feelings, and a divorce would re-establish the opportunity to affirm themselves as they sought a new partnership. Although the literature has not focused on the positive results of divorce, the potential exists for these aspects to have significant effects on individual partners.

Single Parenthood

The 1970s and 1980s saw significant increases in the numbers of single parent families in the United States. Although there was a dramatic increase in the numbers of single parent families created through out-of-wedlock births, the dramatic increase in the numbers of single parent families during this time is primarily attributed to the increase in single parent families formed through divorce. Norton and Glick (1986) have reported that 20% of American families with children under 18 years of age in

1984 was a single parent family, and the greatest increase in these families came about through divorce rather than through out-of-wedlock birth or widowhood. Because of changes in divorce laws that enabled disputing partners to obtain a divorce without attaching blame or fault to a particular individual, the divorce rates climbed to an all time high of 53% for those couples who married in the mid-1970s (Cherlin, 1991).

Inasmuch as single-parent families do not fit the cultural norm of what constitutes "family", these alternate families have faced discrimination and been pathologized in the media and much of the professional literature (Collins, 1991; Faludi, 1991). Although single mothers who have had children out-of-wedlock have been heavily stigmatized, other single mothers have also encountered criticism, especially of their parenting skills and abilities. Much of the literature has focused on the negative outcomes for children of being raised in single-parent families (Keith & Finlay, 1988; McLanahan & Booth, 1989; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Wallerstein, 1985; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). This focus is an outgrowth of the "father absence" literature in psychology (Biller, 1974), where single-parent families are considered as operating from a deficit.

Many of the difficulties faced by single mothers can be attributed to their financial situation. Poverty and near poverty conditions are often faced by single parents.

Because the vast majority of single-parent families are headed by women (Norton & Glick, 1986), who remain disadvantaged in terms of wages and job opportunities (Barber & Allen, 1992; Glass, Tienda, & Smith, 1988; Goldberg & Kremen, 1990; Howe, 1977), the economic struggles of single mothers are pervasive. American women have made substantial gains in the marketplace in terms of both wages and expanding opportunities, however, the vast majority of women workers are still concentrated in low-paying, service sector jobs (Howe, 1977). Women continue to make seventy-four cents for every dollar a man makes (U.S. Department of Labor, 1991) because of job segregation and discrimination, as well as a tendency for less continuous labor force participation than men (Howe, 1977). These economic difficulties faced by single mothers translate to outcomes for their children. A number of researchers have stated that the majority of negative child outcomes found in single parent families are directly attributable to the financial straits of single-parent families (Acock & Kielcolt, 1989; Keith & Finlay, 1988; Krein & Beller, 1988; McLanahan, 1985). For example, children from single-parent households have lower levels of education than children from two parent families (Keith & Finlay, 1988), however this may be both because their labor was needed to support the family and because the costs of higher education were prohibitive. Thus it becomes

difficult to unravel the effects of family structure from family economics. The single mother is faced with both the need to support her family and the realization that this support may be woefully inadequate in today's economy.

Exacerbating the financial difficulties confronting single parent families may be the inability to collect child support, or the instability of such payments. Sixty percent of single mothers who are potentially eligible for child support are actually awarded child support (Garfinkel & McLanahan, 1986). A mother is more likely to be awarded child support if she is: divorced rather than unwed, has more education, and is white rather than a woman of color (Garfinkel & McLanahan, 1986). Although our judicial system acknowledges that children deserve the financial support of both parents, this belief may not be followed in practice. Some family scholars have suggested that women and children have been negatively impacted by no-fault divorce laws, because fathers are more likely to escape assuming responsibility for the financial support of their children (Weitzman, 1985).

An award of child support does not necessarily translate to the mother and her children actually receiving that award. The attitude of many non-custodial fathers is that child support is an optional payment, to be made after their own wants and needs have been met (Weitzman, 1985). Support payments may be late, sporadic, or partial rather

than full payments. The majority of mothers do not receive all of their child support payments paid in full and on time (Garfinkel & McLanahan, 1986). As Garfinkel and McLanahan (1986, p. 25) have stated,

"Of those (mothers) with an award, only half receive the full amount due. Nearly 30 percent receive nothing".

The inconsistency of child support, and the costs involved in pursuing a missing or out-of-state former spouse compound the financial challenges of single parenthood.

Most divorced single mothers are labor force participants (Norton & Glick, 1986). Because the labor force participation of married women with children has increased dramatically, the societal expectations have changed regarding labor force participation of single mothers. When Aid to Families With Dependent Children was conceived in the 1930s the norm was that mothers with children would be full-time homemakers (Garfinkel & McLanahan, 1986). In the late 1980s, the number of working mothers with young children exceeded the tipping point, where more mothers are employed than not employed (U. S. Department of Labor, 1991). Because married mothers of young children work, single mothers are also expected to work; nonetheless, the reality of life as the only breadwinner in the family versus having another adult's income and assistance with child-rearing is substantial.

Diane Burden (1986), in her study of employed single mothers, found that single mothers were not more likely to miss days of work than other workers. Single mothers had high levels of work and family role strain, and spent an average of 75 hours a week on work and family tasks. This study focused on a sample of women who were employed in relatively well paid positions, with annual incomes above national averages, who may have been doing appreciably better than women in service sector employment, yet these women experienced the time and energy crunch common to single mothers.

Despite the precarious financial status of the single-parent family, for many mothers the difficulties involved in being the only available parent and wage-earner, are considered to be preferable to marriage to their former spouse. Single parenthood is a time of personal affirmation as well as challenge, as women learn their own strengths and how to deal with crises on their own (Richards, 1989; Shaw, 1991). Whereas the literature in the United States has tended to emphasize the negative experiences of single parenting (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989), Shaw (1991), in a qualitative study of twenty-five single mothers, found that her participants found single parenthood to be a time of enormous personal growth that they saw as of great benefit

to themselves and their children. Shaw (1991, p. 148) stated,

"Throughout the interviews women consistently made statements referring to these emotional gains, which clearly counteract the more negative feelings and experiences associated with lone parenthood. Such gains, arising as they do out of difficult times, are very highly valued and reflect as sense of pride and achievement".

The potential positive effects for the transition to single parenthood have been under-researched, perhaps because family researchers have attempted to focus on the negative effects of changes in family structure.

Cohabitation: A Transition For Some

Cohabitation potentially functions as either an alternative to remarriage or a precursor to remarriage. In the late 1970s cohabitation became a more socially acceptable state for middle class men and women. Although many Americans tended to view cohabitation as a product of the social unrest and change manifest among college youth of the time, Cherlin (1991) has asserted that cohabitation was always an alternative to marriage for the poor and near-poor. Because the poor had fewer resources to consider, the protective functions of the marriage contract were not as necessary, and poor couples did necessarily go through the formality of marriage, although it is likely that many of these unions were long term relationships.

Cohabitation in the 1970s and 1980s involved more of the college-educated, middle class and thus was seen as a dramatic social change, worthy of research study (Richards, 1989).

Cohabitors, in comparison to married individuals, have been found to be younger (Spanier, 1980), less religious (Macklin, 1978; Watson, 1983), more likely to live in large metropolitan areas, the Northeast and the West (Glick & Spanier, 1980), have relatively low income levels and high unemployment (Macklin, 1983), be unconventional (Macklin, 1983), see themselves as androgenous and liberated, and have younger rather than older children (Hanna & Knaub, 1981). Of course, these attributes are correlates of cohabiters, and thus may be outcomes of the cohabitation experience, rather than precursors. For example, people who cohabit may be viewed by others as unconventional and thus begin to perceive themselves as unconventional although they may not have initially described themselves in such a way. Macklin (1983) has noted that as cohabitation becomes more widespread, differences between cohabiters and non-cohabiters will likely diminish; indeed, recent studies of cohabiters versus non-cohabiters suggest this trend is developing (DeMaris & McDonald, 1993; Schoen & Weinick, 1993).

Studies of cohabitation have tended to focus on whether or not cohabitation is a detriment to marriage for

young, never-married adults (Bumpass, Sweet, & Cherlin, 1991; Cherlin, 1991). In keeping with the current concern on "family values" more conservative family scholars have linked cohabitation to the "breakdown" of the traditional American family (Hunt & Hunt, 1987; Popenoe, 1993), and questioned whether or not young adults raised in single parent families were more likely to cohabit than young adults raised in traditional two parent families (Bumpass & Sweet, 1989; Thornton, 1988). Dire predictions of the demise of the nuclear family have been linked to the lack of commitment to marital relationships that many individuals believe is manifested in the increased numbers of cohabiting couples (Hunt & Hunt, 1987).

There is no doubt that cohabitation increased in the United States during the time period that the baby boom cohort came of age. According to the National Survey of Families and Households, a national probability sample of American families, for those individuals who married between 1965 and 1974, 11% cohabited with someone before marriage, whereas for those marrying between 1975 and 1979, 32% cohabited with someone before marriage. The percentage of persons who cohabited before a marriage in the period from 1980 to 1984 was 44% (Bumpass & Sweet, 1989).

Included in the group of cohabitators are those individuals who have been divorced, and cohabit as either an alternative to, or precursor, of remarriage. In their

longitudinal study of remarriage, Furstenberg and Spanier (1987) found that two-thirds of their sample cohabited before remarriage. Cohabitation has become a strategy used by many divorced individuals; analyses from the National Survey of Families and Households suggest that as many as 60% of those individuals who remarried in the 1980s had cohabited with someone before remarriage (Bumpass & Sweet, 1989).

Cohabitation may thus serve as a filter in the remarriage process. Presumably, those who have gone through the dissolution of a marriage, even if they sought the divorce and feel they made a good decision, have had to deal with the sheer multitude of tasks associated with dissolving economic and legal ties of marriage. Obtaining credit, changing housing and child care arrangements, separating possessions and even sorting the mail can all become time consuming tasks of persons going through the divorce process. Caution may be paramount in determining the pace and timing of remarriage, especially for those mothers who feel that they are able, however tenuously, to support themselves and their children.

Cohabitation provides an opportunity to live with a new partner while still retaining an open "back door" if the relationship does not prove satisfying. The advantages of having a partner, for example, adult companionship and a potential financial contributor to the family, have to be

weighed against the uncertainty of introducing ones' children to a partner who may or may not be around in the future. Mothers may see cohabitation as an opportunity to see whether or not their children will accept the new partner, and also a testing ground for her partner's potential as a father figure to her children.

If cohabitation serves as a remarriage filter, then it can be assumed that some of these unions dissolve rather than end in remarriage. Bumpass and Sweet (1989) found that in their sample of divorced persons who remarried in the 1980s, of the 60% who cohabited before remarriage, 46% cohabited only with the individual who became their second spouse, and 14% cohabited with someone other than their second spouse. Of course, these statistics represent a snapshot in time, and thus do not detail the experiences of those in cohabiting relationships who may yet remarry, those involved in long-term cohabiting relationships, and those who have moved from one of more cohabiting relationship to another without remarrying during this time period.

Although cohabitation has become increasingly normative as a step toward remarriage (Bumpass & Sweet, 1989; Spanier & Thompson, 1987) studies of cohabitation suggest that cohabitation remains a temporary, short-term choice, rather than a long-term alternative to marriage or remarriage (Macklin, 1983; Cherlin, 1991). Most couples

involved in a cohabitation relationship either marry within a relatively short time period, or the relationship dissolves (Bumpass & Sweet, 1989). Even for those who have experienced a prior marriage, cohabitation does not appear to be developing as a long term alternative to remarriage (Cherlin, 1991).

Although little of the research on cohabitation has focused on couples where one or more of the partners is previously married, the scanty literature in this area suggests that cohabitation before remarriage may be beneficial to the marital relationship, but potentially problematic for the adjustment of children. Hanna and Knaub (1981) in their study of 80 remarried couples, half of whom cohabited before remarriage, found that remarried couples who lived together before remarriage reported significantly higher degrees of closeness, happiness, good communication with their partner, and gave positive reports of the remarried family's adjustment. However, these positive findings may, in part, be attributed to the fact that couples in their sample who cohabited before remarriage had younger children than those who did not cohabit. Remarriage and cohabitation may be more problematic for adolescent children, who may have stronger loyalties to the non-custodial parent.

The effects of cohabitation on children is a virtually un-explored area in family studies. As Isacacs and Leon

(1988) have recognized, assessment of the adaptive functioning of children after divorce has tended to center on the differences between children in single parent households versus those in remarried households. Issacs and Leon have further stated (1988, p. 163),

"Such a dichotomous approach overemphasizes remarriage, per se, while ignoring the variety of relational and living arrangements that may exist among those who have not remarried. There is an implicit and unfounded assumption that those who are seriously involved with a new partner, those who are living together outside of marriage, and those who are not seriously involved can be treated as one group simply because they have not remarried".

When their sample of children was divided into four groups by the mother's relationship status (living with a partner, remarried, not involved with a new partner, and seriously involved with a new partner but not living together) Issacs and Leon (1988) found that children in homes where the mother lived with a partner were significantly different from all the other groups. Even after controlling for differences that may have come about before the mothers entered the cohabiting arrangements, children in homes where the mother lived with a partner had higher behavioral problems scores and lower social competence scores than the children in all the other groups.

Because these researchers chose to evaluate the child in the family who was having the greatest difficulty these

findings should be considered cautiously, however, the potential for conflict between the new partner and the children certainly exists in cohabiting relationships just as in remarriage and step-parenting relationships. Perhaps the cohabiting relationship is the testing ground for both the mother and her children as they seek to assess whether or not the partner will make an acceptable husband and father. This possibility would be in keeping with Hanna and Knaub's (1981) finding that the remarried couples who cohabited prior to remarriage viewed themselves as having a higher level of family strength than those who simply remarried without prior cohabitation.

Transition to Remarriage

Timing of the Transition

The majority of divorced individuals remarry (Booth & Edwards, 1992; Furstenberg & Spanier, 1987), and they tend to transition to remarriage within a few years of the divorce. Although social scientists have suggested that marriage is more beneficial to men than women (Bernard, 1972), and men do tend to remarry in greater numbers (Glick, 1990), researchers have found that American women, on average, spent about 3.2 years between divorce and remarriage (Glick & Lin, 1986; Norton & Moorman, 1987).

This time period has remained steady for women during the time period from 1975 to 1985, when most of the women in the Single Parent Substudy experienced their transitions to divorce and remarriage.

The time period from separation to divorce increased during the early 1980s. In 1980 the estimated median interval from divorce to remarriage was .8 years, in 1985 the estimated median interval was 1.2 years (Norton & Moorman, 1987). Whereas this remains a brief interval, this increase in time from separation to divorce may be suggestive of changes in circumstances of divorce, or reflective of the increased complexity of dissolving the household unit as well as the interpersonal relationships.

Data on time to remarriage and time interval of separation have been assessed separately for women who are parents versus childless women in some studies (Cherlin, 1991; Glick & Lin, 1986). Dissolving a marital relationship with a spouse changes dramatically when children are involved, as does the potential for remarriage. Although children from a first marriage could be considered as a barrier to remarriage, researchers have found that younger mothers have been remarrying more quickly during the late 1970s and early 1980s. As Glick and Lin (1986) have noted,

"It was the young divorced mothers who were remarrying more quickly than their childless counterparts,

whereas it was the young divorced childless women who were staying divorced longer than the divorced mothers".

Number of children did not appear to be a deterrent to remarriage, but may rather have served as a spur to mothers, goading them into earlier remarriage. Between 1975 and 1980 the number of mothers of two to five children who remarried within two years of their divorce increased by 48%, whereas the number of childless women who remained divorced over 4 years and had not remarried increased by 197% (Glick & Lin, 1986). Though opportunities for women in the workplace were increasing during the 1970s, it may have been that women with several young children saw their limited options and chose a quick remarriage with an available partner rather than struggling with the economic and financial strains of single parenthood.

The relationship between economic need and remarriage is not clear, and the age and numbers of dependent children may influence this process. Morgan (1991, p.145) did not find support for the "economic protection of marriage" argument, as the women in the poorer women in Morgan's sample were not more likely to remarry, or to remarry more quickly than the women without serious economic difficulties. Thus when considering the relationships between timing, economic need, and remarriage, no definitive relationships are explicit in the literature.

The transition to remarriage may be especially quick for those mothers with little education. In their analysis assessing number of children born before divorce and whether the mother was remarried, Glick and Lin (1986) found that mothers without a high school diploma had the highest percentage remarried within each category of number of children born, while those mothers with at least some college education consistently had the lowest levels of remarriage. Education is a resource that can be used to attain some level of financial security for mothers, without incurring the costs of making a quick remarriage decision. Women with some college education found expanding workplace opportunities in the 1970s and early 1980s; women without education may have found themselves relegated to seeking work in low-paid service occupations.

Lack of personal resources such as education and employment experience may be exacerbated by financial stresses introduced by the former spouse (Weitzman, 1985). If a woman can rely on child support payments and employment income she may be able to attain some measure of security; alternately she may turn to her parents and siblings for assistance. If no personal or family resources are available the only alternative may be to find another source of financial security, a new spouse, and do so rapidly.

Remarriage and Cultural Norms

Whereas factors such as education, personal and family resources and may impact the decision to remarry, remarriage also entails a reaffirmation of the importance of marriage and being married. Marriage is deemed a preferable state in the United States, and provides the members of the couple with different social networks than singles. For women who are used to being part of a couple, the single state may seem lonely and unappealing. Collins (1991) has noted that when single mothers consider remarriage they must weigh the advantages of remarriage, including increased financial status, a partner to help them parent, and feeling that they are in more of a socially preferred state against the independence, autonomy, and opportunities for personal growth they experienced as a single parent.

Cauhape (1983) in her qualitative analysis of mid-life divorce and remarriage for an affluent sample, noted that her sample could be divided into several groups based on their commitment to a belief in the importance of being married. Immediate remarriers tended to have already found the next partner before they exited their marriages, and did not spend any time as a self-identified single person, whereas a group she identified as "graduates" made an immediate and conscious decision that they firmly adhered

to that they would never marry again. "Comfortable courtiers" the third brief transition group were uncomfortable and unhappy being single and determined to remarry as soon as possible.

Because marriage is normative in our culture (Glick, 1990), and the single parent status is perceived as non-normative, considerable pressure may be exerted on single mothers to remarry. Quinn and Allen (1989), in their qualitative study of single mothers discussed the subtle pressures women were subject to by relatives and friends to encourage them to "regain" normality by marrying again. Women faced these subtle pressures not only from family and friends but also from society, through the media and institutions such as the church.

Pressure to remarry may be a reflection of societal ambivalence regarding single parent families. Although single parent families are recognized as an alternate family structure, they may not be perceived as acceptable long term childrearing environments. Collins (1991, pp. 159-160), in discussing pressures placed on single parent families to remarry stated,

"There is a widespread view in Western societies that the nuclear family is the proper setting in which to bring up children ... there is a tendency for minority arrangements like lone-parent families to be seen as something of an affront to established beliefs about family life. If such families are seen to work they undermine the credibility of the nuclear family , and this has subversive implications for the dominant

economic and moral order which to a great extent depends on the nuclear family and in its turn endorses it. It serves the ideological requirements of dominant groups in society to depict lone parent families as nothing more than spoiled versions of nuclear families, and to create the belief that relationships in lone parent families are impaired replicas of those in 'proper' families".

Those individuals who remarry may be responding to this unstated pressure to re-couple and raise children in a socially sanctioned, albeit problematic, environment.

Relationships Within Families of Remarriage

Attractions to the Relationship

Women who chose to remarry enter the new relationship with a renewed belief and commitment to the institution of marriage, yet they also carry with them the experience of a marriage that did not last, commitment that was not lifelong. Because past experience may introduce a note of caution, remarried women may employ a variety of strategies to ensure the potential success of the remarriage. Step-parent relationships are perceived in the research and popular literature as especially problematic (Chilman, 1983; White & Booth, 1985) and remarried mothers may be especially aware of the potential difficulties in families of remarriage. To contribute to the likelihood of fostering permanence in families of remarriage, women may

employ a variety of strategies to improve interpersonal relationships and increase what Levinger (1979) has termed "attractions to the marriage".

One possible avenue to increase the new partner's attraction to the marriage is to have a child with that partner. Having a child in a second marriage has been found to be a common occurrence for women of childbearing age. In two recent studies, researchers found that slightly more than half of women of childbearing age who remarry have a child in the second marriage (Griffith, Koo, & Schindran, 1984; Wineberg, 1990). Although women who remarry may be more committed to having additional children, and thus more inclined to remarry, Wineberg (1992) has noted that childbearing in the second marriage may affect dissolution.

Somewhat contradictory evidence exists as to the efficacy of childbearing in the second marriage strengthening attraction to the relationship. Ganong and Coleman (1988, p. 694), in a study of 105 remarried families concluded "our results clearly indicate that a child does not 'cement the bonds of marriage' in a remarriage". These researchers used multiple measures to assess family functioning and the marital relationships of their study participants, yet they noted that their study, which used a cross-sectional design could not determine if

those stepfamilies with a mutual child were less likely to end in divorce.

Wineberg (1992) found that having a child in the remarriage decreases the risk of dissolution of that marriage during the time period up to ten years after the remarriage. Whereas, the birth of a child in the remarriage appears to have a protective effect, bringing children from the first marriage into the second marriage contributes to marital instability during the first five years of remarriage. Wineberg (1992) has interpreted these findings to suggest that families of remarriage are confronted with the need to establish patterns of family functioning and relationships early in the remarriage. After five years, the family is likely to have solved the dilemmas inherent in forming a new family, or the family of remarriage will have dissolved.

Another method mothers may use to increase attractions to the remarriage for themselves, their new spouse, and the children may be to promote a father-child relationship between the new spouse and children from the previous marriage. Research on families of remarriage suggests that relationships between step-fathers and stepchildren may differ based on child attributes such as gender and age (Clingempeel, Brand, & Ievoli, 1984; Santrock, Warshak, Linbergh, & Meadows, 1982), as well as the relationship the child has with the biological father.

In general, boys appear to do better acquiring a step-father than girls (Clingempeel et al, 1984; Santrock et al, 1982), and younger children adjust to the step-father more quickly than older children (Kalter, 1977). Loyalty conflicts for the child may arise if the child perceives that the step-father is trying to take the place of the father.

Remarriage and the Relationship with the Former Spouse

When a couple has children in common, even after divorce they have a relationship through being the parents of a common set of children. Former spouses who are also parents are much more likely to have contact with each other after the divorce, even if that contact is only on matters pertaining to the children (Ambert, 1989; Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987; Goetting, 1980). How former spouses interact together, as well as the development of relationships between a current spouse and former spouse, are important facets of family relationships. Some research in family studies looks at these relationships in terms of norms and standards of appropriate contact between former and current family members (Ambert, 1989; Goetting, 1980; Masheter, 1991; Troph, 1984).

While the family studies literature addresses lack of contact between fathers and their children as

problematic (Furstenberg & Nord, 1985), contact between former spouses can also be potentially problematic (Ambert, 1989; Masheter, 1991). Some men vanish after divorce. Within one year of a divorce, as many as half of children may have no contact with their father (Furstenberg & Nord, 1985). Such lack of contact is considered detrimental to children's development. Remarriage of the children's mother also tends to reduce contact and visitation, as well as child support payments (Troph, 1984).

Inasmuch as contact with the former spouse when there are joint children tends to bring to the forefront unresolved conflict and hostility between former spouses, remarried women may find that co-parenting is a stressful activity. Studies of contact between divorced individuals show that there is an increased level of contact between the formerly married when they are co-parents (Ambert, 1989; Masheter, 1991). If the former spouse vanishes, then the potential for conflict does not occur, albeit the mother probably also does not receive child support.

Contact between the former spouse and the child also raises the potential for difficulties in the remarried household. The child may have a feeling that they are in some way forced to choose between loyalty to the biological father, and loyalty to the step-father. Thus, for some mothers, lack of contact with the former spouse provides opportunities to enhance the relationship between their

child and their new spouse, while also removing a potential for conflict.

Conclusion

The literature in family studies predominantly focuses on individual events, such as divorce, or remarriage, rather than considering these events in the context of the life course of individuals and families. Studies using a life course perspective (Elder, 1974; Gerson, 1985) suggest that choices are made and events occur that profoundly affect individuals over time. The 1970s and 1980s were periods of intense and rapid social change. These changes produced changes within the family, changes that baffle and worry conservative thinkers. The emphasis in this literature has been that increased divorce rates, large numbers of single parents, and a growing tendency to cohabit both before and between marriages as sources of destruction of the traditional American family.

Researchers using the life course perspective have stated that Americans have unrealistic notions about families of the past, and these beliefs cloud thinking about families. Yet, despite the warnings of family historians (Coontz, 1992; Haraven, 1982), much of the American public sees divorce, single parenthood, families

of remarriage, and other non-traditional families as symptoms of the unraveling of American society.

This study seeks to examine these changes and what they have meant in the lives of a sample of women in the baby boom cohort through their own words and experiences. Predictions of doom for the American family have resounded throughout the history of this country (Coontz, 1992). Rather than assuming that all changes have resulted in negative consequences for women and their children, this study aspires to lose the impassioned rhetoric of conservative America, and discover how these changes were played out in the lives of typical American families.

Research Questions

Quantitative Questions

The literature on rates and timing of remarriage for this cohort suggests that women who have less education tend to remarry more quickly (Glick & Lin, 1986). Having less education implies that a woman may be unable to find employment that will provide adequate support for her family; remarriage may be a financial survival strategy. Thus, hypothesis one examines the relationship between education and speed of remarriage.

Hypothesis One: Women with no more than a high school education will remarry more quickly than those with some college or a college education. Furthermore, women with more education are less likely to remarry than those with no education beyond high school.

Because of the suspected relationship between ability to financially support her children and a mother's remarriage decisions, hypothesis two examined the relationship between the type of work the mother had and her decision to remarry or not.

Hypothesis Two: Women who have a job, in comparison to those who have a career, will be more likely to remarry.

Research on single parenting has reported the oftentimes severe financial strains of raising children in a female-headed household (Arendell, 1986; Garfinkel & McLanahan, 1986; Pearce, 1978; Weitzman, 1985). Movement in and out of poverty has been shown to be connected to marital transitions: divorced mothers often find themselves catapulted into poverty, and remarried mothers may leave poverty through their transitions to remarriage (Arendell, 1986; Bane & Ellwood, 1986; Kneiser, McElroy, & Wilcox, 1988). Because of the relationship between poverty and single parenthood, hypothesis three examines marital transitions and financial stress.

Hypothesis Three: Women who report more financial stress as single parents will be more likely to remarry.

The literature on divorce suggests that women who are the initiators of the divorce are more likely to feel in control and able to handle the transition to single parenthood (Newman & Langer, 1981; Vaughan, 1986). Although women tend to file for divorce, they may not in fact be the initiator, as the behavior of their former spouse may precipitate the break-up. How does the relationship with the former spouse at the time of the break-up and over time impact the experience of single parenthood and the decision to remarry? Hypothesis four addressed the relationship between being the initiator of the divorce, and remarriage.

Hypothesis Four: Women who initiated their first divorce, perhaps to leave an abusive or difficult former spouse will be less likely to remarry than those who did not initiate the divorce.

Divorce researchers have noted that although former spouses no longer have a marital relationship they may still have a co-parental relationship (Ambert, 1989; Masheter, 1991). Relationships with a former spouse, even though they might be conflictual, may indicate lingering, albeit negative, attachment to the former spouse and that relationship. Thus, hypothesis five examined the

relationship with the former spouse over time and the relationship to remarriage.

Hypothesis Five: Women whose relationship with a former spouse over time remains conflictual will be more likely to remain single.

Researchers and therapists have recognized that the baby boom cohort of American women has both a high rate of divorce and a high rate of remarriage following divorce (Cherlin, 1991; Counts, 1991). Counts (1991) has predicted that because there are high rates of divorce, high rates of remarriage, and even higher rates of divorce for remarried individuals, that there will be more and more re-divorces in the population over time. Because marriage is a desired state in our culture (Kain, 1990), it can be assumed that individuals who have divorced after a remarriage may find another partner and remarry again in a process Spanier and Thompson (1987) call "conjugal succession".

Evidence for this phenomenon of repeating a series of marriages and divorces was found in this sample. In order to examine demographic variables known to be associated with divorce and remarriage an additional multivariate analysis was developed. The age the mother became a single parent for the first time was presumed to be related to number of remarriages because researchers have found that as women age they have fewer potential marital partners (Guttenberg & Secord, 1983). Additionally, men tend to

marry women younger than themselves (Glick, 1990), and the age gap between spouses increases in remarriages (Ambert, 1989; Wilson & Clarke, 1992). Thus, the age the mother became a single parent for the first time was included as a first independent variable.

The evidence on number of children and remarriage has been mixed. Although children are often considered as a liability in the remarriage market, some researchers have suggested that women with more children may be more likely to remarry, as they actively seek a partner to help them both with parenting duties and the costs of raising children (Glick & Lin, 1986). Women with a number of children to raise may be especially motivated to seek a partner, and if that marriage folds to seek yet another partner. The number of children the mother had when she was a single parent was used as a second independent variable.

Glick and Lin (1986) found that women with more education were less likely to remarry than those with less education. Education is a form of human capital, and more education increases job opportunities. Hypothesis six explored the relationship between the women's age when she first became a single parent, the number of children, education, and the number of times a woman has been married.

Hypothesis Six: Women who were married at a younger age, had more children to support, and had less

education will be more likely to be married a greater number of times.

Qualitative Questions

Single mothers often rely on family and friends to provide assistance with daily living (Belle, 1982; Quinn & Allen, 1989). Family support may function as a type of safety net, and keep single mothers from plunging into abject poverty (Arendell, 1986). Family support may be categorized into three types, financial assistance, emotional support, and child care (Quinn & Allen, 1989). Although all of these forms of support are important to single parents, they may impact the decision to remarry in different ways. Participants were asked about the reactions of family members when they made the decision to become a single parent, the reactions of family members over time and how their natal family members reacted to the remarriage. Additional information about family support was found in other portions of the interview protocol.

Specific research questions focusing on family support and remarriage include: 1. What types of support did natal family members give to the women in the sample while they were single parents? 2. Were particular family members associated with specific types of support? 3. How did natal family members react to a woman's decision to remarry?

Research on families of remarriage has suggested that these families are especially stressed because of the complexity of relationships between family members, and the lack of defined roles and role expectations (Cherlin, 1981, 1991). The second set of research questions guiding this qualitative inquiry focuses on how relationships in families of remarriage are formed and maintained. The popular literature is rife with information on the difficulties faced by blended families. Women in remarriages are likely to be aware of these potential problems and work to actively promote a positive relationship between their children from the first marriage and their second husband. Forming the new family unit takes time, and the adjustment period may be especially stressful for all of the family members. Cohabitation before remarriage may serve as a testing ground for potential relationships between the two adults, and between the mother's children and a new partner. Contact with the former spouse may also raise issues of responsibility for fathering. The qualitative analysis on families of remarriage is designed to investigate the challenges facing these families.

Specific research questions guiding this second set of qualitative analyses included the following: 1. For this cohort of women, cohabitation was introduced in social time as both a plausible precursor or alternative to marriage.

Were women in this sample likely to cohabit with a man they eventually remarried? 2. How did mothers view the relationship between children of their first marriage and the new spouse? 3. What specific problems did women identify in their families of remarriage? 4. How did relationships with the children's biological father impact family relationships in families of remarriage? 5. How did relationships with others in the new spouse's past, for example his children from a former marriage, influence family relationships?

Families of remarriage have a higher failure rate than families where the adults are in a first marriage. This sample offers the opportunity to explore remarriages that failed, and the reasons women give for the failure of a second marriage. Most of the work on remarriages that fail has focused on demographic indicators that may explain failure (Booth & Edwards, 1992; Cherlin, 1981, 1991) rather than the interpersonal reasons women may cite for the failure of their marriages. The third set of research questions centers on examining remarriages that fail and the experience of a remarriage ending in divorce from the perspective of women. Specific research questions to examine the experience of failure of a remarriage include:

1. What reasons did women give for the failure of a remarriage?
2. To what extent did women in this sample

have multiple episodes of divorce and remarriage? 3. To what extent did women remarry a former spouse?

This study includes both quantitative and qualitative analyses of the lives of the study participants. Because of the complex nature of combining qualitative and quantitative analyses, each chapter addresses a particular set of analyses, and each chapter includes a case study of a participant, used to illustrate and bring to life the lives of the study women.

Conclusion

This study seeks to examine the life course of a sample of women who belong to a cohort unique in American history. The baby boom cohort came of age and made decisions about family, work, and relationships in a period in time characterized by especially rapid changes. Much of the rhetoric on "family values" focuses on the potential harm for children of being raised in anything other than a "traditional" family, comprised of biological parents and their children (Popenoe, 1993; Whitehead, 1993). This rhetoric trivializes and pathologizes the profound changes that individual women have made for themselves and their families. Through a qualitative approach, where participants have the opportunity to view their own life course trajectories over time, the impact of choices on the lives of women and their children can be assessed.

CHAPTER III METHOD

This study was conceptualized as a study of a sample of women who experienced a series of life course transitions including divorce, single parenthood, and for some, cohabitation and remarriage. In contrast to previous generations in American history, these transitions, while not unique to the cohort under analysis, are more common than for previous cohorts of American women. Because the emphasis here is on changes that occur over time in the lives of women, this study uses a subsample of women from a larger longitudinal data set that includes men and women born between 1881 and 1975. In 1990 when the women were interviewed they ranged in age from 30 to 52.

Sample

The Longitudinal Study of Generations, developed at the University of Southern California, began as a study of the generation gap (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991: Mangan, Bengtson & Landry, 1988: Richards, Bengtson & Miller, 1989). In 1971, a sample of 266 grandfathers was recruited from the membership rolls of a large health maintenance organization in the Los Angeles area. Because this study was conceived as a study of the generation gap, all of these men, aged 55 to 90 had to have at least one living

child and one living grandchild age sixteen to twenty-five in 1971 (although not necessarily living in Southern California). The grandchildren, known in the Longitudinal Study of Generations as the third generation (or G3), comprise the group from which the participants for this study were recruited. The original members of the third generation were born between 1946 and 1955, during the time period commonly referred to as the "baby boom", and thus present a unique opportunity to study a set of American women who reached adulthood during a period of rapid social change. Over the years of the study, spouses have been added to the sample, meaning that some G3 study participants are now older or younger than the 1946-1955 cohort.

The members of the third generation of the Longitudinal Study of Generations have participated in four waves of data collection: 1971, 1985, 1988, and 1991. As part of the 1988 questionnaire, members of the third generation were asked if they had ever spent any time as a single parent. Participants who indicated they had spent time as a single parent were mailed a letter asking to return a postcard if they would be willing to be interviewed on their single parenting experiences. The Single Parent Substudy consisted of men and women of the Longitudinal Study of Generations third generation who had

spent time as a single parent through divorce, death of spouse, or having an out-of-wedlock birth.

Because this study was designed to examine transitions and life course trajectories of women who have experienced a divorce and subsequent remarriage, it focuses only on the 62 women who divorced and spent some time in a single parent family. Of this group, 43 have remarried at some point. At the time of the interview, 23 were currently single parents, 38 were currently remarried, and one mother had reunited with her spouse after a two and a half year separation.

Both current and previous transitions were important to the understanding of remarriage after divorce. Of the 38 women who were remarried at the time of the interview, 16 had cohabited with a partner before remarriage. Two women who remarried twice cohabited before remarriage with both of their remarried spouses. An additional 8 women had cohabited with a partner they did not remarry, and two women had cohabited with multiple partners they did not remarry.

Measures

Ninety-three interviews were conducted by telephone during 1990 and 1991. Due to audio difficulties, a total of 80 useable interviews have been transcribed, 11

interviews from single parent fathers and 69 from single parent mothers. These interviews range in length from thirty minutes to two and a half hours and include questions on single parenthood, work, family relationships, cohabitation, and remarriage. A copy of the interview protocol is found in Appendix A. Members of the sample were asked questions in all areas that were pertinent, for example they were asked if they had remarried, and if they had, then the section on remarriage was used. Separate interview protocols were used for divorced, widowed and never married single parents.

All participants were contacted by telephone to set up the interview and to establish rapport with study participants. This initial contact helped to develop a relationship between the participant and the interviewer, a vital link, as the study included potentially sensitive material. In accordance with feminist research methods (Laslett & Rapport, 1975; Oakley, 1981), the study women were active participants in the research process. Sometimes study participants brought up areas they felt were important to our understanding of single parenting, or remarriage. Interviewers also responded to questions about their own lives in the course of the interview. The congenial nature of the interview process, with attention paid to integrating the participant in the research

process, helped to develop a clear and in-depth assessment of single parenting and remarriage.

In addition to qualitative questions assessing the different domains of life course experiences for these women, demographic information was collected including: age of the mother and children at the time of separation, number of years as a single parent, time between separation and divorce, childbearing outside of the first marriage, support payments, and custody arrangements. When the mothers entered into cohabitation relationships the ages of the mother and children were asked, and the length of the cohabitation was assessed. Additional demographic information on education of the mother was available through the longitudinal information collected at the University of Southern California.

Data Analysis Techniques

The analyses for this study were selected to reflect both the nature of the data set and the demands of the life course perspective, and social exchange theory as they were originally conceived in relation to remarriage. Rank (1988) has suggested that quantitative methods answer the who, what, when and where of a research question, whereas qualitative analyses address the how and why of a research question. Good qualitative research with especially

insightful analysis has been instrumental in advancing both theory and research in family studies. For example, Worlds of Pain (Rubin, 1976), Hard Choices (Gerson, 1985), and The Second Shift (Hochschild & Machung, 1989) have all been acclaimed as especially important contributions to theory in family studies.

To lend strength to qualitative work, additional analyses using quantitative methodology can benefit and extend the conclusions reached from data. Triangulation, the "combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon" (Denzin, 1978, p. 291) offers researchers the opportunity to expand the analysis of a data set by using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

Categories can be coded from qualitative protocols, providing proper attention is directed to using multiple coders, and assessing inter-rater reliability. Demographic information also contributes to the evaluation of differences between, for example, those who remarried, and who remained single parents. In this study a combination of qualitative and quantitative analyses were used to illuminate differences between the life course trajectories of two groups of divorced single parents. Remarried women were compared to those who remained single parents to assess differences in the groups that may have impacted their decision to remain a single parent, or to remarry.

Quantitative Analyses

For the quantitative analyses in this study, chi square analysis was chosen because of the categorical data used. Categories were designed to be mutually exclusive and exhaustive (Reynolds, 1984). In order to address questions of validity, two independent coders categorized participants based on qualitative interview data in cases where a categorization was needed. An explanation of coding criteria for every analysis follows a restatement of each hypothesis.

Hypothesis One: Women with no more than a high school education will remarry more quickly than those with some college or a college education. Furthermore, women with more education are less likely to remarry than those with no education beyond high school.

To analyze this hypothesis, the women who remarried were divided into two groups: those with less or equal to a high school education, and those with education beyond the high school level. The sample includes a wide range of educational levels, including trade and technical education as well as four year baccalaureate and advanced degrees. Remarried women are divided into two groups, the rapid remarriers and the cautious remarriers, by median split, with those who remarried in less than the median length of time termed rapid remarriers. This means that women

married within five years after divorce are categorized as rapid remarriers, and those who took longer than five years to remarry are categorized as cautious.

Next, chi square was used to assess significant differences in education level between those who remarried and those who did not.

Hypothesis Two: Women who have a job, in comparison to those who have a career, will be more likely to remarry.

In order to categorize participants as in a job or career, information from the work and family section was used. Participants were asked for specific information about their occupations while they were a single parent, and the number of hours worked per week. Additional questions included "Has being a single parent affected your work life in any way?" and "Did being a single parent have any effect on your career expectations?". Using a combination of the occupation, hours per week, and career expectations information, the members of this study were coded into two groups; group one contained both those who were not employed while they were single parents and those who had jobs: whereas, group two was comprised of those women who had careers. To be coded as in a career the mother had to report at least two of the three characteristics of work: upward mobility, longer hours than a standard work week, and special training or preparation.

Hypothesis Three: Women who report more financial stress as single parents will be more likely to remarry.

In the interview, the section on problems and strengths of single parent families asked participants to identify the three problems they faced as single parents. Previous analyses have shown that women in this sample were very likely to identify financial stresses as a problem while they were single parents (Richards & Schmiede, 1993). To assess hypothesis three, currently remarried women and women who were currently single parents were compared using chi-square analysis to see whether women who reported greater financial stress were more likely to be currently remarried.

Because episodes of single parenting occurred at different points in time, any comparison of family income would have been subject to variation in the worth of household dollars, thus making meaningful comparison of financial stress using dollar amounts difficult. In addition, single parenting experiences took place as long as seventeen years prior to the interview, making recall of household incomes problematic. Finally, several mothers had multiple episodes of single parenting over time, making actual comparisons of income while single parenting virtually impossible.

Thus, two independent coders categorized financial stress for the women into four categories: no mention of financial stress, some financial stress, moderate financial stress, and severe financial stress based on the qualitative information found in the interviews on financial stresses of single parenting. Specifically, if coders found no mention of financial stress, and money was not listed as a problem of single parenting the mothers were coded as having no financial stress. If mothers mentioned money as a problem of single parenting, but also indicated that they were able to deal with that problem, they were coded as having some financial stress. Mothers who discussed money as a problem of single parenting, and also talked about having to receive aid in daily living from family members were coded as having moderate financial stress. To be coded as having severe financial stress, mothers had to have talked about money as a problem of single parenting, received aid in daily living expenses from family and have been forced to take extreme measures for financial survival. Extreme measures included doing something they would not normally consider, such as selling their possessions to feed their children.

Hypothesis Four: Women who initiated their first divorce, perhaps to leave an abusive or difficult former spouse will be less likely to remarry than those who did not initiate the divorce.

To analyze the relationship between divorce initiation and remarriage, the mothers in the sample were asked who initiated the divorce, and about their relationship with the former spouse at the time of the break-up and over time. Each mother was asked " Who initiated the divorce/separation? Was it mainly your decision?"; "What was your relationship with your spouse like around the time when you broke up for the final time?", and "What about your relationship with your ex-husband? How has that changed over time?". These questions tended to elicit information about the chain of events leading up to the divorce decision. For example, a woman might report that she made the actual decision to file for divorce, but this decision came about because she discovered her husband was having an affair. In this case, the husband would be an initiator of the ending of the relationship, although the woman actually filed for divorce. From the responses to these questions two independent coders coded women into groups of initiator versus non-initiator and chi square analysis done to determine whether there was a significant difference between those two groups.

Hypothesis Five: Women whose relationship with a former spouse over time remains conflictual will be more likely to remain single.

Using responses to the question "What was your relationship with your spouse like around the time when you

broke up for the final time? and "What about your relationship with your ex-husband? How has that changed over time?" two independent coders coded relationship with the former spouse over time. Relationships with the former spouse were coded into the following groups: amicable, cold/no feeling, moderately conflictual, very conflictual, and no contact.

Coders were directed that an amicable relationship was characterized by the mother indicating she got along with the former spouse and they maintained a non-conflictual relationship. Relationships were characterized as cold/no feeling if the mother indicated that she really did not communicate with the former spouse or if she said she had no feeling about the former spouse. Moderately conflictual relationships included those relationships where the mother expressed feelings of anger toward her ex-husband. In a very conflictual relationship with the former spouse, the mother discussed on-going conflict, and reported a great deal of anger directed at her ex-husband. There were a number of women who had no contact with the former spouse, including a number of mothers who did not know if their former spouse was still living. Women who had not had contact with their ex-husband for years, and those mothers who reported that their former husband was deceased were coded as no contact. Chi square analysis was done to determine whether or not there were significant differences

between those who remarried and those who remained single parents in terms of their contact with the former spouse.

Hypothesis Six: Women who were married at a younger age, had more children to support, and had less education will be more likely to be married a greater number of times.

Because number of times married was an unexpectedly continuous variable in this sample, ranging from one to four, an additional multivariate analyses could be performed using number of times married as the dependent variable. In this sample demographic information on the woman's age when she became a single parent for the first time, the number of children during single parenthood, and education were all available for analysis.

Education, a categorical variables in this data set, was dichotomized, and a dummy variable created, with those women with no more than a high school education coded as zero, and those with training beyond high school coded one. Education was used as the third independent variable, in addition to the mother's age at single parenthood, and number of children.

Because the variable on career used information on education as a coding criterion, the career variable was not included in the regression. Collinearity between education and career would be a problem, thus rendering career unsuitable as an additional variable.

Qualitative Analyses

The second group of research questions is best addressed through qualitative analysis. Qualitative analysis is hypothesis-generating rather than hypothesis testing (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), thus these research questions are designed to be exploratory in nature. Using the tenets of grounded theory and employing qualitative analysis techniques (Belle, 1982; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), interview questions were assessed for emergent themes. Most studies of divorce, single parenthood and remarriage have studied these phenomenon using quantitative data. As Allen and Pickett (1987, p. 518) noted in their work on single women,

"Theoretical models derived from census data alone do not reveal the internal shadings of diversity that exist within and between members of birth and marital cohorts".

In an effort to further illuminate the changes American women have encountered and assess how these changes impact lives of family members, this study seeks to use qualitative methodology to track lives over time.

Turning first to the investigation of family support and life course transitions, the first set of qualitative research questions, this hypothesis was investigated using Quinn & Allen's (1989) framework of examining support in

three categories: child care assistance, emotional support and financial support. Emergent themes in this analysis of family support and life course transitions provide a basis for evaluating family support, however because questions were not specifically asked about financial, emotional, or child care support, but rather these themes emerged in many of the interviews, this analysis was designed to be an exploratory look at the relationship between reported family support, and the decision to remarry.

The second set of qualitative research questions for qualitative analysis include those examining cohabitation, problems in families of remarriage, and how relationships are formed and maintained in families of remarriage. All respondents were asked about cohabitation. The specific interview question focusing on cohabitation used in this analysis was "At any time while you were a single parent, did you have a male partner or boyfriend living in your home, even for a short period of time"? Women were asked to name their cohabiting partner, and their own age, and their children's age when the partner was living in the household.

The interview questions on families of remarriage included: "How has your second (third) marriage worked out for you"? "How has the remarriage worked out for your children"? "What sorts of problems have you encountered in

your second marriage"? "How have they been negotiated" ? "How have your family relationships (for instance, with your parents, grandparents, siblings, ex-spouse) changed now that you have remarried"? Participants also discussed their remarriages in other portions of the interview thus, transcripts were all read intensively for discussions of remarriage and issues in families of remarriage.

The third set of research questions was designed to examine remarriages that fail. Initial examination of interviews of members of this sample revealed that interviewers had, in the course of the interview process, asked about multiple episodes of remarriage when respondents indicated they had been remarried several times. Often information about other marriages cropped up in the course of the interview, and interviewers followed up by asking the remarriage questions on these failed remarriages. Although the interview protocol did not include specific questions on failed remarriages, this information was generated in the course of the interviews and offered an opportunity to do an exploratory investigation of remarriages that fail.

In this thesis, Chapter Four examines the quantitative hypotheses, and, in keeping with the findings on the quantitative hypotheses, includes a case study of a participant who has been married and divorced four times. Chapter Five provides a qualitative analyses of the role of

family support during single parenthood and the reaction of natal family members to remarriage, incorporating a case study illustrating the role of family support. Chapter Six focuses on qualitatively examining families of remarriage including, the role of the individual's past, and problems in families of remarriage. A case study depicting the intersection of these issues in a family of remarriage is provided. Chapter Seven portrays remarriages that fail, and the issues involved in remarriages that are unsuccessful. A case study portraying a study participant who has had multiple remarriages that have failed is furnished.

CHAPTER IV FACTORS INFLUENCING REMARRIAGE

This chapter examines factors hypothesized to influence the choice of transition to remarriage. Analyses for this portion of the study investigate variables hypothesized to be associated with remarriage, including education, job versus career labor force attachment, financial stress, experience of control over the decision to divorce, and relationship with the former spouse over time. Specifically, hypotheses one, two, three, four, five and six are probed in this chapter.

Demographics of the Sample

Inasmuch as the propensity for remarriage has been found to be associated a number of demographic factors including age (Cherlin, 1991), education (Glick & Lin, 1986), and number of children (Glick & Lin, 1986) these factors were considered for analysis in this data set. The demographic variables of age of mother when she became a single parent for the first time, number of children when she became a single parent for the first time, and total number of children were asked of all study participants. Analyses using these demographic factors are included in this quantitative chapter. Table 1 presents the means and

standard deviations for the demographic variables used in this data set, for the overall sample and separately for those who ever remarried and for those who were married only once.

| Table 1. Demographics of the Sample | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | Total Sample (n=62) | Mothers Married Once (n=19) | Ever-Remarried Mothers (n=43) |
| Age the woman became a single parent for the first time | 27.90 (.621) | 29.74 (1.086) | 27.093 (.730) |
| Total Number of Children | 2.097 (.621) | 1.947 (.209) | 2.163 (.614) |
| Number of Marriages | 1.887 (.770) | 1.00 | 2.279 (.591) |
| Number of Years as a Single Parent | 6.653 (.523) | 7.71 (.962) | 6.012 (.614) |
| Education (modal value) | 3.00 (high school graduate) | 5.00 (some college) | 3.00 (high school graduate) |

One challenge of this data set was that because it was a retrospective account of single parenting and remarriage, there were a number of mothers who had remarried after a divorce but were not remarried at the time of the interview. Given the higher rate of failure for remarriage (Booth & Edwards, 1992; Cherlin, 1991) it is not surprising that there were a number of remarriages in this group of

mothers that ended in divorce. Since women who remarry at all may be significantly different from those who do not remarry, analyses were done to both examine the women who were currently remarried, and women who were ever remarried, separately.

An additional concern emerged after examining the marital histories of the members of the study. Because questions were asked about life course transitions over time, there were a number of women who had made several transitions in and out of wedlock. In this data set, 19 women were married once, 34 women were married twice, six women were married three times and three women were married four times.

The Relationship Between Education and Remarriage

Hypothesis One proposed that women with no more than a high school education would remarry more quickly than those with some college or a college education, and that women with no more than a high school education would be more likely to remarry at all than women with education beyond high school.

Partial support for hypothesis one was found. For this sample, women with no more than a high school education were more likely to remarry at all than women

with education beyond the high school level, however the speed at which they remarried was not affected.

To test this hypothesis, women who were remarried at the time of the interview were divided into two groups by median split. The median length of time in years for the remarried women to have been a single parent was 5.00 years, the mean was 5.83 years, and the mode was 3.00 years. For this analysis, the women who were single parents for 5 or more years before they remarried ($n=23$) were placed in the slow remarriers, while the women who remarried in less than 5 years ($n=15$) were the rapid remarriers. Chi-square analysis revealed no significant differences between the women who were rapid remarriers versus slow remarriers in terms of education levels ($\chi^2 = .0153$, $df=1$, n.s.).

In order to totally assess the potential effects of education on propensity to remarry, an additional analysis was performed. Divorced women who were never remarried were placed in one group ($n=19$), whereas those women who had been married more than once, whatever their current marital status, were placed in a second group ($n=43$). The chi-square analysis showed significant differences. Table 2 shows the results of the analyses. Women who had a high school education or less were significantly more likely to remarry than those mothers who had education beyond a high school diploma.

| Table 2. Education Level by Remarriage Status | | |
|---|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Education Level | Married Once | Married More Than Once |
| H.S. Graduate or Less | n=4 expected value=9.2 | n=26 expected value=20.8 |
| > H.S. Graduate | n=15 expected value=9.8 | n=17 expected value=22.2 |
| $\chi^2=8.20$, $df=1$, $p<.004$ | | |

Jobs, Careers, and Remarriage

Hypothesis two proposed that women who had a job in comparison to those who had a career would be more likely to remarry.

Two independent coders coded women into two groups, those with a job and those with a career. In order to be considered as having a career, the occupation had to have at least two of the following three characteristics: upward mobility, hours worked over that of a standard 40 hour work week, or specialized training. Inter-rater reliability for this measure was .87. For this analysis, women were classified as having a career only if both coders coded women as having a career. Twenty women were coded as in a career while 42 women were in non-career occupations or had never worked outside the home.

Chi-square analysis revealed no significant differences for women with a job versus a career and their likelihood of remarriage ($X^2=2.862$, $df=1$, n.s.). The women in the sample who were classified as having a career ($n=20$) were managers, professionals such as teachers, accountants and medical personnel, or owned their own small business. Women who were classified as having jobs rather than careers were found in secretarial and clerical positions, food and beverage service, or other service personnel.

To explore the possibility that women who remarried repeatedly may have been significantly different in terms of having a job versus having a career, an additional analysis was performed. A t-test was done to determine if the group who had a job versus the group with a career were significantly different in terms of number of times they were married. The t-test revealed significant differences for the members of this data set. Women who had a job rather than a career were more likely to be married a number of times ($F=2.61$, $df=55.72$, $t=2.91$, $p<.005$). Those women with a career were much less likely to be multiply married.

Financial Stress and Remarriage

Hypothesis three suggested that women who have more financial stress as single parents would be more likely to remarry. Two independent coders coded level of financial stress for the women in this data set. Coders combed the entire interview to find mention of financial difficulties for the mothers, focusing especially on the sections on welfare and problems of single parenting. Coders rated financial stress on a continuum with zero being no mention of financial stress to three, serious levels of financial stress. Inter-rater reliability for this measure was .52, indicating the difficulty of coding this variable from qualitative transcripts.

Because degree of financial stress was a difficult item to assess in this data set, as demonstrated by the low level of inter-rater reliability, the four categories were collapsed into two categories. If the women were coded zero or one they were placed into the low financial stress category, if they were coded two or three they were placed in the high financial stress category. If there was discrepancy between coders the higher level of stress was used for a financial stress variable. Collapsing categories resulted in improved reliability for this measure (.79). Chi-square analysis revealed no significant differences between women who were ever remarried and women

who were never remarried in terms of financial stress ($X^2=3.022$, $df=1$, $p=.08$, n.s.).

Obviously, the relationship between financial stress and remarriage is not clear for this data set, and the low level of inter-rater reliability on the uncollapsed measure suggests that determining level of financial stress was difficult. Although the relationship between financial stress and remarriage was not significant at the .05 level, a trend was suggested. Women who were married more than once had more financial stress, and those who were married once had less financial stress. Notwithstanding the lack of a significant relationship, the trend suggests the relationship between financial stress and remarriage requires further investigation.

The relationship between financial stress as a single parent and remarriage may not be clear because financial stress was a proxy variable that coders attempted to interpret from mother's accounts of single parenting. Also, the experiences of financial stress may dim over time for the women who remarried, causing them to report less financial stress than the women currently experiencing single parenthood.

Control Over the Divorce and Remarriage

Hypothesis four proposed that women who initiate their first divorce, perhaps to leave an abusive or difficult former spouse would be less likely to remarry than those who did not initiate the divorce. When women who initiate the divorce remarried they would do so more slowly than women who did not initiate the divorce.

Divorce initiation was coded into three groups: one if the husband initiated the divorce, two if the wife initiated the divorce, and three if the woman stated the divorce was "mutual". In addition to assessing the woman's response to the question, " Who initiated the divorce? Was it mainly your decision?" coders were also asked to consider specific instances in the interview protocol where women may have mentioned precipitating causes. If women reported that they initiated the divorce, but also discussed desertion by a spouse, or infidelity by a spouse, coders were instructed to code the initiator as the husband, in keeping with Vaughan's (1986) research that the divorce is often precipitated by the behavior of one spouse who goads the partner into filing for divorce. Inter-rater reliability for this measure was high (.95).

If the divorce was initiated by the woman, or it was a mutual decision, the couple was coded as wife initiated the divorce, both because there were only three cases where it

was a mutual decision, and because if the woman responded that a mutual decision was reached then she perceived some measure of control over the process. Two categories were used in this analysis, one for husband initiated and one for wife initiated. In keeping with many of the findings on divorce initiation (Glick, 1990) women were more likely to initiate the divorce. There were 41 women who were initiators and 21 husbands who were initiators.

A chi-square test was performed to determine if there were significant differences between the women who were divorce initiators and those who were not as to whether or not they were ever remarried. This analysis was non-significant ($X^2=.829$, $df=1$, n.s.). Thus, there was no support for hypothesis four in this data set.

Relationship with the Former Spouse Over Time and Remarriage

The literature on relationships after remarriage suggests that formerly married individuals may continue to experience conflict over time (Ambert, 1989; Masheter, 1991). Hypothesis five was developed to examine conflict over time and the decision to remarry. Hypothesis five stated the women whose relationship with a former spouse over time remains conflictual would be more likely to remain single.

Coders were instructed to code women into five groups, group one was for women who currently had an amicable relationship with their former husband, group two for those women who described their relationship as cold/ no feeling, group three was for those mothers who had a moderately conflictual relationship with their former husband, group four was for mothers who had a very conflictual relationship with their former husband, and group five for those women who had no contact with a former husband, either because he had vanished, or because he was deceased.

Inter-rater reliability for this measure was not high (.58), although it should be noted that in terms of identifying those relationships that were either moderately or highly conflictual inter-rater reliability was higher-.67. Due to small cell sizes, this variable was collapsed for analysis, with women placed into two groups, those with conflict (formerly coded three and four) and those without conflict (women with amicable or cold relationships and those without contact) with their former husband. If either coder identified conflict at any level, the woman was coded as having a conflictual relationship with her former spouse. Analysis was done to determine if there were any differences in terms of being ever remarried or not remarried between mothers with conflict and those without conflict.

First, chi-square analysis was done to examine whether the women who were currently single were more likely to have a conflictual relationship over time with their former spouse. Significant differences were found in conflict with the former spouse over time for these two groups of mothers. The analysis, presented in Table 3, shows that the 39 women currently in a marital relationship are significantly less likely to have conflict with a former spouse, thus providing support for hypothesis five. When mothers who were ever remarried and mothers who had never remarried were compared, and this analysis also revealed that there were significant differences between the two groups. Table 4 shows the results of this analysis.

| Table 3. Level of Conflict by Current Marital Status | | |
|--|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Marital Status | No Conflict | Conflict |
| Currently Married (n=39) | n=32 expected value=25.8 | n=7 expected value=13.2 |
| Currently Single (n=23) | n=9 expected value=15.2 | n=14 expected value=7.8 |
| $\chi^2=11.90$, $df=1$, $p=.0006$ | | |

| Table 4. Level of Conflict by Remarriage Status | | |
|---|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Marital Status | No Conflict | Conflict |
| Remarried | n=34 expected value=28.4 | n=9 expected value=14.6 |
| Never Remarried | n=7 expected value=12.6 | n=12 expected value=6.4 |
| $X^2=10.49$, $df=1$, $p=.001$ | | |

These analyses show that women who were never remarried were significantly more likely to have conflict over time with their former spouse, however this generalization must be made with caution due to low reliability on this measure. Women who are not remarried are perhaps more invested in continuing a relationship with a former spouse, even if conflictual, due to the need for child support, whereas women who are remarried are both invested in a new relationship and may be having financial support from their current spouse. Indeed it appears from the qualitative comments women made that some of the on-going conflict is associated with lack of child support payments.

Predictors of Number of Remarriages

Hypothesis six stated that women who were married at a younger age, had more children to support, and had less education would be more likely to be married a greater number of times. The regression equation model was developed whereby age the mother became a single parent for the first time, number of children when she was a single parent, and education were regressed on number of marriages. For this sample, the dependent variable, number of times married was a continuous variable with a range from one to four. Examination of the correlations between the independent and dependent variables revealed no difficulty with problems of collinearity. Independent variables were correlated more with the dependent variable, total number of marriages, than they were with each other. Table 5 shows the correlation matrix for the variables in the regression equation.

Table 5. Correlations for Mother's Age at Single Parenthood, Number of Children, Education, and Number of Marriages

| | magesp | chdsp | educat | nmar |
|----------------|---------|-------|--------|------|
| magesp | 1.00 | | | |
| chdsp | .144 | 1.00 | | |
| educat | .0810 | .140 | 1.00 | |
| nmar | -.451** | .145 | -.228 | 1.00 |
| n=62, **p <.05 | | | | |

When the woman's age at the time she initially became a single parent, number of children during single parenthood, and education were regressed on number of marriages a significant model was found, explaining 30% of the variance in the dependent variable, number of marriages. Table 6 shows the results of the regression analysis. As can be seen, all three independent variables were significant predictors of number of times married.

Table 6. Mother's Age at Single Parenthood, Number of Children, and Education Regressed on Number of Marriages

| variable | B | SE B | Beta | prob. |
|--|-------|------|-------|-------|
| magesp | -.074 | .018 | -.469 | .0001 |
| chdsp | .194 | .089 | .244 | .0488 |
| educat | -.343 | .170 | -.224 | .0333 |
| R ² =.30, F=8.21, df=3, p<.0001 | | | | |

Women who are younger when they become a single parent for the first time, have more children when they are a single parent, and have a high school diploma or less are more likely to be multiply married. The following case study depicts a study participant, married and divorced four times, who illustrates the contributions of these variables to the life course.

Quantitative Factors Affecting Remarriage: A Case Study

Sidney, a single parent at the time of the interview, has been married and divorced four times. She married for the first time at 19 and divorced a year later, moving herself and her infant son back into her parents' home. During the five year period between her first and second marriages she had an out-of-wedlock birth of a second son. According to Sidney, the father of this child, "bored me and I didn't want him around anymore".

Sidney's second marriage lasted eight months, and her third child, a daughter, was fathered by her second husband. She has not seen him since before her daughter was born, although according to Sidney, her daughter has seen her father because,

..."This is very complicated. He was my best friend's husband and then they got divorced and then I married him. So our kids had this father in common. And he would come and visit my friend's children and then Sabrina would go down and see him".

After eighteen months as a single parent, Sidney married a third time, with that marriage ending in divorce about eighteen months later. Another period of single parenting was ended when Sidney married a fourth time, a marriage that lasted two years, and that she claimed ended due to problems between her husband and her three children, plus difficulties she had with her husband's daughter, who was also living with them.

Although working 40 hours a week as a nanny at the time of the interview, when asked about welfare participation, she revealed that she has been on welfare during her periods of single parenting. Whereas, Sidney has managed to acquire some education beyond the high school diploma she had when she became a single parent for the first time, she lacks labor force experience during most of her adulthood.

Sidney mentioned lack of money as a problem of single parenting, although she did not dwell on her financial difficulties. She considered herself an especially good parent stating,

"I think that being a single parent has made me very, very close to my kids because I was the only person sometimes, that they could depend on to always be there. Probably one of the reasons why I could never stay married is because my kids were always more important to me than any husband that I had. And that's probably pretty hard to live with if you're a husband".

As a woman who married and divorced for the first time early in the life course, Sidney characterizes the women in this cohort who had multiple marriages and divorces.

Obviously her role as a mother is self-identified as of primary importance; she stated that being a mother is more important to her than being a spouse. With three children to support, and little labor force experience, marriage has given Sidney her breaks from welfare dependence. Sidney has entered and exited four marriages over 20 years, with 14 of those years having been spent in single parenthood.

CHAPTER V FAMILY SUPPORT AND TRANSITIONS TO SINGLE PARENTHOOD AND REMARRIAGE

Turning next to the qualitative analyses in this study, this chapter focuses on both investigating family support during the time women in this sample were single parents, and exploring family reaction to remarriage. The analysis focuses on using Quinn and Allen's (1989) framework of family support during single parenthood, including: child care assistance, financial assistance and emotional support and exploring how natal family members react to study participants' decisions to remarry.

Single Parents and Family Support

Studies of single parent families have examined the importance of having a social support network for single mothers as they struggle to survive (Belle, 1982; Stack, 1974). Support networks assist single women in dealing with day to day challenges of single parenting, as well as provide single mothers with emergency aid in times of need. These support networks for single parents have been shown to include friends, other single parents, and family members (Belle, 1982; Quinn & Allen, 1989). In some communities, single parents are supported by a network of fictive kin (Stack, 1974) who function as a support system.

Whatever the forms of support used, single mothers employ these networks to help them survive.

Quinn and Allen (1989) have suggested that family support comes in three specific forms: child care, emotional support, and financial assistance. Because single women in the study sample were not asked specifically about assistance from family members, but rather their comments on support appeared spontaneously throughout the interview protocol, this analysis of family support and the decision to remarry was designed as exploratory in nature, examining the possible relationship between support and the decision to remarry.

Interview protocols were searched for specific mention of these three forms of assistance, and who provided this assistance to single mothers. Because the source of the support as well as the type of support had the potential to be vital to the mother's ability to survive, qualitative analysis of the emergent themes for family support assessed both the types of support given and who gave that support.

Hypothesis four stated that strong family support alleviates the pressure to remarry quickly, in that it may mediate financial crisis for the single parent family. This hypothesis, although it presumed financial support may be the most significant factor in mediating financial crisis for single parents, also provided the opportunity to assess whether child care (definitely a financial type of

support as well) and emotional support were important in whether or not single parent women chose to remarry quickly.

Types of Support

In the interview protocol, all women were asked about the initial reaction of their family members when the woman first became a single parent. The question was stated: "When you became a single parent, how do you think it INITIALLY affected your relationship with others in your family? How about : your mother, your father, your grandmother, your grandfather, your brothers and sisters, and other family members". Additionally, participants were asked: "Are there other family members who stand out in your memory as being particularly supportive or unsupportive around the time of the break-up?" These questions form the basis for the evaluation of types of support for these single parent mothers, however, information on family support cropped up in other portions of the interview protocol, especially the question on whether or not the mother had spent any time on welfare.

Emotional Support

In general, women felt family members were supportive of their decision to divorce and become a single parent. Forty-two of the study mothers (67.7%) indicated emotional support from some family member when they initially became a single parent. This support was often expressed in terms that the parents and siblings were surprised that their daughter or sister had been able to tough out a difficult situation in her marriage for as long as she had. As a number of women left husbands who had problems their family members knew about, they were especially likely to feel emotional support for their decision. For example, one woman speaking about her mother's reaction to her leaving her alcoholic spouse and becoming a single parent said,

"My mom was all for it because she knew. Most of my family, they had tried for years to get me to leave him, I was married to Henry for seven and a half years. Of that time, I had threatened to leave him many many times for his drinking. They were very supportive of it. There's eight kids in my family and none of them liked him. Absolutely none of them liked him".

Not all women found a sympathetic family backed them in their decision. Emotional support from family members often had an important caveat attached; although family members might be supportive of the woman as a single parent, they might also feel dismay over the divorce. Women were leaving the security of a relationship for

existence as a single parent, and family members sometimes wondered if somehow another solution might have been possible, especially in families where marriage was considered an important commitment. As one mother noted,

"My mother didn't like it. Oh, just to leave the security and to just jump out and do whatever I could on my own. She would have much rather seen me stay in a more secure environment. That is why she and my father allowed us to move in for a while. For the child's sake. Because I didn't know what I was going to do or where I was going to go... my mother had a hard time recognizing why I could just leave it all behind. All that security and everything".

Study participants who had a mother who had spent time as a single parent were especially likely to note that their mother was reluctant to see them make this choice, although they might also understand the necessity it. Somehow this reaction came across as regret and dismay that their daughters would have to face the difficulties of single parenting. A study participant whose own mother had been a single parent commented,

"My mother herself was divorced when I was probably 20 years old and she is still a single person today. No problems there she understood times were tight but she also understood why remain in a relationship that was empty, dead, gone, and non-existent".

Although family members were generally supportive emotionally of single mothers, there were twenty mothers (32.3%) who did not describe any family members as emotionally supportive when they became single parents.

Often this lack of support was due to poor relationships in general with family members. For instance, one woman, currently in a remarriage described problematic relationships in general with her family,

"My mother and I were pretty distant. We still are. She's never given me opinions about my lifestyle, even when I've asked for them. Never interfered. I don't know how to describe her exactly. She had trouble building relationships with people...my brother, my two sisters kind of like my mom, don't express much opinion. They're very, I don't know what the word is. I'm going to call them worldly. They're all involved in relationships now, and have been for many years, all of them where they're living with someone, they're not married. Single parenthood to them-but they think I'm nuts anyway for being a parent. See none of them have children. And don't want any. They never expressed an opinion".

Sources of Emotional Support

For single mothers, their own mothers were the most often mentioned source of emotional support. Twenty-eight women recounted their mother's reaction to when they initially became a single parent as emotionally supportive. One woman related,

"My mother was very supportive of it. She knew that I was unhappy and said that whenever I wanted to come home I was more than welcome. And it was...it didn't have any effect at all, other than, you know, making us that much closer".

Fathers were also generally supportive, although not mentioned as often as mothers. Twenty-one mothers

described their fathers as emotionally supportive when they became a single parent. Fathers were sometimes inclined to express reservations about their daughter's ability to survive on her own, especially economically. Occasionally fathers appeared to have difficulty communicating emotional support to their daughters, but were there when things got tight economically. This may be in keeping with the literature suggesting that men offer instrumental forms of support, whereas women offer affective forms (Cancian, 1985). As one woman depicted her father's reaction to her becoming a single parent,

"My father is extremely boisterous...He wanted to come down, pack me and my daughter up, move us to his neighborhood, you know, give me a job, change my whole life. I thought quite a bit we're very much alike. He was really possessive at that point, getting us far away from this person".

In this data set, there is a small group of 3 fathers who felt that their daughters were acquiring feminist beliefs that lead to the break-up of their marriages, whereas daughters did not make this connection. This group of fathers did not hesitate to make their disapproval known to daughters. One daughter characterized her father's reaction,

"My dad felt that I was the problem. He blamed me. He felt that I was too assertive, I was into women's rights, and going to college and having my own career, And that was the problem. And basically he, I don't

know if he still feels that way or not, but he had pretty strong feelings about that".

Another woman, who was a graduate student at the time, described her father's reaction to the break-up of her marriage as,

..."He was angry with me. You know, I think because he was pretty sexist and he would feel responsible for me. Not so responsible that he would help me out, mind you, but responsible that as his daughter I didn't have the protection of some other man".

Brothers and sisters also figured as sources of emotional support for single mothers. Sixteen women discussed emotional support from siblings. Though siblings were often not the primary source of emotional support for their single parent sister, some siblings were able to convey firmer support than parents for the decision to divorce, as the divorce decision initially upset a number of parents. As this woman describes, the divorce was initially hard for her parents to deal with, but a brother provided incredible support,

(parents) "Oh, it was kind of tough for them at the beginning because there were no divorces on either side of the family. Ya, it was kind of tough at the beginning I think, but it didn't take very long though. I found out later that they weren't real crazy about my husband in the first place, But it was kind of tough to tell them and the support, as far as, you know, they didn't want to help as far as raising the kids or anything. I've never been able to ask for any of that kind of help... (siblings) my younger brother and I have gotten much closer... He's single and kind of just took on a lot of, you know, came over

and helped me do chores around the house. Stuff like that. And he really does a lot with the kids, he likes them a lot. He always wanted to be a dad...he does a lot with them and stuff".

Often support from siblings was a mixed bag, as some siblings, due to age or gender were more privy to the details of their sister's divorce. One woman described the reactions of her two brothers and one sister as,

"My one brother was angered, not over the divorce but the treatment he thought his sister was receiving. He was just angered toward Howard, for Howard's attitude. My little brother, I don't think it fazed him at all, he was still young enough that it was just oh well, it's just one of those things. My sister, we'd talk, she was pretty supportive. I stayed with her during the time that this was going on and like my dad she was very very supportive, she was like a caregiver at that time. I was letting it get to me and letting my health decline. She made sure that health wise I was taken care of".

Another woman related that after her divorce, her relationship with her younger sister deteriorated. When asked if her becoming a single parent affected her relationships with her siblings, she identified her sister and replied,

"Yes, it did. Further apart, she went to live with my husband, my ex-husband. But she was in a lot of trouble too. I mean she was on drugs and then juvenile hall and stuff. She is ten years younger than I am. I don't know how much my divorce affected her, she was having problems anyway".

Occasionally, the study participant felt that a sibling sided with her former spouse, and was disappointed

with the break-up of the marriage. Sometimes a brother who had become a close friend of the woman's husband and when the marriage dissolved the reaction of the brother was negative and he had difficulty being supportive of his sister. There were four women who described this type of reaction from a sibling. For example, one woman stated,

"And my brother- he uhm, it's difficult for him, because he, uhm, I don't know. I think it bothered him because he figured we would be married forever. Gosh- I am trying to understand the way he felt. He liked Nathan, because they were friends before we married".

Another woman explained the reaction of her brother as,

"My youngest brother was really upset because he thought my ex-husband was the greatest guy of earth... he was really upset with me".

Emotional support for women when they were single parents was not necessarily a clear and simple picture. Sometimes key family players, such as mothers, supported their daughters, but other family members did not. For the 43 women who ever remarried, 30 (69.8%) noted that at least one family member gave them emotional support. For the 19 women who did not remarry, 12 (63.2%) identified at least one family member as a source of emotional support.

Financial Support

Although mothers were not specifically queried as to financial support provided by family members, 26 of the study mothers mentioned financial support from family members, whereas 36 mothers did not report any financial assistance from a family member. Family members gave mothers cash, free housing, fed mothers and children and/or bought groceries, co-signed on home loans, provided credit cards, and purchased "luxury items" for the children such as music lessons or other special activities. Sometimes family financial assistance was the only thing that stood between single mothers and the streets. As one woman stated in response to the question about being on welfare,

"I tried while I was going through the divorce, but they would not give me anything because I owned a home even though it was in default and I had no means of support except what I got from my parents while I was going to school. So I was never awarded any because they said I had too many assets. I'm quite bitter about that. There were times when if it hadn't have been for my parents I don't know where I would have gotten money for food".

Sometimes financial support was provided in a variety of ways from more than one family member. One woman pictured a complex of financial assistance she was given by family members as,

"I'll tell you I didn't get any child support from him (her former husband) but I sure did get child support from my parents. Financially, if my children needed

shoes, they got shoes, if they needed piano lessons, they got piano lessons. My daughter plays four instruments and my mother has bought all four instruments, bass violin, piano, flute, and what's the other instrument-violin".

Not all of the study participants had family members who were either able or willing to assist them financially. Several women said that family members were either unable or unwilling to assist them financially. As one single woman described, there was no sympathetic parent to help her,

"No, as a matter of fact, I tried to ask my mother for some help and all I got was 'Well you never pay me back. I've loaned you money but you never pay me back' and I hadn't even asked her. I own my own home and I needed some help with repairs and I hadn't even asked her for any help I just told her what the situation was. She just turned around and said 'Well I'd give you some money, but you never pay me back'. Real nasty, so I feel like she is not a source for me. I just feel like I can't tell her what's really happening in my life. She wants me to tell her I'm miserable, right. But she won't help me so she puts me down for not managing well".

Sources of Financial Assistance

Not surprisingly, parents of the study mothers were an important source of financial assistance for these women, and were mentioned most often when monetary assistance was discussed. There were 17 women who specifically stated in the course of the interview that their parents either loaned or gave them money. Sometimes this assistance

extended to large purchases, like housing, othertimes it was cash for emergencies or in times of need. As one single mother described when her mother saw potential danger for her grandchildren she stepped in,

"We lived in a little tiny house for a while too. I didn't have a lot of money and was trying to earn more and stuff. So we lived in a house that was very small and their friends were all wealthy. So they were conscious of their surroundings. I was raised fairly well to do and didn't ask my mother for help I don't know why... We were in an area where the school was known for drugs. I thought the beginning of the end. I know I can't pull this off. It's hard enough being the single parent and having to make the decisions yourself... I was with my mother one day and talking about it and she said "why don't you buy a house?" and I told her all the reasons I couldn't and I said "why don't you buy me one?" and she did the next day. So we moved. We moved into a very nice area. That's my mother's support".

Sometimes, especially if parents were financially strapped, grandparents stepped in with help. Four women talked about grandparents as a source of financial assistance. One woman disclosed that when her spouse turned violent, her parents and grandparents banded together to remove her from that situation. Her grandparents provided funds to send her brother across country, and this brother then drove the mother, her child, and all of her belongings across half of the United States to the parent's house.

For the women who were ever remarried, 16 (37.2%) identified at least one family member as a source of financial support during single parenthood. Of the never

remarried women 10 (52.6%) disclosed during their interviews that at least one family member helped them out financially.

Child Care Assistance

Both in their discussion of the initial reaction of family members and their discussion of work and family women talked about the child care assistance rendered by their family members. Sometimes parents, a grandparent, or siblings were emergency back-up child care for a sick child, othertimes they were the day to day child care provider for their employed daughter, granddaughter, or sister. Half of the women in this sample (50%) had a family member supply either day-to-day or emergency back-up child care assistance.

This day care assistance often made the difference between getting to work, or having to take a sick day, and not receive any wages. One woman related her daughter's experience with illness, and how her family came to her aid with child care,

"What was really nice though, was my family. There were plenty of times that Alethea was sick and mother would stay home with her. There were several times that my dad did....when she had chicken pox, I only stayed home with her for two of those days, and my family pitched in and took up the rest of the time".

Sources of Child Care Assistance

Both parents and siblings were important sources of child care assistance for single mothers, and for 2 single mothers grandparents also provided child care assistance. Twelve women identified parents as a source of child care assistance, and additional 8 specifically mentioned their mother as a source of child care assistance, and 1 mother revealed that her step-father had cared for her children. Six siblings, almost exclusively sisters, also provided child care support for women during single parenthood. There were also 3 single or remarried mothers whose former spouse contributed child care assistance. One remarried mother, who is in a second marriage defined as troubled, described how her former husband cared for both their daughter and the daughter of the second marriage,

"Uhm, well, he does like, if I need there's been a couple of times where, my husband works swing shift and he has another job, and if I needed him to watch the baby he'll take Hilary and the baby places. Uhm, so as far as that kind of stuff goes, there's a line (he draws) because his friends give him a hard time".

For the women who were ever remarried, 22 women (51.2%) identified at least one family member as a source of child care support when she was a single parent. Nine (47.4%) of the never remarried mothers mentioned that at least one family member provided her with child care support.

Family as Safety Net: A Complex of Family Support

Some mothers in this sample received family support in all three areas from a variety of family members. These mothers felt exceptionally fortunate to have a family support network that dispensed a wide variety of forms of assistance. One woman described her family safety net,

"My sisters, and my mom, and even my dad were- they were great. They rallied around me. By the time I drove cross country and got to Washington, I was completely out of money. My car broke down in Montana and had to be repaired and I needed to get some money together for first and last and everything. My brother-in-law gave me \$2000 when I got to Washington, to use, to get some work clothes and to get myself set up when I got there. You know, they were all just wonderful. My parents opened their home to me and didn't charge me rent until after I got a good job, you know that I was making some money at. All the years that I lived in Washington and was single, my parents would take Cassy for the summer to Nevada with them so that, mainly so that I wouldn't have to pay childcare for all that time".

Many single mothers in this sample received extraordinary support from families. In the entire sample of sixty-two women, there were only nine (15%) women who did not have at least one family member who contributed at one or more forms of support while their daughter, sister, or granddaughter was a single parent. There were thirteen (21%) women who received all three forms of support from family members.

The relationship between family support during single parenthood and remarriage is not clear. Women who did not remarry have received more child care support, but less financial support from family members than the women who ever remarried. This may be because women who remarry were more financially stressed than those women who remained single parents. Total forms of support was not clearly linked to remarriage. Of the 13 mothers who received all the forms of support, four have continued as single parents, and nine have remarried. Conversely, of the nine women who received no form of family support, seven have remarried, and two remain single parents. Researchers have stated that perhaps support networks have specific costs as well as benefits (Belle, 1982; Stack, 1974). One mother seemed to be alluding to these costs in her comments,

... "Y'know it makes a diff--- When you're married and you are with another person, you don't have the same dependency on a parent that you do, and when y'know this parent role is different, it's changed at that point; and then, when we get a divorce, it went back to the parent role. Y'know like if I'd need something I'd call him, 'Daddy, I need some money. Help!'. Y'know, it's just different. The independence, to a certain extent, was lessened, and I think as far as my parents are concerned, they probably--- y'know, it's always nice to be needed. Y'know I think they at a certain point probably are like that a little bit".

This exploration of the role of family support, seems to imply that although possibly crucial to survival as a single parent, family support does not have a clear and

straightforward relationship to a decision to remarry. Although there are further questions to be explored in terms of support networks in this data set, it appears that women who have family support may be neither more nor less likely to remarry. Perhaps family support is like money in the bank, a woman knows it is available when needed, and withdrawals are imperative during times of adversity, such as divorce or single parenthood, but not during more "prosperous" times, where support is available from a spouse.

It is also possible that family support is simply available when it is needed by a family member, no matter what the marital or parental status of the daughter. Certainly married mothers might also rely on parents for child care assistance, and never-married sons and daughters also may return to their parent's home in times of financial crisis.

Family Reaction to Remarriage

In general, women faced approval and relief from their own parents and other family members. Often women felt that their own parents felt relieved of responsibility when the women remarried. As one woman, who lived with her parents and her four children for 10 years while she was a

single parent, described her parent's reaction to her decision to live with the man she eventually remarried as,

"They were, they were, they were jumping with joy for the fact that we were, you know, I was going to move".

Another woman believed that her remarriage influenced her parent's life including their retirement,

"They felt very protective until I got married again. They were very protective, very concerned. My mother reached retirement age; she would not retire, nope Ann might need some more help with the children. They continued in a parent role until I married again and then they retired and then they got along better themselves".

Daughters who were single parents often needed a great deal of assistance in order to survive. As we have seen, parents often helped financially, emotionally, and by providing necessities of daily living, including food, housing and child care. Remarriage allowed the women's own parents to relax, as they no longer needed to provide critical day to day assistance.

In responding to this question, women almost universally reported that family members were happy to see them remarried and that they "really liked" the mother's remarried spouse. Twenty-two women reported positive reactions from family members. One mother, prototypical of the sample, described her family's reaction to her remarriage as,

"Oh, they're happy! Oh, yes, they said that he's a blessing. That's what they said. My father adores him".

Of these women who discussed positive family reactions, six of the women used the term "relieved", made reference to feeling like the family could "relax a little", or discussed security, when presenting the reaction of their family. Women conveyed the impression that their family thought that they could stop being as vigilant in their efforts to help the mother and be there for her. One of this group described her family reaction as,

"They are very happy. They feel more secure about me having a husband. And they like him a lot".

Another woman, talking about her mother's reaction to her remarriage said simply "she is so relieved".

Two women thought there was no change in their family's reaction when they remarried, and 10 women talked about mixed or negative reactions on the part of family members (The numbers do not sum to 43 because of missing data for two women, as well as information on past remarriages for women who are currently single parents). A mixed reaction occurred when women felt that family members still preferred the former spouse, or they liked the new spouse but were also threatened in some way by the relationship. This reaction occurred in conjunction with a

problematic relationship in general between the study mother and her parents. One mother, who was divorced, remarried, widowed, and remarried, examined the reaction of her parents to the last marriage in the following manner,

"And between my parents, they really did care for my second hus-- I mean my third husband, and it really has a lot to do with, not so much they didn't like him personally, is my dad has always-- since I was married at a young age, seventeen, he always felt like he was always, y'know, running everybody's LIFE and he could just tell these husbands, you're gonna do this for me, like it or not-- we were young, stupid kids, y'know and that's fine. But when I married for the third time I didn't marry a boy- I married a MAN. He wasn't young, he had his own thoughts, he'd been in the service, he'd been around and he so he wasn't into taking orders from my father, and of course he felt quite offended by it, and it did cause a little hardship between my parents and my husband and myself because he didn't AGREE with it and my dad felt he had no leverage there, like I could just do what I want".

Another mother who felt that her family was threatened by her remarriage revealed that she and her husband were born again Christians and that her natal family was very "into collecting material things". Because lifestyles and personal focus diverged so greatly between herself and her mother and siblings she thought that her family reacted in a negative manner to the remarriage.

There is a proverb about hindsight being better than foresight, and that certainly proved correct for women whose remarriages did not work out. Women who talked about remarriages that did not work out discussed how their family was initially wary of the new partner, although they

may have tried to mask their feelings. One woman, divorced from her second husband, described this process as,

"Well, they tried to be very accepting of him. There was something about him that they did not like from the very beginning. But as long as we were married, they always welcomed him over and treated him like part of the family".

Another woman, who has been married four times, said her father, although he gets "crotchety" when she divorces has said after each divorce "well, I never did get along with that one, anyway".

Sometimes when women answered the question on the advantages to living with a partner, or when they talked about their family relationships with parents, they provided additional clues as to the influence of family members on their marital status. In keeping with Quinn and Allen's (1989) finding that parents encouraged the remarriage of their single parent daughters, some parents in this sample actively promoted remarriage to their daughters. One woman, married four times, talked about her mother's reaction to her single parenthood as,

"My mom's tired of me being poor and tired of worrying about me. She would like to see me married and settled, forever. But I can't blame her, I'd want that for my kids too".

Other women talked about feeling like they fit into their natal family better if they were married. They felt

that as a single mother they did not fit in as well as a married daughter would. One mother described how her family relationships had changed when she remarried as,

"My family--- I feel like I fit in better. I feel like--- even before I married my first husband, even before--- I feel like right now I have my niche in life. I'm happy with myself, I like myself, I like my family, I like what we do, and I feel like, y'know this is us and , y'know you accept us and like us or that's your problem, and I feel like I can take that attitude with me and I can fit in better, and I felt like-- for a lot of years I always felt like I was well-loved , well cared for, well received but I just felt like I was always peering in the window... Yeah, now I fit".

Family members subtly influenced these divorced women to believe that marriage was a preferable state to that of being a single mother, even when they supported the woman's decision to divorce her first husband, or even a subsequent husband. One woman discussed the reaction of her parents to her divorce in the following manner,

"Oh, my parents were understanding about it. It never affected our relationship. They were, I'm sure, not happy- because the marriage dissolved so to speak. But they know that I am a strong person, and they knew that I could handle the situation".

The same woman, in describing her parent's reaction to her remarriage said,

"Oh, they were happy! They fell in love with Cecil as much as I did. And as a matter of fact, we'll come into our third year of marriage in February, and my mom said' Oh it seems like you have been married

forever! You are just made for each other!'... they just love him. They really do".

Quinn and Allen (1989) suggest that there is familial pressure placed on single women to remarry, and the study women in this sample also faced this subtle pressure to repartner. Cohabitation was not an acceptable substitute to remarriage for the families of these women, and women who cohabited with a man before marrying him related that parents were universally relieved when the remarriage occurred. Remarriage conveys legitimacy and a sense of permanence on the relationship.

Transitions and Family Support

The parents, grandparents, and siblings of the study participants were generally supportive of the women during times of transitions, both out of a marriage into single parenthood, and into a remarriage. Not surprisingly, for the women in this cohort, marriage is still a preferable state, and their natal families also view marriage as a desirable state. Although supportive during single parenthood, family members also rejoice when women remarry. The following case study illustrates the interplay of family support and life course transitions.

Family Support and Transitions to Single Parenthood
and Remarriage: A Case Study

Marilyn married at 17, became a single parent at 19, and moved herself and her one and a half year old daughter, Nancy, into her parents' house. After two years of being a single parent Marilyn remarried, and has been married to her second husband for 17 years. Marilyn and her second husband have three additional children, all sons.

Marilyn states that her parents were very supportive of her decision to divorce. She is the eldest of her parents' six children and when she returned to her parents' house her mother had a baby only eight months older than Nancy. According to Marilyn, this had a positive effect on both Marilyn and her mother. Marilyn talked throughout her interview about the support she received from family members during the divorce and single parenthood transition. She described the process in the following manner,

(her father) "He was just so relieved it (the marriage) was over. He said 'you hung in there, you tried, and now I'm glad you're home'... I think the most supportive was probably my dad"... (her mother)..."Like I said, we've become friends. And not just a mother-daughter relationship but also friends. I think of anybody in the world, she and my dad, they know the most about me. There's nothing I can't tell them. Whereas, during the marriage I was withholding things, not wanting to upset them or hurt them or anything like that"... (her grandparents) "They were very helpful. I got a job and my grandmother babysat

for me so my mom wouldn't have to watch two... I couldn't have made it without family support".

Marilyn felt exceptionally fortunate to have high levels of family support throughout single parenthood, and attributes her successful single parenthood to her family. She felt that her experiences as a single parent were not necessarily characteristic of many single parents because of her high levels of family support.

Family support continued as Marilyn made the transition to remarriage. She characterized her second marriage as "great" and noted that she had a tremendous sense of security in her remarriage and she was happy that she was able to give her daughter a secure home. She described her natal family's relationships with her remarried husband as,

(parents)... "They think my husbands great"... (grandparents)... "Same thing. Because of them watching Nancy when she was little they really became attached to her, those couple of days a week when she went to my grandmother. So naturally they kept an eye on my husband to make sure he was going to be good, then they just kept saying 'Oh he's the best, he's great'".

Marilyn's only regret was "the first marriage", and she revealed that, looking back, she believed that she would have been better off if she had been a single parent initially, and not married her first husband. She claims that her first marriage did have a beneficial effect on her

younger brothers and sisters because she felt they learned from her mistake and were "more careful" when they made their own choices.

CHAPTER VI REMARRIAGE: NEW BEGINNINGS

Remarriages constitute new beginnings, new opportunities for family relationships and for the experience of being partnered. Nevertheless, although they are new beginnings, remarriages are sometimes subtly and othertimes blatantly tinged by past marital experiences. Despite the fact that the remarriage questions focused on the experience of remarriage without reference to past experiences, in answering these questions women in this sample almost universally alluded to their previous marriage, comparing and contrasting relationships in their previous marriage to their present experiences. The pervasive influence of the past colors the present, and suggests that although individuals divorce, the experience of the previous relationship remains with them.

The focus of this chapter is on the experience of remarriage as perceived by remarried women. Thirty-four women were currently remarried, one woman had reunited with her spouse after separation, four women were separated from a remarried spouse, and an additional four women had been remarried at some point but were currently single. All 43 women are included in the analyses in this chapter. Issues of cohabitation before remarriage, time and timing, specific problems discerned by women in the remarriage, the influences on remarriage of children, and the part played

by extended family members in families of remarriage are discussed.

In considering this analysis of remarriage it is important to remember that the remarriage is being assessed by the woman, and that other members of the household were not interviewed. It is probable that the current spouse, the former spouse, the children and other family members view the remarriage differently than the woman, however this study was conceived as an investigation into remarriage from the perspective of American women who were members of the baby boom.

Specific interview questions used to address the last set of research questions were: "1. At any time when you were a single parent, did you have a male partner or boyfriend living in your home, even for a short period of time?" 2. "How has your second (third) marriage worked out for you?" 3. "How has the remarriage worked out for your children?" 4. "What sorts of problems have you encountered in your second marriage? How have they been negotiated?" and 5. "How have your family relationships (for instance with your parents, grandparents, siblings, ex-spouse) changed now that you have remarried?".

Women also mentioned remarriage experiences in other portions of the interview protocol, and transcripts were scoured for any references to remarriage and relationships within the family. Women discussed remarriages in

comparison to previous relationships, the effect of remarriage on the family unit, how the remarriage affected children, their family of origin members, and sometimes how their former spouse reacted to the remarriage. Remarriage was considered not only in terms of the impact on the mother and her children, but also in light of extended kin, and former kin. For single women remarriage is a family affair.

Cohabitation Before Remarriage: A Transition for Some

One life course transition common to almost half of the remarried women was cohabitation before remarriage. Sixteen women cohabited with a man they eventually married, and two women, with multiple remarriages, each cohabited the two different men they eventually remarried. This finding is not surprising, given indications in the research that this is a common transition for divorced individuals contemplating another marriage (Bumpass & Sweet, 1989; Cauhape, 1983; Furstenberg & Spanier, 1987).

This analysis of life course transitions was designed as exploratory in nature, examining the life course transitions of the baby boom cohort of women. These women came of age when cultural beliefs about marriage, sexuality, and cohabitation were changing rapidly (Cherlin, 1991). It appears clear that women of this cohort explored cohabitation as an alternative or precursor to remarriage,

although they did not necessarily explore that possibility before their first marriage. One woman, reflecting back on her experiences with cohabitation before her remarriage noted,

"Well, it was a mutual thing. We both wanted to do that. And hindsight now being what it is, I wish I had done that with my ex-husband. Because we probably wouldn't have married. But my parents were dead set against it. They didn't like the idea, so...".

Women in this cohort seem to have taken advantage of changing cultural values on cohabitation as they considered a remarriage. Eight women in this study cohabited with men they did not remarry, and an additional two women are in long-term cohabiting relationships. Although almost half of the remarried women in this study cohabited before remarriage, cohabitation was not necessarily an alternative to remarriage, but rather a precursor of remarriage or an opportunity to test whether or not a potential marital relationship was viable. Cohabitation was a life course transition for about half of the women in this study, but it appears to be a transitional state for most.

Time and Timing: The Pervasive Influence of Dimensions of Time

Turning first to issues of the past and the influence of chronological age in families of remarriage, the life course perspective considers time and timing to be

important influences in the lives of individuals and families (Haraven, 1978; Bengtson & Allen, 1993). Time and timing, according to the life course perspective, involves social time, historical time and personal time (Haraven, 1978). The significant impact of time dimensions was found throughout the accounts of the study women, and revolved around three issues, the past of the partner, the mother's own past, and chronological age issues.

Usually time and timing issues were introduced by the study women, rather than the interviewer. Sample women believed that their past relationships, as well as their partner's past relationships, influenced the course of their present relationship. Women in this sample also had a sense of what was considered normative in terms of time and timing, especially chronological age issues, and they made specific reference to individual age and timing issues. For example, one mother in answering the question "How has your second marriage worked out for you", answered,

"Well, my husband is 33. And has no children and has never been married before. So...".

This mother, older than her husband by six years, thought first in describing her remarriage of the age difference and her husband's past marital and parenting experience when queried on how her marriage was working out for her.

The Mother's Past

Turning first to the mother's relationship past, women compared their first marriage to their remarriage. For 7 women, their initial response to the question "How has your remarriage worked out for you" reflected a conscious comparison to their own marital past and history. Responses were almost always favorable, including, "Great! Much better than my first" or "Fine, a lot better than the first".

For the study women, current conditions and relationships are not considered in a vacuum, but rather in light of what has happened in the past. Women made conscious, verbal comparisons to their previous marriage and their remarriage. One mother compared her first and second husbands,

"I'm very happily married to my husband now. I just picked a doozie the first time around, thank you very much".

This finding is especially significant in light of the fact that the women were not specifically asked to compare their marriages, rather that was a comparison they initiated.

Social exchange theory suggests that individuals consider their marital relationships in light of a comparison level of alternatives (Levinger, 1979; Duck, 1982). The study women considered their alternatives in

terms of their past choices, and were likely to verbalize these comparisons, although they were not specifically prompted to do so. For example, one mother in response to the question on how the remarriage was working out for her responded,

"Fantastic. The exact opposite of the other one. I didn't make the same mistake twice. It's worked out really well".

These single women still thought about their current relationships in terms of past relationships, even when these past relationships may have been many years ago. The importance of the individual's past cannot be discounted by investigators studying remarriage.

The Partner's Past

In their responses to the questions on remarriage, many women framed their answers in terms of whether or not they married a man who had had no previous marriages, or whether their new partner had been married before. This reflection on the partner's past appeared to be an important consideration in discussing the remarriage. There were seven women who specifically stated their partner's previous history (their new spouse had never been married before), when discussing their remarriage. For example, one mother responded to the question on how her remarriage had worked out,

... "I didn't want to get married. I was real happy with my singleness at that time. I liked my life. But actually my life was a little too perfect in a way ... He had never been married before and had no kids and basically never had a relationship. So he's gone through a lot of changes".

When a partner had not been married before, he also had no experience as a father. Women who married men who had not been married before were more likely to have children with their new spouse. Of the seven women who married a man who had not been married or had the opportunity to be a parent before, three had a child or children born in the remarriage, and another mother, married a few months expressed a desire to have a child with the new spouse. It may well be that women or their partners wanted a shared parenting experience.

As a number of remarriages in the sample were relatively new, with nine women remarried less than one year, there may be children born in these remarriages also. Indeed there is evidence that women expect to have children in their remarriages. One mother, age 38, remarried two months stated,

"We want to have another baby and my biggest fear is I don't want to get---this (being divorced) to happen again".

Two women in the sample who were not able to have children discussed the possibility of adopting a child with their remarried spouse, both in their comments during the

interview, and their qualitative comments in the 1991 Longitudinal Study of Generations questionnaire. Thus there are indications that the women in this sample viewed remarriage as an opportunity to expand their family and share parenting a child unique to their marriage with the new spouse. These women may be considering, as researchers (Ganong & Coleman, 1988; Wineberg, 1990, 1992) have suggested "cementing the remarriage" with the birth of a child.

Another Timing Issue: Age

Another timing issue that emerged from analysis of the qualitative accounts of remarried women was that of the chronological age of their partner, specifically for women who married men who were younger than themselves. Six women in the remarried group mentioned in their accounts that they were older than their remarried spouse. No interviewers asked the mother about the age of her spouse; this information was volunteered by the mother in the course of the interview, suggesting that women saw the age discrepancy as noteworthy. For example, one mother, responding to the question on how her remarriage was working out for her said,

"Very well. We're partners in this business and it's worked out very well, I think. He's much younger than I am, but it's working much better than the first one".

When discussing the age difference women also noted how much discrepancy existed, from the mother who stated she was six months older than her husband to the mother who mentioned the 12 year age gap between her spouse and herself. Having an older husband was not discussed, with one exception, a woman who talked about the 10 year gap between her own age and that of her older husband.

It is normative in American society for women to marry a man two to three years older than themselves (Glick, 1990; Guttenberg & Secord, 1983). Research on remarriage has suggested that men who have been divorced remarry an even younger spouse (Ambert, 1989). Perhaps these women brought up the issue of a younger spouse because of cultural norms; for a woman to remarry a younger man is a very non-normative choice. Somehow women felt that their choice of a younger spouse was sufficiently unusual that they addressed chronological age as a factor in their remarriage.

Although women mentioned the age difference, they did not necessarily perceive a problem, however often family members expressed concern about the age discrepancy. For example, one mother, in discussing the reaction of her brother to her remarriage noted,

"And my brother-he doesn't...he likes Andy for Andy as a person. But he is bothered by the age difference, because there is a 12 year age difference. And he is

always bothered by that. He has only made one (remark)-
'God he is so young!'- but I can tell".

For these study women family, and family reaction made a difference in their experience of single parenthood, and the influence of family reaction to the age discrepancy cannot be discounted when speculating about the future of these relationships.

Past, Present and Future: How Time Impacts Families

Women discussed their families of remarriage in light of the three time and timing issues: their own past relationships, the partner's past relationships, and the age of the remarried spouse relative to the study participant. The past of the remarried partners impacts the present, and may affect future choices of the couple. If the partner has never been married before he may enter the relationship with different expectations than a man who already has experience being married. If the new partner has not been a parent before there may be more impetus for the couple to have a child in the remarriage. Although women believe the past is in the past, the past may also determine some of the future.

Six women in the sample married men younger than themselves, in several cases quite a bit younger. To attach a younger partner, for women, is unusual; usually

men are likely to remarry younger women rather than the reverse. Women did view these chronological age differences as important; although they were not quite certain about why this difference was important it was consistently discussed.

Problems in Families of Remarriage

Problems in families of remarriage, not surprisingly, centered on the relationships between children and the new partner. Two questions in the interview protocol examined problems in remarriage: "What sorts of problems have you encountered in your second marriage? How have they been negotiated?". Two additional questions about the remarriage were also used to help identify problems in the remarriage: "How has your second (third) marriage worked out for you? How has the remarriage worked out for your children?". Occasionally mothers mentioned problems in the remarriage in other parts of the interview protocol. Transcripts were examined carefully for any mention of these problems.

When asked specifically about what problems were identified in the remarriage and discussing the course of their remarriages, women sometimes mentioned multiple problems. Table 7 shows problems that were coded for study women. Problems included: the adjustment period between the woman's new partner and her children, communication

within the marital dyad, difficulties with the former wife or the children of a remarried partner, financial problems in the remarriage, infidelity, problems with a former spouse or his new partner, differences in childrearing beliefs when they had shared children, new in-laws, and other idiosyncratic problems.

Because there is a specific section on children and the remarriage, difficulties surrounding the relationship between the remarried spouse and the mother's children and difficulties surrounding his children from other marriages are discussed in the next section of this chapter.

Communication, Ex-spouses and Finances

Turning first to the five women who discussed communication difficulties in their remarriage, it is important to acknowledge that this set of difficulties was the only problem set mentioned that did not specifically focus on or involve individuals outside the marital dyad.

| Table 7. Problems in Families of Remarriage | |
|--|---|
| Problem | N of Women Who Identified this as a Problem |
| Financial Problems | 6 |
| Adjustment Period with her Children | 14 |
| Communication Problems | 5 |
| Differences in Childrearing Beliefs | 2 |
| New Husband Never a Father Before | 6 |
| Former Spouse or Children of the New Husband | 3 |
| New In-Laws | 2 |
| Infidelity | 2 |
| Former Spouse of Study Woman | 3 |
| Other | 4 |

Although communication difficulties are a major source of dissention in marriage (Kayser, 1993), and are one of the most frequently mentioned cause of divorce (Kitson & Holmes, 1992), communication problems in remarriage were not listed by a majority of respondents. One woman, discussing her communication challenges with her spouse, seemed to be talking about the gender differences in self-disclosure and communication strategies, elsewhere noted (Peplau & Gordon, 1988). She answered the question on problems in her remarriage by responding,

"We talk. We talk a lot. And he has his times when he doesn't like to talk. But I like to talk. I have this, this fear of no communication. I have fear that if you don't communicate it's not going to iron out,

your differences, whatever the problem... And I have to wait 'till he's in the mood to talk. I've learned how to kinda read him, feel him out, and when he is ready to talk and when he's not".

Another woman, reflecting on the problems in her remarriage stated,

... "My husband's a very quiet person, very, very reserved. I think we should be able to communicate better. I'll want to talk about something and I'll get a one word answer. And then I'll bring it up again and then he says, 'we're done talking about this' and I'd say ' I don't think we're done talking about this'".

Whereas communication problems were not mentioned by a large number of remarried women, communication difficulties did surface in accounts of problems in remarriage.

Problematic relationships with the former spouse of the new partner, a problem mentioned by three women, were related either to financial resources and the allocation of these resources, or involved the study mother's interaction with her husband's children. Although problems with a former partner of the husband were not mentioned by a large number of women, when problems existed they often prompted hard feelings between the two families. One mother revealed that she and her new spouse had resorted to legal assistance to deal with her husband's ex-wife. In describing the problems in her remarriage, she answered,

"Well it's about divorce. His divorce. Interference from his ex-wife. Okay, his son moved in here. We have has him for a year. She was starting a lot of

problems with her son. Telling her son a lot of things about me, or telling friends, his friends, that I was not good. Just starting a lot of bad stuff. And it caused a lot of problems because the friends would confront me and tell me... So we had to have the attorney, send her a letter, telling her to stop this nonsense. We've had problems of divorce, his divorce".

Financial difficulties in the remarriage were mentioned by six women. Although remarriage often improves the financial picture for single women (Arendell, 1986; Cherlin, 1992), remarriage did not necessarily solve all financial challenges. Marrying a man with a large financial obligation to his children from a former marriage, or a man with poor spending habits often challenged the finances of the new household.

Sometimes study women, who through the financial adversity they experienced as a single parent learned how to effectively manage their resources, married men who were not good financial planners. Issues of financial management quickly surfaced, as women realized that their new spouse was not an effective manager. One mother of three daughters, whose first husband left her \$20,000 in debt, described her problems in her remarriage and the resultant method of handling finances,

... "Monetary: he was a very free spender, had no savings, has lots of bills, was not together, and it took us-- Well I spent my first year paying off all the bills... When we got married, he did, he said, "you handle the finances because you're better at it" And I told him, just so you understand one thing: I will handle the finances, but the first time you ask

me for some money and I tell you we don't have it and you want to know where the money has gone, I'm gonna throw this checkbook at you and you can just stuff it and you can go get your own checking account".

Conclusions: Communication, ex-spouses, and finances

Communication difficulties and financial woes are often problematic issues in any marriage. Researchers of remarriage have noted that financial difficulties are often problems in families of remarriage (Spanier & Thompson, 1987). How remarried women handled these problems revolved around how they had addressed these same issues in their past, both in their first marriage and during single parenthood. Sometimes women felt they learned some important skills for managing resources during single parenthood, and determined that they could use new skills, honed through adversity, to avoid repeating a past mistake.

Children

Problems related to children in families of remarriage were not simply confined to difficulties concerning the relationship between the new marital partner and the mother's children. Study women, in their discussion of problems of remarriage centering around children, gave verbal evidence of the complexity of relationships that researchers have noted in families of remarriage (Ambert, 1989; Cherlin, 1991; Ihinger-Tallman & Pasley, 1987). Not

only did women talk about their own children, but they also discussed their husband's children from previous marriages, the advent of children born in the remarriage, the relationship of their children to their biological father, and the relationship their children had with a new partner of the child's biological father.

Literature on remarriage has identified the complex of family types that can be found (for example, children of the mother's first marriage and children of the present marriage) without examining the potential shifts in custody arrangements over time, and how these shifts may impact families (Cherlin, 1991; Ihinger-Tallman & Pasley, 1987). Perhaps families of remarriage are more prone to divorce because children move in and out, between households. This mobility, especially since it is perceived as non-normative, may place additional challenges on families of remarriage. In this sample, study women demonstrated that these complex family types do play a role in the creation of relationships in families of remarriage.

Her children

How the remarriage turned out for the study participant's children, as perceived by the study mother, was influenced by several factors. First, the length of time in the remarriage seemed to impact the relationship between the step-father and child, with a great deal of

adjustment taking place in the first year and a half to two years. The birth of additional children in the remarriage also was discussed by women in terms how the remarriage has worked out for the children. Another influence on the relationship between the step-father and child was the relationship between the biological father and the child. Women perceived that children who felt a sense of allegiance to their father had to work through their feelings and come to some sense of what their father and step-father were responsible for in their relationship with the child. This section focuses on the study woman's children, and the factors influencing them in families of remarriage.

Relationships between children and their step-fathers. For children who had spent most of their childhood in the family of remarriage, women tended to describe the relationship between the step-father and child as essentially that of father and child, especially if the biological father had vanished. In keeping with Furstenberg and Spanier's (1987) emphasis on social parenthood as being the important relationship in families of remarriage, these women saw the relationship between their spouse and child as that of father and child, rather than step-father and child. For three women, a defacto relationship of parent and child was viewed as existing between the step-father

and the mother's children. One mother who has not heard from her former spouse in over ten years described the relationship between her daughters and spouse as,

"Very good. They have a---Well, they never knew anyone but Dave to begin with, as far as a father figure at all, so he has become their dad".

Another mother, divorced at 19 with an infant, and remarried for 17 years depicted the relationship between her spouse and daughter as,

..."like my husband refers to my daughter as his daughter, he's raised her, there's no stepparent type of situation here. I don't know how to explain it. There's no problems between a stepdaughter and father, but just normal things between a protective father and his daughter. Like I said, I'm protective and so is he, we're like that with our kids. I can't think of anything that would stand out, to me its just a normal thing. There's no difference made between our daughter and our three sons, they're all our kids. They're all his kids".

Two women reported their children were legally adopted by their spouse, additionally, the mother interviewed above mentioned that her husband tried to legally adopt her child but they could not locate the child's biological father, a necessary step in the adoption proceedings. Adoption proceedings were not peaceful for either of the two women who completed the proceedings; one mother relinquished custody of one of her three children to the child's father. This woman has no contact with the son who lives with her former husband. Although regretful that she cannot see

this child, the mother was satisfied when the adoption proceedings went through because she was then rid of her former husband.

The other mother whose remarried spouse successfully adopted her daughter discussed the adoption and how her anger at her former spouse and social service agencies was rekindled,

"What happened is that they (social services) found him. We were very angry... What ended up happening is that he had not paid \$1000 worth of child support in all these years. What aggravated us was that we had an attorney working on this. Social Services, of course, gets involved, same organization that wouldn't help me fifteen years ago, turned around and counseled him and told him he didn't have to sign the adoption papers. And it angered me and my attorney... My daughter requested this adoption".

Although the daughter's wishes eventually prevailed, the mother was disgusted with the role played by agencies in promoting the rights of the biological father, who had switched bank accounts repeatedly to avoid paying support. Fathers who essentially vanished were replaced in these families; and for these families a parent child relationship was established with the second spouse.

Time remained an important factor in discussing the evolution of relationships within these families of remarriage. Because the interview took place at a different point in the remarriage of each respondent, a pattern was found in the interviews of the women who had been remarried several years. Often relationships between

the children and the new partner started out well, had an adjustment period characterized by difficulties between the new spouse and the child or children, and then differences smoothed out again. Twelve women mentioned this pattern in describing problems in their families. A remarried mother of one daughter described this process, that she felt took a year and a half, as

"Well, it was fine in the beginning, and then it got a little rough, and now it is fine again. Someone came into our lives. Remember I was telling you (the interviewer) how Mary and I got very close? ... You know, mom was always there. Well, when Andy and I did get married, it was fine for a couple of months, about six months, and then all of a sudden, she felt resentment towards someone moving in on us and on her mom and her's relationship. And she started defying- a very defiant young lady and it got really out of hand. So we started going to counselling, and now, it has been a godsend. It really has. Counselling. And Andy and her have a good, straight forward relationship".

Although a pattern of initially good, then diminishing, and finally improving relationships was not necessarily established in all remarriages, it is significant that in those remarriages that failed a pattern was established where the relationship between the remarried spouse and child started out fine, but degenerated over time, and any rapport between the step-parent and child was lost. It seems especially vital for the future of the mother's relationship with a partner that the child and partner establish an amicable relationship over time. It is also important to recognize that families

of remarriage, although they may have a difficult transition period, can form positive and lasting relationships.

Women who were married to men who had no parenting experience were likely to mention this as a specific problem, particularly if their children were young. Of the seven women who specifically noted that they married men with no past marital relationships, all of these women mentioned difficulty with parenting as a problem in their remarriage. A remarried mother of two children, ages five and two, explained her husband's initiation into parenting humorously,

"He had never been a parent before. (All of a sudden he had a five year old and a two year old) who washed her behind once. That was a real eye-opener for him. Because certainly a three year old, a four year old is toilet trained, but they're not always- I don't mean to gross you out, but sometimes as far as toilet hygiene, they need a little help. And to fall into a thing like that, if you don't have any experience, parenting can be a real eye-opener".

Not all women had new partners as willing to be flexible. Men new to parenting often had specific expectations for children that were not in keeping with their wife's expectations. In response to the question about problems in the remarriage seven women specifically mentioned how their partners, new to parenting, questioned both how women disciplined the children and child behavior. New partners sometimes tended to be critical of the

mother's parenting, suggesting that she was too lax in enforcing discipline. A remarried mother described this process in her response to problems she encountered in the remarriage as,

"I think that the fact that Glen has never been a parent before and he is new on the scene. He is new in parenting... We pretty much just talk about things as they come up. There hasn't had to be any heavy discipline... There are things that Glen sees that he feels that I have been a little lax about, of he feels that Patrick could, you know, things like he feels Patrick doesn't listen to me as well as he should. Or doesn't respect me as much as he should, those kinds of things".

Often new partners cultivated an authoritarian relationship with children. Although not all new partners assumed such an authoritarian stance with the children of the study mother, it is interesting to speculate whether women would assume such a stance toward their partner's children if the situation was reversed. When children of the husband entered the mother's household, women seemed to leave the discipline to their husband. For example, one mother whose husband's teenage daughter lived with them for her last year of high school described this period as,

"It was kind of stressful, because she was a real rebellious person, but her father handled her. She would do things for him she wouldn't do for nobody (sic) else".

Is an authoritarian position more accepted for a husband entering the family unit because males are

considered authority figures? Do men believe that they should assume an authoritarian stance for any children in the household? One mother, whose remarriage did not work out described her second husband's relationship with her child as,

"Stewart was an authoritarian and anyone living under his roof had to do it his way. And he had not won over Joshua's love and respect yet, and he was pushing it real fast. You know, 'I'm your dad now, you will do it the way I say to do it'".

Such a position with the study mother's child did not lead to lasting relationships, but rather produced a complex of interpersonal problems between the mother's new partner and the child.

The advent of step-siblings. Fourteen women had additional children born in their remarriage, one woman had a child out-of-wedlock with a man she eventually remarried, the woman who had a marital reconciliation had another child, and two other mothers had children out-of-wedlock between remarriages. There were a total of 19 children born into remarriage relationships in this sample, although not all of these remarriages endured.

Women who had children in the remarriage discussed how the age gap between children posed some specific challenges. One mother, discussing the transition period and adjustment of the family to her remarriage alleged,

(The transition period lasts) "A good deal longer than I thought it would. I'd have to say maybe two years. And then, when I gave birth to my youngest child, that introduced a whole new set of factors. Because the difference in age was also quite great...there is 9 years difference between my younger daughter, and 12 years difference between my son and my younger one...They were happy about it but there were jealousies and it was difficult".

Not all remarried others faced this age gap, especially if they had young children and remarried quickly. However, there women often mentioned certain caveats with regard to the relationship between half-siblings. For example, one mother stated,

..."My daughter is crazy about her little brother. That worked out real well. If it were the other way around and I had a older son and a younger daughter, I'm not sure it would have worked out so well. I am just really thankful".

Women who had children in their remarriage, although they viewed these children as equal, recognized that additional challenges faced them, beyond the normative experience of jealousy when a new child enters the family.

The relationship between the biological father and the child. Another factor that had important consequences for the child's reaction to the remarriage was the relationship between the child and the biological father. Again, it is important to remember that these impressions come from the child's mother, and the father's side of the story is not available. When discussing the child's reaction to the

remarriage, women considered how children experienced feelings of divided loyalty, and how these issues were resolved. A better relationship with the former spouse facilitated an easier resolution for the child. One woman with a positive and effective co-parental relationship with her former spouse (one of the few such relationships in this sample) discussed how her new spouse was careful to establish boundaries and not interfere with the son's relationship with his biological father,

..."He is really fatherly with him. But he is also adamant about not taking his father's place".

When the relationship between the woman and her former spouse was especially strained or conflictual, the child faced more challenges in determining how to resolve issues concerning which father figure did what. For example, one study participant described this process as,

"Oh, it was tough at first. She is just now beginning to settle into the father and step-father situation. At first she had her troubles because everybody had one dad and she has two".

This woman went on to answer the question about problems in her remarriage as,

"A lot of it was through Howard with visitation and responsibility. You know, what the father should be responsible for versus the step-father. Things like that have torn at us. Because I would want to run and keep everybody happy and try and keep the balance and that has been-overall- the biggest problem".

One woman relinquished custody of her daughter to the former spouse. She claimed that the ex-spouse, who had not remarried, used her remarriage and the birth of another child as an opportunity to convince the daughter that her mother no longer needed her as a daughter, and she would be better off with her father. This woman bitterly recounted the process as,

"Well see, Lily left when I married Jonathan because her father had told her that I married him because I didn't love her. And then when we had the next child the father said I didn't need her anymore because I had a new baby. And so that's when she moved".

Although the literature in family studies addresses our cultural beliefs that children need fathers and male role models, mother's perceptions were that children were more stressed if they had two men, especially two with interpersonal hostility, who both wished to function as a father. From the viewpoint of the mother, it is easier to promote a father-child relationship if the child's biological father is out of the picture. Perhaps this is a form of wishful thinking on the mother's part, where the presumption is that everything will work out fine if only the former spouse is erased from the mother's life, including his role as father to their child.

His children

New partners who had been fathers before had other children in their lives besides the study woman's children. Often these children made demands on their father that influenced the course of the study woman's life, through finances, through decisions about future child-bearing, and through the experience of having her partner's children move into her household. Although women were not specifically asked about children their partner had, women talked about these children and the impact on their marriage. Again, it is significant to this study of remarriage to note that children in families of remarriage move in and out of households, increasing the potential for challenges to family members as they establish and renew relationships.

Men who had children from other marriages were financially responsible for supporting these children, and sometimes this responsibility placed a financial strain on the remarried couple. One mother responding to the question on problems, declared somewhat bitterly,

"Mainly financial. I guess that's really all I can speak of. I think there's a bit of resentment as far as I realize he has children to support, too. I mean it's a real soap opera, I could write a book. His ex-wife, although she's remarried, we have arguments sometimes, because he's not as direct as he should be, I don't feel and I feel it affects our relationship. Because it makes me angry, that he's supporting these other children and it really puts a bite in our budget and I knew before I married him that he had these

children to support. It causes some friction. That's really the main problem... It's also caused some problems as far as if he didn't have the other kids than there would be a possibility that we would have a child. But because of that I don't think he's real interested".

Yet another mother, on the subject of her husband's financial obligations to his children, took the opposite stance, asserting that she made certain that he met his support payments because she knew the costs involved in raising children, especially since she had not received support from her former spouse. Answering the question on problems in her remarriage she responded,

"I would say child support problems that he had to pay his ex-wife. He was behind on child support when we got married and I told him, no way babycakes, you pay what you owe. Every year in the summer he always gets behind (because he has the child and doesn't make his payments) and they take it out of his check...Every pay period come hell or high water, I don't care if she's here or not here-send the money. Because really, and that sounds funny for me to say, but a child's needs don't stop just because they're visiting a parent. You still have to keep the house that you've kept, the room that you kept. But who paid for her clothes, she didn't come out here with no clothes on, we didn't pay for all those clothes...I just told him to pay the lady. I said just for peace in the family, for no other reason than peace in the family, peace is worth it... For that child's welfare and for peace, you know, among the two families, it's worth it. So that's what I told him".

Women also discussed the experience of having children of their spouse move in with them, and the circumstances surrounding their husband's children moving in with them . Six women in this sample experienced their husband's

children living full time in their household. Step-child issues focusing on relationships tended to be discussed mainly when these children came to live in the study mother's household. The six women who had their husband's children move into their household all noted these children were older teens. Teens may change households due to problems fathers are considered better at handling (Cherlin, 1991). Women did become involved in problems their step-children had if they were living with them, whereas, they maintained an outsider position if the child was not living with them. For example, one mother, when asked about problems in her remarriage, answered,

"We've always been able to talk about it, we've never had any serious disagreements, if there has been a disagreement in discipline we've worked it out. We've had a serious problem with my step-son which has caused in the long run the family to get even closer. He had a serious drug problem. Emotionally went through some awful times early in the marriage, but because of the strong relationship that Don and I have we were able to work it through., He supported me as well as him (his son) and I guess sometimes that can tear a marriage apart. It is his son. He's clean and because of some therapy, he and I are very, very close now. He's a wonderful person to live with now".

Relationships between the study woman and her husband's children did not necessarily turn out well. Often the partner's children were in the household for short periods of time, and there was a sense of relief when they left. One woman, describing the demise of her fourth

marriage stated that not only did her own children not like her spouse but also,

"We had very different ideas about child raising. We had his daughter living with us, which caused all kinds of wicked step-mother problems. It was just a mess. I would say that, that marriage was definitely ended because of children".

Although researchers of remarriage have described the challenges to families of having a complex set of family relationships (Cherlin, 1991; Ihinger-Tallman & Pasley, 1987), the issue of children moving back and forth between households over time has not been tackled in the literature. White and Booth (1985) have noted that children in remarried households leave home at an earlier age than other teens, however, it is possible that part of this movement toward emancipation may begin at an earlier age when teens move between households. Perhaps because this sample included women who had been remarried for some period of time these revolving custody issues emerged. Often studies of remarriage focus on a cross-section of individuals who have been remarried a certain length of time and do not capture how flexible custody may be.

Other Influences: Children and Their Father's Partners

Children who had ongoing contact with their father also had contact with their father's new partner, and her children. Children of the study women also had the potential for other step-siblings, born into their father's new marriage. Because there were a number of children who had no contact at all with their father, and because not all fathers remarried, the number of relationships to assess was limited. However, although there were only two women who mentioned problems their children had with a stepmother or another child, these relationships often caused the study mother deep concern.

One mother, talking about her ex-husband's new wife described their situation as,

"I get along okay I guess you could say with her. We have conversations on the phone and all this and we could talk for hours and then almost all of the problems seems to originate from this woman. I mean it's like everything my ex does or starts up is a result of her goading. She's one of these pushy domineering types and she'll say things about me that she knows nothing about and say it to Cheryl and I feel this is really bad".

Conclusions: Children in Families of Remarriage

According to Cherlin (1991) only 6% of children in remarried households face a pattern where both parents are remarried, there are children in both households, and the mother has additional births with the new husband.

Whereas, the most complex family types may be in the minority, the sheer number of family arrangements in this small sample of remarried women suggests that for the children of the baby boom cohort, relationships within stepfamilies may indeed be very complex. Coleman and Ganong (1990) in their decade in review article on remarriage suggested that small, in-depth studies of remarried families may help to clarify some of the challenges facing remarried families. The sheer number and complexity of the relationships in the study sample may be a clue to the difficulties surrounding research on this family type.

Families of Remarriage: A Case Study

Pam, a woman who has been married, divorced, and has been remarried for five years reported positively on her remarriage. Her family includes her spouse, a daughter and son from her first marriage, and two additional children born in her remarriage. She characterized her current husband as "great" and stated that although they had their struggles, she and her spouse had good communication and a good relationship. She described the differences between her first and second marriages in the following manner,

"What was important for me is when I came into the second marriage I had no expectations. I think in our first marriages, when we're young, we tend to bring a whole suitcase load of expectations... what life is

supposed to be like, and I didn't have any and expected him exactly like he was. He had some expectations and we had to work through those, but he had never been married before."

In discussing her own past and her husband's relationship past, Pam's response was in keeping with many of the sample who talked about the importance of the past in influencing current relationships. Pam felt that she had grown and changed her six years as a single parent, and had developed some independence in the process, however marriage and being married was very important to her. She characterized her time as a single parent as,

"It was a war, it was hard, I had some really tough times".

Although Pam felt that both of her children from her first marriage adjusted well in the remarriage, she revealed that her son, who was younger, adjusted better than her daughter. Whereas, her son accepted her remarried spouse immediately, Pam believed that her daughter "put up some barriers" in her relationship with her step-father. Pam also noted that there was occasional conflict between her daughter and her current husband.

A different reaction to the current spouse by the children was especially interesting, in light of the fact that Pam noted that her ex-husband, when he visited, spent all of his time with his son, whereas his daughter might get "five to ten minutes". Pam stated,

"It's really odd (that the former husband does not spend time with the daughter) and has been very heartbreaking for her because when they were little, before the divorce, she was the apple of her daddy's eye. And now he could care less, basically... (it has been) emotionally hard (for her)".

Relationships between the study woman, her children, her remarried husband, and the children's biological father in this family suggest that the interweaving of relationships in families of remarriage are especially complex, and often influenced by the past relationship histories of family members.

CHAPTER VII WHEN REMARRIAGE FAILS

Remarriages often fail; indeed remarriages have a higher rate of failure than first marriages. For researchers, it is difficult to determine precisely why remarriages are more unstable than first marriages, because there are a number of factors such as whether or not both partners are in a remarriage, the presence of children, and the previous marital histories of the partners that are difficult to tease out for analysis. This study offers the opportunity to assess marriages that failed, from the stand-point of women of this cohort who remarried, and subsequently redivorced.

Demographers have noted that remarriages have a higher failure rate than first marriages (Cherlin, 1991; Glick, 1990; White & Booth, 1985). A number of theories have been proposed to explain the higher failure rate of remarriages. Cherlin's (1981, 1991) work on remarriage as an incomplete institution has suggested that individuals who remarry are faced with no clear norms and roles for family members. In contrast, Spanier and Furstenberg (1987) have stated that remarriages may be more unstable because individuals who remarry have already gone through one marital break-up, and this experience has both given them the notion that they can survive, as well as making them less likely to put up with an unhappy or unfulfilling relationship. Halliday (as

cited in White & Booth, 1985) has proposed that remarriages fail at a higher rate because individuals who divorce have personal characteristics that render them poor partners.

What insights into this process can study mothers in this data set give? Why did remarriages fail, according to the accounts of this group of women? This data set offered a unique opportunity to evaluate unsuccessful remarriages of 14 study mothers, and to consider the problems that have surfaced in four additional relationships defined as troubled.

Troubled Relationships

At the time of the interview, four mothers who had remarried were separated from their spouse, three mothers indicated problematic remarriages and 10 mothers had second marriages (ie remarriages) that ended in divorce. Because this study explored remarriage from a retrospective as well as current perspective, there were opportunities to explore both remarriages that have endured over time and those remarriages that were interludes ending again in divorce.

Part of the challenge of qualitative analysis is that of emergent themes, and how to identify and handle themes that emerge while analyzing lengthy descriptions of lives. One such theme that emerged was that some remarriages in this sample appeared to be in trouble. These troubled

relationships include both the four women who were separated from a spouse and seemed unlikely to return to the marriage, and four other remarriages.

To be coded as a troubled relationship, the study participant had to have focused her remarks about her remarriage on the negative aspects of the marriage. According to Kayser's (1993) process model on marital disaffection, a key component of marriages that are disaffected and may end in divorce, is a focus on the negative aspects of the partner. Once the focus in the relationship has switched from the positive to the negative the process of disaffection is underway and it is difficult to reverse.

In this sample, eight remarriages were identified as troubled. Remarried women as a group tended to describe their remarriages as much better than their first marriage. The women who were still in their remarriage but revealed problems did not describe their remarriages in such glowing terms. Instead they used statements such as, "Today's not a good day to be discussing that", or "Ohhhhh. It depends on when you're calling. It's up and down. Recently more down". This lack of positive comments on the remarriage, and a focus on the problems in the remarriage established these remarriages as troubled. In addition to their qualitative interviews, comments from a subsequent survey of the Longitudinal Study of Generations, done in 1991,

were used to help verify the assessment of these relationships as troubled. This process did not identify any new troubled remarriages, but did serve to corroborate previous evaluations of these relationships as problematic.

Turning first to the four women who were currently separated from a remarried spouse, an important step in the dissolution process, separation, was attributed to drug or alcohol problems on the part of the spouse and difficulties ensuing from the substance abuse. These problems did not surface until after the marriage; women noted they were taken by surprise to discover that their partner had substance abuse problems. Two of the women had cohabited with their partner before marriage, and stated that the substance abuse problems were not evident until after the marriage. One woman described what happened:,

"He has a drug problem, that is why I asked him to leave. That and some other things I really don't want to go into... I can't believe that I was so unaware for of it for so long...I suspected it for the last few months, but, you know, I guess you just don't want to believe those thing. And you listen to their stupid excuses and you believe them".

Although these women did cite substance abuse as an important factor in their decision to split, these four participants also discussed problematic relationships between their children and the partner they separated from. Only one of these women had a child in the remarriage, and she still discussed difficulties her first child had with

the remarried spouse. When another woman was asked about the relationship between her child and the remarried spouse, she replied,

"They hated each other. Gordon (the son) tried real hard, and Brian he would try, and then he would just totally turn around and be a real jerk. And after six months, it was to be a jerk constantly. Just to try to egg the kid on. You know, for no reason. Just sheer orneriness. And to me saying well I was drunk that is just too easy of an excuse".

One of the women reported that when her child, who was living with a foster parent, asked to move in with them, her husband would not let the child return home.

Whereas substance abuse problems were not the only catalyst for these separations, they certainly seemed instrumental in the decision to separate. Problems with alcohol and other drugs surface in the discussions of the members of this sample, especially in their decisions to leave a spouse. Twenty-nine percent of the women in this sample, in the course of the interview mentioned substance abuse problems for their first husband, and three women discussed their own alcohol abuse. The baby boom generation came of age when the drug usage became more wide-spread. It may be that this cohort of individuals face long-term effects of the changes in social values that happened during the time when they came of age.

There were four additional remarriages defined as troubled, where separation had not taken place, yet the

marriage seemed stressed, and study participants focused on the negative aspects of their partners. Specific problems women perceived in relationships defined as troubled included problems between their children and their partner, for three women, and infidelity combined a job loss for the third woman. Three of these four women had teens, and older children did indeed appear to have more difficulties with their mother's spouse. It is important to acknowledge that parenting teens is a difficult task for any parent, regardless of the relationship between parent and child, but it may be a particularly stressful task for single parents and blended families (Gecas & Seff, 1990; Richards & Schmiede, 1993). One woman, describing difficulties with her teenaged child, attributed some of her husband's lack of parenting expertise to not keeping in touch with his own children:

"The typical step-parent problems. (He had children) But he did not keep in touch with them. We've had goes around with the teenager and I say, hey, this is as new to me as it is to you, so we gotta do it together".

This particular woman went on to note that she had thought about separation from her husband, but had decided against doing so, at least for the time being. She related that she had discussed the possibility of separation with her children,

"When times are rough I have thought about (getting) out, like earlier this year. I said okay we'll just have to tighten down our belts and you guys aren't going to get as much as you would if I had stayed there. And they're like okay, okay".

Another woman in this group, addressed some of the interaction between one of her children and her husband over time. Although this woman claimed she wanted to spend the rest of her life with her husband, she also acknowledged "ups and downs" in the relationship, and her qualitative comments in the 1991 Longitudinal Study of Generations suggested that difficulties were on-going. This mother described how her eldest child and her husband interacted over the child's teen years as,

"Had some rocky roads during the teen years, yes we did. Ah, Rick got into a bit of drug stuff, smoking marijuana, and Charlie is , uh, not tolerant of that at all. And it was very hard for him to accept any of that. And so we went through a little bit of family counseling...".

Although this woman describes her husband as intolerant of drug problems, in her responses to questions on the Longitudinal Study of Generations questionnaire, she reveals her husband's own drug problem, and the strains in their marriage.

"He has a drinking problem but lately has been working very hard to control-- He has become somewhat violent and out of control with me (usually when was drinking)-- Both have realized we have to work much harder on our relationship than we were".

Parenting teens is a challenge for any parent. The stresses introduced during this time period seemed especially exacting in families of remarriage, however it is important to remember that raising teens is not an easy parental task. Single mothers and fathers in the overall sample who felt that single parenting got more difficult over time specifically attributed that increased difficulty to the teen years (Richards & Schmiede, 1993). Parents who have been with the child throughout the child's life have memories of easier times to draw on when the teen seems especially difficult, whereas parents new to the scene may believe that the child's inherent disposition is difficult.

Remarriages That Fail

Ten women had remarried, only to have that marriage also end in divorce, although one of this group has again remarried her second spouse. Sometimes women referred to these failed remarriages as, "my short marriage". Often, discussion of these remarriages for women who had married a third time appeared when the interviewer asked about how their second marriage was working out and discovered that the study participant had been married more than twice. Three of the remarriages that did not endure were with a former spouse, a phenomenon covered in the next section of this chapter.

Turning first to those remarriages that did not involve a former spouse, there were seven women whose second marriage (not to a former spouse) ended in divorce. Women seemed to quickly decide if a remarriage was working or not, as these remarriages lasted for a short length of time ($x = 2.25$ years, range from one month to six years). Problems surfaced rapidly between children and partners, and virtually all of the study participants identified difficulties between their children and the partner. One woman, discussing the problems in the second marriage reported,

"It started out pretty good, we had lived together for like two and a half years before we got married. I don't know what actually happened after we got married. I think a lot of it had to do with me actually having Garth, cause my second husband was I guess about nine years older than Garth at the time. This was his first marriage, I don't think he was exactly ready to have the responsibility and Garth wasn't ready to have him there".

Relationships difficulties were not necessarily this benign. Some partners attempted to rule with a heavy hand, and serious problems ensued. One woman, discussing the decline of her second marriage talked about how her authoritarian second husband wanted her son to get his homework done and the child began telling them he had no homework. The woman explained,

"We tried anything and everything under the sun before any spankings or any corporal punishment started. And

when nothing worked consistently, Stewart finally got to where he started spanking...And I had talked to my mom and dad during this whole thing and told them what we were doing, asked them for guidance as to what else we could do-even asked them for the name of a counselor. Because I was at wits end. I didn't know what to do. Nothing was working and I didn't like the idea of spanking. Well, when they came and got Joshua they took a look at his back side and because of the spankings that he had gotten that week from Stewart he was black and blue on the buttocks. And the courts were brought in. And my parents took him with the court's blessing".

Another woman, characterizing her second husband, described his relationship with her children as,

"He was, he liked to discipline. He was a very strong disciplinarian. Well, I mean he... he wanted the boys to behave perfectly. It was hard for him to have them, you know, being six and seven years old getting in trouble, running where they're not supposed to and he was very strict with them. But I don't think he was capable of, or at the point he wasn't able to give them the affection and love along with the dis..., the strictness. He wanted to, but I don't think he had it in him at that point".

The decision to leave a remarriage may have been sparked by interpersonal difficulties between the woman and her partner, but women also considered the relationship between their partner and their children. The ability to act appropriately in the father role was important to mothers, and they rejected partners who were not willing to function as a father for their children. Partners who wanted to discipline and were perceived as not also providing love were rejected as marital partners.

Revisiting the Past: Remarriage with a Former Spouse

One phenomenon that appeared in this sample was the experience of remarrying a former spouse. Seven mothers in this sample returned to a former partner. Revisiting the past was typically unsuccessful. Of the seven women who returned to a former spouse, only three were still living with him at the time of the interview. Three women were redivorced, and one was separated. The three women who redivorced were all married to new partners at the time of the interview.

For the seven women who returned to a former partner, only one, who was separated for two years but never divorced, seemed pleased with her choice to return to her spouse. In this particular case the mother initiated a two and a half year separation, which she attributed to her husband's unwillingness to return to the work force after an injury. In describing the process whereby she reunited with her husband, she stated,

..."But then he, something changed in him and he really make an effort. And it wasn't just a fluke. It was an on-going effort and I saw it and he persuaded me that it was for real. And, luckily, it was".

There were two women, remarried to a former spouse at the time of the interview, (the third woman, described above, had never divorced), and both appeared to have

difficulties with their decision to return to the former spouse. One woman, divorced from her husband for five years, remarried him and moved to a new community. In describing her remarriage she noted,

"It's been up and down and it's been around. He felt real threatened when I went back to school. But I went back to school because he became disabled... Of course that hurt his pride and that created a lot of problems for us for a while. Until he got past that himself. Then we did have another separation in there for a while because during this time he had gotten involved with another woman and when that got resolved and then, we got back together things worked a lot better".

The second woman, in describing her relationship with her spouse responded,

"We are doing alright. We are having some problems because of (their daughter, age 15, who had run away), so things are somewhat rocky, because him and I kinda have different beliefs on that".

For the other four women who returned to a former partner, the reunited relationship did not go particularly well. All of these women were once again separated or divorced from a previous spouse. Often participants attributed this second dissolution to ingrained character faults of the partner that cropped up again when the woman remarried him. In one case, difficulties were related to alcohol problems, as this separated woman explained,

... "Right before he left (for the second time) I found out that he had been drinking when he was

traveling, but he wouldn't drink in front of me. He had gone through treatment two times so he wasn't going to let me know that he had been drinking. And it all surfaced when he went on a weekend bender when he was supposed to be coming home. And I had to have people at work try to find him, I didn't know at the time that he had started drinking again. They finally located him in the middle of the week and found out that he had been on a bender, and of course then they can't keep him traveling, knowing that he is an alcoholic. And, you know, still drinking. So they gave him a job here in the city and demoted him. And it was about a week and a half later he said he was leaving".

In the other three cases, lack of responsibility and maturity on the part the spouse were identified as the impetus for the relationship to again end. A woman who divorced, remarried the father of her two children, and divorced again, described the remarriage and second divorce,

"And so he started to see them (the children) every week-end. It was at this point we went through some marriage counseling and we decided to remarry... And then I became pregnant with Lori. Unfortunately, part of his, I don't want to call it a syndrome, but part of his pattern is he really loves the idea of being married and having a baby but he panics at the responsibility. So as soon as I became pregnant with Lori he pulled away again. And went and remarried another woman".

Although the literature on divorce suggests that children continue to fantasize about parents remarrying (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989) it is important to note that children in these families were not necessarily enthusiastic about the idea of their parents getting

remarried. For the three women who were remarried to their former spouse at the time of the interview, only the woman who reunited with her husband after the separation responded positively to the question focusing on how the children reacted. Other participants described negative or indifferent reactions on the part of their children. One mother, whose oldest child was not fathered by the spouse she remarried, although he had functioned as a father throughout most of the child's life, described this daughter's reaction as,

"Eileen didn't approve of it (the remarriage). In fact, she was not even going to attend the wedding, but she did. And she always had a very hard time with Adam because Adam is a very strong domineering person. Very, very, and he doesn't like to give the girls a lot of freedom. So, needless to say, I had one that rebelled one way (she has run away from home and was missing at the time of the interview) and Eileen moved out when she was 17. But she did it differently. She came to me and said, 'I can't live under his roof anymore and I am going to live with my grandmother'".

Another woman, discussing the reaction of her four children to her decision to remarry their father stated,

"Mark was very resentful, he's my second oldest. Jessie and Luke were sort of going, oh well, for a long time. When we first got back together. Then over time there was a lot of resentment built up with their dad cause he drank a lot. Things weren't real pleasant. So they built up a lot of resentment toward him".

The decision to return to a former spouse, even if that spouse was the father of the children was not necessarily

taken as a joyous step by the children. This may be because some of these fathers had pervasive interpersonal difficulties, and could not get along with their children any more than they could have an effective relationship with a spouse. It may also be that the children, having gone through one divorce, were worried about their mother resuming the relationship.

The women in this study who returned to a former partner offered clues as to why they made this decision. These women discussed lingering love and attraction to the former spouse, and how they believed that their former spouse had truly changed. One of the women remarried to her former spouse revealed that although they divorced, they continued to have a sexual relationship for the five years between their divorce and remarriage. Another woman discussed the process whereby she reunited with her husband as,

..."both of us dated and it was like, I wasn't doing well with the dating because I compared everyone to him. So I finally just started calling him and we slowly got back together. And we moved in and were living together and it was like, heck, let's just do it again. And things were going really well for us."

The role of lingering attraction seems to prompt women to return to a former partner. Perhaps they believe that the man they may continue to love has changed for the better. The women who returned to a former spouse may have also felt they had the opportunity to exercise some control

over the relationship and that they convinced their spouse that he had to change in order for the relationship to work.

One woman in this study, currently a single parent, may have provided a key to understanding the decision process involved in returning to a former spouse. When describing her relationship with her ex-husband to the interviewer this woman, who had separated from her husband ten times before the divorce, talked about how her husband had changed since their divorce,

"His attitude, since he quit doing cocaine and cut his drinking down,... well he hasn't done any cocaine since July- mainly cause his dealer got busted and things got real hot and he decided that it wasn't worth it anymore. And since then he had gone through withdrawals and all the ugliness of it is gone away, in the last three months or so, he has finally, for the first time, come to realize what respect means, and what humble means. And he realizes now all the things I had been trying to point out to him all these years were right. and he's humbled himself a lot and his attitude has changed a lot"...(is there any chance they will get back together)... "Well you know my daughter and I was (sic) talking about that last night. Right now financially it is extremely hard on me... And I had to take on another part-time job to help supplement...I mean financially that straits that I am in. And I was talking to my daughter last night and I was telling her, 'You know my checking account is in such sad shape. I am overdrawn... I have to live that way every month and I think that is my only problem right now being single is just the money, everything else is just fine... You know sometimes I really wonder if you dad changed enough do you think it would be worth it to let him move back in?' And my daughter says, 'Mom if he moved back in I know our lifestyle would go right back to what it was, cause he'd just take us for granted again. He'd get comfortable and it would start all over again'".

A combination of financial woes, lingering attraction, and a belief that her former husband's attitude has changed appeared to prompt this woman to be actively reconsidering her choice to divorce. This woman may return to her former spouse, although her daughter has expressed reservations.

Remarriage Again and Again

In the sample, there are nine women who have been married more than two times. Table 8 describes these nine women and their marital histories. Because this study focused on the experiences of single parents, sometimes interviewers did not delve into marriages in as great detail, especially if the mothers were married several times and also had a number of partners. Although two researchers have examined the phenomenon of repeated episodes of remarriage after divorce (Ambert, 1989; Counts, 1991; Fox, 1983) this group remains under-explored in family studies and relationship literature.

| Table 8. Marital Histories of Women Married More Than Twice | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| Study Name | Marital History | Current Status |
| Jean | Married 3x, mar to hus1 2x | Remarried |
| Jennifer | Married 4x, mar hus2 2x | Remarried |
| Marcia | Married 4x | Single Parent |
| Sidney | Married 4x | Single Parent |
| Lorily | Married 3x, hus2 widowed | Remarried |
| Kristie | Married 3x, hus 1 div. (now deceased) | Remarried |
| Leslie | Married 3x, hus2 married 2x | Remarried |
| Maxine | Married 3x | Remarried |
| Joanne | Married 3x, married hus1 2x | Remarried |

Whereas, it appears to the casual observer that women who repeatedly marry are primarily focused on the dyadic relationship between themselves and a spouse, women in this groups specifically addressed the effect of their relationships on their children, and emphasized the importance of their children in their lives. A pattern that emerged for this group of women was that if they discerned that the marriage was bad for their both themselves and their child, they left that relationship. For example, a woman who was married four times described

the aftermath of the decision to leave her fourth marriage as,

"My kids did not like him. It was almost a relief when we were divorced because I could quit being the buffer and go back to just being the mom. And not having to try to interfere between the kids and him".

What specifically prompts mothers to continue to remarry after a series of divorces? One clue may be in the belief, evident in accounts of a number of women in this sample, both single and remarried, that marriage is of economic benefit to women. In their discussion of marriage and the problems of single parenting, mothers were acutely aware of the potential economic benefits of marriage. As one woman, divorced twice, and remarried to a former spouse stated simply, the positive things about living with a partner were,

"You have someone to share things with. To help you out financially and you have somebody to care for, to love, feel needed".

The nine women who married three or more times were poorly prepared to survive economically on their own. Although three of them had some college coursework, none of them were college graduates, five were high school graduates or less, and one had a trade school background. They worked in low paid positions in service industries, including child care, food service, and clerical

occupations. Whereas, this group was not significantly different in background from many of the other mothers in the sample, this type of background did not provide mothers with many potential choices for leaving poverty other than through marriage.

Another possibility for explaining the relationally mobile, is that women who repeatedly divorce and remarry are in fact less desirable marital partners themselves, and may have to settle for less than ideal partners in the marriage market. Women with serious interpersonal problems and difficulties maintaining satisfying relationships may be among this group of the relationally mobile, who divorce and remarry a number of times. Furstenberg and Spanier (1987) in their discussion of "conjugal succession" have theorized that persons who divorce and remarry a number of times may have personality characteristics that render them poor marital partners. Some evidence for this inability to form lasting relationships is found in this group. For example, a woman married and divorced four times, with a child born out-of-wedlock between her first and second marriages described her relationships with each spouse, and the out-of-wedlock father of her second child in the following way,

(1st marriage-she initiated the divorce) "Well, obviously it wasn't good or I'd still be married to him. I just, I was so young. You know, you get married at eighteen you don't know anything. I didn't

want to be married to him anymore. So I went home to mom". (father of her second child) "He bored me and I didn't want him around anymore". (second husband- she initiated the divorce) "It was very bad. Not physically abusive but verbally abusive. I haven't seen him since before Sabrina was born, or talked to him". (third husband- mutual decision to divorce) "It's hard to hear you care more about your kids than you care about your husband". (fourth husband-divorce initiated by spouse). "My kids did not like him. It was almost a relief when we divorced because I could stop being the buffer and go back to just being the mom".

A third potential explanation for the relationally mobile is cultural proscriptions for marriage and being in a partnership. These women also may have felt pressure to be partnered in a culture that values being in a relationship (Kain, 1990). For a woman, being partnered often means being dependent on the spouse, both economically and emotionally. As Quinn and Allen (1989, p. 393) have stated, for women of this cohort, the role of wife includes "submissiveness, dependency, apparent weakness, and impulsive, emotional responses". Independence for women can be seen by some as inappropriate, and may cause women to fear they will be seen as unfeminine and undesirable (Faludi, 1991). For example, one woman in her third marriage described the problems in her marriage as,

"My independence from living alone. Trying to give him more authority and not be so authoritative, allowing him to handle things and not to be the head of the household".

Another woman, on her fourth marriage, described her problems as stemming from her successful day care business, which she has since closed,

..."Because even though I was willing to let him have a lot of power and do a lot of things and make decisions. He couldn't do it because of my business. It just held him back and now he can".

Striking a balance between independence and the interdependence found in the marital relationship may be especially challenging for remarried women. While they were single parents they were used to being in charge of their own lives and the interdependence needed within the marital relationship may be a serious challenge for women who have been remarried several times. One woman, in her reflection on her four marriages told how she had begun to value her independence and freedom as a single parent,

..."I was watching a movie the other day, just sitting here by myself. And Billy was sleeping. And for an instant I thought well it's about time he walks through the door. And I got to thinking, well who? And I just sat back and said, well it is just me and Billy. And I felt such at peace with myself, that I didn't have to worry about when he was going to walk through the door or when he was coming home, or this type of thing... Well, it just over the years, I felt I needed somebody to take care of me.. And I ended up seeing that nobody is there to take care of me. Nobody but myself, so why do I need anybody else around?".

This mother may have left what Fox (1983) has termed the "marriage-go-round" of repeated marriages and divorces,

however it seems likely that other women in the baby boom cohort will return to matrimony as the answer to the challenges facing single parents. Marriage is a desired state for the women of this cohort, and although they have left unhappy marriages, they still believe firmly in marriage as an institution, and recognize the potential benefits as well as the potential costs.

When Remarriage Fails: A Case Study

Jennifer, a woman who is currently in her fourth marriage, is especially representative of the life course transitions of women in this sample who had remarriages that failed. She was married for the first time at 16, married her second husband twice, and is currently in another remarriage. Four of her six children live with her and her remarried husband, whereas she has not seen her first child since he was an infant (18 years ago), and her second child lives with her biological father (Jennifer's second and third husband).

Life has been a challenge for Jennifer, although she feels she learned about making better choices in selecting a partner. She did not talk about her first marriage very much in the interview, except she noted that she had not seen her first child since he was four months old because her first husband "kidnapped" his son. A clue to her

former husband's actions was revealed when Jennifer discussed the fact she was a teenage alcoholic, and got sober by joining Alcoholics Anonymous when she was 18. She noted that both of her parents had been alcoholics also.

In keeping with a number of women in the study, Jennifer blames the failure of her two marriages with Rob, her second husband, on his character faults. Although according to Jennifer her former husband continues to be a good father, he was an unfaithful husband, involved in multiple affairs while they were married. Jennifer stated that Rob has changed in the years since their second divorce,

Around the time Susan (her second child) was about 8-9 years old he started to mellow and slow down. He stated getting older and he couldn't get involved in relationships on the same scale that he used to. Which was what used to take all his money and all his time... So once he started slowing down and stopped dating a lot he started to look at his responsibilities with his kids".

In keeping with many of the women who have experienced multiple episodes of divorce and remarriage, Jennifer believes strongly in marriage and in choosing the right partner. She felt that positive aspects of marriage included companionship, financial support, and moral support, and that marriage offered her an opportunity to share her burdens with her husband. Jennifer believed that now, after her three failed marriages, she had finally

grown and changed to the point where she could make better choices in partner selection. She described this process as,

"It took me 30 years to figure that (that I was worthwhile as a human being) out, but I did. It also took me 30 years to figure out that if you're going to pick a partner that you need to have a criteria. That you need to have something in mind. That you have to have limits. You have to pick someone that's willing to commit".

Jennifer believes that by making a number of transitions in and out of marriage, and having a great deal of adversity earlier in her life, that she is now capable of making better life choices.

CHAPTER VIII DISCUSSION

Introduction

Conservative politicians and scholars have predicted the demise of the American family, citing statistics on divorce, cohabitation, and out-of-wedlock births as indicators that Americans are no longer committed to marriage as an institution (Glenn, 1993; Kain, 1990; Popenoe, 1993). According to scholars such as David Popenoe, Dean of Arts and Sciences at Rutgers University, the family composed of two parents and their biological offspring is the best case scenario for raising children, and any other environment has the potential for long term detrimental consequences for the development of young children (Popenoe, 1993). Parents are urged by media and conservative politicians and policy makers to stay together. Although individuals recognize the importance of the child-raising environment, indications are that a satisfying marriage is also rated very highly, as individuals continue to divorce at relatively high rates.

Remarried families have also been presumed to be associated with poor outcomes, with children who have step-parents assumed to be at risk, whereas, children who grow up with their biological parents are presumed to be in a healthier environment. Even though, in the past children

were often raised in a step-family when a biological parent died (Price & McKenry, 1998), the assumption dominant in American culture is that the two biological parent family is the best child rearing environment.

Research on step-families has focused on outcomes for children in families of remarriage, the age at which the children leave home (White & Booth, 1985), and how the complexity of the family type influences family relationships (Ambert, 1989; Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987). Most of this research has examined child outcomes, with the presumption of less than optimal consequences for being raised in a step-family, rather than how women and their children may benefit from the remarriage (Coleman & Ganong, 1990).

Little attention has been focused on how the adults in families of remarriage may be affected by the blending of family members. Although some scholars would state that Americans no longer value marriage and being married as much as they once did (Popenoe, 1993; Glenn, 1993), others would note that our high rates of remarriage most probably stem from a belief in marriage as an institution and our search for a fulfilling marriage (Cherlin, 1991; Kain, 1990). When adults remarry, most probably they are seeking the benefits of this a interpersonal relationship with a partner, love, companionship, the feeling of being part of a family unit, the support that another adult provides: the

same type of relationship they sought in their first marriage.

This study explored the life course transitions a baby boom cohort of American women made in and out of marriage, single parenthood, and remarriage. Relationships within families of remarriage, and with members of the extended family were explored as well. Through the qualitative interviews, women in the sample gave in-depth documentation of the profound changes in their lives and the lives of family members as they moved in and out of marriages. This study has helped to illuminate some of the factors that move women of this cohort in and out of life course transitions.

Quantitative Factors Affecting Remarriage

Turning first to the quantitative analyses that examined remarriage and a number of demographic and relationship variables, it appears that many of the previous findings on demographic correlates of remarriage hold true for the women in this data set.

Education and Remarriage

In this study women with education beyond high school were significantly less likely to remarry than mothers with a high school education or less, although the speed at

which mothers remarried was not affected by education. This finding suggests that for single mothers, education can be considered an important bargaining chip in their ability to survive on their own. Education can be thought of as a form of human capital. Women without much in the way of marketable capital may find themselves without a source of survival other than remarriage, whereas those women with more education may have a number of choices for support of themselves and their children including, but certainly not limited to, remarriage.

This finding appears consistent with Glick and Lin's (1986) finding that women without much education are more likely to remarry, and also is consistent with current demographic trends for women with education. The proportion of American women with a college education who are expected to ever marry has dropped to around 80% (Glick, 1984). Although women continue to experience discrimination in the labor market, and professional careers focused in the traditionally female helping professions are noted for their relatively low pay and high stress, education does appear to give women choices other than matrimony to attain a living wage.

Careers, Jobs and Remarriage

For the study women, having a career rather than a job was associated with remarriage, but only to the extent that women with careers were less likely to be multiply married. While women with careers were just as likely to ever remarry, women who had jobs averaged more marriages overall.

Women with careers rather than jobs may have more stable remarriages because they have more human capital themselves and would hence be more attractive marital partners. Inasmuch as marriage can be looked at through the lens of social exchange, women with more human capital are able to attract men with more capital themselves. It may be that women with careers thus find partners who are able to function as stable marital partners over time. In effect, women in careers versus those in jobs were able to make better choices in their remarriages.

Financial Stress and Remarriage

The relationship between financial stress and remarriage, was non-significant. It was expected that the more financially stressed women would be more likely to remarry. This relationship was not found in this sample. Although financial stress impacts lives of single mothers it may be that the relationship between financial stress

and remarriage is mediated by a number of intervening variables. For example, mothers who are especially financially stressed may appear as poor marriage prospects to prospective partners. From the qualitative analyses, it seems apparent that at some level women consider the breadwinner capabilities of a spouse, albeit, not necessarily before they enter the relationship. Perhaps prospective partners of single mothers also think about the financial advantages and disadvantages of marrying a poor single mother, and find mothers who are heavily indebted to be poor potential spouse material.

Another possibility is that mothers who are especially financially stressed may not have the energy left to seek a new mate. Dealing with the day to day stress of living when resources are tight may occupy all of a single mother's time and energy. It is also difficult to meet potential partners if finances prohibit enjoying social occasions where one might encounter a potential mate.

The measure of financial stress in this study was not necessarily a good measure of relative differences between mothers. For example, a middle-class professional single mother with an income that many single mothers would consider excellent might still be worried about money, and mention that as a problem, whereas, she might be worried about money to send her children to college, a single mother, much more impoverished, might mention money as a

concern of single parenting and literally be worried about feeding her children. A better measure of financial stress, such as a series of specific questions on financial problems related to necessities like food, and housing, would have further illuminated the relationship between financial stress and the decision to remarry.

Control Over The Divorce and Remarriage

In this study, 66% of the women were initiators of the dissolution of their first marriage. Women who initiated the divorce might have done so to leave a difficult or abusive former spouse, hence the role of initiator was presumed to be related to the probability of repartnering. The decision to leave their first marriage was hypothesized to be related to the decision to remarry, in that women who were initiators of the first divorce would be less likely to be remarry, however, no support for the relationship between being a divorce initiator and remarriage was found.

One clue to this lack of relationship may be that women perceive marriages as very different from each other. Although women made comparisons between their spouses once remarried, it may be that initially, as a relationship begins, people concentrate on the positive aspects of their partner and ignore any inconsistent information. Women who

remarry, eventually compare the two husbands, but may not perform comparisons initially.

Sometimes it appears that women who left a difficult spouse simply went on to remarry another difficult spouse, indeed, occasionally they remarried the same spouse. Perhaps each marriage is viewed as so unique that women simply do not consider that they could, in effect, repeat a bad choice. Whatever the reason, there was no relationship between being the divorce initiator and remarriage.

Conflict With the Former Spouse and Remarriage

Women who had more conflict with their spouse over time were less likely to be remarried, whereas those women with less conflict with their former spouse over time were more likely to be remarried. This finding is especially interesting in light of Masheter's (1991) research that found that men and women who were remarried were more likely to be in conflictual relationships with their former spouse than women who were single parents. There are a number of possibilities for explaining the finding in this study that women were more likely to experience conflict with their former spouse were never remarried.

Masheter (1991) did not analyze her findings separately by gender. It may be that the relationship between conflict with a former spouse over time and

remarriage is different for men and women. Masheter (1991) also noted that her sample may have been more representative of individuals with higher well-being over time.

One possibility for the finding that women with more conflict over time with their former spouse are less likely to be remarried is that these women are indeed reminded of a negative experience with marriage. Women may hesitate to become involved and remarry because they are reminded on a regular basis of the difficulties they had in their first marriage. Also, they may have little time and energy left over to contemplate a relationship.

There is a body of literature that suggests that conflict with a former spouse is a form of lingering attachment (Ambert, 1989; Masheter, 1991). If contact and ongoing conflict with the former spouse is also suggestive of lingering attachment on the part of one or both partners, then women who have no contact with the former spouse may be more inclined to remarry than those mothers who are reminded of the past, and have potential lingering attachment to their former partner.

Education, Mother's Age at Single Parenthood, Number of
Children and Number of Remarriages

The study participants provided an opportunity to assess the marital transitions of the baby boom cohort of women. Of all cohorts in American history, this cohort has the greatest likelihood of divorce, and because most divorced women remarry, also a great likelihood of remarriage after divorce. Some researchers have begun studying the marital careers of those who marry and divorce repeatedly (Ambert, 1989; Fox, 1983) a pattern labeled in this study as a "relationally mobile" life course trajectory.

Women in this study were married from one to four times, and some of these women will, most likely, experience other marital transitions before their marital careers are complete. For the study women, the age the mother became a single parent for the first time and the number of children she had as a single parent were positive predictors of number of times married, whereas education was a negative predictor of number of times married. In other words, the women in this cohort, who were younger, had more children and had no more than a high school education had more marital transitions. This finding has interesting implications for further research on marital transitions and the life course.

Qualitative Analyses and Remarriage

Considering next the qualitative analyses of families of remarriage, these analyses focused on the transition to single parenthood, the transition to remarriage and factors that might have been associated with that transition, problems in families of remarriage, and for some study participants, transitions out of remarriage into another episode of single parenting.

Family Support, Single Parenthood and Remarriage

Family support for divorced women with children helped ease their path into single parenthood. Family members most often provided emotional support, but also helped with financial support and child care. Both women who remarried and those who did not received high levels of family support, and this support was not clearly linked to whether or not the woman remarried.

This may be because family support is provided to family members in times of need, regardless of the marital status or parental status of family members. Although family support was not linked with remarriage, from the accounts of the mothers in this study, family support often made the difference for her family in terms of necessities-- food, shelter, and adequate care for her children. Family appears to often serve as a safety net for women;

several women noted that if it had not been for their family they would have had to seek welfare. For the most part, women in this study, reflective of their middle class background, did not believe welfare was a good solution.

The reaction of relief on the part of parents of single women in this study when their daughters decided to remarry suggests that, as Quinn and Allen (1989) found, that although family support is important to survival as a single parent, there is also considerable pressure on single mothers to remarry. Whereas, families certainly give support to other members regardless of marital or parental status, they may give more help over longer periods of time to single mothers. Acquiring a new son-in-law may relieve the burdens of the parents, grand-parents, and siblings of a single mother.

Cohabitation: A Transition for Some

Almost half of the divorced women in this sample cohabited with a man they eventually married, and two women each cohabited with two different men they eventually remarried. Cohabitation in this predominantly white, middle-class sample was relatively common, suggesting that cohabitation among individuals, who would not have considered such an option 20 years ago, is becoming more common, and culturally acceptable.

However, it is important to recognize that cohabitation before remarriage in this sample did not reach those levels that other researchers have found (Spanier & Furstenberg, 1987; Bumpass & Sweet, 1989). Forty-seven percent of the remarried women in this sample cohabited with a spouse before remarriage. Even if the two women in long-term cohabitation relationships in this sample were to remarry, the rates for cohabitation before remarriage would not reach the two-thirds found by Spanier and Furstenberg (1987) in their study, or the 60% estimated in the National Survey of Families and Households (Bumpass & Sweet, 1989).

Although cohabitation is a common transition for the women in this cohort, it may not be as common as has been hypothesized (Bumpass & Sweet, 1989). Alternatively, not all women may have admitted to a cohabiting experience. Women often mentioned that their natal family, especially parents, reacted negatively to their cohabiting before remarriage. Sample participants may have been reluctant to reveal cohabiting experiences.

Comparing Alternatives: How Remarriage Stacks Up

Women in this sample made conscious comparisons between their second marriage and their first marriage, and they also compared being married to being a single parent. This finding is in keeping with social exchange theory that

individuals in a relationship compare the relationship to possible alternatives (Levinger, 1979), in this case either being married to someone else, or being a single parent. For women in this sample, marriage was a preferable state to being single, and this belief was played out in the choices these women made in remarriage. Even women who had not remarried by the time of the interview expressed hope that they might find another, better, partner.

Problems in Families of Remarriage

Mothers in the sample focused their remarks on problems in families of remarriage on communication problems, financial difficulties, interpersonal problems with extended kin or former kin, and children. Although communication problems and financial difficulties are certainly common to many first marriages, this qualitative analysis of remarriage revealed some problems unique to remarriages.

Difficulties with children figured heavily into the mother's discussions on problems in their remarriages, suggesting that the adjustment period between the children and the new spouse plays a strong role in the eventual outcome of family relationships. Whereas, the advent of the first child in any marriage is often both a difficult and rewarding experience, the development of a relationship

between a child and the mother's new spouse is also both a potentially difficult and rewarding experience. Women in this sample felt that the adjustment period for their families took anywhere from six months to a two years, and occasionally women expressed surprise that this transition period had lasted so long.

When Remarriage Fails: The Transition Out of Remarriage

Remarried mothers in this sample whose remarriages failed blamed these failures on their partners, not themselves. Although this is not a unexpected finding, it does suggest that women who had already gone through one divorce had some notion of what was involved and did not hesitate to identify and leave an unsatisfactory mate. To some extent, this finding supports Spanier and Furstenberg's (1987) theory that individuals who have been divorced are less concerned about a second, third or fourth divorce.

There is also support, from the mothers' accounts, for the theory that individuals in remarriage have interpersonal attributes that render them poor marital partners. According to the study mothers, husbands in remarriages were discovered to have interpersonal attributes that rendered them unfit as both spouses and

father figures, however the marital histories of the men were not usually available.

There is a fair body of evidence to suggest that a number of the women in this study had interpersonal attributes that rendered them unfit as marital partners. For example, one mother who was married and divorced twice had substance abuse problems that she admitted made much of the past in her life difficult to recall. Thus, there is some evidence that those individuals who divorce repeatedly may have serious personal problems.

Relationships between the study woman's children and her husband in the remarriages that failed were often fraught with tension and conflict. Whereas, women may have hoped for positive and nurturing relationships between a remarried spouse and the children, this type of relationship did not necessarily ensue. Perhaps Cherlin (1981, 1991) is correct, and remarriage is an incomplete institution with poorly established norms and roles. Or perhaps it is more that remarriage is a complex, undefined institution rather than an incomplete institution.

Remarriage as a Financial Survival Strategy

Americans are supposed to marry for love, not money. Scholars of marriage and relationship development have noted that the model for marriage has changed from a more

instrumental, role differentiated model to one focusing on the inter-personal relationship between the spouses and love (Glick, 1990; Kain, 1990). The entire cultural context of marriage in America supports this idealization of marriage as love-centered, and people who "fall out of love" are seen as justified in seeking the cultural remedy for a lack of love, a divorce (Kayser, 1993). To admit to marrying for money is to run the risk of being thought of as mercenary, greedy, and unloving, and ultimately involves scorning a paramount cultural ideal.

Women in this study who remarried, although they commented on the financial advantages of marriage, did not attribute their decision to remarry to financial considerations. Remarriage was justified in terms of love, and the interpersonal relationship between the mother and her partner, just as the first marriage had been. If mothers do not concede to having made choices for remarriage based on economic necessity does this mean that economic reality did not fuel remarriage decisions in this sample?

Crosbie-Burnett, Syles, and Becker-Haven (1992, p. 309) have written,

"At the societal level, remarriage for many custodial mothers is a stop-gap measure in response to economic desperation; it serves women's and children's interests only in that it raises their standard of living and puts a second adult into their household".

Although no mother in the study divulged that she married for anything other than love and companionship, analyses from this data set suggest that financial considerations have an impact, albeit unexpressed and perhaps unrecognized, on remarriage.

Limitations

These data from a qualitative study of single parent mothers, some of who remarried, to assess the life course transitions of members of the baby boom cohort. Sample members were predominantly white, middle-class women who had been members of a longitudinal study of family relationships. The experiences of the study participants cannot be inclusive of the experiences of all divorced single mothers, but rather suggestive of what the life course transitions have been for white, middle class women in this cohort. Life course transitions for other single mothers, for example, an Hispanic, never-married mother in this cohort, may be vastly different.

The Longitudinal Study of Generations has been an ongoing research project since 1971. Although this project has had a high retention rate for the original study members, it is possible that a longitudinal study of this nature retains healthier families, while those families with more problems stop participating. Mothers in this

sample may be especially hardy and healthy individuals, with stronger family relationships than the average woman in this cohort. Any generalizations to other women in the baby boom cohort thus must be made with caution.

This study assessed the experiences of single and remarried mothers over time. Because accounts of the divorce and remarriage were retrospective, and occurred at different points in the lives of the sample members, the challenges of working with retrospective data must be acknowledged. When mothers recounted the experiences surrounding a divorce, and their relationships, they were examining their past. Researchers of divorce have suggested that divorced persons develop a public account of the divorce after the divorce has taken place and this account often differs from the story divorcing individuals develop at the time of the divorce (). When women discussed a remarriage that failed, they were also discussing another divorce, and their accounts were subject to the biases of time and the need to develop a public accounting of the end of the relationship.

A challenge of this data set was that women were at different points in time in their marital careers and in their remarriages. There were nine women who were remarried less than a year. Their experiences thus far can be presumed to be very different from those women who were remarried over a longer period of time. Because the

interviews took place at different points in time it is difficult to generalize the experience of remarriage as a whole.

Study participants talked about support they received from their family, however specific detailed questions on the type and amount of support offered were not part of the questionnaire. Rather, single mothers were queried if family members were supportive, both at the time of the divorce, and over time. Although financial, child care and emotional support themes emerged from the questionnaires, it is possible that not all of the support given by family members was captured, due to the design of the research questions. Thus, for single mothers, there may have been even greater support from family members than was assessed in this analysis.

Coleman and Ganong (1990) have asserted that to adequately assess remarriage researchers must conduct longitudinal, in-depth studies of families of remarriage. Despite the limitations of this sample, this study attempts to look inside families of remarriage. Although it is not possible to generalize to all members of the baby boom cohort based on the responses of the study participants, this study offered a rare opportunity to look inside families of remarriage for a sample of mostly white, middle-class American women of the baby boom cohort.

Directions for Future Research

For the baby boom cohort of women, remarriage served to offer them both the opportunity to re-partner and the opportunity to form a new family unit. Women in this cohort appear to be highly committed to remarriage; of the 62 mothers in the study, 43 have remarried at least once. These women continue to have a commitment to the institution of marriage, flavored with a reluctance to remain in an unsatisfactory relationship. A bad marriage can be ended, and a better choice just around the corner.

Is Remarriage an Economic Survival Strategy?

To what extent is remarriage an economic strategy for single mothers? Women in this sample were more likely to be married a greater number of times if they had a high school education or less, had more children, and were younger when they became a single parent for the first time. Women did not specifically state that they remarried for economic reasons, rather they were likely to talk about interpersonal issues, the feeling of being part of a couple, and a positive orientation to marriage as opposed to singlehood. However, mothers were aware of the economic advantages of marriage, especially those women who remarried only to find that a new spouse was an economic burden rather than an asset.

In this data set there is subtle evidence that, for some single mothers, remarriage is an economic survival strategy. Future research should investigate to what extent women who are especially vulnerable economically chose to remarry. Whereas, mothers appear willing to discuss the economic advantages of marriage in general terms, they may not necessarily be forthcoming about finances being a motivating factor in the decision to marry or remarry. American culture places great value in romantic love and the experience of being in love as reason to marry (Kain, 1990). Any investigation of economic factors in the choice to remarry must be approached carefully and couched in indirect terms.

Little work has been done on the finances in families of remarriage, albeit financial problems have been identified as a major problem area in these families (Spanier & Furstenberg, 1987). Finances tend to be a problematic area in many marriages. To what extent do remarried families struggle with financial decisions, especially when there are individuals outside the family unit, for example a former spouse, whose financial arrangements impact the remarried family? Does payment or non-payment of child support by a former spouse cause dissention within the remarried family? When women marry men who have children from a previous marriage to support, does this obligation affect the remarried family?

In this data set there are indications that such financial considerations play a role in the remarried family, the interpersonal relationships within that family, and decisions about divorcing a second or subsequent spouse. Although money is not claimed as a driving force in remarriage choices, there is evidence that remarriage is a financial survival strategy for divorced single mothers, and future research must address the subtle relationship between love and money.

Children in Families of Remarriage

Children in families of remarriage, and the complexity of relationships in families of remarriage, appears to be a fruitful area for future research on these families. Children in divorced families seem to have a great deal of mobility, especially during their teen years, to move in and out of households. To what extent are the negative child outcomes associated with families of divorce (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989) actually a product of the child being able to change living situations at will?

Much of the literature on successful parenting suggests that children need consistency: consistency in expectations, and consistency in discipline. Parent educators believe that successful parenting, especially of teens, involves providing both guidance and support as

children make the transition to young adulthood. How much is this need for guidance and support challenged by the realities of children changing one living situation for another?

Revisiting the Past: Who Revisits, and Why?

In this study, there was one marital reconciliation after a long-term separation, and six cases where the study participant returned to remarry a husband she previously divorced. Although some researchers have studied marital reconciliation (see Wineberg, 1992), there have been no studies of the phenomenon of remarrying a former spouse.

In this sample, six out of 62 mothers remarried a former spouse, or almost 10% of the study sample. This practice seems to be especially significant to any consideration of the either relationship development and maintenance. A number of models have been developed to explain both relationship development and relationship dissolution (see, for example, Duck, 1982; Kayser, 1993). How do the life course transitions of going through a divorce, adjustment to single parenthood, and then remarriage with the same individual get played out in the lives of members of this cohort? To what extent is this experience both more common than researchers may have thought and either successful or unsuccessful?

Remarriages That Fail

Although this data set was not designed to assess remarriages that fail, the substantial number of mothers whose second marriage also ended in divorce, and the reasons they gave for the second break-up contribute both important clues as to reasons for the higher divorce rate for remarriages, and suggest areas for future research.

A number of mothers in this data set appeared to have difficulty forming lasting relationships with others, including partners. For some women, their ability to have a lasting marriage appeared compromised by serious interpersonal difficulties. Future researchers need to delve more deeply into individual personality and disposition and the propensity to divorce. If, as researchers have stated, the number of second and third divorces will continue to rise, then the future of research on the family should entail opportunities to study those men and women who marry and divorce repeatedly.

Americans are deeply committed to a culture of romance. The media, popular literature, and peer culture reinforce the notions that a good relationship is necessary for personal happiness and indeed of paramount importance for experiencing a fulfilling life. As Andrew Cherlin (1991) has noted, it is not marriage per se that individuals reject but a particular marriage. Remarriages

will continue to occur in high numbers both for the baby boom generation and the generations that follow. This study allowed a glimpse inside the life course transitions of 62 baby boom women who divorced, experienced single parenthood, and remarried.

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APPENDIX

SINGLE PARENT INTERVIEW STUDY

INTERVIEW COVER SHEET

RESPONDENT ID: _____

Date: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewer notes on the interview (any special circumstances, interruptions, etc):

Respondent ID: _____

Rev. 7/2/90

SINGLE PARENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

FOR MOTHERS WHO HAVE BEEN DIVORCED OR ARE SEPARATED

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Are you currently a single parent? ____ Yes ____ No
 (IF NO) Have you remarried ? ____ Yes ____ No
 Have your children moved away? ____ Yes ____ No
 How many years did you spend/have you spent as a single parent? ____
2. I see from what you wrote in your 1988 questionnaire that you became a single parent by getting a divorce/separation.
 When did you and your husband first separate?
 Separation: ____
 Is your divorce final? If so, when? Divorce: ____
3. How old were you and your children when you and your husband first broke up?
 Mother: ____ Child: ____ Child: ____ Child: ____ Child: ____
4. Is your ex-husband the father of all your children?
 Is he still alive? ____ Yes ____ No
 How far from you and the children does he live?

5. Who initiated the divorce/separation? Was it mainly your decision?
6. What sort of formal custody arrangements do you have with the natural father of your children?
- a. sole custody
 - b. joint custody
- type:
- How do your custody arrangements work out for you and your children? How did you feel about them?
7. How much contact (by phone, by mail, or in person) does your child(ren)'s natural father have with him/her/them?
- a. daily contact
 - b. weekly contact
 - c. monthly contact
 - d. contact every few months
 - e. contact once a year or less
 - f. no contact at all
8. What kinds of contacts does your ex-spouse have with the kids? (Do they ever spend the night with him? Go on vacations together?)
- How has the amount of contact between your children and their father changed over time?
9. **(ASK IF THE MOTHER HAS MORE THAN ONE CHILD)** Were/are patterns of contact different for different children in your family? If so, how and why are they different?
10. Were you awarded child support payments from your child's father? (If not, why not?) If so, how much per child per month? Have these payments changed over time? Do you feel they are fair?
- (IF NO)** Has he ever helped you out financially in an informal way?

11. (IF YES) Are those child support payments paid fully and on time? If not, can you estimate what percentage of your awarded child support you have received?
- If you have not received all of your child support payments, have you been able to do anything about it?
12. Was there ever a time when you were a single parent that you had to go on welfare in order to survive financially? _____ Yes _____ No
- (IF YES) How long were you on welfare? Were you on it more than one time?

QUESTIONS ABOUT INTERGENERATIONAL CHANGES

1. When you became a single parent, how do you think it INITIALLY affected your relationship with others in your family? How about:
- a. your mother
 - b. your father
 - c. your grandmother
 - d. your grandfather
 - e. your children (get specific information about each child in the family where possible)
 - f. your brothers and sisters (if applicable)
 - f. other family members (from the respondent's side of the family)
 - g. your mother-in-law
 - h. your father-in-law
 - i. your other in-laws
2. Are there other family members who stand out in your memory as being particularly supportive or unsupportive around the time of the break-up?
3. What was your relationship with your husband like around the time when you broke up for the final time?

4. How about as time went on? Did you see other changes in your relationship with your parents, grandparents, or other relatives on your side of the family?
5. What about your in-laws? How did your relationship change with them as time went on?
6. What about your relationship with your ex-husband? How has that changed over time?
7. Did you feel like the relationship between your children and their grandparents changed as a result of the divorce/separation? If so, how? (Try and get in-law information here.)

QUESTIONS ABOUT PROBLEMS/STRENGTHS OF SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES

1. During the time you have spent as a single parent, what would you say were your three biggest problems?
2. Would you say that single parenting got easier, or more difficult over time? Why?
Were there any particular things that made it easier or more difficult over time?
3. Are you working now? _____ Yes _____ No
Did you work while you were a single parent? _____ Yes _____ No
(IF YES) What did you do, and how many hours/week did you work?
4. Has being a single parent affected your work life in any way?
Did it have any effect on your career expectations?
5. What do you feel are/were your major strengths as a single parent? What things do you feel you did/do particularly well?
6. Were there any things that you did that made being a single parent an easier job? (For instance, some single parents might join a support group, or figure out how to budget carefully so the money lasts to the end of the month, etc.)
7. **(IF THE MOTHER IS CURRENTLY REMARRIED ASK Q 7-11)** How has your second (third) marriage worked out for you?
8. How has the remarriage worked out for your children?
9. What sorts of problems have you encountered in your second marriage? How have they been negotiated?

10. How have your family relationships (for instance, with your parents, grandparents, siblings, ex-spouse) changed now that you have remarried?
11. What about your relationships with your former in-laws? Have they changed since you got married again?

QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTNERS IN SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES

1. At any time while you were a single parent, did you have a male partner or boyfriend living in your home, even for a short period of time?

NOTE : IF THE MOTHER HAS NOT LIVED WITH A MALE PARTNER, ASK:

What have we missed? Is there anything else about the single parent experience you'd like to tell us about?

2. If yes, how long did he live with you and your children? (in months) How old were your children at the time? (Get listing of all partners)

| | | | |
|-------|------------|--------|-------------|
| Man's | Age of | Age of | How long in |
| Name | Child(ren) | Mother | the Home? |

USE A SEPARATE SHEET OF PARTNER QUESTIONS FOR EACH PARTNER THE MOTHER HAS NAMED. IF SHE HAS NAMED MORE THAN THREE, ASK THE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE THREE PARTNERS THAT THE MOTHER LIVED WITH FOR THE LONGEST PERIODS OF TIME.

3. Why did you and (partner's name) choose to live together rather than marry?
 - a. we weren't ready to get married
 - b. we never considered marrying each other; it was a temporary living arrangement
 - c. it was financially inadvisable to marry
 - d. we did not believe in marriage

- e. one partner, or neither partner willing to make a commitment
 - f. one or both partners were legally unable to marry
 - g. other:
4. Is (partner's name) the biological father of any of your children? If yes, how many?
 5. When (partner's name) was living in the home, did he act as a father to your children?
How? In what ways? If not, why not? What about your child(ren)'s natural father, was he also in the picture at the same time?
 6. How did/does (partner's name) get along with your children? How did their relationship change over time?
 7. How did the members of your family react when you and (partner's name) decided to live together? Were they generally supportive, or were they opposed to your decision?
 8. While you were living with (partner's name), did he have a job? If so, what did he do?
And what about you? Were you employed outside the home? (find out if full-time or part-time employment)
 9. What type of financial arrangements did/do you and (partner's name) have?
 - a. both incomes were shared; all money was considered "family" money
 - b. I paid most of the expenses for myself and my kids, but my partner contributed some money each month for the household expenses
 - c. I paid all of the household expenses myself
 - d. He supported us; I was at home with the kids
 - e. We halved all household expenses and then mother paid any other expenses for child and herself
 - f. other (specify):
 10. While you were living with (partner's name), were you receiving any money from AFDC (welfare)?
 _____ Yes _____ No

11. Did you receive child support payments when you were living together with (partner's name)?
_____ Yes _____ No
12. **(IF THE RELATIONSHIP IS STILL CURRENT)** Did you and (partner's name) eventually marry? If so, what made you decide to marry instead of continuing to live with one another?
13. **(IF THE RELATIONSHIP ENDED)** When the relationship broke up, what was the impact on you? How about on your children?

ASK QUESTIONS 14 AND 15 AFTER ALL QUESTIONS ABOUT ADDITIONAL PARTNERS HAVE BEEN ASKED

14. What would you say were the most positive things about living with a partner? What were the most negative?
15. What have we missed? Is there anything else about the single parent experience you'd like to tell us about?