

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

WOMEN IN REMARRIED RELATIONSHIPS INVOLVING
THEIR NATURAL CHILDREN

By

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A Thesis

Submitted to The Faculty of Graduate Studies
In Partial Fulfillment Of the Requirements
For the Degree Master of Education

Department of Educational Psychology

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

November, 1984

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Acknowledgements

I wish to extend a special thank you, with the greatest appreciation, to my committee head and friend, Richard Carreiro, without whose constant patience, support, and wisdom this study could not have become a reality.

I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to members of my committee, Lillian Esses and William Schulz, whose guidance and expertise were invaluable in teaching me the skills required by such an undertaking.

My sincere appreciation is extended to the 10 women who graciously participated in the interview portion of this study with enthusiasm and support. Thanks also to secretaries Ann Palylyk and Nellie Crossland who gave up many of their leisure hours to type the various drafts of my work, as well as Peggy Gatchell who completed the final manuscript.

Last of all, thank you to my husband, Murray, and to my parents, Joyce and Lou Fingerote, for their faith in my efforts and their pride in my achievement.

Abstract

Women in remarried relationships involving their natural children are becoming less and less of a unique group in modern day society. For some women, the reorganization required by a remarriage is completed with very little debilitating stress. For others, being a remarried woman is being involved in new and often frightening relationships with a husband, one's natural children as well as stepchildren, ex-spouses, relatives, and even the community at large.

The purpose of this study is to examine the remarried women in today's world dealing with the various aspects of their remarried relationships. The study includes a review of the literature available at this time on the topic, as well as a series of 10 interviews conducted with remarried women who have brought their natural children with them to the remarriage. The results of the interviews are then related to the conclusions put forth in the review of the literature. Finally, an overall summary of the conclusions, implications, and recommendations of this study as they relate to the contemporary woman, is presented.

Both literature and interview findings indicate that for the most part women are happy and do not regret their decision to remarry. Although there are stresses and crises

which may accompany remarriage relationships, these women attempt to cope with the various situations head-on and with great courage. This study provides an informative look at the complexities of remarriage relationships today and as they continue into the future.

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INTRODUCTION

Divorce and remarriage have become common events in North American society. Close to 50% of new first-marriage partners may ultimately divorce (Mott and Moore, 1983, p.427). Most divorced women, particularly those in the younger age brackets, will ultimately remarry, most often within 2 to 3 years following a divorce (Kent, 1980). According to Weingarten (1980), over one and one half million adults remarry each year and of these remarriages, 60% involve an adult with physical custody of one or more children under 18 years of age and another 20 percent involve a non-custodial parent. Thus well over a half million adults become stepparents of one or more children annually. Yet, regardless of whatever distinct and unique situation a woman may find herself in, it is correct to assume that she will accept the major responsibility for the success or breakdown of her remarriage.

Women have unrealistic expectations of themselves, expectations which may evolve into a code they feel they must live by. As Visher and Visher (1970) have concluded, women expect themselves to make up to the children for the upset in their family caused by the divorce. They attempt to create a close-knit, happy family, as close as possible to what they see as the norm, that is the intact family. They feel responsible for the emotional well-being of all members of

their family and do not recognize the impossibility of their theory. Women also set out to disprove the "wicked stepmother myth" (Schulman, 1979, p. 213). They expect to love their stepchildren instantly and equally to their natural children, and to be loved in return.

For some women, the reorganization required by a remarriage is completed with a relatively small amount of debilitating stress. However, this group represents the minority. In fact, for most individuals, being a remarried woman and very likely a remarried parent, is a difficult and complex transition. Crises appear every inch of the way as byproducts of the relationships with their partners, their children and stepchildren, their ex-spouses, their relatives, and even by society in general. It is these women who are the focus of this study.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to examine the remarried woman in today's society. The study will focus primarily upon women who have physical custody of their children from the previous marriage, within their remarriage.

Delimitation of the Study

The impact of remarriage on the American family structure is only now beginning to receive attention, despite the overwhelming numbers of women who experience remarriage (Mott and Moore, 1983, p.428). Only a few researchers have attempted to develop a theory to explain the determinants of

remarriage. Weingarten (1980) quotes Cherlin (1978, p.534) as noting that remarriage has been virtually ignored in the sociological family literature, and Pleek (1980:8) as arguing that "of all new family forms, the remarried family most needed further research". Goetting (1979, p.413) speaks of the ex-spouse relationship among remarriage relationships in general, in this manner:

"There is clearly a dearth of information on the former spouse relationship and on other relationships created by divorce. Additional research in this general area would allow us to understand better the impact of divorce on members of our society."

Textbooks are beginning to deal directly with the subject of remarriage, Treating the Remarried Family by Sager et al (1983) being a prime example. Typically in the past, coverage of the topic has been restricted to a few pages in a chapter on divorce, and references usually made to studies, at least a decade or more old. For example, one of the most famous studies, Jesse Bernard's Remarriage (1956) is out of date, centering much of its information around post-war ideology. Nearly every discussion of remarriage which this writer has encountered has devoted the greatest amount of space to three basics -- the well-being of husband and wife, stepparenting, and remarriage prospects for success. According to the literature these topics cover the entire spectrum of remarriage.

According to Visher and Visher (1979, p.36):

"A search of the literature has revealed only a limited number of serious scientific studies with direct applicability to some aspect of stepfamily relationships."

Their survey of all available literature in 1979 led them to conclude:

"... how limited the research is on stepfamily relationships... Systematic inquiry is needed to test the validity of clinical impressions and resultant assumptions. Such studies have not yet been done." (p.49)

The focus of this study is nearly impossible to locate within the available research material. The topic was selected because it appeared that women in remarried relationships who have brought to their remarriage, children from a previous marriage, are in the majority. And this writer's opinion has been verified. "Divorced mothers typically retain custody of their children." (Messinger, 1976, p.197); "A man who marries a mother marries a package -- mother and children. More than one-half of today's remarrying women have children under 18." (Simon, 1964, p.123); "The most common pattern in stepfamilies is for the new stepfather to join a unit in which the children have been living with their natural mother in a mother-headed household." (Visher and Visher, 1979, p.37)

Thus, despite recognizing the existence of this situation, there is almost no material on these women. Research has been confined to stepmothering as the aspect

of women in remarriage to be examined. Studies of women in remarriages with their natural children, are only evident as byproducts of part-time stepmothering, in discussions of "her children versus his children", or in appraisals of the woman's relationship with her ex-spouse. The remarried woman who has her natural children with her and is not a stepmother, is an overlooked topic. Only the chapter devoted mainly to this woman in Visher and Visher (1979) appears to examine this issue.

The predicament outlined above led this writer to initiate a DIALOG computer search at the University of Manitoba library, on the topic of the remarried woman in today's society, with special emphasis placed upon the remarried woman who has retained custody of her natural children. All available sociological, psychological, medical and educational abstracts within the last 15 years were tapped, using descriptors and/or review. The analysis originated in Palo Alto, California, and after 1 week supplied a list of 62 citations of which 34 were inappropriate (for example, the History of Judeo-Christian Divorcing), 4 were unavailable at this time, and the remaining 22 had already been examined, or were easily located at this city's major libraries. In summation, although all avenues were explored, one fact remains. There is a severe paucity of research done on women in remarriage relationships.

Value of the Study

Women who have custody of their natural children and are involved in a remarriage are virtually ignored as a topic in the available literature. The reasons for this absence can only be hypothesized as follows:

- a) They all have adjusted remarkably well and therefore it is assumed they are not in need of any direction or guidance.
- b) They have not adjusted well at all to the various remarriage relationships, but have simply not been researched.
- c) They have not adjusted well, yet have not been researched because stepmothering is a much more controversial issue.
- d) Stepmothering is seen as the only concern when a woman remarries.

In contrast then, the value of this study lies in examining the woman's emotional relationships with her husband, her children, his children (when applicable), her ex-spouse, her relatives and society at large. Perhaps this study will provide a unique contribution to the literature on remarriage, simply because it will deal with a topic which researchers have overlooked.

Definition of Terms

Blended or Stepfamily - This is a family which is comprised of two adults who are not the natural parents to all the children, and their children. It is the merging of parts of

two previous, completely separate families.

Intact family - This is a family where the mother and father are natural parents to all of the children. It is generally the first marriage for both adults.

Natural parent - This is the biological parent.

Absentee parent - This is a child's natural parent who does not reside with the child.

Extended family - This is the network of grandparents and relations which surround the nuclear family.

Sole custody - This is when one natural parent has prime responsibility for the physical upbringing of his or her child.

Joint custody - This is when both natural parents share in the physical upbringing of their child.

The Body of the Study

The body of the study is presented in Chapters II, III, and IV.

In Chapter II a review of the currently available literature pertaining specifically to women in remarried relationships is presented. This overview is restricted to women who have experienced divorce rather than the death of a spouse, as the initiating cause of their single status. Through the literature a glimpse of the overall picture of the remarried woman in today's society is provided. Remarriage as a family model in our society is introduced. The various reasons why women seek to remarry, and the

prognosis for the success of their remarriage, is discussed. The conclusions of researchers such as Glenn and Weaver (1977), Weingarten (1980), and Spanier and Furstenberg (1982) on the happiness and well-being of women in remarriage is also included.

This writer focuses on women who have brought to their remarriage a child or children from a previous marriage. From the paucity of material which does exist on this unique topic, an overview of a remarried woman in her relationships with her husband, her own children, her ex-spouse, her extended family and her community is presented. The complications and implications in connection with her husband's part-time, visiting children, or her husband's full-time, live-in children, are also discussed.

The content of Chapter III explains and discusses the interviewing which has been undertaken to provide data for this study. Included is the rationale behind the interviews, preparing for the interview, the manner of presentation, the structuring of the interview, the reactions and opinions of the interviewees, and finally, a copy of the interview itself plus the proposed interview category format.

The interview includes data on the following topics:

- a) previous marital history and current situation.
- b) perceptions of the stresses of remarried life, for example, in relationships with current spouse, natural children, stepchildren, ex-spouse and his wife, and

extended family.

c) advice to another woman new to this situation.

d) coping mechanisms of the remarried woman.

In Chapter IV the data collected from the interviews is presented, including the results of the findings. The data is categorized under certain topic headings, for example, relevant marital history, positive adjustments and overall well-being, problem areas, coping mechanisms, feminist versus traditional ideology, and a miscellaneous section including role adjustment and suggesting advice to others. The results are stated in an effort to suggest possible conclusions and/or implications concerning the remarried woman.

Summation

Chapter V comprises the final section of the study. In this section, the writer endeavours:

a) To correlate the results suggested by the interviews and the conclusions presented in the review of the literature.

b) To provide an overall summary of the conclusions, implications, and recommendations of this study as they relate to the remarried woman of today.

Chapter 11

Review of the Literature

"Being remarried is part of the vast social experiment of the twentieth century. With an almost breathless urgency remarriage as a way of life has become viable for more people than ever in our known history." (Simon, 1964, p.67) Remarriage occurs among people from different economic backgrounds, of different ages, with different life histories and different religious and moral values. Yet remarriage is often perceived as deviant because of society's inability to cope with it.

Society does not appear able to deal with divorce or remarriage in the ritualized manner with which it copes with birth, marriage and death, which society views as natural stages in the life cycle. There seems to be little realization of the fact that people change and grow all through life, and with such change and growth new needs and goals develop often requiring different marital partners and life styles. (Duberman, 1975, p.3)

The blended family is not a carbon copy of the intact family, although it often strives to be. Remarried families make self-conscious and sincere efforts to handle their unique problems, while appearing in the guise of an "intact" family. According to Visher and Visher (1979), the only similarity between the first married intact family and remarried blended family models is that both contain an adult couple in the household. In a remarried family all members have suffered a loss of a previous relationship. In cases of divorce, one parent lives outside the remarried family unit,

and although there is an adult couple in the home, the relationship between the adults and their natural children predates the couple relationship.

Two-thirds of divorced women choose remarriage as the path most often followed after divorce (Ambert, 1980). They approach a remarriage with love, trust, confidence, and the hope that the new marriage will provide them with everything the first marriage failed to produce. Within this chapter, through an examination of current related literature, the rationale behind a woman's remarriage and her well-being in it, the various relationships in progress as a result of the remarriage, and in particular, a focus upon the lives of women who have brought their natural children with them to their remarriages, is discussed.

Motivations for Remarriage

Research relating to the motivations for remarriage has been sparse, despite the fact that the reasons why women decide to remarry are extensive and complex. The reasons involve a mixture of psychological, social, and economic factors.

Psychological Factors

According to Seagrave's findings in Sager et al (1983), the pain of separation and not being connected to a mate may cause unhappiness and loss of emotional stability. Many formerly married women fear to be alone, feel rejected, lose

interest in their personal hygiene, in their living environment or go to irrational ends to win back their mate. The void left by a former spouse can be devastating (Sager et al, 1983, p. 60).

Rosenbaum and Rosenbaum (1977), Williams and Ohern (1979), Shamgar-Handelman (1982) and Sager et al (1983) all worked with remarried women and couples. They stated that the promise of a caring and loving relationship, as well as the desire and need to be with a specific person, are the prime motivations for remarriage. Part of the appeal of the new love may be the desire to have a family or help with childcare, the promise of domestic peace, the desire for reliable companionship, and the protection from loneliness. Many women remarry to prove to themselves, their ex-spouses, and society in general, that they can be successful in a marriage, they are worthy of being cherished and loved by another man, and they are not a failure, personally, socially or maritally.

Shamgar-Handelman (1982) studied reasons for remarriage among Israeli war-widows during 1970-75. She found that women are motivated to remarry because they firmly believe they must find a new "father" for their children. They wish to repair the damage done to their families. They see their role in life as wife, mother, and homemaker. The loss of a husband has destroyed the stability of their lives and the pivotal point for their activities and self-fulfillment.

They view remarriage as the only way to repair the damage brought on by the loss of the male figure.

Social Factors

The need for more social acceptance in certain groups or sub-systems of our society is also a motivating factor for women. North American society is primarily a couple's world and women are social beings (Williams and Ohern, 1979). External pressures from one's family or friends, or the need for peer status, may encourage a woman to seek a new husband in order to once again gain respectability. She may yearn to dispense with the "meat auction block" of singles weekends, and bars and clubs with their questionable reputations, and instead seek the dependability and virtue of marriage (Sager et al, 1983).

Economic Factors

From studies done in the U.S.A. it appears that divorced women who are weak in ability to support themselves are the most likely to remarry and women who are more independent financially are less likely to remarry, perhaps because they need marriage less... A woman with a low income and education may be helped by remarriage, as she may not be otherwise well equipped to support herself..." Ambert, 1980, p.189)

Thus researchers, for example Ambert (1980) and Mott and Moore (1983), assumed a dichotomy between marriage and high to low economic stability. Mott and Moore (1983) interviewed a group of 238 women, between 1968 - 1973 during the first 5 years following their first divorce. They found that many women consider remarriage a chance to gain financial

security for themselves and their children. Specifically, for a "low wage" woman, a chief gain in a remarriage is the ability to stay home, raise the children, and generally maintain the home. On the other hand, a "high wage" or "career" woman, whose potential earnings are adequate or above average, will not view remarriage as an economic situation, and her incentive to remarry will not necessarily be financially rooted. She will expect to continue her career as a complement to her marriage rather than a substitute, and will be marrying for psychological reasons rather than economic.

In summary, according to researchers, the psychological, social and economic determinants, play a significant role in motivating a woman to remarry. Although each situation is different, women enter remarriages possessing a very different rationale than when they married for the first time.

Well-Being Among Remarried Women

During this writer's review of the literature, it has become apparent that a handful of researchers have directed themselves exclusively to the study of the well-being among remarried men and women after divorce. The overall opinion is that remarried women as a group, are more likely than those in first marriages to say they are happy with their present lives (Duberman, 1975). Due to the residual effects

of earlier divorce trauma, remarried women are apt to think they are gaining a great deal from their second union.

Perhaps remarried people are more appreciative of their situations than people married only once. They have experienced the loneliness and ambiguity of the single adult in American society. They have learned to modify expectations so they more closely resemble reality. Most of them are grateful to become half of a "couple" again. (Duberman, 1975, p.104)

Remarriage often follows a period of cohabitation with the new spouse. It is a complex partnership, where conflict is to be expected, and open communication about past and present, personal and family issues is essential. It requires flexibility of partners, and will produce personal growth, greater maturity and knowledge in both men and women. Women wish to reflect a sense of well-earned peace and well-being within their remarriage.

Glenn and Weaver conducted a study in 1973 through 1975, to provide evidence from three United States national surveys on the reported marital happiness of divorced persons who have remarried. They began with two working hypotheses:

- a) Divorced persons in remarriage will report less marital happiness, as a whole, than persons in other marriages.
- b) Remarried females, as a whole, will evaluate their marriages less positively than remarried males.

The surveys gathered information through face-to-face interviews with persons age 18 and older, (single, married,

divorce and remarried) of the noninstitutionalized civilian population of the United States.

The findings revealed that remarried males are somewhat better satisfied with their marriages than remarried females. However, men and women in remarriages are apt to overreport their marital happiness in a remarriage. Yet in contrast, never-divorced white females appear more satisfied with their marriages than previously divorced white females. Glenn and Weaver tentatively concluded that for women who remarry, prospects for good marriages seem fairly high, and their findings indicate that married persons report greater happiness than any category of unmarried persons. Thus, they have concluded that men and women do report a sense of well-being and a high mean level of marital happiness, in either a first marriage or a remarriage.

In contrast to Glenn and Weaver, Weingarten's study examined the relationship between being remarried and successful adult functioning, in terms of feelings of well-being.

Data for Weingarten's study was collected through the University of Michigan in 1976, by a 90 minute, structured interview with 184 white adults, who were remarried after divorce. "The complex configuration of results... indicates that the remarried are remarkably similar to first-marrieds in most aspects of morale and dissimilar primarily with respect to past distress and feelings of role inadequacy."

(Weingarten, 1980, p.555). Even though it is recognized that remarried adults, men and women alike, have experienced more difficult times than the newly married, it seems as if they have mastered the trauma of divorce. Their level of happiness, self-esteem, and future optimism, indicates the success of their coping mechanisms. Hence, according to Weingarten, this representative sample of remarried adults, illustrated that remarried persons are scoring above average, with respect to such aspects of their remarriage as their sexual relationship, their parenting, and their overall feeling of happiness and current well-being.

Spanier and Furstenberg compiled a longitudinal study of adjustment to marital separation, divorce and remarriage. In 1979, 180 separated persons in Central County, Pennsylvania, who had separated between January, 1975 and April, 1977, took part by interview, in this study. It dealt with such facets of remarriage as life satisfaction, satisfaction with health, suicide propensity, and changes in habits.

The tables presented in this study indicate, that divorced persons in general tend to report enhanced well-being following their divorce. It seems that individuals who report having initiated their divorce, are not any happier than those who do not. There is substantial evidence as well, that well-being and marital quality are significantly related, because six of the eight measures of well-being are

positively related to marital adjustment.

Spanier and Furstenberg concluded, that men and women report greater well-being 3 or 4 years after their final separation, regardless of the marital status. There appears to be no difference between men and women, or between persons with children in their household or without children. They did suggest, however, that individuals with the greatest well-being, are most likely to be remarried 3 or 4 years after their final separation. Furthermore, remarried persons may use different reference points to judge their current well-being. That is, in comparison to a poor first marriage, their current evaluation of well-being may be enhanced if the remarriage is successful.

Thus, despite the fact that the three studies reviewed above, were conducted as a result of differing hypotheses, contained differing focal points in their survey content, were situated in separate areas of the United States, and in different years, the results are remarkably similar. Women are exhibiting marital happiness and well-being in their remarriages according to the current literature.

The Marital Relationship

In Lucille Duberman's The Reconstituted Family(1975) Adams and Wierath (p.46) comment:

The heart of the American family is the marital relationship itself. Because of the great value

which North Americans place on the husband-wife relationship, the success of this relationship is believed to determine family stability. There is no reason to expect that the stability of a blended family be less dependent on the relationship between husband and wife than that of an intact family.

According to Jesse Bernard (1956) willingness, on the part of the divorced to work hard at making the second marriage a success, may be a significant factor in achieving that success. The motivation may stem from various corners, for example, the attempt to prove to themselves that they are not to blame for the failure of the first marriage. If changes are required these individuals are willing to make them, for there is most often a mutual determination by the couple to make the marriage work.

In The Reconstituted Family (1975), Duberman reported on her work with remarried couples. Every couple had been given a Husband-Wife Relationship Score (HWRS), to illustrate how happy they are, this being categorized as poor to good or excellent. Forty-six percent of the couples Duberman tested report poor to good relationships, while the remaining 54% report excellent relationships. The fifty-four percent who rate themselves as excellent may be a bit too high, because they are trying to impress the interviewer, or refusing to acknowledge poor relationships. Also, the investigator may hold different standards from those held by the particular couple. In essence, most couples are found to be very much aware of the state of their relationship.

The remarried couples Duberman worked with recognize that they have good marriages, and generally they are appreciative of their relationships. They feel their disagreements are no different from those in any intact marriage, their major problems being child-rearing, money, sexual relations, religion, political differences, outsiders and recreation (many of these areas to be examined in closer detail in a later sub-section of this chapter).

Duberman (p.40-46) saw the husband-wife relationship as a dependent variable. Factors which can affect the relationship include: The educational level of husband and wife, the ages of each partner, the religions of each, the length of previous marriages, previous marital status, the sex of their children, the present residence of their children, as well as their socio-economic status. To comment briefly on a few of the factors:

- a) College educated remarried women are slightly less satisfied with their second marriages than those with high school or less education.
- b) Age is not a factor. Women average age 33.7 at time of remarriage while men are about 36.8 years of age.
- c) There is no difference in marital satisfaction among various religious groups.
- d) The length of a previous marriage is not a factor.
- e) Previous marital status is a factor. Divorced people remarry more quickly than widowed people.

f) Studies have shown that good marital adjustment increases with social status. The higher the class, the higher the rating for husband-wife relationships.

The remarried woman in her marital relationship, is one of the few areas which has been examined by authors, researchers, and clinicians. Bernard (1956), Simon (1964), Lowe (1970), Baer (1972), Maddox (1976), Mayleas (1977), Noble and Noble (1977), Rosenbaum and Rosebaum (1977), Visher and Visher (1979), and Williams and Ohern (1979), to name a few, are people who have studied and reported upon the lives of women who are remarried. Most often their slant, through anecdotal discussion, has been toward stepmothering, rather than simply "wifing."

According to Rosenbaum and Rosenbaum (1977), building a strong marriage is a pre-requisite to the success of a remarriage. To them a solid, marital, relationship is interwoven with sexual love and friendship. They reiterated time and time again that the first priority in a remarriage is the couple themselves. As psychologist Dana Lehman-Olson pointed out in Noble and Noble (1977, p.102), "Only if a couple's needs are being met through each other have they energy left over for parenting." Remarried women and men must show understanding, acceptance and be motivated to succeed. The relationship between two adults is a love relationship which must be kept alive through tenderness, trust, showing constant concern, and attending to the other's

needs (Noble and Noble, 1977; Rosenbaum and Rosenbaum, 1977.)

Although it is never implicitly stated, the nature of the anecdotal reporting in so many of the books reviewed, points to the woman as the proud possessor of these virtues, She is the one who is greatly responsible for the success of the relationship. For example, Leonard Benson stated in Duberman's 1975 work, that there are basic obligations the couples assume when they marry: truthfulness and dependability, sharing the work, ego support and sympathy, talking and listening, sexual satisfaction and volunteering. All of these aspects are worked at even more relentlessly in a remarriage. Yet, women as mates are encouraged to be direct and open. They must be patient and tolerant, and they must search for a partner who will fulfill their needs, as well as those of their children.

Perhaps the simplest and most explicit treatment of a woman in a remarried relationship, one that easily appeals to women in all walks of life, was presented by Jean Baer in The Second Wife (1972). In her book, she speaks of a woman as being either an ex-wife with custody, a second wife, or a stepmother. But to all three, she directs her key to success in a remarriage:

a) Make your husband feel he is the number one person in your life. Give top priority to building and enriching your personal relationship with him.

- b) Be YOU -- not some imaginary person you think he wants. Modify, compromise and change as necessary. But do it in terms of being yourself for you are his choice.
- c) Keep romance alive.
- d) Trust him.
- e) Be aware that many a man, already a father, will hesitate to start another family with a second wife.
- f) Communicate.
- g) Do not allow his ex-wife or your ex-husband to ruin the marriage. Never compare past and present spouses.
- h) Continue growing.
- i) Know that no matter what kind of children he has, you will have trouble.
- j) Your loyalty is always to your marriage first, the children second.
- k) Tell him when your life needs adjustment.
- l) Be fully committed, knowing that commitment may hurt you.

(Baer, 1972, p.35)

Internal Pressures on the Remarried Couple

A remarried couple does not face a clean slate. No matter how well they have worked out their personal marital relationship, they do not live on an island, and therefore, they are subject to a myriad of internal pressures which can be a constant threat to their marriage.

Messinger (1976) and Gregg (1976) reported that the two greatest problems of remarriage are children and finances.

Children are considered a permanent link to the ex-spouse. Husbands and wives are caught between their loyalty to their own children and their desire to please a new mate.

Discipline problems are also possible in a blended family, since compared to the new couple, previous familial relationships of mother and child, may appear solid and threatening (Visher and Visher, 1979). Then too, women feel guilty about the burden their children place on their new husbands financially, and men may be reluctant to reveal their true financial assets. Money can be a very sensitive issue, with women putting aside funds in case of another divorce, or men refusing to revise their wills, for the same reasons. Women who find they are remarried with less money than when they were first married or divorced, can become very unhappy and resentful.

Williams and Ohern (1979) completed a series of group counselling sessions with remarried couples. Their findings indicated, one of the pressures surrounding a remarriage is the issue of "prior claim" (p.9). This includes not only the reality that there was a first spouse, but there are also prior places, memories, relationships, etc., that must be lived through and worked out. Visher and Visher (1979) also spoke of previous bonds existing in the remarriage, which do not include the new spouse. The couple's relationship has no memories to fall back upon, and must have time to cement

itself together, mature and become secure, while old memories drift more into the background. As Westoff stated in Ambert (1980, p. 205)

"One lives with vibrations of other people who were part of one's old life and the new partner's former life. There are constant reminders of the past spent with others -- living ghosts that go along with every remarriage."

In a remarriage, both partners are more experienced sexually, as well as maritally. According to Ambert (1980), they are more willing to experiment, they have greater variety and fewer inhibitions in their sex lives. They are flexible and more willing to compromise. Sager et al (1983) found in treating remarried couples, that sex in a second marriage is rarely a major problem. Sexual ennui, inhibition, and lack of sexual desire, are less common in remarried couples. Often if sex does pose a problem, the problem may be due to letting the sexual relationship of the first marriage interfere with the remarriage. In essence, Sager et al (1983) stated, that sexuality is better the second time around, perhaps because it is always investigated before marriage.

Differences in life style are basic internal pressures on the remarried couple. Simon (1964), Lowe (1970), Baer (1972), Maddox (1975), Mayleas (1977), Noble and Noble (1979), and Berman (1980), to list a few, all concluded that it is best for a remarried couple to move to a new home, especially when there are children involved. Too many

memories abound in the old house. The new residents may be viewed as invaders, while the old residents consider themselves the real occupants of the house. Then too, simple matters of life styles, such as meal format, bedtime rituals, holiday celebrations, and other traditional routines, can become sources of pressure, if allowed. Compromise must be a key factor in settling these issues.

The relationship with the ex-spouse (a topic to be examined independently in a later section) is a major area of difficulty for many remarried couples (Lowe, 1970; Goetting 1979). Although a working relationship should be formed in order to share the children they have in common, many ex-spouses find this area to be tense, unproductive, and a negative component of the remarried husband and wife relationship.

External Pressures on the Remarried Couple

Although a strong remarriage has the basis to cope with whatever external pressures present themselves, certain areas are nevertheless apt to appear. The negative responses from extended family and community can result in friction between husband and wife (Berman, 1980). As Simon (1964, p.125) concluded:

"Grandparents often step in after a divorce and take care of the children, as they did before that parent's marriage. Therefore, grandparents often feel displaced and displeased with a remarriage and are hostile towards the new person in the remarriage."

The community as well, can work for or against a remarried couple. From the closest group of neighbours, who approve or disapprove of the new addition to the neighbourhood, to a religious or political affiliation, all onlookers or outsiders can place subtle pressure upon the remarried family, pressure which often may not be appreciated or requested. Also, family law is antiquated when dealing with stepfamily situations. Stepfamilies have no legal rights regarding their stepchildren, and this can create many problems for the remarried couple (Visher and Visher, 1979).

According to the researchers, women demonstrate good relationships with their husbands, although theirs is not a simple path to follow. There are internal and external forces in play at all times within the confines of the remarried household. This writer's major criticism of the literature reviewed, is that within the literature, the female is often portrayed as being able to rescue herself, her husband, and her children, from failure again, by way of her experience, and her nearly saintlike behaviour. Whether this is true or not remains to be seen. For now it is simply a difficult theory to accept.

The Remarried Woman and Her Natural Children

This entire study is an examination of the remarried woman in her various relationships, with a specific focus

being placed on the woman who enters a remarriage with custody of her natural children. As previously stated, this topic has been selected because of its commonality and ready availability within our society. Surprisingly though, it is the focus which is least researched, most ignored and generally overlooked, within the literature which this writer has reviewed. Nevertheless, an attempt has been made to review the material which does deal with remarried mothers who have no stepchildren. For this writer the natural mothering involved in a remarriage comprises the principal focus, not stepmothering .

As a group, it is likely that remarried mothers with no stepchildren have fewer conflicts than other women in stepfamilies. Usually these mothers have their children living with them and since the man in the household has no children, there are fewer combinations and permutations than in stepfamilies where both adults have children. There is no competitiveness between groups of children, and the stepfamily can relate to the children more as natural children. (Visher and Visher, 1979, p. 59)

Indeed, a remarried mother and her children are in a more favourable light, when the new husband has no children. Since the mother and her children have worked out their relationship over a number of years, and there are no visiting stepchildren, there is little conflict over different sets of values within the household. Love and trust have long since been established, however, this does provide the mother and her children with a past within which the stepfather plays no part. Possibly, he might feel

rejected, an outsider infringing upon their relationship because of their past bonding (Satir, 1972).

In Virginia Satir's (1972) work with blended families, she found that remarried mothers are often inclined to treat their children as private property, thus introducing a handicap at the very beginning. Or a woman may believe she does not want to impose upon her new husband in matters related to her children, where she feels he may not understand. This places the husband at a disadvantage again for now he is being totally shut out.

In Simon's Stepchild in the Family (1964), she dealt, albeit briefly, with the mother who brings children to the remarriage. Simon stated that mothers may feel guilty about having their new husband support their children. They may feel there is no balance in the family, for although the woman has married only one person, her husband has married a family. He must financially support them (at least partially), while she does not need to divide her finances at all.

Simon also felt that a child who looks too much like his natural father, acts too much like him, or has too much of his love or money, can antagonize his mother, as well as a stepfather. Thus, a child who may be financially independent some day, due to his natural father's contributions, could prove very frustrating for a new husband.

Simon concluded that, "the heart of the matter" (p.171), is a wife's love for her child by another man. This child's attachment to his natural father may bar the stepfather from being anything more than the mother's silent husband. Simon felt, that for the marriage to be successful, a new husband "... gives her a gift by acknowledging the existence of her former husband and accepts the fact that another man fathered the children in the house." (Simon, 1964, p.184)

Visher and Visher (1979) indicated a possible problem in this type of remarriage, due to the stepfather's lack of experience with children. He is thrust instantly into parenting and very often blunders whenever he exerts himself. If he withdraws, the mother is apt to feel let down and abandoned by her husband; or, if he stands firm, the mother may defend her children against him. Both situations are stressful.

One positive aspect pointed out to Visher and Visher (1979) by a mother in this type of situation, is that she and her husband have free time to themselves whenever her children are visiting their natural father. She feels very fortunate to have such an uncomplicated life situation, as compared to others in stepfamily arrangements.

If a remarried mother and her husband choose to have a child or children of their own, this may add a positive or negative element to their marriage. If the new child is seen as bringing the whole family together, cementing all

relationships, and providing love and satisfaction for all, then the advent of a common child is a bonus (Bernard, 1956; Simon, 1964; Gardner, 1977; Visher and Visher, 1979; Ambert, 1980). However, if a new child drives a wedge between husband and wife, due to the husband's feelings for his own child versus those for his stepchildren, a new child becomes a negative facet of the remarriage (Visher and Visher, 1979).

In conclusion, Bernard's statements of 1956 still hold true:

In general, then, the divorced women whose second marriages were reported to be successful were of the middle class, married to well-educated professional men; they were not plagued by the problems of alternating custody as much as divorced women whose second marriages were reported unsuccessful; they were intrusted more often by the court with the custody of their children; and they were surrounded by a favourable attitudinal environment. (Bernard, 1956. p.293)

It is unfortunate, that there is so little research done on these women, to either prove or disprove any of the above discussion. It must be assumed, due to the dearth of material, that the relationship of mother and natural child is beyond reflection or reproach. This writer is not willing at this time to give any definitive statements based on the review of the literature, as to the truth of these assumptions.

The Remarried Woman's Relationship With Her Ex-Spouse

The relationship with an ex-spouse can be a very difficult one for the remarried mother. Because of the

children she shares with her previous husband, she is compelled to be in contact with him in some type of relationship for a good length of time. Maddox (1975, p.126) stated that,"arranging when and how to meet the ex-spouse is one of today's most taxing social exercises." Many ex-spouses manage superficial interaction, many do not.

To many women their ex-husbands represent a "ghost" within their new family, a presence forever lurking in the shadows, although physically they know he is absent (Maddox, 1975). The ex-spouse can be a source of great irritation for both a remarried woman and her husband. Competition and varying degrees of jealousy are common when one spouse has incomplete emotional divorce from the former spouse. A woman's children can be seen as instruments and projections of her former spouse, and may not be accepted for themselves by the new husband (Sager et al, 1983).

Most reseachers see positive amd negative aspects in the woman's relationship with her ex-spouse. The Cruel Stepmother (1970), by Patricia Lowe contained an excellent section (mainly in anecdotal form) on the woman's relationship with her ex-spouse. She stated that the remarried mother must still talk to her ex-spouse, write to him, and strive for a smooth relationship with him for the benefit of the children, since he is still a great influence in their lives.

As the remains of the bitterness and hatred disappear, the relationship with the ex-spouse should improve, calm down

and be easier for everyone. Topics such as visitation, religion, and education, should be less complicated, and when the children are older, it should be possible to include them in some of the decision-making.

Lowe indicated that money is probably the biggest impediment to decent, well-mannered, relationships between ex-spouses. It can embitter in one way or another and affects current spouses as well. It touches decisions about everything and therefore it should be treated carefully.

Lowe stressed that communication is still the key to ex-spousal relationships. The remarried woman must put aside the end of her marital relationship, and look at her ex-spouse strictly as a parent to her child, nothing more. She must try for the welfare of her children never to erase or slur her ex-spouse. The best relationship a remarried woman can have with her ex-spouse is one of honest communication, always for the benefit of her children.

Duberman's (1975) study tested 51 remarried women, of whom 29% respond negatively when questioned about their ex-spouse, 59% are indifferent, and 12% speak positively. The four variables Duberman worked with are, age, length of previous marriage, religion, and social class. The only variable causing any difference in overall outlook is age. Younger women are more apt to feel indifferent or negative toward their ex-spouses than older wives.

Duberman also indicated that the ex-husband is usually

resented more by his former wife than by her husband. The resentment most often centers around money, because the remarried woman often feels her ex-husband should spend more money on her children, or be more regular in his child support payments.

Duberman concluded that the influence of an ex-spouse is usually negative in a remarriage. The ex-husband is considered an unwelcome intrusion on the present. Many women go out of their way to make life unpleasant for their ex-husband and his new wife, by influencing their children's attitude toward the new stepmother. According to Gardner (1977), natural mothers almost predictably are rivalrous with their children's stepmother, aside from the continuing feud with the ex-spouse.

Mayleas' Rewedded Bliss (1977), is a typical example of the "HOW TO" books readily available in bookstores today. These books service a vast number of men and women, who gravitate toward books dealing with life crises such as divorce and remarriage. In her chapter on ex-spouses, which is heavily interspersed with anecdotes which teach a lesson, Mayleas set out certain guidelines:

- a) The practice of avoidance should be respected. Declare a "detente" between yourself and your ex-spouse.
- b) Co-operate over money matters. If your current spouse and your ex-spouse can talk civilly, let them talk instead of you.

- c) Avoid conversation with your children about your ex-spouse. Do not allow your children to pit you and your ex-spouse against one another.
- d) Believe that peaceful co-existence is possible. "Vote for avoidance where that makes sense and opt for co-operation when the music has to be faced." (Mayleas, 1977, p. 219)

In conclusion, Mayleas indicated that the less ex-spouses see of each other, talk to each other, or remark on each other to the children, the better for all concerned. She is definite about the negative aspect of the relationship, and she advised to avoid it, rather than improve it.

Goetting's (1979) study explored the normative intergration or lack of it, associated with the former spouse relationship. Twenty divorced and remarried people, with children by a former marriage, take part in semi-structured interviews, to describe general interaction patterns and unusual incidents of concern, covering such topics as perpetuation of rapport, willingness to associate, and reciprocal influence in child-rearing behaviour.

From her study, Goetting felt that the former spouse relationship is not as lacking as has been suggested by other researchers she has cited. However, the relationship is far from perfect. Her findings are in agreement with those of Duberman (1975), who stated that a greater proportion of men than women are friendly toward their former spouse.

Goetting indicated that the divorce process may be more difficult for women than for men, and that the punishment incurred from that divorce may be generalized to the current ex-spouse relationship. Women may be less acceptant or more guarded in the interaction than men, due to a higher degree of stress experienced by the divorce.

Visher and Visher (1979) compiled an excellent, comprehensive overview of the relationship between ex-spouses. Although the book devotes only three pages to the topic, these three pages are qualitative and concise.

Visher and Visher claimed that the relationship between ex-spouses has an important effect upon the new couple relationship, and on the well-being of the children. In one regard, a co-operative relationship between the two ex-spouses enables the children to relate freely to each natural parent, and to stepparents. On the other hand, a smooth relationship between ex-spouses may be detrimental to the new couple's relationship.

Visher and Visher recommended co-operation between ex-spouses, but not to the extreme where the relationship might suggest an emotional involvement, instead of respect and mutual concern for the welfare of the children. Many couples find they are unable to have any sort of communication which does not result in conflict. They find the simplest way to avoid this is to have a minimum of contact. Visher and Visher suggested that couples in this category seek therapeutic

assistance in working through some of these difficulties.

Ahrons' (1981) study was based on the continuing co-parental relationship between divorced spouses one year following their divorce. Although this study does not deal with remarried ex-spouses, it is appropriate for this discussion.

Interviews covering a wide range of topics were conducted with 54 divorced couples, randomly selected from the 1977 divorce court records, in Dane County, Wisconsin. The study found a wide range of relational patterns among mother-custody pairs. One year after divorce, one-half continue to share major decisions about the children, while approximately one-quarter show less constant contact about issues concerning the children.

The central finding was that those parents who have a mutually supportive and co-operative co-parenting relationship are on much better terms all around, than were those who are more conflictual. It also found that divorced parents who are no longer spouses, maintain certain elements of their former spousal relationship long after the divorce.

Ahrons concluded that contact between divorced spouses has usually been perceived as an indication of unresolved marital issues. She cited Kressel and his colleagues as saying, "With a few notable exceptions, there was a general distrust of the ex-spouse's continuing involvement with each

other... and they drain emotional and physical energies that would more productively be spent in forming new relationships." (Ahrons, 1981, p.426) But this is not the case. Ahrons' findings suggested that many divorced couples continue to share some elements of friendship, thereby minimizing significant losses for both themselves and their children.

Thus, close examination of the literature dealing with ex-spousal relationships yields a variety of concepts. The clinicians and researchers suggest a positive, co-operative ex-spousal relationship, although they are forced to admit this is not always the case. A general review of this literature indicates that most people in the field are optimistic about the future of ex-spousal relationships. But, as of now, a remarried woman's relationship with her ex-spouse has a great many flaws yet to be dealt with.

The Remarried Woman's Relationship With Her Extended Family and Community

Although little time is devoted within the literature to the subject of the remarried woman's relationship with the extended family and community, it is imperative to include the topic within this study. The family of the remarried pair is often expected to function in the same way as a primary marriage family, despite the fact that, in addition to the new husband and wife, there may be two former spouses,

two sets of children, four sets of grandparents, and countless other relatives. New habits, roles, and arrangements need to be established, not only for the blended family itself, but also for the complex, extended, family (Espinoza and Newman, 1979).

The Grandparents

Kent (1980) indicated that during the period of single parenthood, grandparents may have played a major role in the family, especially if a woman and her children have returned to the parental home. This often results in grandparents usurping the mother's authority with her children. Kent also stated that grandparents of both former spouses have to re-establish new boundaries for themselves with the family members of the new marriage, so that they can serve as a source of support rather than conflict.

Maddox (1975) and Noble and Noble (1977) found that grandparents are unsettled by remarriage. Maddox felt they may panic at the thought of losing grandchildren, and intensify their efforts to remain in touch with the children. Grandparents can be overly protective, and be supportive of a remarried woman's new husband and new family, or can be destructive, by not accepting the new situation or the new stepchildren who may come with the remarriage.

Noble and Noble (1977) questioned the manipulation and discrimination by in-laws:

Why do grandparents manipulate and discriminate?

They might want to gain or retain power over the grandchildren or their parents, power to call the shots for whatever purpose they deem appropriate. They might be fearful of being overlooked, of being ignored, and so they strive to make their presence felt. They might want to express their disapproval of their child's new family in the strongest possible way or exert a primary claim to their natural grandchildren. They could even be hoping to break the new marriage apart. (p.79)

The Extended Family

The extended family occupies a position enveloping the remarried couple and their family. According to Maddox (1975) the wheel of remarriage brings wife, husband, and children, into conjunction with a whole array of new relatives -- cousins, aunts, nephews. Suddenly they mean something to each other. Questions are asked and relationships must be explained.

Kent (1980) spoke of "Kin Networks" (p.151) where family from a former spouse have blood relationships to the children in the family. The new networks of relatives that the new members bring, must also become established as a part of the family.

In Claire Berman's book Making It as a Stepparent (1980), she addressed herself directly to the remarried woman:

You or your spouse may have divorced mate number one but, when there are children involved, you soon will discover you have not divorced the aunts, uncles, grandparents of the first in-law family nor completely separated from the children's co-parent. Like it or not, your ex-mate and ex-family stay on as members of your new extended family. The marriage may be over, but many of the relationships linger on, for better or for worse. (Berman, 1980, p.146)

She also explained that most anxiety provoking situations are those, where members of the family past and family present are brought together for the sake of the children. Berman recommended trying to be mature, compromise, and making concessions in difficult extended family situations.

In Duberman's (1975) study, her Husband and Wife Relationship Scores indicated, that those men and women who feel themselves accepted by the extended family have the best relationship with their present spouses. Women report being asked questions such as the following by family and friends:

- a) Does it Work?
- b) How do the children get along?
- c) When are you going to have children of your own?

Remarried women conclude overall, that extended family and friends are very supportive toward their new families.

Finally, in Messinger's (1976) work with remarried families, she spoke of the role stresses of the remarriage. The rules, functions, and relationships, which continue to be tied in with the first marriage, as well as the roles, functions, and relationships, of the new union can create a very stressful situation. The complexities of the relationships, past and present, are poorly defined, making the position of the legally remarried family often a tenuous one.

The Community

Unfortunately, this review of the literature does not

include any specific references on the topic of the remarried woman's relationship with her community. One must assume that there are a host of invisible pressures placed upon her, by various organizations in her community, for example, political, religious, and community oriented groups. These groups regard the remarried woman and her family, with their own point of view, be it a positive or negative one, and they often proceed to treat the woman and her family accordingly.

Although the researchers who have been cited do not speak at length about the remarried woman and the extended family, this writer believes that this faction does play a prominent role in the life of a newly remarried woman. Good or bad relationships with the variety of extra people who form part of the new family, are very influential in the success or failure of a remarried woman's marriage.

The Remarried Woman as Stepmother

Although this study has attempted to limit itself to the focus of a remarried woman who is solely mothering, it would be unwise to ignore the issue of stepmothering. Many remarried women, who bring their natural children to their new marriage, automatically become involved in stepmother relationships. For a majority, the stepmothering is on a part-time basis. Assorted special occasions and holidays, as well as routine weekend visits from their new husband's natural children (who are living with his ex-wife), comprise

the part-time package. Then too, a significant number of women become full-time stepmothers, when they move into their new husband's life combining his children and her children, both from previous marriages. Whether the stepmothering is on a part or full-time basis, demands are placed upon the remarried woman, which are not present when she marries a man who has no children.

This topic is one of the most researched areas in the remarriage literature, yet the information on stepmothering is not over abundant. This writer has dealt with the topic last, because it is not the principal interest of this study.

Stepmothering

The current literature on stepparenting is quite limited with respect to empirical research. However, recently a few popular "HOW TO" books on step-living have been published, for example, The Cruel Stepmother. Lowe, 1970; The Second Wife. Baer, 1972; The Half Parent. Maddox, 1975; How to Live With Other People's Children. Noble and Noble, 1977; Stepparenting. Rosenbaum and Rosenbaum, 1977; Instant Parent. Kalter, 1979; Making it As a Stepparent. Berman, 1980 and others. All of these books attempt to guide the lives of new stepparents, by offering a set of anecdotes to be digested, and acted upon in reality.

Kompara (1980) spoke of one issue that stepmothers must face. In a remarriage, it is difficult to forget the

experience of both first marriages, and many times the stepchildren may offer regular reminders of the previous life they once shared with their natural parents.

According to Maddox (1975) both stepmother and stepfather are not clear on their roles:

...stepparents and stepchildren are related through the marriage of the stepparent to the children's natural parent. But what follows from that is not clear, legally, financially, or sexually. Stepparents are torn between conflicting ideals: that they be no more than a parent's spouse and that they be in some defined way as approximation of a parent, that they be both no parent and new parent. (Maddox, 1975, p.31)

In Maddox's own words the most common problems of stepparenting are as follows:

- a) Keeping the lid on feelings -- admitting hostile feelings is not easy.
- b) Stepparents live in a world of grand emotion. They see themselves as villains, then blame the stepchildren for having forced into the open an evil character that in normal circumstances would never emerge.
- c) The problem of shared authority.
- d) No chance to get used to parenting gradually.
- e) Lack of privacy.
- f) Tremendous pressure on husband and wife relationships.
- g) Nothing is simple for the stepparent. (Maddox, 1975, p.81)

In short, stepparents are "Defensive, misunderstood, exploited, querulous and a victim of other people's mistakes or misfortunes" (Maddox, 1975, p. 84).

Simon (1964) found that women can be jealous, hostile, competitive, and at times even cruel toward their husband's children. She believed that a stepmother's problems are rooted in the triangular relationship between the marital pair and the stepchildren. The problems Simon cited are as follows:

- a) The way a woman loves her husband creates her first problem. She often feels she must love his children as deeply as he does and this is an impossibility.
- b) She fears she will lose her husband's love if she and his child are at loggerheads.
- c) The child's presence may make her feel guilty in her remarriage, especially if she was involved with the father prior to the break-up of his previous marriage.
- d) Guilt and jealousy can make her desperate for the children to accept her.

Lowe (1970) also reported on a remarried woman's relationship with her stepchildren. She felt the stepmother must work toward winning the respect and affection of the children, instead of worrying about love. A stepmother must try to relate to the child, and be unhurried, interested, fair, and gentle. Lowe concluded that love between stepmother and stepchild will come through time and shared experiences, rather than immediately upon request.

In Duberman's (1975) study of stepmother/stepchild relationships, she found young stepmothers more likely to

have good relationships than older ones, a good husband/wife relationship often equals a good stepparent/stepchild relationship, and stepmothering to be more difficult than mothering. Duberman also stated that there is poorer role adjustment when a stepmother's natural children do not live in the same residence as her stepchildren.

A number of studies have mentioned the most common problem area of stepmothering to be disciplining the children, and having unrealistic expectations of instant love and instant familial feelings (Lowe, 1970; Kalter, 1979; Williams and Ohern, 1979; Kompara, 1980). It must not be concluded, however, that stepmothering is strictly a negative issue. Rather, it is a relationship that must take root gradually through much time and effort. It cannot be pushed toward immediate success.

Part-time Stepmothering

Anne Simon (1964) called the weekend stepmother "the remote control stepmother" (p.196). Both Simon (1964) and Baer (1972) devoted a section of their discussion to part-time stepmothering.

Simon (1964) saw the part-time stepmother as being the bearer of certain basic stresses. For example, she may resent the money going to her husband's children, and the affection so lavishly given to them on their visits. The stepmother may feel she must prove she is the better wife,

and she may also forget in her enthusiasm, that her stepchildren's natural mother does not need a replacement, even temporarily. Stepmothers and mothers, according to Simon (1964), are in fierce competition, and as she pointed out, "If you want to be maternal, get a mother's satisfactions, love a child as if it was yours, look somewhere else; you cannot count on your stepchild to fill these needs." (Simon, 1964, p.196). There is no denying maternal love. It is always there despite meeting the requirements of good stepmothering. A stepmother, no matter how successful, cannot compete with the natural mother/child bonding which predates her affiliation with her stepchild.

Baer (1972) also agreed that weekend stepmothering is not mothering. She felt that a stepmother must understand, her main responsibility is to her husband and to her marriage. The children fit into it only as they pertain to the husband's needs, feelings, and the marital relationship. The stepmother does not need to love the children, however, she must be free to be mistress of her own house and express her own values.

Full-time Stepmothering

Baer (1972) saw a big difference between part-time and full-time stepmothering. A full-time stepmother should purposely attempt to do things as a family, always being prepared for awkward moments and difficult situations as a result of the various relationships. There is never a break

for her and many a remarriage has failed because of the frustrations brought on by stepparenting and stepsibling rivalry. As stated previously, stepmothering is often a precarious position to be in, one which can be utilized or destroyed as a result of the interaction of stepmother and stepchild.

The Stepmother Stereotype

The wicked stepmother stereotype survives because it serves some adaptive function in our society. For many generations, children have been indoctrinated with this stereotype, although it has caused great suffering for both the stepmothers and stepchildren.

In Radomisli's (1981) work on stereotypes and stepmothering, he stated that the detrimental effects of the stereotype are obvious. Children's introduction to their stepmother is colored by their expectation of encountering a personification of evil:

Decent women... begin to doubt their own decency, excoriate themselves mercilessly for the slightest sign of impatience or anger, are prevented by their constant self-vigilance from enjoying the new relationship with their step-children, and cannot assert their rightful adult roles because they are so afraid of justifying the dreadful expectations of all concerned. (Radomisli, 1981, p.122)

Schulman (1979) found that in a blended family fantasies and hopes play larger parts than in the instant family. Projection tends to occur and be played out more intensively, and in a more complicated way.

In the "stepmother myth", initially fostered by storybook tales such as Cinderella and Snow White, the stepmother is portrayed as wicked and unflinching. The wicked stepmother is neither "wicked" or "cruel" believed Schulman (1979), but instead, she is a woman who may need the support of her husband. If her relationship with him is problematic, no matter what the overt intention is, she may relate negatively in her stepmother role. A stepmother who is feeling unloved, misunderstood, or exploited, by her husband and stepchildren, can become jealous, distrustful, and hostile, toward what she feels is the source of her problems.

Espinoza and Newman (1979) and Ambert (1980) agreed that stepmothering is the toughest job of all remarriage relationships. It suffers from the worst reputation and therefore, the best time to become a stepmother, is when the children are young, before they have formed loyalties and attachments. Perhaps because it is the woman who cares for the children, and therefore bears the brunt of any conflicts which arise, it seems more socially acceptable to be a stepfather rather than a stepmother.

Stepmothering is a possible facet of the remarried woman's relationships, one which may play an integral role in her life. Although it has not been given maximum importance in this study, it is evident through the opinions of the various clinicians and writers, that stepmothering is a vibrant, multi-faceted, and controversial relationship.

Summary

Women in remarriage relationships are an ever-increasing group although they appear to be underemphasized in the current literature on the topic. They react to each and every member of their immediate families, as well as to external pressures brought on by ex-spouses, extended family, and community.

Unfortunately, the topic is still comparatively new with regard to the empirical findings of the researchers and clinicians. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to provide an unbiased, general overview of the remarried woman's relationships, as seen through the eyes of the professionals, as well as through the eyes of the popular writers of our time. Both researchers and writers alike agree that the topic is under-researched, and is only now beginning to open up on paper.

Thus, in her relationships, a remarried woman has many vistas to cope with, some more successfully and with greater fulfillment than others. Positives and negatives are present within every relationship a remarried woman encounters.

Chapter III

The Interview

The Rationale Behind the Interview

Speaking with remarried women in a realistic, modern day situation, is an essential component of this study. When exploring human issues and problems, reading the opinions and findings of the researchers and clinicians is one avenue to follow. However, interviewing 10 middle class, suburban women provides a complementary path, a path which is of equal importance. Only by interviewing 10 women, would this writer be able to examine the implications of the review of the literature in a realistic light. The assets of interview data, for example, the open-ended questions allowing room for clarification, and the observation of body language and non-verbal cues, are able to shed new light on the cold impersonality of the literature findings. Without the findings yielded by the interviewees, the review of the literature could appear hollow and out of proportion, despite the fact that much of the literature itself is based on self-report and interview data. Thus, it is only through the truths apparent through the interviews, that these results are able to move into clearer focus.

Preparing for the Interview

The 10 interview participants were selected through very informal means. They were 10 women whose names this writer had collected through a network of friends and acquaintances.

They were all remarried as a result of divorce, and had their natural children living with them. Some were stepmothers as well, others were not. These women all resided in middle to upper-middle class areas of Winnipeg, Manitoba. They were between the ages of 32 to 42, and 9 of the 10 were of Jewish persuasion. All 10 women had a minimum of Grade 12 education, with 3 being university graduates and six working outside of the home. Obviously this group could not be considered a random sample of the population, and therefore caution was exercised in the generalization of findings.

Each of the 10 women was telephoned by this writer in order to solicit their support. After the initial introduction was made, this writer explained to the possible participant the rationale for conducting the interview, what types of questions the interviewer would ask, the general scope of the questioning, and assured the participant of complete confidence and anonymity. Sample questions were read to each woman to demonstrate the generality and lack of intimacy involved in answering the questions. The participant was also assured that she need not answer any questions she did not feel comfortable with, and that the interview would not occupy more than one hour of her time. All 10 women were glad to participate in the interview, and immediately made appointments to be held within the privacy of their own home during the following three weeks.

The Manner of Presentation

The interviews were conducted on a very casual and relaxed basis. Most often the interviewer and interviewee chatted over a cup of coffee before the interview began and this seemed an excellent ice-breaker for both individuals. The women appeared nervous at first, but quickly relaxed when they realized how non-threatening the interview was. A great deal of information was provided before the tape recorder was turned on. The interviewer considered this a positive step toward the success of the interview.

Prior to beginning the sessions, each woman was handed a written consent form (See Appendix) which she was instructed to read immediately and sign before beginning. The consent form once more assured her of her anonymity, that the interviewer was the sole person to have access to the tape, and that the tape would be erased within 6 weeks following the session. The consent form also thanked the participant for her cooperation in the project. Most women signed the paper without even reading it, since a rapport had already been established between the interviewer and interviewee.

Before beginning the tape, the interviewer again reviewed the procedure, stating one final time that the participant should use no names in her conversation, and should not answer any questions she would rather not touch upon. By the time the tape recorder went on the participants were relaxed, smiling, and anxious to tell their stories.

The Structuring of the Interview

The interview was not rigidly structured and lasted anywhere from 40 to 90 minutes. It was composed of four distinct subject areas, which could be answered as minimally or as extensively as each participant desired. The four topics were open-ended and could be interpreted in a variety of ways.

The interviewer presented the topics as loosely as possible. The section dealing with the previous marital history and current marriage was the only area which did contain a few precise questions, for example, how long was your first marriage?; how many children do you have? The second section was the broadest, dealing with the participant's overall feeling of well-being, and her perceptions of the stresses of remarried life, for example, in her relationships with her current spouse, natural children, stepchildren (if applicable), ex-spouse and his wife, and extended family and community. The last two topics dealt with advice for another woman new to a similar situation, and coping mechanisms of the remarried woman. A postscript added to the interview asked each woman how traditional she felt her remarriage was.

Reactions and Opinion of the Interviewees

From beginning to end the interviewees were anxious to please the interviewer by discussing each topic as completely and honestly as possible. They were gracious hostesses who

immediately established a warm rapport with the interviewer.

Each interview was completed without difficulty. The women were only slightly uneasy, stating that the interviewer had excellently prepared them on the telephone for the format of the session. They were willing to discuss the various relationships within their remarriage with candor and awareness. They did not consider the interview too long, too intense, or too prying. They were satisfied with the conversation and were quick to point out the ease of the exchange between the interviewer and interviewee. Seven of the 10 women admitted they thoroughly enjoyed the catharsis that the interview afforded them, especially with someone who could be empathic toward their situation. At the end of the session, all of the women were left looking forward to the summary of the findings which the interviewer promised to mail to them upon completion of this study.

The Interview

1. Outline your previous marital history and current situation.

A. Age -

Religion -

Education -

Birth Place -

B. Length of previous marriage -

Reasons for termination -

Children -

Ex-Spouse - remarried? children?

Process of separation -

C. New Children -

Husbands' first, second, etc. marriage -

Children from his first marriage -

D. Reasons for remarriage -

2. How do you perceive the stresses of remarried life?

- your overall feeling of well-being.
- relationship with current spouse.
- relationship with your own children.
- relationship with your stepchildren.
- relationship with your ex-spouse.
- relationships between any of the above of which you are in the middle.
- conflict in or between any of your roles.
- relationship with extended family.

3. What advice would you give to a woman new to this situation?

4. How and by whom have you been helped to deal with your present situation?

5. Feminist vs. traditional outlook within this marriage?

INTERVIEW CATEGORIES FORMAT

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RELEVENT MARITAL HISTORY	POSITIVE ADJUSTMENTS	PROBLEM AREAS	COPING MECHANISMS (MENTAL HEALTH)	FEMINIST TRADITIONAL	MISCELLANEOUS

Chapter IV

Interview Findings of Remarriage Experience

Of the 10 women who were interviewed for this study, not one expressed regret concerning her decision to remarry, yet all 10 spoke of the "hard work" involved with their new marriages, when asked about their overall well-being, these women described themselves as "happy, content, and fulfilled" individuals. However, as their sessions unfolded, the dedication and conscious effort they poured into their marriages, in order to produce the happiness and fulfillment, was clearly evident to the interviewer.

In the following chapter the data collected from the interviews is presented, in addition to the results of the findings. The data is categorized under the topic headings of relevant marital history, positive adjustments including overall well-being, problem areas, coping mechanisms, feminist versus traditional ideology, and a miscellaneous section talking of public image, and offering advice to others. The results of the 10 interviews are integrated within the presentation of each category.

Relevant Marital History

Basic Introductory Information

All 10 women who were interviewed were between the ages of 32 and 42 at the time of the interview. Eight of the 10

women were born in Winnipeg, with 1 being born in Cincinnati, and 1 being a native of Portugal but having resided in Canada for 17 years, specifically in Winnipeg for 5 years. Nine of the 10 women had a minimum of Grade 12 education, with 3 being university graduates as well. Six women worked either part or full-time outside the home, and 3 of the 10 women were married to professional men. All 10 women were part of the middle to upper middle class socio-economic strata. All 10 women were married a second time as a result of divorce, and had their natural children from their first marriage living with them. Eight of these women were stepmothers as well, with 1 never seeing her stepdaughter, 4 being part-time stepmothers (specific days often set up legally), and the remaining 3 being full-time stepmothers.

The following chart re-iterates in more detail the information stated above, as well as further data regarding the 10 interviewees:

Overview Chart of Interviewees

INTERVIEWEES	AGE	PLACE OF BIRTH	RELIGION	EDUCATION	WORK OUTSIDE THE HOME	MARITAL STATUS	LENGTH OF PREVIOUS MARRIAGE	LENGTH OF SEPARATION	NO. YEARS REMARRIED	MARITAL STATUS OF HUSBAND	S.E.S.	LOCATION OF EX-HUSBAND	NO. & AGES OF NATURAL CHILDREN	NO. & AGES OF STEP CHILDREN	BASIS OF STEP MOTHERING
1	32	WINNIPEG	JEWISH	XII	NO	2ND MARRIAGE	9	--	1.5	1ST MARRIAGE	MID.	AWAY	B - 12 B - 10	--	---
2	39	WINNIPEG	JEWISH	X11	YES - P.T.	↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↓	13	4	3	2ND MARRIAGE	UP.MID	WINNIPEG	G - 14 G - 11	B - 16	NO SPECIFIC TIME
3	38	WINNIPEG	JEWISH	X11	YES - P.T.		6	3	5.5	2ND MARRIAGE	MID.	AWAY	B - 13 B - 10	G - 12 G - 10	EVERY SUNDAY
4	42	PORTUGAL	R.C.	U.	NO		14	9 MO.	3	2ND MARRIAGE	MID.	AWAY	G - 14 G - 12 G - 9	G - G - G -	NO SPECIFIC TIME
5	38	WINNIPEG	JEWISH	X11	YES - P.T.		15	13	1.0	2ND MARRIAGE WIDOWER	MID.	AWAY	B - 17 G - 14	B - 6	FULL TIME
6	40	WINNIPEG	JEWISH	X11	YES - F.T.		16.5	--	5	2ND MARRIAGE	MID.	WINNIPEG	G - 20 B - 18 B - 17	B - 19 G - 17	NO SPECIFIC TIME
7	38	CINCINATI	JEWISH	X11	NO		11.5	3	4	2ND MARRIAGE	MID.	AWAY	G - 19 G - 16 B - 14 B - 1.5	G - 8 ADOPTED	NEVER
8	37	WINNIPEG	JEWISH	X11	NO		6	12	3	2ND MARRIAGE	UP.MID.	AWAY	B - 17 B - 15	B - 15	FULL TIME
9	32	WINNIPEG	JEWISH	UNV	YES - F.T.		7	1.5	2	2ND MARRIAGE	MID.	WINNIPEG	G - 9 B - 7 B - 5	B - 4 ADOPTED	FULL TIME
10	33	WINNIPEG	JEWISH	UNV	YES - P.T.		6	2	4.5	2ND MARRIAGE	UP.MID	WINNIPEG	B - 9 G - 6 G - 3	--	---

* P.T. - Part-Time
F.T. - Full-Time

Reasons for Termination of the Previous Marriage

First marriages among the 10 interviewees ranged between 6 to 17 years, with the women having given birth to 2 or 3 children during that time span. The women spoke of their previous marriages with honesty and very little emotion, as if the anger and frustration of those years had long ago been spent.

Three women blamed the existence of continual affairs, or another woman, as the cause of the demise of their marriages. Five spoke of being too young in the first place to marry, one attributed her separation to lack of communication, and one would not respond. The reasons for marriage termination were as follows:

- 1) "It started when we got married."
- 2) "It was a difficult break-up. We started going out when we were 14{ years old. We just grew apart, we were both growing differently. I was miserable so I made him miserable, to the point of leaving."
- 3) This participant did not choose to discuss her first marriage at all.
- 4) "It ended after 6 years of my ex having continual affairs. He finally left."
- 5) "Our marriage should never have been. I was too young when I got married. I shouldn't have gotten married. I wanted out. I couldn't live with it anymore. My husband gambled, there was never enough money, there were arguments, it was

just very difficult. I told him to leave, but he didn't want to. We separated once for a year and tried again. But it didn't work. It was awful. Finally I got him to leave for good. It was never, never, right."

7) "We were married when we were children. One of us grew up and one of us didn't. I didn't need a fourth child, I needed a husband I just couldn't live with someone who was immature and irresponsible. I felt unhappy after the first 3 months of marriage, but I stuck it out. I finally asked him to leave and he did."

8) "It was a young marriage and we were children. It's nobody's fault. It was a mutual decision -- it just came to an end but it was long in coming. He left. I never would have left."

9) "There was a total lack of communication and trust. My spouse was very close-mouthed and there were a lot of professional stresses on both of us. He exploded, and to run away from the problems was easier than to tell me about them. I found out about them afterwards. Basically he had a mini nervous breakdown, packed up his stuff, and ran away.

I was shocked when the separation occurred. I has no idea how much he was suffering emotionally. Our youngest child was not a planned pregnancy and that created a lot of stress, because he was very happy with two children. I guess the pregnancy created problems which escalated. I

had no idea this was going to happen. I knew he was having a physical problem, which we thought at the time was gall bladder, but I had no idea of anything else. No idea whatsoever."

- 10) "The last year was very rocky. My husband seemed very unhappy. He was seeing a psychiatrist at one point because he said he was in a rut. He was totally discontented with our life. He would make statements like 'I wish I could run away and live in a beach hut on Malibu Beach.'

It was not a mutual split. It was a case of his destroying the marriage over a period of time, to such an extent that I finally asked him to leave. For me it was sudden, even though I knew there were problems. Yet I felt I could handle the problems. So when the split actually occurred and I found out some of the truth behind the split, (there was another woman) I felt totally rejected.

Of the 10 ex-spouses, 7 had remarried, and 4 fathered natural or stepchildren with their new wives. Four were living in Winnipeg at the present time.

The Process of Separation

Seven of the 10 participants considered the process of separation a "scary" but positive experience. They spoke in glowing terms with eyes shining, of their time of freedom, independence, and challenge. The actual time spent between the end of the first marriage and the onset of an intense new relationship was between 9 months and 13 years, with the

average being about 2 years. Seven spoke of its impact on their children as a key issue, one cited money as her key problem, and four spoke of seeking professional help at this time. Two of the women indicated the complete absence of a separation process, due to involvement with their second husband prior to the end of the first marriage. The commentary on this topic was as follows:

- 1) "It was scary. I felt secure with what I was doing and I knew I was doing the right thing but it was also scary for the kids. They were afraid of my ex. It was an uptight, uncomfortable, feeling."
- 2) "It was scary, but really exciting. I had confidence in myself, and I had a wonderful support system of family and friends. It was a positive experience for me. I loved it. Here I was in my early thirties on my own with alot of responsibility."
- 3) "There were highs and lows, especially lows. I think I was very selfish at the time. I didn't realize in the circumstances that my children were suffering too. It took about 3 months until I got past myself. I made sure they were fed, and cleaned, and everything. I remember one night I was making supper, and I sat down with them, and my little one said, 'Hey, Mom is having supper with us' and that was the first time I realized I was being very selfish. I found alot of strength at the time. I gave away all my china, I didn't think I would ever be married again."

4) "My marriage really ended at least 4 years before we actually lived apart. During that time we split 2 times for about 3 months each time. He never let go during that time. He was a constant presence.

After the final split I went to the Family Services Association and participated in group therapy, which helped a lot. Thank goodness, I was finally free. The day after he left I changed locks and that was it. I had a new job and I knew I would survive. We had just moved to Winnipeg and I worried about lack of friends, but I made it."

5) "It was difficult for me. I received no child support or alimony. I moved back to Winnipeg from Los Angeles and he never followed me to try and bring me back. The first few weeks were hell, but I had absolutely no regrets. I never thought I would have enough guts to leave. It took me years and years. But when you finally know you're going to leave, nothing can stop you.

It was not easy with children, but nothing frightened me. Nothing mattered. I was free of him."

6) "I had no separation time. I was involved with my present spouse during the marriage. When we separated, I sold my house, and then my husband moved in with me a couple of months after.

I really was not alone. There were times when I wondered if my present husband would really end up with me or not.

I did have thoughts of how I would manage alone -- but I was never alone."

7) "I was 30 years old and for the first time I was on my own. I had gone from a domineering mother straight to a domineering husband. I found myself in a generation of people sleeping around and I found it hard. I slept with my ex for a long time afterward. It was easier and more comfortable than to find someone else. Then I couldn't handle it seeing him around town. So I went to a psychologist who told me I had to start making it on my own, and live my own life and stop holding on to the past. I took my kids camping myself. That was the turning point. Money was no problem, my ex was fair and my parents helped me a great deal. I had a lot of friends, I dated a lot of people, and I honestly had a good time. I had two very important romances, one even went as far as an engagement. I wasn't lonely. I had a good time. I realized that I didn't need to be married. I didn't need someone to support me. I got a good job in a doctor's office and I could look after myself."

8) "It was hard in the beginning. But I think any change is hard. Later you adjust. It is not the horror it is made out to be. I was happy. I was well-adjusted. I had wonderful parents who helped me. That's the key. I wasn't worried about getting remarried. That was never a problem. My ex was rarely around. He did a lot of travelling and I

was really in charge of everything."

- 9) "At the very beginning I was a mess. In the first 6 weeks I could barely cope with myself, never mind the my children. I was very afraid, I was very lonely. I started to pick myself up when my ex threatened to take my kids away if I didn't.

In that whole 1{ years alone I never lost sight of my kids. I busied myself. I was working part-time, I went back to university at night, I began to see my girlfriends and go out again.

I started reading ferociously. I tried not to leave myself any free time at all. I was very lucky. All of a sudden the phone started ringing and people started asking me out. What an ego trip for me! I loved my freedom. I missed not having a companion but I loved no one to answer to. After the first 6 weeks, I did beautifully. The outside world didn't know what was going on inside."

- 10) "It was difficult and scary. I was very young, just 27 at the time. I had a newborn baby, I didn't know what the future held in store. I felt totally rejected by my husband. I had no confidence in myself, I had never managed the house before, everything had to be learned.

Thank heavens my parents stuck by me. It was a difficult time for me, especially the first few months. Any woman who has just had a baby knows that post partum is not a peak time. She is tired, days seem to run into one

another. You can be depressed in the best situation, never mind what I had. The first months I remember next to nothing, other than looking after this baby, sitting and crying, it was winter, my husband was gone, and it all became a blank. I started to surface in the spring -- I started going out with friends. I felt better about myself, men started asking me out. Things definitely started to take shape again.

I was seeing a psychologist the whole time, who was excellent. Things were not calm with my ex. There were constant battles, lawyers' letters, accusations were non-stop. It was a very difficult period for me, although as time went on it did get easier. By the time my baby was 6 months old, I was in control. I was coping very well with the home, money matters, my children were fine, I had a good job -- things were much, much better, and continued to improve right along."

Reasons for Remarriage

Of the 10 participants in this study, only 1 remarried a man who had never been married before. Of the other 9 men, 1 was a widower and 8 were divorced. All 9 had been married one time before. In 3 cases, the husband's natural or adopted (in two situations) children from his previous marriage lived with the remarried couple. In 4 situations the husband's natural children lived with his ex-spouse, and visited with their father and his new wife sporadically.

Nine women stated they had remarried for love, companionship, and sharing of interests and goals. They spoke very matter-of-factly and intellectually of their reasons for remarriage. Yet, the interviewer never doubted their genuine love for their new husband, as illustrated by their facial expressions and relaxation. Five did speak of their choice as a new "father" for their children. No one spoke of finances and security as reasons for remarriage, perhaps due to the socio-economic bracket of these women to begin with.

Reasons for remarriage were very short and to the point:

- 1) "The love for this new man. I felt he would be a good father."
- 2) "I fell in love. I wanted to share my life with him. I thought how nice it would be for my children to be a total family unit again. My kids fell in love with him instantly. He married all of us and we all married him."
- 3) "He made me feel good. He was the only one who could make me laugh. I was very, very at ease with him. I didn't have to put on an act to try to catch anyone."
- 4) "I was scared. How will this man relate to my three daughters? I needed support and I loved this man. But you know how you hear horror stories about men and stepdaughters. I worried, but nothing ever happened."
- 5) "I always wanted to get remarried. Every woman wants security. Nobody could replace my children's father --

they were too old for that. That wasn't the reason. I simply fell in love!"

6) "For some people marriage isn't the answer and for some others, they just have to be married. I just couldn't see myself living with this man forever and not being married. There is a different feeling when you are married. It was just a natural step."

7) "I am family oriented. I wanted someone to snuggle with, to grow old with, to talk to, to take care of me if necessary, a father for my kids, a strong male figure other than my father.

This was someone I really wanted to be with all the time. We had a lot of shared goals, same ambitions, we felt the same about Judaism."

8) "I met somebody who was more the way I was. We had things in common and he was kind, generous -- the right person for me. He got along well with my kids.

I never would have married him if he didn't. Absolutely. The kids came first."

9) "He had the characteristics I liked. He was full of life, high energy level, his own man, the opposite to my ex-spouse. He was a man of true conviction. I was very attracted to him, he loved my kids, and was good with his own son.

I liked him, I admired him, I respected him, I loved him. Those were the reasons I chose him. I didn't choose

marriage. I want to make that distinction clear. I was happy living together, but he pushed marriage. So we got married."

- 10) "I fell in love with this man. He seemed the opposite of my first husband in many ways. He was everything I wanted in a man. I trusted him, admired him, I was attracted to him, he was wonderful to my children and they seemed to take to him immediately. I know that brought him a lot closer to my heart. We had the same interests and goals in life, and I felt we would be good together."

Positive Adjustments to Remarriage

Remarriage is a major commitment for both a man and a woman. In this writer's perception, it is a much more intellectual and educated decision than was a first marriage; it is a decision brought on by experience, hurt, past and present love, uncertainty, and fear of the future. Each woman enters her remarriage with the same hopes with which she entered her first marriage, and a greater ability to cope with whatever situations might lie ahead.

The Overall Feeling of Well-Being

All of the 10 remarried women had been married between 1 to 5 years with the average being about 3.4 years. Of the 10 women, only 2 indicated other feelings besides happiness, fulfillment, and contentment. It is possible that these 8 women were emphasizing the "bright" side of their remarriages

for purposes of the interview, or were not wishing to admit more of their day-to-day reality, even to themselves. The 2 women who did admit to having heavy feelings of harrassment and responsibility within their remarriages, were both university graduates with young children, rather than women with more grown up familes.

How did these women feel on a general day to day basis?

- 1) "Good, satisfied."
- 2) "I feel very content whereas, I hadn't felt this way before."
- 3) "Super -- NOW!"
- 4) "Very fulfilled. I never knew this could exist. I never experienced this kind of marriage before!"
- 5) "Wonderful. I am very, very happy. My children are happy, which is very important. It's like a fairy tale. It's unbelievable. I know many people find it hard to believe you can have a second relationship and be as happy as I am. There are problems but these are minor compared to what I had before."
- 6) "Happy. There are money problems because of the circumstances of my spouse supporting his ex-wife and children. I don't ask for very much. I am very content."
- 7) "Happiness, contentment, fulfillment, peace. I married my best friend. The marriage is as comfortable as on old pair of slippers. This is what I expect marriage to be. This is what I always wanted marriage to be."

- 8) "Wonderful. I'm happy. I feel well, I relate to people well, but I always did. I'm outgoing, sociable, the circumstances are good and when they're good, I flourish."
- 9) "Harried. Our physical space is not terrific. We are a large family in cramped living space. Harried because I am a working parent, but content -- contentedly harried."
- 10) "Generally, I'm happy and content. There are times when it is difficult, because of so many responsibilities and obligations, many self-imposed, I might add. I usually am happy, but I rarely feel free."

The Relationship With Her Current Spouse

Of the 10 interviewees, 6 spoke of their marital relationship in totally positive terms, without reservation, describing their relationship in terms of "good friends", "love, caring and sharing." Four admitted to stresses in the relationship, yet they did not feel this distracted from the positive nature of their relationships. Stresses were due to interference from past relationships, differences in disciplining, disputes over children, and volatile personalities. Money or sex was not considered a point of contention in any relationship.

- 1) "Good friends. We respect each other. There is love, caring, sharing -- all the good things."
- 2) "We are very close, very positive. It is an excellent relationship, with only the odd argument because he spoils my children! There are no surprises, there is a very

good, happy home environment."

- 3) "Prior to this year it was very bumpy, due to his previous relationship. Ninety percent of our disagreements related to his past relationship and that has put quite a strain on our relationship, to this day. But in the last year things have been better. I've always had a low opinion of myself but now things are taking the right turn. We're both people who like to be home and have friends in, rather than go out. He is a better mixer than I am. He is a shoulder for me to lean on. We have a very affectionate relationship -- we hold hands and we like to maintain contact. His past relationship was apparently very cool."
- 4) "Beautiful! We are growing together, we are sharing everything in our life. I think he is the most important person for me, and me for him. We treasure our time together, we try to have time just for ourselves. It is a very vital and beautiful relationship."
- 5) "He is a friend and he is very romantic. We've been married almost a year, but we are still in the courting stage. He still sends me flowers and buys me special gifts. It never ends. He is concerned about me that I don't overwork, how I am coping. I know he is always there for me. He wants to make me happy, and I am. If I ever got deathly ill, would someone be there? No question about it, he would be there."

- 6) "It is open. We talk a lot about how we feel. We try to work out things that are wrong. He is very definite in his ideas on how to raise the children and money matters. I'm more lax in that respect, I'm more lenient, whereas he is more rigid about some things with the kids. There are ups and downs, good times and bad."
- 7) "He's a person you can talk to. Yet he's funny, he's generous, he's what my dad is to my mum and that's what I wanted. It is a comfortable, exciting relationship, everything I would want a relationship to be."
- 8) "When you get married later you make sure you know each other. We have the same ideas, we like to do the same things. I like a lot of privacy and he gives it to me. I don't cramp his style. He likes to gamble, he's out a lot, and that's fine. I wouldn't want him home under my feet all day, so we get along. I know what he likes and I give it to him. He knows what I like and he gives it to me."
- 9) "It is a little bit of a tense situation, because we are both trying to run the household from our own perspective, and haven't quite got our act together yet, on life in general. There are some stresses in our marriage which evolve around our children. Our relationship together as man and wife is wonderful. We understand each other. Personally we do very well. We feel for each other, we're on the same wavelength. But there are some tensions in the marriage which revolve around the children."

10) "We're both dominant, volatile people who never let the other get the better of us. We have many discussions and arguments, but we settle a lot of issues together. I think we get frustrated with one another sometimes, and it can take days before we hash out what's bothering us, but we always do. The relationship is warm, open, and often full of humor, because my spouse has quite a sense of humor.

My spouse is very possessive of me and that is hard for me, but I think as time goes on I am showing him that he need not be so possessive. His first wife was unfaithful to him and I know that is part of his concern. He doesn't mean to compare us, but I think subconsciously he worries that I might be unfaithful, too."

The Relationship With Her Natural Children

The relationship with her natural children from the previous marriage, was declared a positive aspect of the remarriage by seven women, two women also having borne children with their new husbands. The women did not see the remarriage as having any negative impact upon their children. Most of the women went on to warmly describe their husband's relationships as well, with their children. That perspective is briefly reviewed, following these remarks about mother and child relationships:

1) "It hasn't changed. They have accepted their new father and rarely mention their real father."

- 2) "It is very good. Maybe we were a touch closer before because they were so dependent on me. Now there is a lot of sharing between me and their stepfather. It is not perfect like it once was. They have grown up and are not as easy as they once were. Sometimes I am miffed that they come to their stepfather instead of me, but that is what I really want."
- 3) "They were very young. My little one didn't even know his dad.
My boys have known my husband since they were born and they've always called him 'Uncle', to this day. The little one calls him "Daddy" quite often.
My oldest one is a little closer to me, because we went through a very bad time together. Physically and characteristically, he is his father, and that is hard for me."
- 4) "It is much better than before. During the last 6 years before I remarried, I was always telling them I was sick, or I had a headache, and I was never in the mood to do anything for them."
- 5) "It is very good, very stable, very close. If there's a problem we work it out together. My ex was always working, so I was always there for them. Now they come to both my husband and myself. They're very close to me. They're good children. They're not on drugs or anything. When we say no to them, it's no."

- 6) "It is changed because of my spouse. Instead of me giving in as much to my kids, I ask more of them, instead of giving into them. Other than that, our relationship hasn't changed that much. It is different because they are older, that's all."
- 7) "Great! I am really fortunate they are very nice children, young adults actually. They're lazy, sloppy, but basically really good people. I don't approve of everything they do, but they have their own lives to lead. We talk, there is a lot of communication. I insist we have dinner together every night."
- 8) "Nothing has changed. We have a very close relationship. We're very affectionate. To me they're still my babies. As far as I know, I know all about them, for as much as a mother can know."
- 9) "My relationship with my daughter is not terrific. She and I are very similar in nature and we are often on a collision course. She has always been difficult to deal with and is very demanding. She always wants her own way. She has not accepted my new husband and she is still manipulating incredibly. She has never accepted the divorce, adores her father, and thinks there will still be a reconciliation between us, even though we are both remarried."

My 7 year old and I are unbelievably close. I adore him and he adores me. He has transferred all of his love for his father to me.

My 5 year old has always just had a mother. He is my baby. We are very close."

10) "I have a very close relationship with them. It always has been. I love them dearly. They go to their father, and I know that my son especially, has a good relationship with him.

But, I feel what they have with me is very strong. I think they are very happy with their life with me and my husband."

The following statements provide a clearer picture of the husbands' relationships with their wives' children, through the women's point of view. In three situations the husband's input is seen as a catalyst in changing the women's relationships with their children.

1) "He is a little more strict than I am. He expects more from them."

2) No further comment.

3) "Sometimes if they misbehave he says he's not putting up with this anymore, and he makes me feel guilty. I've said to him 'What do you want me to do? Should I put them back in my stomach? I'm afraid I can't do that. Don't make me feel guilty because of something they have done. It is not because they are my children. They have done

something any kid would do."

- 4) "My husband's relationship is very good with them."
- 5) "My husband gets along well with them."
- 6) "My spouse is good with them. He is not afraid to approach them, he says what he feels on what he wants from them. I think they find it easy to talk to him. I think they still go to me with problems, not him so much, but I think that's because of my first marriage, where my husband was never around and so they automatically came to me. I think he resents that sometimes."
- 7) "My spouse gets along beautifully with my two eldest daughters. My oldest child is his good pal. They relate on an adult level. My second changed her name to ours, because that's how close she is to my husband." (The relationship with the third child, a boy, is a definite problem, to be discussed in the section designated "Problem Areas").
- 8) "He's easy going, very accepting. He has a magnetic personality. His relationship with everybody is good. They come to me first, although I'm trying to teach them to go to him. It's hard when they've always come to me."
- 9) "My youngest has a great relationship with him. He is his son.

My 7 year old is almost secure, wanting very much to please him. He has very high expectations of my son. They are different types, but a relationship is growing. He

calls my spouse 'Daddy'.

My daughter's relationship with him is very 'iffy'. He tries but she won't give an inch." (This will be discussed within the section entitled "Problem Areas.")

- 10) "My husband is wonderful with them, as if they were his own. In fact, I see no differentiation between his relationship with them and with our own daughter. He loves them all."

The Relationship With Her Ex-Spouse

The relationship with the ex-spouse can be a positive, well-intergrated aspect of the remarriage or a pronounced problem area. Of the 10 women, only 4 had ex-husbands living in Winnipeg. Two of the 10 women placed no relevance in the existance of their ex-spouses. One had been in a coma for many years and the other had deserted. Five considered their ex's to be positive or at least non-threatening aspects of their remarriage, describing their ex's as "cordial" or "co-operative": They attributed improved relationships to the passage of time, and appeared to be quite comfortable with the place of their ex-husband within their new lives. The remaining three definitely saw their ex's in a negative manner.

Only those with a positive point of view are presented at this time:

- 2) "At the beginning it was not good at all. There was anger, disappointment, it was not an amicable split,

because there was another woman involved. But now the relationship is starting to get better. He sees them every Wednesday and every other weekend. When I was first remarried he was still talking negatively about me a lot. But now there is a sharing and less animosity.

He is important in my children's lives. He has some positive aspects to him. Even though I think my daughters consider this their home and we are molding them, their father is contributing some positive aspect to their life. He has introduced them to the great outdoors, mathematically he is a genius. He has taught them that."

4) "My relationship with my ex is good. I don't see him much except through the kids.

He doesn't support the kids and never has, so we just don't talk to one another. The kids visit him whenever they want, not often. There is no other mention made of him."

7) "It's a cordial relationship. He plays no part in my life now. He speaks to the kids on the phone every month or so. He lives in Florida and has remarried. He has no input into their lives one way or the other. The kids love him but they are being raised by a stepfather. When I brought the kids to Florida last summer, he kissed me when he saw me. I speak to him on the phone when there are issues to be discussed, concerning the kids. He is like a loving uncle."

9) "It has gotten much better. The first 3 years were awful. We were entangled in legal garbage for a long time. We had legal problems surrounding money, not about the kids. I was always to be custodial parent. Now we are much better. Yesterday, we had coffee together for half an hour. But I still don't trust him. We have never fought in front of the children. I don't think he bad mouths me to them or vice versa. He is a very great influence in their life. He sees the kids when he wants and there is no hassle about changes. My daughter is mostly influenced by him. It is a positive influence. I know he doesn't want the children. He wants them here with me."

The Relationship With Her Extended Family

When a woman remarries, she gains a large extended family. Not only does she still maintain her ex-husband's family, she also acquires her new husband's family, as well as continuing with her own. In most cases there is no contact with an ex-spouse's family, however, 3 of the women interviewed for this study claimed positive relationships with their first husband's parents and/or family. They spoke of dinners together, continued communication, and the celebration of special occasions together. As well, 7 of the 10 women spoke at least comfortably of their relationships, their children's relationships, and the overall acceptance by their new family:

- 1) No comment.
- 2) "My husband's family has accepted me and my kids. I still see my ex-husband's family because I am very close with my ex-mother-in-law. We go there for dinner at least once a month and we have a great relationship. Now they have accepted my new husband, too. The relationship includes us all. The only stress is my present mother-in-law. She has been very unkind to me, which is unfortunate."
- 3) "I have no contact with my first husband's family at all. Because I was involved with my husband prior to his divorce, my family considers me a home-breaker, and it is still shaky with them. I have a good relationship with my spouse's family."
- 4) "I have no contact with my ex-family. They are mostly in Portugal, and I don't want anything to do with them anyway. I divorced my husband, so I divorced his family, too. They thought I was terrible anyway for getting married in less than a year.

I have an excellent relationship with my new family. They have accepted me and my children as daughter and grandchildren. Two years ago, I took my husband to Portugal to meet my family and I got worried about it, but it worked out perfectly. They all got along beautifully, and my husband spoke with them. It was great. I had been worried for nothing."
- 5) "My ex has no relationship with his family, neither do I."

They are gone, his mother is about 90 years old, and his father died at age 60.

My husband's family is fabulous. They have accepted me and my children. They are wonderful. I can't believe it. I have such a good relationship with my new in-laws. They treat me beautifully. It is very comfortable. They're not close with my children, but my children are older and are too old to cuddle. I can say whatever I feel to my mother-in-law and she can with me. It is just great."

6) "I don't see my ex's family at all, or for that matter, my new spouse's family either. We are not close with any of them, other than maybe one brother and his family. My parents have accepted my new husband. In our small circle, we are all accepted."

7) "I am very close to my former in-laws. I write to them, I talk to them, my relationship is fine.

My in-laws are weird people. Not everyday type people, they're strange. My kids don't like them, they put up with them. My father-in-law would like the kids to love them, but they don't. I don't like them either. They're not nice people.

But they love me, because they don't know how I feel -- I act very well. I should get an Oscar, because I'm excellent with them. I do everything for them. But they're awful. They're not generous, not kind, they have

no class whatsoever."

8) "I have no contact at all with my ex's family. My kids are grown up, as you know. But it's O.K. I have my inlaws for dinner about every 2 months and that's nice. As well, she reciprocates. She's a fantastic cook, she's easy-going and accepting. There's no problem."

9) "I get along with my new family as well as my husband does. I have been accepted by the extended family better than by the immediate family. My mother-in-law lives in Palm Springs, so she's not here very often. We really have very little to do with her.

I am still close with my ex-sister-in-law. I don't see the others, other than my ex-mother-in-law, who does keep in touch at the holiday season and special occasions. My ex-father-in-law is very angry at me. At one point he asked me to reconcile and I refused. Maybe that's why."

10) "I have a wonderful relationship with my inlaws and new family. They are lovely and warm toward me and my children. We have all been taken in beautifully and I still feel so good about it. It's still not taken for granted.

I have no relationship at all with my ex's mother. If his mother should see me, she does not talk to me. But his extended family is still quite friendly toward me."

Problem Areas Within A Remarriage

Men and women who enter a remarriage do not have any time to acquaint themselves with one another, as a newly married couple should. The minute they are married, the courtship is over. There is at the very least, an instant family (with children appearing from his or her side or both), and an immediate mortgage payment, as the tough realities of day-to-day living settle upon both husband and wife. It is no wonder that the remarried couple may find themselves with certain stresses in their marriages caused by their unique situation, stresses which they attempt to cope with and resolve to the best of their ability.

The Relationship With Her Stepchildren

Eight of the 10 participants were stepmothers as well as natural mothers. One never saw her stepdaughter, who was living with her husband's ex-wife in the southern United States, 4 were part-time stepmothers whose stepchildren visited their father and stepmother fairly sporadically, and the remaining 3 were full-time stepmothers, who were raising a child of their husband's from his previous marriage. One woman was raising a small boy whose mother was deceased. In this case the stepmothering was a positive adjustment for her, since he had been successfully incorporated into the family .

But the other 6 women had found the relationship with their stepchildren, within whatever format, to be a definite

problem area within the remarriage. Problems of communication, lack of equality, interrelationships, loyalties, lack of closeness, and competition, were all evident through their conversation. These women were noticeably distraught, smoking, voices raised, refilling their coffee cups, and generally appearing frustrated, nervous, guilty, and very concerned. It seemed to be unanimous that stepparenting immediately created a new stress within a blended family and that blended families which contained only the wife's natural children were at an advantage. In the interviewees' own words:

- 1) No Stepchildren.
- 2) "We see him weekly -- every Wednesday for dinner -- and any other time he wants to visit. The relationship with my stepson is not perfect. He has never really liked me. While I was just the girlfriend, I was lovely, but as soon as we became married I felt a huge change in his attitude toward me. There are arguments because of him and my own kids. There just isn't the same closeness that there is between my husband and my kids, with him. I think that is due to the fact that we live together. I have tried to be a friend. When he was 10, when he met me, he just adored me. As he got older, he started to resent me, as my relationship with his dad got closer. I notice now he tries harder, but he still throws a wrench in as if to say "He's my dad and you're nothing". It is

the only area I am not content with. It is not terrific. It is a plus that he doesn't live here. He used to come every other weekend, but he wasn't nice to have over on a regular basis. Yet I took it for a solid year. Then I told my husband and he agreed. It was also no good for him to sleep over anymore. We had to solidify our relationship within this home, there had been enough changes.

I am not fine when we are all together, as my husband is. He has decided to have his relationship with his son without infringing upon our family situation. I am sure he would like to have his son over more.

We blame a lot of his son's attitude on where he is coming from. He lives with a mother who is recently separated again. She is not happy. This carries over to her son. There is lots of jealousy between him and my daughters. He resents our family life with his father."

- 3) "It is not great. My stepdaughter will visit my home but is afraid someone will find out she is here. She will not go out in public because she doesn't want her mother to know where she is. She is afraid someone will see her with me.

It is very hard to be myself, to not say anything about their mother. The first time they came here after 5 years, it was 3 minutes of strangeness, and then they were talking to me about everthing, parties, school, friends,

and the way they were talking, it was as if they had no one else to listen to them.

So I find it a strain. Sunday should be a happy time and every Sunday he takes them out, but we can't go too. They don't want their mother to see us all out together. We can't go anywhere or do anything. I don't expect to take their mother's place, but these kids are suffering.

There was a point where I would have taken them, but now I'm not so sure I would. They could only come to live with me on my grounds. I would tell them, I'm not like your mother and that is why your father is with me."

4) "I see them once or twice a month, there is no set visiting time. My relationship with them when we have the opportunity of being alone, is better than when we have to be with people around.

The first experience was 2 years ago when his 14 year old came on holidays with us to B.C. It was beautiful. We were able to talk, and have confrontation of course. But it was great. She is the one I can relate to. But the others have a lot of resentment for me. They have a lot of bad feeling for me. I have a friendly relationship with one. With the others, it is very superficial.

I have tried a friendship role with them. I don't expect them to love me, but they must respect me because I am their father's wife. They can't be rude to me, or to my children, or their father when they come here, and they

must go along with the rules of this family.

The atmosphere is a little tense when they are here. My husband finds they try to manipulate him when they are here, by bringing up situations of the past which are inappropriate now. Yet, both sets of kids get along well together."

- 5) "It is a wonderful relationship. This child is so thrilled to have a mother that we have a wonderful relationship.

He doesn't remember his mother at all, she died when he was so young, and he has been raised by housekeepers. He is an excellent child. He has taken to my children as they have to him. They call each other brother and sister. My children protect him. He's accepted without any problem. He doesn't need anymore attention than my own kids. They are busy in their own worlds. He needs a mother."

- 6) "For many years they wouldn't have anything to do with me, and also their mother didn't want it. It just came to a point where my husband could only see them alone and that was difficult too, for him. He couldn't bring them home. It wasn't a normal thing. They come here now at no special time. But they are guarded and cool and don't come often. I would like to think they think of me as a good person, because I know they don't consider me a friend."

- 7) "She lives in a Southern Baptist community now. It is just

too hard. She is a stranger to us. She is being raised by a crazy woman. It hurts my husband. It is one of the big tragedies of his life. She is a beautiful little girl who is now as crazy as her mother. I didn't have a good relationship with her. She has a vindictive mother. She likes me because I was the only one who disciplined her. I had a lot of trouble relating to her because she was such a nasty child. In between times she could be quite loving, but overall she was not nice. I felt a pain because of her, and so I didn't respond to her as much as I should have. I didn't have a good relationship with her. It was difficult because she was being turned against us. As soon as our son was born, it made my husband feel a lot better. We still maintain contact through the mail, cards and birthday gifts, but that's it. We never know what to say to her."

- 8) "We're friends. When a child comes to you at 12 it is really difficult, because you are not talking about molding a baby. Any woman who says 'I love my new husband and therefore I love his kids' when they come to you at 12 is a liar. The most she can say is 'Lets be friends'. If there's more, I would question it, if anybody says it. I feel no closeness with him. I'm sure he misses his mother, but I never ask. I don't ask him any questions that would hurt him. To me when a child loses a mother, he is an orphan. I don't care if he has a father. That child

suffers. That child will be left in someone's care, who doesn't have the natural feeling that the real mother does. If you don't have that bond, you don't have that feeling, you naturally don't react the same way as you do with your own. The intense feeling that a natural mother has is not there and that's the tragedy of it.

He has suffered. I give him all the credit in the world for surviving. That kid has to be tough. His relationship with my kids took time because they have been raised differently. He comes from a very different background than my two. If he were a little older than my kids, he might have been able to handle this new environment a little better. As it is, it is hard for him and for me.

9) "My relationship with my stepson has grown. He has become very close to me because his own mother passed away recently. In his own little way he knows I'm all he has. He used to run to his father for everything, now he is coming to me.

I care deeply about him. Yes, I love him. But the balance in our home is very hard. He is often scapegoated by the other children. He has a personality all his own. He is extremely physically aggressive, he is a rough and tumble boy. He is the 'boy's-boy' of all time. He is a pusher, a shover and a screamer. I spend alot of my time juggling my act. The only one not really involved is my baby. My other two and my stepson are in a love/hate

relationship which is like a collision course. They are constantly vying for my attention.

10) No stepchildren.

Her Husband's Relationship With Her Children

Two of the 10 women who were interviewed, discussed their husband's relationships with their children, as being quite a stressful and problematic area of their marriage. They saw a lack of communication between husband and child, misunderstanding between the two, and perhaps, an unwillingness on the part of one or both to meet the other halfway. For this reason, the words of these women concerning their husband's behaviour were recorded below:

7) "Unfortunately my son looks exactly like his father. He's a lot like him. My husband has a very difficult time with him. He wants him to be a student, to get good grades, and my son just isn't like that. My husband relates to him like a rabbi to a student, rather than a father to a son. We went to a psychologist because of this relationship, because my son was having problems. He doesn't think of my husband as a father. He is the man his mother married. He feels my husband doesn't like him, yells at him, criticizes him.

We had this out a month ago. He feels my husband is too hard on him. I said we have to change this. I told my husband to talk to my son, because it is getting between us. I am taking the part of my son and that's not good.

My basic instinct and reflex is to side with my son, because my husband can take care of himself. I told my husband he must make more of an effort, and he seems to be. It's true my husband doesn't relate well to him, you can see it. He seems to be rebelling by failing the courses he knows matter to my husband. I guess it is his way of getting back at him."

- 9) "His relationship with my daughter is rough. This man is only her mother's husband. They tolerate each other. They get along better when I'm not around. There is no love lost between them. I totally accept it now. At first I wondered about my relationship because of the input of her negativity. But I pushed it aside and now I accept her behaviour, and so does my husband.

There has been a fair amount of stress because of this. It has prompted us to seek professional help in dealing with this. As I said before, all our stresses involve family."

The Relationship With Her Ex-Spouse

Three women felt their ex-husbands to be stressful elements within their remarriage. One felt that her new family was physically unsafe because of her ex, one saw her ex as a negative because of financial reasons, and the third simply felt that her ex was a complicating factor within her remarriage. (Of the three, two of the ex-partners did not even reside in Winnipeg):

- 1) "It wasn't working, it was so hard on the kids. Finally

there was a judge's decision to end all access.

The kids were afraid of him harming them. His behaviour was bizarre. He tried to break down the door in the middle of the night one night. He would yell obscenities from the front lawn and he used to tell them I was a whore.

I'm not trying to get back at him. Just let him leave us alone. We are always on the lookout for him. Even now, he drives by the house periodically or we see him lurking in the back lane. But that's as far as it gets. He doesn't live in Winnipeg all week now, so he's not around that much.

- 5) "I don't speak to him. The only time I speak to him is if the kids want me to speak to him regarding a plan of theirs.

I get nowhere with him about money. He claims he doesn't need to send the money. He feels that I am married, the kids aren't suffering. There is no need for him to send money. He makes no effort at all.

He seems to feel no guilt. There are no monthly child support payments.

I only upset myself when I ask. He does live out of state so it is very hard to get anything from him. He could hide whatever he wants to.

I resent it. We all resent their father for that. He pressures my son about his grades. He has very little

influence on my children. He calls usually once a week. There is no need to call him. My husband meets their needs. Fortunately he does live away, so there is no need to see him very often. He lured my daughter there for a visit by promising to buy her things. So she went because she wanted new clothes from the States, and it was very exciting for her. I was in L.A. while she was there and she called to ask me to meet her for lunch, because she was so upset while with him. This I did."

- 10) "We have had a difficult relationship, but it is a bit better now. It has been continual nit-picking, disagreements, frustrations, all the way through.

Both my lawyer and myself have always felt that he is planning to try to win custody of the children, when they are the right age, and this scares me. Although I hope the children will never decide to live with him, I know it is a possibility which I must face.

He has a good relationship with the kids, from what I can see. He is very reliable, prompt, I never worry about them when they are with him, which is everyother weekend and Wednesday's for dinner. I know he takes good care of them. But they are always happy to come home. I know he provides them with aspects of life which are not top priority for my husband and myself, such as sports, and outdoors types of activities. I guess I should appreciate him for this, but I don't.

He is married to someone of another faith, and when the kids are with him they get a large dose of another way of life, which we feel doesn't have to be a part of their lives. But we know that this is the way it is. This part is very difficult, because Judaism and maintaining our heritage is important to us.

Honestly speaking, my husband is such a wonderful father to them that I often wish he were the only father to them. It would just make our lives so much simpler. We try to incorporate my ex into our lives as maturely as we can, and we try to do the best for the children that we possibly can.

He has a bigger influence on my son than my daughter, due to a shared interest in sports. He certainly is a presence in our lives. He sees them punctually every week, and does not let his relationship with them wane in any way."

Conflicts Within Relationships

Any woman in a remarriage often finds herself as a functioning mediator, within the various relationships which surround her. Some women find it more of a strain than others do. Within this group of interviewees, 7 women spoke specifically of the strain which they had experienced. This was due to the conflicts within relationships among their family members, between themselves and their husbands because of the children, or the stress felt by one woman in

particular because of her relationship with her ex, and how it carried over to her relationship with her husband.

Three women saw no problem in this area and therefore their remarks were not included:

3) "I do feel like I am in the middle periodically. If there are two slices of bread left and you know your husband will want some toast before bed, do you give it to your kid or to your husband?

It's these kinds of things -- do you tell your kids NO?"

4) "Many times we tend to get on the defensive in dealing with certain problems with my kids or his. But we spend a lot of hours working these problems through."

6) "I feel very torn all the time. I say 'Don't put me in the middle'. There are a lot of fights. I hope I'm being fair whatever the outcome is. It's very hard. I wonder sometimes who should I be more loyal to? Your husband expects you to be more loyal to him, but it is very difficult, because they are your children, not his.

We went for counselling once, because we couldn't all get along and the general feeling was that it is your husband whom you are to side with. He should come first. Sometimes it is very hard -- you don't always agree with him. And after if you choose your children, then what follows is a fight with your husband. By keeping loyal to him, you avoid that problem."

7) See this number within the section entitled "Her Husband's

Relationship With Her Children" with reference to the conflict between her husband and her son, with its resultant stress.

- 8) "I stand accused. I'm always on the witness stand. It's very difficult. We are not 'The Brady Bunch'. I can't answer for everybody, only myself. They've accepted that. I've explained to my husband that if I do something that is not up to par, it's not because I'm a mean witch of the west. I've cautioned him to make all decisions concerning his son because I don't want to make a decision, I don't want to take responsibility for his son and then be accused later on of not being fair.

We ironed a lot of things out before we got married. If there's a problem with my husband and my kids, I pull him aside and tell him what I think later, rather than start anything with the kids involved."

- 9) "As I've said before, all our stresses involve family relationships.

- 10) "I really feel caught in the middle of the relationships. If there is a time where I disagree with my husband's disciplining of our children, I try to discuss it with him in private, rather than in front of the kids. But I would do this, whether it was the natural father or not.

At one point, I would have said I felt conflict between my relationship with my ex, and the relationship with my husband. I used to talk with my ex, and the relationship

with my husband. I used to talk with my ex at the door, and then have my husband disagree with how I handled my ex, and so I would end up arguing with him after disagreeing with my ex. This was awful! But it rarely happens anymore -- I guess I'm better with my ex and my husband is better with me."

Stresses Caused By a Remarried Woman's Roles

When a woman remarries, she is already an ex-wife, an ex-daughter-in-law, a mother and a daughter. Within her new marriage, she is once again a wife, possibly a stepmother, and a daughter-in-law. These women were asked how they managed the various roles and only three confessed to stress as a result of their role management. They attributed the stress to exhaustion, problems with an ex-wife or ex-spouse, and heavy feelings of responsibility and stepmothering. Here were their responses:

2) "Sometimes I get exhausted. I wish life were more simple.

I often wish I hadn't complicated my life by getting a divorce. I sometimes am angry at myself that I couldn't make the best of that marriage.

I get tired and resentful of my husband's ex-wife calling at 1:00 a.m. and accusing him of unfair things. When my ex-husband is mad, at me and says unfair things about me, and when his wife who doesn't know me at all says unfair things about me, WOW! She only knows me through him!

If I'm exhausted, I resent that I have to be all these

things at once. It's like everybody's problems are ours. There are many things that can go wrong. How could I have thought my first marriage was so difficult? We had much less to deal with -- but I guess we had other problems. You do exchange one set of problems for another, when changing marriages, don't you?"

8) "My only problem is the stepmothering. It is so hard. I'm ruled by my conscience and I like to do the right thing. I can see how many wrong things there are and I feel very badly for him. Yet everyone thinks I'm doing fine with him. I think he's lacking a lot. Sure I've given him all the things that the eye can see. But the love and time spent with him that are so important between mother and child are missing and I know it."

10) "I handle all my roles. But I do occasionally feel so harried, and so exhausted, that I wish I could simply take a break from everyone and everything, and tell them to leave me alone. Sometimes there are so many sides pulling at me it seems hard to go on. But I always do."

Coping Mechanisms of the Remarried Woman

The women who participated in this study demonstrated different ways of coping with their new life situation. Five chose to seek professional counselling at some point or another following the break-up of their first marriage. The remaining five had either dealt with the new stresses almost

solely by themselves, or with their spouse, or sought the support and help of family and friends. All ten were satisfied with the route they had chosen, and were eager to explain why:

- 1) "My husband is the one through the whole thing -- we did it together. I didn't even talk to girlfriends or family. He is the one who helped me through it all."
- 2) "My sister has been a big support to me, and one of my girlfriends, my ex-inlaws as well. I had no professional help."
- 3) "We saw psychologists separately, and together, during the early part of our marriage. He lied to me at first and I would always catch him. We actually saw a "clarification" counsellor! My spouse's biggest problem was that he lied to her all along when he didn't have to. I'm the type who wants to talk and work it out. I wouldn't stand for this. I don't want my life to be a big lie.

I have one close Gentile girlfriend who shared this with me. She is still my closest friend. Yet I don't confide in her or trust her. I am quite close-mouthed about my personal life."
- 4) "Professional help I received was invaluable. The Family Services Association was wonderful. I had no family here and only one friend who helped a lot. My feelings were so strong. The first time the kids went for a weekend with their father, that night I couldn't sleep. I wanted to

jump into the car at 5:00 a.m. and go take my husband and my kids back home with me from that woman's house. My feelings were amazing."

- 5) "I have a sister I could talk to."
- 6) "I kept a lot to myself. I had one friend at the very end who was good to us. She helped us, she talked to us, somebody who was on our side. She let us come to her house to be together."
- 7) "I saw a psychologist through the separation. My parents were extremely supportive through it all. My father looked after me financially, emotionally, everyway. I was one of the lucky ones. If I ever felt like falling to pieces, there was always someone there to help pick me up. I was lucky. My parents helped me without babying me."
- 8) "I had no professional help, and I'll tell you why. I've seen what has happened to some of my friends when dealing with counsellors and social workers, and common sense has told me that what they're saying is wrong. I did what I thought was right. I did what I wanted. And I don't regret it.

I have a lot of acquaintances, but only one true friend, a very dear friend who was always there for me."

- 9) "Through the separation, I saw a social worker who kept me going. My parents were wonderful, I had very close girlfriends and their husbands, who were wonderful to me in every way. I was very lucky. For the past year we

have been seeing a child psychiatrist who has been a great help to us."

10) "I saw a psychologist during the first year and a half after my marriage ended. He was wonderful for he really put me back together. He sent me back into the world with confidence and optimism.

My parents have always been with me 100%. After the separation, I could have lived with them, if I chose to. I also had two close friends, who were a great help to me. I must have bored the pants off them those first few weeks while I cried my heart out -- but they stuck by me to this very day. I lost a few friends along the way who couldn't deal with the new situation, or decided to go to my ex's side. But I guess that has to be expected."

Feminist Versus Traditional Ideology

In talking with the women, nine of the ten, although modern in their outlook, lived very traditional lives. They shared in a union, where their husbands were the major bread winners and they were the principle home-makers. Basic role definitions were generally upheld and there were no glaring variations. Only one woman was not involved in a traditional marriage, and therefore, she is the concluding entry of this segment:

1) No comment.

2) "Our marriage is quite traditional. It is not as romantic

as I hoped it would be but . . . "

- 3) "It is a traditional marriage. He is not handy around the house, I am responsible for maintenance of the house. He is not a perfectionist and I am. But things that used to bother me, don't anymore. Life is too short."
- 4) "We came to the marriage with certain expectations of each other and we are carrying them out."
- 5) "Traditional!"
- 6) "In my first marriage, I wanted to be totally dependent on my husband. And I had to be. I wasn't working. The kids were little. But this marriage, I'm working, I'm bringing money into the house, so I'm a little more liberated."
- 7) "It's a traditional marriage and that's the way I want it to be. I stay home and look after the kids and the house, and he goes out to work. I like my volunteer work, my singing with the kids. I'm so happy."
- 8) "It is a very old-fashioned marriage. I'm more than happy to look after the home, the family, the social life, etc. My husband looks after the big responsibilities. That suits me fine."
- 10) "Our marriage is totally traditional. I look after the kids and the house and do my thing, which right now is going to school. My husband works very hard to support us, in as grand a style as he can manage."
- 9) "Ours is not traditional. It never has been. It is a role reversal which is not totally working. I only resent

when I come home I still have a meal to cook, dishes to do and laundry to fold. It is working out well, in that he takes care of the kids and the house. But my husband is not a housekeeper, the way I would like it to be. But I've learned that I can't do it all.

My role is to work, cook supper, take over the mother's role when I come home. His role is the daytime housekeeping until I come home. He does the cleaning, carpooling, grocery shopping, etc. It is only a partial reversal, and that is why I'm exhausted. This has always been going on in this marriage."

Miscellaneous

The concluding section of this interview questioned the women about their public image in the community. The women were also asked, what their advice for others about to embark on a similar life experience would be.

The Public Image

Six of the women felt no slur or lowering of their public esteem, after the termination of their first marriage. Three did feel embarrassed and/or inhibited because of the actual circumstances surrounding their separation, and one exhibited concern over the friends she had lost, due to her separation. Here were the words of these 4 women:

2) "In the beginning I was afraid to go out the front door because everyone knew about the other woman. It was

difficult in the beginning. But once I got my act together I did much better. I wasn't embarrassed by the situation anymore."

8) "When I was separated, it wasn't as prominent as it is today and everyone was talking. I felt a little inhibited but my friends were fantastic. This was only at the beginning."

9) "I was always confident in the community. I felt no slurs, I never hung my head. But I lost a lot of friends when we separated. I don't really know why, other than they may have picked sides, or they were afraid that what happened to me could happen to them."

10) "I never felt a slur in the community, except I felt ashamed at the beginning, when I knew everyone knew about my husband's girlfriend, and I felt very humiliated about that. What bothered me then is that everyone felt so sorry for me. They looked at me with tears in their eyes, and I knew they were talking about me. Thank heavens, I started going out and things got better."

Summary

It is appropriate to conclude this segment of Chapter IV by offering the words of advice of these 10 women, to others about to begin again. These women stressed taking a great deal of time, and not jumping into remarriage, spending a lot of time and effort with one's children, enjoying the period of being single, and finally working hard at one's remarriage

to make it a success. The participants themselves summarized their entire experience, sensitively and honestly:

- 1) "Be sure about his feelings for her and the kids. A new husband has to take on the husband/father role. It must be someone that she knows really cares for her, not just a package deal, but there are separate people to take on."
- 2) "Take a lot of things into consideration. Go into a new relationship with an open mind, make sure this person has left all his baggage behind."
- 3) "Relax and let it happen. Don't go out looking for it. Don't have an idea in your mind of what you want. If you do, it will take forever. Things have ways of working out."
- 4) "Take your time. Go for counselling -- group therapy is preferable to private."
- 5) "Don't date too fast. Take it slow. Stay home and worry about your children because they need you most."
- 6) "The whole thing is very hard. Financially, it is the hardest and not everybody is the type who can make it on their own."
- 7) "Don't get so excited about being married again. Make your own life, make sure you are a person on your own, not a walking wounded. Heal yourself first. Don't rush into anything. Date for the experience of meeting new people, not for looking for a husband. Get as much education as you possibly can, so you can support yourself. Value

yourself, make yourself the cake, everyone else is the icing."

8) "Don't rush. It doesn't matter when you remarry. There's no rush. Don't panic. That's the biggest mistake a lot of women make. They marry whomever comes along. That's when there are problems."

9) "Take your time and enjoy your independence. It's a long, hard, tunnel but there is a light at the end of it. It's scary. You will reach a point where you do feel good about yourself. If you get involved in a relationship, do it slowly and carefully. It's not greener on the other side. Take some time to know yourself. You have to overcome your fear of the unknown. Never be ashamed.

Remarriage is darn hard, it's not easy, it's not a piece of cake, he will not solve all your problems. You just exchange one set of problems for another. But now you can cope better. It needs lots of encouragement. Don't think about leaving when angry -- re-evaluate instead. You must have a lot of communication because there is anger coming from many places."

10) "Be careful. Take your time. Realize just because you remarry you haven't solved all your problems and your life will be ideal. Every relationship has new stress areas, a new marriage is hard, and you have to work at it. You have to be prepared to deal with issues that come up, but hopefully, you are more able to deal with these things

than in the first marriage. Give the new marriage a lot of thought and discussion. The second marriage has a lot more involved, than simply sexual passion. A lot more talking, understanding, because there are so many issues to work through. Never take marriage for granted -- it can fail as easily as the first."

Final Comment

The 10 interviews proved to be a very moving and educational experience for this writer. The women were warm, receptive, individuals, who welcomed the interviewer into their homes and their lives most graciously.

The most interesting result of the interviewing is the discrepancy between what the women said while on tape, versus their conversation with the interviewer after the "interview" was over. The women tried very hard to impress the interviewer with the success of their remarriages, while the interview was in progress. Perhaps there was a tendency to stress the bright side, but, as the questions continued and became more open, the women seemed to unwind, becoming more specific and less unrealistic and rosy, even on tape. Many began by stating they had no problems at all, and that they probably would not have much to contribute to the tape. However, as the tape progressed, the women tended to become more and more relaxed, to such an extent, that once the interview was completed, they often began to retell many of

their answers with much more honesty and candor. Often the last cup of coffee continued longer than the interview had. In essence, it seems as if many of the women were afraid to admit that this marriage is also not perfect, and that they are dealing with stresses, and coping with problems, in this marriage, too.

CHAPTER V

Conclusions and Implications of the Study

Many remarried women come to their marital relationships with their natural children in tow. They are willing to tackle a new marital situation, complete with a host of fresh relationships and complicated stresses. They appear confident and optimistic about their future, and they are not frightened by ex-spouses, stepchildren, new families, and community expectations.

Through the overview of the literature, as well as the conducting of the 10 interviews, this writer has attempted to present a clear presentation of the life of a remarried woman in contemporary society. The intense focus is upon her emotional relationship with her husband, her children, his children (where applicable), her ex-spouse, her extended family and society at large. It has been this writer's intention, that the body of this study provide a worthwhile statement concerning the reality of a remarried woman's life situation.

It is important to note that this writer is also a remarried woman who is living with her second husband and has custody of her natural children. This fact should allow the reader to understand the perspective of this study and the interaction of the interviewer and interviewees, in a clearer light. The status of this writer as a remarried woman has

definitely influenced her reactions to the literature findings as well as to the interview data.

Conclusions

Motivation For Remarriage

Rosenbaum and Rosenbaum (1977), Williams and Ohern (1979), Shamgar-Handelman (1982) and Sager et al (1983), stated that the promise of a caring and loving relationship, as well as the desire and need to be with a specific person, are prime motivations for remarriage. The women who were interviewed are in agreement. They spoke of their motivation for remarriage strictly in terms of love, sharing of interests and goals, and the need to be with a specific person. Only 5 spoke of a "father figure" for their children, although Shamgar-Handelman's study (1982) placed great relevance on such a motivation.

The need for more social acceptance in certain groups of our society does not seem to be a reason for remarriage, according to any of the interviewees, although Williams and Ohern (1979) and Sager et al (1983) felt it is a definite factor in remarriage.

Researchers, for example Ambert (1980), and Mott and Moore (1983), assumed a dichotomy between marriage, and high to low economic stability. Although they found that many women consider remarriage a chance to gain financial security for themselves and their children, the 10 participants of

this study, all members of the middle class, did not agree. Seven women were not high wage earners at all, being able to hold down sales or secretarial positions, and the remaining 3 were in the nursing and teaching professions. Whether they had planned to continue working after their remarriage, or not, seemed of no consequence during the interviews, and, therefore, it was safe to assume that continuing to work played little or no part in their decision to remarry.

Well-Being Among Remarried Women

The 10 women who were interviewed have verbalized many of the findings of Glenn and Weaver (1977), Weingarten (1980), and Spanier and Furstenberg, Jr. (1982). These women as a group were happy in their present lives and thought that they were gaining a great deal from their second union.

Glenn and Weaver (1977) felt that women in remarriages are apt to overreport their marital happiness in remarriage. As mentioned previously, the 10 interviewees did begin by describing their marriage in the most glowing terms, only to become more honest with the interviewer as time progressed.

Weingarten (1980) had illustrated that remarried persons are scoring above average in such aspects of their remarriage as their sexual relationship, their parenting, and their overall feeling of happiness and current well-being. The 10 women did not mention their sexual relationship as a problem area, 7 spoke of the closeness of their relationships with their natural children, and 8 firmly expressed an overall

feeling of happiness and well-being. Spanier and Furstenberg, Jr. (1982) also concurred with Weingarten's findings and the opinions of the interviewees on their overall feelings of well-being.

The Marital Relationship

As previously stated, remarried women appear to be confident about the demands placed upon them by their remarriage relationships. According to Jesse Bernard (1956) willingness on the part of the divorced to work hard at making the second marriage a success is a significant factor. Whatever the motivation may be, the interview results stated that remarried women are willing to work at their marriages, and they realized that a remarriage must never be taken for granted. The reality of remarriage for them, was a combination of hard work and dedication in order to see the various new relationships flourish.

Duberman (1975) reported on her work with remarried couples. She found most couples very much aware of the state of their relationship, they are appreciative of a good relationship, and their major problems are apt to be child-rearing and money. According to the women who were interviewed, childrearing, in particular "stepchildrearing", was the major problem of a remarriage. In fact, these women were quick to add, that blended families which consist solely of the woman's natural children with no stepchildren, are at a decided advantage, and are usually happier.

Duberman's other variables also mirrored the results of the interviews, as evidenced by the following:

- a) College educated remarried women are slightly less satisfied with their second marriages than those with high school or less education. See #9, #10 in "Overall Feeling of Well-Being"
- b) Age is not a factor.
- c) The length of a previous marriage is not a factor.

According to Rosenbaum and Rosenbaum (1977) and Jean Baer (1972), the relationship between a man and a woman is a love relationship, which must be kept alive through trust, communication, and understanding. These are keys to success in a remarriage. All 10 women spoke of these feelings and more, in their discussion of their marital relationships.

The internal pressures on the remarried couple as discussed by the researchers in the review of the literature in Chapter 11 are in agreement with the interviewees' findings. The women concluded that children and finances, previous familial relationships of mother and child, past bonding, differences in life-style, and the relationship with an ex-husband or ex-wife, were, potential areas of stress and negativity in remarriage. Their feelings concurred with the findings of Maddox (1975), Messinger (1976), Mayleas (1977), Goetting (1979), and Williams and Ohern (1979), to name a few.

The external pressures on the remarried couple did not

seem as important to the 10 interviewees, as Simon (1964) and Visher and Visher (1979) felt they were. These women appeared very comfortable with extended family and community reaction to their new life situation, whatever the reaction might be. They seem to have adapted very well to the expectations placed upon them by various onlookers, and were not frustrated by whatever came their way.

The Remarried Woman and Her Natural Children

In conclusion all 10 women spoke of the closeness of their relationships with their natural children. They have a love and a trust which has long since been established, and which does not seem to suffer or diminish, because of the addition of stepchildren, either on a part or full-time basis.

Problems may exist in the new husband's relationship with his wife's children from her previous marriage. The two women who presented their husband's relationships with their children as problematic agree with Satir's (1972) opinions on past bonding with the actual father, and Simon's (1964) feeling that a child who looks too much like his natural father, or acts too much like him, can antagonize his stepfather and his mother, as well. Simon's statement that a child's attachment to his natural father, may bar the stepfather from being anything other than the mother's silent husband, was re-iterated by number 7 and 9 of the interviewees.

The Remarried Woman's Relationship with Her Ex-Spouse

A woman's relationship with her ex-spouse may be negative or positive. Lowe (1970) cited money as the biggest impediment to decent, well-mannered, relationships between ex-spouses. Woman #5 discussed this problem in her negative appraisal of her ex-spouse.

Duberman (1975), and Mayleas (1977), spoke of the negativity of the ex-spouse relationship, and they advise to avoid it, rather than attempt to improve it. Three of the interviewed women saw their ex-husbands as negative aspects within their remarriage.

The remaining seven women showed an accepting, positive, attitude toward their ex-spouses (Visher and Visher, 1979; Ahrons, 1981). According to the seven women who were positive about their ex's, the further the time away from the divorce, the more peaceful the ex-spousal relationship.

The Remarried Woman's Relationship with Her Extended Family and Community

The 10 women who were interviewed attributed very little consequence to their extended families and the community. Seven women claimed comfortable relationships with new grandparents and new families. They felt both they and their children had been accepted beautifully, and placed very little prominence on the existence of these relationships. According to Maddox (1975), Messinger (1976), and Noble and

Noble (1977), the success of these relationships can produce important repercussions in a blended family, and the results of the interviews indicate, that the extended family can either be a support or hindrance to the remarried unit.

The women also spoke very little about problems in the community. If there are a host of invisible pressures placed upon a remarried woman, by the assorted factions of a community, then these women did not mention them. The women reported all extended family and community relationships as unimportant in the day to day goings on within their blended families. It is possible that the questions the interviewer posed did not elicit a detailed response from the interviewees, and perhaps, deeper probing might have produced more specific discussion on the topic.

The Remarried Woman as Stepmother

Eight of the 10 remarried women who were interviewed were natural mothers as well as stepmothers. One was a stepmother in name only, because both she and her husband have no contact with his daughter from his previous marriage. One spoke glowingly of her relationship with her 6 year old stepson, a boy who came to her after 4 years of being raised by housekeepers, due to his mother's death. However, the remaining 6 women, whether functioning as part-time or full-time stepmothers, indicated that stepmothering was the most difficult area of their new life situation. It was the most sensitive spot to deal with, filled with the greatest

uncertainty, and lack of confidence. The women were quick to admit that they did not expect instant love from their stepchildren, nor did they return that feeling. The word "friend" came up often during the interviewing and one woman in particular spoke at great length about the inadequacies of her role.

These women were in complete agreement with Anne Simon (1964), who reported that a stepmother cannot compete with the natural mother-child bonding which has predated the affiliation with a stepchild, and with Jean Baer (1972), who stated that a stepmother does not need to love her stepchildren as her own, but rather, as they pertain to the husband's needs, feelings, and the marital relationship. The words of the interviewees also mirrored the findings of individuals such as, Lowe (1970), Maddox (1975), and Kompara (1980), who spoke of the complexities of steprelationships, the lack of clarity in roles adjustment, and the importance of the passage of time well spent, in the cementing of a steprelationship between woman and child.

A number of studies have mentioned the most common problem areas of stepmothering to be disciplining the children, and having unrealistic expectations of instant love and instant familial feelings (Lowe, 1970; Kalter, 1979; Williams and Ohern, 1979; Kompara, 1980). The findings of the interviews do not necessarily agree with these studies. It is possible that the clinical intervention sought by five of

the women, brought a new perspective to coping with the problems of stepmothering. Although the women did speak of discipline problems, they were very realistic about the type of feelings that flow within the steprelationship, and never did they seem to expect instant love or familial feelings. The women appeared quite realistic about their stepchildren and their place within the new family.

Only one woman spoke of the "stepmother stereotype", which is discussed in the work of Radomisli (1981) and others. She described herself as not being the "wicked witch of the west" stepmother, that she might appear to be. The women also agreed with Espinoza and Newman (1979), and Ambert (1980), that the best time to become a stepmother is when the children are young, before they have formed loyalties and attachments. Again, one of the women spoke in detail of the problems involved in raising a stepson who has permanently joined her family, at age 12.

Thus, in conclusion, stepmothering is a demanding role for any woman to fill. It is unanimous that a woman who comes to a remarriage with only her natural children to raise is at a definite advantage for that is one less stress upon the entire relationship. Despite the fact that stepmothering maintains the potential of being a rewarding relationship, it rarely seems to reach fruition.

Overall Conclusion and Implications

Women who have custody of their natural children and are involved in a remarriage are virtually ignored as a topic in today's psychological and sociological literature. Throughout this study, the remarried woman's emotional relationships with her husband, her children, his children, her ex-spouse, her family and society at large, have been examined as closely as possible.

Generally, the findings of the researchers and clinicians who have devoted some time to this area, are in solid agreement with the reality depicted by the interview results. It must be borne in mind that the group of women who have been interviewed, are not a random sample of our society, but rather a select group (which has partially undergone professional counselling), presenting particular points of view. These points of view may be heavily rooted in their predominantly Jewish background, Winnipeg upbringing and middle class social status. Perhaps the few places where they do disagree with the literature findings, for example, reasons for remarriage, and the relationship with ex-spouse and extended families, are due to a particular life style produced by one type of upbringing. Therefore, one must be aware, that if the women had been more randomly selected from all strata of society, perhaps the results of the interviews would have been more varied. For example, would similar results have been yielded from interviews with a group of

lower class women?

However, the assets of this writer's interview technique must not be overlooked. Sensitivity to individual differences, open-ended questioning, the ability to promote clarification, body language, and less tendency for the interviewees to maintain an attitude of "trying to look good", all contributed to the realism of the data, as well as its impact.

It is this same format, which may possibly have limited the findings of this study. As mentioned previously, socio-economic status is a critical variable in remarriage research, and this study is limited strictly to middle class Winnipeg women. As well, half the sample have received counselling which has changed their perceptions, and perhaps their beliefs, about remarriage. Finally, the fact that the interviewees know the similarity of background of the interviewer, with their own, may also have influenced the nature of their responses.

Nevertheless, the conclusions and overall implications of this study are obvious. Remarried women as depicted by the interview findings and literature data, are happy and do not regret their decision to begin again. They are strong and capable individuals, who shoulder a major responsibility when undertaking this new life situation. They attempt to create a happy family for themselves, their new husbands, and their children. They deal with the emotional well-being of

all members of their families, and are undaunted by whatever stresses or pressures may be present.

They have put aside their previous marriages, and have reorganized their lives, first independently, and then as remarried women. They have not given up their individuality or personal goal attainment, privately or professionally, despite being involved in traditional marriages.

This study indicates that there are many positive adjustments within a remarriage, as well as problem areas. The positive aspects especially appear in the personal relationships of husband and wife, mother and child, as well as husband and stepchild. Negative or problem areas center around stepmothering, conflicts within relationships, or problems with an ex-spouse. In this study, money has not been considered a problem area, and areas such as age at time of remarriage or length of previous marriage, have not been considered key factors.

Today's remarried woman is in a marriage like any other. The difference for her lies in the fact that there are more areas to be dealt with, than in a first marriage, and more relationships to understand. Suffice it to say that any marriage, be it first, second or third, is a unique relationship between two people which must be worked at in order to be successful. Of the 10 women who have been interviewed, 5 spoke of professional counselling in order to help deal with some of their problems. For many people this is the answer.

In actuality, admitting that no marriage or remarriage, is perfect, is a start to coping with problems, whatever their nature and wherever they occur.

Final Recommendations

This study indicates that there are many areas of the blended family yet to be explored. More research is needed on the topic of the remarried couple and their adjustment, but especially on the woman who brings her natural children to the remarriage. Future research should be less reliant on self-report and more willing to utilize objective measurement, such as behavioral testing.

Specific questions to be dealt with through further research are, for example, how does the socio-economic status of different women influence their responses? How should one account for the high rate of divorce for second marriages or the fact that major studies on the topic have shown that there is greater stress and ambivalence in second marriages, than in first? Could this high rate of divorce for second marriages be connected to financial or child-raising reasons, or to the length of the remarriage, or the complexities of inter-relationships with ex-spouses? How do these findings compare with research concerning the adjustment of children to separation and remarriage? Is it possible that women who bring their natural children with them to their remarriage, do not have the problems of women who alternate custody, or

have lost their children completely? Should a comparison study be conducted on women who have received professional counselling versus, those who have not? All of these areas, are possible jump-off points from this study.

Apart from the research, this study also suggests that members of the blended families of today require a variety of counselling or self-help groups with which to fulfill their needs. Groups dealing with blended family issues, for example, the presence of the ex-spouse, stepparenting, and stepsiblings, a place in the community, the advent of a child together, would be of great value to many remarried men and women who are stumbling toward successful blended family relationships.

Thus, a premarital training program for people about to enter a remarriage is highly recommended. Both men and women should be aware of the realities of a remarriage, rather than viewing it as a real life "Brady Bunch".

Then too, this writer recommends a longitudinal study examining the various stages of a remarriage throughout its lifetime. The results of this type of study would be a great asset, when analyzing assorted findings and opinions of current researchers on the topic of remarriage.

In retrospect, this writer should have handled the beginning of this study in a more specific way. The topic could have been more refined, more concentrated on one or two aspects of remarriage relationships, rather than attempting

to run the gamut. The women who were interviewed would have been presented with one or two specific topics, with which they would have been free to deal, rather than the open slate they were handed in this study. In essence, they would have been directed more to a certain area, than was the case. Then too, whether they had received professional counselling or not, would have been a major issue, not an aside, and perhaps it would have been wiser to purposefully select a random sample of women, from all walks of life, rather than the select group which comprised the interview sample.

From having completed this study, this writer would advise future researchers to be aware initially of the amount of literature written on his or her unique aspect of remarriage before beginning the actual research. It is very difficult to review literature which barely exists, and it is very frustrating to be unable to unearth material which has been written but is unavailable at this place or time. As well, a future researcher should keep his topic as specific as possible, using fewer specific questions in his interview, rather than a greater number of nebulous ones. It is this writer's opinion however, that her interview approach was well-received, and such would be the case with people from any socio-economic-stratum, if confronted with an informal and relaxed interview situation.

As the years progress, women in remarried relationships will be more and more prevalent in contemporary society. It

is this writer's hope, that this study has provided an informative and enlightened look at the complexities of the remarriages of today, and a basis for the remarriages of tomorrow.

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Dear

I am completing my Master's Thesis in Educational Psychology on the topic of "Women In Remarried Relationships Involving Their Natural Children".

I require your permission to tape-record an interview with you. All data recorded will be totally anonymous. The tape-recorded interview will be erased by me no later than six weeks following the tape-recorded session.

All tape-recorded information will be confidential and anonymous, will be reviewed solely by myself, and will be used only as the anecdotal component of my thesis.

By executing this form, you will have agreed to the above. Thank you very much for your co-operation in this project.

Rhonda Kravetsky
