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EXPLORING ASPECTS OF STRONG REMARRIAGES

by

Marci Green Campbell

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Family and Human Development

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Logan, Utah

2012

ABSTRACT

Exploring Aspects of Strong Remarriages

by

Marci Campbell, Doctor of Philosophy

Utah State University, 2012

Major Professor: Dr. Brian Higginbotham
Department: Family, Consumer, and Human Development

This study presents findings from qualitative research that focused on how couples who had been remarried for 5 years talk about their strong remarriage. Ten remarried couples were recruited to be interviewed independently. Using a semi-structured interview survey, the interviews were recorded and transcribed. The entire interviews were analyzed and coded to explore aspects of strong remarriages. Prevalent factors that contribute to strong remarriages were identified, which include: commitment, love, religion/spirituality, communication, compatibility, financial agreement, and physical intimacy. Expectations of remarriage were explored with the majority of participants reporting that their remarriage exceeded their expectations. The findings contribute to the literature and suggestions for future research are also discussed.

(134 pages)

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Exploring Aspects of Strong Remarriages

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Marci Campbell, Doctor of Philosophy

Utah State University, 2012

Major Professor: Dr. Brian Higginbotham
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Remarriage is often studied with a focus on the difficulties associated with the complexities of remarriage. The focus of this study was to explore aspects of strong remarriages. Ten couples that had been remarried for 5 years were interviewed separately about their strong remarriage. Prevalent topics were compiled and organized into factors that contribute to a strong remarriage. These factors include: commitment, love, religion/spirituality, communication, compatibility, financial agreement, and physical intimacy. Additionally, expectations of remarriage were explored. The majority of the individuals expressed that their remarriage exceeded their expectations. A discussion of suggestions for future research is included.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Marital quality and stability is a focus of research as high divorce rates and family instability continues to reshape families in the United States (Bachand & Caron, 2001; Cherlin, 2010; Olson & Olson-Sigg, 2008). It is estimated that 40% to 50% of marriages will end in divorce (Raley & Bumpass, 2003; Stevenson & Wolfers, 2007; U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). Unfortunately, few demographic studies of remarriage were conducted in the 2000s, thus limiting remarriage data. However, it is estimated from data collected in the mid-1990s that 69% of women and 78% of men will remarry after divorce, while 5% of women and 12% of men will remarry after the death of a spouse (Schoen & Standish, 2001). Remarriage constitutes approximately half of all marriages for one or both partners (Chadwick & Heaton, 1999; Ganong & Coleman, 2004). Second marriages have a divorce rate of 60% and third marriages have a 73% chance of divorce (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). With this large proportion of adults experiencing a remarriage, it is important for research to reflect the needs of this population.

In response to the remarriage trends, research is often geared toward the difficulties associated with remarriages. Thus, remarried couples have historically been studied from a deficit-comparison approach. However, more recently scholars have begun to utilize a normative-adaptive perspective to study remarriages (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). The normative-adaptive perspective looks at both the positive and negative aspects of remarriage by comparing adaptive well-functioning remarried couples with those who struggle to cope.

Sweeney (2010), in her decade review of remarriage calls for more studies, including qualitative studies, to help understand contemporary remarriages, “that can greatly enhance our understanding of complex and dynamic within-family processes” (p. 678). The purpose of this study is to explore aspects of strong remarriages. An exploratory study enabled the researcher to contribute to the literature regarding factors that influence strong remarriages which can aid preventative measures promoting remarriage quality and stability.

Family Strengths Perspective

Building on an understanding of the complexities of remarried couple relationships and their unique experiences, the family strengths perspective can provide a scaffolding of positive couple features that contribute to strong couple functioning. The family strengths perspective focuses on strengths that can enable couples to respond beneficially to the crises and problems in their lives. Herbert Otto (1962), a pioneer in family strengths perspective, has argued that historically, the family has been studied according to the pathological processes within the family. By conceptualizing family strengths, professionals are in a “better position to help families in the development of their strengths, resources, and potentialities” (p. 80). In the last decade, family research from a strengths-based perspective is emerging (Moore, Chalk, Scarpa & Vandivere, 2002). When considering marital relationships, Fincham, Stanley, and Beach (2007) maintain that family researchers have previously spent time on conflict in marriages with less emphasis on positive interpersonal processes to understand marital quality and stability. Recently, scholars have begun to utilize a strengths-based perspective to study

remarried couple relationships (Deal & Olson, 2010; Ganong & Coleman, 2004). This study has been guided by a strengths-based perspective by looking at aspects of strong remarriages.

Defining Strong Remarriages

Defining a strong remarriage can be complicated with differing opinions, terminologies, or constructs found throughout the literature (Shriner, 2009). This study recognizes that there is no universal definition of a strong remarriage. However, for this study, a strong remarriage is defined as having both quality and stability in the remarriage. Although marital quality and stability are two distinct constructs, they are often used together in defining successful marriages (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). The constructs of marital quality and stability are found in the general marriage literature and are used to define strong remarriages for this study.

Spanier and Lewis (1980) used the construct of marital quality to encompass the broad range of terms being used to measure “the subjective evaluation of a married couple’s relationship on a number of dimensions and evaluations” (p. 826). Marital quality has been measured under several terms including: marital happiness, marital well-being, marital distress, marital adjustment, and marital satisfaction (Shriner, 2009). The current study uses Shriner’s (2009) concept of marital quality that defines the term as, “an individual’s affective response varying in the amount of satisfaction, gratification, or happiness with his or her marriage” (p. 83). Marital stability refers to a couple’s ability to stay married over time rather than divorce. According to Sweeney (2010), “relatively

little is known about specific risk factors for instability among remarried relationships” (p. 670).

The current study utilizes both quality and stability to define strong remarriages. Remarital quality is considered as participants talked about what factors contributed to remarital happiness which, in turn may have influenced remarital stability over time. Remarital stability is considered because the sample of remarried couples has remained together for 5 years.

Purpose of the Study

Compared to the 1990s, the past decade has seen less attention on remarriage potentially due to an increased attention on families formed outside of marriage (Sweeney, 2010). Yet, the sheer volume of people affected by life transitions due to remarriage presents a need to understand this phenomenon. Ganong and Coleman (2004) called for research focusing on the processes within remarriages including questions such as: “What factors contribute to satisfaction in remarriages? How do remarried couples maintain satisfying relationships over time?” (p. 94). The purpose of this study is to respond to the call for research by exploring aspects of strong remarriages through a qualitative study.

Research Questions

This study uses a qualitative research design to explore aspects of strong remarriages. Using a sample of remarried couples who had been married for 5 years, and from a strengths-based perspective, this study addresses the positive aspects of

remarriage that contribute to a strong remarriage. The following two research questions were investigated in this study:

1. How do couples who have been remarried for 5 years, talk about the factors that contribute to strong remarriages?
2. How do couples who have been remarried for 5 years, talk about their expectations of remarriage?

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Remarriage Trends

The prevalence of remarriage in the United States highlights the need to better understand this population. Remarriage as defined by Sweeney (2010) “occurs when a previously married individual enters into a second or higher order marriage in which at least one spouse was previously married to someone else” (p. 668). Any remarriage beyond the second marriage is considered a higher order remarriage such as a third, fourth, or fifth remarriage. It is estimated that at least 10% of all remarriages in the United States are third or higher order remarriages (National Center for Health Statistics, 1993). Approximately one-half of all marriages in the 90s were remarriages for one or both partners in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Kreider (2005) estimates from U.S. Census data collected in 2001 that 38% of all marriages were remarriages. According to Stewart (2001) there are 11 million remarriage households in the United States.

Marriage is now more likely to end in divorce compared to previous centuries where the death of a spouse was the primary reason for the end of a marriage (Sweeney, 2010). Second marriages have a divorce rate of 60% and third marriages have a 73% chance of divorce (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Using data from the 1995 National Survey of Family Growth, Bramlett and Mosher (2002) reported that nearly 30% of remarriages will dissolve in the first 5 years and that the probability of second divorce tends to increase over time. Using the same dataset, Bramlett and Mosher (2001)

reported that 75% of divorced women will remarry within 10 years. Of these women, 79% of White non-Hispanics, 68% of Hispanics, and 49% of Black non-Hispanics remarry within 10 years. Furthermore, within the first 10 years of remarriage, the researchers found that 48% of Black non-Hispanic women will have divorced, in comparison with 29% Hispanic women and 39% White non-Hispanic women. Men remarry at a higher rate and more quickly than women (Wilson & Clarke, 1992).

The Census Bureau's Current Population Report (Kreider, 2005) includes statistics on divorce and remarriage trends over time. The report states that from 1955 through 1979 marital longevity declined for both men and women. However, it appears that marital longevity has since stabilized (Kreider, 2005). For those first marriages that end in divorce, the median length of marriage was eight years. The median length of a second marriage that ended in divorce was similar; eight years for women and nine years for men.

The probability of divorce for couples in remarriages is highest during the earlier years (Bramlett & Mosher, 2001; Kreider, 2005). When considering potential reasons for early remarriage dissolution, it may be helpful to recognize Patricia Papernow's (2008) Stepfamily Cycle which describes the early, middle, and later stages of stepfamily development. The early stage consists of fantasies, followed by immersion into reality with shame, blame, and confusion, and ending with awareness regarding others' experiences in the family. During the middle stage, the family members begin to reorganize and grow. The later stage consists of a mature stepfamily with a sense of "we." It is valuable to understand relational processes in the context of time in order to

more fully appreciate remarriages that are able to adapt during the early years and progress into a more stable union.

Theory

Family stress theory will be used as a conceptual model for understanding and explaining strong remarriages. Remarriage can be seen as a life transition with potential hardships and adaption opportunities for remarried couples. The Double ABCX model (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983) will be used to explain remarriage stressors, potential resources available to remarried couples, perceptions of remarriage, and possible adaptation to stressors in remarriages that made it to their 5th anniversary. An application of family stress theory to remarriage was done by Crosbie-Burnett in 1989. Crosbie-Burnett states that the utilization of family stress theory in studying remarriages offers a direction for “maximizing the probability of bonadaptation and minimizing the probability of maladaptation” (p. 330). Examples of these applications are given to highlight how family stress theory can be used to understand remarriage.

McCubbin and Patterson’s Double ABCX model builds on Hill’s (1949, 1958) ABCX crisis model by delineating pre-crisis and post-crisis variables and incorporating the process in addition to the outcome of the family’s adaption to stress over time. According to this model, the pre-crises phase includes the stressor or event [a] that interacts with the family’s resources [b] and the family’s perception of the stressor [c] to create a crisis [x]. The post-crisis phase or recognition of stressors over time includes the pile-up of demands [A] that interact with the family’s adaptive resources [B] and the

family's perception of the crisis [C] that leads to the degree of family adaptation [X] (see Figure 1).

Stressor/pile-up (a/A Factor)

The stressor [a] is any initial event or circumstance that may lead to a family crisis. Pile-up of demands [A] is the cumulative effect, over time, of stressors on family functioning. According to Crosbie-Burnett (1989) the stressor event occurs as the remarriage changes the family structure. Hardships associated with the stressor [a] (remarriage) may be the addition of new family members, boundary ambiguity, financial strain, step-relationship role ambiguity, and conflicting life cycle stages. The stressor event may be further complicated if stepchildren are involved.

The pile-up of demands [A] is the cumulative effect of stressors over time that effect family functioning. According to Mechanic (1974) and Hansen and Johnson

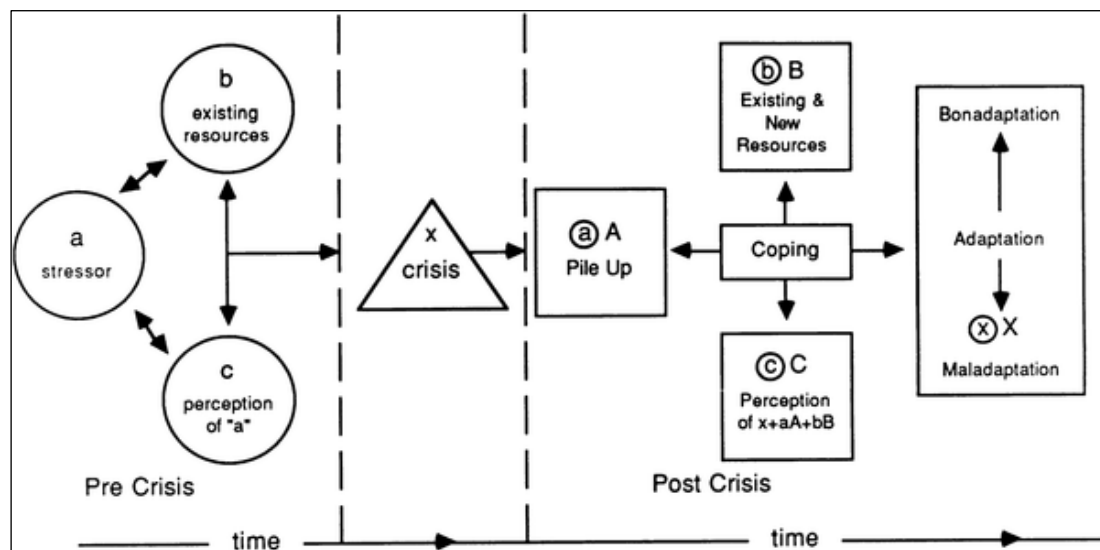


Figure 1. The Double ABCX model (adapted from McCubbin & Patterson, 1983).

(1979), stress can be viewed as a process with a history and a future rather than a short-term single event. Pile-up for the remarried couple may include the baggage brought into the remarriage from previous relationships such as issues with trust or communication. Each remarried spouse may bring a stressor with a history of behaviors or events that may influence relationship interactions.

An important aspect of family stress theory recognizes the potential impact of normative and non-normative events that occur in families (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983; Mederer & Hill, 1983). Remarriage can be seen as a non-normative event that is oftentimes preceded by premature death or divorce. Non-normative events may create a stressor event in families such as the introduction of a new spouse at a time period where established relationships may be strained like ex-spouses or children. Other demands for change such as required role changes, prior unresolved strains, or boundary ambiguity (Boss, 1980) may contribute to stressor events such as a remarriage.

Resources (the b/B Factor)

The resources available to remarried spouses can contribute to their adaptation in times of stress. The resources may either be existing resources [b] that the spouses had during the initial stressor, or developing resources [B] that are utilized in response to the stressor event. These resources act as a mediator between pile-up of demands and adaptation. They can either help or hinder adaptation to the crisis or reduce the pile-up of demands that occur in the relationship. According to McCubbin and Patterson (1985) family resources may include: (a) personal resources such as knowledge, skills, or personality traits that may be used during times of crisis; (b) family system resources

such as cohesion, adaptability, or communication; and (c) social support such as extended family, friends, or community services in which the family can rely on a network for help during stressful life events. When applying this to remarriages, Crosbie-Burnett (1989) discussed that resources include individual strengths such as self-esteem or openness to change, family strengths such as cohesion or common interests, and extended family and community resources such as supportive friends and family or society's acceptance of a variety of family forms.

Perception (the c/C Factor)

Another facilitator between crisis and adaptation is perception. Perception refers to the way in which family members perceive their situation and their ability to cope during difficult circumstances such as perceived family strengths. Perceptions prior to the crises [c] and the perceptions after the pile up of demands [C] guide the meaning that family members give to crisis situations. According to Crosbie-Burnett (1989) the perception of remarriage by both parents and children may contribute to how the family is influenced by the remarriage. For example, family members may view the remarriage as an opportunity to start over or become a legitimate family again.

Crisis (the x Factor)

Potential crisis may occur with the interaction of the family's resources and the family member's perception of the remarriage. According to Crosbie-Burnett (1989), resistance to the change in family structure or roles may create conflict and negative feelings. If the crisis is not addressed, crisis pile-up may occur as problems arise from the initial stressor such as strains from previous events, normative developmental changes

in family members, consequences of attempts to cope with the initial stressor, or ambiguity about the situation.

Adaptation (the X Factor)

Adaptation is the outcome to the process of responding to stressors and crises. According to Burr (1973) adaptation means that the system has sought for equilibrium and successfully resumed its routine operation level after coping with the crisis. The Double ABCX model places adaptation on a range between maladaptation and bonadaptation.

“Maladaptation, the negative end of the continuum, is defined as continued imbalance between pile-up of demands and the family’s capabilities for meeting those demands” (McCubbin & Patterson, 1985, p. 813). Crosbie-Burnett (1989) applied maladaptation to families that experience a divorce or a disorganization of the family where individuals do not get their needs met. When a remarried couple is unable to cope with the pile-up of demands, such as poor communication within the relationship, their remarital stability and/or quality may be negatively affected.

On the other end of the spectrum is bonadaptation. As McCubbin and Patterson (1985) stated, “Bonadaptation, the positive end of the continuum, is defined as a minimal discrepancy between the pile-up of demands and the family’s capabilities, so as to achieve a balance in family functioning” (p. 813). When a remarried couple is able to perceive the crisis in a manageable fashion, as well as utilize their resources such as extended family support, they may be in a good position for positive adaptation to stressors and/or crises. Crosbie-Burnett (1989) discussed that bonadaptation may occur

when the stepfamily begins to have an identity of its own with a realistic perspective on their new family. However, it is possible that a newly remarried couple may experience bonadaptation while the children simultaneously experience maladaptation.

Strong Remarriage Literature

The remarriage literature consists of a wide range of topics. When considering factors that contribute to strong remarriages, the literature review identified reoccurring topics that included: communication, equity and power sharing, finances, children, preparation for remarriage, and expectations of remarriage.

Communication

Communication in remarriages has primarily been studied during the early months or years of remarriage (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). Due to the complex nature of remarriages, clinicians have recognized the need for competent communication skills for remarried couples (Pasley, Rhoden, & Visher, 1996). Effective communication skills can increase the ability to understand the perspectives of others (Mandell & Birenzweig, 1990), clarify role expectations (Pasley, Dollahite, & Ihinger-Tallman, 1993), and assist the adaptation to the transition and stress that may occur in a remarriage relationship (Duncan & Brown, 1992).

There are conflicting results regarding level of communication in remarriages when compared to first marriages. Farrell and Markman (1986) proposed that remarried couples have poorer communication skills than first-married couples. They reported that remarried couples are less accurate in perceptions of each others' values or beliefs about

marital issues and agree less often regarding marital issues than first-married couples.

Furthermore, the authors speculated that remarried couples may struggle with communication skills because they have low self-esteem, fear and avoid conflict, and fail to consider communication skills when choosing a remarriage partner.

Halford, Nicholson, and Sanders (2007) found that remarried couples are less negative and less positive in their communication are more likely to withdraw from communication than first married couples. Similarly, Larson and Allgood (1987) found that conflict resolution was significantly lower for remarried couples.

Conversely, some research has shown that remarried couples do not have lower levels of communication. Allen, Baucom, Burnett, Epstein, and Rankin-Esquer (2001) found no significant difference of avoidance of communication about marital problems between remarried couples and first-married couples. Skinner, Bahr, Crane, and Call (2002) found no significant difference between cohabiting, remarried, and first married couples in levels of communication or disagreement between the couple types. Across all couple types, those relationships with longer duration and those with higher levels of education had slightly higher communication scores.

When studying the differences between functional and dysfunctional stepfamilies and nuclear families, Anderson and White (1986) found that functional stepfamilies were better able to reach an agreement than all other family types indicating the ability to communicate through problems. Using ENRICH, a measure of marital dynamics, Deal and Olson (2010) when comparing happy and unhappy couples found that happy remarried couples report that their partner understands their feelings four and a half times more than unhappy couples, that 72% of happy couples feel good about how much their

spouse shares feelings with them, and 97% of happy couples are very satisfied with how they and their partner talk with each other.

Equity and Power Sharing

Equity in remarriage can be defined as the perceived fairness in the relationship. Power sharing occurs as remarried couples negotiate who has the authority to make decisions in a variety of contexts. When studying equity and power sharing in remarriages, the research has shown differing results. Some research has shown there is no significant difference of equity in remarriages when compared to first marriages (Allen et al., 2001; Kurdek, 1990). Allen and colleagues (2001) compared first married and remarried couples using the constructs of decision-making power and autonomy. The authors found no significant difference with shared decision-making power but that remarried couples tend to endorse greater autonomy in finances and childrearing than first married couples.

On the other hand, several studies have shown that remarried individuals perceived greater equity in their remarriage than in their first marriage. According to Burgoyne and Morison (1997), experiences in first marriages may be a precursor to a more egalitarian relationship in remarriage. In Pyke's (1994) qualitative look at power-sharing amongst remarried individuals, she found that women perceived more equality in decision-making and power-sharing than their previous marriages. When looking at remarriages, Crosbie-Burnett and Giles-Sims (1991) found an egalitarian style of decision-making in the areas of marital sex, money, and the marital relationship.

Equity in the division of household labor has mixed findings in the research. Sullivan (1997) found that women in second or higher order relationships did less housework than first married women. Ishii-Kuntz and Coltrane (1992) found that remarried women were more likely than first married women to work outside of the home with less gender-based labor roles in the home. On the other hand, Demo and Acock (1993) found that while remarried couples found their decision-making process egalitarian, the division of labor in the home was more traditional with women doing the majority of work in the home. Furthermore, Guisinger, Cowan, and Schuldberg (1989) found that remarried women did not think the amount of work their husbands did in the home was enough.

Ganong and Coleman (2004) discussed possible reasons for power-sharing and equitable decision-making in remarriages when compared to first marriages. One such reason is that personal experiences in prior marriages cause some divorced women to seek more power and some men to let go of power in their remarriages (Burgoyne & Morison, 1997; Pyke, 1994). If men or women believe an imbalance of power contributed to the dissolution of their previous marriage, they may seek a more egalitarian relationship in their remarriage. Some women have become accustomed to making decisions post divorce while single and are unwilling to relinquish decision-making power in remarriage, especially when it concerns their children (Bray & Kelly, 1998; Furstenberg & Spanier, 1984). Another possible reason that women have more power sharing in their remarriages is because they bring greater resources into their remarriage such as money, skills, or a household (Giles-Sims, 1987).

Finances

Researchers have looked at the economic well-being for remarried individuals versus continuously married individuals. Remarried individuals in the United States tend to have lower wealth and income than continuously married individuals (Morrison & Ritualo, 2000; Wilmoth & Koso, 2002). Women, in particular, go through a time of financial insecurity after divorce but typically have an increased economic status and a decrease in financial distress after remarriage (Amato, 2000). When looking at financial management and security for remarried women, Van Eeden-Moorefield, Pasley, Dolan, and Engel (2007) found that a longer duration of remarriage was associated with higher financial security. Mothers who remarry tend to be more economically advantaged prior to remarriage than those who remain single or cohabit after divorce (Morrison & Ritualo, 2000). Bramlett and Mosher (2002), in their report on data from the National Survey of Family Growth, reported that divorce after a second marriage was significantly more likely in communities with a high percent of families below the poverty level, with a low median family income, a high male unemployment rate, and a higher percent of families receiving public assistance.

Financial decision-making in remarriages can be as diverse or complex as the remarriage. Whether to pool money (when resources are combined in the marriage), maintain financial independence, or a combination of both is a negotiation that is more common in remarriages than in first marriages (Burgoyne & Morison, 1997; Fishman, 1983; Ganong & Coleman, 1989a). Allen and colleagues (2001) found that both men and women prefer greater autonomy with regards to finances in remarriages compared to first marriages. However, other studies have shown that more than half of remarried couples

pooled their income and shared equally in the financial decision-making process and were satisfied with how they were handling their finances (Fishman, 1983; Ganong & Coleman, 1989a). Higginbotham and Adler-Baeder (2008) found that the belief that finances should be pooled is positively associated with remarital satisfaction.

Financial management in remarriage can become more complex when children are involved. Many stepfamilies may struggle with financial hardships as they try to meet the needs of family members including support for both non-residential and residential children. Deciding how the money will be distributed can be a major source of conflict in stepfamily couples (Coleman, Fine, Ganong, Downs, & Pauk, 2001; Pasley, Koch, & Ihinger-Tallman, 1994). Oftentimes, a stepfamily couple's financial decisions are dependent on the financial decisions of former partners. The unpredictable nature of receiving child support payments can further create a burden to stepfamily couples (Ganong & Coleman, 2004).

Children

Remarried couple relationships can be more complex when children are involved. Bramlett and Mosher (2002) reported that the probability of second marriage dissolution is higher for remarriages with children and especially unwanted children than remarriages with no children involved. Ganong and Coleman (2004) defined stepfamilies as one "in which at least one of the adults has a child (or children) from a previous relationship (p. 2). Often children in remarried situations are designated as "his," "hers," or "theirs" distinguishing between biological children prior to the remarriage and biological children conceived during the remarriage. It can become even more complex when children have

step- or half-siblings from remarriages of both their parents. Another important factor with regard to children is their residential status. Do they live with the remarried couple or have visitation time? Do they live with step- or half-siblings or share visitation time with step- or half-siblings that live with their biological parent? Considering the complexity of the various situations where children are involved in remarriages, Stanley, Markman, and Whitton (2002) found that issues surrounding childrearing was the most common argument among remarried couples but not first married couples.

Parenting in stepfamilies can be diverse and complex based on family histories, age and gender of children, or residential status. Biological parents may have established routines of parenting and prefer to retain control over the childrearing decisions after the remarriage union (Sweeney, 2010). Coleman et al. (2001) found that stepparents are uncertain about how much parenting responsibility to assume. Stepfathers in particular may have a difficult time entering a family where impermeable boundaries have been established centering on the custodial mother and her children (Baxter, Braithwaite, & Bryant, 2006; Golish, 2003).

Weaver and Coleman (2010) found that women acted as mediators between their biological children and the stepfather and that women's loyalties remain with their children. Golish (2003) differentiated between strong stepfamilies and stepfamilies that are having problems and found that both children and adults in stepfamilies sometimes report "feeling caught" between family relationships. An example would be a situation where the stepchild may turn to their biological parent to resolve problems with a stepparent. The author concluded that a variety of healthy communication techniques in stepfamilies contributed to strong stepfamilies.

Teachman (2008) found that women who bring biological children into the remarriage are at a greater risk for marital dissolution. There is no elevated risk of dissolution when the father brings biological children into the remarriage. The author concluded that gender contributes to the context when viewing life course complexities and, therefore, has an influence on remarriage.

Preparation for Remarriage

Because of the complexities of remarriage, clinicians and family life educators have suggested that remarriages “require even greater preparation and planning than first marriage(s)” (Lyster, Russell, & Hiebert, 1995, p.143). However, remarried couples lack preparation and planning for their remarriages (Ganong & Coleman, 1989b; Higginbotham, Miller, & Niehuis, 2009). Empirical research regarding preparation for remarriage is limited. Ganong and Coleman (1989b) found that cohabitation (59%) was the most prevalent form of preparation for remarriage, and counseling (29%) was second in form of preparation. When asked about seeking advice prior to the remarriage, both men and women were apt to include reading materials as a resource. Women were more likely than men to participate in methods of preparation and more likely to deem them as beneficial.

Nearly 20 years after the Ganong and Coleman study, Higginbotham and colleagues (2009) found that talking with other people such as religious leaders, family, or other couples was the most prevalent form of remarriage preparation. Reading materials was second in forms of preparation. The study found that the majority of respondents who participated in remarriage preparation found it to be helpful. Although

formal forms of preparation such as counseling or classes were not prevalent forms of preparation, they were reported to be more helpful by the respondents. In measures of dyadic adjustment, couples who attended formal relationship educational classes reported higher adjustment than any other form of preparation.

Expectations of Remarriage

Expectations of remarriage are conceptually defined by the perceptions and beliefs that individuals report regarding the quality of their remarriage compared to how they thought the remarriage would or should be. In a qualitative study, Michaels (2006) found that remarried couples had very realistic expectations about remarriage that included the effort it takes to have a successful marital relationship. Some remarried couples believe that their new marriage will be better than their previous one (Sager et al., 1983). One reason might be that some remarried couples believe that previous marriage experience will make things easier in their remarriage (Prado & Markman, 1999) or helpful for choosing a more suitable marriage partner (Ganong & Coleman, 2004).

Expectations of remarriage may have an effect on the perceived quality of remarriage. The Remarriage Belief Inventory (RMBI; Higginbotham & Adler-Baeder, 2008) is a measure created to assess remarriage beliefs using seven constructs which include: adjustment comes quickly, stepfamilies are second-class, children are priority, past emotions should stay in the past, partner is perfect, success is slim, and finances should be pooled. When validating the measure, the authors evaluated the casual structure of the RMBI with remarital satisfaction and adjustment and found a negative

association between the remarriage belief that “success is slim” and remarital satisfaction and adjustment. Thus, having a belief that remarriage can be a success is positively associated with perceptions of satisfaction and adjustment in the remarriage.

During the early years of remarriage, unrealistic expectations such as “instant love” among family members can lead to difficulties adjusting to the remarriage (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Therefore, researchers have suggested ways to educate remarried couples regarding realistic expectations. Remarriages and stepfamily relationships develop over time (Papernow, 2008) and empathy and negotiation skills for establishing agreement on family roles and household functioning (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004) have been helpful in educating remarried couples regarding what to expect in a remarriage.

Strong Marriages in General Literature

The experience of remarried couples is often intertwined with family, marriage, and stepfamily research. This study recognizes that in order to more fully understand couple relationships in remarriages, the inclusion of the literature from stepfamilies and marriages in general is useful. Oftentimes, the marriage in general literature includes samples of remarried individuals either in a comparative manner (i.e., comparing remarriages with first marriages) or by combining remarried and first married individuals in the sample. Therefore, the following literature review provides existing research of the reoccurring factors found in strong marriages in general and topics discussed by participants of the study.

Communication

Communication has been found to be an important factor in general studies of strong marriages. Markman, Rhoades, Stanley, Ragan, and Whitton (2010) studied communication during the first 5 years of marriage and found that all couples experienced a decrease in negative communication over time, but the non-distressed couple's negative communication declined significantly more than the distressed couples signifying the association of positive communication with strong marriages. Similarly, Ledermann, Bodenmann, Rudaz, and Bradbury (2010) looked at positive communication in relation to stress and marital quality and found that daily relationship stress affects marital communication and marital quality. The authors conclude that improvements in marital communication can prevent the deterioration of marital quality.

From the National Survey of Marital Strengths, Olson and Olson-Sigg (2008) used data from 50,379 married couples in all 50 states and found that communication was the top ranked characteristic found in happy marriages. Additionally, couples in happy marriages were almost 5 times more likely than couples in unhappy marriages to agree that they are very satisfied with how they talk to each other. These authors concluded that "the willingness and ability to communicate greatly contribute(s) to the health and happiness of a relationship" (p. 8).

Commitment

Commitment is a construct that has been used to measure marital stability (Knoester & Booth, 2000). However, marital commitment does not necessarily mean that couples are happy in the marriage (Ebling & Levenson, 2003). Nonetheless, Stanley

and colleagues (2002) found that higher reported levels of commitment are associated with greater relationship satisfaction.

A distinction in types of commitment found in the literature helps to distinguish and define marital commitment. Three types of commitment are: personal commitment or dedication (Johnson, Caughlin, & Huston, 1999; Stanley & Markman, 1992), moral commitment (Adams & Jones, 1997), and constraint commitment (Adams & Jones, 1997; Stanley & Markman, 1992). Personal commitment refers to an individual's desire to stay with a partner in the future. According to Stanley and Markman (1992) dedication is concept of *us with a future* in the marital relationship. Moral commitment refers to moral or social obligations associated with the institution of marriage that motivates individuals to stay married such as: considering marriage vows sacred and keeping promises. Constraint commitment refers to external circumstances that make marriage dissolution difficult such as: costs associated with divorce or potential negative reaction from friends and family.

Love

Some research emphasizes that the feelings of love influence marital quality. While most people in the United States marry someone they love, it does not always lead to long-term marriages (Vanlaningham, Johnson, & Amato, 2001). Deal and Olson (2010) asserted that love is not enough to maintain a strong marriage. Glenn (1991) contended that the love for one's spouse is obviously a motivation to remain married and that a realistic wedding vow for this time period would be "as long as we both shall love" (p. 265). However, research has found that feelings of love and satisfaction with the

relationship are associated with marital happiness and, therefore, have an influence on marital stability (Rogers, 2004; Sanchez & Gager, 2000).

Religiosity or Spirituality

There exists a lack of consistency in defining the terms religiosity and spirituality. According to Berry (2005), religiosity refers to “linkages to a specific doctrine or group of people” and spirituality refers to “the broader concept of personal experience” (p. 629). Religiosity or spiritual beliefs have been reported as a characteristic found in strong marriages. Olson and Olson-Sigg (2008) found that “couples with strong spiritual beliefs and practices say their faith provides a foundation that deepens their love and helps them grow together and achieve their dreams” (p. 14). Furthermore, when compared to unhappily married couples, happily married couples are much more likely to report that shared religious values improve their relationship and they feel close as a couple because of shared spiritual beliefs. Deal and Olson (2010) reported that couples with high shared spirituality have better communication, more flexibility, greater emotional closeness, and greater marriage satisfaction than those who reported low spiritual agreement.

Allgood, Harris, Skogrand, and Lee (2009) studied commitment to marriage in relation to religious values and found that religious values and attendance in an organized religion were positively associated with commitment to spouse and marriage. Lambert and Dollahite (2008) reported that “including God in marriage enhances and stabilizes marital commitment” (p. 611). Wolfinger and Wilcox (2008) used data from the Fragile Families and Child Well-Being study to look at the association of religiosity with marital

satisfaction. The authors found that father's religious attendance, but not the mother's religious attendance, is associated with perceptions of marital quality. The authors suggested that religious attendance may help fathers turn their attention to the needs of their family and value their marriage as well as give wives a more favorable view of their husbands.

Compatibility

Compatibility in a marriage has been studied as friendship (Bachand & Caron, 2001), enjoying time spent together (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995), shared leisure activities, and enjoying the personality of the spouse (Deal & Olson, 2010). Schwartz (1994) in her book *Peer Marriage* describes an egalitarian marriage as companionate in nature with a best-friend type relationship. Research has found that marital happiness is highest in egalitarian marriages (Amato, Johnson, Booth, & Rogers, 2003; Gray-Little, 1982; Olson & Olson-Sigg, 2008; Schwartz, 1994).

Deal and Olson (2010) when comparing happy and unhappy couples found that satisfaction with the personality of the spouse and shared couple leisure were both in the top ten key strengths of happy couples. With regards to the personality compatibility, the authors found that couples are much more likely to be unhappy when one or both partners have the following characteristics: moody, negative, controlling, depressed, stubborn, or have a temper. With regards to shared leisure activities, the authors found that 85% of happy couples have similar ideas about what is fun and thus enjoy leisure activities together. The personality of spouses contributes to compatibility in leisure activities.

Finances

Research regarding financial management practices is a factor for both remarriages and first marriages. According to Olson and Olson-Sigg (2008) “even happy couples disagree over finances more than any other topic” (p. 13), yet couples in happy marriages agree significantly more on how to manage finances than unhappy couples. Deal and Olson (2010) reported that agreement on spending and saving is found with highly satisfied couples. Gudmunson, Beutler, Israelsen, McCoy, and Hill (2007) reported that financial strain is both positively and negatively associated with couple interactions that ultimately contribute to marital stability. In a qualitative study, Skogrand, Johnson, Horrocks, and DeFrain (2010) found that couples in great marriages had low levels or no debt and had a goal to pay off the debt, lived within their means, and had one person that handled the financial management that required trust and communication within the couple relationship.

Physical Intimacy

Physical intimacy has been another recurring theme in the strong marriage literature. Olson and Olson-Sigg (2008) reported that “a major strength for happily married couples is the quality of the sexual relationship” (p. 16). Additionally, they found that happily married couples report that they are satisfied with the affection that they receive; agree that their sexual relationship is satisfying, and that they are not worried that their spouse may have thoughts about having an extramarital relationship. Deal and Olson (2010) found that 93% of happy couples report that they are satisfied with the amount of affection from their spouse, 89% report that their level of interest in

sex is about the same as their spouse, and 95% are secure about how their spouse interprets affection.

Call, Sprecher, and Schwartz (1995) found that marital happiness was the second (after age) greatest predictor of frequency of sex. The implication of this finding is that happily married couples tend to have more sex and thus become even happier. Theiss and Nagy (2010) used a relationship turbulence model to look at marital relationships and sexual intimacy and found that relational turbulence is negatively associated with sexual satisfaction. The authors suggested that happily married couples tend to have more sex, which makes their relationship happier and unhappily married couples tend to have less sex, thus making their relationship unhappy.

Summary

Because of the high divorce rates for remarriages (Kreider, 2005) and the family complexities often associated with remarriage (Ganong & Coleman, 2004), it would be valuable for researchers and practitioners to understand what characteristics are found in strong remarriages. The literature shows that in study after study, in culture after culture, some of the same characteristics that influence marital strength emerge. However, no study has specifically looked at all of these characteristics in a remarriage sample. Sweeney's (2010) decade in review article on remarriages calls for "new data to document and understand contemporary remarriages" (p. 677) and highlights that "qualitative studies can greatly enhance our understanding of complex and dynamic within family processes" as well as "shed light on the considerable diversity in remarried family and stepfamily experiences" (p. 678).

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Design

This chapter presents the qualitative methods used for this study. Qualitative research is descriptive and searches for depth rather than breadth in human experiences (Berg, 2009). With a call for more qualitative studies to help understand contemporary remarriages (Sweeney, 2010), the goal of this study was to see how remarried couples who had been married for 5 years, talk about remarriage.

Qualitative research is useful in order to facilitate knowledge regarding a relatively unexplored topic in the literature. Qualitative research tends to be inductive; with the collected data analysis giving direction to the study rather than proving or disproving hypotheses (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Qualitative methodology is concerned with how participants apply meaning to their circumstance (Creswell, 2007). It is through qualitative methodology that depth of understanding can be gleaned through detailed descriptions of participant experiences. With a qualitative design, it is not necessary that the “research problem and questions precede the design of the research” (Creswell, 2007, p. 101). In this study, the research problem regarding the dearth of strong remarriage literature was formulated at the onset of the project. However, due to the evolving nature of qualitative design, the research questions were refined after further analysis of the data.

Data was collected from recruited participants through recorded interviews. Remarried couples were interviewed separately from their spouse. Recorded participant

interviews were then transcribed. Interviews consisted of open-ended questions that allowed the participants to characterize what they considered to be a strong remarriage. A qualitative design allowed the participants freedom to elaborate on their experiences and perceptions of remarriage during the interview.

Utilizing a strength-based perspective, the data analysis focused on the positive aspects of remarriage in order to better understand factors that contribute to longevity and strength in the remarriage relationship. The data analysis consisted of looking for common factors that were expressed by the participants in strong remarriages. Family stress theory was used to help guide the research and analyze the data.

Although participants are a subset of a random sample of Utah newlyweds married in 2002, there was not random selection in the final sample. Therefore, the findings were not representative or generalizable to the greater population. Instead, the purpose of the study was to explore in depth the perceptions of couples who were willing to share their remarriage experiences with us.

Participants

Participants for this study came from a multi-layered subset of The Utah Newlywed Study (Schramm, Marshall, Harris, & Lee, 2005). Longitudinal data was collected over three waves during the first 5 years of marriage. The Utah Newlywed Study (Time 1) was conducted by researchers at Utah State University in conjunction with the Utah's Governor's Commission on Marriage. A random sample of newlywed couples was chosen by selecting every fourth marriage license on file at the state's Department of Health, from January to July, 2002. A 38-item survey was mailed to the

sample of 2,823 newlywed couples (5,646 individuals). The survey consisted of demographic questions along with marital adjustment and marital satisfaction questions. When the first wave of surveys was mailed, couples had been married six months on average. Of the 2,823 mailed surveys, 1,010 couples (2,020 individuals) completed and returned the surveys. Six hundred twenty-two of these individuals indicated being in a remarriage or stepfamily.

In 2004, the Remarriage Belief Study (Time 2) conducted by Dr. Brian Higginbotham used the subsample of remarried individuals from the Utah Newlywed Study. For the Remarriage Belief Study, the 622 individuals from the Utah Newlywed Study that indicated being in a remarriage or stepfamily were invited to participate. Invitations, questionnaires, and reminder postcards were sent to their mailing addresses with a cash incentive. At a response rate of 35%, 217 individuals returned the questionnaire. Slightly more females responded (56%). The sample included 70 husband and wife pairs.

The mean age was 40.91 with the median at 38 years. Time 2 participants were primarily Caucasian (91.2%). Hispanic (3.7%) was the only other ethnicity to account for more than 2% of the sample. Thirty percent of the sample had a bachelor's or postgraduate degree and 27.2% of the sample had household incomes that exceeded \$75,000. The sample consisted of 143 participants (65.9%) who remarried after a divorce, with 18 (8.3%) who remarried after the death of a spouse, and 56 (25.8%) who were not previously married but married someone who had been. The average length of remarriage at this survey was 2.60 years with a median of 2.58 years.

A follow-up study (Time 3) was conducted by Dr. Higginbotham in 2007 under IRB #1662 (Appendix A). Following best practices as described by Dillman (2007), postcards, surveys, and follow-up/reminder cards were sent to all respondents from the Remarriage Belief Study (Time 2). See Appendix B for copies of correspondence and Appendix C for a copy of the information letter. Of the 217 surveys mailed, 40 men and 58 women returned their surveys. This 45% response rate included 30 couples for which both husband and wife data was returned. The female respondents mean age was 39.98 with an age range of 24 to 73. The male respondents mean age was 45.42 with an age range of 26 to 89. Women reported a combined household income between the ranges of \$20,000 to over \$100,000 with a mean between \$50,000 and \$75,000. Men reported a combined household income between the ranges of \$10,000 to over \$100,000 with a mean between \$50,000 and \$75,000.

For this present study, 10 couples from Time 3 were selected for in-depth interviewing. The process for selection included various steps. First, individuals needed to have expressed a willingness to be interviewed. This was assessed in the Time 3 survey with a form that explained the rationale for the interview, time commitment, and compensation. Participants could indicate willingness by completing and returning a form (see Appendix D). Of the 40 men, 27 said they were willing to be interviewed, 4 were not willing, and 9 did not answer. For the 58 women, 40 were willing, 2 were not, and 16 did not answer. Next a scheduling letter was sent to each individual who expressed willingness to be interviewed (see Appendix E). If they were still interested, they were instructed to list their and their spouse's availability.

Twenty-three scheduling forms were returned. The principal investigator and research assistant consolidated the schedules. In light of the limited travel budget and the geographical spread of respondents, efforts were made to maximize time and money. A research assistant began calling the participants who were available on the same days and that lived in relative close proximity to one another. She continued calling and coordinating and ultimately scheduled with 10 couples, per the project target.

The 10 women ranged in age from 26 to 55 with a mean age of 41.5 and the men ranged in age from 34 to 75 with a mean age of 44.4. The women reported their household income ranging from \$30,000 to over \$100,000 with a mean between \$50,000 and \$75,000. The men reported their household income ranging from \$40,000 to over \$100,000 with a mean between \$50,000 and \$75,000. See Table 1 for participant demographics.

Procedures

After the 10 interviews were scheduled, Dr. Higginbotham and his research assistant conducted semi-structured interviews with the 10 couples. Husbands and wives were interviewed separately. The protocol for each interview consisted of explaining to the participant the purpose of the interview to help him/her understand that the interviews would provide a unique opportunity to explore the complexities of remarriage in order to understand the characteristics of these relationships. Each participant was given an informed consent letter to sign (see Appendix F) that explained that all transcripts of the interviews would be protected and kept confidential, that their names would not be associated with their answers, that their participation was voluntary, and that any report

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Age	Household income	Religion	# times married	# children
Wife 1	36	\$50,000-\$74,999	Latter-day Saint	1	0
Husband 1	34	Over \$75,000	Latter-day Saint	2	1
Wife 2	47	Over \$75,000	Latter-day Saint	3	0
Husband 2	50	Over \$75,000	Latter-day Saint	3	3
Wife 3	55	\$50,000-\$74,999	Latter-day Saint	2	3
Husband 3	75	\$50,000-\$74,999	Latter-day Saint	2	4
Wife 4	42	Over \$75,000	Seventh-Day Adventist	2	0
Husband 4	43	Over \$75,000	Protestant	1	0
Wife 5	37	Over \$75,000	Latter-day Saint	2	4
Husband 5	37	Over \$75,000	Latter-day Saint	*	5
Wife 6	31	\$40,000-\$49,999	Latter-day Saint	2	2
Husband 6	36	\$40,000-\$49,999	Latter-day Saint	2	4
Wife 7	52	\$50,000-\$74,999	Latter-day Saint	1	1
Husband 7	52	\$50,000-\$74,999	Latter-day Saint	2	5
Wife 8	54	\$20,000-\$29,999	Latter-day Saint	3	5
Husband 8	45	\$20,000-\$29,999	Latter-day Saint	1	1
Wife 9	26	\$30,000-\$39,999	Lutheran	1	1
Husband 9	35	\$30,000-\$39,999	Agnostic	2	3
Wife 10	35	\$20,000-\$29,999	Latter-day Saint	4	4
Husband 10	37	\$30,000-\$39,999	Latter-day Saint	1	1

* = missing. Husband #5 did not specify how many total times he had been married. However, he did indicate he was divorced prior to this remarriage.

of child abuse would have to be reported to child protective services. Each individual's interview was audio recorded. Prior to the interview, each participant was given a \$50 cash incentive for their willingness to participate in the study. This was done prior to the interview so the participants did not feel obligated to complete the interview in order to receive the money. Participants were allowed to stop the interview at any time. The interviews were then transcribed by the research assistant.

Instrument

The semi-structured interviews consisted of 17 questions addressing a variety of topics (see Appendix G). There were two introductory questions: “Briefly share how you met your spouse?” and “What number marriage is this for you and your spouse?” Next, open-ended questions were given that included the following topics: preparation for remarriage, expectations of remarriage, essential elements of a strong remarriage, methods to strengthen remarriage, the role of church or religion, financial decision-making, and stepparenting.

The interview questions were developed by Dr. Higginbotham. He reviewed the literature on stepfamilies and remarriages to look for main topics that impacted remarital functioning. He also reviewed the literature on strong marriages, in general. Additionally, he utilized a strengths-based approach to the interview schedule, patterning the questions after the great marriage studies by Dr. Linda Skogrand in order to glean complementary information about strong remarriages.

Analysis

Dr. Brian Higginbotham was the principal investigator for this study. The researchers referred to in the text are the author of this dissertation and Dr. Higginbotham’s research assistant who helped analyze the data using qualitative data analysis methodology. According to Berg (2009), data reduction is necessary in qualitative research due to the “voluminous nature of qualitative data in the raw” (p. 54). For this study, data reduction occurred as transcribed interviews were coded for common

factors that contributed to strong remarriages and specific quotes were organized into categories. Data was organized and analyzed based on the research questions and the factors that emerged from the transcriptions under IRB #3026 (Appendix H).

Reliability was addressed by checking for consistency in interpretation of what the participants talked about. According to Creswell (2007), inter-rater reliability in qualitative research can be accomplished when separate researchers find similar results during data analysis. This is often called “intercoder agreement” (Creswell, 2007, p. 210) in qualitative analysis. In order to provide inter-rater reliability, the data was analyzed by two coders; the researcher and the research assistant that had interviewed the participants and transcribed the interviews. Reliability in coding requires codes to be clearly defined (Gibbs, 2007). The researchers met to define the initial coding scheme and throughout the data analysis process in order to have reliable factors to code.

Validity in qualitative research is an attempt to show the true picture or accuracy of the findings (Creswell, 2007). According to Miles and Huberman (1994), validity in qualitative research is addressed when the data is deemed probable, reasonable or likely to be true. There are several ways that the researchers addressed validity in this study. Gibbs (2007) has suggested the researcher make constant comparisons throughout the data analysis to check for consistency and accuracy in participant responses and to look for variations in coding. The researchers used constant comparisons to look for congruency of statements made by individual participants throughout their interview. Variations in coding were addressed by researchers as they refined their organization of coded factors using constant comparisons. Furthermore, evidence of validation can be shown with the use of quotations in the qualitative writing (Gibbs, 2007). This study

used organized quotations in order to provide evidence for validity of the results of the research.

Data analysis was done following procedures described by Bogdan and Biklen (2003) and Saldaña (2009). In order to get a feel for the data, the interview transcriptions were read over several times in undisturbed blocks of time by the researcher and the research assistant. Next, the researchers looked for regularities that occurred over and over in the data to pinpoint initial patterns. Words or phrases were assigned to these patterns which became the preliminary coding scheme that specified factors relayed by the participants. Modifications were made to the coding scheme as the researchers tested out the codes.

The software program NVivo (QSR, 2008) was used to help organize the data and test the codes. This software is designed to help qualitative researchers manage and make sense of interview transcriptions. The use of qualitative software “enables the researcher to code easily the same segment of data in multiple ways, to compare data that have been coded differently but might be related to a similar theme or analytical frame, and to use different approaches for the same data” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 175).

Codes were assigned to the factors agreed upon by the researchers after reading through the interviews several times. The preliminary coding scheme included words or phrases that the researchers agreed upon to signify each particular factor during the coding process. Table 2 shows the preliminary coding scheme.

After agreeing on the preliminary coding scheme, the researchers independently coded all the interviews using the NVivo software program. Next, the researchers used the software to compare their coding of the interviews. The researchers had over 91%

Table 2

Preliminary Coding Scheme

Coding factor	Words or phrases
Ability to deal with negative family and friend issues	Children, ex-spouse, friends
Commitment	Using the word commitment, divorce not an option, taking marriage seriously, importance of marriage
Communication	Using the word communication, can talk about anything with spouse, honest and open
Compatibility	Using the word compatible, similar interests, friendship, similar backgrounds, hobbies
Expectations	Using the terms unrealistic, realistic, exceeded, better than expected
Extended family support	Talking about help from extended family, good family relationships
Financial agreement	Talking about money and agreeing on finances
Knowing yourself	Using the term to know yourself, know what you want
Knowing your partner	Using the term know your partner, know what they want
Love	Using the word love, caring, writing notes, unselfishness, gratitude
Making spouse a priority	Think of the other person first, help out with other spouse's roles, give in
Physical intimacy	Using the words intimacy and sex, physical attraction
Religion and spirituality	Using the words religion and spirituality, relationship with God
Trust	Using the word trust, honesty, dependability, how they define it

agreement for each of the coded factors. The researchers exceeded the 80% agreement percentage in qualitative research that was recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994). When there was a discrepancy between the coders, both referred back to the data and came to an agreement on the final code. The NVivo software provided the number of respondents for each of the coded factors, as well as the number of references for each factor.

Of the original 14 coded factors, six factors were dropped from the study (see Table 3) because of the limited number of responses for those factors or because the factor was talked about by participants in the context of a different factor and thus was combined with that factor. After testing the coding scheme, it became apparent to the researchers that the “expectations” factor did not fit into the category of a factor that contributed to a strong remarriage. Rather than talk about expectations contributing to a strong remarriage, participants discussed expectations as a perception of remarriage. However, the unanticipated and data rich information found in the expectations factor led to the development of a separate research question specifically looking at expectations in remarriage. Because research questions do not always precede data analysis in qualitative research (Creswell, 2007), the researcher was able to add the “expectations” component to the study. Including the second research question gives more depth of understanding to the story of the remarriage participants.

After coding the data, the researcher used family stress theory to guide further analysis of classifying, prioritizing, integrating, and synthesizing the coded data (Saldaña, 2009). For research question one, the factors that contribute to strong remarriages were organized by prevalence in participant responses. According to family stress theory,

Table 3

Factors by Gender and Frequency

Factors	Females	Males	Total
Commitment	10	9	19
Love	10	9	19
Religion/Spirituality	9	9	18
Communication	6	8	14
Compatibility	4	9	13
Financial Agreement	2	5	7
Physical Intimacy	2	4	6

these factors can be considered resources that remarried couples have used to adapt to changes brought on by the remarriage. The second research question explored the expectations of remarriage. According to family stress theory, how remarried couples talk about expectations may show their perceptions of remarriage and can contribute to how the remarried individual adapts to the change brought on by the remarriage.

Researcher's Role

In qualitative research, the researcher makes an interpretation of the data. These interpretations cannot be separated from the researcher's background or biases (Creswell, 2007). The researcher's history, values, and expectations may affect the objectivity of the data analysis. However, in qualitative research, the researcher's subjectivity

oftentimes is considered an important part of the project (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

Researcher's shape the qualitative writing and need to be open about their role in the writing process (Creswell, 2007). Reflexivity in qualitative research is the self-awareness of one's biases. It is through reflexivity that qualitative researcher's search for their subjective biases and its effects on the data but recognize they cannot completely be eliminated (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Therefore, the researcher has addressed potential biases for this study below.

The researcher is a divorced single mother that has never been remarried. However, the researcher hopes someday to be remarried. Because of this life experience, the researcher recognizes that expectations, assumptions, and values regarding remarriage may have an effect on her interpretation of the data. For several years, the researcher has talked with many single adults striving for remarriage, as well as those in remarriages searching for information on strong remarriages.

The research problem was developed as the researcher became burdened by the deficit approach in the extant literature on remarriage. Therefore, the researcher had a desire to contribute positive aspects of remarriage to the literature. The first research question was prompted by both a personal desire to know, as well as the dearth of information on what factors contribute to strong remarriages. The second research question was developed as the data was analyzed. Expectations of remarriage resonated with the researcher's experience with dating and the potential impact that expectations may have on the perception of the remarriage relationship.

During the data analysis, the researcher was acutely aware of biases that might interfere with interpretation and regularly practiced reflexivity. The researcher routinely

asked herself if her biases were influencing any process in the data analysis. When the researcher had strong feelings regarding particular quotes, the researcher would set those quotes aside to be visited at another more objective time. If there were any concerns regarding bias, the researcher conferred with the research assistant to verify if the interpretation was consistent with how the research assistant interpreted the quote.

Ultimately, the researcher considers her personal experiences and biases to be beneficial for this study. The researcher believes that her personal knowledge of the complexities associated with remarriage gave her a heightened understanding of the stories that the participants relayed. Although the researcher cannot completely remove her biases from the study, she believes that it is because of her life experience that the topic of strong remarriages is being pursued for this study and that it will be able to contribute to the literature.

Dr. Higginbotham's research assistant was the second coder and helped with the data analysis. The research assistant has been married for four years and has recently had her first child. Within the past 5 years, the research assistant's family of origin has changed from a traditional two parent family, to a single parent family (after the death of her mother), and is now a stepfamily following the remarriage of her father. Her husband is also part of a large stepfamily in which both of his parents divorced and remarried. Over the past 5 years, she has studied remarriage and stepfamily functioning as a graduate student. Through her academic and personal experiences, the research assistant recognizes her possible biases regarding remarriage and stepfamily functioning, as well as her ability to recognize the complexity and challenges these families face.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings from the qualitative data analysis of 10 couples who have been remarried for 5 years. The findings represent the interview data pertaining to strong remarriages. Recruited couples answered open-ended questions regarding both the quality and stability of their remarriage. Findings address the research questions: (a) how do couples who have been remarried for 5 years, talk about the factors that contribute to strong remarriages, and (b) how do couples who have been remarried for 5 years, talk about their expectations of remarriage?

For the first research question, the factors of strong remarriages are listed in order of prevalence in terms of participants' responses from the qualitative interviews. The factors were coded and organized according to how many participants talked about the factor in their interview. Sub-factors within each factor further help to explain how participants talked about each factor and are organized using terminology used by the participants. The factors used for this study were those factors mentioned by at least 25% of the participants. Table 3 shows the factors and how many participants talked about that factor. The seven most prevalent factors are reviewed in this chapter.

For the second research question, participants were asked the following two questions regarding their expectations of remarriage: (a) "Is your marriage now what you expected it would be when you got married?", and (b) "Were your expectations realistic or unrealistic?" Because all of the participants responded to these questions, the findings reflect how each of the participants fit into one of the following three categories:

exceeded expectations, realistic expectations, and more difficult than expected. Table 4 shows the expectations categories and the frequency response of the 20 participants. The presentation of the findings includes factors and sub-factors that emerged from the qualitative data analysis. In order to maintain the essence and quality of the data, the participant quotes were not edited.

Research Question One: How Do Remarried Couples Talk about Factors that Contribute to Strong Remarriage?

Factors that contribute to strong remarriage were coded from the entire interview. Seven main factors emerged as participants talked about strong remarriages. The following factors are listed in order of prevalence: commitment, love, religion/spirituality, communication, compatibility, financial agreement, and physical intimacy.

Table 4

Expectation Category by Gender and Frequency

Expectation category	Females	Males	Total
Exceeded expectations	7	6	13
Realistic expectations	2	3	5
More difficult than expected	1	1	2

Commitment

Commitment was defined by participants in terms of choosing to stay remarried through both the good and the bad times. Of the 20 participant interviews, 19 talked about commitment being an important factor of a strong remarriage. Participants felt strongly about commitment with comments such as, “commitment is number one.” Three sub-factors of commitment emerged: sticking it out, loyalty, and commitment for the sake of the children.

Sticking it out. Because most participants had experienced a previous divorce, the concept of commitment was extremely important to them. One wife stated, “Having been divorced before, I don’t want to be a three time loser! I don’t want to get divorced again. I just have to stick it out this time” (Wife 2). In recognizing from previous marriages that remarriage may have difficult times, participants expressed the need to be dedicated to the remarriage with quotes such as “There’s gonna be hard moments, and if you can’t push through those, then you’re not going to make it, because every marriage is going to have hard moments” (Husband 5), and “Every marriage is tough, but I think that with remarriage you have the experience to try to make it work, I hope” (Wife 2).

Some participants said that divorce was not an option or considered during difficult times. One husband described his decision to be committed:

The reason why we dated so long is I didn’t want to get divorced again, and she didn’t ever want to get divorced because she came from a divorced family, her parents were divorced. So I remember talking with her, and during our eight years of talking and stuff, we both realized it’s going to be hard sometimes. It’s going to be really great most of the time, you know, divorce isn’t really an option for us. It’s just not even ever been considered, at least in my mind. (Husband 1)

In an advisory tone, commitment was discussed in terms of vows. These participants believed that the commitment needed to occur when making the decision to marry. The commitment included the understanding that marriage is important and should be taken seriously when saying “I do”:

Well, we both feel that marriage is important, and it's something that you don't enter into lightly, and it's something you work on. My wife is very determined, and I think we both feel that divorce is not an option. (Husband 2)

I think my advice would be take the vow seriously, that this is a commitment for life, and if you can stand up there and utter these words and a few weeks, months, or years later regret them or wish to just be let out of them, then I think you're not getting it. (Husband 4)

Recognition that commitment was the factor that kept remarried couples together during the difficult times led some participants to reflect that “it is worth it”:

Marriage is a commitment. There are certainly times that aren't the perfect, wonderful marital bliss. But we remind ourselves that our love for each other is a commitment that goes beyond circumstance. And then whatever might be going on, that passes, and we are very happy together. (Husband 4)

It's just an understanding that you may be able to fix some of the things from the past relationship, but you're going to have other things that are going to come up that are going to be just as challenging. And when they do you've got to be able to hang in there and stick it out because it's worth it. (Husband 10)

Loyalty. As part of commitment, participants elaborated on the importance of loyalty to spouse in a committed remarriage. One wife explained that her need for loyalty was based on abandonment issues from her past that helped solidify the importance of loyalty in her remarriage:

I don't know that we've ever even considered not being together, which is wonderful because in my background I have a great fear of abandonment. So I have a great sense of loyalty. For me, it hurts to be abandoned, so I would never want anybody to have to feel the way I've felt when I've been abandoned. So I suppose that would be part of it, too, is loyalty. (Wife 3)

Loyalty to spouse was spoken of in terms of extramarital relationships that may negatively affect the remarriage. One husband defined commitment by saying, “What I mean by commitment is that when things start getting rocky or rough, that you’re not thinking about the grass on the other side of the fence looking greener” (Husband 8). A commitment to fidelity was expressed by this husband:

I think that’s one of the biggest things, for a lot of people, it’s so easy to get divorced that instead of trying to work it out and work through the conflict and come up with some solution, they just easily go out and get divorced. And I noticed a lot of times it’s because somebody will meet somebody else. Both of us are very strong against cheating. (Husband 9)

Loyalty to spouse was also described in terms of trust and support. One husband relayed that “trusting the other person that they’ll always be there” (Husband 1) was an essential element for a strong remarriage. One wife explained that having a trusted and supporting spouse was needed when outside circumstances get difficult:

My husband and I have always said that we are each other’s soft place to fall when the world gets hard, and I think that’s probably a good way to look at it. That no matter what happens we trust each other knowing that the other person’s got our back, even when we’re having a bad day. And nothing else feels kind of right. That’s first and foremost. (Wife 4)

For the children. Commitment in remarriage was connected with children in some cases. Because children are involved in many remarriages, recognition of responsibility to rear these children includes a commitment to both marriage and parenting. The priority to make the remarriage work for the benefit of the children was found in these statements:

We have to make the marriage work for the sake of our children. We are responsible for protecting these children because the next generation’s counting on it. But the marriage needs to be the number one commitment first, and work the kids into it. And in the end it benefits the kids. (Wife 8)

I think that when the parents truly love each other and are committed to each other that helps with the commitment to be good parents. (Wife 7)

Love

Love was described in terms of feelings of love and the actions associated with the expression of that love. Love was talked about by 19 out of the 20 participants as a factor that contributed to strong remarriages. The acknowledgement of love was commonly found throughout the interviews with statements such as “I love my wife very much and everyday that goes by I love her more,” “you know, I love her,” and “we still love each other.” Other participants described their definitions of love more in depth referring to “being in love” versus “loving them.” Additionally, participants discussed love in terms of how they expressed their love to their spouse or how they felt love from their spouse.

Feelings of love. There were a variety of ways that participants defined their feelings of love. One husband said, “She’s my favorite person. I still like to do things with her, she makes me laugh, and I make her laugh. She’s still a person that I want to be with, so I guess a short answer would be love” (Husband 10). Some preferred to distinguish between romantic love and the action of loving their spouse. A couple of participants stated that they were not “in love” with their spouses when they were married:

I made the decision with my head that when he proposed I made a pro and con list of who I was at the time, who he was, and the kind of partners I thought each of us needed. And when I looked at the results of that list I realized that this would be a good match, and even though I wasn’t in love with him that I’d be crazy to let a nice man like that just kind of walk away because I wasn’t in love with him. (Wife 4)

This wife related that after 6 months she had recognized that she did not want to live without her husband and felt that she had fallen in love with him. Because of her experience, this wife stressed the importance of differentiating between romantic love and the act of loving a spouse. She explained that one should make the choice to love their spouse rather than only rely on being in love:

I wasn't in love with him on the day I married him. I'd say maybe it's not important to be in love with the person, but it's important to love them. You have to make a choice to do that, and that choice is made every single day because there's going to be some day, I mean, you're two different people, and there's going to be some days where you think, "I really don't like this person today, but I do love them." And that's the nature of human emotions, is they change. And as long as it has that constancy and that foundation under it, I think most marriages will survive that. (Wife 4)

Recognition was given to the process of love that may change over time. One husband described how he felt the excited twitterpated feelings associated with a new relationship but over time recognized that those feelings were not the same as loving his wife for who she is:

People get married because they like each other a lot. When we first got married it wasn't love I'm sure. At first, everybody's excited, la dee da, but I couldn't live without her, she's amazing. So now I would say that you have to have love. At first, it ain't love. (Husband 6)

When referring to what has kept the couple together, many participants talked about love as a longevity factor with statements such as:

The number one thing is love. I think the positive energy we create, it's a synergistic energy. I would say that was the main thing. (Wife 3)

I think it's the love, you know. We're in love with each other, we still love each other, we like each other, and I think that we both try to make it. (Wife 5)

It's not a hard thing to do, we just love each other. We love being together. (Wife 6)

Expression of love. Participants referred to how they show or receive expressions of love as an important factor for strong remarriages. One wife expressed the reciprocal nature of love by saying that she would “continue to keep my heart open to receive his love and to give him love” (Wife 3). Thinking about what makes a spouse happy was a reoccurring theme in conjunction with love. One husband said, “I just want to make her happy because she’s so doggone good to me! And if I can do something around the house to cause a smile, I try to” (Husband 3).

Unselfishness was another common element of how love was expressed. One husband compared his remarriage to a previous marriage by saying, “I think for one this marriage is just so much better than my first marriage. She’s just so caring and loving. She cares about me. She’s just not selfish, and so it’s easy” (Husband 5). Another husband said, “I think that I find greater pleasure in taking care of her needs than I do in fulfilling my own” (Husband 7). One wife talked about giving up some of her independence in order to show love to her husband:

You need to think about the other person more than yourself, really, and you need to think about making a good life for them and give up some of your independence. You can’t be as independent as you were unless you want to be alone again. (Wife 2)

In an advisory manner, participants explained how to be unselfish:

Well, not to be too selfish, not to try to impose everything that you want on this other person; especially if you’ve been single for a while. You’ve probably got your own house, you’ve got your own way of doing things, you’ve got your friends, and for the most part you’re going to have to change that. You’re probably not going to find a spouse that fits in—I can see that my husband gave up a lot of things when he married me. I gave up a lot of things when I married him. So we both gave up a lot, but I feel like I got more back, and I hope he feels that way, too. I’d say just don’t be so self-centered. (Wife 2)

There's got to be love. I am more concerned about his welfare than I am about my own. I'm expendable. He's not. (Wife 3)

Actions associated with the expression of love were described by some participants. One husband illustrated how he showed his love with thoughtful notes to his wife. "Oh, I write little notes for her and put them around. I've written a few little stories and poems, just things to let her know that I care about her. I love that lady!" (Husband 3). Another husband referred to how important it was to continue dating practices during the remarriage as an expression of love:

You know one thing is when your dating your wife or girlfriend or whatever, see guys are going to look around and buy you stuff, take you food...and all that stuff and buy you flowers and whatever...Get you to fall in love with him and marry him, and two weeks later no flowers, no date, no nothing, I don't know how guys do it. You know, I buy her flowers on occasion. I still take her to the movies. We still go out and we do the things that we did when we dated. I surprise her with trips, you know do things that I know that she would like, even if that's probably the one time I spend money I don't have is if I want to get her something nice or take her somewhere on a trip. I think you have to continue to do things that you were doing when you were dating. (Husband 6)

Religion and Spirituality

One interview question specifically probed the role of religion in the remarriage. It asked, "Has a church or religion played a role in your marriage?" Although each participant was prompted to talk about religion through this specific question, references to religion or spirituality were found throughout the interviews. Religion or spirituality was coded only when it pertained to a factor that contributed to a strong remarriage. Sixteen out of twenty participants said that religion was important in their remarriage. Two participants said that spiritual beliefs were important but not a specific religion. Two participants said that religion did not have any influence on their remarriage.

Having a similar religious belief system was highly valued for the majority of participants. When cross-referencing husbands and wives, all couples were in agreement with their religious or spiritual beliefs.

Several participants had strong convictions regarding the role of religion in their remarriage. One spouse said,

“It is probably the most integral aspect of our marriage, and I think the key to the success of our marriage, too. So I mean, the interview could be over now, because pretty much this is all about religion for us!”(Wife 1)

Three sub-factors emerged that describe why religion was an important factor that contributed to a strong remarriage. These sub-factors were: common goals, religious guidance, and having a personal relationship with God.

Common goals. When talking about religion, many participants discussed common goals that center on shared religious goals:

When you have the same goals and you believe in the same God, and you believe in the same things it makes it fairly easy to get through things. (Husband 1)

I think that our religious attitudes, the same religion, not only that, but we both feel strongly about it. I think that that was very important because that helps us align our goals. I'm not off thinking of doing some crazy stuff that she can't understand or vice versa. So I think that was a big factor. (Husband 7)

One wife explained how the lack of a shared religion may have contributed to the dissolution of her previous marriage:

Well, my first marriage I wasn't involved with church at all. And I think that if I had been, I think that if I'd looked at our marriage as more than just a social contract, I probably would have stayed married that time, because I'm still friends with him. It's really important for both of us to have the spouse whose religious feelings are the same. And we can talk about that, and it does help. It gives you better perspective and it makes you realize that marriage is more than just a social thing that you can just dissolve at any time. We can still dissolve it, obviously, but we have an eternal perspective. (Wife 2)

Her husband explained that having a shared religion in their remarriage aided with commitment to the marriage by saying:

Well we both feel that marriage is important, and it's something that you don't enter into lightly, and it's something you work on. We work on our marriage and plan on being together, and our religion teaches that, and that's important to us. (Husband 2)

Religious/spiritual guidance. Many participants talked about their religion or spirituality being a guiding foundation for a strong remarriage. One husband stated, "We feel like we are divinely guided with a lot of our decisions and choices and we have no problem seeking the Lord for counsel" (Husband 10). Another participant said that "religion has provided the opportunity and the guidelines for this whole marriage" (Wife 3).

One husband talked about his church's emphasis on marriage that helped to strengthen his remarriage:

We're active in our church, and the church stresses marriages and relationships, and I think it's helped strengthen that, and when we communicate and associate together, that's one of our topics of discussion, and I think it's really helped strengthen our purpose of marriage and to stay together. (Husband 2)

Religious doctrine was discussed as a form of guidance with statements such as: "The doctrine within the religion has been a guideline for how I conduct myself in this marriage" (Wife 3), and "if you live the principles that our religion teaches, it's conducive to a happier, solid marriage and family life" (Wife 8). The Bible was referenced as offering guidance for remarried couples:

The Bible was really good about talking about what makes up strong marriage, the roles of husband and wife, and their commitments to each other. So a lot of the books that we went through before our marriage were biblically founded and covered the various aspects of a strong marriage. (Husband 4)

Examples of strong marriages in a religious setting were given as a form of guidance. One participant said, “There have been people who have just been a really good example to us within our religion who have strong marriages” (Wife 1).

Personal relationship with God. In conjunction with religion and spirituality, participants talked about their own personal relationship with God. Regarding important elements of a strong remarriage, one participant talked about his relationship with God that helped him through difficult times:

Well, I may be different than most people, I’m fairly spiritual in the way I think about things, and I think your first one would be, the most essential thing is, I think, your relationship with God, and developing yourself spiritually. Because I believe that you can rely on Him to get you through the hard times, and that will never change. (Husband 1)

One wife described her relationship with God in terms of receiving an answer to prayer regarding remarriage. She felt “impressed” that she would be in another relationship and that she should “prepare, prepare, prepare” (Wife 3).

As words of advice for having a strong remarriage, one participant said that loving God influenced other aspects of marriage so including God in one’s life would be beneficial for a strong remarriage:

You know, really, honestly, I think if I were to tell somebody what to do is just include God in their life. I mean, really, I think it all comes down to that. Because if you have somebody that loves God, they’re going to do everything in their power to be good. And that spills over into every other category: marriage, finances, job. So if you have basically a good person that’s just, I mean, somebody who loves God isn’t going to beat their wife. Somebody who loves God isn’t going to cheat on their wife or husband. So I would say that, just develop and get a good, strong faith in God. (Husband 1)

Communication

Communication in remarriage was talked about by participants as the ability to

express individual thoughts, concerns, and needs in a relationship and having that expression understood by the spouse. Fourteen out of 20 participants talked about communication being important in their strong remarriage. Communication was defined by participants using three sub-factored topics: open and honest, listening, and sensitivity.

Open and honest. Having an open and honest communication style was very important to the participants. Open communication is the ability to say whatever one would like to their spouse. Honest communication is being truthful in what one says. Most participants used both open and honest in combination to describe the importance of communication in their relationship. According to one husband, a critical element of a strong remarriage has to be “open to communication with the other person. Because if you think you know it all then you realize you don’t as you’re sitting in your bachelor condo divorced seven times and unhappy” (Husband 1). Another husband discussed how much he appreciated communication by saying, “That’s the one thing I really like about her, is we can talk. We can openly discuss anything, everything” (Husband 3). Other participants went into greater detail about how communication works in their relationships. One husband talked about not playing communication games in his remarriage but rather being able to communicate freely:

I think that communicating, talking, not playing games, not trying to hide stuff, not trying to pretend something. Our age, certainly adds, enables that, I think. I told one of my sons how I was talking with her (wife) and he would say something like, “well don’t show her your hand!” And I just thought, okay, that’s a typical young person attitude or approach. But you know, after a certain age you say, this is what it is, let’s not beat around the bush or play games or anything like that. So I think being open, not only honest and open, but communicating freely and extensively. (Husband 7)

Being able to talk to her husband even when it was difficult was discussed by one wife.

She described how unhealthy it would be to not talk about relationship issues because of potential hurt feelings. It is the ability to communicate that keeps the relationship close:

You have to have the ability to communicate. So, like say we're in a marriage together and you're doing something that is really grating on my nerves or it's really bothering me or it's really hurting my feelings or whatever, it's I think, unhealthy and unrealistic to expect that you can hold that in and not communicate about it. I think right away the things that you're ashamed of or the things that you're afraid might happen, or the things that hurt you, you have to be willing to talk about that with each other honestly, the truth of it. It's the communication that keeps you close. (Wife 10)

One participant expressed the need to have good communication from the start by relaying their first date story:

The first day she said, "You know what? I'm going to make you a deal. Why don't you just be honest with me and I'll just be honest with you. Let's start the slate clean and that way we won't have any pretenses, you don't have to pretend, you don't have to whatever. Now you can tell me what you do for a living, how much you make if that's important to you, I don't really care. If you're dating me basically to get lucky tonight, tell me that. Whatever!" We had such a good rapport from the very beginning. And just being able to say to each other from the get-go, you know what, I'm just going to tell you the truth. That has been really good. That's probably been one of the big cornerstones. So that would be one, I mean, the open communication and the honesty. (Husband 10)

Listening. Participants discussed listening as a communication tool. It was through listening that they were able to understand their spouse's viewpoint and try to make their spouse happy. As one husband said, "To strengthen our marriage I make sure that I listen to her, I try and make sure that her needs are met, and just respond to what she needs, mostly. And then keep her happy! If she's happy, I'm happy!" (Husband 10)

One wife relayed her desire to listen because she had noticed it was a good thing in her remarriage. She talked about hearing her husband and also letting him know that she was listening:

I just think that I have a tendency to sometimes not listen to him as I think he listens to me. So I've realized that letting him know that I'm listening to him and I'm really actually hearing what he's saying, so it's really just a communication tool. I've noticed it's just been a good thing. (Wife 1)

Another wife detailed how she listens to her husband. She discussed that her intention was to listen and try to better understand her husband:

I listen rather than wanting to be sure that he understands my point of view. I already know what my point of view is, so I listen and figure out, where is he coming from? I seek to understand what did he see or what did he hear, what did he feel? And then why? (Wife 3)

Sensitivity. Participants discussed the need to be sensitive to their spouse's needs while communicating. Good communication prior to remarriage was discussed with one participant expressing a need to "communicate a lot about what your desires are, and try to think of the other person's desires as much or more than your own" (Husband 2). Being sensitive in the approach to communication was also an important point. As one participant stated, "We need to know what to say, what not to say, and recognizing where each of us has sensitivities, and not deliberately pushing each other's buttons" (Husband 4).

Compatibility

When asked about the most essential elements of a strong remarriage, one participant said, "I would say compatibility. I don't believe that opposites attract, I don't buy (it)" (Husband 10). This participant was one of 13 who talked about compatibility. Participants felt that having similar interests or enjoying time together were important characteristics of a strong relationship. Compatibility was discussed by participants in two sub-factors: similar interests and like to be together.

Similar interests. Having similar interests was particularly important in remarriage. One husband stated, “I would say you have to have things you enjoy doing together, even more so than a first marriage because you’ve got different sets of kids and all that, so there’s got to be some commonality, some shared hobbies or whatever” (Husband 5). Enjoying similar activities was commonly mentioned as an important way to spend time together. One participant talked about date nights with her husband by saying:

I guess we both enjoy everything. We go dancing every weekend if we can. Similar interests, not just in dancing, but just supporting me on everything I like. And I do the same thing. (Wife 5)

In some cases, similar interests did not appear to be a consideration at the time of marriage but were now viewed positively, as expressed in comments such as “pleasantly surprised,” “a big plus,” and “makes it lots easier.”

Like to be together. Several participants used the term “like to be together” to describe their relationship, as did the participant who said, “Well we just like each other, we like to be with each other” (Wife 6). One husband talked about enjoying time with his wife rather than doing things with other people:

We’re best buddies. We’re together all the time. For the most part we want to do everything together. We’re not wanting to go do something with other people. We like to be together. (Husband 2)

Another husband talked about the difference between being single for 40 years and marriage. He felt that he would rather do things with his wife than do it alone:

One of the things that’s surprised me after 40 years of going to movies or going skiing or whatever alone, and just because I want to go, suddenly those things are a lot less fun without my wife. I’d rather just do something with her rather than go off and do something by myself, usually. (Husband 4)

Financial Agreement

Of the 20 participants, 7 talked about financial agreement being an important factor in a strong remarriage. Participants defined financial agreement as having a common understanding in the couple relationship regarding financial decisions, priorities, and financial goals. A specific question in the interview addressed financial decision-making. It asked how financial decisions were made in the marriage. Although a variety of topics were discussed by participants in response to this question, the researchers only coded references made throughout the interview where financial agreement referred to a factor that contributed to a strong remarriage.

Having a shared agreement regarding financial decision-making was important to several of the participants. Comments such as “I think it’s really important that you agree about money; I think that that’s huge” (Wife 2), showed the value of financial agreement for some participants. One husband said that it was important to be in agreement before spending money. He expressed that he would not spend money without the consent of his wife by saying, “I have been married long enough to know that I’m not going to break a penny without my mouth” (Husband 6).

In preparation for the remarriage, financial agreement and preparation was considered important. One husband talked about his experience by giving the following advice:

Before you get married, be set financially. I think being financially secure is a good thing to go into a marriage. I think being financially secure at least somewhat is the huge factor in getting married and having children. (Husband 9)

Other participants concentrated on having common financial goals as an important factor to their strong remarriage. When looking at retirement goals, one

husband talked about having financial agreement and harmony so spouses would not feel deprived:

Financially when we look at retirement and different things that we want to do and the things that we want to purchase. We're pretty much in agreement and harmony which really helps when you want to save for retirement, when you don't need to have expensive new car and things. And so you're not feeling like you're deprived. I think that is really a big asset towards a marriage. (Husband 2)

This same participant offered financial advice for a strong remarriage by advising to have "common goals in what you want to do with your money in the future and the way you want to invest, and the things that are important to spend money on" (Husband 2).

The wife of this husband also talked about having common financial goals when talking about making big decisions in their remarriage: "A lot of our big decisions have to do with money, how we're going to invest money and things like that, and we pretty much have the same goals, so we just talk things over" (Wife 2).

One solution to provide financial agreement in remarriage was given by the joint decision to share equally in spending. One husband shared a financial agreement that worked for his remarriage:

And try to be fair in the relationship. Like when it comes to money, we share the money, split everything just to keep it fair. So if we spend money, she'll spend money and I'll spend money, and not one of us is spending all the money and then the other person is not spending anything. (Husband 9)

Physical Intimacy

The importance of physical intimacy in maintaining a strong remarriage was evident in the elaborated responses of several of the participants. Six out of 20 participants talked about physical intimacy being an important factor that contributed to a

strong remarriage. Some participants referred to books or counseling that had taught that physical intimacy in a relationship was critical to sustaining a strong remarriage:

I think you've got to keep the physical aspects of marriage alive and thriving. Because it's so easy to drift apart otherwise, to let the day, one day run into another where you're just too busy or too tired, and before you know it, you've suddenly not physically attracted anymore. In fact, this is in some of the books that we were given for our counseling that talked about this very issue. You just make time; just make it happen, because otherwise it's going to become a problem, a wedge in the marriage. (Husband 4)

I've read that when a couple has frequent sex that little things don't bother them because they have something bigger to focus on that's more satisfying anyways, so they disregard that. And I can see that that's true in a lot of ways for us because we would get busy and I would get tired, and we would kiss each other good night and both of us would fall asleep. And we've had to say to ourselves, we need to pick things up again and get going! (Wife 7)

Having compatible ideas regarding physical intimacy was also expressed as an important aspect to consider when choosing a remarriage partner. It was discussed that one of the benefits of a remarriage is the opportunity to learn physical intimacy patterns from a previous marriage and using that knowledge to choose a partner that is sexually compatible as one husband advises:

I think in a second marriage, you learn that from your first marriage, everybody has different libidos and different sex drives, and there's just no question in life that that becomes an issue, and you have to find someone that has similar desires, and everybody has different desires in the world. So you have to talk about that ahead of time. And that's the one advantage of being in a second marriage. (Husband 5)

His wife also talked about the need to communicate physical intimacy desires prior to remarriage because in her previous marriage she was not sexually compatible with her husband:

Well, I think it has to do with each person has his own level of wanting certain things. And I know that I am the kind that wants sex every night if I can get it. And I used to be in a relationship where it was once every week or twice every

week and it was like, to me I used to say, this is the only time that we have together that we spend as a couple, and it's the only time I feel like you love me. And he was the same way with his previous marriage, so there we're right on the same boat. (Wife 5)

When offering advice regarding strong remarriages, some participants mentioned the need to “keep the spark” alive and to “stay affectionate.” One husband mentioned that it is difficult to revive a dim spark and in an advisory tone said:

The last bit of advice I would have for me and anybody else is keep the affection alive. Once you become just roommates, or if you become just roommates it's going to be really tough to get the fire lit again. Don't let it go out! Just stay affectionate. (Husband 4)

One wife had a plan to maintain physical intimacy in her remarriage by telling her husband, “I've always said I'm going to remind you of the things that we used to do that we don't do anymore, or that you don't do anymore, because I want to make sure that we still keep the spark there” (Wife 5).

Research Question Two: How Do Remarried Couples Talk About Their Expectations of Remarriage?

Because expectations associated with remarriage may contribute to how individuals perceive their remarriage, participants were asked the following qualitative questions regarding their expectations:

1. Is your marriage now what you expected it would be when you got married?
2. Looking back, were your expectations realistic or unrealistic?

All of the participants responded to these open-ended questions. Therefore, the findings reflect the expectations of each participant and how they fit into the following three

categories: exceeded expectations, realistic expectations, and more difficult than expected (see Table 4).

Exceeded Expectations

The majority of participants expressed that their remarriage had exceeded their expectations in some way. Of the 20 participants, 13 described their remarriage as better than expected with statements such as “I got lucky,” or “better than I would have ever dreamed.” A husband in his second marriage said, “It’s far better than I expected! I’ve never been happier in my whole life than I am now. And that’s pretty smiley!” (Husband 3). His wife also talked about how their marriage exceeded her expectations. Over time, she had discovered that her husband and their marriage are what she had always hoped for:

But I didn’t realize you could be this happy. I didn’t realize life could be this good. So actually, this marriage has truly exceeded my expectations. Because the longer we’re married, the more I discover wonderful things about this marriage and I realize now that he is the companion, and this is the kind of marriage that I’ve been looking for ever since I was a little kid. So it’s exceeded my expectations, truly. (Wife 3)

Several participants discussed that they had expected a remarriage to be difficult because of the complexities associated with remarriage such as: stepchildren, ex-spouses, and former marriage experiences. Participants talked about having realistic expectations regarding the complexities initially but discovered that the remarriage was better than they expected. One wife talked about expectations being “very realistic at the beginning,” and “difficult just having a stepdaughter,” but that her remarriage has “been a lot easier and better” than she expected (Wife 1). Another wife talked about getting remarried after a short courtship so she expected that her children would be upset with

her new husband, but reported that “It just worked out so well. I just didn’t expect it to work out so well!” (Wife 6) Regarding stepchildren, one husband talked about the pleasant surprise of having a stepchild involved in his life. He had not thought about children when considering remarriage but was happy that his wife had a son that allowed him to participate in a parenting role:

When I first thought of getting married, I didn’t realize or think about children again. And so that’s a pleasant change, pleasant surprise. I can be a father again, too. (Husband 7)

On the other hand, some participants discussed that while their remarriage exceeded their expectations, the step-parenting component of remarriage was more difficult than expected. One husband expressed that his remarriage was “better than I would have ever dreamed,” but his expectations of the children in the remarriage were unrealistic:

I think the things that weren’t realistic is dealing with my kids. You just think that the kids will accept everything, like everybody’s a good person and it will be fine and they’ll get over it. And that’s the thing that my expectations were too high on, is that part of it. (Husband 5)

Similarly, one husband explained that although his relationship with his wife exceeded his expectations, dealing with his grown children and the remarriage was more difficult than he expected:

More than I expected in a marriage. I think it’s really good. I would say my only bone of contention is our joint relationship with my children. We have different views. My children are all grown up, they’re not little, and I thought where they were grown up it really didn’t matter. But it matters more than I anticipated. (Husband 2)

Realistic Expectations

Of the 20 participants, 5 talked about their remarriage being realistic in terms of

what they expected in a remarriage. Participants explained that they expected the remarriage to be good but also to have difficult times. Some participants expressed that previous marriage had prepared them to have realistic expectations in the remarriage:

This is pretty much it. Going through a marriage you kind of know the ins and outs. I was married for three years before and I kind of knew what it was like. So I really had, I think, fairly realistic expectations going in. (Husband 1)

Some participants talked about being realistic by not having expectations with phrases such as “I don’t do expectations” (Husband 9). One wife talked about not having unrealistic expectations because of previous marriage experiences. Her way of not having unrealistic expectations was to not have any expectations:

We were both in marriages before and knew what a marriage was like. You know it’s not going to be fairy tale all the time everyday and whatever. So it was really experience that I didn’t have those expectations. I didn’t have unrealistic expectations from the beginning. I didn’t have any expectations at all. (Wife 5)

In an advisory tone, some participants talked about preparing for remarriage in terms of expectations. According to one husband, remarrying couples should recognize there will be difficult times and if they “don’t have a realistic expectation, it’s fairly easy to say, wow, this isn’t what I expected, so I’m gone. See ya. And they get divorced” (Husband 1). Another participant offered a suggestion that would help prepare remarrying couples to have realistic expectations of remarriage:

I think that it would be cool if there was some kind of a class that you could, or even a video that would go with the marriage license or something similar. Just taking a video and going in and watching it would give you a little bit of ‘this is for real, here it comes’ kind of a story. Now that would be good. (Husband 6)

More Difficult Than Expected

There were two participants that talked about their remarriages being more

difficult than they expected. One husband talked about the difficulties with busy schedules, the “world getting smaller” as they maneuvered around each other in their small home, and not having the first year of “marital bliss” (Husband 4).

The other participant that discussed her remarriage being more difficult than she expected talked about not being able to have the life-long marriage like her parents’ marriage:

I just have to accept less, and I’m willing to do that, because it is not possible to have, like my parents’ marriage, 57 years. There isn’t the time. There isn’t the life together, the commitment together, the children together—that’s not possible in a second or third marriage. It just can’t happen. So, I can’t expect to have the same things ‘cause we’re just barely starting! It takes years. So, no, it’s not what I expected in the very beginning, but it didn’t take me long to get realistic instead. Well, I have to be content with where we are. (Wife 8)

Both of the participants talked about being disappointed with physical intimacy in their relationship because they no longer had “the honeymoon bliss.” The female explained it by saying, “I think I thought that maybe it would just last longer, the sparks would. I thought that, and apparently they really don’t; for no one!” (Wife 8)

While both of these participants shared that their remarriages were more difficult than they expected, they both expressed that they were happy in their remarriages. Husband 4 said, “I love being married to my wife!” Wife 8 recognized that although she had to adjust her unrealistic expectations of remarriage, “It’s better than being alone!”

Summary

The qualitative data collected from 20 remarried individuals was able to answer the two research questions for this study. These findings addressed the research questions (a) how do couples, who have been remarried for 5 years, talk about the factors

that contribute to strong remarriages, and (b) how do couples, who have been remarried for 5 years, talk about their expectations of remarriage?

The first research question was answered by the participants talking about what factors contributed to their strong remarriage. The factors that contributed to strong remarriages were listed in order of prevalence. Commitment was talked about by 19 of the 20 participants. When talking about commitment, participants described commitment in terms of sticking it out during difficult times, loyalty to spouse, and staying together for the sake of the children. Love was also talked about by 19 out of 20 participants. Love was discussed as feelings of love and expressions of love. When talking about love, participants separated romantic love from loving a spouse. Ultimately, the participants felt that loving a spouse was more important than romantic love.

Religion/ spirituality was the third most talked about factor that contributed to a strong remarriage. Eighteen out of 20 participants said that religion or spirituality was important in their marriage. Participants described how religion contributed to their strong marriage in terms of common goals, religious guidance, and a personal relationship with God. Communication was the fourth most talked about factor that contributed to a strong remarriage. Fourteen out of 20 participants talked about communication. Having good communication was described by participants as being able to be open and honest with their spouse, having good listening skills, and being sensitive in the approach to communication with their spouse.

The final three factors that were talked about by participants were compatibility, financial agreement, and physical intimacy. Thirteen out of 20 participants talked about compatibility that was defined in terms of similar interests and liking to be together as a

couple. Having financial agreement between spouses that contributed to a strong remarriage was talked about by 7 out of 20 participants. The importance of physical intimacy was talked about by 6 out of 20 participants.

The second research question was answered by the participants talking about their expectations of remarriage. Expectations were coded into three categories: exceeded expectations, realistic expectations, and more difficult than expected. Thirteen out of 20 (65%) participants talked about their remarriage as exceeding their expectations. Five out of 20 (25%) participants talked about their remarriage as having realistic expectations. Only 2 out of 20 (10%) participants talked about their remarriage being more difficult than they expected.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Overview

This qualitative study was designed to explore aspects of strong remarriages from the perspectives of couples remarried for 5 years. Two research questions were answered for this study: (a) how do couples who have been remarried for 5 years talk about the factors that contribute to strong remarriages, and (b) how do couples who have been remarried for 5 years talk about expectations of remarriage? Findings for research question one were categorized as factors that contributed to strong remarriages. The seven prevalent factors that were talked about by the participants were: commitment, love, religion/spirituality, communication, compatibility, financial agreement, and physical intimacy. Findings for research question two regarding expectations of remarriage were categorized into one of three categories: exceeded expectations, realistic expectations, or more difficult than expected.

Prior to analyzing the data, a review of the literature identified reoccurring topics regarding aspects of strong remarriages. However, several of these topics failed to emerge as prevalent factors in this study. Equity or power sharing, children, and preparation were factors not included in the findings. Although a vast amount of research on equity and power sharing in strong marriages is found in the literature, and while participants talked about the importance of having shared beliefs regarding financial decision-making, they did not talk about equity and power-sharing in the decision-making process. It is possible that participants did not mention equity and power-sharing

during the interviews because it was not a problem in the remarriage. Because remarriages tend to be more egalitarian than first marriages (Burgoyne & Morison, 1997; Crosbie-Burnett & Giles-Simms, 1991; Pyke, 1994), perhaps the participants had equity and power-sharing in their remarriages but rather than viewing it as a contributing factor to the strong remarriage, it was an assumed way of being in the remarriage. Another possibility may be that participants viewed equity and power-sharing as a difficult aspect of remarriage and, therefore, it was not discussed in terms of strengths in the remarriage.

There was a specific question in the survey that asked participants how children had affected their remarriage. While children that affect the remarriage relationship were talked about by participants, it was not a prevalent factor that children contributed to the strong remarriage. Some participants talked about the importance of having a shared religion and commitment when rearing children and having good relationships with stepchildren. However, the majority of participants talked about the difficulties associated with the complexities of having children in a remarriage. It is possible that couples in remarriages understand the importance of parenting roles (Golish, 2003; Weaver & Coleman, 2010) and stepfamily cohesion (Ganong & Coleman, 2004), but do not connect the success or failure of stepfamily functioning with strengths in the remarriage itself.

Finally, although the topic of preparation had two specific questions asked in the survey, preparation as a factor that contributed to a strong remarriage was not a prevalent response by participants. It is possible that participants did not talk further about preparation because the questions regarding preparation were early on in the interview and preceded questions regarding elements of a strong remarriage. The survey questions

regarding preparation included: (a) how did you prepare for this remarriage, and (b) what should you have done to prepare for the remarriage? Although these questions do not prompt replies regarding factors that contribute to strong remarriages, participants may have felt they had already covered the topic adequately and did not refer to preparation later in the interviews. Additionally, the effects of preparation on a remarriage may have dissipated over time (Carroll & Doherty, 2003; Higginbotham et al., 2009).

The remainder of this chapter includes a discussion of findings that are consistent with the existing research, new findings, and how theory was used to explain the findings. Additionally, limitations of the study and implications for remarriage education and future research are discussed.

Findings for Research Question One

Each factor that the participants talked about that contributed to a strong remarriage is found in the existing literature. However, because qualitative research allows for depth and further explanation of the factors, the following discussion of each factor incorporates important new findings.

Commitment

Nineteen out of 20 participants in this study talked about commitment being an important aspect of their strong remarriage. This finding is consistent with the commitment literature which conveys that higher reported commitment is associated with greater relationship satisfaction (Stanley et al., 2002). Commitment in the literature

distinguishes between personal commitment, a desire to be with the partner in the future, and moral commitment, a limit on personal choice due to moral or social obligations (Adams & Jones, 1997).

Findings from this study support the commitment distinctions. The sub-factors of commitment as defined by the participants include: sticking it out, loyalty, and staying together for the sake of the children. Sticking it out and loyalty were talked about by participants in terms of having an intrinsic desire to stay with their spouse in the future. Examples of personal commitment can be found in phrases such as: staying together during the hard times because it's worth it or trusting each other that no matter what happens, they will be a support to each other. The sub-factor of staying together for the sake of the children can be considered a moral commitment. Participants described having a responsibility to raise children with a moral premise that commitment in marriage is valued and by being an example of a committed marriage partner.

How participants talked about commitment to the remarriage due to marriage vows can be considered both a personal commitment and a moral commitment. Participants that talked about marriage vows in terms of making the personal choice to be with their spouse long-term can be considered a personal commitment. When participants talked about marriage vows in terms of the general premise that marriage itself is a commitment, they are adhering to a moral commitment.

Although this finding is consistent with the commitment literature in general, it adds to the remarriage literature. Commitment does not emerge as a prevalent theme in the remarriage literature. With 95% of the participants talking about commitment in their strong remarriage, it highlights the importance of commitment specifically in remarriage.

Participants expressed an understanding that difficulties associated with the complexities of remarriage created a greater need for commitment in a remarriage. Additionally, participants talked about commitment being especially important in a remarriage because of past failed marriages and the desire not to fail again. This finding is pertinent when discussing stability in remarriages (Knoester & Booth, 2000). Because an overwhelming majority of participants talked about a factor that contributed to the stability of the remarriage when asked about their strong remarriage, this finding contributes to the validity of including the construct of stability in the definition of what makes a strong remarriage.

Love

Love was talked about by 19 out of the 20 participants as a factor that contributed to strong remarriages. This finding is consistent with the literature that feelings of love and satisfaction with the relationship are associated with marital happiness (Rogers, 2004; Sanchez & Gager, 2000). Feelings of love for their spouse were conveyed over and over by the participants in this study.

The depth of how participants talked about love contributes to the literature. The participants talked about love in terms of feelings of love and the expression of love. Feelings of love were further distinguished between being in love and the action of loving the spouse. Being in love was described as a romantic, short-term type of love that was oftentimes felt at the beginning of the relationship. A separate and distinct type of love was felt over time when being in love turned to loving the spouse. Rather than describing a romantic love where the love is something that happens to them, the participants

described loving their spouse as a feeling of love given to their spouse. This distinction may be used to better understand that while most people in the United States marry someone they love, it does not always lead to long-term marriages (Vanlaningham et al., 2001). However, the love that motivates spouses to remain married (Glenn, 1991) may be attributed to the action of giving love to their spouse.

How the participants expressed their love also contributes to the literature. Participants referred to how they show or receive expressions of love as an important factor for strong remarriages. Thinking about what makes a spouse happy, unselfishness, and thoughtful notes or dates were some ways that the participants expressed their love. Although Deal and Olson (2010) maintain that love is not enough to sustain a happy marriage, love was an important factor with 95% of the participants talking about the importance of love in their remarriage.

Religion/Spirituality

Findings regarding religion/spirituality are consistent with the existing literature. Because one interview question specifically probed the role of religion in the remarriage, each participant had the opportunity to discuss religion in the interview. The question asked, “Has a church or religion played a role in your marriage?” Comments were only coded when they pertained to a factor that contributed to a strong remarriage. Religion or spirituality was talked about as an important part of the remarriage by 18 out of 20 participants. All of the couples were in agreement with their religious/spiritual beliefs which finding is consistent with the literature. Happily married couples are much more

likely to report shared religious values than unhappily married couples (Deal & Olson, 2010; Olson & Olson-Sigg, 2008).

The sub-factors of religion/spirituality findings provide depth and insight into how this factor contributes to a strong remarriage. Shared common goals that center on religious goals gave participants a unifying common purpose which is similar to the literature that shows that religious values are associated with commitment to spouse and marriage (Allgood et al., 2009). Guidance based on religious doctrine was considered helpful in showing participants how to conduct their lives. Having a personal relationship with God was offered as advice in times of difficulty which is consistent with the literature that reports that marriage is enhanced and stabilized by including God in the relationship (Lambert & Dollahite, 2008).

Although each participant was asked a question about religion in the interview, the topics of religion or spirituality were found throughout the interviews. The sample was from a highly religious state with 79% of the population reporting a religious affiliation (Kosmin & Keysar, 2009). Therefore, it is not surprising that 90% of the sample talked about religion/spirituality being important in the remarriage. However, the surprising finding is the depth of how important the role of religion played in these participant's remarriages. Several participants talked about religion being the main factor that contributed to their strong remarriage. Religious values were talked about as the guiding principles that affected all other factors in the remarriage as can be seen in the following comment, "It is probably the most integral of our marriage, and I think the key to the success of our marriage, too. So I mean, the interview could be over now, because pretty much this is all about religion for us!" (Wife 1). This finding suggests that having

a mutual commitment to living a shared religion in remarriages may act as an umbrella factor that influences all other contributing factors to strong remarriages through shared values, guiding principles, and common goals.

Communication

Communication was talked about by 14 out of 20 participants as a factor that contributes to strong remarriage. This finding is consistent with the existing literature that reports that happy remarried couples communicate effectively (Deal & Olson, 2010; Markman et al., 2010). The participants talked in depth about how they communicate which was categorized into three sub-factors: open and honest, sensitivity, and listening.

The ability to openly communicate in the remarriage was coupled with the topic of honest communication by participants. Value was placed on being able to speak truthfully, as well as trust that their spouse was truthful in their communication. This finding highlights the importance of spouses being secure enough in the remarriage to speak openly and honestly without negative ramifications and is consistent with the findings from Deal and Olson (2010) that showed that 72% of happy couples feel good about how much their spouse shares feelings with them, and 97% of happy couples are very satisfied with how they and their partner talk with each other.

Open and honest communication is a two-sided communication style that requires both spouses to comply in order to provide a sense of security to be free to openly express oneself. Deal and Olson (2010) defined this effective communication style assertive communication. This suggests that communication in a remarriage is not only the ability to say things in a manner where the other spouse understands what is being

said, but also the security that comes with knowing the other spouse is being open and honest, as well as the security to be free to be open and honest in one's own personal thoughts and feelings. According to one participant, this reciprocal open and honest communication style is "what keeps you close" (Wife 10).

In conjunction with the ability to be open and honest in communication, being sensitive was found to be an important part of communication. Participants expressed the need to be sensitive to their spouse's feelings when communicating. Olson and Olson-Sigg (2008) reported that couples in happy marriages were almost 5 times more likely than couples in unhappy marriages to agree that they are very satisfied with how they talk to each other. Additionally, Lederman and colleagues (2010) concluded that positive communication can prevent the deterioration of marital quality. When spouses are aware and respectful of the feelings and needs of their spouse, they can choose the words that are positive rather than hurtful to use when communicating with their spouse. This may suggest that spouses who regularly communicate with sensitivity provide an environment more accommodating for open and honest communication.

Listening as an effective communication tool is found in the existing literature (Skogrand, Hatch, & Singh, 2008). It was through listening that participants were able to understand their spouse's viewpoint and try to make their spouse happy. According to Deal and Olson (2010), active listening "ensures that both the sender and the receiver of a message are clearly understood and that there is little room for misinterpretation" (p. 152). Participants expressed the need to understand their spouse's viewpoint and that actively listening contributed to their strong remarriage. This finding suggests that not only do spouses desire to be heard, but believe it is important to listen and understand

their spouse's viewpoint in order to help contribute to a strong remarriage. These findings contribute to the literature regarding aspects of effective communication tools specific to remarriages.

Compatibility

Compatibility was talked about by 13 out of 20 participants and was defined as having similar interests and enjoying time spent together. Twice as many husbands talked about compatibility being an important factor for their strong remarriage. This finding might suggest that husbands bond with their wives during leisure activities, appreciate their wives who spend time with them, or highly value friendship in a remarriage as one husband said, "We're best buddies" (Husband 2).

Having similar interests is consistent with the existing literature that happy couples have similar leisure interests (Deal & Olson, 2010). This study offers additional insight regarding similar interests because participants who talked about having similar interests considered it a bonus in the remarriage rather than a requirement when choosing a remarriage partner. This finding might suggest that factors that contribute to strong remarriages may be different than courtship factors that lead to remarriage.

Enjoying time spent together was talked about by participants and can be considered as having a friendship (Bachand & Caron, 2001; Schwartz, 1994). Deal and Olson (2010) found that 95% of happy couples felt that leisure time spent together took precedence over individual time. The authors suggest that happy couples sacrifice individual time in order to nurture a strong marriage. A distinction in the findings was that the participants discussed not only spending time together but also enjoying the time

spent together. This finding might suggest that compatible remarried couples do not consider spending time with their spouse a sacrifice, rather a shared opportunity to enjoy together.

Financial Agreement

Financial agreement was talked about by 7 out of 20 participants. Although the number of participants that talked about financial agreement was nearly half the number of the preceding factors, the author included this factor in this study because the existing literature emphasizes the importance of finances in relationships, as well as the intensity for which the participants talked about this subject. For these participants, having common financial goals and priorities were important in their strong remarriage. This finding is consistent with the existing literature that happy couples significantly agree more how to manage finances than unhappy couples (Deal & Olson, 2010; Olson & Olson-Sigg, 2008) and couples that are satisfied with how they are handling their finances share equally in financial decisions (Ganong & Coleman, 1989a). The importance of having financial agreement in a strong remarriage may simply be the absence of financial strain on the relationship. Additionally, financial agreement provides couples with the opportunity to communicate and establish trust within the relationship (Skogrand et al., 2010).

In addition to valuing financial agreement in a strong remarriage, the participants talked more in depth about the importance of having shared financial goals. Twice as many husbands talked about financial agreement which might suggest that husbands carry the burden of providing financial security in the remarriage and, therefore, think

about financial agreement more than wives. Another hypothesis might be that husbands would rather share the responsibility of financial decisions instead of making the financial decisions themselves. Finally, perhaps husbands have recognized more financial autonomy in remarriages than first marriages (Allen et al., 2001) and, therefore, recognize the need to have shared financial goals.

Physical Intimacy

Six of the 20 participants talked about the importance of physical intimacy in their strong remarriage. Although the number of participants that talked about physical intimacy was nearly half of the preceding factors, the emphasis in the literature and from the participants compelled the author to include this aspect in the study. Olson and Olson-Sigg (2008) reported that “a major strength for happily married couples is the quality of the sexual relationship” (p. 16). Furthermore, happily married couples tend to have more sex, which makes their relationship happier (Call et al., 1995).

How participants talked about physical intimacy contributes to the literature. Some participants expressed that because they had been married previously and knew their own sexual desires, they now had the opportunity to find a partner that is sexually compatible. Participants stressed the need to discuss individual sexual desires prior to the remarriage in order to have agreement in the physical intimacy aspect of the remarriage. This finding suggests that open and honest communication about sexual expectations and desires is beneficial for strong remarriages.

A finding specific to remarriages is the need to “keep the spark” (Husband 5) because according to some participants, staying in a remarriage is even more challenging

than a first marriage and physical intimacy needs to be a part of keeping the remarried couple together. This finding suggests that efforts to sustain physical intimacy in the remarriage would be valuable to remarriage stability. Some participants talked about their agreement with marriage books that stressed the important of staying affectionate. This finding suggests that educational materials regarding shared physical intimacy expectations can be helpful for strong remarriages.

Husbands talked about physical intimacy twice as much as wives. Husbands talked about the need to stay affectionate, to remain sexually attracted to each other, and the need to honestly discuss sexual desires prior to marriage. Deal and Olson (2010) found that 24% of couples surveyed reported it was difficult to talk about sexual expectations with their spouse. These authors also suggest that men and women have differing physiological arousal patterns and that communication regarding sexual needs is vital to sexual compatibility.

The importance of physical intimacy or sexual compatibility for husbands might stem from previous relationships that were missing sexual compatibility that may have contributed to the dissolution of the relationship. Furthermore, men have higher levels of testosterone that contribute to sexual urges that when unfulfilled may contribute to conflict in other areas of the relationship (Deal & Olson, 2010).

Findings for Research Question Two

Little is known about expectations of remarriage and how it affects the remarital relationship. Because of the high divorce rates for remarriages (Bramlett & Mosher, 2001; Kreider, 2005), existing research has stressed the importance of remarried couples

having realistic expectations about challenges unique to remarriages (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004; Papernow, 2008). Therefore, it is helpful to know what couples in strong remarriages report regarding their expectations 5 years into their remarriage.

Exceeded Expectations

The majority (65%) of the participants felt that their remarriage exceeded their expectations. Because the existing literature stresses the importance of remarrying couples having realistic expectations of the difficulties associated with remarriage (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004; Papernow, 2008), this finding could be viewed as contradictory to previous research. However, this is not necessarily the case because the participants talked about having realistic expectations going into the remarriage, but were pleasantly surprised that their remarriage was better than they expected. Qualitative research views phenomena as a process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003) and because the data was collected 5 years after the remarriage, participant perceptions of the quality of the remarriage may have changed over time. Patricia Papernow's (2008) *Stepfamily Cycle*, which describes the early, middle, and later stages of stepfamily development may give an explanation that remarried couples have gone through the development stages after 5 years and are now a mature remarried couple with a sense of "we." Additionally, it is possible that the efforts of educating the public regarding difficulties associated with remarriage has been effective and that the participants of this study went into the remarriage expecting more difficulties than actually occurred, thus explaining comments such as "I got lucky" (Wife 5).

This finding contributes to the literature by presenting a strengths-based outcome for a previously deficit-based research topic. The finding offers hope for the individual afraid of high remarriage divorce rates or fearful of attempting to overcome the difficulties associated with remarriage. While it is beneficial for remarrying individuals who have unrealistic fantasy-type expectations of remarriage to understand the difficulties associated with remarriage (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004; Papernow, 2008), it may be beneficial for those individuals who shy away from attempting a remarriage to have research that shows some remarriages transcend realistic expectations. Having both ends of the spectrum regarding expectations in the remarriage literature may reach a larger set of potential remarrying individual types.

Realistic Expectations

Five participants talked about their expectations of remarriage being realistic. The participants talked about understanding the difficulties associated with the complexities of remarriage in conjunction with expecting good times in the remarriage. These participants based their expectations on their experience in previous marriages that consisted of both good times and hard times. This finding is consistent with Michaels (2006) qualitative study of successful stepfamilies where couples had realistic expectations and understood the effort it takes to have a successful remarriage.

A major finding regarding realistic expectations is how some participants talked about not setting expectations in order stay away from unrealistic expectations. These participants described understanding that remarriage would have difficult times, but that not having expectations would allow them to persevere during the difficult times.

Ultimately, not having expectations was talked about the same as having realistic expectations. This distinction would be helpful when designing future studies of expectations.

More Difficult Than Expected

Only 2 out of the 20 participants talked about their remarriage being more difficult than they expected. Because the study focused on strong remarriages, it is not surprising that only 10% of the participants talked about their remarriage being more difficult than they expected. During the early years of remarriage, unrealistic expectations can lead to difficulties adjusting to the remarriage (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). A contributing finding is the reason why their expectations were not met. Both of these participants were disappointed that the romance in the remarriage or as they termed it, “the honeymoon bliss,” had dissipated. This reiterates the need for shared beliefs regarding continual physical intimacy in a remarriage.

Theory

Family stress theory can be used as a conceptual model for understanding and explaining strong remarriages. Remarriage can be seen as a life transition with potential hardships and adaption opportunities for remarried couples. The Double ABCX model (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983) can be used to explain remarriage stressors, potential resources available to remarried couples, perceptions of remarriage, and possible adaptation to stressors for remarried couples who have been married for 5 years.

Remarriage can be seen as a non-normative event that is oftentimes preceded by premature death or divorce. According to the family stress theory, the stressor is any initial event or circumstance that may lead to a family crisis. According to Crosbie-Burnett (1989) the stressor event occurs as the remarriage changes the family structure. Pile-up of demands is the cumulative effect, over time, of stressors on family functioning. Because this study focused on the positive aspects of remarriage, findings are not directly reflective of pile up of demands. However, with some factors, it can be inferred that pile up of demands would play a role in the remarriage if the opposite of that factor were true. For instance, the participants discussed the need to maintain physical intimacy over time in order to deter the pile up of demands on “keeping the affection alive” (Husband 4). Furthermore, it is important to recognize that the participants who volunteered for this study considered their remarriage to be strong and, thus, did not focus on the stressors over time in their remarriages.

The resources available to remarried spouses can contribute to their adaptation in times of stress. The resources may either be existing resources or developing resources that are utilized in response to the stressor event. These resources act as a mediator between the pile up of demands and adaptation. Religion/spirituality was a resource that the majority of participants used to strengthen their remarriage. Religion was talked about as a guiding foundation to show remarried individuals how to conduct themselves in the marriage. Communication was also a resource used by participants. The ability to be open and honest, to actively listen to their spouse, and to have sensitivity to the needs of their spouse while communicating were all communication resources that contributed to adaptation in the remarriage.

Another facilitator between stress and adaptation is perception. Perception refers to the way in which family members perceive their situation and their ability to cope during difficult circumstances such as perceived family strengths. These perceptions guide the meaning that family members give to crisis situations. The way participants perceived having similar interests as a bonus in the relationship can be seen as a family strength that could contribute to adaptation. Participant's perception of love that changed over time from romantic love to loving their spouse acted as a facilitator for adaptation to the remarriage. Additionally, the finding that 65% of participants perceived their remarriage as exceeding their expectations could act as mediator between stress and adaptation.

Adaptation is the outcome to the process of responding to stressors and crises. The Double ABCX model places adaptation on a range between maladaptation and bonadaptation. "Maladaptation, the negative end of the continuum, is defined as continued imbalance between pile-up of demands and the family's capabilities for meeting those demands" (McCubbin & Patterson, 1985, p. 813). On the other end of the spectrum is bonadaptation. McCubbin and Patterson (1985) stated, "Bonadaptation, the positive end of the continuum, is defined as a minimal discrepancy between the pile-up of demands and the family's capabilities, so as to achieve a balance in family functioning" (p. 813). Participants from this study of strong remarriages can be found in the bonadaptation range showing the ability to adapt to the stress of a new remarriage, and over time successfully utilize resources and perceptions to achieve quality and stability in their remarriages.

Limitations

A limitation of qualitative research and, therefore, this study is the inability to generalize the findings to the greater population. While the small sample size of 20 participants allows for in-depth responses and exploration of the research questions, the findings may not represent the experiences and feelings of all remarried couples. Bias may be present because the participants self-selected and were offered an incentive for participation in the study. Because the participants were willing to share their perceptions of strong remarriage, they may have had personal reasons for participation that could contribute to bias in the findings.

The demographic representation was fairly homogenous with the majority of the participants being Caucasian from a highly religious western state. However, the age range of 28 to 77 gives a broad range of life experiences from the participants. Additionally, there was a wide range of income levels ranging from \$30,000 to over \$100,000.

Another limitation of the study is the potential personal bias of the researcher in analyzing the data. The researcher is a divorced single mother that hopes someday to be remarried. Although efforts were made to limit bias, her personal experiences and perceptions could have had an effect on the findings. The researcher's personal experience led to the incorporation of research question two as she recognized the need for a strengths-based perspective of expectations. Although bias can be considered a limitation, in qualitative research, researcher bias can also be considered an integral and important part of study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Creswell, 2007).

In addition to the interpretation of the findings by the researcher, how participants express themselves during an interview may contribute to a limitation in this study. Terminology or definitions used by participants are subjective and, therefore, not concrete. Consequently, the researcher's attempt to infer participant's use of language may or may not be accurate.

Finally, the concept of time may be a limitation when analyzing the data. It was not always clear whether participant responses were reflective of current relationship dynamics or something that existed 5 years ago. The relationships may start, end, or develop over time with described characteristics.

Implications for Future Research

Because of the exploratory nature of this qualitative research design, this study offers an array of future research topics to be quantitatively studied, and verified. Quantitative studies that verify the importance of commitment specific to strong remarriages due to the complexities associated with remarriage, and the desire to not fail again could contribute to the specific needs of remarried individuals. Future research that distinguishes between romantic love and the action of loving a spouse can help to make the distinction between the way couples refer to love in the literature. Additionally, how couples express love could be further quantified in order to show behavioral variables found in a loving remarriage relationship.

The association of a shared religious/spiritual agreement and strong marriages is found in the literature (Deal & Olson, 2010; Olson & Olson-Sigg, 2008). Quantitative studies that verify specific variables in religiosity or spirituality that contributes to strong

remarriages such as types of religious guidance and common goals should be investigated. This study was conducted in a homogenous religious state. Therefore, replicating this study or verifying quantitatively the religious/spiritual factor with a heterogeneous religious/spiritual sample would contribute to the literature. Furthermore, because reports that religious affiliation is declining in the United States (Kosmin & Keysar, 2009), future studies that correlate religiosity and strong remarriages could help to explain remarriage trends.

Communication skills specific to remarriages could be a topic of future research. Because participants talked about communication in terms of truthfulness, it is possible that couples in remarriages bring into the remarriage fear and doubt about honesty due to experiences in their previous marriages. Research that correlates honesty and communication specific to remarriages should be investigated. Furthermore, quantitative lists of communication skills specific to remarriages could contribute to educational materials used in relationship education.

Because the factors of compatibility, financial agreement, and physical intimacy in this study showed a 2:1 husband to wife ratio, gender differences in all factors that contribute to strong remarriages could be investigated. What is important to husbands is not always what is important to wives and vice versa. More knowledge about gender differences would facilitate helpful information for those couples seeking educational materials on strengthening their remarriage.

The dearth of research regarding expectations of remarriage provides an opportunity to expand on the expectations findings from this study. For example, we know very little about specific expectations of remarriage. Although Higginbotham and

Adler-Baeder (2008) used the RMBI to look at expectations of remarriage in association with remarital satisfaction and adjustment, there is still a need to further investigate expectations of remarriage. What is considered a realistic expectation? Which expectations are the most valued? Additionally, it should be further investigated how couples who are not happy in a remarriage report about their expectations of remarriage. Finally, it would be helpful to have research that combines the emphasis of realistic expectations with the possibility of exceeding expectations from a strengths-based perspective.

Concluding Remarks

Remarriage is often studied with a focus on the difficulties associated with the complexities of remarriage. While the author does not wish to dismiss or minimize the problems found in remarriages, this study sought to understand the opposite end of the remarriage spectrum by exploring aspects of strong remarriages using a strengths-based perspective. The findings from this study will contribute to the literature by presenting factors that influence strong remarriages from the perspectives of couples who have been remarried for 5 years. These factors can be quantitatively studied in future research to provide a substantive knowledge of attributes found in successful remarriages. With this information, relationship education can be empirically designed to help remarried couples learn ways to strengthen their remarriage.

The topic of expectations and how it affects the quality of remarriage is a relatively new and exciting area of study. The findings regarding expectations contributes to the literature by offering an example of happily remarried couples that felt

they had realistic expectations going into the remarriage, but were pleasantly surprised that the remarriage exceeded their expectations. This finding provides encouragement for those individuals who fear remarriage due the complexities associated with remarriage and the high remarriage divorce rates. Furthermore, future quantitative research regarding expectations and its association to quality and stability of remarriage is needed. Having an understanding of the role of expectations can add to the remarriage education literature in helping remarried couples understand the impact of expectations on their relationship. Ultimately, this study offers insight into the lives of strong remarried couples which provides examples for other remarried couples to follow in striving to have a strong remarriage.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A:
IRB Approval



Institutional Review Board
4460 Old Main Hill, SER 140
Logan, UT 84322-4460
Telephone: (435) 797-1821
Fax: (435) 797-3769



USU Assurance: FWA#00003308
Protocol # 1662

11/13/2006

SPO #:
AES #: UTA00

MEMORANDUM

TO: Brian Higginbotham
Katie Henderson

FROM: Richard D. Gordin, Acting IRB Chair
True M. Fox, IRB Administrator

Richard D. Gordin
True M. Fox

SUBJECT: Remarriage in Utah: An Evaluation of Factors Influencing Marital Quality
Your proposal has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board and is approved under expedite procedure #7

- There is no more than minimal risk to the subjects.
 There is greater than minimal risk to the subjects.

This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file for the period of one year. If your study extends beyond this approval period, you must contact this office to request an annual review of this research. Any change affecting human subjects must be approved by the Board prior to implementation. Injuries or any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board.

Prior to involving human subjects, properly executed informed consent must be obtained from each subject or from an authorized representative, and documentation of informed consent must be kept on file for at least three years after the project ends. Each subject must be furnished with a copy of the informed consent document for their personal records.

The research activities listed below are expedited from IRB review based on the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) regulations for the protection of human research subjects, 45 CFR Part 46, as amended to include provisions of the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, November 9, 1998.

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Appendix B:
Correspondence

Introduction Postcard

Hello again! As a follow-up to the Remarriage Belief Inventory Study that you participated in during 2004-2005, we are hoping to gather information about your 5th year of remarriage! I sincerely hope you will participate again as there is very little research on the quality and stability of remarriages over time. Your continued participation will help change that! In combination with information from previous surveys, the information we will gather this year will allow us to analyze 5-year trends and changes in remarriage satisfaction, stability, beliefs, and behaviors.

In approximately two weeks, a survey will be mailed to your home. We will include a small cash token of our appreciation for your time. We sincerely hope that you will take a few minutes to complete and return the survey.

Follow-Up Postcard

Two weeks ago a follow-up survey on remarriage quality and stability was mailed to you. If you have already completed and returned the survey, we sincerely thank you for your participation. Your responses will be used to assist professionals who work to strengthen remarriages and stepfamilies. If you have not returned the survey, would you please take a few minutes and do so today?

Your responses are extremely valuable to us! After all, it is only by surveying those in remarriages and stepfamilies that we can understand the characteristics of these relationships.

If you did not receive a questionnaire, or if it was misplaced, please call (435-797-7276) or email (BrianH@ext.usu.edu). Thank you!

Appendix C:
Information Letter

Template updated 5/9/2006

UtahState UNIVERSITY

Page 1 of 1

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY, CONSUMER, AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
College of Education and Human Services

Letter of Information for the Remarriage in Utah Study

Hello again! As a follow-up to the Remarriage Belief Inventory Study, I am hoping to gather additional information from 100 couples, including yours. I sincerely hope you will complete another survey as there is very little research on the quality of remarriages *over time*. Your participation will help change that! By now you should be in the fifth year of your marriage. In combination with information from previous surveys, the information we will gather this year will allow us to analyze 5-year trends and changes in remarriage satisfaction, stability, beliefs, and behaviors.

Besides a small token of my appreciation, there may or may not be any direct benefit to you from participating in this follow-up study. However, your participation will help identify factors that promote satisfying and stable remarriages and will assist professionals who work to strengthen remarriages and stepfamilies. There are no anticipated risks to participation; although, it is possible that you may feel some discomfort as you respond to particular questions. Feel free to skip any questions you do not feel comfortable answering. You may withdraw from the study at anytime without consequence.

As with previous surveys all information will remain confidential. No one from your family, not even your spouse, will ever see your responses. If results of the study are published or presented, your names will not be listed.

This year we are also hoping to do some interviews. Interviews provide a unique opportunity to explore, in detail, the complexities, challenges and rewards of remarriage/stepfamily living. Information about the interviews has been attached to the end of the enclosed survey. Participation in the interviews is completely voluntary and if you choose to participate and are selected you will be compensated \$50. As with all information in this study, the transcripts of interviews will be protected and kept confidential. Regardless of your interest in being interviewed we still hope you complete and return the enclosed survey. As in the past, we will send you a report of the research findings.

The USU Institutional Review Board for the protection of human participants (IRB) has reviewed and approved this research study. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in a USU research project, you may contact the IRB at (435) 797-1821.



Brian Higginbotham, Ph.D.
Principal Investigator
(435) 797-7276
BrianH@ext.usu.edu



Appendix D:
Invitation to Participate in Interview

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERVIEW

As part of this follow-up study we would like to personally interview approximately 10 couples (or 20 individuals). We will provide a \$50 incentive for each individual who meets with us for approximately 1-2 hours. The interview can be scheduled at a time and location of your choosing. Interviews provide a unique opportunity to explore, in detail, the complexities, challenges and rewards of remarriage/stepfamily living. As with all information in this study, the transcripts of interviews will be protected and kept confidential.

Please indicate if you would be willing to be interviewed:

- I am willing to be interviewed.
- I am NOT interested in being considered for an interview.

If you are willing to be interested, please list a phone number and/or email address so we can contact you if you are selected.

Participant ID number: _____ *(The 4-digit number found under
the bar code on page 1 of the survey)*

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Appendix E:
Scheduling Interviews

Address

Dear Recipient

Thank you for your willingness to be interviewed in the Remarriage in Utah Study. We are in the process of scheduling interviews. In doing so, we would like to find out what are the best times for you and your spouse to be interviewed. Please fill out the attached form and return it. After looking at all potential interviewees' schedules, we will do our best to accommodate as many as possible.

The interview will consist of a number of questions regarding your remarriage. The interview will be approximately 1 hour long and there will be a \$50 per person stipend for your time. Each interview will be performed by USU staff and will be recorded. Once again, all information in this study will remain protected and confidential.

Thank you for your cooperation and participation in this important research. This will provide us with a unique opportunity to explore, in detail, the complexities, challenges and rewards of remarriage/stepfamily living.

If you have any questions regarding the logistics of these interviews please contact my assistant, Katie Henderson, at 435-797-1543 or katieH@ext.usu.edu.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Higginbotham". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Brian J. Higginbotham, Ph.D.

Enclosure

Scheduling Calendar for the Remarriage in Utah Study

Please fill in dates and times that you and your spouse could be interviewed. This is a general idea of what times will work best for you. You may be as general or specific as you wish. We would like to do several interviews in one day; therefore, if you can be flexible with your available time it would assist us greatly. Once we receive this information, you will be further contacted in order to schedule a set time and place for the interview.

Name (Husband and Wife): _____

Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

Example					
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
5	6 Anytime after 3:00	7 Between 5-7:00	8 Anytime after 3:00	9	10 Between 8a.m.-6:00

MARCH					
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3
5	6	7	8	9	10
12	13	14	15	16	17
19	20	21	22	23	24
26	27	28	29	30	31

April					
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
2	3	4	5	6	7
9	10	11	12	13	14
16	17	18	19	20	21
23	24	25	26	27	28
30					

Appendix F:
Consent Letter

Template updated 5/9/2006

UtahState
UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY, CONSUMER, AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
College of Education and Human Services

Interview for the *Remarriage in Utah* Study

ID#

- Participation is completely voluntary and participants may skip any questions they do not feel comfortable answering.
- By law, we are required to report child abuse and neglect.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Audio and written files of the transcripts will be saved.
- If portions of the interviews are published or presented, participant names will not be listed.
- Participants will be given a stipend valued at \$50 for their time and participation. As with all information in this study, the transcripts of interviews will be protected and kept confidential.

My signature certifies that I have read this form, had my questions answered, agree to participate, and have received the stipend.

Participant's Signature

Date

Participant's Printed Name

The signature of the interviewer certifies that the interview was completed and the incentive was given to the participant.



Appendix G:
Interview Schedule

Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

(Begin tape) This is the NFRG interview with the *(wife/husband)* from couple *(ID #)*

1. To begin, please briefly share how you met? *[follow-up as needed to make interviewee comfortable]*
2. What number of marriage is this for you? *[pause / allow response]* And for your spouse?
3. How did you prepare for this marriage? *[pause / allow response]* What services and resources did you use to prepare? *[Prompt by asking if they read books, counseling, etc. Did they do it alone, together, etc.]*
4. In hindsight, what things should you have done to prepare for your remarriage? *[Is there anything you wish you would have done, that you didn't?]*
5. Is your marriage now what you expected it would be when you got married? What were your expectations? Please explain.
6. Looking back, were your expectations realistic or unrealistic?
7. You've now been married for 5 years, right? *[pause / allow response]* From your experience, if you had to choose 3 things, what would you say are the three most essential elements of a strong remarriage? *[What are the most important characteristics of a strong marriage? How would you define a strong marriage]*
 - a. *[Ask them to talk about each of the three specifically]*
8. How did you learn about what it takes to have a strong remarriage? *[If answer begins to focus on marriage in general, ask a follow-up about remarriages specifically]*
9. What do you do to strengthen your remarriage?
10. What have been the three most challenging aspects of your remarriage?
 - a. *[Ask them to talk about each of the three specifically]*
11. What has kept you together?
12. Has a church or religion played a role in your marriage? Please explain.
13. How are big decisions made in your remarriage? *[pause/allow response]*
 - a. Is it the same for little decisions?
 - b. Is it the same for financial decisions?
 - c. Is it the same for parenting decisions?

14. I'm going to ask how different types of children have affected your remarriage [*not how your marriage has affected them*]. Biological children from previous relationships, Stepchildren, and mutual children. If you don't have any of the children in question please say not applicable.
- a. First, how has having biological children from a previous relationship affected your current marriage?
 - b. Next, how has having stepchildren affected your current marriage?
 - c. Lastly, how has having mutual children ("ours" children) affected your marriage?
15. What advice would you give to newly remarried couples? What would you tell them to do? [*pause and allow response*] What would you tell them not to do? [*to avoid*]
16. Is there anything else about strong remarriages that you would like to share?
17. Is there anything you would like to ask us about?

Appendix H:
IRB Certificate of Exemption #3026



Institutional Review Board
4480 Old Main Hill, SER 140
Logan, UT 84322-4480
Telephone: (435) 797-1821
Fax: (435) 797-3789



IRB Certified Exempt: 9/12/2011
Exempt Certification Expires: 9/11/2014

Certificate of Exemption – Category #4

FROM: Richard D. Gordin, Acting IRB Chair
True M. Rubal, IRB Administrator

Richard D. Gordin
True M. Rubal

TO: Brian Higginbotham
Marcy Campbell

DATE: 9/12/2011

RE: Protocol # 3026

TITLE: Factors that Influence Strong Remarriages

The Institutional Review Board has determined that the above-referenced study is exempt from review under federal guidelines 45 CFR Part 46.101(b) Category #4: Research, involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

This exemption is valid for three years from the date of this correspondence, after which the study will be closed. If the research will extend beyond three years, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to notify the IRB before the study's expiration date and submit a new application to continue the research. Research activities that continue beyond the expiration date without new certification of exempt status will be in violation of those federal guidelines which permit the exempt status.

As part of the IRB's quality assurance procedures, this research may be randomly selected for continuing review during the three year period of exemption. If so, you will receive a request for completion of a Protocol Status Report during the month of the anniversary date of this certification.

In all cases, it is your responsibility to notify the IRB prior to making any changes to the study by submitting an Amendment/Modification request. This will document whether or not the study still meets the requirements for exempt status under federal regulations.

Upon receipt of this memo, you may begin your research. If you have questions, please call the IRB office at (435) 797-1821 or email to irb@usu.edu.

The IRB wishes you success with your research.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Marci Campbell

1562 Quail Way

Logan, Utah

801-318-6303

Email: marciskool@yahoo.com

Education

- 2008-present Doctor of Philosophy in Family Sciences and Human Development, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.
- 2005-2008 Master's of Counseling, University of Texas at San Antonio, San Antonio, Texas.
- 1986-1991 Bachelor of Science/History Teaching major, Spanish minor, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

Professional Experience

- 2009-present Graduate Research Assistantship, Department of Family, Consumer, and Human Development, Logan, Utah.
- 2009-present Instructor FCHD 3100 Abuse and Neglect, FCHD 1500 Human Development, FCHD 2400 Family Relations.
- 2008-2009 Graduate Teaching Assistantship, Department of Family, Consumer, and Human Development, Logan, Utah.
- 2007-2008 Mental Health Counselor: Domestic Violence Prevention Services & Hospital Rehabilitation Center for brain injury patients and families.

Academic Honors, Scholarships, & Awards

- 2009/2010 Gregory C. Trevers Scholarship, Simmons Single Parent Scholarship
- 2008-present 3.9 GPA

Publications/Research

The Utah Healthy Relationship Initiative: A Case Study of a Statewide Approach
(submitted for publication)

Domestic Violence Protocol, Utah Healthy Relationship Initiative

Community Service

2009- present Board Member of Cache County Child and Family Support Services

2010-present Board Member of Somebody's Attic

1996-present Volunteer Dance Instructor all ages with performances in retirement centers