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PREPARATION FOR REMARRIAGE: UTILIZATION
OF DIFFERENT FORMS AND THEIR
RATED HELPFULNESS

by

Julie J. Miller

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Family, Consumer, and Human Development

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ABSTRACT

Preparation for Remarriage: Utilization
of Different Forms and Their
Rated Helpfulness

by

Julie J. Miller, Master of Science
Utah State University, 2007

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

Remarriage has gained special attention in the past couple of decades from clinicians, researchers, and educators because of the unique issues faced by individuals entering such a relationship. Recognition of these issues increased marriage practitioners' hope that a shift in the social climate had led individuals to prepare for remarriage through various means. This study sought to, one, gain a current perspective on remarriage preparation; two, learn how individuals rate the helpfulness of preparation; and three, note any differences in remarital quality (remarital satisfaction and adjustment) and perceptions of preparedness between individuals who did or did not participate in preparation. Data were analyzed from the Utah Newlywed Study. Results showed that most individuals prepared by talking to others or reading written information, and most individuals who participated in some form of preparation found it helpful. Despite a high number of participants who reported remarriage preparation as helpful, nonparticipants

were more plentiful than participants. The majority of those who did not participate reported preparation as unnecessary. Remarital quality varied based on the preparation form considered. Based on the results, it was suggested that marriage practitioners should do more to increase individuals' views that preparation is valuable, as those who participated generally found it to be helpful.

(95 pages)

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Julie J. Miller

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Over the last half century the United States has seen a surge of divorcing couples across the nation (Schoen & Canudas-Romo, 2006). With thousands of divorced adults as part of the population, remarriage became increasingly common. Social scientists have defined remarriage as the second or higher order marriage of at least one of the marital partners (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). Approximately half of all marriages, on an annual basis, are remarriages (U.S. Census Bureau, 1999). With remarriage, a new set of challenges and issues arise for couples—ranging from on-going interactions with former partners to the formation of new steprelationships—as they each prepare for and begin their lives together. The formation of healthy marriages, both first and remarriages, is currently one of our nation's core social challenges (Brotherson & Duncan, 2004).

One way to facilitate the formation of healthy remarriages is by assisting couples to consciously prepare for their remarriage. Couples who participate in such preparation take the time to deliberately slow down the finality of such a momentous decision, recognizing that the influence of their marital union goes beyond them to affect those around them and the rest of their lives (Stanley, 2001). In a recent meta-analysis on the effectiveness of premarital programs, Carroll and Doherty (2003) noted that couples who participated in premarital programs improved their relationships by 79% compared to those who did not participate. Areas in which participating couples saw immediate, positive changes included communication, conflict management skills, and overall relationship quality. However, Carroll and Doherty's focus was solely on general premarital education classes. There are many other acknowledged forms of marital

preparation—such as counseling, reading appropriate literature, and home study programs.

Social scientists now recognize the need for separate and distinct forms of preparation for those entering remarriages. Adler-Baeder and Higginbotham (2004) encouraged family practitioners to realize that couples entering remarriage will not have their issues and concerns adequately addressed if they only participate in educational experiences geared toward general couple relationship skills and issues. General marriage preparation is inadequate due to the unique situations faced by remarried couples, such as the social climate confronted by these couples and their families and the greater marital instability associated with remarriage (Cherlin, 1978; Ganong & Coleman, 2004; Schoen & Canudas-Romo, 2006).

Recognizing the benefits of healthy marital and familial relationships and the importance of preparation, the federal government is currently supporting a Healthy Marriage Initiative. This Initiative was first introduced by President George W. Bush in 2001. In early 2006, Congress included a funding provision into the Federal Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 [Senate Bill 1932]. This provision allocated \$100 million dollars per year, for the next five years, to strengthen marriages. The main goal of the Healthy Marriage Initiative is to assist couples in forming and maintaining healthy marriage relationships. One of the many authorized uses for the allocated funds is to increase the availability of marital preparation resources and opportunities for individuals—never married and divorced alike—who choose marriage.

Despite the fact that federal funding is now available and although social scientists and clinicians have recommended pre-remarriage education for many years,

there is a dearth of up-to-date information regarding the usage and effectiveness of remarriage preparation. In 1989, Ganong and Coleman published a study on remarital preparation. The respondents were remarried couples who had participated in some form of remarriage preparation (e.g., attended support or educational groups, read written information, or visited with counselors or friends). Through interviews and questionnaires, Ganong and Coleman sought to understand how couples prepared for remarriage and what forms of preparation couples found most useful. Preparation activities were analyzed separately to see how they impacted the both the marriage and (step)family relationships. Ganong and Coleman's study is now almost 20 years old, but it is the most recent study examining participation in and helpfulness of remarriage preparation. With the increased social acceptance of remarriage, the current prevalence of remarriage, and the rising availability of remarriage preparation resources, it may be helpful for policy makers and practitioners to know more about current preparation strategies and their effectiveness for remarrying couples.

The underlying purpose of this study is similar to Ganong and Coleman's (1989). The purpose is to identify how frequently individuals participated in different forms of remarital preparation and the benefits for those who participated in them. Ganong and Coleman's study serves as a guide for the present study, and various forms of preparation are assessed, including: (1) participation in counseling sessions; (2) attending classes, lectures, or workshops; (3) visiting with religious leaders, other couples, or parents; (4) reading books, pamphlets, magazines, or newspapers; (5) watching videos; and (6) visiting websites. Though cohabitation was not considered a form of preparation by the

current study's creators, whether or not individuals did so and how cohabitation relates to remarital quality and perceptions of preparedness are also assessed.

To appraise the effectiveness of preparation, individuals who participated in the different forms of preparation are compared to individuals who did not on two measures of remarital quality: remarital satisfaction and remarital adjustment. The usefulness of the remarriage preparation forms is also ascertained by analyzing individuals' perceptions of their preparedness. This study provides more up-to-date information that may assist family practitioners and government officials in recognizing the most commonly used and most efficacious forms of remarriage preparation. Hopefully, the results will inform the federal government as they decide how to allocate funds from the Healthy Marriage Initiative to assist remarrying couples and their families.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature will first present remarriage trends and demographics. Then transitions into and out of remarriage are explored, followed by a discussion of remarriage preparation. Subsequently, the purposes of the current study will be detailed and the guiding study and conceptual framework expounded upon. The review concludes with an introduction to the research questions and hypotheses for the current study.

Remarriage Trends and Demographics

Throughout the latter half of the 20th century, the United States experienced many social transformations. One such transformation included the rising prevalence of divorce. According to Schoen and Canudas-Romo (2006), divorce rates rose sharply beginning in the 1970s and peaked in the mid-1980s. Although leveling off for most age groups during the 1990s, the divorce rate remained above 40% for those younger than age 50 through the year 2000 (Schoen & Canudas-Romo).

As divorce rates grew, events leading to remarriage and the formation of stepfamilies began another shift for American families. Historically, remarriages normally occurred following the death of a spouse. However, in recent decades remarriages usually transpire when divorced individuals choose to remarry (Ganong & Coleman, 2004).

In 1970, approximately 15% of all marriages were remarriages for one of the partners and an additional 16.5% of marriages were remarriages for both partners. By the

end of the 1980s, these remarriage rates had risen to 22.5% and 23.4%, respectively (U.S. Census Bureau, 1999). Population data provide on-going evidence that remarriage continues to be a common experience in the *United States*. The most recent estimates indicate that approximately half of all marriages include at least one partner who has been previously married (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, Table 145).

Divorced men are more likely to remarry than women (Kreider, 2005). Analyzing the 2001 Survey of Income and Program Participation data, Kreider discovered that 55% of divorced men were currently remarried, compared to only 44% of divorced women. The trend that men remarry more frequently is also seen in earlier estimates given by Demaris (1984), suggesting that 86% of men and 75% of women are expected to remarry following a divorce.

In the *United States*, men and women who have recently separated from or divorced their spouse are typically between the ages of 25 and 44 (Kreider, 2005). Consequently, for both men and women, remarriage usually occurs while they are in their early to mid-thirties (Kreider). Between 1970 and 1990, Census data indicated that the average divorced man remarried between ages 33.6 and 37.4. For divorced women, remarriage typically occurs between ages 30.1 and 34.2 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1999).

Age also plays a role in the prospect of remarriage. On average, older, divorced women (age 25 or older) are 13% less likely to remarry within 10 years of their divorce than women age 24 or younger (Bramlett & Mosher, 2001). Not surprisingly, widows and widowers are typically 20 to 25 years older when they remarry than the average divorced man or woman (U.S. Census Bureau, 1999).

Remarriage rates also differ by race. Whites are the most likely to remarry, while blacks are least likely to remarry (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002). Using Census data to compare different racial and ethnic groups of females, Bramlett and Mosher reported that 58% of white women, 44% of Hispanic women, and 32% of black women were remarried within 5 years following their divorce. Although the percentages of remarriage increase for all three groups ten years after finalizing their divorce, the trend remains: only 49% of black women remarried, compared to 79% of white women and 68% of Hispanic women.

Transitioning to Remarriage

Length of Courtship

Not only do a high percentage of divorced individuals remarry, but many choose to do so shortly after the dissolution of their previous marriage. The median time between a person's divorce and subsequent remarriage is generally less than 4 years, and approximately 30% remarry within 1 year (Ganong & Coleman, 2004).

Similar findings were reported by Montgomery, Anderson, Hetherington, and Clingempeel (1992) who studied the courtship behavior of divorced women. Through standardized questionnaires and structured interviews, they identified that the median amount of time between women's separation and remarriage was 28.8 months—slightly less than two and one-half years. Likewise, data from the U.S. Census Bureau (1999) indicates that 50% of women have remarried within 5 years following the dissolution of a previous marriage. Findings based on data from the National Survey of Family Growth

indicate that 75% of women remarry within 10 years of their divorce (Bramlett & Mosher, 2001).

Cohabitation

Despite the relatively quick transition from one marriage to another, many people do not remarry before choosing to recouple. A growing proportion of divorced and widowed adults are choosing to cohabit either before or instead of remarriage (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). Montgomery et al. (1992) also analyzed the cohabitation habits of divorced women while studying their courtship behaviors. They found that 80% of those who cohabited did so within one year following the finalization of their divorce.

However, data from the National Survey of Family Growth (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002) provides slightly different information. Women have a 53% probability of cohabiting within five years after the dissolution of their first marriage. Ten years after women's first marital dissolution, the probability of cohabitation rises to 70%, a rise of 17% in only 5 years.

Although there is some discrepancy between the reported statistics, it is clear that a large portion of divorced and widowed adults have chosen to cohabit before entering remarriage. This is further supported by a recent finding that about half of all remarriages begin with cohabitation (Xu, Hudspeth, & Bartkowski, 2006). It is more common to find cohabiting couples who have been previously married than cohabitating couples who have never been married (Ganong & Coleman, 2004; Xu et al.).

Remarital Quality: Remarital Satisfaction and Adjustment

Once couples wed, they move beyond courtship or cohabitation and officially enter into remarriage. Because of the quick transition to remarriage and the high rates of remarital dissolution (which will be discussed later), how satisfied couples are with their remarriages is of great interest to researchers and practitioners alike. Slight differences have been found between the rate of marital satisfaction in first marriages and remarriages, with remarriage being somewhat lower (Ganong & Coleman, 2004; Kurdek, 1989; White & Booth, 1985). The difference in satisfaction between first marriages and remarriages, however, tends to be small and of little practical significance (Ganong & Coleman).

One difference many remarried couples face while striving to build a strong bond as a newly-married couple is simultaneously trying to build vital relationships with extended and stepfamily members—particularly stepchildren (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). Trying to form multiple relationships can be an overwhelming task. Despite the need to form all these relationships, many clinicians and practitioners see a strong couple bond as a necessity for building a strong stepfamily. A strong couple bond can fortify the partners as they face many other issues that arise while trying to blend past and current family members (Ganong & Coleman).

In their book, Ganong and Coleman (2004) review three common areas that tend to affect the couples' bond as they adjust to marriage and/or desire to increase their marital satisfaction: communication, power/equity, and childbearing. They reported that remarried individuals tend to have poorer communication skills than individuals in first

marriages. They also explain that many of the issues remarried couples disagree over deal with misunderstandings about previous relationships and how they influence current relationships. Though there appear to be more conflicts impeding marital adjustment, remarried couples report greater satisfaction in the balance of power and equity in their remarriages compared to their first marriages. But, the decision whether to have children together or not seems to be more complex for remarried couples than for those in their first marriage.

Clinicians have also identified and sought to address four difficulties remarried couples face when attempting to build a couple bond and adjust to their new stepfamily (Ganong, Coleman, & Weaver, 2001). By overcoming these difficulties, clinicians hope remarried couples and their families can build and maintain family relationships.

The first difficulty most stepfamily members encounter when adjusting to their new family situation is the lack of necessary skills required to keep the stepfamily together (Ganong et al., 2001). The members are usually locked in their own personal problems and unresolved barriers. As a result, will not or cannot utilize requisite skills to build and maintain the fragile relationships found in new stepfamilies.

The second adjustment difficulty, related to the first, is that stepfamily members neglect relationship maintenance. This could be due to issues related to the first barrier, or simply a lack of interest in building a relationship. The third adjustment difficulty is that the relationship partners simply do not recognize or respond to strategies used to build or maintain the relationship. Ganong and his colleagues (2001) suggested that such might be the case simply because stepfamily members might be on different timetables as

to their interest in the relationship, have differing expectations and motivations for the relationship, or may still be mourning previous life losses—like a previous marriage.

The final adjustment difficulty many clinicians address in remarital preparation is the recognition that the relationship skills stepfamily members currently have may not be utilized appropriately in their stepfamily (Ganong et al., 2001). This could be the case because they are used to responding to family members as one would typically in nuclear family relationships, rather than recognizing the change in family dynamics when two families are blended.

Although there seem to be more complexities for couples who are adjusting to a new remarriage rather than a new first marriage, remarried couples generally report similar adjustment levels as first married couples do (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). The reality that remarried couples report similar marital satisfaction and adjustment as first married couples creates a paradox when looking at the dissolution rates for first marriages and remarriages.

Remarriage Dissolution

Despite similarities in marital quality, there is a higher dissolution rate for those in remarriages than for those in first marriages (Ganong & Coleman, 2004; Schoen & Canudas-Romo, 2006). Ganong and Coleman have hypothesized six reasons for this greater tendency of dissolution. First, couples who divorce may be more prone to leave relationships due to faulty personality characteristics, attitudes, expectations, negative communication, drug dependency, or their inability to economically provide for others. Second, as evolutionary researchers would argue, divorce proneness may be a part of

some people's genetic makeup. Third, other relationships—such as with stepchildren, former spouses, and extended families—may have a negative impact on the remarital relationship; this, in turn, may increase the couple's desire to be released from such tension-ridden relationships and facilitate a divorce. Fourth, remarriages may be at a higher risk of dissolution because of the lack of societal support and educational resources. Yet, couples in relationships with higher risks tend to be less likely to utilize available resources—whether because of their own beliefs, because society views seeking help as a deficiency, or any other number of reasons—to help them build better relationships (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004; Halford, 2004). Fifth, reentrance into the dating scene brings with it a smaller pool of candidates for remarriage, which also increases the possibility of remarrying an inadequate partner and leads to a greater chance of dissolution (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). And sixth, many couples are unaware of the unique difficulties associated with remarriage; thus, they are insufficiently prepared to handle the challenges with which they are faced.

The Role of Remarriage Preparation

With so many individuals ending one marriage relationship and quickly transitioning into another, clinicians and practitioners are recognizing the need for specialized remarriage preparation. The general goal of marriage preparation is to give individuals and couples knowledge and skills needed to build and sustain healthy marriages (Hawkins, Carroll, Doherty, & Willoughby, 2004). Although the goals of remarriage preparation include this general goal, many researchers and practitioners recognize that couples entering higher-order relationships will likely face more complex

problems than those entering their first marriage, especially if they are bringing children into the relationship—as many do (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004; Ganong & Coleman, 1989; Messinger, 1976). Hence, the goals of remarital preparation are to help the couple and their new family by addressing issues and concerns unique to their situation, as well as issues universal to all couples (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham; Ganong & Coleman).

Although there is limited evidence on the effectiveness/helpfulness of remarriage preparation, the literature gives considerable support for general marriage education. Stanley (2001) lists several possible ways couples can benefit from preparation. These include (1) increasing the couples' deliberation of the value and stability of their relationship; (2) assisting couples to readily recognize the value of a healthy marriage; (3) helping couples understand that there are available resources to assist them through life; and (4) encouraging couples to learn the difference between the static (typically unchangeable characteristics; e.g., family background) and dynamic (adjustable behaviors and characteristics; e.g., personal habits) factors each partner bring into their marital relationship. Once couples have experienced these benefits of marriage education, 90% report being willing to participate again in similar educational experiences (Stanley).

A meta-analysis by Carroll and Doherty (2003) of premarital prevention programs benefits are not long-term—lasting anywhere from six months to three years—there are positive, recognizable gains in the areas of communication, conflict management, and overall relationship quality (Carroll & Doherty). Many program evaluations report

similar findings and benefits (e.g., Bielenberg, 1991; Ganong & Coleman, 1989; Hughes & Schroeder, 1997; Lyster, Russell, & Hiebert, 1995).

Forms of Remarriage Preparation

An increased awareness of the need for and benefits of remarital preparation has also increased the available means which couples have to prepare. Both formal types (e.g., therapy/counseling, educational classes, and cohabitation) and informal types (e.g., talking with others, written material, and media) of preparation will be addressed.

Therapy or Counseling

Marriage/relationship preparation with remarried couples and stepfamilies began with therapists (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). The therapists who first worked with these couples and families treated them the same way they would treat first marriages and nuclear families. For these therapists, realization came quickly: remarried couples and stepfamilies faced unique challenges and issues that nuclear families did not have to deal with (Ganong & Coleman). Their focus then turned to addressing stepfamily relationship maintenance and enhancement (Ganong et al., 2001; Papernow, 1994).

Unfortunately, counseling often created more stepfamily problems and an increase in the frequency of disagreements for both men and women (Ganong & Coleman, 1989). However, Ganong and Coleman report that participating men did have greater positive feelings toward their family. Today, therapists build on family strengths as they address the differing dynamics in remarriage and stepfamily life through varying

therapeutic approaches in relation to history, structure, and development (Papernow, 1994).

Educational Classes

Although help for remarried couples began with therapists, educational classes have emerged as an available resource for these couples. According to Ganong and Coleman (2004), “a decade ago, stepfamily members who wanted to attend family life education programs or workshops would have had a difficult time finding them. This is less true now...” (p. 225). Programs geared towards remarriage and stepfamilies have grown in number over the past few decades. Many of these programs have been created upon the belief that the greatest need of remarrying couples is education about their situation (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004).

Educational classes have a variety of formats. The typical form is a class, which has multiple sessions over a period of time and generally requires participants to complete tasks to improve their remarital relationship. The second format is a lecture—which is usually a one-time, motivational distribution of remarital material. The least common format is a workshop. A workshop has characteristics similar to both lectures and classes, and fits between the two in length, dissemination of information, and requirements of participants. These programs are also disseminated in different settings: colleges, universities, extension offices, public/private social service agencies, religious organizations, and more (Ganong & Coleman, 2004).

When reviewing remarriage education programs, Adler-Baeder and Higginbotham (2004) identified five important areas for practitioners to address when

helping couples prepare for the unique situations brought about by remarriage and the creation of stepfamilies. The first of these areas is the incomplete institution. This is the idea that there currently are no socially constructed guidelines for remarriage and stepfamily life. The second area includes practitioners pointing out realistic stepfamily development and dynamics. The third and fourth areas include the importance of building the stepparent-stepchild relationship, but cautioning the remarried partners that building a couple relationship is the priority. The fifth and final area asks practitioners to encourage the couple to confront and define relationships with former partners.

Coleman and Ganong (1985) also encouraged practitioners to recognize and combat commonly held myths about remarriage. Some of the pertinent myths they mentioned included: "things must work out this time around"; "keep criticism to oneself and focus on the positive"; and "if things are not going well remember what went wrong in previous relationships and be sure it does not happen again." Educational programs attempt to combat these myths by making remarrying couples consciously aware of these faulty beliefs and giving them tools to fight them. Teaching remarried individuals about these myths will help better prepare them for some of the issues that will possibly arise in their new family, aiding in marital adjustment.

Many remarriage and stepfamily programs have been developed in recent years. The goals of these programs are varied. Some of the major program goals include: creating stepfamily cohesion (Bielenberg, 1991); building stepfamily strengths (Duncan & Brown, 1992); identifying and addressing unrealistic role expectations (Kaplan & Hennon, 1992); and increasing remarital satisfaction (Lyster et al., 1995). Also, in a review of multiple programs, Hughes and Schroeder (1997) found other program goals in

stepfamily educational programs: addressing family dynamics, transitional adjustments, incomplete institution, emotional responses, and stepfamily expectations.

Despite the increasing number of programs, most of these programs have had little to no evaluation (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004; Hughes & Schroeder, 1997). To build better programs Hughes and Schroeder suggested that four different areas be identified before, during, and after programs are created. The first is the inclusion of relevant theories as the programs are developed. Secondly, comprehensive need assessments of remarried couples and stepfamilies need to be conducted to better know what to include in the programs. Third, based on the assessments, educational programs need to be built around important and relevant topics that stepfamilies are or could be faced with. Fourth, more instruction should be given to program facilitators so they are aware of stepfamily issues. Researchers are beginning to answer this call; however, published evaluations that address these important areas have been slow to appear (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004; Adler-Baeder, Higginbotham, & Lamke, 2004).

Cohabitation

As has already been established, a large number of couples cohabit before remarriage. With so many people choosing to cohabit, researchers and practitioners have given this form of preparation a large amount of attention in relation to remarriage. Montgomery et al. (1992) reported that 78% of women in their study cohabited before remarriage. Ganong and Coleman (1989) reported that 59% of their study participants cohabited.

For most of these couples, cohabitation is a form of preparation for remarriage. Many believe it serves as a trial period to establish whether or not their relationship will work. Some divorced individuals also view cohabitation as an alternative to being stuck in a relationship much like their previous marriage—which dissolved (Ganong & Coleman, 2004).

The issues and complexities of cohabitation prior to remarriage are largely unexplored. Contradicting results have been found as to whether cohabitation before a remarriage affects remarital outcomes as significantly as cohabitation before a first marriage. Demaris (1984) found that cohabitation before a remarriage had little to no effect on remarital satisfaction. However, Xu et al. (2006) reported findings indicating that remarital satisfaction is lower for remarrying couples who cohabit compared to those who do not.

Talking with Others

Talking to others includes addressing remarriage issues with religious leaders, other couples, friends, or parents. Ganong and Coleman (1989) discovered that seeking advice from friends had a stronger, positive effect on women's stepfamily relationships than on men's. Women who talked to their friends had a more positive overall feeling for their stepfamily. However, these women also reported having more disagreements over the children. When men talked to their friends, they reported having more stepfamily problems and no perceived benefits. Receiving advice from religious leaders, other couples, or parents has not specifically been addressed in previous research.

Written Material

Although talking with others can provide some way to learn information about remarriage, many individuals prefer to read information at their own pace, gaining knowledge which might or might not be useful. Written material includes pamphlets, newspapers, magazines, and books which are geared toward preparing couples for remarriage. The availability and usage of pamphlets, newspapers, and magazines has yet to be addressed. This is likely due to the novelty of the availability of these resources for remarrying couples.

Ganong and Coleman (2004) related that beneficial reading materials could include novels, short stories, nonfiction, or self-help books. In reporting the helpfulness of books, Ganong and Coleman (1989) found that they seemed to cause more stepfamily problems for men and more disagreements for women—though the increase in problems did not reach significance. Women also experienced more positive feelings after reading books. Despite having more negative than positive results, Ganong and Coleman support reading books as a form of preparation—claiming they can disseminate vital information, demonstrate new ways of conceptualizing situations, promote self-understanding, and increase discussion.

Media

Media preparation resources (e.g., videos, Internet websites) are the least explored form of preparation. The availability of videos which prepare couples for remarriage is a topic yet to be addressed by researchers. Little is known about what is available, if

couples are obtaining and watching such recordings, or how beneficial they are as preparation sources.

However, Ganong and Coleman (2004) have commented on using the Internet for remarriage preparation. In their view, the Internet provides a plethora of information. Yet, there is no way to control what information is placed on the Internet. So, they warn those seeking information via the Internet to do so cautiously, as there is a lot of misguided information which could cause more harm than good to remarriages and stepfamilies. Individuals and couples should keep to sites which are known to be sponsored by reputable organizations or agencies.

Perceptions of Preparedness

Individuals and couples who participate in remarriage preparation should theoretically feel more prepared to enter their marriage. Yet, little has been done by researchers to assess whether or not couples who participate in remarriage preparation actually report feeling more prepared for their marriage. Ganong and Coleman (1989) found that couples who participated in some form of preparation seemed to have more disagreements and stepfamily or marital problems. These problems most likely did not arise from the knowledge and information gained through preparation, but could have been a motive for them to seek help either before or soon after their remarriage. Although there are some who seek preparation before their remarriage, the majority do not.

Why Do They Not Prepare?

Despite the admirable goals of remarriage education, the seemingly supportive benefits of marriage education in general, and the large number of varying forms of remarriage preparation, the available literature indicates that most remarrying couples do not engage in remarriage preparation activities. A few decades ago, practitioners could have been to blame. For years there was a lack of recognition that remarriages and stepfamilies experience unique stressors in comparison to first marriages and nuclear families (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004; Papernow, 1994). However, increasingly the differences are being recognized, and family practitioners are seeking to address them. Yet, evidence suggests that remarrying couples may not be taking full advantage of resources available to them (Ganong & Coleman, 2004).

In their study on remarital preparation, Ganong and Coleman (1989) found that many couples entered remarriage either overly optimistic or naively. The majority expected step-relationships to be good, though stepparents tended to be less optimistic than biological parents. This belief has been called the "myth of instant love" (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). Belief in this myth leads couples or individuals to believe that once the vows of matrimony bond the stepfamily together, the family relationships will automatically be at a level where stepparents, stepchildren, and biological family members will all love and be concerned for each other as a normal, nuclear family would. By accepting this myth, couples discount the number and intensity of the concerns they might possibly have following their marriage.

Moreover, many couples rarely saw a need to fix something they viewed as inconsequential or unbroken. Avoidance or the desire to keep things as they are stopped many from recognizing issues which might be important to address. In fact, some families chose to decline participation in Ganong and Coleman's (1989) study by simply responding, "Things are going well in our (step)family and I don't want to talk about anything because it might start up trouble" (p. 32).

Many couples also decline participation simply because they do not want to see or do not recognize that their situation is any different than a first marriage or nuclear family (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004; Papernow, 1994). This belief appears to be perpetuated by our society at-large and many family practitioners, who tend to revere the nuclear family as the model family for all (Ganong & Coleman, 2004).

The literature also indicates that many couples base their expectations for the new relationship on expectations—met or unmet—of their previous marriage (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). These couples believe they do not need "marriage preparation" because they have already been in a marital relationship. This mindset perpetuates the belief that remarriages and stepfamilies are just like first marriages and nuclear families. It also creates the possibility that some believe that their previous experiences have been sufficient to provide the necessary knowledge to deal with the current, but different, situation.

The Guiding Study

Because of the complexities of remarriage some researchers argue that remarriages "require even greater preparation and planning than first marriage[s]" (Lyster

et al., 1995, p. 143). This has been supported by practitioners and educators in the field (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004). In acknowledging remarital complexity and the importance of encouraging couples to prepare, Ganong and Coleman (1989) have conducted the only study solely related to the remarital preparation behavior of couples entering such unions. Their purpose was two-fold: to see how couples prepare for remarriage and to determine what forms of preparation are most helpful.

Their sample consisted of 100 remarried men and 105 remarried women, who were recruited through marriage license records, snowball sampling, and media advertisements. In semi-structured interviews, couples were asked about their preparation for remarriage. The forms of recognized preparation included: cohabitation, support or educational groups, counseling, friends, or written information. At the conclusion of the interview, standardized questionnaires were administered asking about stepfamily problems and the marital, parental, stepparent-child, biological parent-child, and family relationships.

Ganong and Coleman's (1989) results provided many insights for policy makers and practitioners regarding ways to help couples prepare for remarriage. They found that the majority of couples (59%) chose to prepare for remarriage by cohabiting prior to remarrying. Preparation participants viewed the other forms of preparation (listed above) as beneficial, though some of these seemed to increase couple and family problems. Also, as is typically seen, women were more likely than men to participate in the different forms of preparation and more often rated them as helpful.

Although cohabitation was the most common form of preparation, other forms were acknowledged as being utilized. Counseling was the second most frequently used

form of preparation. Of the 25% of men and 38% of women who attended counseling, 53% of men and 63% of women found it to be helpful. Written information was used by 34% of men and 47% of women and reported by the majority as being useful (67% of male participants, 80% of female participants). Support and educational groups were reported by few as a form of preparation (4% of men and 12% of women). For those who did attend, most went to support groups; although men rated them as being moderately helpful (30%), the majority of women found them to be beneficial (67%).

Although the results suggest that there are benefits to remarriage preparation, there are reasons to question the applicability of the findings to remarrying couples in the 21st century. The study was conducted almost 20 years ago. During the past 20 years, however, the United States has seen many changes in relation to remarriage. For instance, remarriage is now more widely recognized and accepted as part of our culture (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). There is also a greater push for couples to participate in remarital preparation—either through education or therapy—as the complexities of remarriage have been more readily recognized (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004). Education and therapy have become less stigmatized in our society, and the number and quality of resources for remarried couples and stepfamilies has increased. Because of these changes, it is important to reassess if couples are preparing for remarriage and the effectiveness of various forms of remarriage preparation.

The Guiding Framework

Cultural changes in the United States during the past couple of decades have led to a greater acceptance of marriage preparation, as was beginning to be established in the

late 1980s (Ganong & Coleman, 1989). Many couples seek to build healthy family relationships and recognize the need to do so before their marriage begins. To understand this process, the intervention framework was introduced by Coie et al. (1993). The goal of the intervention framework is to “prevent or moderate major human dysfunctions” (p. 1013). They define human dysfunctions as major mental or physical health problems. Achieving the goal of this framework is obtained through two areas: by eliminating or mitigating the cause of dysfunctions; and by counteracting risk factors and reinforcing protective factors.

There are four guiding principles for the intervention framework. The first is the idea that prevention efforts should address fundamental causal processes. In other words, participants should know beforehand what risk and protective factors the intervention will address to prevent the related dysfunctions. The second principle is based on the idea that early intervention decreases the chances of later dysfunction—recognizing that risk factors need to be dealt with before they become stable and predictive of dysfunction. The third principle is that prevention efforts should “target primarily those at high risk” (Coie et al., 1993, p. 1015). The fourth, and final, guiding principle recognizes that, in order for prevention to be most effective, there must be an effort made in all areas that influence and affect possible dysfunctions.

Because remarriage preparation is preventive in nature and, if implemented in a comprehensive way, can address risk and protective factors, the intervention framework is applicable. Specifically, with an intervention framework

...modifiable factors found to negatively affect marital quality are risk factors that can be addressed in practice with the intention of reversing or avoiding them,

thus positively affecting marital quality and/or reducing marital dissatisfaction. (Adler-Baeder et al., 2004, p. 537)

Also, that

modifiable factors found to positively affect marital quality are protective factors, and program content focused on enhancing, maintaining, and/or promoting these factors will serve to positively affect marital quality. (Adler-Baeder et al., 2004, p. 538)

Remarriage has been indicated by many researchers and practitioners as being a relationship with greater risks than first marriages (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004; Papernow, 1994). Hence, there is a greater need to intervene, helping stepfamilies by addressing not only the marital relationship, but also issues pertaining to stepchildren, extended family members, former spouses, and any others who might be affected by the stepfamily's formation. It would be useful to know what forms of preparation are most beneficial so the intervention framework can help delineate which forms are sufficiently addressing risk and protective factors for couples who are remarrying.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Ganong and Coleman (1989) are the only researchers who have specifically studied the marital preparation of remarrying couples. Yet, because their study was conducted nearly 20 years ago and our social climate has evolved, it is important to gather more current knowledge as to how individuals are preparing and what they find most useful in their preparation for remarriage.

Consistent with Ganong and Coleman's remarriage preparation study (1989), the first and underlying research question for the current study is: what forms of preparation are used most frequently and rated as most helpful? From this research question, two

hypotheses emerge. The first is that cohabitation and written material are expected to be utilized most frequently and written information will be rated as most helpful. This hypothesis is based on previous findings from Ganong and Coleman. It is also consistent with the intervention framework in that both cohabitation and written materials can be viewed as forms of preparation that address risk and protective factors, and should thereby be seen as helpful. The second hypothesis is that women will report participating in remarriage preparation more frequently than men, as was observed in Ganong and Coleman's study.

There is one additional question to be addressed in this study. Is preparation for remarriage associated with marital quality? As was demonstrated by the literature, remarital preparation is generally seen as helpful by participants (Ganong & Coleman, 1989) and benefits couples' relationship quality (Carroll & Doherty, 2003). In this study, remarital quality is assessed specifically through measures of remarital satisfaction and remarital adjustment. Perceptions of preparedness will also be assessed to see if preparation helps participants feel better prepared. Based on these research questions, there are two hypothesized outcomes. These two hypotheses are supported by the first two principles of the intervention framework, which suggest that individuals who learn about risk and protective factors early in their relationships (before they remarry) do better at avoiding later dysfunction (Coie et al., 1993). The first hypothesis is that individuals who participated in remarriage preparation will have higher scores of remarital satisfaction, higher remarital adjustment, and greater perceptions of preparedness than individuals who did not participate at time one. Second, it is hypothesized that those of the sample who participated in remarriage preparation will

have higher levels of remarital satisfaction, higher remarital adjustment, and greater perceptions of preparedness at time two than those who did not participate in any form of remarriage preparation.

In summary, the research questions and hypotheses are:

1. What forms of preparation are used most frequently and rated most helpful?
 - a. It is hypothesized that the forms of remarriage preparation to be utilized most frequently are: cohabitation and written materials. And written materials will be rated most helpful by participants.
 - b. It is hypothesized that women will report participating in remarriage preparation more frequently than men.
2. Is preparation for remarriage associated with remarital quality and perceptions of preparedness?
 - a. It is hypothesized that, at time one, individuals who participated in remarriage preparation will have higher levels of remarital satisfaction, higher remarital adjustment, and greater perceptions of preparedness than individuals who did not participate in similar forms of preparation.
 - b. It is hypothesized that, at time two, individuals who participated in remarriage preparation will have higher levels of remarital satisfaction, higher remarital adjustment, and greater perceptions of preparedness than individuals who did not participate in similar forms of preparation.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the degree to which individuals participate in and benefit from various forms of remarriage preparation. Up-to-date information is needed to inform policy makers and family practitioners regarding activities that are used and found helpful by remarrying couples.

Sample Selection

The data used in this study came from the Utah Newlywed Study, which was funded by the Utah Governor's Commission on Marriage. The goal of the Newlywed Study was to further the understanding of marriage preparation and newlywed experiences for first and remarrying couples in Utah. Researchers from Utah State University conducted the investigation.

Time One

Newlywed couples were randomly chosen (every fourth couple) from marriage licenses recorded at the state's Department of Health. The selected licenses were issued between January and July of 2002. Couples had been married an average of six months when the surveys were first mailed to them. The sample consisted of 2,823 couples. Of the 2,823 surveys mailed, 12 couples refused to participate, 282 were undeliverable, 1,519 couples did not respond, and 1,010 couples completed and returned the surveys. The response rate for time one was 40%. This response rate is higher than the rate

typically seen for mailed surveys, which is 20 to 30% (Dooley, 2001). Of the 1,010 couples who responded, 303 reported being in a remarriage.

Time Two

Approximately one-and-a-half years after the first survey was completed, a second survey was mailed to the couples who had completed the survey the first time. At this time, couples had been married approximately 2 years. Of those 1,010 couples who completed the survey at time one, 436 returned the second survey. The response rate for time two was 43%. Of the 436 returned responses, 125 couples reported being in a remarriage.

The sample used in this study consisted of the individuals who completed the surveys at least the first time they were mailed (303 women and 303 men). Those who completed the surveys both times were used when the data was analyzed at time two (125 men and 125 women) for remarital quality and perception of preparedness.

Sample Characteristics

Marriage Number

Of the 303 women in a remarriage, approximately half (49.5%) reported the current marriage to be their second. On the other hand, 24.4% reported their current marriage as only their first; making it a second or higher order marriage for their spouse. The final quarter of female respondents reported the current marriage to be their third or higher order marriage.

The marriage number trend is similar for remarried men in this sample.

Approximately half (52.1%) of the men reported the current marriage as their second.

Only 23.1% of the men reported this marriage as their first (thus, a second or higher order marriage for their partner). Finally, 24.1% of the men reported the current marriage as a third or higher order marriage for themselves.

Age

The ages of remarried women in this sample ranged from 19 to 85, with a median of age of 34.5 years. The remarried women's average age was 37, with a standard deviation of 12.6 years. The remarried men in the sample were slightly older, and reported an age range of 20 to 87 years old. The men's average age was 39.6 years (standard deviation of 13.0 years) and the median was 37 years.

Race/Ethnicity

The large majority of the sample reported their race/ethnicity as white, non-Hispanic. This included 84.5% of the women and 85.1% of the men. Hispanics/Latinos were the next largest group—with 5.6% of the women and 4.3% of men reported as part of this group. For women, being multiracial was reported third most frequent (3%). For the men's third most frequent group, they reported three racial/ethnic groups at the same rate (2%): multiracial, Asian, or American Indian/Alaska native. The race/ethnicity group with the fewest respondents was African American, with 0.3% of women and 1% of men reporting such.

Education

The majority of remarried women (63.1%) reported having attended at least some college. Of those women who attended some college, 15.4% had obtained a bachelor's degree and 8.4% had obtained a degree higher than a bachelor's. The second highest level of education obtained by women was at least some high school (23.5%). Finally, 13.4% of women reported having attended a technical school or obtaining a certificate.

Similarly, the majority of men had attended some college (66.8%). But a larger number of men, compared to women, had obtained a bachelor's (20%) or higher (9.5%) degree. Like women, the second highest level of education reported by the men is at least some high school (26.1%), followed by attending a technical school or receiving a certificate (7.1%).

Religious Affiliation

The greater part of the sample reported being members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (59.7% of women and 57.8% of men). But, there are quite a few respondents who reported no religious affiliation—including 17.2% of the women and 19.8% of the men in the sample. The third largest religious group was Catholics (7.9% of women and 5.9% of men). The rest of the sample reported being members of five other religious groups.

Procedure

At both times in the original study, couples were mailed a set of questionnaires. Each mailing consisted of separate questionnaires for husbands and wives to fill out

independently. Along with the surveys, a two dollar incentive was included. After 10 days, a reminder card was mailed to those couples who had not yet returned their surveys.

Since the current study used the Utah Newlywed Study data secondarily, approval from the original researchers needed to be and was obtained. Approval was also sought through the University's research board. Once this approval was given (see Appendix A), the current study proceeded.

Measures

Time One

A questionnaire was compiled consisting of 38 measures. These measures included demographic questions, questions regarding premarital preparation (see Appendix B), perceptions of preparedness, the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS; see Appendix C), and the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS; see Appendix D). Two versions of the questionnaire were created: one for husbands and one for wives—only changing words to reflect the targeted sex.

The premarital questions inquired whether couples had engaged in any preparation for their marriage, and, if so, how helpful each preparation form was (see Appendix B). The options included: counseling; visiting websites; talking to other couples, parents, or religious leaders; reading books, pamphlets, magazines, or newspapers; watching marriage videos; attending classes (2 or more sessions), or attending lectures/workshops (one session). Respondents rated the helpfulness of the activities on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (“very helpful”) to 5 (“not helpful at all”). If

couples did not participate in the listed preparation activities they were instructed to select six (N/A, meaning not applicable).

The Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS) consists of three items (see Appendix C). These items ask respondents to rate how satisfied they are with their marriage, their spouse, and their relationship with their spouse on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1, "extremely satisfied," to 7, "extremely dissatisfied." In reviewing common scales for marital satisfaction, Burnett (1987) reported that the KMSS has a high alpha coefficient, ranging from .84 to .93. In other studies, the alpha coefficients have reached levels of .95 to .97 (Green, Woody, Maxwell, Mercer, & Williams, 1998; Schumm, Bollman, Jurich, & Hatch, 2001). The alpha coefficient in this study ranged from .91 to .95, differing by gender and the time of the survey.

The KMSS has also been concurrently compared with other marital satisfaction scales and subscales and has shown a high intercorrelation with these measures (Quality Marital Satisfaction, $r = .91$; Dyadic Adjustment Satisfaction Subscale, $r = .83$; Schumm et al., 1986). Calahan (1996) reported that the construct, concurrent, and criterion validity and the internal consistency of the KMSS were modest.

The Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS; see Appendix D) is a shorter version of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale, created by Spanier (Burnett, 1987), and is used frequently because of its brevity (Crane, Middleton, & Bean, 2000). The RDAS contains only 14 items—18 fewer than the original scale—and is divided into three subscales: cohesion, satisfaction, and consensus. The cohesion subscale measures how well an individual feels connected to his or her spouse through joint activities and discussions. The satisfaction subscale measures how satisfied an individual is with his or

her marriage by questioning how stable the marriage is and how much conflict is experienced. The consensus subscale measures how well an individual and his/her spouse agree in important areas that generally arise in marriage, such as leisure, decision-making, values, and affection (Busby, Christensen, Crane, & Larson, 1995).

The RDAS highly correlates with the original scale ($r = .97$). It also maintains the strengths of the original scale, which are: multidimensionality, a strong correlation with the Marital Adjustment Test, and the ability to distinguish between distressed and nondistressed individuals and relationships (Crane et al., 2000). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the RDAS was .90 (Crane et al.). In this study the alpha coefficient ranged from .86 to .89, dependent upon gender and time of the survey.

Respondents' perception of marital preparedness was assessed at each time with a single-item question. "Overall, looking back, how prepared do you feel you were going into the marriage?" Respondents were given four response options, ranging from 1, "very well prepared," to 4, "not well prepared."

Time Two

Another survey was mailed to respondents at time two. Questions again included the KMSS, the RDAS, and perceptions of preparedness.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The first research question, "What forms of preparation are used most frequently and rated most helpful?," is answered through descriptive statistics and paired sample *t* tests. Descriptive statistics establish what forms of preparation were used most frequently and the reported degree of helpfulness of each form. These descriptive statistics address the first hypothesis, which is that cohabitation and written materials will be utilized as the preparation participated in most frequently and written materials will have the highest rating of helpfulness. The second hypothesis for question one, which is that women participate more often than men, is answered with paired sample *t* tests. These tests determined if there is any relationship between biological sex and the use of various forms of preparation.

Independent *t* tests are used to answer research question two, "Is preparation for remarriage associated with remarital quality and perceptions of preparedness?" The *t* test is the most appropriate analytical procedure because comparisons will be drawn between the means of independent samples, where one variable is categorical data (e.g., gender) and the other variable is interval data (e.g., KMSS, RDAS; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). Independent samples *t* tests identified the differences, if any, of remarital satisfaction, remarital adjustment, and perceptions of preparedness between the two groups—those who did and those who did not participate in the various forms of remarriage preparation. Separate *t* tests are used to analyze time one and time two data. By running separate tests for time one and two, both hypotheses for question two—that preparation participants

will have higher remarital quality and perceptions of preparedness at time one and time two—are addressed

The results are reported following the order of the research hypotheses given previously. First, results are presented for the frequency of the different forms of preparation, which also includes individuals' reasons for not participating in those forms which they did not utilize, and the frequency of cohabitation. These results are followed with respondents' reports of each form's helpfulness and a comparison of women's and men's participation. Finally, results are presented for each of the indicators of remarital quality: remarital satisfaction and remarital adjustment, as well as perceptions of preparation. In the Utah Newlywed Study, surveys were filled out separately by men and women, even though the surveys were mailed to couples. Hence, results are presented separately by gender, except for cohabitation.

Remarriage Preparation Participation and Cohabitation

Women

The majority of women, more than half of the respondents, prepared for their remarriage by talking with other people. This occurred with various people, which included talking with religious leader (52.8%), other couples (60.4%), and/or with their parents (66.3%). The second most frequent form women used to prepare was reading various forms of written information—including books (38.6%) and magazines, pamphlets, or news articles (44.6%). Frequencies and percentages for women who participated in each form of remarriage preparation are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Women's Remarriage Preparation

Preparation form	Number of women who participated	Percent of women who participated
Read a book on marriage	117	38.6
Professional counseling	56	18.5
Talked with religious leaders	160	52.8
Visited a website	22	7.3
Visited with other couples	183	60.4
Visited with parents	201	66.3
Read pamphlets, magazines, or news articles	135	44.6
Watched videos or movies on marriage	47	15.5
Attended a class (2 or more sessions)	59	19.5
Attended a workshop or lecture (1 session)	44	14.5

Preparation forms that practitioners would consider more intensive, such as classes or professional counseling, had low participation (see Table 1). Less than one-fifth of female respondents participated in these forms of preparation (19.5% attended a class, 14.5% attended a workshop/lecture, 18.5% went to professional counseling). Preparation aided by technology had the lowest reported usage. Only 7.3% and 15.5% of the women reported visiting a website or watching a movie, respectively.

Men

Men also reported their remarriage preparation participation for each of the forms. Their two most frequent forms of preparation were talking with others and reading written materials (see Table 2). Men prepared for remarriage most often by discussing their upcoming remarriage with religious leaders (47.5%), other couples (54.8%), and/or their parents (62.7%). Men prepared by receiving advice from their parents more frequently than they did from other couples or from their religious leaders. However,

Table 2

Men's Remarriage Preparation

Preparation form	Number of men who participated	Percent of men who participated
Read a book on marriage	86	28.4
Professional counseling	65	21.5
Talked with religious leaders	144	47.5
Visited a website	17	5.6
Visited with other couples	166	54.8
Visited with parents	190	62.7
Read pamphlets, magazines, or news articles	99	32.7
Watched videos or movies on marriage	40	13.2
Attended a class (2 or more sessions)	52	17.2
Attended a workshop or lecture (1 session)	37	12.2

conversations with religious leaders and other couples were still frequent forms of reported preparation. Secondly, almost one third of men prepared for remarriage by reading books (28.4%) or pamphlets, magazines, or news articles (32.7%).

For the more formal and intensive forms of preparation (classes or counseling), 21.5% of men saw a counselor compared to the 17.2% and 12.2% who respectively chose to attend a class or workshop/lecture (see Table 2). Technology-aided forms of preparation, such as visiting a website or watching a video/movie on marriage, were the least likely forms of preparation men participated in. Only 5.6% found information on a website, and only 13.2% watched a video/movie on marriage.

Reasons for Not Participating in Preparation

Although there were respondents who participated in each form of preparation, there were many individuals who did not participate in some or all preparation forms. Individuals who did not participate in any of the ten listed forms of remarriage

Table 3

Frequency (and Percentages) of Reasons for Women's Nonparticipation

Preparation form	Didn't think was needed	Not available	Took too much time	Spouse wasn't interested	I was not interested
Read a book on marriage	86 (51.8)	23 (13.9)	17 (10.2)	4 (2.4)	36 (21.7)
Professional counseling	145 (65.9)	25 (11.4)	7 (3.2)	7 (3.2)	36 (16.4)
Talked with religious leaders	67 (51.9)	16 (12.4)	0 (0.0)	5 (3.9)	41 (31.8)
Visited a website	104 (44.6)	70 (30.0)	6 (2.6)	1 (0.4)	52 (22.3)
Visited with other couples	60 (58.3)	9 (8.7)	2 (1.9)	3 (2.9)	29 (28.2)
Visited with parents	54 (65.1)	9 (10.8)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	20 (24.1)
Read pamphlets, news articles, or magazines	92 (63.0)	16 (11.0)	6 (4.1)	1 (0.7)	31 (21.2)
Watched videos or movies on marriage	112 (52.1)	51 (23.7)	12 (5.6)	3 (1.4)	37 (17.2)
Attended a class (2 or more sessions)	114 (55.6)	37 (18.0)	18 (8.8)	1 (0.5)	35 (17.1)
Attended a workshop or lecture (1 session)	117 (54.2)	44 (20.4)	19 (8.8)	2 (0.9)	34 (15.7)

Table 4

Frequency (and Percentages) of Reasons for Men's Nonparticipation

Preparation form	Didn't think was needed	Not available	Took too much time	Spouse wasn't interested	I was not interested
Read a book on marriage	87 (45.5)	19 (9.9)	15 (7.9)	0 (0.0)	70 (36.6)
Professional counseling	110 (53.1)	26 (12.6)	14 (6.8)	2 (1.0)	55 (26.6)
Talked with religious leaders	68 (54.8)	5 (4.0)	2 (1.6)	0 (0.0)	49 (39.5)
Visited a website	109 (46.2)	47 (19.9)	2 (0.8)	1 (0.4)	77 (32.6)
Visited with other couples	65 (58.6)	6 (5.4)	1 (0.9)	0 (0.0)	39 (35.1)
Visited with parents	54 (59.3)	7 (7.7)	2 (2.2)	0 (0.0)	28 (30.8)
Read pamphlets, news articles, or magazines	87 (52.1)	12 (7.2)	6 (3.6)	0 (0.0)	62 (37.1)
Watched videos or movies on marriage	104 (47.3)	41 (18.6)	3 (1.4)	0 (0.0)	72 (32.7)
Attended a class (2 or more sessions)	105 (50.0)	24 (11.4)	13 (6.2)	0 (0.0)	68 (32.4)
Attended a workshop or lecture (1 session)	108 (49.3)	31 (14.2)	11 (5.0)	0 (0.0)	69 (31.5)

preparation were asked to report why (see Tables 3 and 4). Independent of the form of preparation, the majority of respondents felt that participation was not needed before their remarriage (45-66% of women and 46-59% of men).

More women than men felt that preparation was not needed for each form of preparation, except visiting a website (45% of women versus 46% of men) and talking to religious leaders (52% of women versus 55% of men). Even for the most frequent forms of preparation (talking to others or reading written material), individuals who did not participate reported that they did not think doing so was needful as one of the most frequent reasons for not participating (see Tables 3 and 4).

For the form of preparation that had the lowest participation frequency, visiting a website, 30% of women and 20% of men reported that there were none available (see Tables 3 and 4). Similarly, 24% of women and 19% of men reported that videos/movies on marriage (the second least common form of preparation) were not available to them. These two forms had the highest number of respondents reporting their non-participation being due to not having the form available.

Few men and women reported that they did not participate in any form of preparation because of the amount of time it would take them (see Tables 3 and 4). Reading written materials, especially books, was considered to be time consuming by both men and women who did not read. In this sample, 3.2% of women and 6.8% of men reported that it took too much time to go to professional counseling. Similarly, 8.8% of women and approximately 6% of men reported that attending a class or a workshop/lecture took too much time.

The second most frequent reason individuals gave for their nonparticipation was that they were not personally interested in the preparation form (16-32% of women, 27-40% of men; see Tables 3 and 4). However, both women and men rarely reported that

their spouse was not interested. Only 0-4% of women and 0-1% of men reportedly felt that their spouse was not interested in any form of remarriage preparation.

Cohabitation

Although cohabitation was not specifically listed as a form of preparation in the Utah Newlywed Study, the literature indicates that many individuals consider premarital cohabitation to be a form of remarriage preparation (Ganong & Coleman, 1989). In this sample, 136 couples reported cohabiting before remarriage. This accounts for about 45% of the female and male respondents. The frequency for women and men is the same because the surveys were mailed to couples, though filled out separately by the women and men.

Summary

For both women and men, the two most common forms of preparation were talking to others (religious leaders, parents, or other couples) and reading written information from various sources. Cohabitation was also participated in by many surveyed, though it was not included as a formal form of remarriage preparation. The first hypothesis for research question one was supported, as many prepared through reading and cohabitation. Individuals who did not participate in each form of preparation generally reported that they viewed participation as not being needful or they were not personally interested in participating in the preparation form.

Remarriage Preparation Helpfulness

Just as nonparticipants were asked to explain why they did not participate in preparation activities, women and men who participated in the different forms were asked to rate the helpfulness of their participation (see Tables 5 and 6). The helpfulness of cohabitation was not rated; rather, individuals were only asked to report whether or not they had cohabited.

Women

The majority of women who reported participation in the various forms of remarriage preparation found the various forms of preparation somewhat helpful, helpful, or very helpful (see Table 5). The helpfulness ratings were at somewhat helpful or above for 89.7% of women who talked with others and 88.5% who read written materials, the two most common forms of preparation.

When considering each preparation form, counseling was found to be rated the most helpful by women who participated in it, with 48.2% finding it very helpful and only 1.8% finding it not helpful at all. Talking with religious leaders and attending workshops were close a second (38.8%) and third (34.1%) for respondents rating them as being very helpful. Also, for those women who attended a class, workshop, or lecture there were none who found the information they learned to be completely unhelpful.

Even those forms which had the fewest respondents, such as visiting a website or watching a video/movie on marriage, had high ratings of helpfulness. There were 72.7% of the female respondents who ranked visiting websites as somewhat helpful or higher,

Table 5

The Frequency (and Percentage) of Women's Helpfulness Ratings

Preparation form	Very helpful	Helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not very helpful	Not at all helpful	Not applicable/did not participate
Read a book on marriage	37 (31.6)	42 (35.9)	29 (24.8)	7 (6.0)	2 (1.7)	160
Professional counseling	27 (48.2)	16 (28.6)	8 (14.3)	4 (7.1)	1 (1.8)	212
Talked with religious leaders	62 (38.8)	41 (25.6)	40 (25.0)	11 (6.9)	6 (3.7)	120
Visited a website	1 (4.5)	6 (27.3)	9 (40.9)	6 (27.3)	0 (0.0)	243
Visited with other couples	41 (22.4)	63 (34.4)	60 (32.8)	14 (7.7)	5 (2.7)	94
Visited with parents	60 (29.9)	64 (31.8)	57 (28.3)	15 (7.5)	5 (2.5)	76
Read pamphlets, magazines, or news articles	22 (16.3)	43 (31.9)	50 (37.0)	15 (11.1)	5 (3.7)	142
Watched videos or movies on marriage	8 (17.0)	14 (29.8)	18 (38.3)	3 (6.4)	4 (8.5)	222
Attended a class (2 or more sessions)	18 (30.5)	27 (45.8)	11 (18.6)	3 (5.1)	0 (0.0)	210
Attended a workshop or lecture (1 session)	15 (34.1)	16 (36.4)	10 (22.7)	3 (6.8)	0 (0.0)	226

and 85.1% of women who ranked marriage videos similarly. None of the forms of preparation were rated by more than 10% of the female respondents as being not helpful at all. The form of preparation rated most often as the least helpful by respondents was watching a video/movie on marriage (8.5%).

Men

The majority of those men who participated in remarriage preparation rated each form of preparation helpful (see Table 6). The helpfulness of any written material was rated as somewhat helpful, helpful, or very helpful by 86.5% of men. For those men who talked to others about their impending remarriage, 87.2% rated it as somewhat helpful or higher.

For men, talking to religious leaders was seen as very helpful by respondents more often than any other form of preparation (33.3%). It was closely followed by attending a class (32.7%). The third most frequent form of preparation men saw as very helpful was reading a book (32.6%).

Reading a book was also the form of preparation men rated least often as being not helpful at all (1.2%). Only two forms of preparation were rated by more than 10% of those men who participated as being not helpful at all; these forms were visiting a website (11.8%) and attending a workshop (10.8%).

Summary

On the whole, both women and men who participated in any of the preparation forms rated them as being helpful. Helpfulness ratings were high for the two most common forms of preparation, which were talking to others and reading written

Table 6

The Frequency (and Percentage) of Men's Helpfulness Ratings

Preparation form	Very helpful	Helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not very helpful	Not at all helpful	Not applicable/did not participate
Read a book on marriage	28 (32.6)	26 (30.2)	22 (25.6)	9 (10.5)	1 (1.2)	217
Professional counseling	17 (26.2)	20 (30.8)	20 (30.8)	4 (6.1)	4 (6.1)	238
Talked with religious leaders	48 (33.3)	40 (27.8)	40 (27.8)	8 (5.6)	8 (5.6)	159
Visited a website	2 (11.8)	2 (11.8)	9 (52.9)	2 (11.8)	2 (11.8)	286
Visited with other couples	29 (17.5)	42 (25.3)	73 (44.0)	12 (7.2)	10 (6.0)	137
Visited with parents	37 (19.5)	64 (33.7)	63 (33.2)	20 (10.5)	6 (3.2)	113
Read pamphlets, magazines, or news articles	14 (14.1)	25 (25.3)	45 (45.5)	12 (12.1)	3 (3.0)	204
Watched videos or movies on marriage	6 (15.0)	8 (20.0)	16 (40.0)	8 (20.0)	2 (5.0)	263
Attended a class (2 or more session)	17 (32.7)	13 (25.0)	15 (28.8)	5 (9.6)	2 (3.9)	251
Attended a workshop or lecture (1 session)	8 (21.6)	14 (37.8)	9 (24.3)	2 (5.4)	4 (10.8)	266

information. For women, the form of preparation rated as very helpful most frequently was professional counseling, and for men it was talking to religious leaders. So, the hypothesis that written materials would be rated as most helpful was not fully supported, though these materials are still seen as helpful. Only the men rated any forms of preparation as not being helpful at all by more than 10% of the participants; those forms were visiting a website and attending a workshop.

Women's Versus Men's Participation

One of the study's research questions asked whether women participated in remarriage preparation significantly more often than men. The frequency of participation for women and men, detailed in Tables 1 and 2, indicates that women may indeed participate more often than men in every form of preparation except professional counseling. To find out if women's participation was significantly greater than men's paired sample *t* tests were performed. Paired sample *t* tests were run because the data were collected from couples, though they were requested to complete the surveys individually.

Women's and men's participation did not significantly differ in half of the preparation forms. Men were just as likely to participate in professional counseling $M = 0.06$, $SD = 1.931$, $t(251) = 0.46$, $p = 0.646$, two-tailed; visiting a website $M = -0.08$, $SD = 1.176$, $t(239) = -1.098$, $p = 0.273$, two-tailed; watching a video/movie on marriage $M = -0.08$, $SD = 1.614$, $t(244) = -0.752$, $p = 0.453$, two-tailed; attending a class $M = 0.0122$, $SD = 0.4561$, $t(254) = 0.419$, $p = 0.675$, two-tailed; and attending a workshop/lecture $M = -0.1$, $SD = 1.678$, $t(241) = -0.958$, $p = 0.339$, two-tailed, as women.

For the five remaining forms of preparation, women participated significantly more frequently than men. These forms include reading a book $M = -0.36$, $SD = 2.267$, $t(251) = -2.501$, $p = 0.013$, two-tailed; talking to religious leaders $M = -0.26$, $SD = 1.811$, $t(260) = -2.358$, $p = 0.019$, two-tailed; visiting with other couples $M = -0.37$, $SD = 2.114$, $t(256) = -2.803$, $p = .005$, two-tailed; visiting with parents $M = -0.33$, $SD = 1.988$, $t(261) = -2.672$, $p = 0.008$, two-tailed; and reading pamphlets, magazines, or news articles $M = -0.39$, $SD = 2.088$, $t(250) = -2.963$, $p = 0.003$, two-tailed.

In summary, women's participation was more significant than men's in two of the three most common forms of preparation. These forms were: talking to others (religious leaders, other couples, and parents) and reading written information (books, pamphlets, magazines, and news articles). Since questionnaires were sent to couples, women and men reported participation in cohabitation at the same rate; thus, a paired t test was not necessary to perform.

Remarital Quality and Perceptions of Preparedness

Along with wanting to know if individuals participated in remarriage preparation, another objective of this study was to evaluate how participation influenced remarital quality and perceptions of preparation. Independent t tests were run to compare those women and men who participated in remarriage preparation to those women and men who did not in terms of remarital satisfaction, remarital adjustment, and perceptions of preparedness (at times one and two).

Remarital Quality: Remarriage Satisfaction

The Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale was used to obtain respondents' satisfaction with their remarriage at times one and two. Remarriage satisfaction was significantly different only for women at time two. However, the results were opposite to those hypothesized. Those women who did not read a book $t(91) = 2.689, p = 0.009$, two-tailed; a pamphlet, magazine, or news article $t(98) = 2.721, p = 0.008$, two-tailed; or attend professional counseling $t(24) = 2.242, p = 0.035$, two-tailed, had significantly higher remarital satisfaction at time two compared to those women who did participate in these activities. There were no significant differences at time one for women. Also, there were no significant differences at time one or time two for men who did or did not participate in remarriage preparation.

Remarital Quality: Remarriage Adjustment

Separate t tests were run for each of the three subscales of the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale—satisfaction, consensus, and cohesion—and for the total adjustment score. For most of the forms of preparation there were no significant differences between those who did and did not participate. The few significant differences are reported below, including those findings that went counter to the hypothesized outcome, which was that those who participated in remarriage preparation would have higher marital adjustment at both time one and two.

On the satisfaction subscale, a result that went against the study's hypothesis was that those women who read pamphlets, magazines, and news articles had lower remarital satisfaction at both times one, $t(275) = 2.108, p = 0.036$, and two, $t(110) = 3.208, p =$

0.002, than those women who did not. Similarly, women who talked with their parents had significantly lower satisfaction at time two, $t(108) = 2.199, p = 0.030$, than those women who did not. Women who watched a video/movie on marriage also had lower remarital satisfaction at time two than women who did not, $t(104) = 2.551, p = 0.012$.

There were also significant results from the consensus subscale, but only for time two. Women who attended professional counseling had significantly lower consensus scores than nonparticipating women at time two, $t(105) = 2.312, p = 0.023$. However, those women who attended a workshop or lecture reported a greater amount of consensus at time two than women who did not, $t(100) = -2.129, p = 0.036$.

All of the significant results from the cohesion subscale provided positive support for participation in remarriage preparation at time one. Those women who read a book, $t(275) = -2.2, p = 0.029$, had higher reports of cohesion than women who did not at time one. Similarly, those women who attended a class, $t(267) = -2.666, p = 0.008$, or a workshop/lecture, $t(268) = -2.243, p = 0.026$ had greater cohesion at time one than those women who did not. There were no significant findings for time two for either women or men.

There were significant findings on all three subscales for those women who cohabited. Those women who did not cohabit before remarriage had significantly higher scores at time one than those women who did [satisfaction: $t(296) = 2.151, p = 0.032$; cohesion: $t(297) = 2.871, p = 0.004$; consensus: $t(296) = 2.343, p = 0.020$; total adjustment score: $t(297) = 3.164, p = 0.002$].

The only other significant finding for the total score was for those women who attended a workshop or lecture. Those women who attended a workshop or lecture had

significantly higher total adjustment scores at time one compared to those women who did not participate in this form of preparation, $t(268) = -1.967, p = 0.050$. There were no significant findings for men's remarital adjustment at time one or two on any of the indicators of remarital quality.

Perceptions of Preparedness

Only one independent t test was significant for perceptions of preparation. Those women who talked to their parents before their remarriage had significantly higher perceptions of preparation at time two than those women who did not participate, $t(109) = -2.122, p = 0.036$, two-tailed. Beyond the above result, there are no significant differences between those who participate in remarriage preparation forms and those who do not for both women and men at times one and two.

Summary

In relation to remarital satisfaction, women who had not read any written material or attended professional counseling had higher satisfaction than women who had participated in these activities at time two. Results from the subscales of remarital adjustment show that women who attended a workshop/lecture had higher consensus at time two and higher cohesion at time one than women who had not participated. Overall, remarital adjustment was higher for those women who had not cohabited before their remarriage or who attended workshop/lecture at time one. Only women who had talked to their parents perceived being more prepared than women who had not at time two. There were no significant results for the men in relation to remarital satisfaction, adjustment, or perceptions of preparedness.

Conclusion

Some results supported the hypotheses and others did not. The most frequent forms of preparation were talking to others or reading written information, as was expected. The hypothesis that preparation is helpful was supported, though not specifically that written material had the highest rating. Surprisingly, women participated in preparation more frequently than men in only half of the preparation forms. The biggest discrepancies between hypotheses and the results come with remarital satisfaction and adjustment and perceptions of preparedness. Overall, the results did not support the frequent forms of preparation. But, classes and workshops/lectures were beneficial for remarital adjustment. Possible explanations for these results are given in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

As with the results, the discussion is presented in the order of the research questions which guided this study. Hence, the frequency of participation and nonparticipation in the preparation forms and cohabitation is discussed first. Secondly, an analysis of what forms of preparation were seen by the participants as being helpful is given. Third, the discussion addresses women's versus men's participation and if participants or nonparticipants have greater marital quality—as was assessed by remarital satisfaction and remarital adjustment—and perceptions of preparedness. The discussion concludes with strengths and limitations of the study, as well as suggestions for further research and practical application.

Remarriage Preparation Participation, Nonparticipation, and Cohabitation

Most Frequent Forms of Preparation

Results revealed that talking to others (religious leaders, other couples, and parents) and reading written materials (books, pamphlets, magazines, or news articles) were the two most frequent forms of remarriage preparation for both women and men. One of these two forms, written materials, was also a frequent form of preparation in Ganong and Coleman's (1989) study. Notwithstanding the fact that almost two decades have passed since the Ganong and Coleman study, it appears that individuals are still preparing for remarriage in many of the same ways.

In Ganong and Coleman's (1989) study, talking with friends was one of the forms of preparation they focused on. The current study expanded on talking to friends to also include talking to religious leaders, other couples, or parents. It could be due to the easy access of family and friends that this form of preparation is the number one form both women and men engage in. It could also be that humans are inherently social beings; so, talking with others could be due this natural, social phenomenon. Marriage is a life-altering event. Receiving or seeking advice from those whom you love and respect seems natural for anyone stepping into marriage, even if they have previously been married before (Ganong & Coleman).

The second most common form of remarriage preparation is reading written material. Unlike Ganong and Coleman's (1989) study, this study included more than books as reading material. Also included were pamphlets, magazines, or news articles. Both women and men in this Utah sample choose to read pamphlets, magazines, or news articles more often than they read books. This is not surprising, given that such materials are shorter than books and can still provide marriage related information. Many couples choose to participate in these less intensive or time consuming forms, perhaps because they, one, believe a small refresher on good relationship skills is all they need; two, they are not in a distressed relationship; or three, they do not have a desire to change their relationship (Hawkins et al., 2004).

Reading books is likely a common form of preparation because doing so provides individuals the information they think they want and/or need. It also allows them to gain the information on their own time. Self-guided marriage help is useful and flexible (Hawkins et al., 2004); for many adults reading a book provides such help. The United

States culture has also convinced us to believe that issues in the marriage relationship are a private matter—something to be dealt with only between the couple involved. Such a belief has created a stigma against seeking for help (Ganong & Coleman, 1989), whether the relationship is distressed or not. From this study it appears that many individuals may still seek help through private ways, such as reading books—ways that are accepted by our culture.

Least Frequent Forms of Preparation

Preparation forms that are generally thought of as more intrusive and intensive, such as counseling and classes/workshops, had only moderate participation—which is not surprising. Although education is generally what practitioners think remarried couples need (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004), very few attend. The general population seems uninterested in formal relationship education (Stanley, 2001).

The lack of participation in the more intensive forms could also be due to the way our culture views remarriage and seeking help to prevent or resolve problems in remarriage. In general, the public believes that remarriages and stepfamilies should be just like first marriages and nuclear families (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). This causes frustration for these families. However, such a belief encourages creativity among marriage professionals who want to help these families anyway (Hawkins et al., 2004; Stanley, 2001).

Additionally, the lack of participation might also be due to the slow recognition of different issues remarried couples may face and the even slower process of creating specialized remarriage preparation forms (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004).

Moreover, individuals may not attend classes or workshops due to a lack of relevancy and/or specificity of information directly related to recoupling and stepfamily life (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham; Stanley, 2001).

Despite living in the age of technology, very few individuals chose to prepare for remarriage by watching a video/movie on marriage or visiting a website. Finding educational videos/movies on marriage seemed to be a hard task for those in the general public, who are most likely unaware of the products educators and practitioners have conscientiously produced. So, it is no surprise that few report viewing a video/movie to prepare for their remarriage. But, given the vast amount of information on the World Wide Web it is surprising that more did not seek to prepare by viewing such sites.

Perhaps the sample has recognized the plea of Ganong and Coleman (2004) to be careful about what information is accessed on the Web and how it is applied in their marriages and families. The World Wide Web offers no way to monitor the accuracy of its information. However, given that the average age for women was 37 and for men was 40, those entering remarriages might not be as technically savvy as many who are entering their first marriage. Or, they may be unaware of the vast amount of information available through the World Wide Web. It is also possible, due to financial issues, that these people do not have access to the Web. Another probable explanation is that the individual is too busy building relationships to take the time to access the information available.

Reasons for Nonparticipation

Although the focus of this study was how individuals prepare for remarriage and the helpfulness of remarriage preparation, data were also collected as to why those who did not participate in each form of preparation chose not to do so. The majority of nonparticipants reported that the reason they did not prepare for their remarriage using any of the preparation forms was because they did not see preparation as necessary.

The view that preparation is unnecessary could be accounted for by at least three reasons. The first is the belief held by some, as stated by Ganong and Coleman, "If it isn't broken, don't fix it" (1989, p. 31). Many individuals find no reason to work to improve their marriage relationship when they do not perceive anything being wrong with it (Halford, 2004). Remarriage preparation may be discounted because individuals are experiencing high levels of positive emotions in their new relationship and generally do not see any problems (Ganong & Coleman).

Second, many see marriage as a natural step in their progression through life, which continues to perpetuate people's belief that they can easily step into it. Generally, what people see as a normal part of life they also see as coming easily to or occurring naturally for them or that what they learned in their own families while growing up was enough (Larson & Holman, 1994). Many believe that whatever life has given them is what they are supposed to deal with. When people believe such things they are unlikely to want to learn or do anything to change the course of what is happening.

The third and final reason may be that many who remarry also do not see preparation as needful because they have been married already (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). They feel they have gained hands-on experience from their previous marriage(s).

They already know what they want and what they do not want. However, they seldom recognize that there are different issues facing them in remarriage—especially when children from previous relationships are present—that they did not have to deal with in their first marriage (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004; Messinger, 1976).

Another interesting result also deals with the reasons why individuals did not participate in remarriage preparation. Individuals reported they were personally uninterested in participating more frequently than they reported that their partner was uninterested. Such a report could lend support to the individualistic nature of our society. The fact that respondents reported themselves as being uninterested suggests that they are aware of their own desires. However, when they do not similarly suggest that their partner is uninterested, it could be that they, as a couple, are not talking about doing anything to prepare for their remarriage. This poses the possible situation researchers and practitioners are afraid of: couples are not talking about “potentially toxic issues” (Ganong & Coleman, 1989, p. 28) before they remarry.

However, it should be noted that men are less apt to report that their partners are uninterested in participation than women. This suggests that men view women as more interested in remarriage preparation. This is not surprising, given that women are generally seen as the natural caretakers of relationships (Ganong & Coleman, 2004).

Cohabitation

Although this study did not consider cohabitation as a form of preparation it is generally considered to be one (Bumpass, Raley, & Sweet, 1995; Ganong & Coleman, 1989). Forty-five percent of the sample cohabited before their remarriage. This is lower

than what has been recently reported by Xu and colleagues (2006), who found that 50% of their sample cohabited before marriage. However, it is only a slight difference. This difference is likely explained by the majority of participants being affiliated with a religion that strongly discourages cohabitation.

Remarriage Preparation Helpfulness

The majority of those women and men who participated in some form of remarriage preparation rated them as “somewhat helpful,” “helpful,” or “very helpful.” This is concurrent with Stanley’s (2001) report that most people who participate in marriage preparation find it beneficial and would participate in it again. It also supports the hypothesized outcome, that the two most frequent forms of preparation (talking with others and written information) would be rated helpful, though written information was not rated as the most helpful form of preparation.

The finding that remarriage preparation is perceived as highly helpful for each of the ten given forms is supported by the intervention framework. Preparation for remarriage, in any form, may help change the individual’s awareness of the issues they might face when entering their marriage. Preparation may also give individuals at least some suggestions (if not specific tools or skills) on how to combat the negative aspects of their relationships and build the positive (Coie et al., 1993).

When looking at specific helpfulness ratings for each of the forms of preparation, it is interesting to note that none of the women who took a marriage class or attended a workshop or lecture reported that the information they received was “not helpful at all.” Such a result adds credence to practitioners’ claims that marriage education is beneficial

(Carroll & Doherty, 2003), even though many individuals seem uninterested and few choose to attend. It is also encouraging to marriage professionals who support marriage education.

On the opposite end, the men who attended a workshop or lecture rated such preparation as the least helpful of all—though only about one-tenth of the sample rated it as such. However, men also rated marriage classes as the second most helpful form of preparation. Such a discrepancy between participating women, men, and similar forms of preparation might be explained by the content of the workshop/lecture. Though focusing on gender-related topics is discouraged by marriage practitioners, in general men and women tend to value different relationship areas (e.g., women value communication, men value sexual relations; Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004). It might have been that the topics the men wanted addressed were not focused on, while the topics women tend to value were. Or, it could have been that the length of the workshop or lecture was not sufficient to fulfill the needs of the men, and those men who attended a workshop/lecture would have found it more helpful to attend a class because they needed a more intense form of preparation (Hawkins et al., 2004).

Women's Versus Men's Preparation Participation

Unlike Ganong and Coleman's (1989) study, the current results show that women participated significantly more often than men in only half of the preparation forms. The fact that men use some forms of preparation just as often as women is encouraging and suggests at least two things. The first is that the social climate for marriage preparation has changed in such a way that more men are thinking about and participating in

remarriage preparation. It could also suggest that couples are preparing together—a feat many marriage practitioners would like to see happen (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004; Hawkins et al., 2004).

However, upon a closer look, men prepared just as often as women in preparation forms that are more likely to be couple activities (e.g., attending counseling, classes, workshops, or lecture). Yet, women participated more often in activities more suited to individuals (e.g., reading books, pamphlets, magazines, or news articles or talking to other couples, religious leaders, or parents). So, women could still be more concerned about the relationship (Ganong & Coleman, 2004), and are bringing their partner to participate in preparation forms that are best suited for both partners.

The forms of preparation that men are just as likely as women to participate in are those forms which were either more intensive (counseling, classes, and workshops/lecture) or technologically guided (videos and websites). Looking at the frequency of individuals who participated, these forms have the fewest people choosing to prepare by these means. So, while having similar numbers of men and women prepare is encouraging, the lack of difference in these preparation forms could be due to fewer individuals participating.

Results showed that more men went to a professional counselor than women before their remarriage. Typically women are seen as the relationship caretakers and more likely to participate in preparation (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). Having more men attend counseling, which is one of the more intensive forms of preparation, goes against what is expected. Two possible explanations come to mind. The first could be counted as more evidence for what was previously said, the cultural stigma of men participating in

marriage preparation has lessened over the years. The second is the possibility that more men than women face becoming a stepparent when remarriage occurs (Ganong & Coleman) and want some guidance on how to deal with the situations they will be facing.

Remarital Quality

Remarital Satisfaction

Significant results for remarriage satisfaction, based on the KMSS, were few and went against the hypotheses. There was a significant difference in satisfaction for women who participated by reading written materials or attending professional counseling compared to those women who did not at time two. Those women who did not participate had higher marital satisfaction.

The first possible explanation for this discrepancy is that there are many confounding variables between time one and two which were not controlled for through statistical analyses. Second, it could be that women who participated in these preparation forms are more sensitive to issues going on in their remarriage. Thirdly, the time two data collected occurred roughly one and one-half years after the first—at time when couples tend to be coming out of, what professionals call, the honeymoon period of marriage. Perhaps problematic issues are beginning to emerge, and those who have been prepared might be more aware of these or better able to identify problems which are occurring.

Satisfaction did not differ between those individuals who participated in the other eight forms of remarriage preparation and those who did not. This result also goes against the expectation that those individuals who participated in remarriage preparation would have higher satisfaction. However, the current finding is supported by Stanley (2001),

who reported that couples who participated in marriage preparation rarely showed a difference in marital satisfaction in comparison to those who did not participate. This could be explained by selection effects. Such effects could be shown by those who are participating in remarriage preparation. Participants are likely to be individuals who notice marital problems more often than others might. Their preparation merely brought them to the same level as other individuals who do not participate (likely they did not participate because they were already satisfied with their relationship) because they have been given the knowledge they lacked that nonparticipants already had. Now that the individuals (those who did and did not prepared) are on the same level, they report the same level of remarital satisfaction. Those who participate in remarriage preparation may be more committed to making their marriage work, which is why they participated in the first place (Stanley, 2001). Thus, their participation was more a show of their commitment to their remarriage than a desire or need to improve the relationship.

Ganong and Coleman (2004) also present four possible explanations why few couples participate, which could possibly influence satisfaction. The first is that our society tends to encourage people to overlook problems until they become crises. It is possible that these remarried individuals have not reached crises, since they are not seeking help. The second reason is that many individuals enter remarriage overly optimistic about how things will work out and may disqualify the preventive measures remarriage preparation provides. They feel satisfied with their relationship, and may be avoiding those situations which preparation would have taught them to handle. Thirdly, there are many myths in our society about remarriage and stepfamilies. Some of these myths include: instant love between the stepparent and stepchild(ren), marriage makes

people happier, what is best for the parents is best for the children, and more. So, the individuals in this study may be trying to live up to these myths—either consciously or unconsciously—rather than realizing the falsity of them. Finally, there are fewer resources available for remarrying individuals (compared to general marriage preparation) that are geared specifically to their situation. So, if remarrying individuals were to participate, their satisfaction may not be increased because they have not been given the necessary skills to handle the unique situations in remarriages.

Remarital Adjustment

The RDAS, a measure of marital adjustment, has three subscales: satisfaction, consensus, and cohesion. The satisfaction subscale's significant results were consistent with the results from the KMSS. Along with reading written materials, women who talked to their parents or watched a video had lower satisfaction on this RDAS subscale at time two.

For women who talked to their parents, it could be that they are continuing to include their parents in their marital relationship even after their remarriage has occurred. Doing so could be detrimental to the remarriage, where the couple relationship should take precedence over the parent-child relationship—especially when dealing with marital issues. Women who watched a video might also have lower satisfaction because the video did not provide enough information to help them sufficiently prepare. Though, such a conclusion is only a conjecture, as confounding variables have not been accounted for.

The consensus subscale provides mixed results. Women who attended professional counseling had lower consensus than women who did not at time two. But,

women who attended a workshop or lecture had higher consensus at time two. These findings support what practitioners see as the main issue: remarriage couples need to be educated on issues they might face more than to be counseled (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004).

All significant results from the cohesion subscale provided support for the more intensive or time consuming forms of remarriage preparation. Women who read a book and attended either a class or a workshop/lecture reported greater cohesion than women who did not. Once again, the support for preparation through bibliotherapy (Ganong et al., 2001) and education (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004) was found.

The most prominent finding for remarital adjustment relates to cohabitation. Women who cohabited before remarriage had significantly lower scores on all three adjustment subscales and, consequently, the total adjustment score. Since there are more individuals who are cohabiting before remarriage compared to before first marriages (Xu et al., 2006), such a result may have implications for those working with divorced individuals. For instance, based on this result, it may be important to stress to newly divorced individuals, either in divorce proceedings or court-ordered education, that cohabitation would not be particularly beneficial to helping them adjust to a new relationship. Additionally, for individuals who have cohabited, educators should find ways to stress important areas on which they should focus to ease their adjustment into a remarriage.

Although cohabitation is generally considered a form of preparation and is largely seen by the public as helpful (Demaris, 1984; Ganong & Coleman, 1989), the finding that those women who cohabit have lower remarital adjustment supports a large body of

research on cohabitation, which found that cohabitation before marriage may have negative consequences to the marriage (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). Such findings are supported by the adjustment findings in this study.

Overall Remarital Quality

Overall, women had the only significant findings for remarital quality. Women who read written materials or went to professional counseling had lower satisfaction than women who did not at time two. Women who cohabited had lower adjustment, but women who went to a workshop/lecture had higher adjustment than those who did not. Even though there were only significant results for women's remarriage preparation, there may be lessons to be learned from the lack of significant findings. There are at least three possible explanations for the large number of insignificant findings.

The first explanation was emphasized by Carroll and Doherty (2003) in a meta-analysis on marriage education. Although there appeared to be many positive benefits for individuals who participated in marriage education, those positive benefits tended to be short term—lasting only six months to three years. So, it is possible that the few significant differences in remarital quality identified in this longitudinal study may be due to the positive benefits of remarriage education slowly fading away.

The second possible explanation may be that the lack of significant results is a sign that the relationship between the couple may not be the most vital relationship to focus on in a remarriage. Some researchers have suggested that it might be more important to focus on the stepfamily cohesion than the marital relationship (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). Couples usually bond through their love and support of one another.

However, many times the children and extended family may be opposed to the remarriage and set one partner against the other until the marital relationship is stressed by the loyalty conflicts created (Ganong & Coleman).

The third possible explanation is related to the information individuals received as they prepare. Perhaps individuals are receiving inadequate information, misleading information, or are insufficiently putting the information they learned to use. Individuals may be using sources that are not necessarily based upon research on remarriage, such as fashion magazines or newspapers (Leon & Angst, 2005). This may also be why individuals who are preparing by reading are not experiencing higher levels of remarital quality or perceptions of preparedness. It might be that information provided in the sources individuals accessed was misleading. So, when they put it into practice the new ideas or methods did not help change or improve the situations they faced. Misleading information provides a false sense of preparation. Or it could be that individuals may be learning, but they may not be practicing what they have learned due to any number of reasons. One of these reasons could be that they refuse to address the issues, though they learned to recognize them through their preparation, because they fear to fail in another relationship or other myths—as suggested by Coleman and Ganong (1985).

Perceptions of Preparedness

The only significant finding regarding perceptions of preparedness contradicts an earlier finding in relation to women's adjustment: at time two, women who had talked to their parents as preparation for their remarriage felt more prepared than women who had not participated in this form. If talking to parents lowers satisfaction (an adjustment

subscale), but increases the feeling of preparedness it could be that parental involvement is helping women see more remarital issues, but doing little to help the couple solve them in satisfying ways. These women could be managing their anxiety through their parents. It could also be that in talking about the issues, only the situations and feelings were expressed and there was no clear conclusion to help the women resolve the issues they faced.

The lack of significant findings does not imply that remarriage preparation is not helping individuals, though there is the possibility. Even though the majority of the results indicated no increase in perceptions of preparedness, it could be that—even though they prepared—individuals found that once they were in their remarriage their preparation had not be enough. Since the survey was completed after the individual had been remarried the results might be showing that individuals were disillusioned by their preparation or they had not been prepared in all aspects of the relationship that they faced when they completed the survey. Therefore, they might not have higher perceptions of preparedness.

Strengths, Limitations, and the Future

There are a number of strengths in the present study. The first is the large sample size. There were 303 women and 303 men who participated in the study. A large sample size adds power to results. The second strength is that the study included the perspective of men. Remarriage studies, particularly those using governmental data (e.g., Census, National Survey of Family Growth), tend to focus on women. Adding in the men's perspective added a different, vital view—especially since more men than women

remarry (Kreider, 2005). The final strength includes how the current study expanded on Ganong and Coleman's (1989) original remarriage preparation study. Unlike Ganong and Coleman, this study asked respondents to give the reason why they did not participate in the each form of preparation. From their responses we were able to learn that many individuals entering a remarriage did not find preparation necessary.

However, the fact that this study only focused on the marital relationship can be seen as a limitation. More than two individuals are involved and need to be cared for when a couple enters a remarriage. A remarriage affects former spouses, present children, and extended families, both former and from birth. Future research should consider looking at how remarriage preparation affects the whole stepfamily or comparing preparation for the remarrying couple versus preparation that includes the whole stepfamily.

The findings are also limited because it includes only those individuals who returned surveys. Not knowing anything about those who chose not to return surveys limits the generalizability of the findings. Those who returned the survey were predominantly white. This also limits the findings, as different races and ethnicities experiences with remarriage preparation may vary.

When considering participant characteristics another suggestion for future research, as Stanley (2001) presents, is to research how individual and couple characteristics influence participation or nonparticipation in marriage preparation. Research should also be done to consider what common characteristics individuals have who build strong remarriages. Knowledge of such characteristics could guide the formation of beneficial remarriage preparation. It would also be important to consider

how individuals are affected by the honeymoon period of the marriage relationship, which is generally considered the first year or so of marriage. Individuals in this study had been married an average of 6 months when they completed the first surveys, and could have still be experiencing an emotional high.

Another limitation to this study was the lack of inclusion of cohabitation as a recognized form of preparation. Though individuals were asked to report whether they cohabited or not, they were not asked whether their cohabiting experience was one to prepare them for marriage, a choice other than remarriage, or a combination of the two. Research shows that cohabitation is more common before remarriages than it is before first marriages (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). Because of this, it is been suggested that cohabiting couples, who fit the criteria of a remarried couple, should also be considered as having formed a stepfamily (Bumpass et al., 1995) and included in future studies on remarriage and stepfamily issues. Although they should be recognized as a separate system than a formally remarried couple, the dynamics of cohabiting individuals are important to understand as more choose to cohabit before remarriage than before their first marriage (Xu et al., 2006).

This study was also limited by the statistical methods utilized. There are many confounding factors in remarriages. Some of these factors include: the number of previous marriages (Ganong & Coleman, 2004), the presence/absence of children (Messinger, 1976), building a relationship between the stepparent and stepchild(ren) (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004), a lack of social support (Messinger), how previous relationship losses were dealt with (Messinger), incomplete institution (Cherlin, 1978), negative language describing relationships (Ganong & Coleman), and living by

the nuclear family image (Ganong & Coleman). Studies and analyses which consider these and other pertinent factors are important to be used in future research.

Trends and Practical Applications

Remarriage preparation trends have not greatly changed between the 13 years spanning Ganong and Coleman's (1989) study and data collection for the current study. The most frequent forms of preparation, for the Ganong and Coleman study, were written materials and cohabitation. Results from this study coincide with these frequently used forms, though cohabitation was not specifically addressed as a form of preparation. One difference between the studies is the increase in number of individuals who talked to religious leaders, their parents, and other couples as their remarriage approached.

There has also been an increase in the number of men who participated in remarriage preparation since Ganong and Coleman's (1989) study. The most likely contributors to men's increased participation is the change of our social climate or prodding by the women to take part in the increasing resources available. It is now more acceptable than it was twenty years ago for everyone, men in particular, to seek help to improve such an intimate relationship as marriage. This trend reflects such a change.

Another important trend to note is the steady report from the previous and current studies about the helpfulness of remarriage preparation. This report is that remarriage preparation is viewed as helpful by the majority of remarriage participants. If the majority of participants are reporting that preparation is helpful, it is vital that preparation be encouraged—especially preparation that is created to help couples avoid dysfunction and recognize risk/protective factors (Coie et al., 1993).

Based on these three trends and the results from the current study, it is suggested that preparation through educational classes, workshops, and lectures continue to be created and promoted. Although few respondents utilized such methods, those who did reported higher adjustment (attending classes) and greater cohesion and/or consensus. With such benefits and so few participating, educators have the additional challenge of encouraging individuals to see such preparation forms as needful, as many in this study did not believe they are.

Further, it is also necessary to improve and expand written publications. The written word is necessary not only to educate those entering a remarriage, but for those parents, religious leaders, and couples with whom they will talk. Remarriage brings its own unique issues, many of which are still unrecognized by our society (Stanley, 2001) and need to be addressed. However, it is vital that the resources are monitored. After reviewing prior research on stepfamilies in print media, Leon and Angst (2005) concluded that such media is largely problem-focused. While couples do need to be aware of problems specific to stepfamilies, it would also be useful to them to give more attention to strengths on which they can build a stronger joint family. Since many couples are already accessing books, pamphlets, magazines, and news articles it is important, as stated by the intervention framework, that such materials teach them about topics and issues remarrying couples face, both problems and strengths (Coie et al., 1993). Since media has such a strong impact on our culture (Leon & Angst), it may also be useful for researchers and practitioners to combat misleading messages about stepfamilies with the knowledge they have.

Despite the fact that many in this sample read written materials, practitioners need to remember that, although individuals are reading, written materials are more often rated as less helpful than the intensive forms of preparation (e.g., counseling, classes, workshops/lectures). Practitioners, educators, and governmental authorities might do well to note that the best levels of adjustment were reached by individuals who participated in these forms of preparation. Policies to support such forms of preparation should be encouraged based on the results of this study.

Conclusion

Almost 20 years have passed since Ganong and Coleman (1989) conducted the first study on remarital preparation. The results of this study indicate that very little has changed over the years. Although the social climate has changed to increase the participation of men, there are still a large number of women and men who see formal remarriage preparation as unnecessary. Although there is need for more research, there appears to be sufficient remarriage research to create useful preparation. Now the challenge of marriage practitioners and educators is to encourage remarrying individuals to recognize the benefits of remarriage preparation.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval



USU Assurance: FWA#00003308
Protocol # 1750

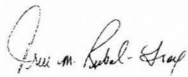
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD OFFICE
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Telephone: (435) 797-1821
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SPO #:
AES #: UTA00

2/12/2007

MEMORANDUM

TO: Brian Higginbotham
Julie Miller

FROM: True M. Rubal-Fox, IRB Administrator 

SUBJECT: Preparation for Remarriage: Utilization of Different Forms and Their Rated Helpfulness

Your proposal has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board and is approved under exemption #4.

- X 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. **Any change in the methods/objectives of the research affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation.** Injuries or any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the IRB Office (797-1821).

The research activities listed below are exempt 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, June 18, 1991.

- Research, involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological
4. 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.

Appendix B

Remarriage Preparation Forms in the Utah Newlywed Study

Appendix C
Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS)

Appendix D

Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS)

Most persons have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list.

	Always agree	Almost always agree	Occasionally agree	Frequently disagree	Almost always disagree	Always disagree
Religious Matters	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0
Demonstration of affection	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0
Making major decisions	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0
Sex relations	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0
Conventionality (correct of proper behavior)	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0
Career decisions	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0

	All the time	Most of the time	More often than not	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship?	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
How often do you and your partner quarrel?	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Do you ever regret that you married (or lived together)?	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
How often do you and your mate "get on each other's nerves"?	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
	Every day	Almost every day	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	
Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	

How often would you say the following occur between you and your mate:

	Never	Less than once a month	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Once a day	More often
Have a stimulating exchange of ideas	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Work together on a project	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Calmly discuss something	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5