

HOW PARENTING STRESS AND DISCOURAGEMENT IMPACTS
FUNCTIONING WITHIN STEPFAMILIES

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The study analyzed how parenting stress and discouragement affect stepfamily functioning. Whether the parent was a biological parent or stepparent, whether the stepparent was a stepmother or stepfather, or whether the marriage had been formed more or less than two years was also considered. One assumption made was that increased parenting stress and discouragement will lead to decreased family functioning. Other assumptions were that there will be more increased parenting stress and discouragement and decreased family functioning found in stepparents than biological parents, in stepmothers more than stepfathers, and in parents in families formed less than two years more than those in families formed more than two years. Complete data was collected from 30 subjects.

Three instruments were used in the study. The Parenting Stress Index measures how much stress parents experience in areas relating to how they see their child and how they see themselves as parents. The Discouragement Scale for Adults was developed to measure the Adlerian concept of discouragement in an adult population. The Family Assessment Device measures how a family functions.

There was no correlation found between total parenting stress, total discouragement, or general functioning in families. There was no difference in results between biological or stepparents, stepmothers or stepfathers, or whether the marriage was formed more than rather than less than two years. A post hoc analysis did find correlations between some of the subscales of the Parenting Stress Index, the Discouragement Scale for Adults, and the Family Assessment Device.

Further research could focus on larger sample sizes and correlation between subscales of the instruments used.

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Chapter 1

Introduction To The Study

The role of the family has traditionally been seen as nurturance and development of the individual. Within a family, members become functioning human beings as children learn skills and develop self-esteem (Swick, 1984). Remarriage creates family relationships within a stepfamily whose members have yet to create interpersonal relationships. Couples voluntarily enter into the relationship but children do so involuntarily (Cissna, Cox, & Bochner, 1990). A child has no choice in assuming the role of stepchild, while a stepparent actively chooses to assume that role. Children may express their feelings about family transitions by behavior they choose to adopt (Cooney, 1994). Family life becomes more complex as new social roles are created. Spouses become stepparents and children become stepchildren, and possibly stepsiblings (MacDonald & DeMaris, 1995, 1996). In a remarriage a new member enters into the family. This new member may be unwelcome by children in a family unit that has already developed a shared history and established roles and relationships. Initial expectations and beliefs about stepfamily life will impact the success of a family. Those remarried families who try to use the first marriage family as a model will experience more problems than those stepfamilies understanding differences that occur naturally in stepfamilies (Heatherington & Jodl, 1994).

The number of stepfamilies in the United States has been growing dramatically. Forty percent of all marriages today are remarriages for at least one partner (Michaels, 2000). About one-third of all people married at this time have been married at least one time previously (Ihinger-Tallman & Pasley, 1997). It has been estimated that by the year

2010 there will be more stepfamilies in America than any other kind of family (Visher & Visher, 1996; Visher, Visher, & Pasley, 1997). Between 50 to 60% of children born in the 1990's will live in a single parent home at some point, typically headed by a mother (Hetherington, Bridges, and Insabella, 1998). Approximately 33% of all children in the United States will live with a stepparent before they are 18 years old (Michaels, 2000; Visher et al., 1997). Over 7 million children are living in stepfamilies today (Fine & Schwebel, 1992; Kelley, 1992). Approximately 57 to 60% of all remarriages end in divorce (Fine, 1986; E. Visher, 1994), meaning that many children will experience another parental divorce (Coleman & Ganong, 1990). Remarriage rates of divorced individuals are 75% for men and 66% for women, indicating that people are not rejecting marriage, but specific marriage partners. With successive marital transitions, about half the children of divorce will have a stepfather within four years and will experience at least two divorces of their residential parent before age 16. African Americans and Hispanics are less likely to divorce after separation than are Whites, so these children spend more time in a single-parent household (Heatherington et al., 1998).

Extremes of adaptability and cohesion within a family have been considered to be unhealthy, with moderate levels of each considered to be evidence of healthy families. Communication is seen as the method by which families develop adaptability and cohesion patterns within families, as healthy families are thought to have high levels of communication (Fisher, Giblin, & Regas, 1983). Stepfamilies may experience lower levels of cohesion and adaptability than nuclear families. This fact could mean that a stepfamily is not as healthy as a nuclear family, but may indicate that patterns of

cohesion and adaptability within stepfamilies are just different, not necessarily worse (Barber & Lyons, 1994; Coleman & Ganong, 1990).

The traditional perception of a stepfamily is one of deficit; the stepfamily is inherently less than a traditional nuclear family (Coleman, Ganong, & Gingrich, 1985; Ganong & Coleman, 1994; Heatherington & Stanley-Hagan, 2000; Visher & Visher, 1990).

Remarriage is seen as an incomplete institution. The idea of incomplete institutionalization refers to the extent that rituals and norms provide structure for interaction between members of a stepfamily (MacDonald & DeMaris, 1995).

Controversy surrounds this continued perception. Some studies have identified difficulties that occur within stepfamilies. Higher levels of conflict between a biological parent, stepparent, and child may be present (Heatherington & Jodl, 1994; Orleans, Palisi, & Caddell, 1989), and relationships between stepparents and stepchildren may have a significant impact upon marital relationships (Fine & Kurdek, 1995; Orleans et al., 1989). Others have found that there is not necessarily any more marital conflict found within remarriages than in first married families. MacDonald and DeMaris (1995) found that there was not any difference in amounts of conflict in families with stepchildren and biological children and those families with just biological children. This was true for conflict within family life and marital life. They did find that there was more conflict in families where there are only stepchildren without joint biological children in a marriage. Even though a lack of norms may lead to confusion in early stepfamily interactions, flexibility that comes from a lack of norms and an ability to creatively meet issues from many different perspectives may provide benefits for new stepfamilies in the beginning. Other studies (Amato, 1994; Furstenberg, 1988; Ganong & Coleman, 1993;

Heatherington et al., 1998; Ihinger-Tallman & Pasley, 1997; Kurdek, 1994; Zill, 1994) have found that any differences between children in a stepfamily as opposed to those in a nuclear family is very small, and that there is no appreciable difference in children growing up in stepfamilies and those in single-parent homes.

Stepfather and stepmother households have been found to be different. Stepfather families make up 80 to 90% of all stepfamily homes as custody has almost always been awarded to biological mothers in divorce settlements (Bray, 1995; Mason & Mauldon, 1996; Orleans et al., 1989). Stepfathers appear to moderate adverse effects of divorce and single parent custody for boys and have been found to develop closer relationships with stepchildren than have stepmothers (Isaacs & Leon, 1988; Coleman & Ganong, 1990). Compared to fathers in never divorced families, stepfathers are more disengaged and authoritative over time (Anderson & White, 1986; Hetherington, 1989; Heatherington & Jodl, 1994; Popenoe, 1994).

There are fewer role models and less social support for stepmothers. Stepmothers are usually expected to enter into a new family and assume child-care and household responsibilities at once. Stepchildren may resist having to choose between two mothers, so will automatically reject a new stepmother out of loyalty to their biological mother (Coleman & Ganong, 1997; Fine & Schwebel, 1992; Salwen, 1990; Visher & Visher, 1996).

Structure of stepfamilies and a lack of clear expectations of what is expected produce an intense emotional atmosphere (E. Visher, 1994). There is often no clear understanding of what role one is to undertake, how to address household members, or

even who is considered to be a part of the family (Fine & Schwebel, 1992; Ganong & Coleman, 1997; Levin & Trost, 2000; Whitsett & Land, 1992a).

Many researchers have come to believe that stepfamilies are not inherently less, just different, and for them to try to be like a nuclear family may be unrealistic and may interfere with natural stepfamily development. When a stepfamily tries to be like a nuclear family, members are disappointed because unrealistic expectations are not met (Fine & Schwebel, 1992; Ganong & Coleman, 1997, Levin & Trost, 2000; Mills, 1984; Papernow, 1993; Visher & Visher, 1988).

Higher levels of stress are found in stepfamilies than within nuclear families. Some researchers found that remarriages are more likely to end in divorce (Fine & Schwebel, 1992; Kelly, 1992), but others have found that there is no more likelihood of divorce in remarried families than other families (E. Visher, 1994). Major stresses found in stepfamilies are the presence of children not biologically related to all family members (Furstenberg, 1988; Heatherington & Jodl, 1994; Mills, 1984; Popenoe, 1994) and the lack of role clarity (Coleman & Ganong, 1997; Roberts & Price, 1989; Visher & Visher, 1996). With stress present in stepfamilies, effective coping strategies become vital. Strategies may change over time as stepfamilies move through developmental stages (Whitsett & Land, 1992b).

Alfred Adler, in proposing his theory of Individual Psychology, saw discouragement as interfering with how one successfully fulfills all of life's tasks. Ignoring strengths and focusing on problems may lead to discouragement in stepfamilies. Once discouraged, members of stepfamilies can no longer identify options and alternatives to problems they are facing (Dreikurs & Mosak, 1966). There has not been an instrument that

measures discouragement in an adult until recently. Jones (1997), Chernin (1997), and Haggren (1997) developed the Discouragement Scale for Adults (DSA) as part of their doctoral dissertations at the University of North Texas. It is now possible to identify areas of discouragement that may be interfering with healthy development and functioning of stepfamilies.

Statement of the Problem

Until an instrument to measure discouragement in adults was developed, it was not possible to determine what impact discouragement has on development and functioning of stepfamilies. It has not been determined how levels of discouragement and parenting stress affect functioning of stepfamilies.

The purpose of this study is to determine how levels of discouragement and stress impact stepfamily functioning, and therefore limit perceived choices and options within the stepfamily population.

Review of Related Literature

This section presents a review of literature related to stepfamilies in general, to stepfamily functioning, to differences between nuclear and stepfamilies, and to stepfamily development. Literature pertaining to concepts of stress and discouragement is also reviewed.

Stepfamilies In General

Divorce has been defined as a social institution in which there is a pattern of behavior that will probably continue to occur over time (Beer, 1992). As the importance of family cohesion has decreased, divorce rates have increased. In society in general there has been a decline in kinship. The industrial revolution moved work from family

produced and centered to a centralized and mechanized endeavor. Home became a place where the focus became more relationship focused than financially focused and motives for marriage became more romantic than financial. As more women began to work outside of the home and to attend college, satisfaction with old sex roles declined. Women had greater economic independence and no longer had to remain in relationships where emotional ties were no longer important. Divorce is now believed to be preferable to remaining in an unsatisfactory relationship. Society seems to value adult freedom and self-centeredness, leading to adult-centered families (Beer, 1992).

One out of three people in the United States is now a member of a stepfamily and one out of two will be a stepparent, stepchild, or stepsibling during their lifetime (Popenoe, 1994). Half of all first marriages end in divorce, and if data about couples that separate but never divorce is added, the rate of marital dissolution reaches 60% of all first marriages (Heatherington & Jodl, 1994). In households with minor children, more than one-fifth of the households include a stepparent (Mason & Mauldon, 1996). Divorce occurs 10% more often in remarriages than in first marriages (Hetherington et al., 1998). Divorce in remarriages occurs earlier in a marriage, within five years versus seven years in first marriages (Papernow, 1993). Divorce rates of remarried women under the age of 40 years old are more than 62%. The rate of divorce increases as the number of children in families increases (Popenoe, 1994).

Seventy-five percent of men and 66% of women remarry after divorce. As successive marriages occur, one-half of children of divorce will have a stepfather within four years. Many of these children will experience a second parental divorce before they reach sixteen years of age (Heatherington et al., 1998). About 50% of new stepfamilies

are blended families, with children from former relationships of both husband and wife. Over half of these families will have children together, which adds half siblings to the family (Heatherington & Stanley-Hagan, 2000).

Although there is an increase in the number of remarriages occurring after divorce, rates of remarriage after divorce are decreasing slightly. There may be a greater financial motive to remarry for women than men. Economic survival may contribute to decisions to remarry for many women. Women who are employed, financially secure, and well-educated remarry at a lesser rate than women who are financially insecure (Ganong & Coleman, 1994).

Approximately 80% of all stepfamilies are made up of stepfather/custodial mother configuration. Thirteen percent of stepfamilies consist of stepmother/custodial father, and fewer than 10% are made up of complex stepfamilies (Mason & Mauldon, 1996).

Although there are similar levels of marital satisfaction found in first married couples and remarried couples, the divorce rate is greater for those remarried couples. Booth and Edwards (1992) found some variables that may impact the divorce rate for remarried couples. Individuals in remarried relationships are often more isolated than those in first marriages. Attitudes of those in remarriages are more likely to be more favorable to the idea of divorce, in women more so than men. A first marriage occurring before the age of 20 appears to be found more frequently in remarried individuals versus those still in a first marriage. Remarried individuals overall have lower occupational status and education. These attributes, which contribute to deterioration of marital quality and stability, are found in higher numbers in those remarriages where both individuals have been previously married and divorced. Over an extended period

people in a remarriage were more likely to report a decline in marital quality and were more likely to be thinking about divorce and discussing marital problems with others. It may be possible that it takes less of a decline in marital quality for divorce to occur for remarried individuals than those in a first marriage (Booth & Edwards, 1992).

Negative Perceptions of Stepfamilies

Popular thought in today's society considers a nuclear family to be a traditional family, with all others as non-traditional or alternative. This viewpoint perpetuates beliefs that stepfamilies are not as good as nuclear families (Ganong & Coleman, 1994; Heatherington & Stanley-Hagan, 2000). When biological parents are described as real or natural, one may conclude that all non-biological parents (including step, adoptive, or foster) are unreal or unnatural. If nuclear families are normal, real, or traditional then other types of families are considered abnormal, unreal, or non-traditional. Language used in this manner may make it more difficult for family members in non-nuclear families to develop positive identities and satisfying relationships (Ganong & Coleman, 1997; Michaels, 2000).

Stepfamilies find not only is there little support for them in social institutions, but often barriers are present. Stepparents who want to be involved with the educational process of their stepchildren find that schools make little allowances for the presence of stepparents. Exclusion from these social institutions provides a constant reminder that society views stepfamilies as deficient in some manner. Some stepfamilies pretend to be nuclear families in order to be accepted, but that puts added pressure on relationships in a stepfamily to imitate nuclear family relationships. In order for a stepfamily to become a nuclear family, the other biological parent has to be erased from

the picture. Prior relationships must be forgotten as if they never happened and stepfamilies must act as if everything that happened before remarriage did not happen. Former spouses and their families must give up all contact with children, leading to emotional losses for both adults and children. Non-custodial biological parents usually do not want to give up parental rights to their children, and stepparents usually do not want to adopt stepchildren, making attempts to appear as a nuclear family fraught with problems (Ganong & Coleman, 1997).

There are no labels for relationships between ex-spouses and present spouses, or between current spouses of a divorced couple. When there are no terms for a relationship, it may be the relationship is not supposed to exist. If a relationship is not supposed to exist, cooperation is unlikely to occur. Children will have less difficulty and greater adjustment when family members in each family communicate and cooperate with each other in parenting matters (Ganong & Coleman, 1997).

Stepfamily members are stereotyped within society. Stepmothers are perceived more negatively than mothers in a nuclear family. Stepmothers are seen to have more negative characteristics, such as being unkind or unreasonable, and as not being interested in or skilled in raising children. They are also seen as having fewer positive characteristics than mothers in nuclear families. This stereotyping of stepmothers may be particularly difficult for them because women often define themselves and are defined by others on the basis of marital and parental status. Stepfathers are seen more negatively than fathers in nuclear families, but not as negatively as stepmothers. Stepchildren are seen as neglected and unloved, a view that will continue as long as

society continues to use the term “stepchild” to mean something that is neglected (Ganong & Coleman, 1997).

Stepfamilies as a whole are viewed in more negative terms than nuclear families (Ganong & Coleman, 1997; Heatherington & Stanley-Hagan, 2000). Popular literature and movies have portrayed stepfamilies as more problematic and have neglected to show strengths stepfamilies possess. Some myths about stepfamilies have impacted how society views stepfamilies. Some of the most prevalent myths include: “(a) stepchildren resent and dislike their stepparents, (b) stepchildren have more problems than other children, (c) stepfamilies are just like other families, (d) stepparents and stepchildren never can learn to love each other, (e) adoption turns stepfamilies into normal families, and (f) children should be loyal to one mother and one father only” (Ganong & Coleman, 1997, p. 98). The myth of the evil stepmother is in direct opposition to the myth that stepparents should immediately love their stepchildren (Salwen, 1990). The multitude of myths that abound about stepfamilies, and general acceptance of many of them, increases confusion and frustration that members of stepfamilies often experience early in stepfamily development. The belief in the myth of instant love on the part of stepparent may lead stepparents to feel guilty when that does not happen. They may try to force a relationship instead of letting it develop at the child’s pace. There is pressure placed on stepfamily members to automatically and instantly love strangers (Ganong & Coleman, 1997).

Stepfamily Functioning

“Stepfamilies do not represent a mutation from normal life, but rather life itself” (Carlson, 1995, p. vii). Functional stepfamilies have been found to be similar overall to

functional nuclear families in that both exhibit good marital adjustment (Anderson & White, 1986; Fine & Kurdek, 1995). A variety of responses of family members to divorce and remarriage can be found within a family. Most members will experience distress and disruption of functioning at first, but will recover within the first two to three years. Others may have extreme and enduring problems related to healthy functioning. Still others may appear to adapt but experience delayed reactions to transitions within the family. There is a minority of adult and family members who will cope well with changes that occur during divorce and remarriage (Hetherington, 1989; E. Visher, 1994).

Many researchers look at stepfamilies that have been together at least two years, assuming that most stepfamilies will begin to function better after that amount of time has passed (Anderson & White, 1986; Fine & Kurdek, 1995; Hetherington, 1989; Visher & Visher, 1988). Like all families, stepfamilies are continually changing (Papernow, 1984, 1993). Nothing can be taken for granted within stepfamily relationships, especially early in family development. There will be outsiders trying to join with insiders, preexisting alliances between children and parents, and constant movement as children come and go between households. The structure of stepfamilies creates a tense emotional climate and illuminates reactions of family members. Relationships are developed under a microscope (E. Visher, 1994). Children may be facing normal developmental challenges at the same time they are experiencing family transitions such as divorce or remarriage. Adjustments of parents and children may be more difficult as a family experiences more instability (Heatherington & Stanley-Hagan, 2000). Presence of stepchildren within a remarried household is considered to be the most stressful and problematic issue of the family. Stepchildren are a destabilizing force

within a stepfamily, with a higher rate of divorce among couples with stepchildren than those without stepchildren (Ganong & Coleman, 1994).

Unrealistic expectations prevent open communication and lead to denial of conflicts and problems. Families may avoid talking about problems, so problems remain unresolved. Everyone in a stepfamily brings expectations into relationships based upon past experiences. Add to this the cultural expectations about remarriage and step-parenting, and family members are not even aware of many competing desires, expectations, and wishes under the surface (Ganong & Coleman, 1997).

John Visher (1994) identified some basic human needs which initially may not be met within a stepfamily: acceptance and love, maintenance of secure attachments to individuals special to the child, belonging to a group (not to be a stranger), and personal control and autonomy. Stepparents and biological parents may feel torn between new partners and children. Stepparents may experience continued hostility from stepchildren and children may feel pulled between two households as they react to losses they are experiencing.

There have been some patterns noted about stepparent adjustment. Gender of stepparent and stepchild, type of stepfamily, and length of time a stepfamily has been formed appear to impact adjustment within a family. Stepmothers have more difficulty with adjustment than do stepfathers. Stepparents who are in complex stepfamilies have more problems adjusting to life changes than do stepparents who are in simple stepfamilies (Fine & Schwebel, 1992).

Norms have begun to be developed about expectations of stepparent roles, especially for stepfathers. Stepfathers are expected to be less involved with

stepchildren early in a remarriage. Stepparent behaviors are more similar to that of biological parent behaviors when stepchildren are younger at the time of remarriage. Many beliefs about stepparent roles are formed early in the remarriage and usually remain stable over time. There is less closeness in stepfamilies and time is needed to develop a sense of stepfamily cohesion (Ihinger-Tallman & Pasley, 1997).

The Developmental Issues in Stepfamilies Research Project found most difficulties in children ages 6-8 in families remarried for 6 months and children ages 11-14 in stepfamilies together for 5-7 years. Early stressful transitions to stepfamily life were a source of problems in younger children, while problems of older children were related to transitions into adolescence, parenting problems, and unresolved issues of the initial divorce (Bray, 1995).

Marital satisfaction is related to ways in which couples interact around issues of stepfather or stepmother families, residential or nonresidential children, and simple or complex stepfamily structures. Beliefs about stepparent roles, agreement on child rearing practices, and an ability to work out a mutually satisfying stepparent/stepchild relationship have been found to impact marital satisfaction in stepfamilies (Ihinger-Tallman & Pasley, 1997). Over time marital satisfaction is the same in remarried and non-divorced couples. There is a decline in marital satisfaction in both groups as children move into adolescence (Heatherington & Jodl, 1994).

Stepfamily adjustment and marital satisfaction can be fostered if a stepparent and stepchild work out a mutually satisfying relationship, regardless of whether a relationship is close or distant. Both stepmothers and stepfathers have reported less interaction and less feelings of warmth for stepchildren as compared to biological

children. Stepmothers experience more difficulty overall with stepparent/stepchild roles whether there was a great deal of time spent in the parenting role or not much time at all. Stepdaughters present a great challenge, with evidence suggesting that girls in stepmother families are at greater risk for emotional or behavioral problems (Ihinger-Tallman, M. & Pasley, K., 1997).

Divorce and remarriage are part of a complex sequence of transitions in household structures and family relationships. Multiple divorces and remarriages increase difficulties children experience (Booth A. & Amato, P., 1991). Parent-child relationships are disrupted and more conflicted during early stages of marital transitions, whether a divorce or remarriage. Parenting in stepfamilies is often less authoritative than in non-divorced first families. Relationships between biological parents and children become more like those found in non-divorced first families over time. With the exception of remarriages occurring when a child is in early adolescence, there are more similarities than differences in parenting styles of custodial biological parents in remarried and non-divorced families. The relationship between stepparents and stepchildren remains more disengaged even over time (Heatherington & Jodl, 1994).

Early in a remarriage, stepfathers may try to develop a close relationship with stepchildren. After frequent rebuffs and distancing behavior, most stepfathers no longer try to have a warm relationship with their stepchildren. A closer stepfather-stepson relationship may develop if a remarriage has taken place when a child is young (Heatherington & Jodl, 1994).

Data obtained in the 1987-1988 National Survey of Families and Households found some patterns emerging for stepfather/custodial mother configurations (Mason and

Mauldon 1996). There was little evidence of absent biological parents providing much financial or other help to their children. About one-third of all custodial parents received any child support or alimony, and this was a small amount compared to the cost of raising a child. Contact between non-custodial parent and child was very limited. About half of the children saw their non-custodial parent less than once a year. About 28% of non-custodial fathers saw their children at least once a month, with 15% seeing their children once a week or more (Mason & Mauldon, 1996). There is more contact between the non-custodial father and child when there is low conflict between divorced spouses. Despite the fact that children are more able to adapt to family transitions when parents are cooperative and non-confrontational in co-parenting relationships, only about one fourth of divorced parents develop such relationships. Another one fourth have acrimonious relationships. Non-custodial mothers are more likely to sustain contact with their children, about twice as much contact as non-custodial fathers. They are less likely to completely drop out of their children's lives (Hetherington et al., 1998; Pasley & Dollahite, 1995). Adjustment of children in families of divorce is dependent upon adults in at least two households operating cooperatively in their relationships with children. This cooperation has been found to be more important than custody arrangements or time spent in each home (Papernow, 1993).

Non-custodial fathers decrease their involvement with their children following a divorce, and this involvement decreases even further following remarriage of a custodial parent. Involvement with a non-custodial parent is important for adolescents as they struggle with identity issues (Bray, 1995). While remarriage of a biological mother decreases contact between children and their biological father, the most prevalent style

of parenting by a stepfather is one of disengagement. The result is often less male adult support for children (Popenoe, 1994). In those rare instances when children do live with their biological fathers, non-custodial mothers usually continue to stay more involved with their children. Non-custodial mothers still monitor behavior of children and take part in child rearing tasks. As adults, children who grew up in a stepmother home will be more likely to have similar relationships with both mother and stepmother, while adults who grew up in a stepfather home will view their relationship with their stepfather more positively than that with their biological father. It appears that a longer period of co-residency and shared history allows bonds to develop between stepfathers and stepchildren (Selzer, 1994).

Stepparents may expect to have some authority and control within a new family, but establishing a relationship with stepchildren before attempting to enter into a disciplinary role will possibly alleviate some resentment and conflict that can arise (Orleans et al., 1989; E. Visher, 1994; Visher & Visher, 1990). A stepmother may experience frustration when she is expected, and expects herself, to take a disciplinarian role within a new family. She will have little authority with the children until a relationship has developed where children care about pleasing her. Biological parents of children need to remain in the role of disciplinarian until that time. A stepparent can slowly move into that role as a respectful relationship develops between a stepparent and stepchild (Visher & Visher, 1996). There is an increased likelihood that stepchildren will be withdrawn or hostile to a residential stepmother if a biological father becomes less involved with discipline and if the non-custodial mother is an involved parent (Heatherington & Stanley-Hagan, 2000).

There appears to be more permeability of boundaries between stepparent-stepchild subsystems and marital subsystems in a stepfamily than there is between parent-child subsystems. Stepparents may transfer negative feelings from stepparent-stepchild subsystems to marital subsystems, impacting levels of marital satisfaction. Biological parents may see difficulties as separate from parent-child relationships while stepparents see problems as related to stepparent-stepchild relationships (Fine & Kurdek, 1995).

Adjustment of Stepfamily Members

Many disappointments, misunderstandings, and irritations that occur early in remarriages with stepchildren are associated with unrealistic expectations couples often have about marriage. Fewer norms have been developed to guide stepfamily members in establishing relationships within a new family. Space within a household can become an issue of conflict as more than one household moves into an area that belonged to just one household previously (MacDonald & DeMaris, 1995). High and unrealistic expectations increase difficulties in being a parent to a child of someone else.

Stepmothers and stepfathers view stepfamilies differently, and residential stepparents view stepfamilies differently than stepparents who have occasional visits from stepchildren (Coleman & Ganong, 1997).

The most difficult role appears to be that of stepmothers (Heatherington & Stanley-Hagan, 2000), whether they are residential stepmothers who have a major parenting responsibility or nonresidential stepmothers who are occasionally visited by stepchildren. Many cultures have stereotyped the role of mother as positive, while the role of stepmother is stereotyped as less family oriented, less interested in children, and

unskilled in parental duties. Because most stepfamilies are formed by divorce, stepmothers of today are often seen as a supplement, an extra mother. There may be competition between biological mothers and stepmothers over the right to parent children (Coleman & Ganong, 1997).

Stepmothers who bring their own children to a remarriage often experience even more stress than those women who enter into a stepfamily without biological children. They may perceive their husband's preferential treatment of stepchildren or mutual children over their biological children. Stepmothers may be expected to assume parental and disciplinary roles immediately, often with differing values and expectations found within a couple. When there is little support from a spouse for her actions within these roles, a stepmother is unlikely to receive support from any other source, including her children. Stepfamilies, as viewed by stepmothers, provide little positive reinforcement and present challenges that may be beyond their capabilities (Coleman & Ganong, 1997). Stepmothers experience more difficulty with stepparent roles if they have biological children. This is true whether biological children are from a previous marriage or present marriage. Coleman and Ganong (1997) found that stepmothers found little satisfaction in stepmother roles or their performance of it. The most positive reaction to a stepmother role was that of ambiguity, with several stepmothers stating that they hated being stepmothers.

Stepfathers fit into a family more easily. When stepfathers interact infrequently with stepchildren, there is less likely to be conflict within a family. If stepfathers attempt to interact with their stepchildren, and are rejected, they distance themselves from their stepchildren. It has been found that when stepfathers quit trying so hard, a more

satisfying relationship may develop over time (Coleman & Ganong, 1997). Stepfamilies are found to be less cohesive but more adaptable than the overall population.

Stepfamilies with lower cohesion have been found to be more satisfied than those trying to act more cohesively. Stepfamily members were also more satisfied with more adaptability within a family than those in first marriages (Papernow, 1993). Children in stepfamilies may experience positive or negative feelings toward stepparents. Some children see stepparents as consultants who have enriched their lives. Loyalty conflicts lead others to feel guilt and anxiety when they begin to have positive feelings about stepparents. Almost all stepchildren, regardless of relationships with stepparents, prefer discipline to be administered by biological parents. They also resent new household rules and their lack of input into changes made in households. If a stepchild decides to dislike, ignore, or disregard a stepparent, there is little that parents or stepparents can do about it. Stepchildren will view each attempt to be reached as negative (Coleman & Ganong, 1997).

There is debate about how large are differences between children of divorce and remarriage and those children who have not experienced divorce. It has been estimated that approximately 20-25% of children in divorced and remarried families experience problems versus 10% of children in nuclear families who experience problems. Although this is a twofold increase, it is important to note that the vast majority of children from divorced families and stepfamilies do not experience problems. Most children cope with divorce and remarriage of their parents. Many problems that were found in children whose parents divorced were present in the child before a divorce took place. It is likely that unhealthy family relationships have already had an impact on adjustment of

children before a divorce occurs. Children who are experiencing problems before a divorce and remarriage are likely to find these problems exacerbated following family transitions (Heatherington et al., 1998; Heatherington & Stanley-Hagan, 2000, Ganong & Coleman, 1986). Moving from a highly conflicted situation, whether a first family to divorce or a single-parent family, to a stepfamily that can be a more stable environment may improve the adjustment and well being of children involved (Heatherington & Stanley-Hagan, 2000).

Behavior problems are sometimes noted, especially in families where a Gaepchild is a girl. Problems with boys found early in a remarriage appear to moderate over time. An explanation for differences between girl and boy reactions to stepfather interventions may be related to the type of mother-child relationship that existed before remarriage. Sons are often in conflict with a single mother, so may see the introduction of a stepfather as a situation where they have nothing to loose. Girls will often develop a more responsible, powerful role in a single household, and may perceive a stepfather as a threat to their independence and relationship with their mother (Barber & Lyons, 1994; Hetherington, 1989). It has recently been found that there is not as much gender difference in adjustment as was previously thought. This may be somewhat attributed to an increase in father custody, joint custody, and increased involvement of non-custodial fathers in lives of their children (Hetherington et al., 1998).

Early adolescence is an especially difficult time for remarriage to occur. Adolescents appear to be less able to adapt to changes than children at other ages. Problems may emerge or increase at adolescence or young adulthood even if divorce and remarriage occurred much earlier (Hetherington et al., 1998). Conflict increases between

stepfathers and stepdaughters when a child reaches adolescence. Developing a close stepparent/stepchild relationship is difficult, but may be almost impossible if remarriage occurs when a child is entering adolescence (Heatherington & Jodl, 1994). Intimacy and closeness may get confused with sexuality in stepfamilies. Stepparents are unsure what kinds of affection and bonding are appropriate with stepchildren. When these issues are discussed openly, stepfamily members can feel more comfortable in forming closer relationships with each other (Bray, 1995). Heatherington and Stanley-Hagan (2000) found that there is little difference in parenting between biological parents in first married families or long established stepparents except for those who had children in early adolescence at the time of remarriage.

Barber and Lyons (1994) found that adolescents in remarried families experienced more depression, were more worried, and had lower self-esteem than adolescents from nuclear families. Findings were not at a clinically significant level. Adolescents in first married families reported less negative and more positive feelings than adolescents in remarried families. Adolescents whose parents are divorced are reported to have more concerns about being able to establish a stable marriage and family life. They are more likely to become sexually active sooner, give birth outside of marriage, get married earlier, and get divorced more often than adolescents who are part of a nuclear family (Spruijt & de Goede, 1997). Increased levels of conflict impacted adjustment in adolescents whether family structure was a remarried family or a first married family (Barber & Lyons, 1994).

Children, adolescents, and adults from divorced and remarried families are at greater risk for developing adjustment problems, and multiple divorces increase the risk.

Children are more likely to experience academic problems and to be less socially responsible and competent. Adolescents from divorced families have greater difficulty with normative developmental tasks such as establishing intimate relationships and increasing social and economic autonomy. Adult children are more likely to have adjustment problems, are less satisfied with life, and experience lower economic success. It is more likely there will be marital instability, with divorce within the first five years of marriage reported to be 70% higher for women from divorced families than those whose parents have never divorced (Hetherington et al., 1998). Family members are a main source of identity and social support for many people and are seen as a first line of support in emergency situations. This perceived source of social support could be less in stepfamilies. There is a significant decrease in support for children whose parents have divorced. This support is not impacted positively or negatively when a parent remarries (White, 1994).

Stepfamily and Nuclear Family Differences

The complexity of stepfamilies contributes to difficulties in studying close relationships within a family. Just defining who should be included in a study is problematic. According to Ganong and Coleman (1994), there is a possibility of 22 dyadic relationships in a stepfamily when divorced parents remarry spouses who already have children. Children do not necessarily consider all household participants in a stepfamily to be family members. They may include people not living the household, such as a biological parent (Ritala-Koskinen, 1997).

There are basic differences in structures of stepfamilies and first married families. Many losses have occurred before formation of a stepfamily. A divorce or death will

have been part of previous experiences. Children may feel they have lost their family. Children will have also lost attention they have received from a parent that now goes to a new spouse. Losses need to be recognized and the past let go of before members can fully appreciate positives in a new family (Visher & Visher, 1996).

In a stepfamily, family members come together from possibly very different family and marital experiences. Instead of coming together single and without children, as in a first marriage, there are previous relationships and children already present at the beginning of a relationship. Historically, a more ordinary pattern is of a couple getting married and having a period of time for adjustment. Stepfamily adjustment occurs after the formation of a family. Adjustment is condensed into a short period of time. Parental remarriage requires acceptance of a role of stepparent at the same time as that of a spouse. Parent-child relationships predate a new relationship between marital couples. Preexisting bonds between parents and children may make it more difficult for bonds between couples to be developed. There may also be difficulty in forming a child-stepparent bond (Visher & Visher, 1996). How a relationship develops between adults and eventual acceptance of changes in a family by children are significant factors in healthy family functioning (Heatherington & Stanley-Hagan, 2000; Visher & Visher, 1996). Another biological parent is present in stepfamilies, in either another household or in the memory of children. The presence of possibly three or four parental figures to choose between is a problematic issue for children after divorce and remarriage. Children who are encouraged to form good relationships with all adult parental figures will find it easier to negotiate the trap of loyalty conflicts (Visher & Visher, 1996).

A New Look at Stepfamilies

Recent research proposes an alternative to the deficit model; the idea that stepfamilies function effectively in a variety of adaptive ways that may be different from a nuclear family (Coleman et al., 1985; Orleans et al., 1989). Remarriage may solve more problems than it causes. Parents may find companionship, shared responsibilities, and more financial security (Hobart, 1989). It is possible that stepfamilies function better when there is a mutual child in the family. Time and patience were also found to improve stepfamily functioning (Kelley, 1992). Children and adults within stepfamilies often feel helpless and overwhelmed. Knowledge of what can and cannot be controlled within another household and an ability to give up trying to control what cannot be controlled can provide impetus to work within areas of influence and provide more order and predictability within households (Visher & Visher, 1996).

Stepfamilies who have been in therapy have identified personal and family validation, as well as knowledge a therapist has about stepfamily development as important to successful therapy outcomes. Strengthening marital relationships and normalizing family experiences, as well as education about what to expect, were also identified as helpful for clients. It will be important for family members to recognize that stepfamilies bring together people who have had different experiences and heredity (Michaels, 2000; E. Visher, 1994; Visher & Visher, 1990). Parent/child alliance brought into a stepfamily must be preserved, but couple alliances, of much shorter duration, must be strengthened for family preservation. Since adults should be in charge of families, smooth functioning as a team is necessary for a strong family unit (Visher & Visher, 1996).

Visher and Visher (1990) have stated that there are six characteristics found in the adults in a stepfamily that have been associated with satisfactory adjustment within stepfamilies. Each adult member will have mourned losses and be ready to move into a new pattern of life. Losses might include loss of a previous marital relationship for someone who is divorced. A spouse who has never been married will need to mourn the loss of a marriage that does not involve stepchildren and a former spouse. Adults entering into a new marriage will have realistic expectations. They will not expect a stepfamily to be like a first married family. When a stepfamily is identified as successful, there is usually a strong and unified couple in the lead. Adults in the family will have recognized the need to nourish marital relationships so that there will be a sense of security for children (Visher & Visher, 1990).

New traditions and rituals will aid development of a stepfamily. It will be helpful to continue with previous traditions and rituals, if possible, but to include new ones. Flexibility and creativity are often found in a successful stepfamily. Connection between step-relations does not just happen. Time and patience are required to develop these bonds. Adults from both households who will be willing to develop a cooperative relationship in dealing with shared care of their children have more satisfaction within a stepfamily environment. Children are not caught in the middle and can freely go between households (Visher & Visher, 1990).

Kelley (1992) asked stepfamilies who had presented for counseling and some stepfamilies who had not been in counseling what were some important characteristics needed for healthy stepfamily functioning. They identified flexibility, respect, patience, support systems, communication, and fun and humor as important ingredients for

healthy functioning within stepfamilies. They also stated that it is important not to have stronger coalitions across generational boundaries than within generations.

Cissna et al., (1990) identified two tasks of new stepfamilies. First is to establish within minds of children the solidarity of marital relationships. Some family members may perceive the situation to be marriage against kids. The second task is to establish a stepparent's credibility as a parental authority. These tasks are interactive and need to be negotiated simultaneously. Visher & Visher (1990) concurred with this view, adding that a new family unit must develop a sense of membership within its members.

Stress and Discouragement

Research has found there are higher levels of stress noted in stepfamilies as compared to nuclear families (Fine & Schwebel, 1992; Heatherington & Jodl, 1994; Waldren, Bell, Peek, & Sorell, 1990; Whitsett & Land, 1992a). Even though biological parents experience stress within a stepfamily, a stepparent apparently faces even more stress. There are often daily conflicts that cumulatively result in more stress and strain on a stepfamily (Booth & Edwards, 1992; Whitsett & Land, 1992b). A major stress identified in stepfamilies was presence of children who are not biological children of both parents (Furstenberg, 1988; Ganong & Coleman, 1994; Heatherington & Stanley-Hagen, 2000; Mills, 1984; Visher & Visher, 1996; Whitsett & Land, 1992a). Another cause of stress is related to the need to clarify roles and to establish stepfamily boundaries separate from biological family boundaries (Papernow, 1993; Roberts & Price, 1989; Visher & Visher, 1996; Zeppa & Norem, 1993). Boundary ambiguity has been related to higher levels of stress (Berry, 1990). Zeppa and Norem (1993) found that stepfamilies did not identify greater levels of stress within families than nuclear

families. Stepfamilies did not differ significantly from nuclear families in levels of disturbance caused by family life events. It has been suggested that after demographic variables are controlled for, there is little difference between functioning abilities of stepfamilies as compared to nuclear families, which is possibly a testimony to the resiliency of stepfamilies (Fine & Schwebel, 1992; Heatherington et al., 1998; Heatherington & Stanley-Hagan, 2000). Stepfamilies who were subjects in Fine and Schwebel's (1992) study had been married for an average of 14 years, so may not be representative of those in early years of stepfamily formation. The length of time that a stepfamily has been constituted appears to moderate levels of stress. Fine and Schwebel (1992) noted that stepparents in a stepfamily for 2 ½ to 7 years have less difficulty with discipline and are more accepting of family members, though when children enter adolescence functioning of families may decline.

Alfred Adler, in his theory of Individual Psychology, proposed that everyone living on this planet is involved in satisfying five life tasks: work (productivity), society (friendships), self-significance (one's relationship to one's self), spirituality (relationship one has to the universe or cosmos), and sex or love (intimate relationships) (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956; Nystul, 1989). The task of love has been identified as one task that many people do not ever satisfactorily fulfill. Love and marriage has not been seen as urgent; it can be avoided and people can still live. Intimacy of love and sex requires a closeness and cooperation that may not be called for in tasks of work and society (Dreikurs & Mosak, 1966). We are all interdependent as we try to fulfill the task of love (Mosak, 1989). Attempts to fulfill this task of love will propel individuals from one

relationship, or marriage, to another until an environment that will further one's life is found (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956).

Discrepancies experienced by parents or stepparents between what was expected and what actually is happening may possibly result in discouragement (Mosak, 1989). Discouragement will result in individuals losing confidence in the ability to be successful (Lazarsfeld, 1991). When one is discouraged, alternatives and solutions to one's problems are not easily found (Dinkmeyer & Dreikurs, 1963). This lack of vision can have a profound impact on the ability of a stepfamily to function in a healthy manner. Ignoring strengths and focusing on problems may change a stepfamily's perceptions. Things that were not seen as problems may now become areas of concern. Discouragement can occur if focus is on problems instead of on identifying strengths (Coleman et al., 1985; Kelly 1992).

Living demands courage, the willingness to take risks when consequences are either not known or may be unpleasant (Mosak, 1989), as well as the courage to be imperfect (Lazarsfeld, 1991). Encouragement within families helps parents to improve relationships with their children. An atmosphere of cooperation results as democracy increases. Encouragement becomes a circular process. A sense of belonging and of being worthwhile increase as people are encouraged within an atmosphere of cooperation. People then have increased courage to participate and belong in society, which leads to more involvement and encouragement (Meredith & Evans, 1990). Stepfamily members can begin to function in ways that will more readily meet the needs of each family member.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine how levels of discouragement and parenting stress impact functioning within a stepfamily. Perceived choices and options of stepfamilies may seem limited as levels of discouragement and parenting stress increases.

Chapter 2

Methods

The researcher attempted to determine how parenting stress and discouragement affect family functioning within stepfamilies. She used the Discouragement Scale for Adults, the Parenting Stress Index, and the Family Assessment Device in her research.

Research Questions

There has not been an instrument available to measure discouragement in adults until now, so the effect of discouragement upon functioning of stepfamilies has not been explored. Literature reflects the belief of some authors that parenting stress is a major reason for the failure of some stepfamilies (Fine & Kurdek, 1995). This researcher looked at dimensions of discouragement and parenting stress, and how they impact stepfamily functioning. This study addressed the following research questions.

1. How is family functioning affected by discouragement and stress that parents experience within a stepfamily?
2. Do levels of discouragement and parenting stress affect biological parents differently than stepparent?
3. Do levels of discouragement and parenting stress affect stepfathers differently than stepmothers?
4. Do levels of discouragement and parenting stress affect stepfamilies that have been together less than two years differently than those stepfamilies that have been together more than two years?

Hypotheses

In an effort to answer the above research questions, the researcher formulated 12 hypotheses.

1. Subjects with increased parenting stress as measured by the Parenting Stress Index (PSI; Abidin, 1990) will experience increased discouragement as measured by the Discouragement Scale for Adults (DSA; Chernin, 1997; Haggan, 1997; Jones, 1997).

2. Subjects with increased parenting stress as measured by the PSI will have decreased family functioning as measured by the Family Assessment Device (FAD; Epstein, Baldwin, & Bishop, 1983).

3. Subjects with increased discouragement as measured by the DSA will have decreased family functioning as measured by the FAD.

4. There will be no difference in levels of discouragement as measured by the DSA between biological parents and stepparents.

5. There will be no difference in levels of parenting stress as measured by the PSI between biological parents and stepparents.

6. There will be no difference in levels of family functioning as measured by the FAD between biological parents and stepparents.

7. There will be no difference in levels of discouragement as measured by the DSA in stepmothers and stepfathers.

8. There will be no difference in levels of parenting stress as measured by the PSI in stepmothers and stepfathers.

9. There will be no difference in levels of family functioning as measured by the FAD in stepmothers and stepfathers.

10. There will be no difference in levels of discouragement as measured by the DSA between parents in stepfamilies that have been formed less than two years and parents in stepfamilies formed more than two years.

11. There will be no difference in levels of parenting stress as measured by the PSI between parents in stepfamilies who have been formed less than two years and parents in stepfamilies formed more than two years.

12. There will be no difference in levels of family functioning as measured by the FAD between parents in stepfamilies formed less than two years and parents in stepfamilies formed more than two years.

Definition of Terms

Several terms have restricted meaning for this study.

Simple Stepfamily: Only one parent has children from prior relationships.

Complex Stepfamily: Both parents in the home have children from a prior relationship.

First Married Family/Nuclear Family: Both parents in the home have not been married before and have no children from a previous relationship.

Discouragement: A lack of courage an individual exhibits when attempting to meet the challenges of the five life tasks identified in Adlerian literature as work, love, society, self-significance, and spirituality. Operationally defined, discouragement is the score a subject obtained on the Discouragement Scale for Adults (DSA; Chernin, 1997; Haggan, 1997; Jones, 1997), with higher scores indicating more discouragement.

Parenting Stress: The emotional upset experienced by parents as a result of the parenting experience. Operationally, parenting stress is the score obtained on the Parenting Stress Index (PSI; Abidin, 1990), with higher scores indicating more stress.

Family Functioning: The ability of a family to operate in a manner which allows each member to grow and develop to one's greatest potential while continuing to be a healthy family unit. Operationally defined, family functioning is the score obtained on the Family Assessment Device (FAD; Epstein et al., 1983), with higher scores indicating lower levels of family functioning.

Subjects

Subjects were recruited from churches, community agencies, master's level counseling classes, and word of mouth in Texas and other southern states. The requirement for participation in the study was that a stepfamily be a simple stepfamily in structure. The researcher strived to recruit approximately 30 stepparents for this study. The researcher attempted to recruit an ethnically diverse population. No one was excluded from the study on the basis of race, religion, or ethnicity.

Instruments

Several instruments were used in this study. They included a demographic questionnaire, the Discouragement Scale for Adults, the Parenting Stress Index, and the Family Assessment Device.

The demographic questionnaire asked for information about the individual and the stepfamily (See Appendix A). Each individual was asked age, sex, occupation, ethnicity, and whether he or she is a biological parent or stepparent. Other questions were asked about the structure of the family, whether a simple stepfamily, a complex stepfamily, or

a first family, but only information from simple stepfamilies was used for this study. Information was obtained about length of time in the present marriage, quality of the present marriage, marital state before the present marriage, and length of time in a single parent home, if applicable. Questions were also asked about the number, age, and sex of any children living in the home for at least 50% of the time, as well as those children who live in the home for less than 50% of the time. Information was obtained about the quality of the parent/child relationship for children living in the home at least 50% of the time, and those living in the home less than 50% of the time. Information about type of custody arrangement was obtained, as well as about frequency of visits of those children living in the home less than 50% of the time. Information about educational level and annual income was also requested.

Discouragement Scale for Adults

The Discouragement Scale for Adults (DSA) was developed as part of dissertations done by Chernin, Haggan, and Jones at the University of North Texas. The instrument was developed to provide a method of assessment of the Adlerian concept of discouragement in adults over the age of 18 years. The DSA is a paper and pencil 60-item instrument that takes about 15 to 20 minutes to complete (see Appendix C). The DSA consists of five subscales that correspond to the five life tasks identified in Adlerian literature as work (productivity), love (intimate relationships), society (social relationships), self-significance (one's relationship with self), and spirituality (one's relationship with the cosmos or a higher power). The items were selected based on ratings by five notable Adlerians and item correlations with subscale and total scale scores. Scores are obtained for a Total DSA and for the five subscales. Factor analysis

indicated five factors present with underlying dimensions related to the five life tasks.

Scores for Total DSA range from Low Discouragement at 60 to High Discouragement at 300. Subscale scores range from Low Discouragement at 12 to High Discouragement at 60.

Norms were established with a group of 586 subjects who were diverse in age, gender, and ethnicity. Further normative information was developed with a presumably discouraged population (N=46). Additional normative information has been developed with parents of children with a craniofacial anomaly (N=105) and college students aged 18-27 years old (n=523) (Jones & Haggan, 1996). Normative information was also developed with a presumed discouraged population (N=46) (Chernin, 1997).

Internal consistency was calculated using Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha. Correlations of the DSA were .9392 for the norm sample, .9496 for the presumed discouraged, .9365 for the cranio samples, and .9327 for the college student sample. Jones & Haggan (1996) report negative and significant correlation between the DSA and the Social Interest Scale ($p < .10$) and the DSA and the Social Interest Index ($p < .001$). The inverse relation between social interest and discouragement indicates support for construct validity for the DSA.

T-tests between means of the Norm sample and means of the Presumed Discouraged sample on the DSA, the Social Interest Scale (SIS), and the Social Interest Index (SII) were performed to provide additional criterion-related validity (Jones & Haggan, 1996). Differences between the two groups were found to be significant (DSA, $p < .000$; SIS, $p < .000$; SII, $p < .008$).

Parenting Stress Index

The Parenting Stress Index (PSI) was developed by Abidin (1990) to assess individual parent-child systems under stress (see Appendix D). The instrument was developed based on an existing knowledge base, thereby providing content reliability. The current form, Form 6, was developed to provide an instrument that was easier to administer and to hand-score (Abidin, 1990). Earlier forms had allowed some items to contribute to more than one subscore and more than one domain. Correlations between each item and each domain were obtained for the present form. Items were retained on some subscales and deleted on others, based upon this correlation, and factor analyses that were done. The instrument now has 101 items, with an optional 19- item Life Stress Scale. There is a Child Domain with six subscales. The subscales are Adaptability, Acceptability, Demandingness, Mood, Distractibility/Hyperactivity, and Reinforces Parent. The Parent Domain has seven subscales. They include Depression, Attachment, Restrictions of Role, Sense of Competence, Social Isolation, Relationship with Spouse, and Parent Health.

Norms for the PSI were obtained initially from a group of 2,633 parents recruited primarily from Central Virginia. The current form was normed with 534 parents from the initial group and 2,099 additional parents recruited between 1983 and 1989 (Abidin, 1990).

Alpha reliability coefficients were determined for each subscale, each domain, and the total score (Hauenstein, Scarr, & Abidin, 1986). The coefficients range in magnitude from .70 to .83 for Child Domain Subscales, and from .70 to .84 for Parent Domain subscales. The reliability coefficients for the two domains are .90 and .93, and for the

Total Stress Index is .95. The coefficients are sufficiently large enough to indicate a high degree of internal consistency for these measures.

Zakreski (1983) performed test-retest evaluations of the PSI. For coefficient reliability he found scores for Child Domain to be .778, for Parent Domain to be .69, and for Total Stress Index to be .88. Alpha reliability coefficients were also done on the total score and each domain to determine internal consistency. The coefficient for the Child Domain was .89, for the Parent Domain was .93, and for the Total Stress Index was .95, indicating a high degree of internal consistency across the instrument.

Family Assessment Device

The Family Assessment Device (FAD) was developed by Epstein, Baldwin, and Bishop in 1983 as a screening instrument to provide information about various dimensions of the family system (see Appendix E). The FAD is based upon the McMaster Model of Family Functioning, a clinically oriented conceptualization of families. Six dimensions of family functioning are identified. The first dimension, Problem Solving, refers to the ability of the family to resolve problems at a level that allows the family to maintain effective functioning. Communication is the second dimension identified. Communication is defined as the clear exchange of information among family members. The third dimension, Roles, focuses on whether the family has established a set of patterns of behavior for handling family functions effectively, and whether tasks are equitably and clearly assigned to family members. Affective Responsiveness, the fourth dimension, assesses the extent to which individual family members are able to experience appropriate affect over a range of stimuli. The fifth dimension, Affective Involvement, focuses on the extent to which family members are

interested and place value upon other members' interests and concerns. Behavior Control, the sixth dimension, assesses ways a family expresses and maintains standards of behavior for family members. The FAD has a scale for each dimension, as well as a General Functioning Scale, which assesses overall health/pathology of a family.

The FAD is a paper and pencil questionnaire that can be filled out by all family members over the age of 12. There are 53 items on the questionnaire, which are statements a person could make about one's family. There are an equal number of items describing healthy and unhealthy functioning for each dimension. Subjects rate their agreement or disagreement about how well the item agrees with their family by selecting one of four responses: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The instrument takes about 15 to 20 minutes to complete (Epstein et al., 1983).

The norming population of the FAD consisted of 503 individuals (Epstein et al., 1983). The group included 294 individual from 112 families. They included four families of children in a psychiatric day hospital, six families of patients in a stroke rehabilitation unit and nine families of students in an advanced psychology course. The remaining 93 families in this group contained one member who was an inpatient in an adult psychiatric hospital. The total sample of 503 individuals also included 209 students in an introductory psychology course.

The first version of the FAD consisted of a set of 240 items, 40 for each dimension. The authors selected the smallest subset of items that together produced a scale with the highest reliability using Chronbach's Alpha. The range of alphas was between .83 and .90, but the scales were highly inter-correlated. The most highly inter-correlated

subset of items, which consists of 12 items, were used to make the General Functioning scale. The original set of 240 items was once again considered as items were selected that were written for the relevant dimension. The items for each dimension had to be highly correlated with each other to provide maximal internal consistency, and the items had to correlate more highly with that scale than with the General Functioning scale or any other dimension. The item selection for each scale stopped when the scale reliability was over a minimum, set at $\alpha = .70$. The process resulted in scales containing between five and twelve items. The reliability of the seven scales ranged from .72 to .92 (Epstein et al., 1983). Subsequent reports support internal stability for all scales but the Roles scale (Harrigan, 1989; Joffe, Offord, & Boyle, 1988).

The scales have been found to be moderately independent. The correlation between the dimensions ranges from .4 to .6. The variance shared between the dimension scales is accounted for by the variance each shares with the General Functioning scale for the most part (Epstein et al., 1983).

Validity is suggested through comparison of FAD scores of families presenting clinically with individuals from families not presenting clinically. Individuals' scores for 218 non-clinical families and 98 clinical families were used in a discriminate analysis to predict whether the family was from the clinical or non-clinical group. Sixty-seven percent of the non-clinical group and 64% of the clinical group were correctly predicted (Epstein et al., 1983).

Test-retest reliability was considered when the FAD was administered along with two other self-report family assessment measures (FACESII and Family Unit Inventory) to 45 non-clinical individuals and the FAD was re-administered to the same individuals one

week later (Miller, Epstein, Bishop, & Keitner, 1985). The test-retest scores were: Problem Solving .66, Communication .72, Roles .75, Affective Responsiveness .76, Affective Involvement .67, Behavior Control .73, and General Functioning .71. Similar test-retest data was reported by Browne, Arpin, Corey, Fitch, and Gafni (1990).

The same sample used for test-retest reliability was used to measure concurrent validity. The researchers identified subscales of the FAD that would be expected to manifest a substantial relationship ($r > .50$) with subscales of the FACESII and the Family Unit Inventory (FUI) (Miller et al., 1985). Substantial relationships were obtained between the FUI Family Integration scale and the FAD scales of General Functioning, Problem Solving, Communication, Affective Responsiveness and Affective involvement (-.51 to -.75). Lower correlations were found between the FUI Family Integration scale and the FAD scales of Roles and Behavior Control, as well as between the FUI Family Coping scale and the scales of the FAD. The correlation of scores between the FAD and FACESII did not correspond as expected from a supposedly curvilinear instrument such as the FACESII, but a more linear relationship was found.

Discriminative validity was evaluated by comparing the scores of the FAD with the evaluation of an experienced family therapist using the McMaster Model of Family Functioning (Miller et al., 1985). The families rated as unhealthy by a clinician on a given dimension had significantly higher family mean FAD scores for every dimension except Behavior Control, which approached significance.

Procedures

Approval was obtained from the University of North Texas Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects. The researcher contacted each biological or stepparent.

Each subject was given an Informed Consent Form (see Appendix B) and a packet that contained the form requesting demographic information (see Appendix A) and the three instruments to be completed. After they provided demographic data, subjects provided information about their levels of discouragement while completing the DSA. Subjects provided information about levels of stress experienced in the parenting process as they completed the PSI. The last instrument completed by the subjects was the FAD, as they provided information about their perception of functioning within their stepfamily. The demographic information and instruments were completed in 45 minutes to 1 hour. Subjects completed the packet and returned it to the researcher. The informed consent form provided a way for subjects to request feedback about the information they provided. For those subjects requesting feedback, the researcher will contact the subject at a later time to provide that information.

Statistical Analyses

After the collection of data, analyses were done. Appropriate analyses were used to evaluate the demographics and twelve hypotheses. The demographic data will be reported using frequencies and percentages. Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 were analyzed by means of Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients. Hypotheses 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 were analyzed by means of multivariate analysis using Wilks' Lambda.

Chapter 3

Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the results of the collection of data and a discussion of the findings. The purpose of this study was to determine if, and how, parenting stress and discouragement affect stepfamily functioning. Twelve hypotheses were developed to investigate these factors.

1. Subjects with increased parenting stress as measured by the Parenting Stress Index (PSI; Abidin, 1990) will experience increased discouragement as measured by the Discouragement Scale for Adults (DSA; Chernin, 1997; Haggan, 1997; Jones, 1997).

2. Subjects with increased parenting stress as measured by the PSI will have decreased family functioning as measured by the Family Assessment Device (FAD; Epstein, Baldwin, & Bishop, 1983).

3. Subjects with increased discouragement as measured by the DSA will have decreased family functioning as measured by the FAD.

4. There will be no difference in levels of discouragement as measured by the DSA between biological parents and stepparents.

5. There will be no difference in levels of parenting stress as measured by the PSI between biological parents and stepparents.

6. There will be no difference in levels of family functioning as measured by the FAD between biological parents and stepparents.

7. There will be no difference in levels of discouragement as measured by the DSA in stepmothers and stepfathers.

8. There will be no difference in levels of parenting stress as measured by the PSI in stepmothers and stepfathers.

9. There will be no difference in levels of family functioning as measured by the FAD in stepmothers and stepfathers.

10. There will be no difference in levels of discouragement as measured by the DSA between parents in stepfamilies that have been formed less than two years and parents in stepfamilies formed more than two years.

11. There will be no difference in levels of parenting stress as measured by the PSI between parents in stepfamilies who have been formed less than two years and parents in stepfamilies formed more than two years.

12. There will be no difference in levels of family functioning as measured by the FAD between parents in stepfamilies formed less than two years and parents in stepfamilies formed more than two years.

The data were collected and analyzed as they relate to the purpose of the study.

Analysis of Data

Evaluation of Hypotheses

Hypothesis one. Hypothesis 1: Subjects with increased parenting stress as measured by the PSI will experience increased discouragement as measured by the DSA.

Hypothesis one was analyzed using a Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The researcher first looked at the correlation between the total stress subscale of the PSI and the total discouragement score of the DSA.

Table 1

Pearson r Correlation Between Total Stress Subscale of PSI and Total Discouragement

Score of DSA

		Total stress subscale of PSI	Total discouragement score of DSA
Total stress subscale of PSI	Pearson Correlation		0.345
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.062
	N		30
Total discouragement score of DSA	Pearson Correlation	0.345	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.062	
	N	30	

There was no significant correlation found between the total stress subscale of the PSI and total discouragement score of the DSA. Hypothesis one is rejected.

Hypothesis two. Hypothesis 2: Subjects with increases parenting stress as measured by the PSI will have decreased family functioning as measured by the FAD.

Hypothesis two was analyzed using a Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The total stress subscale of the PSI was correlated with the general functioning subscale of the FAD.

Table 2

Pearson r Correlation Between Total Stress Subscale of PSI and General Functioning

Subscale of FAD

		Total stress subscale of PSI	General functioning subscale of FAD
Total stress subscale of PSI	Pearson Correlation		0.461
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.010
	N		30
General functioning subscale of FAD	Pearson Correlation	0.461	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.010	
	N	30	

There was no significant correlation found between the Total Stress subscale of the PSI and General Functioning subscale of the FAD. Hypothesis two is rejected.

Hypothesis three. Hypothesis 3: Subjects with increased discouragement as measured by the DSA will have decreased family functioning as measured by the FAD.

Hypothesis three was analyzed using a Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The correlation between the Total Discouragement score of the DSA and the General Functioning subscale of the FAD was examined.

Table 3

Pearson r Correlation Between Total Discouragement Score of DSA and General Functioning Subscale of FAD

Total discouragement score of	General functioning subscale of
-------------------------------	---------------------------------

		DSA	FAD
Total discouragement	Pearson Correlation		0.136
score of DSA	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.475
	N		30
General functioning	Pearson Correlation	0.136	
subscale of FAD	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.475	
	N	30	

No significant correlation was found between the Total Discouragement score of the DSA and General Functioning subscale of the FAD. Hypothesis three is rejected.

Hypothesis four. Hypothesis 4: There will be no difference in levels of discouragement as measured by the DSA between biological parents and stepparents.

Hypothesis four was analyzed by means of multiple analyses of variance using Wilks' lambda.

Table 4

Multivariate Test for Differences in Discouragement Between Biological Parents and Stepparents using the DSA

<u>Between-Subject Factors</u>	
	N
Biological	10
Stepparent	6

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Wilks' Lambda	.904	.509	5.000	24.000	.767

There was no difference found in discouragement as measured by the DSA between biological parents and stepparents. Null hypothesis four is accepted.

Hypothesis five. Hypothesis 5: There will be no difference in levels of parenting stress as measured by the PSI between biological parents and stepparents.

Hypothesis five was analyzed by means of multivariate analyses using Wilks' lambda.

Table 5

Multivariate Test for Differences in Parenting Stress Between Biological Parents and Stepparents using the PSI

Between-Subject Factors					
	N				
Biological	10				
Stepparent	6				

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Wilks' Lambda	.983	.229	2.000	27.000	.797

There was no difference found in parenting stress as measured by the PSI between biological parents and stepparents. Null hypothesis five is accepted.

Hypothesis Six. Hypothesis 6: There will be no difference in levels of family functioning as measured by the FAD between biological parents and stepparents.

Hypothesis six was analyzed by means of multivariate analyses using Wilks' lambda.

Table 6

Multivariate Test for Differences in Family Functioning Between Biological Parents and Stepparents using the FAD

Between-Subject Factors					
	N				
Biological	14				
Stepparent	16				
Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Wilks' Lambda	.775	.913	7.000	22.000	.515

There was no difference in family functioning as measured by the FAD between biological parents and stepparents. Null hypothesis six is accepted.

Hypothesis seven. Hypothesis 7: There will be no difference in levels of discouragement as measured by the DSA in stepmothers and stepfathers.

Hypothesis seven was analyzed by means of multivariate analysis using Wilks' lambda.

Table 7

Multivariate Test for Differences in Discouragement Between Stepmothers and Stepfathers using the DSA

Between-Subject Factors					
-------------------------	--	--	--	--	--

	N
Stepmother	10
Stepfather	6

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Wilks' Lambda	.468	2.272	5.000	10.000	.126

There was no difference in levels of discouragement between stepmothers and stepfathers as measured by the DSA. Null hypothesis seven is accepted.

Hypothesis eight. Hypothesis 8: there will be no difference in levels of parenting stress as measured by the PSI in stepmothers and stepfathers.

Hypothesis eight was analyzed by means of multivariate analysis using Wilks' lambda.

Table 8

Multivariate Test for Differences in Parenting Stress Between Stepmothers and Stepfathers using the DSA

<u>Between-Subject Factors</u>	
	N
Stepmother	10
Stepfather	6

Hypothesis ten. Hypothesis 10: There will be no difference in levels of discouragement as measured by the DSA between parents in stepfamilies that have been formed less than two years and parents in stepfamilies formed more than two years.

Hypothesis 10 was analyzed by means of multivariate analysis using Wilks' lambda.

Table 10

Multivariate Test of Difference in Discouragement Between Stepfamilies Formed More Than Two Years and Less Than Two Years

Between-Subject Factors					
		N			
More than 2 years		22			
Less than 2 years		8			
Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Wilks' Lambda	.766	1.464	5.000	24.000	.238

There was no difference in levels of discouragement between parents in stepfamilies who have been formed less than two years and those in stepfamilies formed more than two years. Null hypothesis 10 is accepted.

Hypothesis eleven. Hypothesis 11: There will be no difference in levels of parenting stress as measured by the PSI between parents in stepfamilies who have been formed less than two years and parents in stepfamilies formed more than two years.

Hypothesis 11 was analyzed by means of multivariate analysis using Wilks' lambda.

Table 11

Multivariate Test of Difference in Parenting Stress in Stepfamilies Formed More Than Two Years and Less Than Two Years

Between-Subject Factors						
N						
More than 2 years	22					
Less than 2 years	8					

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Wilks' Lambda	.948	.734	2.000	27.000	.490

There was no difference in levels of parenting stress between parents in stepfamilies who have been formed less than two years and those formed more than two years. Null hypothesis 11 is accepted.

Hypothesis twelve. Hypothesis 12: There will be no difference in levels of family functioning as measured by the FAD between parents in stepfamilies formed less than two years and parents in stepfamilies formed more than two years.

Hypothesis 12 was analyzed by means of multivariate analysis using Wilks' lambda.

Table 12

Multivariate Test of Difference in Family Functioning Between Stepfamilies Formed More Than Two Years and Less Than Two Years

Between-Subject Factors	
N	
More than 2 years	22

Less than 2 years 8

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Wilks' Lambda	.869	.472	7.000	22.000	.844

There was no difference in family functioning between stepfamilies formed more than two years and those formed less than two years. Null hypothesis 12 was accepted.

Demographic Data

The demographic data was examined by looking at frequencies and percentages. Thirty-three individuals answered and returned the packet of instruments. Of those, three did not provide fully completed instruments and will not be considered in the analyses, leaving a total of thirty individuals to be included in the analyses. The majority of the individuals (24 or 80%) were from north or central Texas. The remaining six individuals were from other southern states. Of the thirty individuals, 18 (60%) were female and 12 (40%) were male. Twenty-nine individuals (97%) were Caucasian and one (3%) was Hispanic. Fourteen individuals (47%) were biological parents and 16 (53%) were stepparents. Of the stepparents, 10 (62%) were stepmothers and 6 (38%) were stepfathers. Twenty-two individuals (73%) have been in their present marriage for more than two years and eight individuals (27%) have been in their present marriage for less than two years.

Summary of Results and Discussion

No significance was found between parenting stress and discouragement when analyzing the total scores of the DSA and PSI although parenting stress has been found to impact how stepfamilies see themselves and other family members (Heatherington &

Stanley-Hagen, 2000). The total scores may not identify the variables that represent problems within the family.

A stepfamily's ability to function effectively can be impacted by the stress experienced due to children in the family (Ganong & Coleman, 1994), though that was not shown when the total scores for the PSI and FAD were analyzed. All areas of functioning within the stepfamily may not be affected the same by the presence of children in the family.

Discouragement and a lack of courage to find solutions can affect how stepfamilies function (Kelly, 1992; Heatherington & Stanley-Hagen, 2000), but significant correlation was not found in the analysis of the total scores of the DSA and FAD. Such a broad view of the issues may not identify areas of problems that may be present.

The researcher did a post hoc analysis of the subscales of the instruments used to determine if any significance might be found. Significance was found at the 0.05 level in the correlation between the Total Stress subscale of the PSI and Society and Self subscales of the DSA (see Appendix I). Subjects experience more parenting stress in the area of how they see themselves as parents and discouragement in areas of society and with themselves. Subjects experience more discouragement in areas relating to self and others if they see themselves as less competent as parents than they might like.

Further correlations were done between the Child Domain, Parent Domain, and Total Stress subscales of the PSI and Problems, Communication, Roles, Affective Involvement, Affective Responsiveness, Behavior Control, and General Functioning subscales of the FAD. There was a high positive correlation between subscales of Communication and Roles and a moderate positive correlation between subscale of

affective involvement of the FAD and Total Stress score of the PSI. A low positive correlation was found between the Behavior Control subscale of the FAD and the Total Stress score of the PSI (see Appendix J). Parenting stress has been found to be a factor in adjustment and functioning of stepfamilies (Ganong & Coleman, 1994; Heatherington & Jodl, 1994; Heatherington & Stanley-Hagan, 2000). The inability to express positive emotions, communicate well with other family members, and have clear expectations about roles of each family member appears to impact how families function.

There is a low positive correlation between the Self subscale of the DSA and Behavior Control of the FAD, the Society subscale of the DSA and the Affective Involvement subscale of the FAD, and the Love subscale of the DSA and the Roles and General Functioning subscales of the FAD. Even though correlations were low, they were identified as significant (see Appendix K). Subjects who experience difficulties in the area of love also have difficulty with role assignments and general functioning in families. Those who had problems relating to society also had problems expressing positive emotions in the family. Subjects with lower opinions of themselves experienced more problems with behavior control.

There was a high positive correlation between the subscales of Communication, Roles, and Affective Involvement and the General Functioning subscale of the FAD. Findings indicate that subjects who experience problems, have difficulty communicating and expressing positive feelings, and have difficulty with role assignments within families will experience difficulties functioning within families. There is a moderate positive correlation between the Behavior Control subscale of the FAD with the General

Functioning subscale of the FAD. These subscales are not part of the General Functioning subscale so significant relationships were found (see Appendix L). Further research focusing on the subscales of the DSA, PSI, and FAD with a larger number of subjects might reveal more significant relationships between the subscales and provide more knowledge of stepfamilies.

Literature (Booth & Edwards, 1992; Fine & Kurdek, 1995; Visher & Visher, 1996) states there is a difference between biological parents and stepparents in parenting stress and family functioning, with stepparents experiencing more difficulties. This was not confirmed in the research done. The small sample size may not have provided enough variation to discern differences.

It has been reported (Coleman & Ganong, 1997; Ganong & Coleman, 1997; Heatherington & Stanley-Hagan, 2000) that stepmothers have more problems coping with their role within stepfamilies than do stepfathers. There was no difference found in this research. Other results might be found if the sample size was larger.

Research has suggested that there is a difference between families formed less than two years and more than two years (Fine & Kurdek, 1995; Ihinger-Tallman & Pasley, 1997). That was not found to be true in this research, but the number of subjects in each group was not equal. There was some variation between those married less than two years and more than two years on the Work subscale of the DSA and on the Child Domain of the PSI, but because there were so many more subjects that had been married more than two years than less, it is difficult to determine the significance. Seventy-three percent of the subjects were in stepfamilies formed more than two years.

This may have skewed the results. More differences might have been noted if the number of subjects had been more equal for each group.

There are several limitations to the study. The number of subjects in the study is small and subjects were self-selected. Larger numbers of subjects randomly selected might provide different conclusions. There were a disproportionate number of families (73%) formed for longer than two years than less than two years. This may have impacted the results of the research. Subjects were all of Caucasian ethnicity except for one who was Hispanic. Other ethnic groups might not respond in the same way this group did. Subjects were from Texas or other southern states so the results cannot be applied to individuals in other areas of the United States.

The number of stepfamilies will continue to grow in coming years. Further research into how parenting stress affects family functioning could provide information that would allow those families to learn new ways to deal with stress they are experiencing. Further research into how discouragement affects families could provide information that would help to educate families about dynamics within families. Larger sample sizes might provide more details and further significant correlations between discouragement, stress and functioning within stepfamilies. As more is learned about stepfamilies, therapists and educators can provide more significant help to struggling families.

APPENDIX A
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Demographic Data

Age_____ Sex_____

Occupation_____

Ethnicity: African-American Asian Caucasian Hispanic Native American

Other_____

Are you: Biological parent Stepparent

Educational Level:

Less than high school graduate High school diploma Some college

Undergraduate degree Graduate degree

Structure of family :

- 1. Simple stepfamily:(biological or adopted child(ren) of one parent) or (biological or adopted child(ren) of one parent, biological child(ren) of parent and stepparent)
- 2. Complex stepfamily: (Both parents have biological or adopted child(ren))
- 3. First family: (First marriage for both parents, no children from other relationships)

Length of time in present marriage: 0-2 years 3-5 years 5+ years

Quality of present marriage: Excellent Good Fair Poor Very Poor

Before present marriage were you: Never married Divorced Widowed

If previously married, length of time of previous marriage: 0-1 year 2-3 years 4-5 years 5+years

Length of time in single-parent home before remarriage: 0-1 year 2-3 years 4-5 years 5+years Not applicable

Number of children living in the home **at least** 50% of the time: (3-4 days a week)

_____ Age and sex of children in the home **at least** 50% of the time: (3-4 days a week) _____

Type of custody arrangement: Sole custody Joint custody Non-custodial parent with visitation

Other _____

Age and sex of children in the home **less** than 50% of the time (3-4 days a week)

Frequency of visits of children not living in home 50% of the time: More than once a week time

Once a week Every other week Once a month Once a year Other _____

Overall quality of parent/child(ren) relationship:

With children living in home at least 50% of the time (3-4 days a week): Excellent
Good Fair Poor Very Poor

With children living in home less than 50% of the time (3-4 days a week): Excellent
Good Fair Poor Very Poor

Estimated Annual Income:

\$0 - \$14,999 \$15,000 - \$29,999 \$30,000 - \$44,999 \$45,000-\$59,000 \$60,000+

ID# _____

PLEASE CIRCLE YOUR RESPONSE

Do you want to receive feedback about the information you are providing? YES NO

Do you want to be included in the drawing? YES NO

If yes to either, please provide the information below.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Appendix B
Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

I am conducting research to finish the requirements of my doctoral degree at the University of North Texas. I am requesting your participation in this study and estimate it will require about one hour of your time. Your decision to participate is strictly voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits.

The purpose of the study is to see how discouragement and parenting stress might affect stepfamily functioning. The study will involve completing a demographic data sheet and three questionnaires. The purpose of the study is to look at groups of families and individuals, and your name will not be connected to the results in any way. The name, address, and phone number you provide will be removed from the questionnaires and used only to provide feedback to you about the information you have provided, or to enter you in the drawing. No one other than myself, and possibly my graduate committee, will see your responses, which will be identified by number only.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (817) 267-9575. I am conducting this research under the supervision of Dr. Michael Altekrose, Ph.D. of the University of North Texas. He can be reached at (940) 565-2910. Thank you for your help and cooperation.

Mary Roberson, Doctoral Candidate
University of North Texas
Department of Counseling, Human Development, and Higher Education
Denton, Texas (817) 267-9575

I am willing to participate in Mary Roberson’s research project.

Signature

Date

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of North Texas
Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects. (940) 565-3940

ID#_____

Appendix C
Discouragement Scale for Adults

DISCOURAGEMENT SCALE FOR ADULTS

M. Jones, P. Haggan, J. Chernin

DIRECTIONS

This survey contains statements that some people might say about themselves. Read each statement and circle the response that most represents how YOU think or feel about the statement. Don't spend much time thinking about the statements. It is best to give your first response. There is No right or wrong answer.

SA = strongly agree,
D = disagree,

A = agree,
SD = strongly disagree

U = undecided,

CIRCLE

ONE

1. I have a difficult time getting along with myselfSA A U D SD
2. I feel spiritually disconnectedSA A U D SD
3. I blame others for my problems at work or schoolSA A U D SD
4. I tend to quit difficult tasksSA A U D SD
5. I easily find fault with myselfSA A U D SD
6. It is difficult for me to commit to another human beingSA A U D SD
7. I am happy with myselfSA A U D SD
8. I am a spiritual personSA A U D SD
9. I like to cooperate in group projectsSA A U D SD
10. I intentionally hurt others feelingsSA A U D SD
11. I think other people are better than I amSA A U D SD
12. I have a positive influence on others at school or workSA A U D SD
13. I like to intimidate other peopleSA A U D SD
14. I am OK with my understanding of a spiritual powerSA A U D SD
15. Completing a project is as important as starting oneSA A U D SD

**SA = strongly agree,
D = disagree,**

**A = agree,
SD = strongly disagree**

U = undecided,

CIRCLE ONE

16. I have no regrets with my love life so farSA A U D SD
17. Spiritual pursuits are fulfilling to meSA A U D SD
18. It is difficult to stay motivated at
school or workSA A U D SD
19. I avoid intimate relationshipsSA A U D SD
20. I do just enough to get bySA A U D SD
21. The use of force is OK as a way to solve
problems in intimate relationshipsSA A U D SD
22. I have no trust in a Higher PowerSA A U D SD
23. My love life seems so full of
problems I think about giving upSA A U D SD
24. I am worthwhileSA A U D SD
25. I actively work to improve my intimate relationshipsSA A U D SD
26. I feel discouraged about my spiritualitySA A U D SD
27. I am tolerant of others, opinionsSA A U D SD
28. I only participate when I am sure I can winSA A U D SD
29. I am satisfied with myselfSA A U D SD
30. My academic and/or career goals
are realisticSA A U D SD
31. I enjoy helping others learnSA A U D SD
32. I am comfortable expressing my spirituality in my own waySA A U D SD
33. I have little to do with spiritualitySA A U D SD
34. I feel self-assured most of the timeSA A U D SD

**SA = strongly agree, A = agree, U = undecided,
D = disagree, SD = strongly disagree**

CIRCLE ONE

- 35. I take on difficult projects at school or workSA A U D SD
- 36. I am OK with my choice of spirituality/religionSA A U D SD
- 37. I have faith in my ability to overcome difficultiesSA A U D SD
- 38. I feel comfortable with my sexual behaviorSA A U D SD
- 39. I am self-confident in daily activitiesSA A U D SD
- 40. I look for every advantage I can get over othersSA A U D SD
- 41. I am more aware of my weaknesses than my strengths SA A U D SD
- 42. I make decisions without consideration of others' thoughts, feelings, or needsSA A U D SD
- 43. I maintain a false front to keep intimate relationshipsSA A U D SD
- 44. For me, stealing is OK in certain situationsSA A U D SD
- 45. I am content with my choice of occupationSA A U D SD
- 46. I am successful in loveSA A U D SD
- 47. I feel empty spirituallySA A U D SD
- 48. It is important for me to outdo othersSA A U D SD
- 49. I am disappointed in loveSA A U D SD
- 50. I contribute to the well-being of othersSA A U D SD
- 51. When things go wrong, I count on spiritual support to get me throughSA A U D SD

**SA = strongly agree,
D = disagree,**

**A = agree,
SD - strongly disagree**

U = undecided,

CIRCLE ONE

52. I am optimistic in overcoming
difficulties with my intimate relationsSA A U D SD
53. I enjoy the challenge of new endeavorsSA A U D SD
54. I am willing and able to work
hard for successSA A U D SD
55. I am optimistic about my futureSA A U D SD
56. I often feel jealous or threatened
in my intimate relationshipsSA A U D SD
57. I enjoy it when other people failSA A U D SD
58. I believe it is OK to use unfair
means if necessarySA A U D SD
59. I act sick to avoid obligations at
school or workSA A U D SD
60. I believe I am a useful part of the universeSA A U D SD

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APPENDIX D

SAMPLE ITEMS FROM PARENTING STRESS INDEX

Sample Items From Parenting Stress Index

17. My child seems to cry or fuss more often than most children.

37. My child usually avoids a new toy for a while before beginning to play with it.

For statement 41, choose from choices 1 to 5 below.

41. I have found that getting my child to do something or stop doing something is:

1. much harder than I expected
2. somewhat harder than I expected
3. about as hard as I expected
4. somewhat easier than I expected
5. much easier than I expected

53. I enjoy being a parent.

71. I often feel that my child's needs control my life.

95. When I run into a problem taking care of my children, I have a lot of people to whom I can talk to get help or advice.

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APPENDIX E

SAMPLE ITEMS FROM FAMILY ASSESSMENT DEVICE

Sample Items From Family Assessment Device

4. When you ask someone to do something, you have to check that they did it.

___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD

12. We usually act on our decisions regarding problems.

___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD

17. You can easily get away with breaking the rules.

___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD

21. We avoid discussing our fears and concerns.

___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD

24. After our family tries to solve a problem, we usually discuss whether it worked or not.

___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD

34. There's little time to explore personal interests.

___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD

43. We are frank with each other.

___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD

53. We are generally dissatisfied with the family duties assigned to us.

___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD

59. When we don't like what someone has done, we tell them.

___ SA ___ A ___ D ___ SD

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APPENDIX F

PERMISSION FOR USE OF DISCOURAGEMENT SCALE FOR ADULTS

Permission for use of Discouragement Scale for Adults

From: paulhaggan@attbi.com
To: mrob68@earthlink.net
Subject: Discouragement Scale
Date: Wed, 26 Mar 2003 03:41:10 +0000

Hi Mary,
You are more than welcome to use our scale in your study. I can't remember, but vaguely think our scale is copyrighted. I recall filling out a form for its copyright but don't recall ever sending it in or receiving a confirmation for that. At any rate, you have my permission. I have no idea where Jeff is these days, but would imagine he would give you permission too. Let me know if I can be of any further help.
Take care and good luck.
Paul

Hi Mary,

Good to hear from you. Glad you are in the final stages of your work. It sounds very interesting, and I can't wait to hear your results.

I support your request to publish the DSA in your appendix.=20

Missy
Melissa W. Jones, Ph.D.
Assistant Superintendent
Snyder Independent School District
2901 37th Street
Snyder, Texas 79549

Phone 915-573-5401
FAX 915 573-9025
drmelj@snyder.escl4.net

APPENDIX G

PERMISSION FOR USE OF SAMPLE ITEMS FROM PARENTING STRESS INDEX

Permission for use of Sample Items from Parenting Stress Index

PAR

Psychological Assessment Resources

16204 N. FLORIDA AVENUE
LUTZ, FLORIDA 33549
Tel: (813)968-3303
Fax: (813) 968-2598
www.parinc.com

Sent Via Email: mrob68@earthlink.net

March 11, 2003

Mary Roberson
9000 Ravenswood Road
Granbury TX 76049

Dear Ms. Roberson:

In response to your recent request, permission is hereby granted to you to include up to 6 sample items from the Parenting Stress Index (PSI) in the appendix of your dissertation on how parenting stress and discouragement affect stepfamily functioning.

This Agreement is subject to the following restrictions:

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TWO COPIES of this Permission Agreement should be signed and returned to me to indicate your agreement with the above restrictions. I will return a fully executed copy to you for your records.

Sincerely,

Patty Drexler
Executive Assistant
to the Chairman and CEO

ACCEPTED AND AGREED:

ACCEPTED AND AGREED:

BY:

MARY ROBERSON

BY:

PATTY DREXLER

DATE: 3/11/03

DATE: 3/14/03

APPENDIX H

PERMISSION FOR USE OF SAMPLE ITEMS FROM FAMILY ASSESSMENT DEVICE

Permission for use of Sample Items from Family Assessment Device

Rhode Island Hospital

A Lifespan Partner

March 17, 2003

Mary Roberson
9000 Ravenswood Road
Granbury, Texas 76049

Dear Ms. Roberson,

As the Director of the Brown University Family Research Program, your request to include a copy of the Family Assessment Device (FAD) in the appendix of your dissertation was forwarded to me. Although requests such as yours are regularly granted (as part of a final dissertation), we do not grant requests that allow the FAD to be accessible via the internet.

If your committee agrees, you have permission to include a sample of the instrument (i.e., not more than 10 items) in the final version. I hope this will address your dissertation requirements. Congratulations on completion of your study

If you need further assistance, please note that the Family Research Program is now located at Rhode Island Hospital.

Sincerely,

Christine E. Ryan, Ph.D.
Director, Family Research Program

BROWN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

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Christine E. Ryan, PhD
Director
Family Research Program
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Rhode Island Hospital

Assistant Professor

Department of Psychiatry
and Human Behavior

Brown University
School of Medicine

Appendix I

Pearson r Correlation Between Subscales of the PSI and DSA

Pearson r Correlation Between Subscales of the PSI and DSA

		Total Stress Subscale of PSI
Society		0.393*
Subscale of DSA	Sig. 2-tail	0.032
	N	30
Self		0.464*
Subscale of DSA	Sig. 2-tail	0.01
	N	30

* Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

APPENDIX J

PEARSON r CORRELATION BETWEEN SUBSCALES of the PSI and FAD

Pearson r Correlation Between Subscales of the PSI and FAD

		Total Stress
		PSI
Communication		0.805**
Subscale of FAD	Sig. 2-tail	0
	N	30
Roles		0.717**
Subscale of FAD	Sig. 2-tail	0
	N	30
Affective Involvement		0.673**
Subscale of FAD	Sig. 2-tail	0
	N	30
Behavior Control		0.470**
Subscale of FAD	Sig. 2-tail	0
	N	30

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

APPENDIX K

PEARSON r CORRELATION BETWEEN SUBSCALES of the DSA and FAD

Pearson r Correlation Between Subscales of the DSA and FAD

		Love subscale of DSA	Society subscale of DSA	Self subscale of DSA
Roles		0.404*		
subscale of	Sig. 2-tail	0.027		
FAD	N	30		
Affective Involvement			0.453**	
subscale of	Sig. 2-tail		0.012	
FAD	N		30	
Behavior Control				0.365*
subscale of	Sig. 2-tail			0.048
FAD	N			30
General Functioning		0.407*		
subscale of	Sig. 2-tail	0.026		
FAD	N	30		

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed)

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

APPENDIX L

PEARSON r CORRELATION BETWEEN SUBSCALES of the FAD

Pearson r Correlation Between Subscales of the FAD

		General functioning subscale of FAD
Problem solving		0.896**
subscale of	Sig. 2-tail	0.000
FAD	N	30
Communication		0.766**
subscale of	Sig. 2-tail	0.000
Fad	N	30
Roles		0.714**
subscale of	Sig. 2-tail	0.000
FAD	N	30
Affective Involvement		0.767**
subscale of	Sig. 2-tail	0.000
FAD	N	30
Behavior Control		0.613**
subscale of	Sig. 2-tail	0.000
FAD	N	30

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

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