

ROUTES TO REMARRIAGE AND SUBSEQUENT (RE)MARITAL QUALITY:
DOES HOW YOU GET THERE REALLY MATTER?

by

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B.A., The University of British Columbia, 2007

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

in

The Faculty of Graduate Studies

(Family Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

OCTOBER 2009

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ABSTRACT

Remarriage is a growing phenomenon that has reached an all-time high within the past few decades. While research on the marital quality of remarried couples has become common, existing remarriage literature has endlessly assessed remarried couples as a united and cohesive group, failing to distinguish between the various forms and complexities. Due to this lack of research, this study aims to investigate various forms of remarriage (e.g. serial/higher order marriage, remarriage through widowhood or divorce, and postmarital cohabitation as recoupling) in terms of relationship quality in order to clearly show that remarriage is not a simple union, but rather a complex form. Compared to those with a lower number of previous marriages, remarried persons who have a higher past number of marriages were hypothesized to experience lower marital quality. Widowers who remarry are also hypothesized to encompass higher levels of marital quality when compared to those who divorced and then remarried. And finally, persons who chose to cohabit post-divorce were compared to remarried persons, as a pure exploratory analysis. To assess marital quality three dimensions that have been well documented are used: divorce attitudes, marital interaction, and disagreements. Using the Canadian General Social Survey cycle 15: family history data set, logistic regression analyses are used for the two binary dependent variables (divorce attitudes and marital interaction) whereas multiple regression is used for the disagreement dependent variable. Overall findings indicated no support for any of the hypotheses once the control variables were added, however, postmarital cohabitators differed from remarried persons in terms of likelihood of divorce/breakup; there were no other significant differences between these groups. This study helped to explore a different way of looking at remarriage and these results suggest that more research is needed in order to investigate these variations of remarried unions on experiences of marital quality.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Since 1961 Canadian divorce statistics have soared, with the divorce rate peaking in 1987 at 96,200 divorces (Statistics Canada, 2003). As of 2001, there were 71,783 divorces in Canada, and divorce rates have remained relatively stable since (Statistics Canada, 2003). Consequently, these heightened levels of relationship dissolution tendencies suggest increasing numbers of adults entering a second union of which can take numerous forms. For example, during the past four decades not only has there been a rapid increase in remarriage rates, but also a substantial increase in rates of cohabitation (Skinner, Bahr, Crane, & Call, 2002). In 2001 nearly 1.2 million couples were in a common-law (cohabiting) relationship, which is an increase of 20% from 1995. There was a somewhat smaller increase in number of married couples between these two years, a mere 3%, with this form of union increasing in 2001 to 6.4 million from 6.2 million in 1995 (Statistics Canada, 2003). Thirty-four percent of marriages formed in 1997 consisted of one partner who had been previously married, with roughly half of these unions involving partners who had both been married at least once prior (Statistics Canada, 2000). Statistics reveal that by the year 2000, approximately 10% of the Canadian population had been married twice and roughly 1% had been married more than twice.

The trends highlighted by these statistics contribute to an ever-changing society; however, research on forms of recoupling has been rather limited and even exclusive. Remarriage is an evolving phenomenon associated with much complexity, though the intricacy of one's marital history is often overlooked. Furthermore, cohabiting unions developed after marital dissolution are also common though are also frequently overlooked within the literature. The proposed study discussed herein is an initiative to amend this gap in the literature. Ultimately, the various forms of remarriage (serial/higher order marriage, remarriage through

widowhood or divorce, and postmarital cohabitation as recoupling) will be looked at in terms of relationship quality and stability in order to uncover whether or not remarriage is a one-dimensional union (as it has been treated in the current literature) and also if the way it is experienced makes a difference for the satisfaction and stability outcomes of the relationship.

1.1 Problems with remarriage quality and stability research

The main problem with remarriage research is that most researchers fail to consider marital histories as thoroughly as they should. They do not distinguish between first and higher order marriages (remarriages), or the other types of unions the person may have been in between multiple remarriages, implying that marriage of any order is a uniform group. Reasons for end of first marriage such as widowhood and divorce are not commonly singled out within the research literature. This creates difficulties within the research outcomes because remarriage may take many forms, and unfortunately, the literature comparing remarriage to other union types does not emphasize the differences. For example, it has been indicated that when it comes to marital quality and stability research, 'remarriage' as a whole is notoriously compared to first marriage (e.g. Cherlin, 1978; Clarke & Wilson, 1994; Dush, Cohan, & Amato, 2003; Peek, Bell, Waldren, & Sorell, 1988; Pink & Wampler, 1985; Skinner, Bahr, Crane, & Call, 2002; Vemer, Coleman, Ganong, & Cooper, 1989; White and Booth, 1985).

Another shortcoming of remarriage research is the shortage of research considering different forms of recoupling as a second, third, fourth, etc. form of union. For instance, cohabitation of any form is most often compared to marriage as a general category (e.g. Axinn & Thornton, 1992; Berrington & Diamond, 1999; Brines & Joyner, 1999; Brown, 2004; Brown & Booth, 1996; Bumpass & Lu, 2000; DeMaris & Rao, 1992; Heaton, 2002; Lillard, Brien, & Waite, 1995; Nock, 1995; Skinner, et al., 2002; Seltzer, 2000a; Thomson & Colella, 1992; Wu, 1995), when the different forms should be distinguished between just like remarriages. It is important

that the different types of cohabitators (e.g. premarital and postmarital) be identified because for these couples marital histories may play a role in how their new unions play out. For instance, the postmarital cohabiting couples share characteristics with remarried couples because they have previous marriages in common; alternatively, postmarital cohabiting relationships may differ from remarriages because of the differences in formality of the unions.

In sum, marriage or union orders (e.g. first remarriage, first common-law union, second remarriage, second common-law unions, third remarriage, etc.), reasons for end of first marriage (e.g. widowhood versus divorce), and reasons for cohabitation (e.g. premarital and postmarital) must be investigated since it has been clearly identified that recoupling after marriage dissolution may take multiple forms (e.g. dating, postmarital cohabitation, remarriage, LAT/commuter marriages, etc.) and thus, the outcomes may be different when the comparisons change.

A common consequence of implementing research without differentiating between the different groups is that it produces varying outcomes; and this is why remarriage quality and stability research has shown to be rather inconsistent, with results inspiring some empirical debate. A number of empirical investigations evaluating marital satisfaction in first marriages and remarriages have pointed towards couples' experiences of greater marital satisfaction in remarriages (Campbell, Converse, & Rodgers, 1976; White, 1979), while an equally vast collection of empirical investigations report higher levels of marital satisfaction in first marriages (e.g. Glenn & Weaver, 1977; Peek, Bell, Waldren, & Sorell, 1988); though in all these instances, the differences were small at best. The marital stability literature is too cluttered with inconsistencies within the findings; though remarriages are generally considered to be at a higher risk of dissolution than first marriages. To begin, much research points to the fact that when compared to first marriages, remarriages are seen as having lower levels of relationship stability and increased rates of divorce (Booth & Edwards, 1992; Brown & Booth, 1996;

Bumpass, Sweet, & Castro Martin, 1990; Cherlin, 1978; Clarke & Wilson, 1994; Martin & Bumpass, 1989). Whereas others indicate that remarried couples generally are no more likely to have significantly higher lifetime divorce rates than first-married couples (Espenshade, 1983; McCarthy, 1978; Weed, 1980, as cited in Peek, Bell, Waldren, & Sorell, 1988).

As noted above, remarriage is difficult to conceptualize as it can take multiple forms and its theoretical conceptualizations can influence both the expectations and the results of related research. It should now be apparent that remarriage is not simply one thing; in fact, the differences in relationship dynamics and characteristics between various remarried couples can be rather extensive. The general task of this research project is to investigate how the various complexities of remarriage relationships (e.g. widowers, divorcees, higher-order marriages/unions, postmarital cohabiters, to name just a few) are differently related to marital quality. For the purposes of this study, marital quality is to be defined as the “subjective evaluation of a married couple’s relationship” (Lewis & Spanier, 1979, p. 269), whereas marital stability is to be defined as “the propensity to dissolve an existing marriage” (Booth, Johnson, & Edwards, 1983, p. 388). The questions investigated in this project will go beyond the current remarriage literature and touch upon issues that are nearly always overlooked and that have a very limited understanding. My research questions are listed below.

1. Does number of past unions (after end of first marriage) influence relationship quality?
2. Do reasons for end of first marriage (e.g. widow versus divorce) impact relationship quality?
3. Is there a difference between remarriage and postmarital cohabitation in levels of relationship quality?

Chapter 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Cherlin's (1978) Incomplete Institution Hypothesis

From as far back as 1978 when Andrew Cherlin coined the term 'incomplete institution,' remarriage has been referred to as such. It is important to understand what this term exactly means, as well as the consequences tied to it. To illustrate, Cherlin (1978) argues that the reason there is a higher divorce rate for remarriages is due to the 'incomplete institutionalization' of remarriage after divorce in Western society. That is, marriage and remarriage after marital dissolution are distinct institutions, with fundamental differences between the dynamics within the two relationships. By institution, Cherlin (1978) means "organizations of social roles [...] which define not only acceptable behaviors, but also objective reality" (p. 634). He goes on further to suggest that the institution of the family provides guidelines that are seen as contributing to stable family relationships; roles include managing and controlling reproduction, as well guiding family members through experiences tied with family life and childrearing. Consequently, first marriage is seen as an institution since there is common knowledge or consensus across the Western nations concerning the roles attributed to the members of the family (Grizzle, 1999); this 'unity' provides first marriages with a lead over other unions because members are less likely to be in conflict over family roles. On the other hand, remarriage is considered to be an 'incomplete institution' as the roles of family members are less clear and not nearly as agreed upon as those in first marriages. Cherlin (1978) suggests that there is a shortage of societal guidelines and norms governing the remarriage relationship, a lack of socially defined techniques for resolving problems, as well as an absence of established or 'institutionalized' social support; Cherlin (1978) posits that no institutionalized solutions have surfaced. Moreover, it is this lack of 'unity' that is seen as contributing to conflict and disagreement over roles ascribed to family members (Cherlin, 1978; Grizzle, 1999).

Cherlin (1978) emphasizes that language, law, and custom are all ways in which the responsibilities and functions of family members in marriages are defined. Though in first marriages roles are clearly defined by these three components, remarriage is a different case. To begin, remarried families lack the appropriate terms given to members of the stepfamilies as well as positions within the stepfamilies; it is not uncommon for certain positions to remain nameless (Cherlin, 1978; Ganong & Coleman, 2004). Similarly, those in remarried unions tend to have difficulties describing their relations to their ex-partners' parents; some refer to them as ex-in-laws whereas others refer to them as simply their in-laws. This is where these types of relationships can get confusing. Next, remarried families experience ambiguous or non-existent laws and social policies. Many laws do not apply to the remarried families, especially when stepchildren are involved; for example, stepparents are not warranted rights or legal responsibilities to their step-children (Fine, 1997; Mason, 1998; Mason, Fine, & Carnochan, 2001). Lastly, remarried families also experience little or no institutional social support. In fact, many social organizations, which include school systems, religious groups, healthcare policies, and youth groups to mention a few, are not designed to cater to the remarried family (Ganong, 1993; Ganong & Coleman, 2004); members of the remarried families are then usually deterred from participating in these organizations, or are excluded entirely.

Nevertheless, Cherlin's (1978) ideas regarding marital institutions have shown to have an immense influence on the way remarriage is conceptualized; not only by scholars, but also by the way upcoming students are taught to comprehend these unions (Ganong & Coleman, 2004; Grizzle, 1995). In fact, in a metanalysis of 26 marriage and family textbooks Coleman, Ganong, and Goodwin (1994) discovered that over 66 percent of the textbooks used Cherlin's (1978) ideas conceptualizing remarriage as an incomplete institution (Grizzle, 1995). Additionally, numerous studies have applied and tested the incomplete institution hypothesis (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987; Beer, 1992; Booth & Edwards, 1992; Clingempeel, 1981; Dahl et al.,

1987; Fine, Coleman, & Ganong, 1998; Furstenberg & Spanier, 1984; Ganong, Coleman, & Cable, 1997; Giles-Sims, 1984; Grizzle, 1995; Grizzle, 1999; Keshet, 1990; Papernow, 1988).

To illustrate, the idea that family roles are undefined or incompletely institutionalized in remarried families is supported by past research (Bray, 1988; Guisinger, Cowan, & Schuldberg, 1989; Schwebel, Fine, & Renner, 1991). Studies implemented by Giles-Sims (1984) and Guisinger, Cowan, and Schuldberg (1989) imply that when interviewed, couples in remarriages show differing perceptions of appropriate roles and duties towards their stepchildren and the remarried couples tended to disagree with each other regarding these roles. This all said, Bray (1988) found that not only do remarried couples disagree with each other regarding these roles, but when interviewed they also disagreed with parents currently in first marriages regarding their positions. On a similar note, during Schwebel, Fine, and Renner's (1991) analysis of college students, they discovered that undergraduate students also disagreed with each other concerning the roles and responsibilities stepparents are to have. Thus, if postmarital cohabiting couples were brought into the mix, the results may be drastically different. Accordingly, research must be done in this realm.

Next, Cherlin's (1978) assertions that incompletely institutionalized roles within the family are a cause of concern as they create 'disunity' and disorder is also supported by past research (Clingempeel, 1981; Clingempeel & Brand, 1985). More specifically, in Clingempeel's (1981) original study as well as its replication (with variations in measures of marital quality) in 1985 by Clingempeel and Brand, the general outcome was that marital problems in remarried families are closely linked to family complexity. That is, individuals from complex stepfather families, where both spouses had children from a previous marriage and the wife had full custody of them, experienced lower levels of marital quality than those from simple stepfather families, where only the wife had children from a previous marriage (Clingempeel & Brand, 1985).

And lastly, Cherlin (1978) postulates that remarriages are less stable and have a lower success rate than first marriages. The mere fact that numerous studies comparing first marriages to remarriages have found remarriages to have not only lower levels of marital quality, but also be less stable than first marriages suggests that his ideas are at minimum, valid; however, the common understanding amongst the literature reveals that differences between the unions are rather small, and that generally there are more similarities between both forms of marital unions than there are differences (Glenn & Weaver, 1977; Peek, Bell, Waldren, & Sorell, 1988; Pink & Wampler, 1985; Skinner et al., 2002; Spanier & Furstenberg, 1982; Vemer, Coleman, Ganong, & Cooper, 1989; Weingarten, 1980; White and Booth, 1985).

2.2 Lewis & Spanier (1979) Marital Quality Theory

Similar to Cherlin (1978), in their marital quality theory Lewis and Spanier (1979) also proposed that marital quality and marital stability were important to understanding marital relationships. Though Lewis and Spanier's (1979) original intent for this theory was for first marriages, this is an attempt to apply this theory to remarriage. Marital quality is defined as the "subjective evaluation of a married couple's relationship" (p. 269) whereas marital stability is defined in terms of the resilience and permanency of the relationship remaining intact; accordingly, "a stable marriage is one that is terminated only by the death of one spouse" (p. 269). In theorizing about the quality and stability of marriages, Lewis and Spanier (1979) view marital quality as the "single greatest predictor of marital stability" (p. 273) and according to their framework, feelings of low quality within the marriage typically determine and precede the termination of the relationship; alternatively, if the subjective feelings regarding the satisfaction with the relationship are high, chances are that marital stability will be high as well.

Lewis and Spanier (1979) believed that alternative attractions and external pressures to stay married (or barriers to leave marriage) influence relationship quality and stability.

Alternative attractions include friendships, extramarital affairs (Cole, 1985) while examples of external pressures are normative inputs (Reiss, 1976), family expectations, institutional constraints (Lewis & Spanier, 1979) structural constraints including economic and occupational demands, and parental duties (Nye et al., 1973). There are two sides to external pressures; they can either protect the couple from terminating their relationship or act as a force that pushes them further apart. Ultimately, Lewis and Spanier (1979) hypothesized that marital quality and stability are the strongest forces foreseeing marital outcomes, while alternative attractions and external pressures behave as mediating variables (Pasley & Sandras, 1994); research has supported their claim (e.g. Green, 1983; Schumm & Bugaighis, 1985; White & Booth, 1985). Thus, it is not known whether Lewis and Spanier's (1979) theoretical predictions hold for remarried couples of various sorts (e.g. multiple past marriages, divorced or widowed before remarriage, postmarital cohabiters).

Chapter 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Remarriage is difficult to conceptualize as it can take multiple forms and its theoretical conceptualizations very much influence both the expectations and the results of related research. With recoupling after marital dissolution becoming an increasingly common trend, it is no wonder that there has been a slowly increasing interest, and a recent spike in the research concerning remarriage. In essence, the demographic trends reveal that patterns of repeated marriage are becoming increasingly prevalent in society, yet the research in this realm is rather limited. The vast majority of past research on remarriages erroneously depicts the union as a united and cohesive group, failing to distinguish between the numerous forms and combinations found today (Coleman, Ganong, & Fine, 2000). Through an analysis of the available literature, it appears that the numerous forms of existing remarriage unions as they relate to marital quality can be broken down into four categories or themes which include: number of past marriages and/or unions, reasons for end of first marriage (widowhood vs. divorce), and remarriage vs. postmarital cohabitation.

3.1 Number of Past Unions and Marital Quality

By definition, serial marriage is a marital pattern in which a person has undergone at least three marriages (Brody, Neubaum, & Forehand, 1988). Surprisingly, this area of research is largely overlooked especially in terms of couples' marital quality. However, in 1988, Brody, Neubaum, and Forehand implemented a rather innovative study, solely investigating the topic of serial marriage by examining the penalties and costs associated with the personal and behavioral characteristics of serial marriers', as well as their lifestyle's influences on children. Though scarce, studies have shown that marital orders (e.g. first marriage, second, third, etc.) and histories are important contributors to marital stability (which is influenced by marital quality)

and this factor is shown to make a difference in research outcomes (e.g. Clarke & Wilson, 1994; White & Booth, 1985); this is why in my research study I aim to investigate if and how number of past unions influences marital quality.

While using a nationwide sample, White and Booth (1985) looked at the complexities of the remarried family. Comparing three different forms of remarriage to each other (e.g. first marriage for both spouses, single remarriages where only one spouse has been previously married, and double remarriages where both spouses have been previously married), they found that heightened levels of relationship dissolution occur for the most complex form of remarriage: double remarriages where both spouses have been previously married. Within a three year period, the likelihood of these couples' dissolving their relationships is double that of any other form of remarriage.

Though Clarke and Wilson (1994) agree that it is important to consider the number of past unions (and thus, the complexity of the union) of both the persons in the remarriage relationship, they believe age is also an important factor. In their analysis of couples married in 1972, they found that more first marriages than double remarriages had ended in divorce by 1988. Strangely enough, when they took into consideration specific age and sex groupings, such as men 20 to 24 years of age, the findings reversed. This means that fewer first marriages than remarriages had ended in divorce. They attribute these differences to two reasons: first, the couples entering remarriages were older than those entering first marriages, which is important because divorce rates decline with higher age at marriage, and second, remarried couples that eventually divorced ended their relationships more quickly than first marriages.

Some have also found that marital dissolution histories are important contributors to repartnering (i.e. de Jong Gierveld, 2004), which in turn is seen as influencing reports of marital quality and stability. For example, in her investigation de Jong Gierveld (2004) uncovers that number of previous partner dissolutions influenced the type of union a person chose.

Respondents who had experienced only one relationship dissolution were twice as likely to

remarry, whereas those with two (or more) dissolutions were more likely to choose a different method of repartnering (e.g. Living Apart Together). In spite of this, the number of previous relationship dissolutions did not affect the likelihood of forming subsequent unions altogether. de Jong Gierveld's (2004) empirical investigation is a unique and important contribution to the remarriage literature and fortunately, researchers (e.g., Bumpass, Raley, & Sweet, 1995; Clingempeel, 1981; Hobart, 1991; Vemer, Coleman, Ganong, & Cooper, 1981) are now attempting to think about remarriages and stepfamilies in more complex and multifaceted manners (Coleman et al., 2000). To illustrate, Hobart (1991) investigated remarried couples and found that in stepfamilies in which both parents have children from past relationships, marital quality is reported as poorer than those families in which only one parent had a child from a previous relationship; Hobart (1991) theorizes that the outcomes are as such because of the complexity of the family, which in turn leads to more opportunities to experience conflict. The main tenets of Hobart's (1991) argument shares similarities with Cherlin's (1978) incomplete institution argument as well as Lewis and Spanier's (1979) marital quality model. For instance, Cherlin's (1978) ideas that the complexity of the remarriage family creates a sense of disunity (e.g. conflict over family roles) in this case would elude to the prediction that: *a more complex marital history (e.g. two or more past unions (after end of first marriage) for the respondent) is more negatively related to marital quality. This means that a higher number of marriages/unions should be negatively related to marital satisfaction, stability, and marital interaction and positively related to divorce attitudes and frequency of disagreement) than a less complicated history (e.g. only one past marriage).*

The rationale behind this is that more past marriages or unions means more 'baggage' (e.g. Hartman, 2007; Knox & Zeusman, 2001), which Cherlin (1978) would refer to as 'complexity; this in turn suggests that there are many problems with the current marriage as a whole. For example, the more complex the marriage, the less consensus there is for the proper terminology of ex-family members and even current family members; not to mention the role

that these family members play in the lives of the new couple, which can interfere with ordinary family life. This interference accompanied with the feelings of disunity takes a toll on the couples' experiences of marital quality, deeming their satisfaction with their relationship as low. Cherlin's (1978) theorizing is very similar to Lewis and Spanier's (1979) conceptions regarding external pressures. According to them, the lack of consensus within the family unit, combined with feelings of disunity can lead to marital instability. Familial expectations play a large role within the external pressures a person experiences on a daily basis. If the family is in disharmony, even if it is just the 'ex-family members', this takes a large toll on the individual.

It is important to note that as remarriages/relationships continue to form and reform, the new children produced within each marital union do not replace one another, instead they add to the children present in the first marriage or previous unions. Both the incomplete institution hypothesis and Lewis and Spanier's (1979) model suggests that legal family provisions such as financial obligations to former spouses/partners and children are an area of concern for remarried couples, and that there are simply no legal provisions for many remarried family problems and no solutions are present either (Cherlin, 1978). In the case of Lewis and Spanier (1979), this is an external pressure. Couples need to form a balance between the obligations to their current spouse or partner and children, as well as children from former marriages/unions and former spouses/partners; this can surface as a great economic strain for the new remarriage family (Hartman, 2007). To top it all off, remarried persons may be unwilling to put all of their economic resources into a second marriage due to this; consequently, money problems may arise. It is also possible for new spouses, to be resentful of the monetary obligations of their new spouse to their former marriages, especially when it contributes to the well-being of the former spouse or partner (Hartman, 2007; Knox & Zusman, 2001; Lown & Dolan, 1994). Thus, it would be only logical to assume that the more ex-spouses and/or partners and children from previous marriages the individual has, the more extreme the financial obligations, which increase levels of marital dissatisfaction.

Other sources of external pressures include parental obligations and financial demands (Lewis & Spanier, 1979). The presence of children from a previous marriage/relationship is a definite gateway to relationship dissolution; research (Aguirre & Kirwan, 1986; Pasley & Sandras, 1994; White & Booth, 1985) confirms that having children within the household is negatively related to marital quality and stability. For example, if the individual has numerous marriages/intimate relationships, it is more likely for them to have multiple children from different partners, which means that it can be exceptionally difficult for the spouse to want to stay within the current relationship for numerous reasons. However, financial demand is a definite factor here. Thus, just like Cherlin (1978) would suggest, Lewis and Spanier (1979) would also agree that conflict over money can occur, especially in the presence of multiple children.

Because there are various types of remarried/recoupled families, the possibilities for number of past marriages and/or unions of both partners' combinations are rather vast, deeming these unions as rather complex; these complexities can in turn influence marital quality. Needless to say, for the purposes of this research question, the types of remarried couples that are to be investigated include those in their: (1) first remarriage/union (after end of first marriage), (2) higher order marriage/union of any kind (explained above). Role ambiguity is a major factor present within the complications of the remarried family, especially when children are present (Cherlin, 1978); Lewis and Spanier (1979) would classify this as an external pressure. Because the roles of the stepparent and/or stepchild are neither defined nor clearly understood, participants within the remarriage/recoupled relationship may feel confused and dissatisfied with the arrangements; additionally, since the newly established stepparent is not awarded and specific legal rights or duties concerning their stepchildren (Mahoney, 1994), conflict and confusion is inevitable. For example, the way discipline is established may be a touchy subject filled with controversy (Bray, 1988; Bray, 1999; Bray & Berger, 1993; Hetherington, 1992; Hetherington & Jodl, 1994). Alternatively, stepparents can be rather uncertain of whether their role should be to become, as Newman and Grauerholz (2002) call it,

more of a substitute (replacement) parent or an alternative parent. Both these situations lead to conflict, and conflict within a relationship is related to the satisfaction or quality within a marital relationship (Amato, Johnson, Booth, & Rogers, 2003; Bradbury, Fincham, Beach, 2000; Carr et al., 2000). Similarly, past research (White & Booth, 1985) suggests that consequences linked to stepchildren (such as those mentioned above) account for drops in marital quality and increased marital instability (Lewis & Spanier, 1979).

Role ambiguity (e.g. role expectations are not realistic, not agreed upon, and boundaries are not clearly defined) has also been found to be associated with remarital satisfaction in that the higher the role ambiguity, the lower the marital satisfaction (Cherlin, 1978; Falke & Larson, 2007) which is especially true for wives (Ihinger-Tallman, 1988); research suggests that this is so because for stepmothers there are fewer role prescriptions that are socially accepted than there are for stepfathers (Ihinger-Tallman, 1988) which contributes to higher role ambiguity (Fine, 1995) and thus, more external pressures (Lewis & Spanier, 1979). In all these cases mentioned, the external pressures are acting as a driving wedge between the spouses/intimate partners, emphasizing the burdens of the relationship, and pushing them further apart, rather than buffering the couple from marital dissolution. Additionally, when individuals divorce and remarry/recouple multiple times leaving and meeting new children in each of the failed relationships, role ambiguity increases, and the confusion and marital unhappiness is only amplified; thus, when compared to 'simple stepfamilies', 'complex stepfamilies' experience greater role ambiguity (Fine & Schwebel, 1991; Visher & Visher, 1988) which leads to lower remarriage quality (Falke & Larson, 2007). In other words, the more complex the marriage/relationship, the less complete the institution.

Naturally, possible combinations of couples' marital orders and/or histories must be distinguished and investigated through research. Contrary to the past, the existence of consistent, systematically collected and documented surveys provided by the Canadian Government (such as the Canadian General Social Survey) allows access to the marital history

data of the Canadian population possible; this in turn makes the investigation and analysis of serial marriages much simpler. However, this does not mean that the remarriage union is any easier to describe or capture. After all, there has been much empirical research implemented on complex (those where both adults bring children to the remarriage) versus simple (where only one adult brings children) stepfamilies, and virtually none looking at marital histories and marital quality in isolation. For instance, we know that the results of analyses implemented on the relationship quality of stepfamilies has been rather mixed. In their metaanalysis, of a small sampling of research, Vemer, Coleman, Ganong, and Cooper (1989) uncover that the complexity of the stepfamily does not show significant effects on rates of marital happiness; on the other hand, Clingempeel's (1981) investigation reveals greater levels of happiness among couples residing in simple stepfamilies. But when it comes to the investigation of complex versus simple marital histories, the research falls short.

Many authors have briefly recognized the existence of multiple-divorce and of higher order marriages (e.g., Belsky, Lerner, & Spanier, 1984; Bernard, 1972; Bitterman, 1968; Bloom, Hodges, Kern, & McFaddin, 1985; Day & Mackey, 1981; Hunt, 1966, 1974; Landis, 1950; Mead, 1974; Norton & Glick, 1976; Schwartz, 1968), though the references to this topic have been rather vague and unfocused, more often occurring during the discussion of other aspects of marital instability and usually not during discussions of matters of marital quality (Brody, Neubaum, & Forehand, 1988). Another pitfall of remarriage research is that the literature has focused primarily on the relationships of the parent and child instead of the parental relationship, which is why more investigations of this topic are needed (Papernow, 1980; White & Booth, 1985). The bottom line is that further steps must be taken to ensure research is more inclusive.

3.2 Reasons for End of First Marriage and Marital Quality

In the investigation of remarriage, the majority of authors tend to either examine only those who had undergone divorce or even fail to distinguish between the marital histories of those individuals who chose to remarry; in spite of this, some authors do make the effort to consider others included in this category, such as widowed persons, somewhere within their comparisons (Chiswick & Lehrer, 1990; Wu & Balakrishnan, 1994; Sweeney, 1997; Lampard & Peggs, 1999). Despite the lack of empirical investigations, it has been noted that the route taken to forming a new romantic relationship is just as important as the type of relationship formed. Research (Ganong & Coleman, 1988) suggest that each year over half a million persons sixty-five years of age or older, remarry, which includes widowed persons; the number of remarriages at this age is predicted to increase in the near future.

When it comes to divorce, the actual experience represents the severance of social networks and ties (Kitson & Morgan, 1990) which is evidenced through the loss or changes of close friends, as well as the loss of affinal kin or family such as the ex-spouse's parents, brothers, sisters, etc. (Ambert, 1988; Furstenberg & Spanier, 1984). Family is shown to play an important support system role for an individual's adjustment to divorce (Gerstel, 1988) and because a divorcee has less family to choose from than other forms of couples, it is no wonder that divorced individuals are found to have a higher likelihood of seeking professional sources of help than married, single, or widowed persons (Kitson & Morgan, 1990). However, being divorced also means the possible influence of the individual's 'baggage' on their new relationship, which includes children, money, and former wives or husbands (Knox & Zusman, 2001; Pasley, Sandra, & Edmonson, 1994; Weston & Macklin, 1990; Whitsett & Land, 1992). To illustrate, Knox and Zusman (2001) suggest that especially when it comes to a women considering marrying a previously married man, there are many implications such as finding a new home for both of them rather than having the man move into the woman's home, having to

delay marriage until custody or asset division issues settle, as well as the possibility of a less successful marriage and increased marital instability. Though these implications are very real and troublesome, the implications of divorce are not only held for those marrying into a previously divorced family, there are also implications for the ex-spouse such as competition with the ex-spouse's new partner and feelings of inferiority; however, these implications have not been well-studied at this point in time.

Legal issues related to the determination of custody and child support are very prevalent consequences of divorce, with financial hardships playing a significant role in the intricacy of the remarried system (Dupuis, 2007; Knox & Zusman, 2001; Lown & Dolan, 1994); Cherlin (1978) addresses this in his incomplete institution argument as does Lewis and Spanier (1979) when he describes external pressures. For example, those who are divorced are found to experience a lower standard of living, suffer greater economic hardship, and hold less wealth than those who have not chosen to divorce (Hao, 1996; Marks, 1996; Ross, 1995, Teachman & Paasch, 1994); many find that these economic differences are especially greater for women (Amato, 2000). However, women who choose to marry these men also suffer the economic consequences due to these ex-husbands' monetary responsibilities (e.g. alimony, child support) to their children and wives which threatens not only the harmony, but also the financial survival of the new marital relationship (Knox & Zusman, 2001). When the husband's first family presents as a financial drain to the new family created through remarriage, the financial responsibilities tied to this can in turn generate tension and resentment within the new marriage (Knox & Zusman, 2001; Lown & Dolan, 1994).

Another main source of conflict for individuals marrying previously married men or women are their ex-spouses, which Knox and Zusman (2001) refer to as 'living with the ghosts' of the new spouse's first marriage. Though Knox and Zusman (2001) focus almost exclusively on ex-wives, the feelings experienced by the new wife can and does relate to new husbands as well. Feelings of jealousy and competition are quite common for the new spouse as well as the

ex-spouse, and spouses must not only learn how to deal with difficult ex-partners (Hartman, 2007), but also how to maintain contact with their former partners for the sake of their children, while keeping their distance emotionally from their ex-spouses so that their new partners do not feel threatened; Goetting (1982) refers to this as 'boundary maintenance.' Here, problems occur not only for their new wives, but also for their ex-partners. For example, feelings of jealousy may surface when the ex-spouse dates or marries (Stokes & Wampler, 2002).

It can be argued that widowed persons experience subsequent unions vastly differently from those who choose to dissolve their prior unions by their own choice; however, the literature does not appear to take this into consideration. In fact, no studies have solely examined the outcomes of widowed persons who remarry versus those who dissolved their relationships on their own accord and chose to remarry. If truth be told, very few studies have even attempted to look at the outcomes of widowed persons who remarry versus those who do not (Schneider, Sledge, Shuchter, & Zisook, 1996); those that do show that psychological well-being, marital quality, and marital stability are of particular importance here.

Widowed persons have many options for recoupling which include remaining single, having a companion, dating, cohabiting, remarrying (Moorman, Booth, & Fingerman, 2006), without the negative effects (on relationship quality and stability) previous failed marriages may bring to their current relationships; e.g. stored resentments, division of assets, competition with spouse's new partner. It is as if they are starting from the very beginning again. In fact, when widows remarry, they may share the same characteristics as those who are in their first marriages because they did not choose to dissolve their prior relationships; it was brought upon them.

Carr (2004) further suggests that the way in which widowed persons experienced their past marriages plays a role in how they interpret recoupling. Though many may not realize this, widowed persons who had labeled their past marriage as 'very close' may show a heightened desire to begin another romantic relationship (Carr, 2004); in a way, they want to continue from

where they left off. This is especially true of men who, more often than not, are dependent on their wives for emotional support and intimacy (Dykstra & de Jong Gierveld, 2001, as cited in Carr, 2004). On the other hand we must recognize that others, especially women who experienced 'very close' marriages, may still feel like they are married to their past spouses (van den Hoonaard, 2002); thus, starting a new relationship would be 'cheating' on their spouse. In their eyes, their late marriage was sacred and they need to keep their spouses memory alive (Hopper, 2001).

The fact that for men marriage is correlated with better health and increased longevity has been well-documented, and the results remain unchanged when looking at the effects of remarriage. Some research even shows that romantic relationships of any sort (e.g. dating, cohabiting, etc.) contribute to the health of those in older ages since partners not only care for each other's health, but also take less health risks than those not in a relationship (Goldman, Korenman, & Weinstein, 1995; Franks, Wendorf, Gonzalez, & Ketterer, 2004). And when compared to those younger, older persons are generally found to report greater satisfaction with their romantic partners (Bograd & Spilka, 1996; Carstensen, Gottman, & Levenson, 1995).

Based on the literature review of widowed persons' experiences, as well as the incomplete institution hypothesis, I hypothesize that *widowed persons who remarry will rate their marriages as higher in quality than those who had divorced; that is, widowed persons who remarry should encompass lower levels of divorce attitudes, higher levels of marital interaction, and lower number of disagreements than those who are divorced and remarried*

After all, for those who are divorced, remarriage is a choice and not a circumstance; on the other hand, for those who are widowed remarriage is more of an unfortunate situation and the way the widows interpret their situation is important. More importantly, when widowers remarry, the same issues of language terminology, law, and customs that Cherlin (1978) emphasizes still exist, but I suggest it is to a lesser degree. Essentially, the 'baggage' (as suggested by Hartman, 2007; Knox & Zusman, 2001) of the ex-spouse may not be there

because they are deceased. This includes the interference of ex-partners on the lives of the new couple, financial obligations to the ex-spouse, and resentment of the ex-spouse for numerous reasons, including monetary obligations (Hartman, 2007; Knox & Zusman, 2001); basically, there are no ex-spouses to give money to, though there may be children. Because of this, remarried persons may be more willing to pool their money and invest it into their new marriage and family.

This means that their negative external pressures (Lewis & Spanier, 1979) have lessened or even completely disappeared, and positive external pressures may have surfaced. For example, the couple may feel pressure or encouragement by the institution of marriage (which Cherlin suggests does not exist for remarried couples) to pool their resources or invest in some new property that is both of theirs. Furthermore, they may be feeling pressure from the family to act more like a union rather than keeping everything separate. I also believe Cherlin's (1978) idea of role ambiguity is still present but to a lesser degree because the ex-spouse is no longer there; which means more feelings of unity in these relationships because the intrusion of the ex-partner is eliminated. Consequently, all of these things should in turn add to increases in perceptions of marital quality and satisfaction within the relationship, especially when compared to divorced married persons.

Though children do complicate matters, stepparent issues appear to be less complicated when the ex-spouse is deceased, especially when it comes to defining parental roles (Newman & Grauerholz, 2002). For example, as previously mentioned, the stepparent as substitute versus stepparent as alternative problem is now eliminated since there is now only one parent involved (Newman & Grauerholz, 2002). The new (step) parent is now more of a substitute and less of an alternative parent; the couples' community and family may feel like this is the right thing to do and that the new spouse must step up to fill this gap in the child's life. This is a form of external pressure (Lewis & Spanier, 1979), though this time the child is not as much of a burden but rather more of a uniting force.

In sum, little is known about remarriage after widowhood (Connidis, 2001) and there appears to be a multitude of reasons to learn more about this form of romantic relationship. However, an important assumption in the work carried out by remarriage researchers is that all those who remarry have been divorced merely because it is less common than remarriage after divorce (Connidis, 2001); obviously this is not always the case. The mere fact that society is progressively becoming older (and the average lifespan is increasing) means that in the near future there will be more persons who are left widowed than ever before who will want to seek intimate relationships; in fact, the good news is that widowhood is occurring later in life than ever before (Connidis, 2001; Moore, Rosenberg, & McGuiness, 1997). The majority of the remarriage statistics have catered to those who have been remarried and widows have been left untouched. Fortunately, in this study I will be able to differentiate between remarried couples who had been widowers and those who had created their new union due to divorce, as this has been offered as an important distinction. I will look at marital history and compare (1) those who are widows that are now remarried for the first time, with (2) those who had been divorced and are also remarried for the first time.

3.3 Remarriage and/or Postmarital Cohabitation and Marital Quality

Though the divorce statistics reveal that the Canadian rates are relatively high, the remarriage rates do not quite match. It is hard to believe that individuals are foregoing intimate relationships altogether; it is more likely that individuals are taking a different route to recoupling after marital dissolution instead of remarrying (route 1), they are seeking to recouple in postmarital cohabiting relationships (route 2). Researchers (Coleman, Ganong, & Fine, 2000) suggest that postmarital cohabitation encompasses great similarities to remarried couples, especially when children are involved. Because it is clear that the nature of remarried couples and cohabiting persons is diverse, I suggest that they have many similarities that are not

recognized in the literature. The mere fact that at the core of these two forms of unions is a relationship between two persons who have been previously married should imply that these unions should be more similar than any other two; after all, both postmarital cohabitation and remarriage are ultimately routes to recoupling after relationship dissolution. However, these unions also comprise differences, such as the fact that marriage involves some legal responsibilities and rights that are different from cohabiting. To top it all off, it has been suggested that formal unions are harder to dissolve than informal ones, as in the case of cohabitation (Seltzer, 2000b). Thus, it is only logical to ask if the relationships in these two unions are the same or different in terms of relationship quality and/or stability.

De Jong Gierveld (2004) suggests that though after marital dissolution some do remarry, postmarital cohabiters as well as other forms of postmarital recoupling are becoming increasingly common in Northern and Western Europe (Bumpass, Sweet, & Castro Martin, 1990; Chevan, 1996; Davidson, 2002; de Jong Gierveld & Peeters, 2003; Karlsson & Borell, 2002; Stevens, 2002; Waite, 1995; Wu & Balakrishnan, 1994). This is important because though a bit behind, North America generally follows European trends; consequently, postmarital cohabitation is becoming progressively more common in Canada (Mills, 2004). Though this may be the case, the research in this area is still drastically limited; the mere fact that only 7 articles have specifically examined cohabitation after marital disruption as the main focus of their research indicates that this is a significantly understudied phenomenon (Blanc, 1987; Bumpass & Sweet, 1989; de Jong Gierveld, 2004; Haskey & Kiernan, 1990; Mills, 2004; Wu, 1995; Wu & Balakrishnan, 1994).

To begin, studies implemented by Blanc (1987), Bumpass and Sweet (1989), Haskey and Kiernan (1990), and Wu and Balakrishnan (1994) have all investigated the prevalence of cohabitation after marital disruption. Blanc (1987) employed her investigation on previously divorced women and examined their occurrences of postmarital unions, marital and/or

cohabitation. In Sweden and Norway she discovered that in both these countries postmarital cohabitation was the most favored and chosen form of repartnering after relationship dissolution. Moreover, within 4 years after divorce, approximately half of the sample of both countries began a cohabiting union rather than a remarriage; the numbers for those who chose to enter a remarriage were very small.

Next, in both Bumpass and Sweet's (1989) and Haskey and Kiernan's (1990) analysis of postmarital cohabiting unions, they found that there was an inverse relationship between postmarital cohabitation rates and age; that is, with age, rates of cohabitation after marital disruption decreases. Their main findings suggest that when compared to remarriage there is a significantly higher rate of postmarital cohabitation, though the rates varied by gender. Additionally, Bumpass and Sweet's (1989) investigation of persons residing in the United States, uncovered that out of those who at the time were currently cohabiting, approximately 1/10 of those had been previously married. When looking at previously married persons who had ever cohabited, they found that 1/3 had been in a union as such. Lastly, Haskey and Kiernan's (1990) research on currently cohabiting separated and divorced individuals in Great Britain showed that the rates for separated men and women were 26% and 10%, respectively, whereas the rates for divorced men and women were 1/3 and 1/4 respectively.

Wu and Balakrishnan (1994) also discovered that the postmarital cohabitation rates outweighed the remarriage rates in previously married individuals, though their findings did differ in one important way: gender. While the previously mentioned studies found larger differences between men and women's cohabitation rates, Wu and Balakrishnan's (1994) findings revealed that there was rather small variation between the rates for women and men in the study. The outcome was that when compared to women, men were more likely to opt to remarry; though men and women were equally likely to cohabit.

While other studies explore rates of postmarital cohabitation, de Jong Gievelde, (2004) seeks to explain the reasons for the differences in rates; she focuses her investigation on the Netherlands. In support of the declining remarriage rates and soaring postmarital cohabitation rates, de Jong Gievelde (2004) emphasizes that new forms of repartnering (e.g. postmarital cohabiting unions, LAT) are competing with remarriage. De Jong Gierveld (2004) refers to these postmarital unions as *consensual unions* in that they are “partner relationships that are not tied down by the formalities of marriage or remarriage, but leave people’s options open” (p. 237). In the end, she finds that the history of the person plays a huge role in deciding which route to repartnering one chooses which include: “age at most recent union dissolution, the number of partner dissolutions, working during and after the most recent union dissolution, and other demographic variables” (de Jong Gievelde, 2004, p. 236).

Though these 7 articles have given some insight to the investigation of postmarital cohabitation research, it is important to consider all aspects of the literature. Some research (e.g. Clarkberg et al., 1995; Nock, 1995; Landale & Fennelly, 1992; Rindfuss & VandenHeuvel, 1990, to name a few) has in fact, investigated the differences between cohabitation and marriage, though no studies have specifically compared postmarital cohabitation to remarriage. Both sides of the postmarital cohabitation versus remarriage debate will be presented in lieu of the present investigation of whether there is a difference between remarried and postmarital cohabiting persons on measures of relationship quality.

It has been well documented that compared to those in more traditional relationships (i.e. first marriages), relationships that come up short in terms of social recognition as well as clarity of normative standards are known as having looser ties to those in more traditional relationships, such as their parents; ultimately this means that divorced persons and/or remarried couples, never-married persons, and cohabiting couples all experience lower levels of support from family (Cooney & Unhlenberg, 1992; Nock, 1995; Umberson, 1992). Essentially, it

is suggested by Nock (1995) that “a basic emotional resource” is missing amongst persons who have weak relationships with their parents (p. 57). This is an important aspect of relationship research as it is potentially hazardous to the individual in both the remarriage and the cohabiting union since it affects the relationship quality of the couple’s relationship (Nock, 1995), which in turn decreases the stability of the given relationship.

To say that remarriages are the only unions that experience inconsistencies such as unclear or ambiguous family member roles, a lack of societal guidelines and norms, shortage of socially defined techniques for resolving problems, absence of established institutionalized social support (school systems, religious groups, healthcare policies, and youth groups to mention a few) and a lack of unity within the relationship that contributes to conflict and disagreements as Cherlin (1978) identifies, is undeniably false; individuals in cohabiting unions experience these complications as well, especially those in postmarital cohabiting unions. Thus, not unlike remarried persons, those in cohabiting unions are subject to a lack of institutional support as they are seen as being deviant in the eyes of the church, are exempt from inheritance rights as each person faces taxation by the government (Hunt, 2004), and may themselves experience or have their children experience stigmatization in other social institutions (Nock, 1995; Shapiro & Keyes, 2008; Waite & Gallagher, 2000) like school systems since they are not legally bonded together in the union called marriage; in short, members of remarried families as well as postmarital cohabiting families are usually deterred from participation or are excluded entirely from these organizations. In the case of postmarital cohabitators, the societal pressures and disapprovals mentioned above correspond with the external pressures evident in marital relationships, as discussed by Lewis and Spanier (1979). Not only can these individuals be stigmatized by society, it is also highly likely that they are experiencing family pressures to marry, especially if children are present, and maybe even some structural constraints imposed on them in terms of income and/or education which may

deter them from entering marriage. For example, an older person might decide that it is more cost effective to live with their new partner rather than just date them, however, due to tax and/or pension regulations, being married might not be the best route for them economically. Additionally, cohabitation (instead of marriage) may be more common for higher educated individuals. If this is so, then a person who has a higher level of education might decide that this is the best option for them; however, they may or may not agree with this establishment but societal pressure might persuade them to go against their wishes.

Additionally, there are many different forms cohabiting unions can take (e.g. as a form of being single, as a form of marriage, as a precursor to marriage, and as a route to recoupling after marriage), each with its distinct characteristics; in fact, the diverse nature of cohabiting unions are due to the rapidly changing nature of societal rules regarding cohabitation, marriage, and even childbearing (Seltzer, 2000b). The underlying similarity between these cohabiting unions is that there is a lack of unity and established norms for each member's position.

Language, law, and custom are all ways in which the responsibilities and functions of family members in marriages are defined, and Cherlin (1978) suggests that roles for those in remarriages lack these three types of definitions. However, it can be argued that cohabiting unions, especially postmarital cohabiting couples, also suffer from ambiguous family terms and positions with a great lack of consensus between what to call members (Nock, 1995; Seltzer, 2000b); this is another example of an institutional (or lack thereof) pressure which may push the couple apart. For example, some persons in cohabiting unions play by the same rules as married couples, and refer to their partners' parents as their in-laws, whereas others do not.

Next, the incomplete institution hypothesis suggests that there is a problem with the experience of ambiguous and or non-existent laws and family policies that apply to remarried couples, especially when stepchildren are involved. However, just as stepparents are not warranted legal rights or responsibilities to their ex-stepchildren (Fine, 1997; Mason, 1998;

Mason, Fine, & Carnochan, 2001), the 'pseudo' stepparent within the cohabiting relationship not only experiences the same frustrations, but also has the same rights as the legal married stepparent (Seltzer, 2000b); alternatively, when a cohabiting partnership with children decide to break up, social policies ensure that the biological parents still have the same rights, responsibilities, and privileges regardless of if they were previously married or not (Seltzer, 2000b); this is an example of a normative or societal input (Lewis & Spanier, 1979) which works towards uniting the couple as a recognized pair, however, this particular example corresponds with marital dissolution. Thus, in these two instances there are no differences for those with a legal marriage and those with a common-law union.

Though the many similarities of postmarital cohabitation and remarriage in terms of relationship quality and stability have been identified, there are some important characteristics of both these unions that appear to set them apart; this includes legal and normative constraints, enforced intimacy, as well as relationships with parents.

To begin, marriage of any sort has one important aspect that no other alternative union has: the formalization of the "legal event of marriage" (Nock, 1995, p. 56) which means the marriage license (Seltzer, 2000b). Teachman, Thomas, and Paasch (1991) even insist that no matter how the marital union began (e.g. cohabitation, dating), the existing legal status of marriage is the strongest predictor of stability. After all, Seltzer (2000) insists that to a certain extent marriage is defined by laws, and that those who choose to forgo these unions in lieu of something less formal, such as cohabitation, belong to a different group with different rules.

There are evidently more barriers to leaving a relationship when it has been legally formalized through marriage than when there is no legalities binding the relationship together (as in the case of cohabitation) (Musick, 2007). According to Levinger (1976), there are barriers to leaving a legal marital relationship which are defined as things that hold the relationship

between two people together outside of personal attraction; in the case of married persons, property is an extremely significant barrier (Nock, 1995). The supposed “enforced intimacy” (Nock, 1995, p. 57) of the marital relationship may also play a role in the barriers to leaving a union as such. For example, there are strong social sanctions that suggest that ‘deviant’ behaviors such as infidelity and digressions from traditional marital lifestyles are not acceptable for married persons, which leads to different results in terms of relationship quality for married and cohabiting persons. In other words, there are very few legal and/or social barriers to ending a cohabiting relationship, and greater costs involved in exiting a marital relationship (Musick, 2007). Consequently, numerous studies have found that when comparing premarital cohabiting unions to first marriages, cohabiting unions were also found to be less stable (Carlson, McLanahan, & England, 2004; Manning, Smock, & Majumdar, 2004), to possess lower levels of marital quality, and to encompass lower levels of commitment to the institution of marriage (Booth & Johnson, 1988; Bumpass & Sweet, 1989; DeMaris & Leslie, 1984; Nock, 1995; Thomson & Colella, 1992) as well as less satisfaction with their relationships with their own parents (Nock, 1995).

These emphasized drops in relationship quality and stability of cohabiting couples is not only attributed to the legality of the union; approval from social institutions as well as normative constraints also play a role here (Nock, 1995; Seltzer, 2000b). Though cohabitation of any sort is a growing form of coupling (Bumpass & Lu, 2000; Casper & Cohen, 2000; Hamilton et al. 2005; Noack, 2001; Seltzer, 2000b; Smock 2000) that is becoming increasingly common, it is not always accepted (Seltzer, 2000b). For example, Nock (1995) notes that those who marry are instantly treated differently by society, which includes their own parents and family. In fact, data from both the US and the Netherlands have shown that attitudes towards marriage by parents and friends are very important to a person’s decision of whether to cohabit. For example, if parents and/or friends are seen as being less supportive of cohabitation, children

are less likely to cohabit than if parents and/or friends were supportive of the union (Axinn & Thornton, 1992; Liefbroer & Gierveld, 1993).

There is also the issue of childbearing outside of marriage. Though this too is becoming increasingly common, and society has shown tolerance (Bumpass & Lu, 2000; Seltzer, 2000b) and even acceptance under some circumstances (Manning, 2001, Musick 2002; Musick, 2007), for the most part society still does not favor this as the best environment for raising children (Heuveline & Timberlake, 2004; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Seltzer, 2000b); in fact, the strength of the normative consensus (Lewis & Spanier, 1979) favoring marriage is extremely difficult to diffuse. The mere fact that phrases such as “out-of-wedlock” and “illegitimate” childbearing exist and are commonly used by the general public should demonstrate society’s disapproval (Cherlin, 2001; Seltzer, 2000b, p. 1248; Thornton, 1995; Waite, Bachrach, Hindin, Thomson, & Thornton, 2000); not to mention that mere fact that society treats nonmarital childbearing as a ‘problem’ (Musick, 2007).

When looking at the similarities and differences of these two different forms of recoupling, it is also important to consider that the couple’s relationship with their own parents as it is particularly significant (Umberson, 1992). After all, both Nock (1995) and Seltzer (2000b) suggests that cohabitation might possibly inhibit close relationships across generations, while marriage brings families together. For instance, not only have married persons been found to depict their relationships with their parents in a more positive light than cohabiting persons (Nock, 1995), but also parents of married children have been found to report closer relationships with their children than parents of cohabiting couples (Aquilino, 1997); Furthermore, Cooney and Uhlenberg (1992) uncovered that when compared to those married, children who are currently cohabiting are less likely to list their parents as a means of prospective help.

Clearly, the concept of an ‘incomplete institution’ does not solely apply to remarriage, and it appears that Lewis and Spanier’s (1979) marital quality theory nicely relates to

postmarital cohabiting unions; however, in future studies it would be more beneficial to compare cohabitation – more specifically, postmarital cohabitation – to remarriage. The fact that in 1995, Steven Nock depicted cohabitation as an ‘incomplete institution,’ a term that Andrew Cherlin (1978) had conceived nearly two decades earlier to describe remarriage, implies their similar natures; yet the research in this realm has been lacking. After all, the one thing that both postmarital cohabiting couples and remarried couples possess are complex (and sometimes vast) marital histories; this is something that first marriage can never encompass. Though there are many reasons to believe that when each union is compared to the dimensions of marital quality, they should produce similar results, there are also reasons to believe that these two unions are dissimilar. In fact, it is the same circumstances that draw the two unions together in the eyes of some (e.g. Nock, 1995), that appear to drastically differentiate the two.

Chapter 4

RESEARCH QUESTIONS & HYPOTHESES

To recap, now that the existing literature has been reviewed, my three main research questions and their corresponding hypotheses are listed once again below.

Research Question #1: Does number of past marriages and/or unions (after end of first marriage) influence relationship quality?

More specifically, I hypothesize that *a more complex marital history (e.g. two or more past marriages/unions after end of first marriage) is more negatively related to marital quality (positively related to divorce proneness and number of disagreements, and negatively related to marital interaction than a lower number of past marriages/unions) than a less complicated history (e.g. one remarriage).*

Research Question #2: Do reasons for end of first marriage (e.g. widow vs. divorce) impact relationship quality?

I hypothesize that *widowed persons who remarry will rate their marriages as higher in quality than those who had divorced; that is, those who are widows and are currently remarried should encompass lower levels of divorce proneness, higher levels of marital interaction, and lower number of disagreements than those who are divorced and remarried.*

Research Question #3: Is there a difference between remarriage and postmarital cohabitation in levels of relationship quality?

In accordance with the review of literature above, there are many reasons to believe that these two unions will relate similarly to the measures of relationship quality; on the other hand, there is an equally vast number of reasons to believe these two unions will relate differently to the measures of relationship quality. There is no specific hypothesis proposed for this research question since it was purely exploratory in nature.

Chapter 5

METHODS

5.1 Data

The data used for the present study is from the 2001 General Social Survey¹. This nationally representative survey has a cross-sectional design and the data for the General Social Surveys are collected via monthly computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI) taking place from January to December of the given year. The survey collects retrospective data on various family life events from early to late life such as respondents' leaving their parental home, fertility intentions, schooling and start of regular work, marital history, family origins, values and attitudes regarding life course events and their subsequent timing, as well as detailed questions regarding past relationships, both marital and cohabiting, and various measures of relationship quality that have been well documented.

The sampling plan of participants for the present study consists of a national, stratified, sample. The total number of participants sampled is 24,310 Canadian male and female respondents aged 15 and over; excluded are those residing in the Yukon and Northwest Territories, and full time residents of institutions.

5.2 Sample

The sample is limited to all respondents in either a common law or marital heterosexual union during the time of the survey that have had at least one previous marital union. The study excludes respondents who currently have a 'premarital cohabiting' or 'first marriage' relationship status since the activities and behaviors looked at within the context of the study do not apply for these individuals; moreover, the study will not explore relationship dynamics of same-sex

¹ General Social Survey Cycle 15: Family History

couples. The format of the General Social Survey only allows one person within a relationship to be surveyed; thus, both partners are not directly studied.

Three measures from the survey are used to establish the sample. First, a measure of whether the respondent has ever been legally married is assessed with options of either 1) “yes” or 2) “no”; only those who responded “yes” are considered. Next, to determine that those respondents who have different ranks and combinations of marriages and common-law relationships are included in the sample, but not those in their first marriages, the question “Rank of current marriage of respondent” is used. Categories of this variable include 0) “no current marriage”, 1) “first marriage”, 2) “second marriage”, 3) “third marriage”, 4) “fourth marriage”. Those who are currently in their 1) “first marriage” are excluded from this sample. Finally, a measure of “Rank of current union” was used with categories of 0) “no current union” to 8) “seventh union”. Those who answered, 0, that they were not in a current union were excluded. In sum, my sample includes those who had been ever legally married and now either living common-law or remarried (but not in their first marriage).

The analysis was run twice, once with weighted data and once with unweighted data. Since the results did not appear to change, it was decided that weighted data will not be used in the analyses. Based on the criteria noted above, the selected sample size is 2027. Age of respondents ranged from 25 to 80 years (mean = 50.66, SD = 11.718). See table 1 for the full sample description (descriptives of all variables used in the analysis). There is a pretty even distribution of male and female respondents; 47.9% male and 52.1% female. The vast majority of participants (83.9%) were born in Canada; 15.3% of the sample was born in a country outside of Canada. A large percentage of subjects reported a Roman Catholic religious background (33.8%). However, Protestants (27.9%), members of the United Church (14.1%), people from other/unknown religious backgrounds (3.3%), and individuals expressing no religious preference (17.4%) were also represented in the sample.

Twenty-seven percent of the participants attained a diploma/certificate from community college or trade/technical school (mean = 3.93, SD = 1.453) with an additional 23.2% who have completed some secondary/elementary/no schooling, approximately 20% of the sample received a high school diploma, and nearly 17% have completed a Doctorate/Mater's/Bachelor's degree. On the other hand, roughly 26% of the participants spouses/partners received a high school diploma (mean = 3.21; SD = 1.47) with an additional 18.5% receiving some secondary/elementary/no schooling, 16.5% have completed a Doctorate/Mater's/Bachelor's degree, and a little over 13% received a Diploma/certificate from community college or trade/technical. The average total couple income is between \$50,000 and \$59,999 (SD = 2.344); whereas the average respondent income is between \$30,000 and \$39,000 (SD = 2.785).

5.3 Dependent variables

5.3.1 Relationship quality indicators

For the present study relationship quality is multi-dimensional and three empirical conceptualizations (divorce proneness, marital interaction, disagreements) that have been well-documented (e.g. Booth & Edwards, 1992; Johnson, Amalooza, & Booth, 1992; Johnson, White, Edwards, & Booth, 1986; Lewis & Spanier, 1979; Locke & Wallace, 1959; Orden & Bradburn, 1968; Spanier, 1976) have been selected as the dependent variables for the present study. For example, the Locke and Wallace scale (1959) used marital satisfaction, disagreement, and interaction to measure marital quality, whereas Spanier's (1976) marital quality scale consisted of marital interactions, disagreements, satisfaction, divorce proneness, and numerous marital problems. For a description of these questions, see Appendix A. See table 2 for descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations for all measures, including control variables. Each quality is assessed as follows:

5.3.1.1 Divorce proneness/attitudes

This concept is assessed by the sum of two questions that were combined and aimed to capture the cognitive component of divorce proneness. To better reflect the questions, divorce proneness will be referred to as divorce attitudes. The questions both were based on a scale of 1 = *very important* to 4 = *not at all important*, and asked the respondent how important it was to (1) have a lasting relationship, and (2) be married in order to have a happy life. The summed total of the responses was considered with scores ranging from 2 to 8 with higher scores indicating a higher likelihood of divorce. Respondents in this study generally reported high levels of divorce attitudes and thus, the distribution for this variable is significantly skewed in a positive direction ($p > .01$), with over forty percent of the sample responding '2'. The median of this variable is 3 and the mean is 3.40. Divorce attitudes is not normally distributed, thus the variable scores were recoded into a dummy variable; scores of '2' were coded as 0, and scores of '3' through '8' coded as 1 in order to meet the normality assumption.

5.3.1.2 Marital interaction

This is measured by three questions, two of the questions scored on 4-point scales that ask (1) "About how often do you and your spouse/partner discuss something?" with response categories that include 1 = *never*, 2 = *hardly ever*, 3 = *sometimes*, 4 = *often*; and (2) "About how often do you and your spouse/partner laugh together?" with response categories that include: 1 = *less than once a month*, 2 = *once or twice a month*, 3 = *once or twice a week*, 4 = *almost every day (4 or more times/week)*. A global marital satisfaction item is added to this marital interaction scale (this was identified through the use of a principal components analyses and inter-item correlation), and is measured by a 3-point likert scale that asked the respondent about the overall happiness of their marriage; the items range from 1 = *not too happy* to 3 = *very happy*. Higher scores indicate greater relationship happiness. Scores from the three questions are summed together; scores range from 3 to 8 with higher scores revealing higher levels of

marital interaction. Respondents in this study generally reported high levels of marital interaction, consequently, the distribution for this variable is significantly skewed in a negative direction, with over seventy-seven percent of the sample responding '8'; the median and mean of this variable is 8.00 and 7.65, respectively. This variable was not normally distributed, and in order to meet the normality assumption, the variable scores are recoded into a dummy variable with responses '3' through '7' coded as 0, and responses of '8' coded as 1.

5.3.1.3 Disagreements/arguments

This concept is measured by answers to five questions that were aggregated to form an additive index of the frequency of arguments on various issues; typically, frequent arguments indicate poorer quality relationships (Booth & Edwards, 1992). The general question is: "Do you and your spouse/partner 1= *never*, 2 = *hardly ever*, 3 = *sometimes*, or 4 = *often* never have arguments about ..." The topics assessed by this question include: "chores and responsibilities," "money," "showing affection to each other," "leisure time," and "In-laws." The responses were summed, with the range values for this index being 6 to 24. Higher scores indicate more frequent disagreements. The median and mean for this variable is 8.00 and 8.60. Though this variable has a positive, significant skew and does not appear to be normally distributed, the variable will not be recoded into a dummy variable. The analysis for this variable was run twice; once with this variable dichotomized and once with the variable left the way it is. The results were very similar, so I chose not to dichotomize it in order to see more of the variance.

5.4 Relationship quality scale structure

For this study, marital quality is assessed through a multidimensional measure (as suggested by Johnson, White, Edwards, & Booth, 1986; Snyder, 1979) which includes three distinct aspects of marital quality: divorce attitudes, marital interaction, and conflict/disagreement. The selection of a single global measure may be favored by some (e.g.

Fincham & Bradbury, 1987; Norton, 1983) as longer inventories may confound the respondent's qualitative judgments about marital satisfaction with the behavioural dimensions that are commonly used to predict marital quality. On the other hand, Snyder (1979) and Johnson et al. (1986) suggests that the global measure proposed by Fincham and Bradbury (1987) and Norton (1983), though widely used, fails to establish empirically distinguishable dimensions of marital quality, and that in turn research has suffered. Snyder (1979) suggests that there is a need for a "comprehensive multidimensional measure with well-constructed norms that permit the simultaneous assessment of a broad range of dimensions in marriage as these relate to global marital satisfaction" (p. 813). This is why a multidimensional measure of marital quality will be used and compared.

Inter-item correlation was used to test whether the items comprising each of the factors could justifiably be added together to represent each dimension (see Table 3); this was confirmed with a factor analysis though the results are not reported. It is imperative that the inter-item correlations be positive, especially between those measuring the same component; consistent negative correlations with a given item means that the items are not measuring the same thing which is problematic (Bartee, Grandjean, & Bieber, 2004). Low or no correlation between the items in each factor/component would refute the use of an additive model to measure the given dimension of relationship quality within each component; according to Blake (1979), "inter-item correlations seldom exceed 0.40" and this should be kept in mind when interpreting the size of these coefficients (p. 249).

To begin, all the correlations presented are significant at the .01 level. The results of the inter-item correlation presented in Table 3 shows that the six items that measure DISAGREEMENT are highly related to one another and form a homogenous scale. Next, looking at the two items intending to measure DIVORCE ATTITUDES, it is evident that the inter-item correlations are exceptionally high at .574. Furthermore, the three questions comprising the

MARITAL INTERACTION scale are highly inter-correlated, with the coefficients being .382, .442, and .475; these correlations are sufficient enough to create an additive scale. Thus, it is logical to create summative measures for each of the three dimensions.

As previously indicated, there are many theoretically sound reasons to keep these three dimensions separate, as well as good reasons to add them together to create a scale. However, a bivariate correlation of these three summative measures shows very low significant correlations (-.116 and -.263) which means that though there is somewhat of a relationship, the dimensions are in fact distinct. Furthermore, when these three variables were added together and the reliability was tested, the three variables produced a very low alpha score, -.214; this gives further support for these variables to be kept as three separate dimensions.

5.5 Independent variables

5.5.1 Number of Past Unions (common-law and marital)

For this independent variable, "Rank of current union of respondent" is asked, with categories of this variable that include 0) "no current union", 1) "first union", 2) "second union", 3) "third union", 4) "fourth union", 5) "fifth union", 6) "sixth union", 7) "seventh union", and 8) "eighth union". As discussed previously, the sample for this study is limited to all respondents in either a common law or marital heterosexual union during the time of the survey that have had at least one previous marital union; thus, the response options of 0) "no current union" or 1) "first union" are not valid. The median is 2.00 and the mean is 2.22. The number of valid cases for this variable is 2027.

5.5.2 Reasons for end of first marriage

The two groups that are tested in this independent variable include (1) those who are widowers (from their first marriage) that are now remarried or cohabiting, with (2) those who are divorced (from their first marriage) and are also remarried or cohabiting. Since it has already

been established that those in the entire sample had “ever legally married” at least once in the past, “reason for end of first marriage” only is looked at. For this question, response categories including: “Separation and then divorce or annulment”; “Separation, then death of spouse; Death of spouse”; “Divorce or annulment without separation”; “Other reason; Marriage has not ended (current marriage)”; “Separation but divorce is not final (current marriage)”. The first (“Separation and then divorce or annulment”) and fourth (“Divorce or annulment without separation”) response options are considered as “divorced”; those who chose the seventh “Separation, but divorce is not final (current marriage)” option will not be included. Thus, those included within the first category are respondents who had been widowed and were now remarried; this group was coded as 1. Those included in the second category are those who had been divorced and are now remarried; this group is coded as 0. For this hypothesis, the reference category is those who had been divorced and are currently remarried (coded as 0). For this variable, the number of cases available is 1918. Eighty-nine percent of the sample falls into the divorced category, and eleven percent of the sample falls into the widowed category.

5.5.3 Remarriage vs. postmarital cohabitation.

For this independent variable, the two groups that are researched include those who are (1) cohabiting postmaritally and (2) remarried. Since history of marriage is already established, marital status must be established next. Postmarital cohabiting marital status is assessed by the question: “Is your marital status” with the response options for participants as “living common-law”, “married”, “widowed”, “divorced”, “separated”, or “single (never married)”. Those who answered “living common-law” include all respondents in a common-law relationship who had been either divorced or widowed prior; this category is coded as 1. The second remarried group was assessed by the question “rank of current marriage” with those who responded “second,” “third” or “fourth” in the second category considered. This group is comprised of respondents in a higher order marriage of any kind (e.g. their second, third or fourth); this group

is coded as 0. For this hypothesis, the reference category is remarriage (coded as 0). The number of cases available for this variable is 1972; 66.2% of this sample falls into the remarried category and 33.8% of the sample falls into the postmarital cohabiting category.

5.6 Control variables

In all of the analyses implemented, five variables are controlled for due to the relation of these variables on marital quality. Education and income fall under the socioeconomic status (SES) control variable category and are added in the second block of the analysis. *Income* is measured as “Total household income” and is an interval variable indicating “no income or loss, “less than \$5000”, “\$5000 to \$9,999”, “\$10,000 to \$4,999”, “\$15,000 to \$19,999”, “\$20,000 to \$29,999”, “\$30,000 to \$39,999”, “\$40,000 to \$49,999”, “\$50,000 to \$59,999”, “\$60,000 to \$79,999”, “\$80,000 to \$99,999”, and “\$100,000 or more”. The number of cases available for this variable is 1589. *Education* is also controlled and is measured through the “Highest level of education obtained by the respondent (in five categories)”, and is an ordinal variable indicating “doctorate/master’s/bachelors degree”, “diploma/certificate from community college or trade/technical”, “some university/community college”, “high school diploma”, “some secondary/elementary/no schooling”, and “other beyond elementary/high school”. The number of cases available for this variable is 2006.

Next, presence of ‘children’, ‘duration of first marriage’, and ‘duration of first marriage squared’ are all included within the family control variable category and are added within the third block of the analysis. The *presence of children* has been found to be negatively related to marital satisfaction and quality (Nock, 1995), with step-children or non-biological children proving to be a great influence on relationship quality (Cherlin, 1978). Thus, *presence of children* is controlled for and is a categorical variable (1 = *children*, 0 = *no children*). The number of cases available for this variable is 2027. According to studies implemented by Watson (1983)

and Watson and DeMeo (1987), duration of first (or previous) marriage is also important to consider, as the time the couples spent in their current relationship influences their perceptions of marital quality. *Duration of first marriage* (coded in years) is controlled for due to the relation of these variables on marital quality and stability. This variable is created by first subtracting “age of respondent at start of first marriage” from “age of respondent when divorce or annulment was final for first marriage”. Then “age of respondent at start of first marriage” is subtracted from “age of respondent when first spouse died”. These two variables are then added together to create the duration of first marriage variable. There is reason to suspect that the given dependent variable impacts duration of first marriage more in the beginning of the relationship, then decreases in the middle, and then increases again later on (e.g. imagine a U-shape). Because of this suspicion, duration of first marriage is also squared to account for curvilinearity. The number of cases available for these variables is 1749.

Lastly, ‘sex’ and ‘age’ variables were also added in as demographic controls in the fourth block. Sex may have an important influence on the outcome of the analysis as research has found important differences between the way men and women interpret their marriages; that is, gender plays an important role in marital stability and quality outcomes (Campbell et al., 1976; Clarke & Wilson, 1994; Glenn & Weaver, 1977; Locke & Klausner, 1948; Terman, 1938; Thompson & Walker, 1990; Vemer, Coleman, Ganong, & Cooper, 1989; Weingarten, 1980). Thus, sex is controlled for and is a categorical variable (1 = *female*, 0 = *male*). The number of cases available for this variable is 2027. Research (Clarke & Wilson, 1994; Nock, 1995; VanLangingham, Johnson, & Amato, 2001) has also shown that age positively relates to relationship quality and satisfaction and thus, relationship stability. Age is measured in years and the number of cases available for this variable is 2027.

5.7 Analysis Strategy

Given that the data for this study was taken from the Canadian General Social Survey, cycle 15, it is imperative that prior to analysis, all the data was examined to detect outliers, missing data, and errors in data entry, as well as to ensure no violations of important statistical assumptions have occurred. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, standard deviations) were generated for all variables of interest, and distributions were assessed for normality, linearity, and degree of skewness; range, frequencies, boxplots, and histograms of all scores were examined as well. Subsequently, all data utilized for this study was modified in order to fulfill normality assumptions; that is, if the assumptions were not already satisfied.

Logistic regressions were conducted for the two binary dependent variables: divorce attitudes and marital interaction. For the third dependent variable, disagreements/arguments, multiple regression was utilized. Note that all multivariate analyses were based on unweighted data; the analysis was also run with weighted data and similar results were found. Furthermore, the control variables described above are included in all three of the analyses. The results reported are the unstandardized beta coefficients, standard error, and significance levels. Model fit is also reported and investigated in all of the analyses. It is important to note that the changes in sample size for each of the analyses were due to listwise deletion, which removes all the data for an individual whenever there is any missing data that is required by an analysis (Roth & Switzer, 1995).

Chapter 6

RESULTS

Several hypotheses and research questions were investigated for previously married and now recoupled persons in this study. It was hypothesized that a more complex marital history (e.g. third marriage, fourth marriage, fifth marriage, etc. for respondent) is more negatively related to marital quality than a less complicated history (e.g. only one remarriage for respondent). According to the literature and theoretical framework discussed previously, a higher number of past unions should hypothetically be negatively related to marital interaction, and positively related to divorce attitudes and disagreements/arguments. It was also hypothesized that widowed persons who remarry will rate their marriages as higher in quality than those who have divorced and remarried; that is, the marital status 'widowed and currently remarried' should be positively correlated with marital interaction and negatively correlated with divorce attitudes and number of disagreements/arguments. The question of whether there is a difference between remarriage and postmarital cohabitation in levels of relationship quality was also posed. No specific hypotheses were put forward for it was hoped that the explorations in this study would yield some tentative conclusions and possibly give way to suggestions for future research. However, according to the literature examined above, there are reasons to believe that these two unions will relate differently to the measures of relationship quality while on the other hand, there is an equally vast number of reasons to believe these two unions will relate similarly to the measures of relationship quality.

6.1 Regression Analysis

Do different forms of remarriage encompass different levels of divorce attitudes? Table 4 presents the logistic regression models of divorce attitudes. Model 1 evaluates the extent to which the type of remarriage relationship (e.g. number of past unions, reason for recoupling, postmarital cohabitation vs. remarriage) reflects different levels of divorce attitudes, and does

not include any control variables. Contrary to what was hypothesized, the analysis provides no support for lower levels of divorce attitudes for widowers or persons with a higher number of past unions. This means that being a widow is not related to lower levels of divorce attitudes. Contrary to previous research, having a higher number of past unions is not related to a higher likelihood of thoughts of divorce. Only the remarriage vs. postmarital cohabitation variable produces a significant beta (-2.163) which means that being in a postmarital cohabiting union is related to lower levels of divorce attitudes (S.E. = .162, $p < .000$).

Next, in model 2 socioeconomic status (SES) control variables are added to the regression equation to determine if being in a postmarital cohabiting union truly is associated with lower levels of divorce attitudes, or if other variables such as the socioeconomic status (SES) controls 'total household income' and 'education', are more important determinants of this relationship. The relationship between postmarital cohabitation and a lowered probability of relationship dissolution still holds (-2.210, S.E. = .164, $p < .000$) though the 'education' variable shows that having a higher education increases the likelihood of divorce attitudes (.109, S.E. = .045, $p < .05$). In model 3, family control variables are added which include 'children', 'duration of first marriage', and 'duration of first marriage squared'. Once again, the negative relationship between postmarital cohabitation and divorce attitudes is still present (-2.204, S.E. = .169, $p < .000$) as is the relationship between higher education and higher likelihood of divorce (.109, S.E. = .046, $p < .01$), however, 'duration of first marriage squared' has a significant beta as well. 'Relationship duration squared' has a very weak, 'U-shaped' relationship with 'divorce attitudes' (-.001, S.E. = .001, $p < .01$); because the relationship is curvilinear, divorce attitudes drops quickly within the first few years of marriage and then increases again (e.g. imagine a U-shape).

Lastly, in model 4 'age' and 'sex' were added to the analysis as demographic control variables to see if these variables changed or eradicated the reported relationships. In terms of divorce attitudes, the addition of 'age' and 'sex' did not change any of the variables already identified as significant. This means that in the end, postmarital cohabitators still have lowered

levels of divorce attitudes (-2.204, S.E. = .169, $p < .000$) and this variable still holds the strongest significant relationship with 'divorce attitudes'; thus, being in a postmarital cohabiting relationship means a decreased likelihood of relationship dissolution attitudes.

Do different forms of remarriage encompass different levels of marital interaction? Table 5 presents the logistic regression models of marital interaction. Model 1 evaluates the extent to which the type of remarriage relationship (e.g. number of past unions, reason for recoupling, postmarital cohabitation vs. remarriage) reflects different levels of marital interaction, and does not include any control variables. Contrary to what was hypothesized, none of the independent variables have a significant relationship with marital interaction; this means all of the remarriage types are unrelated to marital interaction. In model 2, socioeconomic status (SES) control variables are added to the regression equation which include 'total household income' and 'education'. The analysis shows that 'total household income' has a significant negative relationship with marital interaction in that as income increases, marital interaction decreases (-.087, S.E. = .033, $p < .01$). In the third model, family variables including 'children', 'duration of first marriage', and 'duration of first marriage squared' are added; there are still no significant relationships for any of the predictor variables however the negative relationship for 'total household income' still holds (-.070, S.E. = .034, $p < .05$). 'Children' produces a significant beta. It appears that presence of 'children' increases the likelihood of marital interaction (.465, S.E. = .150, $p < .000$). Lastly, with the addition of the demographic control variables 'sex' and 'age' to the logistic regression in model 4, 'age' is found to produce a significant relationship with marital interaction that shows that as age increases, marital interaction decreases (-.030, S.E. = .011, $p < .01$); however, all of the previous significant relationships remained.

Do different forms of remarriage encompass different levels of arguments or disagreements? Table 6 presents the OLS regression models of marital interaction; the

unstandardized regression coefficient (Beta) for each variable, the standard error, and the explained variance for the sets of variables are all reported. As in the other regressions, model 1 evaluates the extent to which the type of remarriage relationship (e.g. number of past unions, reason for recoupling, postmarital cohabitation vs. remarriage) reflects different levels of disagreements or arguments, and does not include any control variables. As made evident by Table 6, the three remarriage types (independent variables) jointly contribute to the number of disagreements/arguments as the equation with the three predictors produced an R-square of .010; their contributions were rather small. Significant betas were found for two out of the three predictor variables: reason for recoupling $-.890$ (S.E. = $.245$, $p < .000$) and remarriage vs. postmarital cohabitation $-.349$ (S.E. = $.165$, $p < .05$). It appears that being widowed is related to a lower frequency of disagreements, as is being in a postmarital cohabiting union.

When the socioeconomic status (SES) control variables 'total household income' and 'education' were added in model 2, the model produces an R-square of .22. Both the predictor variables 'reason for recoupling' and 'remarriage vs. postmarital cohabitation' still produce significant betas when these control variables are added; they are $(-.669, \text{S.E.} = .302, p < .05)$ and $(-.326, \text{S.E.} = .185, p < .05)$, respectively. This means that having either a widowed and remarried status or having a postmarital cohabiting status is still related to lower levels of disagreements/arguments. Additionally, both the SES control variables produce significant betas. For example, the analysis shows that having a higher income is related to lower levels of disagreements or arguments $(-.082, \text{S.E.} = .041, p < .05)$ whereas having a higher level of education is related to more disagreements or arguments $(.168, \text{S.E.} = .063, p < .05)$.

In model 3, family control variables are added which include 'children', 'duration of first marriage', and 'duration of first marriage squared', and produce an R-square of .086. With the addition of these variables, the relationships between the predictor variables and frequency of disagreements disappears; there is no relationship between being widowed and now in a remarried union or being in a cohabiting union and disagreements/arguments. The relationship

between education and disagreements still held. Family control variables with significant betas include children .990 (S.E. = .162, $p < .001$) and duration of first marriage $-.078$ (S.E. = .027, $p < .01$). There appears to be a very strong relationship between having children and the likelihood of a higher frequency of arguments. In terms of duration of first marriage, a longer first marriage appears to predict lower levels of disagreements within the current relationship; these two variables appear to parcel out the effects between disagreements and the two independent variables.

Lastly, with the addition of demographic control variables 'age' and 'sex' in model 4, the R-square changes to .094. The negative relationships between having either a widowed and remarried status or a postmarital cohabiting status and number of disagreements or arguments is still parceled out; however, the positive relationship between 'total household income' and disagreements/arguments remains (.717, S.E. = .197, $p < .000$) as does the negative relationship between duration of first marriage and disagreements ($-.060$, S.E. = .027, $p < .05$). Both the demographic control variables produced significant betas: age $-.036$ (S.E. = .011, $p < .01$), sex $-.054$ (S.E. = .171, $p < .01$). Thus, it appears that being older produces a lower frequency of disagreements and being female is related to a higher number of arguments one has in their current union.

Chapter 7

DISCUSSION

This chapter summarizes the results to the two hypotheses and one research question outlined in chapter 3. The limitations of the study will then be discussed followed by implications for the findings and implications for future research. The goal of this present study is to investigate the influence of several types of remarital unions - including one remarriage vs. multiple remarriages, previously widowed and now remarried vs. previously divorced and now remarried, and those who are in a remarried union vs. those who are in a postmarital cohabiting union - on various dimensions of marital quality. Because relationship quality is multi-dimensional, three empirical conceptualizations that have been well-documented (and discussed prior) and are considered theoretically meaningful (Johnson et al., 2003) are used in the analyses; they are divorce attitudes, marital interaction (includes marital happiness), and disagreement (Booth & Edwards, 1992; Johnson, White, Edwards, & Booth, 1986). The results of this study did not provide very straightforward conclusions; in fact, results did not fully support any of the hypothesized relationships. However, the results provide several partial conclusions.

The first research question addresses whether the number of past unions (after end of first marriage) a person has had influences relationship quality. It was hypothesized that having a higher number of past unions is more positively related to divorce attitudes and number of disagreements, and more negatively related to marital interaction than a lesser number of past unions. This hypothesis was not supported. Number of past unions was not significantly related to any of the dimensions of marital quality. The second research question investigated was whether the reasons for end of first marriage (e.g. widow or divorce) produced different marital quality outcomes. It was hypothesized that widowed persons who remarry should encompass lower levels of divorce attitudes, higher levels of marital interaction, and lower number of disagreements than those who are divorced and remarried. This hypothesis was also not

supported. Being previously widowed and remarried did not show any significant relationship to any of the dependent variables once the control variables were introduced. For example, it first appeared that widows experienced lower frequencies of arguments; however, children and duration of first marriage were actually accounted for this relationship. Thus, based on the results of this study, widowers did not experience higher levels of marital quality than remarried divorced persons.

The last research question was exploratory in nature though suggestions of possible outcomes were identified. The aim here was to investigate whether there were any differences between remarriage and postmarital cohabitation in terms of relationship quality. The current literature does not directly address these two groups and implications from current studies give reason to believe that there are reasons for differences as well as similarities between these two groups. Results from this study suggest that postmarital cohabitators have a lower likelihood of divorce attitudes than the remarried group which would suggest that postmarital cohabiters might experience higher levels of relationship quality than remarried persons; though one needs to be careful when interpreting the results. This variable measures the importance of being married and having a lasting relationship, not necessarily the likelihood of divorce or breakup. There were no significant differences between remarrieds and postmarital cohabitators in terms of marital interaction and number of disagreements once the control variables 'children' and 'duration of first marriage' were factored in. In fact, there was a deceiving relationship between disagreement and postmarital cohabitation that suggested being in a postmarital cohabiting union decreases the likelihood of arguments; however, children and duration of first marriage parceled out the relationship. Thus, it can only be concluded that in terms of relationship quality, postmarital cohabiters differ from remarrieds only in terms of divorce attitudes – or the value placed on marriage and lasting relationships; they are less likely to breakup. In terms of marital interaction and arguments, postmarital cohabitators and remarried persons share similar levels of marital quality.

Through the investigation of the highlighted research questions, three major themes emerged which appear to account for the majority of the lack of differences between the different groups of remarried persons; moreover, all three themes appear to be interrelated. The four main explanations include 1) previous relationships as 'baggage' 2) children/economic issues, 3) unclear definitions of family roles (role ambiguity, language terminology, etc.) and 4) marriage as an 'ideal'.

7.1 Previous relationship(s) as 'baggage'

In terms of considering the previous relationship(s) as 'baggage', this idea encompasses many different aspects of the previous relationship and includes the interference and/or resentment of ex-spouses, children, parents, ex-in-laws, and perceptions of the previous relationship as well as the duration of the previous relationship. A possible reason for not finding a relationship between both number of past unions or reasons for end of first marriage and divorce attitudes is that these individuals may have not considered their past marriages as 'baggage' (e.g. Cherlin, 1978), thus, they did not feel the burden that was suggested earlier by Cherlin (1978) and Lewis and Spanier (1979) as leading to thoughts of divorce (or devaluing marriage) and/or lower levels of marital quality. There may have been no extreme feelings of jealousy, competition, or resentment for the individual's current spouse's ex-spouse for those who were remarried and previously divorced; in fact, they may have gotten along nicely with their ex-spouses, or they at least did not consider them threats to their current relationship; therefore they would not be more likely to devalue their current marriage by thinking about divorce. The intensity of divorce attitudes these individuals within each remarriage experience may be analogous to each other. For example, those who are remarried and previously widowed and those who are remarried and previously divorced may share similar life occurrences since those who have a previously widowed status do not necessarily have a

spouse who has been previously widowed; similarly, those with one past marriage may have a spouse with multiple remarriages/unions or vice versa. This means that these extreme feelings of jealousy can and may be prevalent for all members within these groups, leading to similar levels of divorce attitudes and marital interaction for individuals within both combinations of groups of remarried couples (e.g. one remarriage versus multiple remarriages; previously widowed versus previously divorced).

The idea of 'baggage' can also be defined by the experiences, influences, or perceptions of the individuals' previous relationships have had on their current relationships. For example, research suggests that widowers who had experienced 'very close' previous marriages were more likely to consider their current marriage in a positive light, thus wanting to continue from where they left off; this was in turn supposed to lead to higher levels of marital quality for remarried widowers. More research needs to be done on widower's perceptions of their first marriages and the influences on marital quality on subsequent marriages. Since little is known about 'not very close' previous marriages, it is difficult to predict what the outcome would be for widowers who experienced these types of past marriages. Since the outcome here did not suggest that widowers experienced higher quality remarriages, it is possible that for the most part, widowers in this study did not feel that their first marriages were 'very close' or were particularly wonderful. Their marriages could be either poor in quality or simply mediocre. Because of this, they might have had no expectations for their current marriages, leading to similar perceptions and ideologies of marriage as an institution as the divorced and remarried group. This needs to be further investigated in order to see what the impact of 'not very close' previous marriages of widowed remarried persons have on subsequent marriages.

Prior research has shown that generally there are no major disagreements in remarriage for widowed persons (Pankarinkangas, 2008) whereas there have been findings of high, stable levels of disagreement in remarriage for divorced persons over time (Johnson, Amoloza, & Booth, 1992). There seems to be a general consensus for remarried widowed persons that

when the spouses disagree about something, they do not necessarily argue about it; instead, they may have agreed that even if they do disagree on something, they can simply live with it without fighting. On the other hand it does not appear that many previously divorced and remarried persons share this agreement. However, what these studies did not consider, and what may really explain these effects is duration of first marriage.

In this study it appears that duration of first marriage plays a role in parceling out the relationship between not only widowers experiencing fewer disagreements, but also postmarital cohabitators and fewer disagreements. The findings suggest that the longer the duration the first marriage the fewer number of arguments/disagreements in the current relationship. Many factors could be at play here. Similar to what was suggested earlier respondents could have had a tumultuous first marriage that consisted of many years of fighting and arguing, and have simply agreed to not argue in their current union.

Alternatively, there could simply be that there is something different about those persons who had very long-term first marriages and those whose first marriages did not last very long. For example, there is probably a difference between the factors that lead a marriage to end after 2 years compared to those that cause a marriage to end after 15; these factors are yet to be explored in depth and these marriages tend to be treated as identical in most analyses (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Those with longer first marriages could be widowers who chose to cohabit subsequently instead of marry. If this is the case, then those persons might still have positive views of their first marriage and may want to make their current union work because they enjoy being in long-term relationships, so they resist arguing. This may be true due to the findings that widowers who had good, longer lasting previous marriages wish to 'continue from where they left off' (Carr, 2004); this is especially true in the case of men (Dykstra & de Jong Gierveld, 2001, as cited in Carr, 2004). Thus, they may have a very positive view of marriage, and may make a conscious effort to have a happy remarriage, with lower frequency of arguments.

7.2 Children/Economic obligations

One of the main reasons for hypothesizing certain relationships between number of past unions and the three marital quality variables is due to Cherlin's (1978) incomplete institution hypothesis which focuses on the step-family, where children play a vital role; Lewis and Spanier's (1979) theory also identifies children as external pressures which in turn can lead to lower levels of marital quality and dissolution. It would have been ideal to have found 1) any relationships between the predictor variables and marital quality, and 2) these relationships to have been parceled out when children were added into the equation; this was not the case. However, within the analyses, presence of children did present itself as a significant variable in predicting marital quality, with this variable being closely related to income. Because of this, there are many reasons to suggest that Cherlin's (1978) and Lewis and Spanier's (1979) theoretical propositions are ~~not entirely~~ correct in terms of suggesting that remarriage is an incomplete institution; that is, at least those regarding children. The truth is, it could be that the different forms of remarriage may have more in common than current theory and the proposed review of literature have suggested, deeming remarriage as a single, and united union, no matter how many times it is experienced, or how the individual has arrived there; thus, similar to what was suggested by Cherlin (1978), the union of remarriage can be considered as 'incomplete'.

For example, within this study, children in the household proved to have a very strong, positive relationship with disagreements. This finding is in accordance with both Cherlin's (1978) and Lewis and Spanier's (1979) propositions that legal and familial provisions such as financial obligations to children and their former spouses influence marital quality due to the great economic strain for the new marriage. It is also not uncommon for these obligations attached to the children to cause resentment within the marriage thus creating a marriage that is approached half-heartedly; this is in the case that the child is not common to both partners

within the union. However, it can be argued that the main reasons these results were very similar for the various marriage histories (thus, showing no significant difference between those with more past marriages and those with less) is that having children in general causes these arguments and lower levels of marital satisfaction (Cowan & Cowan, 1992; Feldman, 1971; Glenn & McLanahan 1982; Houseknecht, 1979; Renee, 1970; Ryder, 1973), not necessarily the number of children, etc. The more past marriages/unions a person has had does not mean that they have borne more children outside of their current union; though the chances of this occurring does increase. Additionally, there was no way to distinguish between the number of children within these unions, and there seems to be some type of threshold one reaches that suggests after a certain number of children (it could be even one), the frequency of arguments no longer increases. Thus, it seems that in the case of multiple remarriage partners, when one gets to the certain number of kids, they plateau, and no longer experience higher levels of conflict.

The idea that more ex-spouses/partners and thus, children, from previous marriages the individual has, the more extreme the financial obligations, which increases levels of marital dissatisfaction is also not necessarily true either. First (as addressed above), having more past marriages/unions does not mean the individual has had children as a product of each of them. Second, a person who has had only one previous marriage could enter a relationship where their current spouse has five children from their previous marriage and this could be a greater financial strain than a person who has had five or six previous marriages or unions and has only had one child (or none) borne out of them. Thus, the two forms of remarriage could be more similar than different depending on the situation. Along similar streams of thought, presence of children (which is closely related to age) also appears to have a strong occurrence within the postmarital cohabitation versus remarried groups.

To begin, since half of all remarriages begin with cohabitation (Sweet & Bumpass, 1987; Hanna & Knaub, 1981), it is only logical to assume that certain characteristics of these

relationships may be comparable especially in relation to marital interaction. Age is a factor that affects both groups in terms of marital interaction. It appears that as age increases, marital interaction decreases. This is a common finding in research, and since these unions have similarities (such as similar ages, children dynamics, income, etc.) it is not surprising that the results are what they are. Both unions have their downfalls that may lead one to suggest that either one of them is less complete than the other. Both unions are equally as likely to have children present that are not a product of both partners; language, custom and law in terms of describing family members are also problematic and cause much confusion and discord (as will be discussed later); the catholic church does not accept either form of recoupling and thus, these couples are thus seen as 'deviant'; social support is very low or nonexistent; and lastly, these two unions can take many forms. Consequently, these results shed some light to the internal workings of these couples' relationships.

Presence of children plays a role in parceling out the relationship between widowers and frequency of disagreements. The mere presence of children within the household is associated with a higher likelihood of disagreements. For example, it was suggested in the review of literature that having an ex-spouse is related to higher levels of disagreement and lower levels of marital quality; this includes financial obligations to the spouse, interference of ex-spouse, and resentment of ex-spouse (Cherlin, 1978). It was also suggested that because of these reasons, widowers are more likely to pool their monetary resources, thus experiencing higher levels of marital quality. However, this was not the case. Even though in the case of the widower their ex-spouse may not be in the equation to impede in the lives of the new couple, children (if any) are still there to interfere. In this case, the children are most likely adults or older than those of divorced individuals; however, they are just as troublesome to the remarriage union as younger children. The children might not accept the new partner and since they are older in age, they are more inclined to interfere in their parent's relationship with their new partner, and voice their opinion. This in turn may cause friction with the widower's current partner, and may lead to

more disagreements within the relationship. Along the same lines come inheritance/economic issues. If money from the deceased parent goes to the parent that is still alive, the children might worry that their parent will waste or 'invest' all of their money into their current relationship, leaving themselves (and their children) without any money if the relationship were to fail. They may also fear that their deceased parent's hard earned money will go to their living parent's spouses family instead of them. Under certain circumstances, the child may withdraw their love and time spent with their parent in order to try and coerce their parent to leave their current relationship. This also creates conflict for their parent's new relationship and can lead to more frequent arguments.

It appears that children are a common factor in predicting the relationship quality; and presence of children relates to higher levels of marital interaction. Cherlin (1979) suggests that children in stepfamilies are the main cause of problems and reductions in marital quality. Though he does not specifically address other unions such as postmarital cohabitation, it is clear that Cherlin's (1979) main argument addresses the mere presence of children in the household as a significant culprit behind these lower levels of marital quality in remarriage unions; this is why he defines remarriage as an incomplete institution. However, these issues with children are not solely experienced in remarried unions. In fact, those in postmarital cohabiting unions are more likely to be in the same situation as a person who is remarried than someone who is cohabiting premaritally; e.g. in a relationship with an uncommon child.

Postmarital cohabitation was also found to be related to fewer disagreements, compared to remarried persons. This relationship disappeared once the control variables were tested. For example, children appeared to account for a higher frequency of arguments. As in remarriage, it is not uncommon to have children present in the postmarital cohabiting union; either children from a previous marriage or ones that are products of the current relationship. Parents may experience marital tensions on a daily basis whenever they experience stresses or problems with their children (Almeida, Wethington, & Chandler, 1999). For example, it is easy to imagine

an argument or disagreement between parents about how to discipline their child or a heated argument about which parent is supposed to drop off/pick up their child from school or an extracurricular activity. Additionally, children are constantly competing with the amount of time the parents are able to spend with each other (Anderson et al., 1983), and when this occurs it is easy for the partner who is in competition with the child to become jealous and angry and consequently, start a fight with their partner; this is especially true if the cohabiting partner is not the biological parent of the child. Thus, it is this 'spill-over' that leads researchers (Bell, 1979; Lerner & Spanier, 1978; Margolin, 1981) to suggest that children are active contributors to the family environment and should not be seen as merely passive recipients of family influences.

Children also contribute to tension within the postmarital cohabiting household due to the economic strains they produce. Cohabiting partners with children in the household, regardless if the child is common to both partners or just to one, are more similar to married couples in that they jointly pool their money (Barlow, Burgoyne, Clery, & Smithson, 2008; Vogler, Brockmann, & Wiggins, 2008) with the majority of public suggesting that cohabiting parents should pool their money (Barlow, Burgoyne, Clery, & Smithson, 2008). With regards to postmarital cohabiters, tension and disagreements could be amplified because of the large costs of raising children. If the partner is not the biological parent but is contributing their money to raising this child, they may become angry and begin to feel pressured into supporting this new family. Thus, frequency of disagreements may increase.

7.3 Unclear definitions of family roles (role ambiguity)

With regards to reasons for end of first marriage and number of past unions, there are numerous reasons why none of the predicted outcomes (marital interaction) were found which include language terminology, kinship, and norms and rituals.

A possible reason number of past unions and reasons for end of first marriage were found to have no significant effects on divorce attitudes, which goes against the hypothesis, is

that perhaps these individuals did not experience any particular familial pressures as suggested prior (e.g. Cherlin, 1978; Lewis & Spanier, 1979). This could simply be because their families were supportive and were not concerned about names, titles, and/or roles. This in turn may have influenced the feelings of the respondents' and they may not have felt a sense of 'disunity' as suggested by Cherlin (1979) which can be considered an external pressure according to Lewis and Spanier (1979); Cherlin (1979) proposed that feelings of disunity was a major factor in the lowered levels of marital quality experienced by remarried persons; and this is interpreted as an external pressure by Lewis and Spanier (1979). On the other hand, in terms of number of past unions, it could be that in terms of divorce attitudes, it doesn't matter if one has more ex-spouses or less because the feelings of ambiguity, disunity, and disharmony still exist for the respondent regardless. For instance, some ex-family members might stop talking to the ex-spouse, causing no interference within the current marriage while some ex-family members may play a large role in the lives of the ex-spouse, thus creating interference. Just because there are more ex-family members does not mean they are more likely to interfere or put a strain on the current relationship than less ex-family members; therefore there may be no differences in levels of divorce attitudes for these two groups which means everybody shares the same values regarding lasting relationships and marriage.

Language terminology (Cherlin, 1978) is an issue that is shared amongst those divorced and currently remarried persons, widowed and currently remarried persons, those with one past marriage/union, and those with multiple past remarriages/unions. It was hypothesized that though the same issues of language terminology, law, and customs still exist for the widowed group as well as those with currently one remarriage, it is to a lesser degree; this was not the case. First, the ambiguity and lack of consensus on the terms used to address or describe the stepparent's role within the family are an area of concern according to Cherlin (1978). For instance, what should the children (of any age) call the new spouse/partner? Should they be referred to as 'Mom' or 'Dad', or should they be referred to by their first name? Additionally,

when speaking about the new spouse/partner, should they be called a 'stepparent' or simply 'parent'? Though there are many variations of the terms used to address these new spouses/partners, the role and term 'stepparent' is socially-recognized as a new spouse of a previously married woman or man (Hall & Kitson, 2000); which may suggest that remarriage is an incomplete institution as Cherlin (1978) argues. Furthermore, regardless of the age of the child, these issues are still prevalent and do exist. Most assume that these issues only affect young children which are more commonly found in divorced and remarried families; however, these language ambiguities are just as troublesome for older or adult children, which are more commonly found for those widowed and remarried persons, since they have more of an adjustment to overcome.

Another issue similar to both remarried widowed persons and remarried divorced persons as well as serial marriers and those who have on had only one past marriage, is the idea of family and kinship; this is central to Cherlin's (1978) incomplete institution hypothesis. In the United States (Hall & Kitson, 2000) and Canada definitions of "family" have been based on legal marriage and blood-relatedness. That being said, stepfamilies are commonly defined by marriage and to a lesser degree, blood-relatedness (Hall & Kitson, 2000). For example, a child born to a remarried couple would be related by blood to any children the couple had from previous marriages; the children would be considered 'half-siblings' (Hall & Kitson, 2000). However, there are different types of stepfamilies. For example, a 'simple' step family is one in which one of the spouses had a child living in the household; on the other hand, a 'complex' step family is one in which both spouses have children living in the household (Henderson & Taylor, 1999). Alternatively, a 'blended' family is one in which both spouses have children from their previous unions (one or more), or one or more children from the current union and one or more children from previous unions. Thus, it is evident that the definition of stepfamily is quite complex, with much disagreement regarding who should be included in the definition of the

stepfamily (Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991); however, most would agree that there is an existing (and evolving) unit called a 'family'.

Another issue that presents itself for both types of remarried unions is that of norms and rituals. Regardless of the type of stepfamily, issues of societal recognition of patterns of behaviour between family members and legitimacy of the relationship are all present within these families. Though individuals in what Cherlin (1978) deems as 'complete institutions' tend to take these rights, responsibilities, and the legitimacy of their relationships for granted (Hall & Kitson, 2000), these issues have to be negotiated and discussed within stepfamilies (Pasley, Dollahite, & Ihinger-Tallman, 1993); however, these issues surface very similarly within the different forms of remarried unions. Thus, their perceptions regarding marriage and recoupling (divorce attitudes) is not affected. Unlike the issues discussed above, those who are in postmarital cohabiting relationships were found to be significantly different from those who are remarried, on at least two of the three marital quality indicators.

There was also no significant difference between remarriage and postmarital cohabitation in terms of marital interaction which once again, suggests that these two types of unions may be more similar to each other than many want to believe. As discussed previously, relationships such as postmarital cohabitation, remarriages, and never-married persons lack social recognition and clarity of normative standards appear to have less support and ties to their families. Since both these relationships fall within this category, it not surprising that these two groups have similar levels of marital interaction because they are constantly under stress and speculation. Because cohabitation in general is becoming much more common in society, the reason there was a lack of difference between postmarital cohabitators and remarried persons may be that postmarital cohabitators are not necessarily worse off in terms of support than remarried persons.

For example, stepfamilies of any sort have complex financial and legal issues concerning children from previous marriages, estates, and property (as was hypothesized). To

begin, guardianship of children is a factor associated with a lack of legal acknowledgement of committed postmarital cohabiting unions and can lead both union types to experience similar levels of marital interaction. The courts do not regard the cohabiting partner or stepparent as a caregiver or parent of the child. Within both the remarried and postmarital cohabiting union, the ex-spouse can challenge or reclaim a child in the event that something happens to the biological parent of the child (Hall & Kitson, 2000) or if the cohabiting or remarried partners decide to separate (Fine, 1997; Mason, 1998; Mason, Fine, & Carnochan, 2001; Seltzer, 2000b); this is particularly problematic if the remarried stepparent has not legally adopted the child (Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991). Thus, in terms of legal issues, remarried and postmarital cohabiting unions share many similarities, which is why there was no significant differences in terms of marital interaction.

7.4 Marriage as an 'ideal'

It is important to note that for this study, divorce attitudes measures the importance of 1) being in a lasting relationship and 2) being married. A highly plausible reason that there was no difference between those with different number of past unions and/or those who are divorced and remarried and those who are widowed and remarried in terms of divorce attitudes is that regardless of the marriage or union number, or the way the respondents had ended their first marriage, respondents believed that marriage or being in a lasting relationship was important. This is why they were constantly recoupling: they were striving for perfection.

According to Glenn (1999), marriage is seen as one of the most important goals in life for many people. However, there are seemingly high expectations associated with marriage (Glenn, 1999; Kohm & Groen, 2004). Additionally, since sexual relations, child-bearing, and living together have all become more acceptable outside of marriage individuals do not need to rush into marriage in order to fulfill these needs or desires; instead, the individuals can "afford to

hold marriage to a higher standard” (Edin, Kefalas, & Reed, 2004, p. 1011-1012) since these activities were once only acceptable inside the institution of marriage. One reason for the similarities between the different forms of remarriage and the importance of marriage and/or lasting relationships is the idea that even though marriage is seen as a very important life goal, with the bar set for marriage continuously increasing, people are not willing to work as hard to maintain these relationships (Edin, Kefalas, & Reed, 2004; Glenn, 1999; Kohm & Groen, 2004); basically, people are not as willing to make the sacrifices and investments needed to maintain a successful marriage (Glenn, 1999) which include things such as sacrificing their own needs for their partner’s, time, and/or money, etc.

To begin, number of past unions was found to have no significant effects on frequency of disagreements or arguments, which means that having more past unions (after end of first marriage) is not associated with higher levels of disagreements. This finding, though contrary to what was expected also is not unexpected. For example, the respondent might be happy with their current union (regardless of whether it’s their second or eighth) and thus has no reason for conflict. Just because there may be a big difference in marital histories in terms of quantity between those who remarry or recouple once and those who remarry or recouple multiple times doesn’t mean that their intentions and perceptions of their relationships are not similar. For example, once again, both groups may be looking for the ‘perfect’ spouse which in turn enhances marital quality; however, it just might take some people longer to find ‘the one’ in order to be truly satisfied.

This means that maybe the respondents are remarrying/recoupling because they are striving for perfection, and are thus satisfied at the beginning of the marriage, but then like their previous marriage(s), the marital interaction declines with time (though may increase again eventually), and thus marital quality does also. Thus, duration of the current relationship may be important for the outcome of this analysis and this was not investigated; that is, there may be a curvilinear relationship between duration of current marriage and marital interaction.

Next, widowers were not found to have higher levels of marital quality when compared to divorced persons. Other than the 'baggage' or 'children/economic' arguments for this outcome, it could be that widowers have unrealistic expectations of their partners due to their perceptions of experiences with their deceased spouse. It is possible that widowed persons held their previous marriages on such a high pedestal that they were constantly comparing their current marriages to them, striving for their previous state of 'perfection'. This is especially true after their spouses have passed away since many tend to forget about the negative qualities and experiences they have had with a person once they are gone. In a way, when they enter a new marriage, they have similar ideas as the divorced group: they want to find the 'perfect' partner that was either 'better' than their past partner (in the case of divorced remarrieds) or just as good as their previous partner (in the case of widowed remarrieds) and could offer them everything that they needed out of a marriage.

On the other hand, it could be that marriage is just not that important for certain groups of people, especially those who have experienced it before; e.g. postmarital cohabitators. The reason there were a lower likelihood of divorce attitudes for postmarital cohabitators than remarried persons could be due to the postmarital cohabitators marriage ideologies. Cohabitators who don't value the institution of marriage are simply not interested in marrying and would thus not report lower levels of relationship satisfaction even if they do not deem their partner as "marriageable" (Brown, 2000). Furthermore, when asked about the importance of being married (as does the divorce attitudes measure) if the respondent ideologically opposes marriage, they would not deem this is high. This is what happened within the analysis.

In sum, it can be said that according to the findings of this study, there is no difference in marital quality between serial marriers and those with less past marriages, those who were previously widowed and currently married and those who were previously divorced and currently married, and between those who are cohabiting postmaritally and those who are remarried. However, what does this mean for remarriage as an institution? It could be that there is simply

no difference in levels of interaction, likelihood of divorce, and frequency of arguments between different forms of remarriage (once children and duration of first marriage are controlled), these remarried groups are essentially the same and because of this, remarriage can be considered an 'incomplete institution'; that is, regardless of how many times it is entered and left and the means in which one gets there, remarriage is the same. Moreover, these different types of remarried persons appear to share relatively equal amounts of problems and experience similar situations which suggests that remarriages are more homogenous in nature than suggested.

Chapter 8

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, & IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Limitations

Though the questions investigated in the present study were an attempt to go beyond the current remarriage literature, limitations are present that need correction in order to better capture these questions of interest in the future. It is these limitations that suggest the need for caution in interpreting the findings. To begin, one clear limitation concerns the sample. The questions were asked to a single respondent and not the couple or dyad, this means the results are only indicative of the respondents' reflective perceptions of their relationship and the level of congruency between partners' responses can not be established. This is problematic because thoughts about divorce (divorce attitudes) by one spouse may lead to the termination of a marriage that is highly rated by the other spouse. Responses from the dyad are needed to further evaluate these explanations (or lack thereof). Furthermore, the diversity in race or ethnicity of the sample was not able to be distinguished due to the type of questions available.

Next, with all secondary data sources there come some limitations to their use; the 2001 General Social Survey is no exception. The main problem with this particular data set is due to the broad range of family topics the survey covers, the topics are not covered as in depth as would be possible on a smaller survey. More specifically, by using available measures and questions from the 2001 General Social Survey, the exact questions of interest were not able to be investigated as thoroughly as I had wished.

For the most part, it is possible that concepts were weakened through the use of this type of data set; better measures of marital quality and stability are needed such as those that capture couples' interactions and relationship processes. For example, the questions used to address *divorce proneness* do not entirely reflect the concept. *Divorce proneness* is captured in other studies (e.g. Booth & Edwards, 1992) by a scale that assesses a cognitive component as

well as actions. The cognitive component is assessed in this study through a scale that measures how important it is for the participant to have a lasting relationship and to be married; though a better measure would be to ask if the participant has thought either about divorce or that their relationship was in trouble. This measure of divorce attitudes really measured whether the respondents value marriage or being in a lasting relationships, and not how likely they are to break up. Thus, the questions asked may be biased depending on what type of union the respondent is in. For instance, those who were cohabiting postmaritally were shown to have lower levels of divorce than remarried persons, which some may interpret as having a more stable relationship (which in turn suggests they have higher levels of marital quality). However, this is not the case – those who cohabit postmaritally are less likely to value marriage and/or a lasting relationship than the remarried group.

Unfortunately, it is also not possible for the actions component of divorce proneness to be measured with the preexisting data set; examples of this component include talking to others (e.g. spouse/friends/clergy) about the possibility of divorce, consultations with an attorney or counselor, and separation from spouse. If these concepts were measured, the research outcomes may be different.

The measure of relationship satisfaction can also be considered as restrictive for a couple of reasons. First, questions that asked about the happiness regarding certain aspects of marriage are not available, nor are questions about the extent of the love towards their spouse or comparisons of their marriage to other marriages. A question directly asking about the respondent's relationship satisfaction is asked, though it is measured on a 3-point likert scale; a 5-point likert scale or higher would be better for the analysis. Due to the results of the reliability and factor analyses, as well as the inter-item correlations, it was best to put marital satisfaction in with the measures of marital interaction; thus, there is no single question that addresses marital satisfaction within this study. One additional concern is regarding the measure of disagreements/arguments; this variable might be under-reported since conflict in relationships

can be seen as rather taboo and individuals might not want their relationship to appear socially undesirable.

Another downfall of using an already established data set is that the independent variables are also affected. For instance, the review of literature indicates that different respondent-spouse combinations need to be tested; however, complicated marriage orders and histories are not always possible to study with this type of data set because the sample size for the study would drop drastically which would in turn lower this study's statistical power. Information regarding the marital history for the spouse/partner of the respondent was not clearly identified due to the nature of the data set; thus, it is not possible to match the spouse's marital histories to the respondents'. Because of this, more accurate comparisons were not made as desired. For example, the only question for spouse's/partner's previous marital status was "What was your spouse's marital status before entering into this marriage?" with response options including widowed, divorced (or had a previous marriage annulled), or single (never legally married). There is no way to tell how many marriages and/or unions that spouse/partner has had which is a problem when this is important to the research questions.

Number of past unions would ideally have had categories that followed the different marital/cohabiting directories and patterns (after end of first marriage). This way it would be clear if remarrying more often or recoupling more often made a difference in terms of marital quality, or if these directories didn't make a difference at all. For the *reasons for end of first marriage*, the two original groups that I wanted to test were (1) those who are widows that are now remarried for the first time, with (2) those who had been divorced and are also remarried for the first time; the actual categories that were tested do not take into consideration number of remarriages after widowhood or divorce and thus measured only those who had ever been divorced or widowed. And lastly, for *postmarital cohabitation versus remarriage*, the two categories that initially were to be tested included (1) currently cohabiting, previously divorced once, and their partner has never been married (2) currently remarried, previously divorced

once, and this is the first marriage for their partner. Because I was not able to get into great detail about spouse's or partners' previous marriages, the two groups had to be transformed into those who were (1) cohabiting postmaritally and (2) remarried; once again, there are no distinctions between number of past marriages and/or reasons for forming these unions. Further investigation of these marital quality predictors must be implemented taking into considerations the limitations of this study and applying the suggestions.

It would have been interesting to control for duration of current marriage/union since research has suggested there is a relationship between this variable and marital quality; however, the questions available in the data set did not permit this. This means that the findings may be more difficult to interpret if couples who have been married for a short period of time do in fact differ in significant ways from couples who have been married for longer periods of time. In addition, even though presence of children was controlled for, the ages of children were not available which would have been an interesting comparison. Controlling for type of child in the household (e.g. respondent's child/ren, spouse/partner's child/ren, common child/ren) was attempted but when this was investigated the sample size dropped to a very low number which would not have produced any significant results.

Some might criticize the present study for a lack of significance. Significant trends for some control variables to relate more strongly with the dimensions of marital quality than the intended predictor variables were found, as well as a non-significant model of marital interaction using only the predictor variables. There is a possibility that with enough participants (a larger sample), the intended relationships would have reached statistical significance. Furthermore, although the three established dimensions marital quality each demonstrated strong inter-item reliability, critics might claim a longer, more reliable instrument would be preferable. Therefore, the findings of these may be limited in generalizeability.

8.2 Implications

The implications of the present study's findings suggest that future studies of marital satisfaction of recoupled persons should use similar measures of marital quality, as presented in the study, to further assess its use and strength. However, as discussed above, they should be careful as to not neglect any of the crucial components and measures; this may have played a role in why the present study did not produce very many significant results.

In addition, researchers should utilize different means of sampling other than a preexisting data set; data collection which includes self-devised survey and/or in-depth and open-ended qualitative interviews on a subsample of the survey participants would likely best evaluate the influence of the marital quality predictors on evaluations of marital quality. Furthermore, the two theoretical perspectives (Cherlin, 1987; Lewis & Spanier, 1979) that guided this study may have not been the best frameworks for research of this sort; future research may utilize other theoretical frameworks (e.g. symbolic interactionism, etc.) that may better explain the complicated histories of remarried persons; or even test/compare different theoretical frameworks. Furthermore, it would be beneficial for future research to clarify conceptual ambiguities and empirically test competing theories (e.g. theories of stress, commitment, exchange) of marital instability and quality to determine if, and what, are the gender, cultural, and age differences in the conceptualization of marital quality and stability. This realm of research also is in need of longitudinal investigations of the remarried unit. Nevertheless, there is a great need for longitudinal theories to guide this research such (e.g. life course perspective, etc.).

Researchers should continue to consider which unique combinations of marital histories account for the variation in the dimensions of marital quality. More research on postmarital cohabiting unions is needed, since these relationships are relatively new to the research world and not a lot is known about them and how they should be treated. Researchers should take the

steps to use the different combinations of marital histories of the spouses as suggested above to explore future research. In the future, it would also be interesting to control for religion since this factor might make a difference in results of marital quality, especially between the widowed and divorce group as well as the remarried and postmarital cohabiting group. Overall, continued empirical explorations of these variables are essential to understanding the influence of marital history on current levels of quality within the remarriage relationship, as well as for the cohabiting (postmarital) union.

In conclusion, leading from Cherlin's (1978) incomplete institution framework and Lewis and Spanier's (1979) marital quality theory, all three research questions were investigated. It was argued that the number of past unions (e.g. the complexity of the relationship) influences relationship quality; that reasons for end of first marriage, more specifically widowers versus divorcees, impacts relationship quality differently; and also if the incomplete institution hypothesis can be applied to postmarital cohabiting unions for better conceptualization. Ultimately, this study aspired to fill in the gaps of existing remarriage research and be applicable to a variety of disciplines; however, the findings did not prove to be very significant.

Table 1. Sample description (descriptives of all variables used in the analysis)

	X/Proportion	SD	Range
Divorce attitudes	59.8%	----	2
Marital Interaction	78.8%	----	2
Disagreements/Arguments	8.60	3.058	15
Number of Past Unions	2.22	.528	6
Reasons for end of first marriage	11%	----	2
Remarriage vs. Postmarital Cohabitation	33.8%	----	2
Income	4.02	2.344	11
Education	3.93	1.453	5
Children	38.3%	----	2
Duration of first marriage	12.6162	9.79294	56.90
Duration of first marriage squared	400.06788	255.0149	3248.99
Age	50.66	11.789	55
Sex	42.1%	----	2

Table 2. Bivariate correlations, means, and standard deviations of all variables used in the analysis

	Divorce attitudes	Marital interaction	Disagreements /arguments	Number of past unions	Reasons for end of first marriage	Remarriage vs. postmarital cohabitation	Income	education	children	Duration of first marriage	Duration of first marriage squared
Divorce attitudes	1										
Marital interaction	-.081**	1									
Disagreements/arguments	.049*	-.243**	1								
Number of past unions	-.072**	.013	.050*	1							
Reasons for end of first marriage	-.205**	-.007	-.094**	-.373**	1						
Remarriage vs. postmarital cohabitation	.409**	.014	-.051*	.121**	-.056*	1	1				
Income	.028	-.056*	-.088**	-.471**	.315**	.016	1				
Education	.071**	.038	.105**	.158**	-.273**	-.017	-.374**	1			
Children	-.059**	-.073**	.229**	.512**	-.258**		.022	-.342**	1		
Duration of first marriage	-.177**	.045	-.237**	-.391**	.660**	.003	.315**	-.285**	-.308**	1	
Duration of first marriage squared	-.195**	.038	-.213**	-.356**	.652**	-.024	.309**	-.275**	-.258**	.962**	1
X	--	--	8.60	2.22	--	--	4.02	3.93	--	12.6162	400.0678
SD	--	--	3.058	.528	--	--	2.342	1.453	--	9.79294	255.0149

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Table 3. Inter-Item Correlations of Dependent Variables

	DIVORCE ATTITUDES - variable 1.	DIVORCE ATTITUDES - variable 2.	MARITAL INTERACTION - variable 1.	MARITAL INTERACTION - variable 2.	MARITAL HAPPINESS.	DISAGREEMENT - variable 1.	DISAGREEMENT - variable 2.	DISAGREEMENT - variable 3.	DISAGREEMENT - variable 4.	DISAGREEMENT - variable 5.
DIVORCE ATTITUDES - variable 1.	1									
DIVORCE ATTITUDES - variable 2.	.574**	1								
MARITAL INTERACTION - variable 1.	-.115**	-.055*	1							
MARITAL INTERACTION - variable 2.	-.126**	-.061*	.475**	1						
MARITAL HAPPINESS.	-.261**	-.180**	.382**	.442**	1					
DISAGREEMENT - variable 1.	.015	-.018	-.057*	-.155**	-.221**	1				
DISAGREEMENT - variable 2.	.044	.017	-.125**	-.192**	-.265**	.485**	1			
DISAGREEMENT - variable 3.	.008	.013	-.168**	-.229**	-.287**	.312**	.379**	1		
DISAGREEMENT - variable 4.	.011	.008	-.088**	-.200**	-.224**	.371**	.348**	.456**	1	
DISAGREEMENT - variable 5.	-.022	.005	-.075**	-.115**	-.155**	.218**	.292**	.289**	.350**	1

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 4. Logistic Regression Coefficients for Regression of Divorce Attitudes on Selected Independent Variables (N=1306)

Independent variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	B	B	B	B
NUMBER OF PREVIOUS UNIONS (MARRIAGE & COHABITATION)	.102 (.125)	.115 (.128)	.091 (.128)	.092 (.128)
REASON FOR RECOUPLING	.305 (.211)	.253 (.213)	.039 (.231)	.032 (.237)
REMARRIAGE VS POSTMARITAL COHABITATION	-2.163*** (.162)	-2.185*** (.168)	-2.210*** (.164)	-2.204*** (.169)
Control Variables				
Socioeconomic status (SES)				
TOTAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME.		-.010 (.029)	-.007 (.030)	-.007 (.030)
HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF THE RESPONDENT.		.109* (.045)	.109* (.046)	.109* (.046)
Family				
BIOLOGICAL/STEP-CHILDREN IN HOUSEHOLD.			.011 (.135)	.020 (.148)
DURATION OF FIRST MARRIAGE.			.039 (.021)	.040 (.021)
DURATION OF FIRST MARRIAGE SQUARED.			-.001** (.001)	-.001** (.001)
Demographic				
AGE				-.001 (.008)
SEX				-.017 (.129)
Ng.R ²	.235	.240	.248	.248

Note: Beta is the unstandardized regression coefficient. Standard error indicated in parentheses.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .000$

Table 5. Logistic Regression Coefficients for Regression of Marital Interaction on Selected Independent Variables (N=1268)

Independent variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	B	B	B	B
NUMBER OF PREVIOUS UNIONS (MARRIAGE & COHABITATION)	-.049 (.125)	-.035 (.126)	-.003 (.129)	.030 (.131)
REASON FOR RECOUPLING	-.023 (.242)	-.091 (.245)	.121 (.263)	-.076 (.271)
REMARRIAGE VS POSTMARITAL COHABITATION	-.058 (.150)	-.059 (.150)	-.011 (.152)	.140 (.160)
Control Variables				
Socioeconomic status (SES)				
TOTAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME.		-.078** (.033)	-.087** (.033)	-.070* (.034)
HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF THE RESPONDENT.		-.046 (.051)	-.031 (.051)	-.035 (.051)
Family				
BIOLOGICAL/STEP-CHILDREN IN HOUSEHOLD.			.465** (.150)	.704*** (.169)
DURATION OF FIRST MARRIAGE.			.020 (.023)	.035 (.023)
DURATION OF FIRST MARRIAGE SQUARED.			.000 (.001)	.000 (.001)
Demographic				
AGE				-.129** (.009)
SEX				.232 (.145)
Ng.R ²	.000	.007	.026	.039

Note: Beta is the unstandardized regression coefficient. Standard error indicated in parentheses.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .000$

Table 6. Multiple Regression Coefficients for Regression of Disagreements/Arguments on Selected Independent Variables (N=1263)

Independent variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	B	B	B	B
NUMBER OF PREVIOUS UNIONS (MARRIAGE & COHABITATION) (RESEARCH QUESTION #1)	.330* (.143)	.187 (.160)	.313 (.138)	.079 (.158)
REASON FOR RECOUPLING (RESEARCH QUESTION #2)	-.890*** (.245)	-.669* (.302)	-.127 (.249)	.304 (.322)
REMARRIAGE VS POSTMARITAL COHABITATION (RESEARCH QUESTION #3)	-.349* (.165)	-.326* (.185)	-.435 (.162)	-.346 (.188)
Control Variables				
<i>Socioeconomic status (SES)</i>				
TOTAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME.		-.082* (.041)	-.001 (.002)	-.049 (.040)
HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF THE RESPONDENT.		.168* (.063)	-.106* (.050)	.118 (.061)
<i>Family</i>				
BIOLOGICAL/STEP-CHILDREN IN HOUSEHOLD.			.990*** (.162)	.717*** (.197)
DURATION OF FIRST MARRIAGE.			-.078** (.027)	-.060* (.027)
DURATION OF FIRST MARRIAGE SQUARED.			.001 (.001)	.001 (.001)
<i>Demographic</i>				
AGE				-.036** (.011)
SEX				-.054** (.171)
R ²	.010	0.22	.086	.094

Note: Beta is the unstandardized ordinary least squares regression coefficients. Standard error indicated in parentheses.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .000$

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APPENDIX

DIVORCE ATTITUDES

DIV_PRONa1. In order for YOU to be happy in life, is it very important, important, not very important or not at all important to have a lasting relationship as a couple?

DIV_PRONa2. In order for YOU to be happy in life, is it very important, important, not very important or not at all important to be married?

MARITAL INTERACTION

MAR_INTERACTa1. About how often do you and your spouse discuss something? Is it often? sometimes? hardly ever? never?

MAR_INTERACTa2. About how often do you and your (spouse/partner) laugh together? Is it often? sometimes? hardly ever? never?

MAR_HAP. Overall, would you say that your relationship is ... very happy? fairly happy? not too happy? not asked?

DISAGREEMENT

DISAGREEa1. Do you and your (spouse/partner) often, sometimes, hardly ever or never have arguments about chores and responsibilities?

DISAGREEa2. Do you and your (spouse/partner) often, sometimes, hardly ever or never have arguments about money?

DISAGREEa3. Do you and your (spouse/partner) often, sometimes, hardly ever or never have arguments about showing affection to each other?

DISAGREEa4. Do you and your (spouse/partner) often, sometimes, hardly ever or never have arguments about leisure time?

DISAGREEa5. Do you and your (spouse/partner) often, sometimes, hardly ever or never have arguments about in-laws?