THE REMARRIAGE FAMILY AND THE FORMER SPOUSE
- MARITAL ADJUSTMENT AND FAMILY COHESION

BY

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ABSTRACT

It has been suggested that 25% of marriages in Canada are remarriages (Schlesinger, 1981). In such remarriages it has been recommended that the non-custodial parent have minimal contact with the new family (Goldstein, Freud & Solnit, 1973). More recently, therapists have begun to recognise the importance of having permeable boundaries in remarriage families which allow all significant family members to stay involved (Messinger, 1985; Sager et al., 1983).

This research study included 33 families in which the wife had remarried after a divorce, and had children from the previous marriage. A total of 105 subjects participated including 33 wives, 30 stepfathers and 42 adolescents. Employing an anonymous questionnaire format, the following hypotheses were tested: (1) There is a significant relationship between the wife's contact with her former spouse and family cohesion. (2) There is a relationship between contact with the former spouse and marital adjustment. (3) There is a positive relationship between balanced cohesion and marital adjustment. (4) There will be less variance between family members on cohesiveness when there is moderate contact with the former spouse.

The total frequency of contact was assessed over a three month period, and subjects were grouped according to No Contact, Telephone Contact Only and Personal Contact.
Eighty-two percent of the children were found to have contact with their non-custodial father once per month or less.

Statistical analysis supported the relationship between marital adjustment and former spouse contact. Pearson Correlation Coefficients revealed a significant relationship between cohesion and marital adjustment. The strongest relationships were found in the husband scores in both cases. The relationship between cohesion and frequency of contact with the former spouse was not statistically significant. No significant difference in variance on cohesion scores was found between groups with No Contact or Personal Contact with the former spouse.

The sample was found to be within the norms (Spanier, 1976) on the marital adjustment measure, and significantly below established norms (Olson et al., 1985) on cohesion.
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Chapter I - Introduction

Demography

Many families in North America are struggling to reorganise their roles and relationships after divorce and remarriage. As divorce rates continue to escalate, the rate of remarriages is also growing. In 1970, 30% of marriages in the U.S.A. were of couples in which at least one of the partners had been previously married. By 1980 this figure had increased to 41% (Furstenburg, 1980). A 1981 demographic study of family trends in Canada found that one out of every four Canadian marriages were remarriages (Schlesinger, 1981). It has been estimated that if current divorce and remarriage rates continue through the 1980's and 1990's, 25% of all American children will become stepchildren and 25% of all adults will become stepparents (Cherlin, 1981). Despite these large figures, the area of remarriage families has only recently received much attention from researchers.

Loss is a common experience for members of remarriage families. This may be the loss of a parent, a spouse, a dream for the future, or financial stability. It may be the permanent and total loss following a death or a partial loss after a divorce (Visher & Visher, 1979). Nearly 90% of remarrying men and women are divorced, the rest widowed (Glick, 1980). In addition, 60% of couples in remarried
families have custody of one or more children and 20% involve a non-custodial parent (Glick, 1980). For this large population, the beginning of a new marriage will also involve children born from a former relationship, the existence of a former spouse and his/her relations, and the trauma associated with divorce. Resolving these losses is considered to be an important prerequisite for the successful formation of a new family (McGoldrick & Carter, 1980; Ranson, Schlesinger & Derdyn, 1979; Visher & Visher, 1979). Some clinicians believe that a total emotional divorce rarely occurs when children are involved (Sager, Brown, Crohn, Engel, Rodstein & Walker, 1983).

Nature of the Problem

The development of a remarriage family differs significantly from that of an intact family. First marriage couples move through a series of transitional steps that can be more or less anticipated for those who are prepared (Messinger, 1984). There is opportunity for the couple to focus on the marital subsystem before children are born. This opportunity does not exist for the remarried couple (Random et al., 1979). Not only are the transitional steps uncharted, but they move immediately into a parenting stage of family development which requires the interweaving of three or more families. The spouses may be at very different phases of the family life cycle as a result of
their previous family experiences, which can make the transition to an integrated, workable family more difficult (McGoldrick & Carter, 1980). The children, having already suffered the loss of one parent may be fearful that this new relationship will weaken their relationship with the remaining parent. There likely has been a single parent phase in the family where there is a tendency for the custodial parent and children to develop closed boundaries (Messinger & Walker, 1979). This is one of many factors that can make it difficult for a new person to enter the family system and for the spouse subsystem to develop a primary bond (Ransom et al., 1979).

The manner in which remarriage families are influenced by members of the former nuclear family is not well documented. Clinicians and researchers have conflicting views of the effect that relationships with a former spouse have on the remarried family. Some caution that the less ex-spouses see or talk to each other, or mention the other to the children, the better for all concerned (Mayleas, 1977), and others conclude that the ex-spouse generally has a negative influence on the remarriage (Duberman 1975). The most frequent view of contemporary therapists and researchers indicates that some cooperation is in order. Visher and Visher (1979) recommend cooperation between ex-spouses but not extreme emotional involvement. Ahrons (1981) found that after a divorce, parents need to dissolve many aspects of
the nuclear family; redefine their relationship to eliminate the spousal roles while establishing new parental roles. She also expressed the opinion that continuing to share some elements of friendship minimizes losses for the parents and the children.

A workable parenting relationship formed by the biological parents after separation and divorce may not continue after one of them remarries. A study conducted by Crosbie-Burnett (1983) showed that half of men and women reported a change in their relationship with their ex-spouses after remarriage. Twice as many women in this study enjoyed improvement in this relationship as experienced deterioration. This study also showed that the amount of contact a natural father maintains with his children drops significantly after remarriage. This reduction in contact may account for some of the increase in harmony, but there is insufficient research to substantiate this.

A study of forty stepparent couples by Clingempeel (1981) placed couples in three equal sized groups according to the levels of contact the wife maintained with her former husband. He found that couples where moderate contact (one to three contacts per month) was maintained with the ex-husband exhibited higher marital quality than those with either high or low levels of contact. These results were
not replicated in a later study which utilized a modified methodology (Clingempeel & Brand, 1985).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the present study was to investigate some of the effects of contact with the ex-spouse on the remarriage family. The acknowledgement of the former family appears to be important in the formation of a remarriage family. It then follows that it is valuable to add to the knowledge of this relationship through research. The Clingempeel studies (1981, 1985) are among the very few specific research projects in this area. Further empirical information about this aspect of the remarriage family should lead to better understanding of the functioning of these families, and help to clear some of the confusion regarding the effect of the ex-spouse on the remarriage family system. In addition, it may be useful in creating guidelines for both the families struggling with the challenge of blending a family and the clinicians helping them.

The theoretical framework for examining the remarriage family in this study will be that of family systems theory. This approach assumes that a change in any part of the system will have an effect on the entire system. It provides a valuable framework for understanding how the entire family reacts when in a period of change.
particular, the Structural approach of Salvador Minuchin, with its emphasis on boundaries and subsystems is utilized. In addition the concept of multiple tracks (Sager et al., 1983) provides a theoretical framework for understanding the complex kin relationships of the remarriage family.

Definition of terms

**Boundary**—the internal world of a person's experience as well as the physical barrier between oneself and others (Walker & Messinger, 1979).

**Cohesion**—"the emotional bonding that family members have toward one another" (Olson, McCubbin, Barnes, Larsen, Muxon & Wilson, 1985, p. 3).

**Complex stepfather family**—families which result from the marriage of a divorced man with children from his previous marriage (but without custody) and a divorced woman with custody of children from her former marriage (Clingempeel, 1981).

**Simple stepfather family**—a family which results from the marriage of a man without children from a former relationship, and a divorced woman with custody of children from a former relationship.

**Custodial parent**—a parent that provides the primary residence for one or more of his/her children.

**Non-custodial parent**—a parent that does not provide a primary residence for one or more of his/her children.

**Former spouse**—a person who was formerly related by marriage, after the marriage is ended by divorce. This will be used interchangeably with the term ex-spouse.

**Frequency of contact**—a count of the number of times, within a specified time period, that designated persons have a face-to-face meeting that includes the exchange of at least one word.

**Intact family**—a family in which both the husband and wife are in their first marriage, and the children living in the home are their biological children.
Marital Adjustment—"a process, the outcome of which is determined by the degree of: (1) troublesome marital differences; (2) interspousal tensions and personal anxiety; (3) marital satisfaction; (4) dyadic cohesion; (5) consensus on matters of importance to marital functioning" (Spanier, 1976, p. 17).

Remarriage family—a family that is created by the marriage (or living together in one domicile) of two partners, one or both of whom had been previously married and then divorced or widowed (Sager er al., 1981).

Quasi-kin—former spouses, the kin of former spouses and the people former spouses marry (Bohannon, 1970).

Stepfather—a man who marries a woman who has custody of her biological children.

Stepchild—a child whose natural mother or father or both has remarried.

Research Questions

The major objectives of this study were to determine the relationships between:

(a) The frequency of contact between ex-spouses who have one or more children and the level of cohesion as perceived by family members in the remarriage family.

(b) The frequency of contact between ex-spouses who have one or more children and the level of marital adjustment demonstrated by the remarried couple.

(c) The cohesion as perceived by the family members in the remarriage family and the level of marital adjustment demonstrated by the remarried couple.
Other variables such as length of time between marriages, mother's satisfaction with the parental involvement of the former spouse, age of children, and differences between simple and complex stepfather families were also examined to determine if there are any significant patterns.
Chapter II - Review of the Literature

Introduction

The myths in our culture about stepfamilies are very old. Stories about wicked stepmothers in tales such as Snow White, Cinderella and Hansel and Gretel have been passed down through the ages. Remarriage is on the increase but is not a new phenomenon. In a demographic survey (1977) Bohannan and Erickson found that almost all of the 84 natural families they interviewed had at least one stepparent a generation back. They commented that "...most people today appear to have some (personal) experience with a step-relationship" (Bohannen & Erickson, 1977, p.2). Despite these confirmations of the long-term and widespread existence of remarriage families, research and clinical interest in the area is relatively new (Visher & Visher, 1979; Walker, Rogers & Messinger, 1977). The sociologist Cherlin (1978), hypothesized that the higher rate of divorce for remarriages after divorce than after death of a spouse (Bumpass & Sweet, 1972; Cherlin, 1977) is due to the incomplete institutionalization of remarriage. Cherlin argued that intact families have institutionalized patterns of behaviour recognized and supported by the society. Remarriage families, however, face very different problems due to the fact that their complex family relationships are
not well defined in Western society. Appropriate social behavior with ex-spouses, post-divorce shared parenting, relationships with kin and new spouses of former spouses are all without social guidelines. The belief that lack of guidelines for roles and relationships is the primary problem, rather than the complexity of the institution itself, has been supported by other researchers in the field (Walker, Rogers, & Messinger, 1977; Furstenburg, 1980).

Emily and John Visher, in their frequently quoted book *Stepfamilies: A Guide to Working With Stepparents and Stepchildren* (1979, state that many stepfamilies are reluctant to identify themselves as such due to the social stigma and their own feelings of failure. An article by Azubike Uzoka (1979) may provide some explanation for the slowness of our culture to acknowledge the existence and acceptability of the remarriage family. Uzoka believes that the American focus on the self-sufficiency of the nuclear family is "inadequate, misleading and extremely pernicious when relied on for an understanding of the dynamics of family functioning ..." (p.1095). He explored the roots of the nuclear family ideal and interpreted them as a necessary adjustment at the time of industrialization when extended families were separated and communication and transportation systems were poor. This is no longer the case, but the myth of the nuclear family remains despite the lack of support and loneliness it generates even in members of these
"ideal", intact nuclear families. Using this perspective to examine the remarriage family, it can be seen that in order for it to resemble the ideal it must deny its own history. Families of remarriage have significant members of the family system living outside of the family household (Kent, 1980), and yet the cultural ideal is to revere the self-sufficiency and closed boundaries of the nuclear family (Uzoka, 1979). Many other investigators of remarriage have referred to the detrimental effects of recreating the nuclear family (Anspach, 1976; Visher & Visher, 1979; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). The term bi-nuclear family has recently become evident in remarriage family literature (Messinger, 1984). This concept of a family with two stepfamily homes in which the children move freely between, may prove to be the redefinition of a normal remarriage family (Messinger, 1984).

History of Divorce and Remarriage Research

The first major research project about remarriage was the sociological study by Jessie Bernard (1956). Now considered a classic, this study gathered information from census data, individual case material and questionnaires completed by 2009 informants who were closely connected with remarriage families. Bernard showed evidence that although there are individuals who repeatedly fail at marriage, a sample taken at any given time will show that most are as
successful in their remarriages as those in first marriages. She also found that the success of remarriages after death of a spouse was higher than after divorce. Her discussion of the influence of the ex-spouse assumed that the breakup of the first marriage was instigated by the husband and that the wife has suffered great loss. She maintains that divorced men tend to remarry more often than divorced women, and the distress of the spouse that does not remarry will likely have a negative effect on the remarriage. This study presents many of the problems of adjustment in remarriage families. Its validity is limited by the fact that the population is neither random nor representative of the population.

A later Canadian study (Schlesinger, 1978) used similar methodology in its interview study of 96 Toronto couples. This work was largely descriptive, including many quotations from the subjects, and contains little quantitative data. Some observations relevant to the present study include: seventy-three percent of the previously married women felt it was more difficult to be the remarried partner than the previously single partner, widows stated more satisfaction with both of their marriages than divorced women, and eighty-one percent of the respondents felt that their present marriage met their expectations very satisfactorily.
Another early major study, conducted by William Goode (1956), explored the effects of divorce on mothers. This random sample of 425 urban women was divided into four groups according to how long they had been divorced at the time of the research interview. One finding of this study, that the majority of mothers thought their children's lives had improved after the divorce, has been widely referred to in subsequent research. Other research has indicated that divorce and remarriage did not necessarily have detrimental effects on children (Burchinal, 1964), although the emotional trauma of separation and divorce needs to be resolved in order for the transition to remarriage to be successful (Bitterman, 1968). Despite these findings, which have been substantiated by recent research (Ganong & Coleman, 1984), the majority of early studies were generally pessimistic and searched for the deleterious effects that remarriage had on family members (Esses & Campbell, 1984).

Sociologist Paul Bohannen made a valuable contribution to the literature of divorce and remarriage. Divorce and After presented articles about the aftermath of divorce. While investigating the patterns of divorce and remarriage, Bohannen discovered some interesting patterns of interaction between ex-spouses and their new partners. He found in some cases that new relationships formed between the two new spouses of ex-spouses. He called these relationship patterns between ex and current spouses, "divorce chains", 
and coined the term "quasi-kin" to refer to ex-spouses and the kin of ex-spouses. The complications in family relationships when households are made up of members who are not kinsmen of one another are outlined by Bohannen. He suggests that emphasis needs to be put on household relationships as well as genetic relationships, and points out that there are no realistic guidelines for families to do this. An article in this collection by Margaret Mead explored the conflict of stepfamily relationships in our society when children are taught to love and trust only one set of parents. Though not backed by empirical study, these frequently quoted theoretical articles recognised new kinship patterns that challenged the nuclear family myth.

Lucille Duberman (1973, 1975) was one of the first, and remains one of the few, researchers who focused on the remarriage family as a unit (Sager et al., 1979). A random sample of eighty-eight couples remarried in 1965-69 was drawn from the marriage licence bureau in Cleveland. She focused on the quality of relationships of members of remarriage families, using a "Family Integration" scale to determine how close each member felt to his/her family. Her results support the view that a weak marital system affects the level of family functioning (Lewis, Beavers, & Gossett, 1976; Minuchin, 1974). Due to the small sample size, an unrepresentative population and the ex-post-facto nature of the study, Duberman's finding must be considered to be
tentative (Sager et al., 1979). Despite these limitations, Duberman provides a valuable exploratory study of the issues and relationships of remarriage families.

Limitations of Remarriage Literature

The research literature in the area of remarriage is plagued by problems common to the study of families. According to Walker, Rogers and Messinger (1977), some of the limitations include non-random, unrepresentative samples (Bernard, 1956; Schlesinger, 1978), small random samples focusing on one aspect of the family (Duberman, 1973), non-random clinic samples (Fast & Cain, 1966), studies conducted in the past (Bernard, 1956; Duberman, 1973), or at one point in time (Bowerman & Irish, 1962). Walker et al. (1977) comment that most of the findings reported are "suggestive - possibly valid, but unproven." Esses and Campbell (1984) discussed similar weaknesses in the methodology including also the use of unstandardized instruments, open-ended interviews and questionnaires with inadequate testing for validity and reliability. They point out the need for longitudinal research and for an adequate theoretical model of stepfamily functioning. The latter may have been addressed by the comprehensive concept of multiple tracks developed by Clifford Sager and associates (1983).
The difficulties of finding suitable remarried populations for study is complicated by the fact that there are eight recognised combinations of families caused by remarriage, which may differ widely in their dynamics. The situation most often studied are stepfather families because they occur more frequently than stepmother families. Another problem in finding subjects may be the previously mentioned invisibility factor discussed by Visher and Visher (1979) which inhibits remarriage families from identifying themselves, much less agreeing to participate in research. The phenomenon of pseudo-mutuality, in which the family presents the external image of a happy family despite the presence of conflict, has also been recognised frequently in remarriage families (Messinger, 1976), and may be a deterrent for a family to volunteer to be studied.

The majority of studies in the remarriage area have been focused in one of three areas. The first group of studies are those which compare remarriage families with intact families (Anderson, 1983). A large number of these have focused on the success or satisfaction of first marriages compared to remarriages (Glenn & Weaver, 1977; McCarthy, 1978; Weingarten, 1980). The results of these studies have been contradictory, but the most frequent results seem to indicate that remarriages have slightly higher failure rates and slightly lower satisfaction than do first marriages, that remarried males are on the whole more
satisfied with marriage than remarried females, and that remarried females are more satisfied with their present marriage than their previous marriage.

A second group of studies examine the adjustment of children to remarriage. A review of thirty-eight studies in this area was conducted by Ganong and Coleman (1984). Although problems with methodology were reported, they concluded that in general there was little evidence that children in stepfamilies differ from children in other family structures. The five year longitudinal study of children of divorce by Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) concluded that diminished or disrupted parenting rather than the family structure itself, was connected with the incidence of depression in children of divorce. In addition they found that the extent to which the child benefited from a remarriage depended on how well the conflict between the father and stepfather had been resolved and the child having a continued contact with the non-custodial parent. The majority of children in this study were living with their biological mother and a stepfather. When Bernard (1956) investigated the mental health of stepchildren, using university students as her subjects, she found no significant difference in terms of stability, self-sufficiency or dominance compared to non-stepchildren. No long-term, non-clinical research has been conducted on the children of remarriage within the context of the family.
The subject of stepparent-stepchild relationships has probably resulted in the largest number of research projects. The majority of these have studied stepfather-stepchild relationships. An early study (Bowerman & Irish, 1962) found that in stepfamily homes with adolescents, stepmothers had more difficult roles than stepfathers, and stepdaughters had more extreme reactions towards their parents than did stepsons. These findings have been supported by more recent research (Chilman, 1983). Another early study (Fast & Cain, 1966) set the tone of pathology in their article "The stepparent role: Potential for disturbance in family functioning". Many of the studies that followed investigated the difficulties of these adult-child relationships rather than the positive features (Pink, 1985; Rallings, 1976; Stern, 1978).

**Structural Family Theory**

Structural Family Theory, as developed by Salvador Minuchin (1974), is based on viewing man as acting and reacting as a member of different social contexts. The family is a very influential social system, and there is an interdependence between the individual and their family (Minuchin, 1974). This model emphasizes the importance of the family's structural organisation for the functioning of the family unit and the growth of its individual members. An individual will be a member of a number of subsystems in
which he or she will have a variety of roles, a varying amount of power and differing skills. A subsystem refers to groupings within the family which may include individuals, dyads or larger groups. In a remarriage family, the possibility for subsystems are even greater than the intact family. Another central concept to Structural Theory is the concept of boundaries.

**Boundaries.** Minuchin refers to boundaries as being the rules defining who participates in subsystems and how they participate (1974, p. 53). For a family to be functional, the boundaries must be clear and defined. This is important so that the members can carry out their functions without interference, but can also have contact with other members of the subsystem and those outside of the subsystem. The establishment of appropriate boundaries aids in the development of the family hierarchy and helps create an effective unit in which to perform necessary parenting functions. When this balance is not maintained, the family system may become enmeshed or disengaged. These same concepts are used by Olsen et al. in their Circumplex Model (Olson, et al. 1979). The cohesion subscale of the associated Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scale III (Olson et al., 1985) identifies two adequate levels of cohesion labelled separated and connected, and the extremes of disengaged and enmeshed.
Enmeshment refers to a preference within the family to increase communication and concern until the boundaries become blurred and the members cannot differentiate (Minuchin, 1974). This is a common feature of single parent families. It can make the transition to a remarriage family very difficult if the family is not able to redefine the boundaries in order for the new member to develop a role. This enmeshment of the single parent family subsystem can also make it unlikely for the spousal subsystem to develop clear boundaries. The original single parent family members will remain a significant subsystem due to their common experiences and memories, even when the boundary issues are resolved successfully (Keshet, 1980).

Disengagement refers to a preference within the family to maintain distance through decreased communication and overly rigid boundaries (Minuchin, 1974). In order for a family to successfully negotiate the transition into remarriage they will need to be flexible. While an enmeshed system reacts with intensity to every change, regardless of its significance, the disengaged family does not allow enough closeness to react and adapt to change, even when it is necessary for the healthy functioning of the family.

Boundaries in a nuclear first-marriage family are generally well defined (Walker & Messinger, 1979). Periods of transition are stressful for families and a period of
boundary dysfunction can be a normal way for a family to react (Wood & Talmon, 1983). According to Wood and Talmon this reformation of boundaries is a crucial part of the process of family transition. For the single parent or remarriage family, one of the most difficult issues is to know how to let go of their old structures. "If the family hangs on to the 'blueprints' of the phantom-intact family, they may get stuck in the process" (Wood & Talmon, 1983, p.354). It is a delicate process for a family to maintain a structure to support it during the confusion of transition, yet be able to yield that structure in order to adapt to the new system. Sometimes the stressful situation of boundary ambiguity exists in which the family is unsure who is in or out of the family (Boss, 1984). Visher and Visher (1979) indicate that disorganisation and conflict should be considered a normal state for the first one and one half to two years of remarriage, while these issues are resolved.

Walker and Messinger (1979) refer to the links that connect remarriage families to the previous marriage as an indication of more "permeable" boundaries in these families than in traditional nuclear families. They identify lack of prescribed traditions, difficulties in talking to children about the other parent, and the quality of parenting by non-custodial parents, as problems associated with the permeability of boundaries. Despite these problems, they advocate the healthiness of flexible, permeable boundaries
between the former spouse and his kin, and the new remarriage family (Walker & Messinger, 1979). This is supported by other clinicians and researchers in the field (Ahrons, 1980, Crosbie-Burnett, 1983; Kent, 1980; Visher & Visher, 1979).

McGoldrick and Carter (1980) identify the boundary issues within the stepfamily as being membership, space, authority and time. While these can be issues in any family, the questions of who belongs in the family; physical allocation and respect of space; who is in charge of discipline, money and decisions; and the rationing of time together, quickly become loaded issues in remarriage families. The resolution of these boundary issues is complicated by the fact that the various subsystems within the family may have differing developmental needs.

The Marital Subsystem

In an exploratory study of healthy family functioning, Lewis et al., (1976) found that health in a family was characterized by the establishment of a boundary for the spousal relationship, and the existence of strong marital unity. The primary importance of the marital relationship has been stressed by many other family therapists (Minuchin, 1974; Satir, 1967). Therapists and researchers in the field of remarriage have generally supported the belief that the
marital unit is central to the functioning of the family (Duberman, 1975; Messinger, 1984; Sager et al., 1983).

Visher and Visher (1979) stressed the importance of the marital bond, but concluded that there tends to be less cohesiveness among remarriage families as a whole compared to intact family bonding. Crosbie-Burnett (1984) challenges the importance of the couple relationship in predicting family happiness. She found that satisfactory relationships between the stepparent and stepchildren had a greater effect on family happiness. Anderson (1983) found that dysfunctional stepfamilies often exhibit high levels of marital involvement and marital adjustment. An inverse relationship has been reported between the presence of children from a former relationship and adult satisfaction with the present family situation (Pasley & Ihinger-Tallman, 1984). When one member of the couple has children, and the other not, there are differences between their viewpoints and expectations which may become a source of conflict (Maddox, 1975; Schulman, 1972; Visher & Visher, 1979). It appears that the couple relationship is generally thought to be important to the survival of the remarriage family but may differ in priority when compared to an intact family.

**Effect of Former Spouse Subsystem on the Remarriage Couple.** The existence of a former spouse can have an effect on the relationship of a remarried couple. It was
demonstrated that people who remarry after a death have higher marital satisfaction than those who remarry after a divorce (Bernard, 1956; Bumpass & Sweet, 1972). As previously discussed, it is not well researched but usually recommended by therapists, that cooperation between the remarriage family and the former spouse is helpful. There is even less conclusive information about the effects of the former spouse on the marital relationship. The writings on remarriage have largely ignored the existence of a relationship between former spouses and its effects on the boundaries of the new system (Ahrons, 1980).

A small body of research on the relationship between parents after divorce supports the family systems model, in that the members continue to be interdependent. Parents generally continue to share responsibilities, concerns and joys of child rearing (Ahrons, 1981; Goldsmith, 1980). In families one year after divorce, parents who had a mutually supportive and cooperative co-parenting relationship also interacted frequently and shared more than child-rearing (Ahrons, 1980). Women generally prefer more distance in former spouse relations than men (Goetting, 1979), and are less satisfied with the co-parental relationship than men (Ahrons, 1981). Non-custodial fathers view themselves as more involved with the rearing of the children than the custodial mothers acknowledge (Goldsmith, 1980). It is recognised that the relationship changes between divorced
parents when one of them remarries (Crosbie-Burnett, 1983), but this process is largely uncharted. The majority of writings that refer to the former spouse after remarriage warn of possible negative effects of this relationship on the remarried couple, although they may recommend continuing communication for the good of the children (Duberman, 1975; Messinger, 1984; Visher & Visher, 1979).

Messinger (1984) comments that most people look for exclusivity of love and loyalty in marriage, but that the new spouses and the former spouse often get caught in a triangular power struggle. In a remarriage where there are children, there will remain a link through the children to the former marriage. In addition to this reminder of the former marriage, an inverse relationship has been found between the reporting of unresolved problems from first marriages, and the reporting of a successful second marriage (Bernard, 1956; Messinger, 1983).

Clingempeel (1981) found a curvilinear relationship between contact with former spouses and marital quality in remarriage. The contact between spouses was measured by a frequency count of meetings over the previous six months. The subjects were then grouped into three equal sized groups of low, moderate and high contact according to the frequency of contact. The low contact group were found to have 0-3 contacts over six months, the moderate group had 1-3
contacts per month, and the high contact group had contact at least weekly with their former spouse. Moderate contact correlated with high levels of marital quality and high and low contact were associated with low marital quality. He also found in this study that marital quality was higher in simple stepparent families than in complex stepparent families. This later result was confirmed in a later study (Clingempeel & Brand, 1985), but the relationship between former spouse contact and marital quality was not obtained. A curvilinear relationship between interaction with kin and marital functioning in intact families was obtained by Blood (1969). Extremely high and low levels of kinship interaction were related to lower levels of marital solidarity and cohesion, while moderate levels of interaction were related to enhanced marital quality (Blood, 1969).

Roberts (1985) found that there was a negative relationship between a "liking" attachment to the former spouse, and marital adjustment. He also found that family cohesion and marital adjustment were positively related (1985). Duberman (1973) concluded that the influence of an ex-spouse is generally negative, and that the rejection of the remarriage by his relatives may help the remarriage spouses to be closer in mutual defense and support. Sager et al. (1983) state that if the two present spouses are
...emotionally divorced enough from their past lives, are mature people who can be open with each other, and neither has a characterological disorder, nor is the least neurotic, psychotic, borderline or senile, they can usually deal with and weather the provocations of the most difficult ex-spouse. However, since few among us can claim this state of perfection, an ex-spouse can be the object that the Rem couple uses to provoke all degrees of negative processes between them, from mild irritation to insane jealousy and the contemplation of murder. (p. 202)

It appears that one of the challenges for a remarried couple is to negotiate a relationship with the former spouse that allows for the development of clear boundaries around the marital system and the remarriage family unit, while permitting communication at the parental level, and acceptance of a relationship between children and the non-custodial parent.

The Children's Subsystem

One of the major stressors for children in remarriage families is the disruption of the individual life cycle (Sager et al., 1983). This happens initially when the family life cycle is disrupted by the separation of the parents, and again when one of the parents remarries. The adjustment to these changes, as discussed earlier, has
attracted some research and clinical interest, but few studies have looked at the child as a member of the family system.

Subsystems of children are often formed by age with the younger children and older children having membership in separate subsystems to carry out many of the family functions. This may vary considerably in remarriage families where there is the possibility of children living together who are biological children of the mother only, of the father only, or are born to the remarried couple. There is a tendency for closer alliances between blood relatives within a remarriage family (Anderson, 1983). Children of similar ages brought together as siblings by remarriage may become very competitive and protective of their respective parents attention (Visher & Visher, 1979).

The establishment of appropriate boundaries is especially important to protect the "incest taboo" when there are teenagers brought together in a household. The heightened sexuality in a newly remarried household can be both frightening and stimulating for an adolescent. They may be attracted to their step-siblings or to a stepparent. Often these boundaries are maintained with hostility and withdrawal as the adolescent masks his unacceptable feelings (Visher & Visher, 1979).
The Natural Parent. Wallerstein and Kelly (1980), found that most of the children in their sample retained a deep identification with, and attachment to, both biological parents five years after their divorce. This was true even when the non-custodial parent had little contact with the child, and when the custodial parents remarried creating a stepparent for the child. The most severe developmental and emotional distress was displayed by children with little or no father contact. They also reported that the child would continue to yearn for the biological parent even when there was a positive relationship with the stepparent.

There is some evidence that the frequency of visiting is reduced after one of the parents remarries (Anderson, 1983; Crosbie-Burnett, 1983). Adolescents tend to have less contact with non-custodial parents than younger children. This may be due in part to the natural move towards affiliation with the peer group during adolescence. When studying kinship patterns in remarriage families, Anspach (1976) found that fathers are the pivotal link to kin for their children. When contact is diminished with the non-custodial parent, the child may also lose contact with grandparents and other important family figures.

In their much quoted book Beyond the Best Interest of the Child, Goldstein, Freud and Solnet (1973) made recommendations on child custody and visitation after
divorce. They strongly advocated that the control of visitation should be with the custodial parent, that the non-custodial parent should have no legally enforcable right to visit the child, and that a clean break with the child by the non-custodial parent presents less danger to both families in the long run. These widely quoted guidelines are unsupported by most current clinical writers (Messinger, 1984; Sager, et al., 1983; Vischer & Vischer, 1979). The preservation of the parent-child relationship and the recognition of this relationship by the families is generally recommended, supporting the previously discussed findings of Wallerstein and Kelly (1980).

The children are the link between the former family and the new remarriage family. Often the natural father does not accept that it is in the child's best interests for the new stepfather to develop a role in the child's life (Messinger, 1984). The custodial parent may become less open to co-parenting with the ex-spouse after remarriage (McGoldrick & Carter, 1980). The child's pivotal position in the remarriage family indicates the need for cooperation between adults, and the establishment of clear boundaries between all subsystems.

Multiple Tracks of the Remarriage Family

Sager et al. (1983) conceptualize remarriage as the
creation of a Remarriage Family Suprasystem that includes the entire network of kin from past and present marriages that impinge on the remarriage family. They discuss the needs of the subsystems in the context of an evolutionary system that includes individual, marital and family life cycles. The precursor to remarriage has been the disruption in all three life cycles and so turbulence is expected. The remarriage creates an additional set of life tracks, the remarriage life cycle. It will be a remarriage family life cycle when children are involved. In this case, the "old" nuclear family will continue in some form, continuing on the former family life cycle while the new remarriage cycle evolves. This framework is in many ways compatible with the Structural Family Theory model as developed by Salvador Minuchin. It is systems-oriented, and focuses on the process of developing sub-systems and boundaries. The new concept of multiple tracks acknowledges the existence of the complex interactions and relationships that exist within the remarriage family. It provides a new framework for looking beyond the nuclear family structure to a broad remarriage family structure with permeable boundaries.

Hypotheses

In testing the following hypotheses, family cohesion will be measured using the cohesion subscale of the Family
Adaptability and Cohesion Scale III (Olsen, et al., 1985); frequency of contact will be measured using the Contact with Former Spouse Questionnaire, modified for this study from Clingempeel (1981); and Marital Adjustment will be measured using the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976).

1. In a remarriage family, there is a significant relationship between family cohesion, and the frequency of contact between a remarried wife and her former husband. Low and high levels of contact are associated with extreme measures of cohesion, and moderate levels of contact are associated with balanced levels of cohesion.

Rationale: It has been established in the literature reviewed that the acceptance of communication between a non-custodial parent and his former spouse's remarried family is important for the well being of the children. There is evidence (Boss, 1980) that indicates that resolving issues from a former marriage is necessary for the success of a remarriage. The redefinition of boundaries is important in remarriage families in order that they occur as sources of support rather than sources of potential conflict (Kent, 1980). Clingempeel, (1981) found that there was a high correlation between the frequency of contact that children had with their non-custodial fathers, and the frequency of contact between the children's mother and her former husband. In families where there is contact between
wife and former husband, therefore, there is also likely similar contact between father and children. The measure of the wife's contact is likely a more accurate reflection of the families' acceptance of contact because families in which the children visit but are used as message-carriers for their parents, or where there is no contact between parents, will be measured as low contact families. Evidence has been presented that indicates that a relationship with the former husband will likely effect the marital relationship. In order for a family to establish a functional (balanced) level of cohesion it would appear that some contact between former spouses is necessary for the well-being of the children. This would be an indication of the recommended 'permeable boundaries' between the families (Walker & Messinger, 1979). Too much contact may be an indication that the former spouse is enmeshed in the system, and that inadequate boundaries have been formed around the remarriage family. This would likely interfere with the formation of a relationship between the children and the stepfather (Schulman, 1981), and would also affect the marital relationship (Messinger, 1984). Little or no contact may be an indication of overly rigid boundaries between the family systems. It has been established that this is detrimental for the children, making their adjustment to the remarried family difficult and affecting the family cohesion.
2. There is a relationship between contact with a remarried wife's former spouse and the marital adjustment in the remarried couple.

Rationale: It has been established by previous research that the former spouse has an effect on the marital relationship. In addition the remarried couples' marital adjustment has been said to be negatively affected by unresolved issues from the former marriage. The literature is not consistent as to the extent and the direction of the effect of former spouse involvement on the remarriage. Clingempeel (1981) found that moderate levels of contact (1-3 contacts per month) with a former spouse were related to better marital quality than high or low levels of contact. This finding was not replicated in a modified study (Clingempeel, 1985). It is consistent with the Structural Family Theory model, and the findings of Lewis et al. (1976) that high levels of contact with a former spouse may indicate highly diffuse boundaries around the couple subsystem and would be associated with low marital adjustment. It is not clear from the literature what level of marital adjustment would be associated with low levels of former spouse contact. There is clear indication that contact is necessary for the adjustment of the children, and contradictory evidence of its effect on the couple. No contact may be an indication of unresolved issues from the former marriage, which has been determined to effect the
remarriage couple relationship. A curvilinear relationship similar to the results of Clingempeel (1981) and Blood (1969) is a possibility. An alternate relationship may be a negative linear relationship between contact and marital adjustment. This would support Duberman's observations (1976), and Roberts (1985) finding that 'liking' of former spouse was negatively related to marital quality.

3. There is a positive relationship between balanced levels of family cohesion and marital adjustment in a remarried family.

Rationale: It has been recognised by Lewis et al. (1976) and Minuchin (1974) that optimal family functioning is characterised by a strong marital relationship. This is supported by many other family theorists, including the majority of experts in the remarriage family field (Messinger, 1984; Sager et al., 1983; Visher & Visher, 1979). There has been some evidence presented that the couple relationship may not be as important as other relationships in predicting the happiness in remarriage families (Crosbie-Burnett, 1984). Most of the evidence supports Roberts (1985) that there is a positive relationship between family cohesion and marital adjustment in remarried families.
4. There will be less variance for family members on the cohesiveness scores in families where there is moderate contact with former spouse than in families where there is low or high contact.

Rationale: Visher and Visher (1979) stated that "children who are the only contact with ex-spouses have a very powerful position which often works to everyone's disadvantage " (p. 210-11). If the first hypothesis in this study is supported, it should follow that the cohesiveness scores of the family members will have a small range, indicating that the perception of family cohesion of all family members is fairly similar. If there is low contact, there will likely be children who are not well adjusted to the remarriage family and would have a resulting extreme cohesiveness score. A new husband is likely to resent high contact and find it more difficult to establish a role in the family, also resulting in an extreme score. Appropriate contact appears to be associated with the establishment of permeable boundaries, not rigid or diffuse boundaries. It is unlikely that there will be families with a small variance between scores in the high or low contact with former spouse groups, due to the factors associated with the extreme levels of contact discussed above.
Chapter III - Methodology

Description of Subjects

Subjects were restricted to simple or complex stepfather families, made up of a biological mother with custody of one or more children, and a stepfather. The biological mother had children from a previous marriage and that marriage ended in divorce. The stepfather may or may not have been previously married, or have children from a previous relationship. There may be children born to the remarriage couple. Stepfather families were selected because they are more numerous than stepmother families and so would potentially be easier to recruit.

Due to the difficulties in recruiting sufficient families, further definition of criteria was avoided, so that all stepfather families as outlined above could participate. This created an opportunity to increase the population size and create more sub-categories for the study of significant relationships. In addition, where ever possible, the following criteria were also included. At least one of the children was between ages twelve and nineteen inclusive and able to respond to the FACES measure of family cohesion. The stepfather did not provide the primary residence for any of his children, but his children may visit in the subjects home. The couple were legally
married or living together as a couple for a minimum of two years. The literature on remarriage indicates that there is a period of approximately two years for stabilization to occur in remarriage families (McGoldrick and Carter, 1980; Stern, 1978). Families that are beyond the two year point are more likely to be representative of the population of remarriage families. In cases where a family member other than the wife refused to participate, data was to be collected from the remaining members.

Recruitment of Subjects

The goal was to recruit thirty families that fit the preceding criteria. Recruitment occurred in a variety of methods and locations. Articles appeared in the two local Nanaimo newspapers, giving general information about the remarriage family study, and inviting subjects to contact the researcher. Similar information was posted at the University of British Columbia, Malaspina College and community notice boards in Nanaimo. The researcher visited classes at Malaspina College. Students were asked to pass on an information letter to anyone they thought may be interested in participating. A colleague of the researcher visited three classes at U.B.C. Nanaimo Family Life Association, an agency which provides educational programs and counselling to families, gave information about the
study to appropriate clients during their intake procedure. A Nanaimo women's group that promotes research about women's roles, Women in Dialogue, was canvassed. An information letter was included in all questionnaire packages for subjects to pass on to other interested families. This approach was found to be the most effective method of recruiting subjects in one remarriage family study (Curtis, 1983). When potential subjects were identified by the above methods, they were asked to contact the researcher, or where possible to leave their name and phone number so they could be contacted.

This procedure did not provide a random sample, so the subjects may not be representative of the general population of remarriage families. The subjects were volunteers and so are likely better educated, of higher socio-economic status, more intelligent and more sociable than the general population (Borg & Gall, 1983). The chance of subjects having these attributes was increased by the recruitment of subjects from college and university campuses. However, the variety of recruitment methods should prevent the problems of some past studies (Bohannen, 1975; Fast & Cain, 1966) associated with focusing on one limited population such as a clinic population.

After subjects volunteered to participate, they were called and asked selected demographic questions to ascertain
that they met the criteria, and were given basic information about the study. Contact was made in this manner to deal most effectively with the spread of geographic area that the subjects covered. The researcher made any long distance calls that were necessary. If subjects qualified and agreed to participate, they were sent the data package including a letter outlining the general purpose of the study, the tasks they would be asked to perform, confidentiality, and information about the graduate student researcher. They were told that they could request the results of the study upon completion, and that they had the right to withdraw at any time. It was anticipated that there may be some problems with adolescents refusing to participate, or changing their minds before completion of the data collection. A letter contained in the adolescent's data collection envelope attempted to make the adolescent feel valued in the project.

Data Collection

Families were sent the measurement instruments along with the above mentioned letter. This consisted of separate packages for each family member. The wife received a copy of the Subject Information - Wife Form, Former Spouse Contact Form, FACES III and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale. The husband received the Subject Information - Husband Form, FACES III and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale. The adolescent
child(ren) received FACES III and a letter. Other than the Former Spouse Contact Form in which collaboration was encouraged, they were asked to complete the enclosed forms without communication with other members until after the information was returned. Each package was in an envelope that could be sealed. The family was instructed to place their completed forms in the sealed envelope and put them all in the provided stamped, addressed envelope to be sent back to the researcher. In this way, each family member could complete their own documents, but the likelihood of only some members returning them was reduced by gathering them in one common envelope.

Visher and Visher (1979) found that stepfamilies tend to be reluctant to identify themselves. It was hoped that by collecting data without personal contact that subjects would be more willing to participate, less concerned about confidentiality, and less likely to display the psuedo-mutuality that is common to remarriage families (Messinger, 1979), than if there were face to face contact with the researcher. This was also helpful in data collection, as the subjects were spread over a wide geographical area. A drawback to using an impersonal method of data collection may have been that subjects felt less personal involvement with the research and researcher and therefore less commitment to complete the data
collection. This concern was dealt with in part by stressing in the introductory letter the special concerns of remarriage families and the importance of further research in the area. An additional drawback was that questions about the procedures were not answered at the time by the researcher. This was dealt with by giving very clear written instructions, and welcoming subjects to contact the researcher (collect) if there were any questions.

**Measurement**

**Demographic Information Form**

There were two versions of this form, one for wives, one for husbands. The collected data included information with regard to present family members, past marriages, children, custody arrangements, occupations etc. Subjects were requested to complete these questionnaires without collaboration.

**Frequency of contact with ex-spouse**

A modification of the Quasi-Kin Relationships Questionnaire developed by Clingempeel (1981) was utilised. The original instrument requested each remarried person to indicate the frequency of face-to-face contact they had with their former spouse and their spouse's former spouse. The present study focused only on the wife and her contact with
her former spouse. Contact was defined by Clingempeel as any face-to-face encounter that consisted of at least one word being exchanged. This definition was maintained.

The Clingempeel questionnaire asked subjects to record their responses on a chart with one square representing each of six months, and columns for totalling the frequency. This was modified in the present study by utilizing three one-page calendar sheets representing the three months previous to collection of data. These calendars contained the days of the month and indicated statutory holidays. The subject indicated each contact with an "x". The researcher totalled the frequency for each month at the top of the page, and a grand total on the first page. By using this type of visual aid, it was believed that the subject should better be able to recall past contact. Pretesting of the instrument indicated that six month recall was difficult and therefore not accurate, so the time was reduced to three months. As in the Clingempeel study, the subjects were asked to do the following to improve the reliability:

(a) consider the typical visitation schedule and any special events such as birthdays
(b) collaborate on responses with present spouse in order to improve memory.

Subjects were then asked to remember how they felt during each contact in the most recent month, and to
indicate whether the contact was positive, neutral or negative. Subjects were also asked to indicate the total number of phone contacts that occurred between the ex-spouses in the previous two weeks (fourteen days).

The reliability of this instrument, as pointed out by Clingempeel, is susceptible to memory distortion over time. Test-retest reliability was obtained in his study by randomly selecting twenty of the remarried people between one and one-half months and two and one-half months after the study and asking them again about the quasi-kin contact. They were placed in three discrete groups as they had been in the original study. Group placement remained the same in seventy-five percent of the cases. In the present study, subjects were also to be placed in discrete groups which would also improve the reliability of the instrument.

This instrument was pre-tested by administering it to three divorced, unmarried women, who were asked for their comments and suggestions. The format and instructions were modified numerous times and then administered to two more divorced, unmarried women.
Family Cohesiveness Measurement

The concept of family cohesiveness refers to the degree of emotional distance or closeness that exists in a family (Friesen, 1983). It is related to the concept of boundary, discussed in Chapter II. Cohesion was measured in the present study by the cohesion subscale of the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales III (Olson, et al., 1985). This subscale measures the degree to which family members are separated from or connected to their family. This dimension is one of the three primary dimensions integrated in the Circumplex Model developed by the authors, the other two being adaptability and communication. Cohesion was analysed in the Circumplex Model as having four levels ranging from extremely low (disengaged) to extremely high (enmeshed). The moderate levels, separated and connected, were considered to be indicative of healthy family functioning and the extreme levels are generally seen as dysfunctional for the family.

FACES III is a twenty item self-report scale which measures a family member's perception of his/her family's functioning. It is designed to be appropriate for persons twelve and over. In order to receive the most accurate score reflecting a families' functioning, FACES III was administered where ever possible to both parents and a
minimum of one child between the ages of twelve and nineteen. Olson et al. (1985) found that there was wide variability between different family members' cohesiveness scores and stressed the importance of administering the scale to as many family members as possible. Cutting points and norms are available to place the combined family score into one of the above four categories. The adaptability subscale was not considered in this study. Validity and reliability figures are contained in Family Inventories (Olson et al., 1985).

Family scores were formed only in families where an adolescent had participated. A mean was calculated from the scores of all family members who completed the task. These family scores, were used in testing the hypotheses involving family cohesion. In addition they were tested using the mean couple cohesion scores, wife scores, husband scores and adolescent scores. In testing Hypothesis Three, only scores from the families which had both husband and wife scores and at least one adolescent score were considered.

Measure of Marital Adjustment

Marital adjustment was measured by the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976). This is a self-report scale that has thirty-two items measuring four dimensions: Dyadic Cohesion, Dyadic Satisfaction, Dyadic Consensus and
Affectional Expression. The scores for these subscales are totalled to give an individual total score. A couple score was obtained by taking the mean of the two scores.

Based on a review of the literature, Spanier (1976) defined marital adjustment as "...a process, the outcome of which is determined by the degree of:

(1) troublesome marital differences
(2) interspousal tensions and personal anxiety
(3) marital satisfaction
(4) dyadic cohesion
(5) consensus on matters of importance to marital functioning." (p.156).

The DAS is widely used in family research. Clingempeel (1985), who originally used the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale in his 1981 study, used DAS in his replication study).

Content validity for this scale was established using an evaluation by three judges. Criterion validity was supported by finding a significant difference between a married sample and a divorced sample. Construct validity was supported by a correlation of .86 with the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976). Reliability was determined for each component and for the total scale. Total scale reliability was found to be .96 (Spanier, 1976).
**Statistical Procedures**

The independent variable in this research was the frequency of contact the wife maintained with her former spouse. Dependent variables measured were Cohesiveness and Marital Adjustment. Additional independent variables were generated from the Demographic Information Sheet. Length of time between marriages and complexity of family were examined to determine if there were any significant relationships with either of the dependent variables.

Statistical analyses consisted of calculating descriptive ($X$, $s$, $r$) and inferential ($Z$, $t$, $F$) statistics. The Z test used to determine if the remarried population differed significantly from established norms on the Cohesion and Dyadic Adjustment measures. One-Way Analysis of Variance ($F$ test) was used to determine any significant differences among levels of Contact with Former Spouse and the dependent variables. The contact measure was divided into three levels for analysis using both Family Cohesion and Dyadic Adjustment scores (Hypotheses 1 & 2). Post-hoc comparisons were made using the Tukey Honestly-Significant-Difference Test. Contact was divided into two levels for analysis of the variance in cohesion scores between family members (Hypothesis 4). Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients were used to determine if there was a significant relationship between Dyadic Adjustment and
Family Cohesion (Hypothesis 3). Pearson Correlations were also used to reflect relationships between the number of years between marriages and both Dyadic Adjustment and Family Cohesion. One-way Analysis of Variance with the Tukey procedure was used to determine significant differences between three levels of family complexity and (a) Dyadic Adjustment (b) Family Cohesion (c) variance in Cohesion scores between family members.
Chapter IV - Results

Demographic Data

A total of forty-two families agreed to participate in this study. Twelve families were referred by Nanaimo Family Life Association, 6 from school counsellors, 6 from word of mouth, 5 from university or college classes, 5 from colleagues of the researcher, 5 from other subjects, and 3 from the newspaper articles. A total of 30 families were from the Nanaimo area, 7 were from Greater Vancouver, 3 from Victoria, 1 from Seattle and 1 from Calgary.

Thirty-three of the families returned completed questionnaires, comprising 78.6% of the number distributed. Thirty-three wives, 30 husbands and 42 adolescents participated making a total of 105 individual subjects. Twenty of the families met all of the specified ideal criteria, 4 couples were married less than 2 years, 3 had no adolescents in the family, 4 returned uncompleted questionnaires by either the husband or adolescent, and 2 had adolescent children from the husband's previous marriage living in the sample family. There were a total of twenty-nine families in the sample in which at least one adolescent participated. There were twenty-six families that included scores from both the wife, husband and at
least one adolescent. Demographic information about the wife and husband subjects is included in Table 1.

There were 64 children in this sample who lived with their mother and stepfather at the time of the data collection. Fifty-two of these children (81%) see their natural father once per month or less, as indicated by the mother. The step-fathers in this sample had a total of 29 of their own children who did not live with them. Eighteen of these children (62%) are visited by their non-custodial father once per month or less (Table 2). The women in this sample had a total of 67 children from previous marriages with a mean age of 15.12 years. The men had a total of 33 children from previous marriages with a mean age of 17.88 years.

Six families in the sample had one or more mutual children born to the remarried couple. In 100% of these six families, the husband had no children from a previous marriage. Ten men in the sample had not been previously married, and had no children from a previous marriage. There were nine children born to remarried couples with a mean age of 1.9 years.

The sample did not differ significantly from the established norms on the Dyadic Adjustment measure (Spanier, 1976). Z-scores indicate that this sample does differ.
### Table 1

**Demographic Information of Wives and Husbands**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Wife</th>
<th>Husband</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean S.D.</td>
<td>Mean S.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age at last birthday.</td>
<td>37.94 3.66</td>
<td>41.13 8.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age at first marriage.</td>
<td>19.66 2.61</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years between marriages.</td>
<td>4.00 3.46</td>
<td>3.30 2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of first marriage.</td>
<td>9.81 3.78</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of present marriage.</td>
<td>6.90 3.66</td>
<td>5.33 3.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2

**Frequency of Visitation of Children by their Non-custodial Fathers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numbers of children</th>
<th>*Mothers' children</th>
<th>**Stepfathers' children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More than once</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>per week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximately</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>once per week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 2 times</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>per week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than once</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>per month</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* these children are living in a sample family
** these children are not living in a sample family
significantly from the established population norms (Olson et al., 1985) on the Cohesion Measure. The scores for wives, husbands and mean family scores are all significantly lower than the established norms. A summary of these comparisons is included in Table 3. There are no established norms for adolescent individuals on this measure. The mean cohesion score of adolescent girls was lower than the adolescent boys, although not statistically significant.

**Frequency of Contact With Former Spouse**

The frequency of contact that wives in this study maintained with their former spouses was lower than expected, based on the previous research conducted by Clingempeel (1981). There was only one score that fell within the comparable 'high frequency of contact group' in Clingempeel's study which included persons who have at least weekly contact with their former spouse, and made up one-third of his sample. Three scores (9%) in the present sample fell in his 'moderate' interval including persons who maintained 1 to 3 contacts per month. The remaining 29 scores (88%) had less than one contact per month and would fit in the 'low' group in the Clingempeel study. Of these 29 scores, 23 (69% of total sample) indicated that they had no personal contact at all with their former spouse. It was
Table 3

a) **Comparison of Sample Cohesion Scores and Established Norms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>z - score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Adult Norm</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>37.27</td>
<td>4.77</td>
<td>2.69 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>33.53</td>
<td>7.36</td>
<td>6.33 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family with Adolescent Norm</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>33.79</td>
<td>6.39</td>
<td>5.52 *</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .01

b) **Comparison of Sample Dyadic Adjustment Scores and Established Norms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>z - score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Adult Norm</td>
<td>114.8</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>116.94</td>
<td>15.73</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>113.13</td>
<td>14.46</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife &amp; Husband</td>
<td>115.13</td>
<td>14.11</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
decided, due to the low frequency of contact scores, to group this sample differently than the Clingempeel study. Subjects were placed in three groups according to whether they maintained (a) no contact, (b) telephone contact only or (c) personal contact with their former spouse. Eighteen wives had no contact, 5 had only telephone contact and 10 had some personal contact with their former spouse. In one hundred percent of the cases where children had contact more often than once per month with their father, the wives had telephone or personal contact with him. Eighty-two percent of the women who had contact reported that the contact over the past three months was the same as they normally maintain with their former spouse.

The quality of contact factor, added to the data collection in this study, was not considered in the statistical analysis due to the low numbers of women who reported contact. Of the five women who reported frequent conflict in the past year with their former spouse, all included child support as one of the issues (Table 4).

**Hypothesis One**

This hypothesis stated that there is a significant relationship between family cohesion, and the frequency of contact between a remarried wife and her former husband. Statistical analysis, using a One-Way Analysis of
Table 4

**Former Spouse Contact and Conflict and Issues During the Past Year**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No Conflict</th>
<th>Infrequent Conflict</th>
<th>Frequent Conflict</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal Contact</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child support</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>visitation</td>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>custody</td>
<td></td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Telephone Contact</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>visitation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>custody</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No Contact</strong></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child support</td>
<td></td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>visitation</td>
<td></td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>custody</td>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Individuals</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Variance, indicated no significant relationship between cohesion and frequency of contact. This analysis was conducted five times using the scores of the wives, husbands, adolescents, all spouses, and all family members.

Although not statistically significant, in all five subgroupings, the highest mean cohesion scores were found in the Personal Contact Group. In the analysis of the Husband Scores and the Adolescent Scores, the lowest mean cohesion scores were found in the Telephone Contact group. The lowest mean cohesion scores were found in the Low Contact Group in the other three subject groupings. The $F$ value was highest in the analysis of the Husband Scores ($F=1.95$), followed by the Husband and Wife Scores ($F=1.76$). Descriptive and inferential statistics are included in Table 5.

**Hypothesis Two**

This hypothesis stated that there is a relationship between contact with a remarried woman's former spouse and the marital adjustment in the remarried couple. A significant relationship was found between the contact the wife maintained with her former spouse, and husband and wife scores on the Dyadic Adjustment Scale ($F=5.08$, $p < .01$) (Table 7). The Tukey Honest Difference Test, used to make pairwise comparisons, indicated that the means
Table 5

Means, Standard Deviations and F Values of Cohesion by Former Spouse Contact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>F Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wife</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Contact</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36.50</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>37.80</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>38.40</td>
<td>5.48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>37.27</td>
<td>4.77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Husband</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Contact</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32.53</td>
<td>5.46</td>
<td>1.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29.80</td>
<td>5.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>36.90</td>
<td>6.12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33.53</td>
<td>7.36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adolescent</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Contact</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>30.55</td>
<td>6.34</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>29.67</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31.50</td>
<td>7.53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>30.74</td>
<td>6.31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Husband &amp; Wife</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Contact</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>34.70</td>
<td>5.48</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>35.90</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>37.65</td>
<td>5.71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>35.83</td>
<td>5.63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Contact</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>33.04</td>
<td>6.13</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>33.56</td>
<td>5.54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>35.12</td>
<td>7.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>33.79</td>
<td>6.39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of the No Contact Group and the Personal Contact Group are significantly different from each other at the .05 level of significance. Dyadic Adjustment Scores were lower, indicating poorer marital adjustment, in the group in which the wife had no contact with her former spouse ($X = 109.64$), than in the group in which the wife had personal contact with her former spouse ($X = 120.80$). The results of this analysis must be considered to be tentative, due to the large variances in the Dyadic Adjustment means. This may indicate a violation of the assumption that the variances in the population from which the samples are drawn are equal. Although the means of the Telephone Contact Group are actually higher in all three subject groupings, there are diverse variances in the Dyadic Adjustment scores. When this occurs, the sample with the greater variance will tend to fall at the extremes of the rank sequence in the Tukey Procedure, and in consequence will be assigned lower ranks than the sample with less variance. The large variance in conjunction with the low number of scores in the Telephone Contact Group, makes it likely that any possible association would not be demonstrated statistically. Descriptive and inferential statistics are included in Tables 6 and 7.

A significant relationship was also found between the contact a wife kept with her former spouse, and the dyadic adjustment of her present husband ($F = 5.90$, D.F. = 29, $p < .01$). The Tukey Honest Difference Test indicated that
Table 6
Means and Standard Deviations for Dyadic Adjustment by Former Spouse Contact - Husband & Wife

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Contact</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>109.64</td>
<td>16.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone Contact</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>121.90</td>
<td>16.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Contact</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>120.80</td>
<td>8.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>115.13</td>
<td>15.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7
ANOVA Table for Dyadic Adjustment by Former Spouse Contact - Husband & Wife

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>D.F.</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2097.25</td>
<td>1048.62</td>
<td>5.08*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>12393.74</td>
<td>206.56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>14490.98</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p. < .01
Table 8

Means and Standard Deviations for Dyadic Adjustment by Former Spouse Contact - Husband

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Contact</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>106.07</td>
<td>15.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone Contact</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>121.40</td>
<td>19.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Contact</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>119.60</td>
<td>6.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>113.14</strong></td>
<td><strong>14.46</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9

ANOVA Table for Dyadic Adjustment by Former Spouse Contact - Husband

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>D.F.</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2106.45</td>
<td>1053.23</td>
<td>5.9*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4822.56</td>
<td>178.61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6929.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p. < .01
### Table 10

**Means and Standard Deviations for Dyadic Adjustment by Former Spouse Contact - Wife**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Contact</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>112.61</td>
<td>17.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone Contact</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>122.40</td>
<td>17.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Contact</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>122.00</td>
<td>9.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>33</td>
<td>116.94</td>
<td>15.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 11

**ANOVA Table for Dyadic Adjustment by Former Spouse Contact - Wife Scores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>D.F.</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>742.40</td>
<td>371.20</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7179.48</td>
<td>239.32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7921.88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


the means of the No Contact Group and the Personal Contact Group are significantly different from each other at the .05 level of significance. Again, the Dyadic Adjustment Scores were lower in the group in which the wife had no contact with her former spouse (X=106.07) than the group in which the wife had personal contact with her former spouse (X=119.6). As in the previous case, these findings must be considered tentative due to the small sample size and diverse variances. Descriptive and inferential statistics are included in Tables 8 & 9.

One-Way Analysis of Variance did not reveal any significant differences between Contact Groups in the wife sample. Descriptive and inferential statistics are included in Tables 10 & 11.

**Hypothesis Three**

The third hypothesis stated that there is a positive relationship between moderate levels of family cohesion and marital adjustment in a remarried family. Analysis was conducted using the Pearson Product Moment Coefficient. The data collected in this sample was made up almost entirely of low and moderate cohesion scores. Only three individual scores out of a sample of 105 were over 45, the established individual score cutting point above which a
Table 12

**Pearson Correlation Coefficients for Dyadic Adjustment and Cohesion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>r</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p.<.0005  
** p.<.01  
*** p.<.025

Table 13

**Means and Standard Deviations of Difference Scores* in Family Cohesion By Former Spouse Contact**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Families</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Contact</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>5.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12.08</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Difference scores between the highest and lowest cohesion scores in families where there are scores representing a wife, a husband and at least one adolescent.
Figure 1

Scatterplot for Dyadic Adjustment by Cohesion - Wife and Husband Scores

D 150-   y 145-  a 140-  d 135-  i 130-  c 125-  120-  A 115-  d 110-  j 105-  u 100-  s 95-  t 90-  m 85-  e 80-  n 75-  t 70-  65-  60-  
//
24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 46 48 50

Cohesion

~ Wife Scores
.
Husband Scores
score is considered to be high or enmeshed (Olson et al., 1985). No family scores were in the high or enmeshed category. Because of the small sample size, and non-randomness of selection it is impossible to determine if this sample is representative of the population of remarried people, or if in fact it has a truncated range with the high cohesion range missing from the sample.

In using the Pearson correlation, the relationship between family cohesion and the couple dyadic adjustment was positive and significant, \( r = .43, \ p < .025, r^2 = .18 \) using a one-tailed test of significance. The cohesion scores of the couples and their dyadic adjustment was also positively related and significant \( r = .59, \ p < .0005, r^2 = .34 \). The strongest relationship was between the cohesion and dyadic adjustment scores of the husbands \( r = .75, \ p < .0005, r^2 = .56 \). These scores are included in Table 12, and shown graphically in Figure 1.

**Hypothesis Four**

This hypothesis stated that there will be less variance between family members on the cohesiveness scores where there is moderate contact with the former spouse than in families where there is low or high contact. Because of the lack of high contact scores discussed previously, the sample was divided into two discrete groups of (a) No Contact and
(b) Telephone and/or Personal Contact. The difference score between the highest and lowest cohesion score in a family was obtained only from the twenty-six families in which an adolescent score was included. A One-Way ANOVA did not indicate any significant main effect in cohesion scores across the contact with former spouse factor, resulting in an "F" value of .29. Means and standard deviations are reported in Table 13.

Length of Time Between Marriages and Complexity of Family

There were no significant relationships between the numbers of years between marriages and either Dyadic Adjustment or Family Cohesion. One-Way ANOVA indicated no significant differences between three levels of family complexity and (a) Dyadic Adjustment (b) Family Cohesion or (c) variance in Cohesion scores between family members.
Chapter V - Discussion

Discussion of Visitation and Former Spouse Contact

One of the surprising findings of this study was the low frequency of contact between wives and their former spouses, and between the children and their natural fathers. In sixty-nine percent of the sample families, the wives had no contact with their former spouses, and the children visited with their father once per month or less. It would appear that in this sample there are generally well-defined boundaries between the former family and the present remarriage family, to the extent that they could be considered to be disengaged from each other.

The majority of families in this study included adolescent family members. The mean age of children born to the previous marriage of the wives was 15.1 years. This likely had a major effect on the amount of visitation that the children had with their non-custodial parent. It has been found that adolescents have less contact than young children with their divorced fathers (Kelly & Wallerstein, 1977). This alone does not account for the large numbers of children who had little or no contact with their fathers. Kelly and Wallerstein found that 8% of the children from divorced families in their study had
no contact with their father and 25% had contact less than twice per month, compared to 14% with no contact and 81% with contact less than twice per month in the present sample.

One explanation may be that families in which there was little visitation and former spouse contact were more likely to volunteer as subjects in this research, which includes the children as subjects, and to complete the questionnaires. There has been little family research in this field that includes parents and children. It is also possible that due to the small sample and non-random selection in this study, that these results are not representative of the population of children from remarried families.

Both the Clingempeel studies (1981, 1985) and the present study indicate that there is a connection between visitation and the contact that is maintained between the former spouses. In view of the low visitation, it is not surprising that the contact with the former spouse in this study is also low. In the Clingempeel studies, one third of the wives had weekly contact with their former spouse. An explanation for this may be the difference between samples in age and family life cycle. In his research the couples had a mean age of 34.3 years, and the mean age of the oldest child was 10.2 years. In the present sample,
the mean couple age was 39.5 years, and the mean age of their combined children was 14.8 years. The families in the present sample are older, and generally have adolescents in the home, whereas the Clingempeel sample are in an earlier developmental stage with young children.

It is also possible that Clingempeel reported erroneously high contact figures due to weaknesses in the measurement instrument. He asked his subjects to recall former spouse contact for a six month period, a length of time that was found to be difficult for accurate recall when it was pretested in the present research. In addition, Clingempeel asked the subjects to enter month totals without indicating individual contacts, which could lead to an overestimation of frequency. The measurement instrument used in the present research would also be affected by memory, but to a lesser extent due to the shortened period of recall. The use of calendar pages to indicate contacts may give a more accurate account of actual frequencies. The shortened designated time period may reduce the ability to generalize contact throughout the year, but 82% of the women with contact indicated that it was the same level as normal.
Discussion of Cohesion and Dyadic Adjustment

The low cohesion scores combined with marital adjustment within the normal range, support Vlsher and Vishers' (1979) claim that low family cohesion may be normal for remarried families. The remarriage family structure with its multiple life cycles may not be conducive to enmeshment as a family preference. Subsystems of the family, especially the original single parent family subsystem may enmesh under stress (McGoldrick & Carter, 1980) but reduced connectedness is the norm, especially in families with adolescents. Whiteside (1983) stated that the boundaries around remarried families which include adolescents are more permeable not only because of the need to establish an independent identity, but also because of the longer history of the first family.

Contrary to much of the literature, and in support of Clingempeel (1981), wives in this study demonstrated higher marital adjustment than husbands. This may be because the present study focuses on stepfather families, whereas other studies have included stepmother families as well (Glenn & Weaver, 1977; Weingarten, 1980). It is generally recognised that the difficulties are greater for
stepmothers than other parental roles in remarriage (Visher & Visher, 1979). This may negatively effect the marital quality, and have lowered the marital adjustment scores in studies that do not differentiate between family type. The wives were also higher than the husbands in their perception of the family cohesion. This would be expected because the wives have biological and family relationships with the children that predate the marriage, while the husbands are the newcomers in the family.

Dyadic Adjustment and Former Spouse Contact

The data supports the hypothesis that there is a relationship between marital adjustment and former spouse contact. The results indicate that lack of contact with the former spouse is related to lower marital adjustment in the remarriage, and personal contact is related to high marital adjustment. This refutes the theorists and researchers such as Duberman (1975) and Mayleas (1977) who concluded that the ex-spouse generally has a negative effect on the remarriage.

Interestingly, the strongest relationship was between a wife's contact with her former spouse and her husband's marital adjustment. This relationship was strong enough to also produce a significant relationship in the couple
scores, but the relationship was not significant when the wife scores were analysed on their own.

It is possible that there are extraneous variables involved in the wife relationship, such as visitation, discipline and other kin relationships, that make it difficult to accurately measure the relationship between contact and marital adjustment. The majority of the contact frequencies were very low, yet there was a significant difference in marital adjustment for both the husband and the couple according to the contact the wife maintained with her former spouse. It appears that the ability to maintain, or not maintain contact is in itself a crucial issue. Not maintaining any contact when there are mutual children involved may be due to ongoing conflict with the ex-spouse, and an inability for the present marriage to withstand the strain. This supports the theorists who maintain that issues from the previous marriage need to be resolved in order to successfully form a new relationship (Visher & Visher, 1979; McGoldrick & Carter, 1980; Ransom et al., 1983). It could also be argued that when the husband has a high level of marital adjustment, he is more apt to support his wife in maintaining contact with her former husband. When the husband does not demonstrate marital adjustment, the wife may not take the risk of endangering her present marriage.
Messinger (1984) stated that in order for new spouses to support their partner in maintaining a collaborative relationship with a former spouse, the marital relationship must be trusting, solid and loving. She expands by stating:

The new marriage must build a bridge with the former marriage that will not weaken the new union. Hence, the collaboration regarding the children must be not only between the former spouses, but with the present partners. In order that the present partner(s) may be included in sharing their lives not only with the spouse but with the spouse's children, there must be confidence that the first marriage is finished and that the emotional aspects concern only the children. p. 226

Although not statistically significant, the wife scores indicate that the mean marital adjustment scores are approximately ten points lower in the No Contact Group than in the other two groups. It is possible that the inability of the adults involved to resolve conflict, and to maintain healthy intimate relationships could account for low levels of both contact and marital adjustment. This may be more obvious with the husband because there
would not be as many intervening variables involved. The fact that the husband's marital adjustment is related to the contact that his wife maintains with her former husband supports Structural Family Theory. One of the important tasks for a couple is to create a boundary to protect their relationship (Lewis et al., 1976). This data supports the view that more permeable boundaries may be associated with healthy marital relationships in remarriage (Messinger, 1984). When the relationship is not strong, rigid boundaries are required to protect the relationship from the stresses involved with reminders of the previous relationship. Wood and Talmon (1983) in their work on boundaries indicate that flexibility is an essential part of growth and change, and yet that it is also normal for boundaries to become less permeable when the system is stressed. Minuchin (1974) warned that when families respond to stress with rigidity it can prevent the successful negotiation of transitional points and dysfunctional patterns may appear. Rigid family boundaries may serve to stabilise the remarriage family in the short-term, but prevent the successful resolution of the many transitions and periods of reorganisation.

Conclusions from this data must be considered to be tentative, due to the diverse variances in Dyadic Adjustment scores apparent in the data, most obvious in
the Telephone Contact Group. Although the mean Dyadic Adjustment scores of this group are actually larger in all three subject groupings than that of the Personal Contact Group, the small number of cases and the diverse variance within the scores prevents any conclusive results. It is possible that Telephone Contact is also associated with Marital Adjustment, but a larger sample is needed to confirm that.

The data does not include subjects who maintain a high level of contact with the former spouse, so the curvilinear relationship found by Blood (1969) and Clingempeel (1981) is not clarified. It is possible that the present study actually presents a truncated range and does not include the high contact families. If the study included a larger number of families with young children, there would likely be more families in this high contact category, and the curvilinear relationship might be evident. Alternately, the curvilinear relationship may only exist with families who have young children. Realistically, the numbers of families at all stages that maintain low levels of contact with the former spouse are likely to be more numerous than high contact families. Visitation with the non-custodial parent often lessens with remarriage (Crosbie-Burnett, 1983; Anderson, 1983). There is a trend in our culture to recreate the nuclear
family structure (Uzoka, 1979), and there are few guidelines for maintaining relationships with former spouses (Cherlin, 1977). Though it is not possible to confirm the curvilinear relationship, the data in this study does partially support the findings of Clingempeel and Blood. The Personal Contact Group in the present study has similar frequencies as the moderate group in the Clingempeel study. In all three studies, these families with a moderate level of contact also had high marital adjustment.

**Cohesion and Former Spouse Contact**

The prediction that there is a significant relationship between family cohesion and former spouse contact was not confirmed by the data. There appears to be a trend, although not significant, for the Personal Contact families to indicate higher levels of cohesion than families in the other groupings. It may be that the skills to communicate with an ex-spouse, such as an ability to remain flexible and communicate effectively (Messinger, 1984) may also be prerequisites for cohesion within the remarriage family.

Again, the strongest relationship was found in the husband group, followed by the couple grouping. Families in which the husbands feel comfortably bonded with the
family may also be families that have resolved their boundary issues to the extent that the former spouse can remain involved without jeopardizing the family unit. It appears that the adjustment of the stepparent may be an indicator of the resolution of the issues surrounding the previous family, and the development of boundaries in the family system.

There was virtually no indication of a relationship found between the wives or the children and contact with the former spouse ($E = .53$ & $.29$). Other intervening variables such as child support, visitation, and length of time between marriages may have had an effect on these relationships in this study. The wife is a pivotal figure in the stepfather family (McGoldrick & Carter, 1980). While accommodating the many roles she plays within these families, it is difficult to limit the number of variables suspected of impacting on the results. It is also possible that the low frequency of contact in this particular sample is not sufficient to give a reliable indication of the true relationship with cohesion. High contact with associated high visitation of children may profoundly affect the child's perception of family cohesion. It is likely, however, that this is an accurate reflection of the relationship in families with adolescents. Other factors such as the relationship
between the adolescent and the stepparent, discipline, the age of the child and the length of time since the divorce may be stronger indicators of cohesion for this age group.

**Dyadic Adjustment and Cohesion**

The prediction that moderate levels of family cohesion and marital adjustment would be positively related was supported by the current research. These results were similar to those found by Roberts (1985), and assumed by Olson et al. (1979). Roberts interpreted his results as a confirmation of the importance of boundaries in remarriage, and the need to answer the basic questions of inclusion versus exclusion in order for members to have satisfying experiences in remarriage.

This explanation is logical for the present research as well. Once again, the relationship was strongest when comparing the husbands' dyadic adjustment and cohesion scores. The husband in the sample families is the newest member of the family, except in the few families where a mutual child has been born. If the boundaries in the family are renegotiated after the remarriage so that the stepfather is included in the family, he is more likely to demonstrate healthy levels of cohesion and marital adjustment.
The positive relationship between marital adjustment and cohesion for couples was expected. It seems reasonable to assume that some of the characteristics that may be associated with healthy cohesion, would also be the associated with marital adjustment. The adult sample in the current study measured below the norms on cohesion and within the norms on dyadic adjustment, and yet it appears that the findings are in support of the view that marital health is related to healthy family functioning (Lewis et al., 1976). In remarriage families, cohesion may be lower than the norm without it being an indication of dysfunction. This further supports the view of Visher and Visher (1979) that cohesion tends to be lower in stepfamilies. Keshet (1980) comments that the complexity and multitude of the stepfamily system demands that couples recognise that individual autonomy and differentiation is essential.

The relationship between couple marital adjustment and family cohesion is not as strong as the relationships previously discussed which do not include adolescent scores, but is still an indication that marital adjustment is not at the expense of the closeness of the family. A trend is indicated in these results that families which have high marital adjustment may also have healthy levels of cohesion in both the adult and child subsystems.
Variance on Cohesion Scores

The prediction that there will be less variance between family members on the cohesiveness scores in families where there is moderate contact with former spouse than in families where there is low or high contact was not supported in the data analysis. This is not surprising considering the lack of evidence for a relationship between cohesion and contact with a former spouse. The explanations are similar. In this sample of largely adolescent families there are too many possible extraneous variables, such as visitation and length of time between marriages, to result in any conclusive results. In addition, it is possible that cohesiveness in itself is not related in any way to the contact that is maintained with a former spouse. The more direct relationship between visitation and cohesion may yield interesting results, particularly if the sample included children who have frequent visitation with their non-custodial parent.

Conclusions

As rapidly increasing numbers of people in North America remarry, the cultural reverence of the nuclear family continues. In the past, therapists and researchers warned of the dire consequences of maintaining contact
with the family members left outside of the immediate household after a divorce (Goldstein et al. 1973; Mayleas, 1977). Traditionally, the final stage of a divorce has been considered to be the exclusion of the absent members from the family system (Ahrons, 1980).

More recently, researchers such as Lillian Messinger and Carl Sager have challenged this perception. They have identified the need to view families formed by remarriage as being binuclear, or evolving along multiple tracks that acknowledge the impact of significant family members living outside of the system. Results of a five year study of the effect of divorce on children (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980) clearly indicate the need for active parenting from both biological parents to maintain the mental health of the children.

The results of this study support the view that the biological father should be recognised as a part of the system. The results indicated that couples in which the wife maintains contact with the former spouse also demonstrate higher levels of marital adjustment. The couples with no contact with the former spouse were also couples with lower marital adjustment. A trend that cohesion may be higher when contact is maintained with the former spouse was also indicated, although not
statistically significant. A positive relationship was found between dyadic adjustment and cohesion.

The frequency of contact between the former spouses and the visitation reported between children and their non-custodial fathers was very low in this study. In spite of the fact that 81% of the children saw their father once per month or less, only one woman in the study reported that she had frequent conflict with her husband over visitation. The low amount of contact and visitation in this study, and the relationship between low dyadic adjustment, cohesion and contact indicates that the rigid boundaries may be a reaction to stress in the remarriage family. It appears that these families may be very distant in their way of dealing within and outside of the family system. The boundaries were more flexible in the healthier families which increased their ability to accommodate their changing needs.

Ransom et al. (1979) indicated that when the former spouse maintains a role with the children, that all members of the family must sort out their loyalties, feelings of anger, guilt and jealousy in order to accept the relationship. This may be too risky for many families, especially those in the early phases of blending, yet as stated by Messinger "...denial of the reality can lead only to dissention and discomfort in a
pseudofamily charade." (1984, p.221). It appears that in order for a family to take these risks, it must begin from a stable point.

The resolution of these issues around the first marriage has been found to be important for the success of the remarriage (Bernard, 1956; Messinger, 1983; Sager et al., 1983). In this study, the newest family member, the stepfather appeared to act as an indicator of the couple health, and comfort of family boundaries. The statistically strongest relationships in the study were all found in the husband subsamples. This in itself is a confirmation of the strength of the family system when it is considered that one of the main variables was of his wife's contact with her former spouse. The stability of the marital relationship seemed related to the overall health of the family, and to the ability to maintain permeable boundaries.

The results of this research support Messinger's claim that acceptance of the differences in family structure from the traditional nuclear family is related to the success of the remarriage (1984). Families that are flexible and secure enough to resolve the issues of a previous marriage, and encourage continued visitation of children, probably also have the skills to develop healthy levels of family cohesion and marital adjustment. The
cultural norms that revere the nuclear family and continue to treat remarriage as an abnormality are challenged by the healthy functioning of these families.

Limitations

Several limitations of the current research should be noted. Firstly, the sample size was small and the selection was not random, therefore the results may not be representative of the general population of remarriage families. This restricts the ability to generalise the results of this research.

The study made use of a non-standardized instrument to collect frequencies of the contact with the former spouse. It relied upon the memory of the subjects which is subject to error. It also collected data for a restricted time period, so the ability to generalise is again restricted.

The method of data collection may have precluded very dysfunctional families from participating. The family had to have communication and cooperation levels sufficient for each member to receive the necessary instructions and questionnaires and for someone to gather them together and mail them.
Finally, the conclusions were based on statistically significant findings that were in some cases quite small, and on non-significant trends apparent in the data. These findings should be considered as exploratory, and so should be viewed with caution.

**Implications and Suggestions for Future Research**

Remarriage families are developing a new family structure without socially-sanctioned guidelines. There needs to be an awareness of the differing needs and possibilities of these families in the legal, educational and social services areas. Family law was developed within the frame of reference of the nuclear family. Some of the resulting laws are inappropriate for remarriage families and need to be modified. The adversarial system often encourages disagreement between parents and inhibits the chances of collaboration. Mediation is now available as an option for resolving child custody and should be encouraged. The legal position of both the non-custodial father and the stepfather are limited and do not reflect the positive roles that these key figures can play in remarriage families.

The education system is slow to adapt to the changing structure of families. Report cards are routinely issued
only to custodial parents. Stepparents and non-custodial parents may not be invited to interviews, school meetings and graduations. Schools should encourage the participation of all parents in the education of their children. Teachers need to become sensitized to the similarities and differences between intact, single parent and remarriage families.

Educational programs should be readily available for families entering remarriage in order for them to realistically plan for the challenges ahead, and receive information about workable alternatives to the nuclear family. Many counsellors are unaware of the differences between nuclear and remarriage families. With new theoretical models being developed by people such as Carl Sager and Lillian Messinger, counsellors need to be sensitised to the special problems of these families.

This present research indicates a need for more understanding of the role of the non-custodial parent in the remarriage family. Functional binuclear families should be studied to determine common characteristics. The most useful research would likely employ longitudinal designs and would examine over time the changing boundaries and relationships within the extended family structure.
References


and clinical implications. *Family Relations*, 34, 401-409.


Appendix A

Introduction Letter To Family

Remarriage Study Project,
Nanaimo Family Life Association,
1619 Townsite Rd.,
Nanaimo, B.C.,
V9S 1N3.

Dear Family Members,

Thank you for indicating interest in my research project on remarriage families. I am an M.A. student in Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia, working under the supervision of a committee chaired by Dr. John Friesen. This project is my thesis, which will complete my studies.

My purpose is to understand more about the relationships that exist in families after remarriage. Very little is known in a scientific way about remarriage families, particularly when there are children from a former marriage. Since you are in a remarriage family, you can help to increase the knowledge about this special kind of family you live in.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. Your responses are confidential; there will be no way of identifying who the returned information is obtained from. If you would like to receive the results of this study, please let me know by separate communication. I would be delighted to share this information with you at the completion of the study.

Your participation involves completing one, three or four questionnaires. There should be three envelopes enclosed; one for the mother containing four questionnaires that will take approximately one hour to complete, one for the stepfather which has three items and should take about one half hour, and one for each child between twelve and nineteen which contains one short, five minute questionnaire. The Former Spouse Contact Form, contained in the mother's envelope can be filled in with help from her husband. All others are to be completed without help from other family members. Please feel free to discuss your responses, but wait until after they are mailed back to me. If questionnaires are completed, I will assume that your consent has been given to participate in this study.

Once these questionnaires are completed, seal your envelope and put it in the large stamped, addressed envelope provided. When all members have completed their information, please mail. If any family member does not complete their questionnaire, return the blank questionnaire(s) with the completed ones. If you decide not to participate as a family, please return the uncompleted forms.

If you are aware of any other remarried families that may be interested in participating in this research, please pass onto them a copy of the enclosed letter marked Remarriage Study Project.
Appendix B

SUBJECT INFORMATION - WIFE  (Please complete or check)

1. Age at last birthday.  ________ years.

2. How many times have you been married previous to your present relationship?  ________ times.

3. Please indicate the sex and age of your children from your previous marriage(s). Also indicate if they are currently living with you more than half of the time.
   a) Sex ___ Age ___ Living with you more than half time? Yes ___ No ___
   b) Sex ___ Age ___ Living with you more than half time? Yes ___ No ___
   c) Sex ___ Age ___ Living with you more than half time? Yes ___ No ___

If you have previously been married more than once, answer the following questions referring to the first marriage in which children were born. Indicate which children were born to this marriage with an 'x' in #3.

4. How long was this former marriage?  ________ years.

5. What was your age when you entered the marriage in which these children were born?  ________ years.

6. Have there been any conflicts between you and your former spouse in the past year regarding:  a) custody _______
                                                                                                               b) visitation _______
                                                                                                               c) child support _______
                                                                                                               d) other _______

If other, please specify:  ____________________________________________

7. Would you say such conflicts, if present are:  a) frequent ___
                                                                                                               b) infrequent ___

8. Did the frequency of visitation that your former spouse had with your mutual children alter at the time of your remarriage?
   a) visitation increased ___
   b) visitation did not change ___
   c) visitation decreased ___
   d) visitation stopped ___
9. How frequently does your former spouse see your children?
   a) more than once per week _____
   b) approximately once per week _____
   c) approximately 1-2 times per month _____
   d) less than once per month _____
   e) never _____

10. Has your former spouse remarried? Yes ____ No____

11. How long was it between the end of your former marriage and your marriage to, or cohabitation with, your present husband/partner?_______

12. How old were you when you married (or began to live with) your present husband/partner? _______ years.

13. How long have you been married to (or lived with) your present husband/partner? _______

   a) Sex ____ Age ____
   b) Sex ____ Age ____
   c) Sex ____ Age ____
Appendix C

SUBJECT INFORMATION - HUSBAND  (Please complete or check)

1. Age at last birthday.  ______ years.

2. Were you married previous to your present relationship? Yes ___ No ___
   -if your answer is 'no', please skip to # 10.

3. Please indicate any children from your previous marriage(s).
   a) Sex ___  Age ___  Living with you more than half time? Yes ___ No ___
   b) Sex ___  Age ___  Living with you more than half time? Yes ___ No ___
   c) Sex ___  Age ___  Living with you more than half time? Yes ___ No ___

4. If they do not live with you, how often do you see them.
   a) more than once per week  ____
   b) approximately once per week  ____
   c) approximately 1-2 times per month  ____
   d) less than once per month  ____
   e) never  ____

5. How many times have you been married previous to your present
   relationship?  ______ times.
   If you have previously been married more than once, answer the following
   questions referring to the first marriage in which children were born.
   Indicate which children were born to this marriage with an 'x' in #3.

6. On the average, how frequently do you have in person contact with
   your former spouse?
   a) more than once per week  ____
   b) approximately once per week  ____
   c) approximately 1-2 times per month  ____
   d) less than once per month  ____
   e) not at all  ____

7. On the average, how frequently do you have telephone contact with
   your former spouse?
   a) more than once per week  ____
   b) approximately once per month  ____
   c) approximately 1-2 times per month  ____
   d) less than once per month  ____
   e) not at all  ____
8. Indicate your perception of the amount of conflict between you and your former spouse at this point in time.
   a) extreme conflict
   b) moderate conflict
   c) little conflict
   d) no conflict

9. How long was it between the end of your former marriage and your marriage to, or cohabitation with, your present wife/partner? ________

10. How old were you when you married (or first began to live with) your present wife/partner? ________ years.

11. What term best describes your reaction to your wife/partner having contact with her former husband?
   a) angry
   b) jealous
   c) resigned
   d) accepting
   e) pleased
Appendix D

*PLEASE COMPLETE LAST*

Contact With Former Spouse

To complete this section, you are asked to remember, as well as you can, all of the times that you have had contact with your former spouse over the past three months. To help you remember, there are three calendar pages attached, with holidays marked on them. You are encouraged to complete this with the help of your husband/partner.

A contact is any time you have met your former spouse, face to face, and exchanged at least one word. This means that if you passed on the street and said "Hello", this would count as one contact. Waving from the the other side, or talking on the telephone would not count as a contact.

(If you have had no contact with your former spouse over the past three months, please write NO CONTACT at the top of this page and return. In this way I will know that the questionnaire was not inadvertently left blank. If you have had contact only by phone, follow the instructions for #5 below and indicate NO PERSONAL CONTACT above.)

Please follow these instructions:

1. Think of all family birthdays, special occasions, holidays, your children's visitation schedule, etc., that may have involved your former spouse. Mark these on the calendar. This is to help you remember. They can be erased later if you wish.

2. Mark with an "X" each contact you have had with your former spouse on the calendar square of the day it occurred. If there is more than one contact on a particular day, indicate by putting the corresponding number of "X"s on the square.

3. Look at the calendar page for the most recent month. Try to remember how you felt during each contact you had with your former spouse that month. Choose one of the following responses and put the appropriate symbol beside the 'x'. If you cannot remember how you felt, just leave the 'x' to indicate the contact.

   a) Positive contact - indicate with a '+'

   b) Neutral contact - indicate with a '0'

   c) Negative contact - indicate with a '-'

Remember, discuss this questionnaire with your present husband/partner if you need help remembering; not your former spouse.

When this has been completed, please go on to #4 and #5.
4. Please estimate how the amount of contact with your former spouse over the past three months compares with the amount of contact you normally have with him.

   a) More contact in the last three months than normally

   b) The same contact in the last three months as normally

   c) Less contact in last three months than normally

5. Think of any conversations you have had with your former spouse by telephone in the last two weeks (fourteen days), starting from yesterday. Again think of any occasions that you would normally have this type of contact e.g. before a visit with the children. You may want to use a calendar to help you. Your husband/partner can assist you. Write the total number of phone calls over the past two weeks, in the space provided below.

   I SPOKE TO MY FORMER SPOUSE ______ TIMES BY TELEPHONE IN

   THE PERIOD FROM ______ TO ______

   (date)    (date)

Thank you for your involvement!