Identifying the Factors that Influence Marital Stability and Satisfaction for Custodial Parents who Remarry: Implications for Theory and Therapeutic Practice

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IDENTIFYING THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE MARITAL STABILITY AND SATISFACTION FOR CUSTODIAL PARENTS WHO REMARRY: IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY AND THERAPEUTIC PRACTICE

BY

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Abstract

This qualitative research study was designed to develop a grounded theoretical model which family therapists, psychologists and other professionals could use to understand the factors that influence both remarriage stability and satisfaction. Based on such understanding, they may use the same model as a preventative and/or clinical intervention guide while working with divorced parents preparing for remarriage and/or currently remarried parents.

Participation was limited to adult eight males and eight females aged 45 to 70 years. Each participant was remarried in a civil court and/or religious denomination after a first divorce. All the participants had at least eight years in their second marriages, and were living, or had lived with at least one biological child from the first marriage. They were recruited from the state of New Jersey's inner cities, urban areas, and suburban neighborhoods. They were of different cultural backgrounds and belonged to various religious denominations, including two of them who were non-denominational.

A grounded theory research methodology design (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was used. Participants were asked for their current and retrospective views of their first marriages, divorces, and remarriages. Data were collected from individuals not couples. The grounded theoretical model that was developed from this study indicated committed love as the central theme that permeated through eight primary factors and eight secondary ones. The primary factors emerging from open coding, axial coding, and selective coding were integral mutuality, finances, collaborative parenting, sexuality, knowledge of the complexity of remarriage, communication, spirituality, and professional help. The secondary factors were marital history, motivations for remarriage, dating, house rules and roles, conflict resolution, clear boundaries, cohabitation, and permanent sites for professional remarriage services. Discussions of each factor, clinical implications of the theory developed in this study, how to conduct comprehensive assessments of the clients' strengths and constraints, interventions, limitations of the study, suggestions for professionals and future research are included.
Acknowledgments

Before expressing my gratitude to all the people who have helped me in one way or another toward the completion of this dissertation, I want to highlight the historical background of this study. The inspiration that motivated me to conduct this study originated from my reading of Pope Paul VI's (1969) encyclical letter entitled Humanae vitae in which he asked religious ministers and all people of good will to be open to the signs of the times in the church and society. Based on that invitation, I started in 1998 to see in different churches and counties in the state of New Jersey, an increasing number of divorces, single parents, remarrying parents, and other remarried parents going through a second, third or fourth divorce experience. Rutter (1998) called the last three decades as a transition period into "the divorce revolution" (p. 185).

As I listened to the painful stories of some of those parents, just before or after another divorce experience, I realized that I was incompetent to offer them professional help. On the other hand, the stories I heard from some of the remarried parents in my parish community helped me to realize that their second marriages were more stable and satisfying than their first ones. After listening to those two parallel types of remarriage stories, I developed an interest in exploring the factors that help remarrying parents to establish a stable and satisfactory remarriage after divorce.

Based on these historical considerations, I want to express my sincere thanks to all the people whose personal stories challenged my competence and/or motivated me to conduct this study. Specifically, I express heartfelt gratitude to the following people for sharing with me their words of wisdom, talents, time, life experiences, and for their patience whenever I asked them.

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Last but not least. Thanks to all the people who have helped me in different ways. Even if I have not mentioned your names, they are written in my heart.
Dedicated to
Antonia Ndaba – a South African woman from whom I first learned to be
an attentive listener to people contemplating remarriage,
in loving memory of uncle Expedito Siewanyama, Pope Paul VI, my Consolata religious
superiors and friends, the Late Reverends: Alexis Lipingo, Joan Bere, and Mauza Julius,
who paved the way for me to attend graduate studies,
and
in loving memory of my father, the Late Stephen Kalibbala,
whose culturally accepted polygamous marital life exposed me
to multiple stepmothers, half-siblings, and extended stepfamily members
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Chapter I

Introduction

This research study was designed to develop a theoretical model from the retrospective experiences of parents who remarried after a first divorce in order to reinforce the preparation for remarriage stability and satisfaction of custodial parents. The existing literature, research studies, and remarriage preparation programs are very limited in identifying the correlates of remarriage stability and satisfaction. They are focused mainly on the discussion of stepfamilies, remarriage after divorce or widowhood, remarriage happiness, conflicts with the ex-spouse, and the challenges between stepparents and stepchildren (Kapiselh, 1987; LeBey, 2004; Lofas & Sova 1985; Myers & Schiewbert, 1999; Richmond, 1995; Tesman, 1978; Thies, 1577; Walsh, 1992).

Participants were solicited in the state of New Jersey. The study was open to participants from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, age, levels of formal education, and socioeconomic status. The final selection of participants consisted of individuals who were in their second marriages after experiencing a first divorce, and they were custodial parents living or had lived with at least one child below the age of 18 years.

Background of the Problem

Attention to the signs of the times in society and religious institutions (Paul VI, 1969) reveals that there are increasing numbers of divorces, remarriages of divorced parents, and children living in stepfamilies as a result of divorce (Carter & McGoldrick, 1998; Lofas & Sova, 1995). There are many divorced individuals in society. The divorce rate is higher in remarriages than in first marriages (Nichols, 1996). It is no wonder, then, that Rutter (1998) called the last three decades a transition period into "the divorce revolution" (p.185).

McGoldrick and Carter (1998) observed that remarriage has a significant impact on the children of divorced parents. These authors underscored that there is an increasing number of
Stepfamilies through remarriage, a situation that can be complex for the partners involved and their significant others. Sager (1985) clarified that second marriages are usually more complex than first marriages because one's life cycle is being lived out in two or more marriage and family life cycles. Consequently, the two marital and family life cycles overlap and often produce serious conflicts for the individual and her or his spouse(s) past and present, and for the children who live out their lives in two simultaneous family life cycles.

However, 64% of the remarriages are likely to end in divorce, and about 50% of remarriages terminate in less than 5 years, especially if they involve stepchildren (Kety & Borgen, 2000; McGoldrick & Carter, 1998; Nichols, 1996). In fact, some of the remarried spouses divorce and remarry a second, a third, or fourth time (Nichols, 1996).

Therefore, for some spouses, the cycle of divorce and remarriage has become a habitual or behavioral pattern referred to as "serial monogamy" (Breihm, 1992, p. 403). All in all, the majority of divorced parents find it difficult to stay single for the rest of their lives. Sooner or later, a significant number of them opt for remarriage. Half of the marriages in the United States that occur each year are remarriages (Nichols, 1996; Rutter, 1998).

Consequently, in a search for how to prevent and respond to the increasing percentages of divorce after second marriages and the challenges of serial monogamy (Gottman, 1993; McGoldrick & Carter, 1998; Nichols, 1996), this study generated a theory that family therapists, psychologists, and other professionals (FTPAs) may use to empower remarrying custodial parents to prepare for remarriage stability and satisfaction. Examples of the other practitioners working with remarriage couples include religious ministers and social workers.

The rationale for focusing on developing a theory and model of treatment was based on the fact that, although there are growing numbers of family therapists, psychologists, and other professionals who are doing their best to respond to the challenges, instabilities, and unhappiness faced by people in second marriages after an experience of divorce, the number of these professionals with expertise in working with people in remarriage contexts is still very low.
(Framo, 1985; Kelley and Burg, 2000; McGoldrick & Carter, 1998; Rutter, 1998). Furthermore, most traditional marriage and family therapists are primarily trained to work with biological or nuclear families, not with stepfamilies (Lofas, 1998; Lofas & Sova, 1995; Nichols, 1996).

Likewise, most traditional psychologists are trained to work with individuals, not stepfamilies. It is no wonder, then, that the estimated success rate of counseling services by these traditional professionals is only 33% in the United States (Stepfamily Foundation Inc., 2004). This is because they often apply the same paradigms of individual counseling and nuclear family counseling to the remarried families without considering the specific problems confronted by people in stepfamilies (Bergen, 2000; Framo, 1985; Lofas & Sova, 1985).

Another rationale for seeking to develop a theory that is focused on the preparatory phase of remarriage is based on the clinical and literature research findings which indicate that many divorces would have been avoided if at least the partners had sought professional help during courtship rather than rush into remarriage with a lot of unresolved issues (Arrato & Ochs, 1987; Baum, 2003; Coleman & Gao, 1985; Ganoon & Coleman, 1989). Consequently, instead of using a preventative approach, the literature indicates that most of the couples turn to therapy when it is practically very difficult to resolve their individual and marital problems, or they just opt for divorce (Gottman, 1993, 1994a, Kelley & Burg, 2000).

Carter and McGoldrick (1998) clarified,

"Courtship is probably the least likely time of all phases of the life cycle to seek therapy. This is not because coupling is easy, but because of the tendency to idealize each other and avoid looking at the enormous long-range difficulties of establishing an intimate relationship. While the first years of marriage are the time of the greatest overall marital satisfaction for many, they are also a time of likely divorce. The degree of mutual disappointment will usually match the degree of idealization of the relationship during courtship..." (p. 238).

Therefore, this research study involved also a brief exploration of what FTPPs may do in order to help custodial parents contemplating remarriage to seek professional help before and during courtship. Kelley and Burg (2000) recommended, "Settle as many issues as you can before you get married. It is easier to separate an egg before you scramble it" (p. 139).
Additionally, a lot of emphasis was given to exploring the contributing factors that reinforce both remarriage stability and remarriage satisfaction. The rationale for this exploration was based on the clinical and literature findings indicating that some spouses stay together for years while married with their respective partners, but they lack marital satisfaction (Gottman, 1993, 1994b; Johnson & Greenberg, 1994; Larson & Holman, 1994).

On the other hand, some spouses experience temporary marital satisfaction with their spouses, and then they separate (Russell-Chapin, Chapin, & Sattler, 2001; Walsh, 1992). Such marital stability without satisfaction or marital instability with temporary satisfaction not only affect the spouses involved but also their significant others, especially the children whose lives are significantly affected by their custodial parents' levels of marital stability and satisfaction (Kupisch, 1987; Leiby, 2004; Myers & Schwiebert, 1996; Richmond, 1995; Tesser, 1978; Thies, 1977, Walsh, 1992).

**Research Question**

Based on all the above considerations, the research question for this study was:

What are the identifiable factors that influence marital stability and satisfaction for custodial parents who remarry after a first divorce?

**Contributions and Significance of Study**

This research may help family therapists, psychologists and other professions (FTPPs) to attain deeper understanding (insight) concerning the unique and complex realities within each remarriage in custodial situations so that they can competently promote remarriage stability and satisfaction. This empowerment may assist FTPPs in complying with the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) code of Ethics (1998) which requires mental-health professionals to offer services corresponding to their areas of competence.
Elaborating on the importance of empowering FTPPs to understand the dynamics within each remarriage, it is important to take into account Covey’s (1989) general recommendation of helping people to become more effective, “Unless you [in the present case, FTPPs] understand me [i.e., your client] and my unique situation and feelings, you won’t know how to advise me or counsel me. What you say is good and fine, but it does not pertain to me” (p. 238).

Applying this recommendation to FTPPs, they might have to make a radical paradigm shift with regard to seeking to understand their clients’ problems and complex dynamics before making any intervention. Furthermore, because of the stigmas still attached to divorce and remarriage in some of the organized religions (Ahrons, 2004; Himes & Coriden, 1996), it is hoped that the results of this study may inspire more religious leaders to extend pastoral care to custodial parents who find it hard after divorce to find acceptance and full communion in their religions (Shelmon, 1992).

Based on the higher rates of divorce after remarriage (McGoldrick & Carter, 1998), the findings of this study might be integrated by FTPPs into the existing primary prevention programs for remarrying custodial parents in order to reduce risks of re-divorce. The study also provided FTPPs with specific interventions for helping custodial parents. The information that was collected from the participants might help custodial parents preparing for remarriage to become more aware of the factors that influence re-divorce before they remarry so that they may participate in pre-remarriage preparation workshops that are designed to prevent re-divorce and serial monogamous relationships.

Clarification of Some of the Significant Terms and Phrases in this Study

Remarriage stability: This refers to the custodial parent’s responsibility to develop and maintain a permanent marital-commitment with his or her spouse until biological death separates them (Berger, 1998; Chalmers, 1997; Himes & Coriden, 1996).

Remarriage satisfaction: This phrase refers to the custodial parent’s responsibilities to establish a
second marriage, in which the custodial parent perceives the relationship as generating happiness and meaning through his or her interactions with his or her spouse, learning to persevere by doing his or her best to make marriage a success, and in a mutually life-giving structure with his or her spouse and children (Gottman, 1994b; Jacobson & Greenburg, 1994; James & Johnson, 2001; Leiby, 2004; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

A typical rationale for focusing on remarriage satisfaction is based on Aristotle’s observation (Megan, 1998) and Maslow’s (1961) conviction that happiness is the summum bonum (supreme good) and the essential goal of human existence. However, happiness is a side effect of whatever reason one has to feel happy, and the attainment of meaning is the essential goal of human activity (Frankl, 1963).

Since this study was designed to explore the factors that influence remarriage satisfaction (and stability), I gathered information from the participants by asking them what had helped them to attain and maintain a meaningful, committed, nurturing relationship (i.e., life-giving) to both parents and children, and that which had the further benefit of generating and maintaining happiness.

Insightful understanding: This term refers to what Loevinger (1990) described as reflective understanding and a unifying field of knowledge.

Resilience: This term used is this study from the standpoint of the “psychology of human effectiveness” (Gelso & Fassinger, 1992, p. 293), and in reference with Kelley and Bargar’s (2000) research findings which indicated that in spite of the challenges related to divorce, remarriage, and stepfamilies (e.g., personal, social, cultural, legal, gender, and financial constraints), some of the people involved are able to overcome them and start to live normal lives.

In this study, resilience refers to the interpersonal strengths and interpersonal empowerment (Walsh, 2002) that help divorcees and/or children of divorced parents to develop positive coping strategies before, during, and/or after divorce. Rutter (1998) clarified, “Although
divorce and remarriage may confront families with stresses and adaptive challenges, they also offer opportunities for personal growth and more harmonious, fulfilling family and personal relationships" (p. 186).

Remarriage triad: This is a phrase I (researcher) deduced from the literature review (Franco, 1985; Kelley & Burg, 2000; McGoldrick & Carter, 1998; Rutter, 1998) to refer to the interconnection among divorce, re-coupling and stepfamily realities; expressed figuratively as indicated on page 8.
Figure 1. Remarriage triad: Interconnection among divorce, re-coupling and stepfamily realities.

The icon within the remarriage triad represents the presence of a family therapist, psychologist, or other professional (FTPP) whose roles and interactions with divorced custodial parents contemplating remarriage are geared at reinforcing those partners’ remarriage stability and satisfaction, so that the children involved may also be happy within the stepfamily.
Summary

The first chapter has been focused on presenting the argument or need for conducting a research study about remarriage stability and satisfaction. Special emphasis has been made to present the problem, the need for training family therapists, psychologists, and other professionals (FTPPs) about the remarriage triad, establishing a background for the theoretical orientation, and the significance of the study.

Given the complexity of remarriage (Carver & McGoldrick, 1998; Ganong & Coleman, 1989; Gottman, 1994b; Kelley & Burg, 2000), this research is designed to develop a theoretical model for FTPPs that they may use to become more aware of the major issues, concerns, and challenges affecting the remarriage triad. Therefore, the results of this study are primarily intended to empower family therapists and psychologists, so that they can acquire an insightful understanding of the complexity of the remarriage triad and competently collaborate with the people involved to reinforce remarriage stability and satisfaction.

The rationale for choosing to focus on FTPPs is based on the currently limited number of competent FTPPs working with custodial parents in remarriage situations (Nichols, 1996). By the same token, empowering more FTPPs (e.g., with the following literature review and the results of this study) will help them to make timely interventions that reinforce remarriage stability and satisfaction. This is the main idea underlying this research, and it is the theme on which the research will be focused.
Chapter II
Literature Review

General Observation

The literature review in this chapter was focused on what family therapists, psychologists, and other professionals (FTPPs) may need to understand first about the remarriage triad in order to design contextualized interventions for reinforcing remarriage stability and satisfaction. Additionally, this chapter includes categorized terms of clinical considerations and suggestions for FTPPs that have been cited or deduced by the researcher from the literature that is related to the purpose of this study.

Metaphor Applied to Entering a Remarriage

Kelly and Burg (2000) compared entering a remarriage to walking onto a movie setting after the film has begun. While the other cast members have to adjust to a new presence and to the fact that the script may have been rewritten, the one who enters has to find a way to fit into a story line and mood that has already been established. Based on this metaphor, Kelly and Burg emphasized that it is important for remarriage partners to be aware of the changes that will occur between marriages (the first marriage that ended through divorce and the next marriage: remarriage).

Consequently, Kelly and Burg (2000) cautioned remarrying parents to prepare their biological children for their plans to remarry. These authors’ observation is that “Most people do not seem to spend enough time preparing children for a remarriage and the many changes that will occur” (p. 113). Additionally, Kelly and Burg noted that children of divorce, regardless of their age, almost always cling to the magical hope that their parents will reunite. Therefore, it is understandable why many of them have trouble accepting anyone whose presence will necessarily put an end to this fantasy. Kelly and Burg also observed that remarriage adjustments
are difficult for everyone because people are resistant to change, even when change is for the better. In other words, change is often associated with loss (Berry, 1998; Bowlby, 1980).

Kelley and Berg (2000) suggested that divorced parents contemplating remarriage should not rush into too much togetherness with the prospective stepparent of their children, nor inadequately surprise the children about their plans to remarry. Several authors have recommended that, instead of rushing into remarriage, dating should begin with brief, get-acquainted visits in a relaxed, casual setting before planning any significant time together, including the weekends (Black, 1998; Brehm 1992; Nichols, 1996). Therefore, divorced parents should give their biological children time to get acquainted with their prospective stepparents before announcing any plans to remarry, and, if possible, the announcement should be done in person (Kelley, 1995; Kelley & Burg, 2000; Wellerstein & Blakeslee, 1995).

Contributing Factors to Divorce in First Marriages and Remarriages

Minuchin and Nichols (1993) emphasized that the failure to identify and resolve the contributing factors (possible causes) of divorce in the first marriages creates serious consequences, because remarrying spouses usually reenact the dynamics of the first marriage in their second or subsequent marriages (Guzang & Coleman, 1989; Gottman, 1999a,b).

Clinical findings in reference to some of the causes of divorce indicated that 30% of the clients reported the lack of in-depth communication as the main contributing factor of divorce (Berger, 1998; Gotman, Notarius, Gonso, & Markman, 1976). Other factors cited as contributing to divorce include personality incompatibility between spouses, unrealistic expectations about marriage and/or unrealistic idealization of one's partner (especially during courtship), marital infidelity, personality abnormality, constant social pressures that create stress, lack of mutual prayer and spiritual life, cultural values that condone violence, domestic violence, conflictive relationships with in-laws, pathological jealousy, money used as a power source to control one's
partner, lack of open communication and negotiation about money, use of drugs and alcohol (Carter & McGoldrick, 1998; Gottman, 1994a; Kaslow, 1996; Rutter, 1998; Treadway, 1989).

**Gender Differences and Remarriage**

More divorced men spend shorter lengths of time between divorce and remarriage than divorced women (Baum, 2003). However, rushing into remarriage before resolving the loss and grief associated with divorce is a great threat to remarriage stability and satisfaction (Kelley & Burg, 2000; Lofas & Sova, 1985; Reis, Senghak & Solomon, 1985).

Men generally differ from women by how they learn and practice attitudes, rituals, and habits that hinder or facilitate the process of mourning divorce as a result of having grown up in a given culture (Worden, 1991). Additionally, such learned practices may be reinforced by expectations and norms that a particular culture sets for its people in reference to their genders, ages, religious orientations, socioeconomic status, levels of formal education, and openness to seeking professional help during grief (McGoldrick, Giordano & Pearce, 1996; Miller, 1999; Parker, Laungani & Young, 1997; Tatelbaum, 1980; Staudacher, 1987; 1981).

**Marital Stability and Divorce Prevention**

In an effort to help couples attain and maintain the marital stability and satisfaction that prevent divorce, contemporary couple therapists encourage couples to invest themselves together in the foundation of their marriage, assess whether their expectations are realistic or not, develop emotional intelligence, learn to express emotions appropriately, prevent distress (especially because it affects communication motivation and sexual intimacy), promote marital adjustment, reinforce couple strengths, and validate interactive process in contrast to avoidance and volatile communication (Burleson & Denston, 1997; Gottman, 1994b; Johnson & Greenberg, 1994).

Professional therapists have suggested that marital partners should learn and practice problem-solving or conflict resolution skills, have open and mutual negotiation dialogues about
finances, sexuality, parenting skills, set clear boundaries with in-laws, attain a level of acceptance that some aspects cannot be changed, step attempting to change one another, maintain a significant level of shared spirituality and prayer time, learn to forgive the self and the other, constantly maintain the purpose(s) of their marriage, learn to negotiate differences of opinion, and whenever necessary join a support group and seek professional help before the problems escalate (Ahrons, 2005; Ganong & Coleman, 1988; Kerr & Bowen, 1988; O'Leary, Heyman, & Jongwan, 1998).

Communication and Conflict Resolution

Gottman et al. (1976) observed that communication between spouses was a very fundamental ingredient in marital stability. Its absence and the lack of communication skills created a real danger to marital stability, dialogue, and decision-taking. Gottman and collaborators drew a general hypothesis that couples who have poor communication may not be able to work collaboratively, and they tend to send contradictory messages to their children (Richmond, 1995; Reissell-Chapin et al., 2001).

Non-dialoguing spouses are likely to find it more difficult to maintain harmonious relationships, to negotiate about money, friends, religion, sexual expression, work, relaxation time, and step-parenting roles than dialoguing spouses (Gottman et al., 1976; Nichols, 1996). Likewise, depressed individuals who know communication skills but lack motivation are in-lined to communicate negative information (Burleson & Denton, 1997; Gottman & Silver, 1999).

Example of Needed Paradigm Shifts

A typical example of a needed paradigm shift for practitioners working with custodial parents in remarriage situations involves a consistent practice of empathic listening to their children. Covey (1999) made this recommendation after realizing that most people typically seek first to be understood by the person or people they are talking to, but it is difficult for them to
listen with an equivalent amount of intent to understand what the speaker is saying. That is, while the other person is speaking, most people listen with the intent to reply. Most of the time during a conversation they are either speaking or preparing to speak.

Many people apparently seem to be listening, but in actuality they are filtering everything through their own paradigms and reading their autobiographies into other people’s lives (Covey, 1989; Ferch, 2001). It is assumed that exploring some of the realities and challenges experienced by currently remarried parents will provide some pathways to improve remarriage stability and satisfaction by offering deeper understanding of the experiences for remarriage parents who have at least one custodial child at the time of remarriage (Falicov, 1988).

Designing Interventions that Encourage Verbal Communication

It is hard for some grieving divorcees to confide in someone else (Smoker, 1995). They think that, by telling the stories of their losses, they will be burdening their listeners with their troubles, or they will be too personal and too intimate. The fear to unveil too much about themselves overwhelms them. Therefore, FTPPs may need to be prepared to help people in the remarriage triad who might have difficulty in verbally communicating their stories and losses.

During the period when divorced parents are working through the grief, it may be very valuable for them if they can have access to a person in whom they can confide and verbalize their thoughts, fears, concerns, anger, guilt, and other feelings (Berry, 1998). Straudacher (1994) emphasized that there “are hundreds of thoughts, feelings, conditions, questions, and assumptions that can be cleared up or lessened by talking them over with someone else, particularly with another person who has also experienced a loss” (p. 128).

The following paragraphs are summarized themes from literature reviews in which the authors directly or implicitly indicated what family therapists, psychologists, and other professionals (FTPPs) may need to understand while working with people within the remarriage triad.
Professional's Evaluation of Personal Feelings about Stepfamilies

An FTPP cannot effectively help a stepfamily in crisis if he or she holds negative attitudes or stereotypes toward them. FTPPs may need to first educate themselves about specific issues in stepfamilies in order to be of any help (Ferch, 2001; Frazzo, 1985). They need to consider the people within the remarriage triad as people, and not as pathological specimens (Nichols, 1996). In other words, FTPPs may have to assess their own attitudes and beliefs about the remarriage of divorced parents and should obtain the necessary training they need, so that they can better understand, empathize, and offer professional help to the diversity of people within a given remarriage triad (Ferch, 1999; Focham, Beach & Davila, 2004).

Remarriages are Complex and Different from First Marriages

FTPPs may need to be aware of the different problems and issues that stepfamilies face. They cannot be counseled exactly as a nuclear family would be. There are specific issues such as children’s loyalty conflicts between the biological parent and stepparent, feelings of not belonging (within the family and society in general), and feelings of his and hers when it comes to children (Nichols, 1996; Richmond, 1995; Sager, 1985).

Each Person in the Remarriage Triad is Unique

First of all, no two remarriage-triads are exactly the same. Secondly, each person within a given remarriage triad is also unique. For instance, each divorced parent has his or her unique way of mourning divorce. Likewise, divorced parents who rush into the second marriage before mourning the previous divorce handle their unresolved grief differently. The same is true for the children of divorced parents and their respective stepsiblings (Baum, 2003; Sager et al., 1985).

Therefore, FTPPs may need to learn how to empathize and work effectively (Covey, 1989) with all the family members but also with each member of the remarriage triad. When counseling a stepfamily, the FTPPs need to be able to understand the clinical issues of each
family member and each person should be listened to with an open mind. It is worth noting that whenever a problem arises in a stepfamily, divorce is not always the child’s fault, the parent’s fault, or the stepparent’s fault (Satir & Baldwin, 1983; Tessman, 1978; Walsh, 1992).

*Working on Past and Present Problems*

Remarried spouses and people in stepfamilies are constrained not only by present problems but also by problems lingering from divorce and previous relationships. Therefore, FTPPs may have to help individuals to mourn losses from a previous relationship, but they should also show them how the new family structure is being affected by those feelings (Berger, 1998; McCullough, Spence, & Worthington, 1994). Similarly, by using a preventative approach, FTPPs need to help remarrying partners to make a comprehensive assessment of the partners’ integral lives before remarriage in order to explore, anticipate and address future problems before they happen (LeBey, 2004).

*Giving Sufficient Therapy Time to Each Person in a Remarriage Trial*

FTPPs should neither allocate a fixed amount of time for all the people in therapy (e.g., 6 months) to resolve their problems nor give up if the family is still having adjustment problems. Effective therapy usually takes place in stages as opposed to a preprogrammed deadline (Haley, 1987). Remarriage is affected by many different factors, and it can take years for all family members to adjust and to establish long-lasting and mutually satisfactory relationships (Billings, 1979; Bowlby, 1980; Fincham et al., 2004; Visher, 1990).

*Cohabitation Before Remarriage*

Based on the findings of a study by Gnaug and Coleman (1989), cohabitating prior to remarriage had positive effects, but those effects were limited to the marital relationship only. The effects were most positive for men. Based on the same study, the results were surprising in
indicating that pre-remarriage counseling for cohabiting partners was negatively related to remarriage success. Most of the cohabiting partners who sought counseling ended up separating before remarriage or after remarriage. According to Ganong and Coleman, a possible explanation may be that cohabiting partners seek counseling to resolve existing problems, not to learn how to prevent problems. By the same token, the counselor was most likely focusing on problems lingering from divorce, not problems concerning remarriage and stepfamilies.

A significant number of couples seek counseling once problems have gotten out of control. Visher (1994) observed that many couples adopt an if-it-is-not-broken, do-not-fix-it attitude and that keeps them from seeking professional help before their problems escalate. Therefore, FTPPs may need to ponder seriously and design short-term and long-term interventions that will empower partners contemplating remarriage to seek professional help even in the absence of existing problems.

One of the main goals for FTPPs should be to help remarrying partners develop a timely remarriage check-up or a new attitude that reinforces checking on whatever is not broken before it breaks (Brown & Booth, 1996; Cunningham & Foley, 1994). This new attitude includes a realistic examination of the partners' relationship, expectations, motivations for remarriage, and a profound awareness of what constitutes the process of successful blending in stepfamilies (Ahrons, 2004; LeBey, 2004).

Langers of Heightened Sexual Attraction and Rushing into Remarriage

The literature review revealed that some divorcees, particularly men, rush into remarriage (Baum, 2003; Kelley & Burg, 2000). This observation was found to be coherent with the research results of Dalton and Aron (1999). The literature indicated that divorcees who are experiencing intense pain and are under the influence of strong emotion (e.g., high levels of anxiety, anger, and/or hatred) are more likely to experience heightened feelings of sexual
attraction. FTPPs should, therefore, help divorcees to work through their feelings of sexual attraction or other emotions (Cox, 2002; Demo & Acock, 1997).

Helping Divorced Parents to Plan for Remarriage

A stable and satisfactory remarriage requires a comprehensive pre-marital preparation, especially if it involves adolescent children (Ahross, 2004; Berger, 2000; Lutz, 1983), because remarried partners are more likely to face more challenges than first marriages (Cherlin, 1992; MacDonald & DeMaris, 1995). Consequently, in the pre-remarriage preparation planning, FTPPs should help divorced parents contemplating remarriage to focus on the following three key areas: financial planning and living arrangements, resolving feelings and unresolved concerns about the previous marriage, and profound discussions regarding parenting and decision-making (Kelley & Burg, 2000; Shlemon, 1992; Smoke, 1995; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989, 1995).

Elaborating on these three preparatory areas, FTPPs may help divorced parents preparing for remarriage to agree on where they will live, how they will sustain themselves financially, how they share their wealth, and how to spend their money (Kelley & Burg, 2000; Wolcott, 1999). FTPPs may help the partners decide on whether they want to keep their money separately (each with a different bank account, credit card) or have a joint account (one-pot method) and spend it together. However, based on Kelley and Burg’s (2000) qualitative research, FTPPs are advised to understand that the results of this study indicated that remarried couples who were using the one-pot method generally reported higher marital and family satisfaction than those who separated their funds.

FTPPs may need to help remarrying parents resolve feelings and concerns about their previous marriages (Smoke, 1995). FTPPs may need to understand that, for both adults and the children involved in the post-divorce transitions, remarriage usually reawakens old unresolved anger and hurts from previous marriages. A typical example is when a child hears that her parent
is getting remarried. Consequently, the child is forced to give up on the ultimate hope that his or her biological parents will ever reconcile (Nichols, 1996; Rutter, 1998).

Some divorced men and women have felt hurt or angry and exacerbated stormy relationships with their ex-spouses after hearing of their remarriage arrangements (Shlemon, 1992; Wang & Amato, 2000). Therefore, if such men and women seek professional help from FTPPs, the FTPPs need to understand how to help them, for instance, by reframing for them the remarriage of their ex-spouses as an occasion for their final emotional divorce, for letting go, and seizing the spiritual opportunity to plan for a new beginning (Ahrons, 2004; Smoke, 1995).

FTPPs may need to understand how to communicate and be facilitators of parenting arrangements and decision-making processes for the remarrying partners (Gaoong & Coleman, 1989). FTPPs may help remarrying partners discuss the role the stepparent will play in raising their new spouse’s children as well as changes in household rules that may have to be made (Ereka-Weatherley, 1996). Even if the couple lived together before marriage, the children are likely to respond to the stepparent differently after remarriage because the stepparent will most likely take on an official parental role (Brown & Booth, 1996).

**Impact and Dynamics Between Stepparents and Stepcildren**

FTPPs may need to understand that the relationships between stepparents and children are more likely to be conflictive than those of nuclear families. This is partly because some new stepparents jump right into attempting to establish close relationships with their stepchildren without considering first the children’s emotional status and gender. For instance, boys and girls in stepfamilies prefer verbal affection, such as praise or compliments, rather than physical closeness, such as hugs and kisses from their stepparents. In particular, girls in stepfamilies reported that they were uncomfortable with the physical expressions of affection from their stepfathers. Additionally, most boys were reported as more accepting more quickly of their stepfathers than girls (James & Johnson, 2001).
FTP peace may also need to understand first the unique resources and constraints of each stepfamily and also help stepparents to understand that most frequently a threat to the stepparent-stepchild relationship might arise over questions of loyalty and sexuality (Ganong & Coleman, 1999; Rutter, 1998). For example, a stepfather may wonder whether his new wife is more loyal to her children or him. This attitude can create an inappropriate triangle within the remarriage triad among children, custodial parent, and stepparent.

The same attitude also reveals that the stepfather assumes that he and the children are at the same hierarchical level within the family (Carter & McGoldrick, 1998). Therefore, FTP peace may need to know the professional interventions that are well-suited for remarried families in order to help the people in such a remarriage triangle develop healthy stepfamilies (Gordon, Baucom & Snyder, 2004; Kelleys, 1995).

**Encouraging Custodial Parents to Let Children Have Contacts with Nonresidential Parents**

First, FTP peace may need to realize that, although adjustment to divorce can be very challenging for children (MacDonald & DeMaris, 1995), most children after the divorce of their parents eventually become resilient. They tend to adjust better to their new lives when the non-custodial parent moves out of the house but visits consistently and maintains a good relationship with them. However, after the remarriage of the custodial parent, the non-custodial parent (especially the father) usually maintains low levels of contact with the children or completely cuts off from them (Hendrick, 1995).

FTP peace may have to help divorced parents to understand that the less a non-custodial parent visits the children living in stepfamily households, the more likely those children are to feel abandoned by the non-custodial parent (Lofas, 1998; Lutz, 1993). Consequently, FTP peace have to understand how to help parents reconnect with their children (e.g., by encouraging them to develop special activities and rituals that involve only the children and the non-custodial parent) (Lewis, 1980). Furthermore, FTP peace may have to caution parents to avoid the risk of badmouthing
their ex-spouses in front of the children. Otherwise, such a practice undermines the child's self-esteem and may put the child in the position of defending a parent (Kelley & Burg, 2000).

Broadening the Scope of Knowledge

Because remarriage is so complex, it is recommended that practitioners working with individuals living in remarriage contexts should have a comprehensive understanding of the fields of knowledge which have a significant impact on their clients' lives. Examples of such fields of knowledge include sociology, economics, anthropology, spirituality, theology, psychology, psychomantics, human biology and human sexuality, political philosophy, church law, and civil law (Gray, 1996; Larson, Nowell & Nichols, 2002; Miller, 1985; Smoke, 1995). They should also learn how to integrate them into pre-remarriage preparations and post-remarriage counseling. Additionally, they should be encouraged to make appropriate referrals (Gray, 1996; Nakonezny & Shull, 1995).

Working in Collaboration with Professionals of Different Disciplines

Based on an extensive literature review, clinical experience, and research studies about divorce, Gray (1996) observed that divorce is a stage process with many crisis points and major life stressors for the individuals and families involved. She realized that the divorce process involves distinct psychological and legal stages, but there was little collaboration between therapists and attorneys who were working with divorced clients.

Gray (1996) realized that separation of the psychological process and legal process of divorce was a major threat to the client's integral life. Gray emphasized, "Although most mediators and attorneys acknowledged that their work and legal process is affected by the psychological process, they often have no collaborative relationship with clinicians" (p. 118).

Gray decided to design a model that would help therapists to work in mutual collaboration with attorneys and other legal system personnel. She called that model the expert-
consultant model. It is an alternative model to traditional therapy models because it is a model of intervention that takes both psychological and legal processes of divorce into consideration. It is intended to offer quality care for the divorcees and their significant others.

The therapist works with the client’s best interests in mind. The model offers flexibility and consistency to both the client and therapist. According to Gray (1996), traditional therapy may not be in the client’s best interest, particularly during the first stages of divorce before resolving the legal implications of divorce. By then, the client may be in greater need of legal information before he or she is ready to work through his or her psychological and emotional turmoil.

In order to give the best help to people within the remarriage triad, it may be deduced that as clinicians, FTPPs may have to critically address the psychological and legal process of divorce because the specific stages should determine specific intervention strategies. They need to maintain their clients’ confidentiality (AAMFT Code of Ethics, 1998), but also be able to work in collaboration with other professionals (e.g., pastors, social workers, lawyers, psychiatrists, law enforcement officials), and take the necessary steps to make referrals whenever necessary.

FTPPs are mostly likely to offer better help to their clients if they “can assess the client’s psychological stage through observation or the use of a standardized assessment instrument tool. This assessment combined with knowledge of where the client is in the legal process will determine the type of intervention that is appropriate” (Gray, 1996, p. 119).

Summary

This literature review has been focused on what FTPPs may need to understand first about the remarriage triad in order to reinforce remarriage stability and satisfaction. Significant themes have been deduced and applied to FTPPs from the contributions of many theorists, clinicians, and researchers.
Based on the consulted literature, we now know that there is an increasing number of custodial parents entering remarriage after divorce. Additionally, second marriages have been reported to be more complex than first marriages and more likely to end in divorce than first marriages. The literature review also indicated that most custodial parents do not seek counseling until the relationship is badly damaged. In other words, many second divorces would have been reduced if the remarrying partners sought professional help during courtship rather than rushing into remarriage with a lot of unresolved issues (Amato & Ochiltree, 1987; Baum, 2003; Coleman & Ganong, 1985; Ganong & Coleman, 1989).

In a search for how to prevent and respond to the increasing percentages of divorce after second marriages and the challenges of serial monogamy (Carter & McGoldrick, 1998; Gottman, 1993; Nichols, 1996), this study will be focused on generating a theory that FTPPs may use to empower remarrying custodial parents to prepare for remarriage in order to promote stability and satisfaction.

It may be deduced from the cited authors, researchers, and clinicians that remarriage stability and satisfaction involve many contributing factors. However, even if the sources of those identified factors seem reliable, more qualitative research studies are needed to explore what mental-health professionals need to know in order to empower divorced custodial parents preparing for remarriage, so as to reinforce their marital stability and satisfaction; how to help remarried spouses establish and maintain clear boundaries with their former spouses; and how to empower children living with stepparents and stepchildren.

Based on the literature consulted, more research is needed to explore what FTTPs may need to know to empower divorced parents contemplating remarriage. This will help to reinforce their remarriage stability and satisfaction, and school personnel can be made aware and more supportive of the needs of children whose parents are going through a divorce, of children in single-parent families, and of those in stepfamilies.
The consulted literature did not address the ways in which FTPPs may help custodial parents prepare more successfully prior to remarriage. More research studies are needed which will help FTPPs think more in terms of prevention than correction.
Chapter III
Methodology

This chapter is designed to focus on describing how the proposed study was done. As mentioned earlier in the first chapter, the purpose of this study was to generate a theoretical model for family therapists, psychologists, and other professionals (FTPps) that they can use to reinforce remarriage stability and the satisfaction of custodial parents after a first divorce. The research question was focused on exploring what FTPPs may have to understand first in order to facilitate more effectively the divorced custodial parents’ preparation for remarriage stability and satisfaction.

Given the formulation of the research question and my need to generate a theoretical model from the results of this study, the theoretical methodology that I chose for this qualitative study is grounded theory (Creswell, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Therefore, in this chapter, the focus was on describing the theoretical methodology, the participants, procedure of data collection, and method of data analysis.

Grounded Theory Methodology

Grounded theory methodology (GTM) was used in this study. GTM is a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in systematically gathered and analyzed data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). GTM involves building a theory from data collection and analysis that emerges flexibly over time. The main purpose was to develop a conceptual model (or theory) that is grounded in data and to establish relationships between concepts without focusing too much on the description of people or phenomena (Rafols & Moon, 1996). Therefore, grounded theory approach to theory development is related to the inductive method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).
In GTM, the researcher becomes the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, and it is the researcher's theoretical sensitivity that allows the development of a theory that is grounded in the data. Additionally, a grounded theorist's awareness of the subtleties of meaning in data depends on personal qualities of insight, understanding, and the ability to make sense of what is pertinent (Rafuls & Moon, 1996). Therefore, based on these observations, no theoretical propositions for the intended study were stated at the very outset. The generalized theoretical conclusions emerged out of the empirical data that was collected from the participants and coherently interpreted by the researcher.

Historical Background of the GTM

The GTM was developed in 1967 by two sociology researchers, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss after feeling embarrassed by the gap between theory and empirical research. They adopted Hegel's approach: thesis -- antithesis -- synthesis to the GTM, and their integration of theory and empirical research took a both-and approach in contrast to an either-or approach (Rafuls & Moon, 1996).

In the 1990s these two sociologists disagreed about the emphasis of grounded theory. For example, Glaser (1992) emphasized emergent theory developed by dealing only with the relevant data and completely doing away with all the preconceived data that may have nothing to do with the variables that are relevant to the emergent theory. On the contrary, Strauss and Corbin (1998) emphasized that excellence of coding is the key to arriving at the emergent theory. Such excellence is achieved by organizing all the available data by making use of a formalized approach that is structured and orderly (Rafuls & Moon, 1996).

Given these two different emphases of grounded theory, I opted for Strauss and Corbin's (1998) conceptualization of grounded theory to be used in this study. The main reason for choosing this emphasis is based on in consideration of the participants' contextual realities and the researcher's theoretical sensitivity (Creswell, 1998; Rafuls & Moon, 1996). Furthermore,
Strauss and Corbin's (1998) emphasis enabled the researcher to follow a formalized approach that is structured and orderly. Consequently, I focused on the participants' context in order to code and analyze systematically the data that was collected.

I included Strauss and Corbin's (1998) two sets of criteria for a rigorous study by implementing the study and carrying out data analysis, and by developing and refining the ideas in the final part of the study. Finally, the resultant theory was written in a narrative format by focusing on the themes that highlighted the reinforcement of both remarriage stability and satisfaction.

Definition of Terms

In this chapter and throughout the entire study, I used the following terms and phrases with the following connotations:

Axial coding: the process of relating categories to their subcategories, termed "axial" because coding occurs around the axis of a category by linking categories at the level of properties and dimension (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 123)

Category: a theme which represents a unit of information composed of events, happenings, and instances (Creswell, 1998).

Concepts: the building blocks that I used to develop the theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Credibility: this term refers to the trustworthiness criterion in conventional research comparable to internal validity in conventional research (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The researcher used many techniques to facilitate the credibility of this study (e.g., prolonged engagement with the participants, persistent observation, peer debriefing, and member checking).

Confirmability: this term refers to the precautions which I implemented to make sure that the findings of the inquiry were established by the participants and conditions of the inquiry instead of the biases, motivations, interests, or perspectives of the researcher who interviewed the participants.
Dependability: this term is used in qualitative studies in a manner comparable to the notion of reliability in quantitative research. It refers to the need of determining that the findings of this study may be repeated if the inquiry would be replicated with the same (or similar) participants in the same (or similar context). A rough coding system and analysis of the raw data were some of the strategies the researcher used to establish dependability and to maintain its consistency.

Dimensions: The ranges I used to analyze how the general properties of each category varied, and what was specific to each category.

1 or me: stands for the primary researcher.

Informed consent form: a document which every participant signed before participating in the study to express his or her voluntary willingness to participate after being informed about the necessary details (Appendix E) regarding the study and his or her well-being.

Gatekeepers: Individuals whom the researcher contacted in writing to ask for permission in order to recruit participants in their respective social work agencies (Appendix A) and ministers of different religious denominations (Appendix B).

Open coding: It is an analytic process through which I identified concepts, their properties, discovered dimensions in the collected data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Phenomena: The concepts which I used to summarize the central ideas in the data (Appendix J).

Properties: The characteristics of each category.

Prospective participants: individuals who were contacted by the researcher on the assumption that those individuals had the potential for providing information that would be relevant to the study.

Purposeful sampling: the criteria which the researcher used to explore the factors that influence remarriage stability and satisfaction from selected participants (Croswell, 1998).

Reflective journal: a kind of personal diary in which the researcher recorded a variety of
information about self, process news, observations about participants, insights, and reflections about what was happening in terms of his own beliefs, values, and interests.

Remarriage satisfaction: This phrase refers to the custodial parent's responsibilities to establish a second marriage, in which the custodial parent perceives the relationship as generating happiness and meaning through his or her interactions with his or her spouse, learning to persevere by doing his or her best to make marriage a success, and in a mutually life-giving structure with his or her spouse and children (Gottmann, 1994b; Jacobson & Greenburg, 1994; Jensen & Johnson, 2001; Leelley, 2004; Strauss & Carbin, 1998).

Remarriage stability: This refers to the custodial parent's responsibility to develop and maintain a permanent marital-commitment with his or her spouse until biological death separates them (Berger, 1998; Charaplin, 1997; Evans & Corden, 1996).

Remarriage trial: This term was designed by the researcher to illustrate the need for conceptualizing the dynamics of relationships and interactions of remarried parents and their significant others by focusing on their resources and constraints within a framework of three-inter-connected domains: divorce, re-coupling and living in a stepfamily context.

Selection criteria: the common criteria or set of requirements that every participant had to have before being selected by the researcher to participate in the study (Appendix D), (e.g., one of the selection criteria for this study required all participants to be heterosexual individuals).

Selective coding: the process of integrating and refining the theory.

Snowball approach or chain approach: a method of obtaining participants by identifying cases of interest from people who knew other people to be information rich.

Subcategories: The concepts that pertain to a category and which are helpful in giving further classifications and specification to each category.

Theoretical sampling: process whereby the researcher interviewed individuals who could contribute to the evolving theory.
Theoretical saturation: The point in category development at which no new properties, dimensions or relationships emerged during analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). However, it is important to clarify that theoretical saturation was not yet attained after interviewing the anticipated 12 participants (six men and six women). Consequently, as planned, I consulted my adviser to decide whether to stop interviewing additional participants or to agree on how many more participants to interview. The adviser told me to interview more participants until saturation. After interviewing four more participants (two females and two males), based on their additional input, saturation was attained.

Transferrability of results: This phrase was applied to the study by the researcher to refer to the potential for the findings of the study to be applied to other people in different or similar contexts. In other words, transferrability in qualitative research may be compared to external validity in quantitative research (Mertens, 1998).

However, it is important to note that unlike quantitative studies which provide results that can be generalized, qualitative studies are geared at providing only working hypotheses along with an account of the time and context in which they were collected. The person interested in applying those hypotheses has to use his or her judgment before transferring them (Creswell, 1998; Mertens, 1995).

Participants

All participants were selected in the state of New Jersey through purposeful sampling. The following criteria of purposeful sampling (Creswell, 1998) were used to select the final participants. Based on the way the study was designed, all the participants had to be heterosexual adult men and women, and the information related to each participant's sexual orientation was gathered by means of self-reports (Appendix F).

The selected participants were from diverse ethnic, socioeconomic, and religious backgrounds and had varying levels of formal education. All selected participants were or had
been custodial parents and simultaneously living or had lived in second marriages with at least one biological child (below 18 years of age) from the first marriage that ended in divorce. All the participants were at least eight years or more in their second marriages.

The rationale for selecting participants that had remarried 8 years or more in their second marriages is based on research findings and other literature which had revealed that remarriage instability (risk of redivorce) was greatest in the early years of remarriage because remarried partners “do not wait as long to leave an unhappy situation” (McGoldrick, 1998, p. 421) as in first marriages (Gottman, 1994b; Gottman, Ryan, Carree, & Erley, 2001; James & Johnson, 2001; LeBey, 2004; Wolcott, 1999; Walsh, 1992).

Remarried partners who survived the first 5 to 7 years of remarriage seemed to have a greater likelihood of remarriage stability and satisfaction (Visher, 1994). However, that did not necessarily mean that they had not experienced problems. Rather, it involved a manifestation of their resilience to the multiple challenges associated with the remarriage after divorce and their determination to work through and growth through the remarriage adjustment process (LeBey, 2004; Morrow, Rakshia, & Castañeda, 2001; Nathols, 1998; Rutter, 1998; Visher, 1994).

In this study, data was drawn from a multicultural population, with a wide-range of each participants’ retrospective stories. Since the research question of this study (chapter 1) was designed toward identifying factors that influence remarriage stability and satisfaction, it was appropriate that the participants be individuals whose remarriages could be claimed to be stable and satisfactory. By the same token, the resultant theory might help in reinforcing the resilience and unanticipated strengths of custodial parents entering remarriage by providing them with a new and more accurate vision that people can live normal lives after divorce and can establish functional stepfamilies (Ahrons, 2004).

It is important to clarify that no participant self-reported himself or herself as a gay or lesbian, and/or a bisexual individual (Appendix F). Otherwise, he or she would have been excluded from participation because the results of this study were intended for developing a pre-
re marriage theoretical model for individuals preparing for heterosexual marriage after a first heterosexual marriage that ended in divorce. Secondly, it was beyond the scope of this study to develop a theory that encompassed comparisons (Kurdek, 1994) between heterosexual individuals and those of other sexual orientations.

Based on the above selection criteria of purposeful sampling, this study was also designed to be open to multicultural perspectives (Morrow et al., 2001). Such openness helped the researcher to reach a diversity of participants, and it contributed to maximizing the transferability (Guba, 1985; Levine & Philpot, 2002) of the results of this study.

No parental consent was required because the study consisted of adults (25 years of age and above). However, every volunteering individual who met the requirements (Appendix D) for participating in the study had to sign a consent form (Appendix E) before being interviewed. Secondly, every individual was informed verbally and in writing that he or she would retain the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Where and How to Recruit the Participants

The participants were solicited from inner-city, urban, and suburban areas in the state of New Jersey. The snowball approach (Creswell, 1998) was used in this study. The researcher had face-to-face appointments or telephone dialogues with various gatekeepers to solicit permission to recruit participants. The pastors consisted of different religious groups (Catholic, Episcopalian, Unitarian, Pentecostal, Quakers, Jewish, Lutheran, and Rose of Sharon Community Church).

During the face-to-face meetings or telephone conversations, I introduced the study to the gatekeepers. I informed them about the purpose and asked them to grant the permission in writing on the official letterhead of their churches or agencies to recruit the participants (Appendices A & B). I also asked for the permission from the religious pastors to grant me 3 to 4 minutes to make a brief presentation about the study to their congregants at the end of the religious services.
Before setting the date to address the congregants in church, I presented my written speech (Appendix C) to the religious ministers and sought their approval or disapproval of whatever I was going to say to the congregants. Two religious ministers granted me the permission to address their congregants, approved my written oral presentation, and I addressed their congregants on the scheduled dates. At the end of every oral presentation, I distributed flyers about the study and my contacts to the congregants (Appendix D).

Some of the contacted religious ministers granted me permission only to distribute flyers, and others verbally informed me not to speak to their congregants and not to distribute the flyers. Most of the religious ministers who told me not to speak and not distribute flyers told me that they were concerned about how their remarried congregants would feel about participating in the study. The same ministers mentioned that although they had many remarried divorced parents in their religious congregations, remarriage after divorce was still a sensitive and difficult topic to be openly spoken about in their churches.

After receiving the written permissions from the pastors and social workers who accepted my request to recruit participants in their agencies or churches, I made arrangements to schedule a brief presentation of the study to the church members, and/or to distribute the flyers about the study and my contacts. I contacted all the volunteers who expressed their interest to participate in the study, and scheduled for when and where to meet to go over the informed consent form (Appendix E) together before signing or withdrawing without penalty. I also informed every prospective participant who had signed to participate in the study that he or she had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

I had no prior knowledge of or familiarity or friendship with any of the participants. Therefore, I had to build rapport first with the volunteers. Building trust or joining (Buchlin, 1974) with prospective participants helped in circumventing their resistance, enabled them to feel more comfortable with the researcher, and purposefully contributed to the interviews with more in-depth information and adequate self-disclosures.
In order to reach more participants, I asked each interviewee to establish a communication network with other people they knew whom they considered information rich and met the requirements of this study (Appendix D), and to refer them to me. The selected prospective participants signed an Informed Consent Form (Appendix E) before the initial interview. I purposefully selected the participants until theoretical saturation was reached (Appendixes J & K) by using a comparative method of data collection (Creswell, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1988).

Sample size

The grounded theory methodology (GTM) is based on collected data (Creswell, 1998). Data collection continued until theoretical saturation (Strauss & Corbin, 1988), that is, until new data ceased to yield new information. The exact number of participants for this study was 16 (eight men and eight women), and it was determined after reaching theoretical saturation. I became aware that I had attained saturation when I realized that any additional participant was repeating the same ideas in different words as the previous participants, without providing any new data.

Examples of such ideas were related to the motivations for remarriage, description of love, maturity, financial management in stepfamilies, and stepparenting (Appendixes J & K). For instance, in regard to the types of banking accounts that were used by the participants, after interviewing 12 of them, any additional participant would speak of using either a joint account, independent and separate accounts, and/or separate accounts.

Implications of the GTM for the Researcher and Examples of the Researcher's Roles

The development of the grounded theory methodology required the researcher to be actively involved in the study. It required me to be imaginative, creative, curious, inquisitive, courageous to face the unknown, able to think in abstract terms, ability to deal with ambiguity
and discovery, skilful in observation, capable of analyzing patterns and themes of interaction, able to interview and maintain continuous self-examination, be persistent, tolerant, patient and flexible (Spronk & Moon, 1996). Some of the ways in which I carried out the above requirements include the following roles:

I set up individual face-to-face appointments with social workers and the pastors of different religious groups in both inner-city and suburban neighborhoods and asked them for the permission to recruit participants in their agencies and churches. Additionally, I established rapport with the prospective participants and informed them in writing about the objective and the significance of the study (Appendix E). I communicated to each participant the ethical implications involved and the precautions that pertained to every participant’s safety.

I personally discussed the issues regarding confidentiality and anonymity with all prospective participants. I allocated every volunteer who met all the criteria for the study an alphabetically chosen pseudonym after signing the consent to be interviewed. My rationale for choosing to use alphabetically arranged pseudonyms was to facilitate keeping track of the order in which the participants were interviewed and because the comparative method of data collection was used in the study.

Although allocating numerical figures (e.g., 1, 2, 3...) would serve the same purpose of keeping track of the order in which the participants were interviewed, pseudonyms were used to reflect the gender and cultural background of the interviewees. The use of pseudonyms in comparison to numbers helped me to avoid the risk of impersonalizing the participants.

I asked every participant to notify me immediately about any kind of unease or discomfort related to the research. This notification contact would take place before, during, and/or after the face-to-face interviews. I gave an opportunity to the prospective participants to ask any questions and raise any concerns they may have had that needed clarification. As mentioned before, I asked every selected participant to sign a consent form before the interview.
and I informed every prospective participant that he or she had the freedom to participate in the research study or to withdraw at any time without penalty.

I then set face-to-face appointments for two interviews and a follow-up session with every individual who accepted to participate in the research. After every first interview, I asked every participant to write any additional information related to the discussed questions or data that he or she considered necessary related to the purpose of the study. I gave all participants stamped self-addressed envelopes to mail to me that additional data.

*Ethical Sensitivity: Protecting the Welfare of the Participants*

I held a face-to-face meeting with each prospective participant to review the Participant Informed Consent Form (Appendix E) before scheduling the day of the interview. I gave the participants an opportunity to ask whatever questions they might have had related to their safety and other concerns. This was primarily because the participants might have had unresolved issues from their previous marriages (McGolrick & Carter, 1998), and because the interviews might have influenced the participants to experience feelings of discomfort. Therefore, I briefed all the participants individually before the first interview about what to do in any case of discomfort that was related to the study (Appendix E).

I provided the names and work telephone number of my mentor to every prospective participant, together with those of the Director of Seton Hall University’s Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (SHU-IRB-HS), so that each participant might ask any questions he or she might have or clarify concerns related to the research or about me.

To ensure the anonymity of the participants, the data were recorded by allocating a pseudonym to every participant. I am keeping all the recorded audiotapes, the participants’ demographic information, and assigned pseudonyms in a locked drawer in my office. The overall length of interviewing (without including break-times) was approximately 3 hours per participant.
In order to reinforce the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, several precautions were taken throughout the study. For instance, the person who helped me with the transcribing of the interviews first of all had to pass the BB — exam and then signed a confidentiality agreement (Appendix H) before being provided with the tapes. Additionally, I removed all identifying information from the transcriptions and all names were changed on the transcripts. Disguised transcripts were analyzed and coded for recurrent themes.

All records are kept confidential, and no other person has access to the tapes. Other researchers might have access to the disguised transcriptions, I monitored and maintained all research materials and I kept all the recorded audiotapes, the participants' demographic information and assigned pseudonyms in a locked drawer in my office. I will keep them for 3 years after the completion of this study. Such a period is intended to serve for further possible verification of the collected data and might enable me to re-contact any given participant in case it is necessary to do so.

The results of this study might be published and presented to the public at my discretion. I may present any portions of tapes of any recorded interview because all the participants gave me authorization by means of their written consent to use of the tapes in future presentations (Appendix F). All the participants agreed by means of their signatures to make use of their tapes for my future use and presentations. Participants will be referred to by pseudonyms in all publications and presentations. I adhered to keep confidentiality throughout the entire research process, and I will continue to keep it after the study.

Methods of Data Collection

In grounded theory methodology, the trustworthiness of the findings increases if multiple sources of data are utilized (Rafols & Moon, 1996). Therefore, the study included participants with different variables. The data collection methods that I used in the study included completing
a Demographic Sheet (Appendix F) in-depth structured interviews, audio-taping, probing, post-
first interview written notes by participants, and a reflective journal that I wrote and still keep.

The transcribed interviews from the audiotapes were the primary sources of data
collection. I took notes during the interviews related to every participant’s verbal communication
and also entered the nonverbal communications in a reflective journal. Another rationale for the
keeping a reflective journal was to facilitate the recording of my thinking processes and how my
concepts evolved and transformed over the course of the research project. I referred to my
reflective journal during the writing phase to clarify to the readers of the research study how I
reached my conclusions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Consequently, the reflective journal was
useful in supporting the credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability of this study
(Erlanson, Harst, Skipper & Allen, 1993)

Interview Guide

The interview guide within grounded theory methodology generally consists of open-
ended, flexible, action-and-process-oriented questions. At the beginning of the interview, the
questions were usually broad, then become more focused and refined as the analysis occurs.
Secondly, the questions were generally focused on asking about concepts that had not yet been
identified or explored or whose relationships were poorly understood or conceptualized
(Creswell, 1998; Rafle & Moore, 1996).

In light of these observations, I designed the interview guide for this study (Appendix G)
by making use of Taylor and Bogdan’s (1984) conceptualization of an interview guide as a list of
general areas to cover with each informant. Taylor and Bogdan clarified that the interview guide
is not a structured schedule or protocol. Consequently, I used it to decide how to phrase the
questions and when to ask them. It served as a reminder for me to ask about certain topics,
expanded it and or revised it as I conducted additional interviews.
Therefore, for the purposes of this study, I used an interview guide (Appendix G) to explore retrospectively the interviewees' experiences and obtained their suggestions regarding different areas of remarriage. However, I repeated some of the guideline questions by using different words in order to keep track of the every interviewee's consistency in his or her responses. Secondly, at the end of each interview, I gave every participant the opportunity to express verbally some of his or her additional life experiences and suggestions for family therapists, psychologists, and other professionals (FTPPs) that were not reflected in the interview guide. Furthermore, after every interview, I provided a stamped self-addressed envelop to the participants who volunteered to provide additional post interview suggestions for FTPPs in writing.

Probing

I probed the participants during the interviews. Probing was an essential key to successful interviewing (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). In qualitative research, probing consists of the researcher asking the interviewee specific questions and encouraging the informant to provide more information. Elaborating on the importance of probing, Taylor and Bogdan emphasized that interviewers cannot assume that they know exactly what people mean. The interviewer must avoid the risk of taking for granted the common-sense assumptions and understandings that other people share. Additionally, qualitative interviewers must force themselves to constantly ask informants for clarifications and to elaborate on what the informants have said.

Whenever necessary and appropriate, I used probing questions during the interviews to get more information from the interviewees and to follow-up on topics, statements, and words that needed clarification. My background knowledge of family therapy and family psychology were significant resources in implementing the probing techniques. Some of the probes I used in this study included the following: May you tell me more about ... What do you mean by the word...? What was going on when...? When did ... happen?
Credibility of the Resultant Theory through Member Checking

After transcribing the interview data from the audiotapes, I sent transcripts to each participant to confirm whether the transcriptions reflected the content of what each participant wanted to say. I asked individual participants to make corrections, clarifications, and brief elaborations. All the participants complied with these requests, and returned to me the transcripts with their feedback. This kind of feedback from the participants was intended to maximize the credibility of the resultant grounded theory.

Transferability of the Results

Based on the qualitative nature of this study, I was not expected to provide a transferability index at the end of this study. However, it is my responsibility to provide a database that will make transferability judgments possible on the part of the potential applies of grounded theory I have developed in chapter 4.

During the feedback sessions, I asked every participant to express his or her reactions regarding all the established categories in Appendix K, particularly reactions on new information that had not been provided by a given participant. Listening to every participant’s reaction based on the established categories from all the participants’ data, helped me to draw themes about how the findings of this study might or might not be transferable to different people in different or similar contexts. For instance, one of the male participants strongly expressed a negative reaction about the watching of sexual movies as a way of keeping sexuality expressiveness alive. It seems that that participant’s religious views and cultural background played a role in his reaction.

Elaborating on the notion of transferability in qualitative studies, Lincoln and Guba (1985) clarified that, although the supplied data are not easily generalizable, those data are relevant because of their capacity to add to the researcher’s body of background knowledge, patterns of understanding, and to supply suggestions for possible actions.
Procedures of Data Analysis and Writing

The process of data analysis in grounded theory is systemically done, and it begins as soon as the researcher begins to collect data (Creswell, 1998). Likewise, in this study, data analysis began immediately after the first data were collected from the first interviewee. This kind of data analysis involved a two-stage process. The first consisted of attenitive listening to the interviewee’s responses by the researcher in order to analyze the data mentally without writing anything. Secondly, I started to write the mentally analyzed data. By the same token, data analysis started before reaching theoretical saturation because in grounded theory, data collection and data analysis are intertwined (Rafols & Moon, 1996).

During the data-analysis phase, I implemented Rafols and Moon’s (1996) recommendations: used both creative and critical thinking skills, used excellent organizational and conceptual abilities, exercised good writing abilities, practiced good decision-making skills, utilized the ability to deal with ambiguity, and I had to develop within myself a lot of patience.

To facilitate the process of analyzing and recording the data for emergent categories of meaning (Creswell, 1998), I used the following three interrelated phases of data analysis as described by Straus and Corbin (1998): open coding phase, axial coding phase, and selective coding phase (Morrow et al., 2001). However, before explaining these procedures of data analysis, I want to clarify the anonymous manner in which the participants were coded to protect their identification. The following illustration is an example of the two groups of participants in regard to gender and the use alphabetically selected pseudonyms I allocated to the different participants (Figures 2 & 3).

Group 1: Women who remarried after first divorce. Examples of possible alphabetically arranged aliases for female participants: Alicia, Beatrice, Catherine, Dora, ...

Group 2: Men who remarried after first divorce. Examples of possible alphabetically arranged aliases for male participants: Abraham, Bernardo, Charles, Daniel, ...
During the open coding phase (Appendix J), I formed initial categories of information about the factors that influence remarriage stability and satisfaction for custodial parents who remarried by segmenting the information. Furthermore, during this phase, I formed initial categories of suggestions and implications for theory and therapeutic practice from the collected data. I analyzed the data to explore the several properties or subcategories within each category to take note of the extreme possibilities of remarriage stability and satisfaction on a continuum. The participants’ cultural backgrounds and other significant demographic data (Appendix J) were also integrated into the open coding phase (Appendix J).

The open phase of data analysis consisted of my seeking to understand before writing (i.e., my search for conceptualizing what each participant meant by specific words or phrases). During the interviews, I was attentive to those key words (e.g., respect) and used several times the technique of probing for clarity and to gather more data. After transcribing, I first did a thorough reading of every interview to get a sense of the context and meaning of the key words or phrases (codes) by every participant.

After the open coding phase, I used axial coding. During the axial phase I assembled the data in new ways to identify the central category from the collected data. Additionally, I explored the causal conditions (i.e., categories) that influence the remarriage stability and satisfaction of custodial parents after a first divorce. In this phase, I analyzed the categories developed during the open phase to explore the specific strategies (i.e., actions or interactions) that resulted from the encoded central category of remarriage stability and satisfaction. Finally, I identified the context and intervening conditions (i.e., the narrow and broad conditions) that influenced the strategies and delineates the consequences (namely, the outcomes of the strategies) for remarriage stability and satisfaction.

During axial coding, I explored the ways in which the open coded concepts and/or categories (Appendix J) were related to their subcategories. I did this by searching for data-based responses to questions such as when, where, who, why, how, and with what consequences. Most
of the answers to these questions were evident within the data, and I analyzed others by making use of my conceptualization of the participants' inputs and feedbacks.

Since the axial coding phase is very important in theory building (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), the perspective I took toward the data during axial coding was to focus on systematically developing and relating the categories that led to the generated theory of remarriage stability and satisfaction in the fourth chapter of this study. Axial coding (Appendix J) involved establishing the relationships between the categories and their subcategories that were developed from the open coding phase, reviews of the data, and searching for answers to the research question from the data, my research journal, and the unspoken feedback I got from the participants after the interviews.

After the axial coding phase, I used selective coding to identify a story line (chapter 4) and integrated the categories in the axial coding phase (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). During the selective coding phase, I presented conditional propositions (or hypotheses) related to factors that influence marital stability and satisfaction. The narrative story line and hypotheses that were developed in this phase reflected a substantive-level of theory (chapters 4 & 5) that mental-health personnel (e.g., family therapists and psychologists) may integrate in their therapeutic practices while working with custodial parents who remarry after a first divorce.

For the purposes of this study, the selective coding phase will be the final outcome of this study, and it will be written in a story format by integrating in it various narratives from the participants.
Chapter IV
Research Results

This chapter is designed to focus on the primary goal of developing a grounded theory regarding the factors influencing remarriage stability and satisfaction that emerged from the collected data of 16 participants. In order to develop this theory, I proceeded through step-by-step activities, specifically the coding of the data (Appendixes I & X), and an interpretation of the research results within a narrative format (Friedman & Corble, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1998, White & Epson, 1990).

In order to facilitate the development and conceptualization of the emergent-grounded theory, this chapter is divided into the following parts: clarifications about the participants, grouping of the participants by gender, description of each participant with a special focus on specific demographics (Figures 2 and 3), and the identification of the primary and secondary factors of remarriage stability and satisfaction. After the identification of these factors (Figure 2), I identified the central factor or theme by following the guidelines of Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Creswell (1998). Furthermore, in this chapter, each identified factor will be described in detail and in its relationship to the central factor.

Whenever possible, tables and figures have been included in this chapter for purposes of clarification. Two summarised appendixes (I & X) illustrate the open coding and axial coding phases of data analysis that I used toward the generation of a grounded-research theory of remarriage stability and satisfaction.

As mentioned in the previous chapters, the data analysis in this study ended with the selective coding phase, and that phase is the one upon which this chapter has been written in narrative format. Therefore, the main purpose in this chapter is to illustrate the process of how the participants' data were integrated and refined into a theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In other
words, the narrative description of all the identified themes from the data is simultaneously the developed grounded theory of the influencing factors of remarriage stability and satisfaction.

Background Clarifications about the Participants and the Developed Grounded Theory

Before elaborating on the generated theory from the results of this study, I want to note that, for reasons of confidentiality, the names of the 16 participants and their significant others have been replaced by pseudonyms. Secondly, 15 participants out of 16 described their second marriages as stable and satisfactory. The 16th participant (Fred) said that he was unsure of the future of his remarriage. This was because, 3 months before the interview, he had started to experience problems with his second wife.

Nevertheless, Fred volunteered to be interviewed, and his contributions seemed very insightful, and related to the purpose of this study. The other fifteen participants also revealed that, even if at the time of the interview they had become more secure about the future of their second marriages, they had also previously experienced some moments of tension and unhappiness, especially during the first 5 years of their remarriages.

The grounded theory that emerged from the data will reflect the distinction between primary and secondary factors that influence both remarriage stability and satisfaction. This distinction is based on the number of participants who reported on a selected factor or theme. Primary factors refer to any selected theme reported by more than 8 participants out of the total of 16 participants. Any theme that was reported by less than 9 participants has been categorized as a secondary factor.

It is important to note that I selected one central factor from all the primary and secondary factors, because a grounded theory by its very nature is generated from the most outstanding theme amongst the selected themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The title of the central theme and its selection criteria will also be presented in this chapter.
Ever if a factor has been classified as secondary, that does not mean that it is less important than any of those classified as primary ones. The distinction between primary and secondary factors is primarily the difference in frequency in which they occurred. In this study, every reported participant’s experience is valuable in its uniqueness, and/or its relationship to that of other participants. Therefore, I have made every effort possible to code each participant’s lived experiences without reducing them to numerical figures. Secondly, no single participant’s experiences are considered normative. Every participant had a personal story to tell, and I did my best to listen attentively to each story.

The introduction to the developed grounded-theory will include an identification of some of the participants’ specific demographics (e.g., genders, ages, and cultural backgrounds) which are helpful in understanding the contextual realities of the participants, and these will be referred to during the description and interpretation phase of the results in chapter 5.

Although the developed theory is not designed to focus on gender differences, whenever applicable, clarifications that highlight gender differences will be reported within the primary and secondary themes. Gender is considered a major variable in this study. The participants’ chronological age-range was from 45 to 79 years. Therefore, all the participants had lived for over one generation (60 years). It is not surprising then that the responses to my questions and volunteered suggestions seemed to me to be contributions made from long-term experiences. The responses reflected a broad knowledge base. The responses were based primarily on each participant’s life-experiences and wisdom that they said they had received by age.

All the participants in this study were parents who entered second marriages with children after a first marriage had ended in divorce. Therefore, if some of the participants’ contributions to this study resemble or contradict the factors that influence or hinder marital stability and satisfaction in first, third, fourth or any other number of marriages, that is not the intent of this study. It is beyond the scope of this study to make explicit comparisons and contrasts between second marriages and first marriages or any other rank of marriage (e.g., third,
fourth, fifth). Nevertheless, I think that certain factors (e.g., mutual love and compatibility) are likely to influence the stability and satisfaction of all marriages.

All the participants' contributions were based on their retrospective accounts of their experiences and current points of view about remarriage stability and satisfaction. Therefore, I ended the participants' data by focusing on what each participant thought and felt comfortable to say as the time of the interviews and in follow-up sessions. Some of the participants' responses are simply reflections of what they learned during their remarriage experiences, as opposed to assuming that all the participants knew and did exactly everything they communicated to me before they entered their remarriages after a first divorce.

For instance, during the interview, Bernardo emphasized strongly that remarriage partners must avoid the risk of moving into the house or apartment that belongs to one of them. However, this is something he learned from what he called "one of my past mistakes."

Bernardo: It was not a wise decision for me to ask my second wife to move into my house where I was staying as a single parent with two children [Alice and Tom]. In a special way, my daughter [Alice] highly resented my second wife [Jennifer] partly because my daughter perceived my wife as a stranger in the house who had come to bring chaos into the home that my daughter considered her own.

It is important to note that the following participants' contributions are a synthesis of their short-term and long-term experiences that go beyond what each knew, did not know, did and/or did not do at the time of entering their second marriages. Unless otherwise stated, whatever is reported in this study reflects the participants' views at the time the interviews were conducted and in during follow-up sessions.

Growth of the Participants and their Demographic Data

I categorized the participants into two groups by their gender differences (Figures 2 & 3) as shown below. For each gender group, the participants are listed in the order the researcher interviewed them individually. That is, for each gender group, the participants listed first was the
first to be interviewed, then the next ones, until the saturation point was reached. Each group consists of eight participants. It is also important to note that all the participants (females and males) self-reported as heterosexuals in their individual sexual orientations.
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<td>Italian &amp;</td>
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| Highest | Some | third | Completed | One year | Second | Third | Half | Few
| level of | college | year | college | and 6 | year of | year | (1/2) | and
| formal | college | of | college | months | college | college | year of | occasional
| education | classes | college | college | of college | college | college | college | occasional
| | | | | | | | | occasional
| | | | | | | | | occasional
| Religion | Presbyterian | Roman | Roman | Roman | Baptist |
| | Catholic | Catholic | Catholic | Catholic | | 
| | | | | | | | | Quaker |
| Age at 1st marriage | 21 | 20 | 10 | 22 | 8 | 29 | 5 | 16 | 5, 18, 25 |
| and duration of 1st marriage | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Children | 1.0 | 5.0 | 1.0 | 2.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 | 5.0 | 1.2 | N/A |
| from 1st marriage | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| and from 2nd marriage | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Time in years between 1st and 2nd marriages | 1.8 | 6.27 | 8.20 | 9.18 | 2.31 | 1.33 | 2.16 | 3.25 | N/A |
| Year in marriage | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Number of step-children | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | N/A |
| Current residential neighborhood | Suburban | Urban | Urban | Urban | Lower-city | Inner-city | Suburban |
| Annual family income in thousands (US dollars in thousands) | Over 130 | 45-55 | 75-90 | 75-90 | 35-45 | 35-45 | 75-90 | 45-15 | N/A |

*Figure 1. Demographic summary of the female participants.*
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<td>Charles</td>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>Elias</td>
<td>Fred</td>
<td>Geoff</td>
<td>Henry</td>
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<td>English</td>
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<td>3 years early child care</td>
<td>College Graduate</td>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>Ph. D student (clinical psychology)</td>
<td>Two years at college</td>
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<td>20, 20</td>
<td>12, 25</td>
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<td>23, 3</td>
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<td>4, 9</td>
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<td>Time in years between 1st and 2nd marriage, and time in remarriage to present</td>
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<td>2, 19</td>
<td>2, 5, 71</td>
<td>2, 8</td>
<td>3, 5, 16</td>
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<td>90,000 - 130,000</td>
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<td>45,000 - 55,000</td>
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<td>75,000 - 90,000</td>
<td>Over 130,000</td>
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Figure 3. Demographic summary for the main participants.
Description of Female Participants

Alicia. Alicia is a 58-year-old woman of Italian descent, who migrated to the United States with her parents from Italy when she was 8 years old. She speaks Italian and English fluently. She was raised as a practicing Pentecostal. She completed a few college classes before she was married at the age of 21, for the first time to her husband (Paul) of Italian descent (second generation), for 17 years. Paul was the only child and was raised by his single mother, who was a non-practicing Pentecostal. Paul and Alicia had one biological son (Bob), who is currently 29 years old and is in his first marriage.

At the time of the interview, Alicia had been remarried to Alex for 8 years. Alex also entered remarriage having a son (Samuel) from the first marriage, who is currently 35 years old. He lives about 10 miles from Alicia and Alex’s home, and they visit each other regularly. Alicia and Alex live in a suburban neighborhood on an annual income of over $130 thousand.

Alicia and Paul were married for 17 years when Alicia filed for divorce. Before the legal divorce was finalized, the couple sought marital counseling. The main reason for seeking help was an attempt to make the marriage work after Paul’s involvement in consuming cocaine and an ongoing marital infidelity with a woman who was 10 years younger than Paul. After signing the divorce papers, the court granted Bob’s custody to Alicia, and Paul was allowed monthly visits to see Bob. Alicia reported that 6 months after the court’s approval of the divorce, Paul stopped consuming cocaine and married “that same younger girl” (Rose).

Immediately after the court approved the divorce, Alicia and Bob moved to an apartment. Six months later she started dating Alex, a Ph.D., Jewish-American man who is 12 years older than Alicia. She described Alex as very respectful of her. During the first 6 months of dating, Alex and Alicia dialogued in detail about their finances, and in the 7th month they decided to get married. They put all their money into a joint account, bought a house in a suburban neighborhood, and Alicia moved into the new house with Alex and Bob.
In retrospect, Alicia reported her admiration of Alex’s involvement in Bob’s education and disciplining his son. According to Alicia, such involvement has helped her son to succeed in school, and she feels very happy that her son has gained the trust of his stepfather without losing contact with his biological father. During the first half of the interview with Alicia, I (researcher) felt compassion for her as I listened to the emotional abuse she experienced in her first marriage. However, after taking a break, I felt joyful for her as I listened to how she has managed to find happiness and feel respected as a wife in her second marriage.

Currently, Alicia and Paul are in their second marriages. Based on Alicia’s narrative, Bob seemed to be a very significant person in the lives of nuclear and extended family members. Above all, it was interesting for me to hear Alicia narrate the joy she felt on Bob’s marriage to Jane, because Alicia, Alex, Paul, and Rose had an opportunity to interact with one another in an extremely friendly and mutually respectful manner. Alicia even managed to dance with Paul. Alex had a good conversation with Rose. And Alex danced with Rose!

Beatrice. Beatrice is a 64-year-old woman born and raised in Puerto Rico. Both her parents were Puerto Rican, devout Catholics, and they raised her as a Catholic, too. She attended college for 3 years, and at the age of 20 was married for the first time to Ricardo, a Puerto Rican man, during an official ceremony within the Catholic Church. After 10 years of marriage, they divorced. Eight years later, she married Antonio, who was also a divorced, and has been married to him for 10 years. Beatrice and Antonio have not had any children together, although Beatrice has five children and Antonio has two children from their previous marriages. They now live in an urban neighborhood on an annual income of $45 to 55 thousand. According to Beatrice, being a Catholic contributed to her prolonged perseverance in that marriage that she described as being “unhappy, abusive, and miserable.”

After those 10 years, she felt that she could not bear the verbal, physical, and emotional abuses any longer. Consequently, she decided to divorce her husband and left the house immediately. After divorcing Beatrice suffered a lot of humiliation from her family members for...
having divorced. She experienced financial difficulties and could not meet her own needs and those of her children. Two years after the divorce, she moved to the United States with her five children and remained a single mother for the next 6 years. During this period she experienced a lot of loneliness and lack of support in raising the children.

In the meantime, Beatrice met Antonio, who had just migrated to the United States from South America. She first cohabited with him, and later they married civilly. Her primary motivation for remarriage was the need for a companion, someone who would help her with the financial needs of her five children. Antonio left his two children from his first marriage in his country of origin with their mother. Beatrice described Antonio as "a warm, respectful, mature, loving, and religious person."

These values in Antonio helped Beatrice to regain her self-esteem, because she felt that he treated her with dignity, listened to her, went to church with her, and was always available to her children. Even if Beatrice did not enter the second marriage while focused on the love between the couple, she advocated that remarrying partners need to love one another and to seek counseling, especially about forgiveness for those who feel wounded from the previous marriage.

In her opinion, mutual love is the key to remarriage stability and satisfaction.

Beatrice: The two partners have to be in love with each other because this helps them to understand each other and communicate about their problems with concern and seek solutions that benefit them and their significant other.

According to Beatrice, being a Roman Catholic had positively and negatively affected her marriage life. She described in positive terms that belonging to the Catholic Church has helped her to keep the faith in the midst of suffering, especially by praying the Sorrowful and the Glorious mysteries of the Rosary. However, being refused reception of the Eucharist has brought her a lot of self-blame and anger toward the Catholic leaders' insensitivity to the pain of people going through divorce. By the same token, as a remarried Catholic and churchgoer, she feels condemned for having remarried instead of being supported by the church to which she belongs.
I was highly touched by the pain that Beatrice expressed in regard to her first marriage, and to being a single mother. Above all, she mentioned that being both a mom and a dad to her children was very draining. Now as a remarried divorcée she finds it hard to receive the Eucharist in the Catholic Church. When the researcher asked her about the annulment process, Beatrice almost broke into tears, and, spoke only after a 2-minute silence and sobbing.

Beatrice: We have tried for the past 5 years but all our efforts have been in vain. At the same time I find it difficult to start putting in writing what happened to me in the first marriage because the more I write, as required by the church officials working on my annulment process, the more I experience the pain and humiliation I experienced in the first marriage.

I, the researcher, was impressed that Beatrice had kept her faith and continued going to the Catholic Church even without being allowed to receive the Eucharist!

Catherine: Catherine is a 54-year old woman of Italian and Polish background, but she identified herself as Italian, and as a non-practicing Roman Catholic. She graduated from college as a teacher. She was married for the first time to Andrew when she was 22 years old. The marriage lasted 8 years, and during that time they had first a baby girl (Eileen), and then a boy (Eric). After her divorce she spent 4 years taking care of her two children in a rented apartment.

In the 4th year, she started dating Michael, who is of a German and Italian background and they married. Catherine and Michael have been married for 22 years. The two of them have not had any child together. Michael, also a divorcé, did not have a child from his first marriage. They currently live in a townhouse and have an annual family income of $75 to 90 thousand.

In elaborating on her background, Catherine mentioned that she was the youngest in her family and that all three of her siblings were still in their first marriages. Consequently, she revealed, with a lot of pain, that it was hard for her siblings and parents to accept her after her divorce and to understand the circumstances that contributed to it. However, some of the extended family members who had divorced before her came to her rescue, and she had a number of friends with whom she associated as she was mourning the loss of her first marriage.
One of the reasons that hindered Catherine’s family members for sympathizing with her immediately after her divorce was the fact that they did not know about the tensions which the couple was experiencing, especially because, whenever Catherine and Andrew appeared in public, they seemed to be very friendly. That is, they showed no expressed marital conflicts and misunderstandings, which could make others suspect any tensions between the couple.

According to Catherine, 3 years before the divorce occurred, she had already made a decision that that was not the marriage she wanted to be in for the rest of her life. However, she did not want to be the one to initiate the divorce. To her advantage, on one occasion the couple got into a slight argument, and Andrew asked that they separate. With no further delay, Catherine took those words as a pretext to justify that Andrew was the one who initiated the divorce, and she separated from him immediately. During Catherine’s stay with her children, after the divorce, she tried her best to keep contact with her ex-in-law, whom she described as very good people, and whom she wanted her children to maintain close contact with as they grew up.

As mentioned before, in the 4th year after her divorce, Catherine started dating Michael, and during a 6-month process of courtship Catherine realized, “This is the man [Michael] I was going to marry. I mean, I thought I wanted to spend the rest of my life with him.”

Elaborating on Michael’s cultural background, Catherine mentioned that he described himself as Italian, but according to her he was “an ex-German.” When asked by the researcher to explain what she meant by “ex-German,” she started by identifying herself as Italian.

Catherine: We [Italians] are very emotional. We just go with our emotions and let them run, while he will think things out before he reacts to anything. So he does not let his feelings show, but you know they are there.

Catherine helped me, the researcher, to understand why a person like her could stay in a marriage in which she was not feeling happy.

Catherine: It was the day before Mother’s Day. We were driving to the grocery store because we were having everyone over for Mother’s Day dinner, and he [Andrew] said to me: “You seem so unhappy most of the time. Why do you stay?” And I said to him: “I stay because of the children.” And he said: “Well, we should separate.” And that was it. And that was the end of it. He gave me what I
wanted because I didn’t want to be the one to say, “I want out.” So he helped me get out of it. But otherwise I probably would have stayed married to him [but unhappy].

Dora. Dora is a 50-year-old woman born and raised Roman Catholic in Peru. She speaks Spanish fluently and is able to express herself in English, though with some difficulty. She completed college in Peru as a nurse. She married for the first time at the age of 20, and her marriage lasted for 5 years, during which time she had two children. Nine years after her divorce she married Alex, and the two of them have been married for 18 years; they have not had any children together, and Alex did not have any children. Alex and Dora live in an urban neighborhood, and their annual income is between $75 and 90 thousand. At the time of the interview, Dora said that, although she had withdrawn attendance at Mass and other services from the Catholic Church, she still considered herself Catholic.

Dora grew up in a low-income family of five siblings and eight stepsiblings. While growing up, Dora stayed with her biological parents until she was four, and then they separated. She went to stay with her mother until she was 11, and afterwards she started staying with her father who was then remarried to Laura. Based on this information, Dora emphasized that the way she knew her second husband was primarily through cohabitation with him. The following are her responses when I asked her about her motivations to remarry with Alex.

Dora: I decided to choose my second husband because he was a man without children. I went in my house no other kids than mine because I had a negative experience with my divorced father who married a lady with too many kids.

Based on the same experiences of being a stepchild and the pain that it brought her, Dora resolved not to marry any man who had children. At the time of the interview, Dora mentioned that she was very happy in her second marriage and had already spent 18 years with Alex. Together they co-parented her two daughters. Dora highlighted that she has done her best to provide “guidance” to these children, because that is what she did not receive from her father, mother, and stepmother while growing up. Additionally, when I asked Dora whether she had
concerns about becoming a stepmother by virtue of getting married to a man who had children, she responded:

Dora: No, no. It was not that. I think I could have been a real good step mom, but I always have the idea that it's always a problem. Like if he could have had kids and I have kids, he always wants something for his kids, and I will always want something for my kids, and there is going to be trouble, not even over money, probably it is everything.

Listening to Dora's story caused me (the researcher) to think about children who grow up having witnessed the divorce of their parents. Later on they end up marrying for different motivations and their marriages may end up in divorce. Then they remarry, and the cycle of divorce is repeated in their children. On the other hand, Dora's experiences of her parents' divorce, living in a stepfamily, her painful first marriage, her struggle as a single mother to raise her children, and finally her stability and satisfaction in remarriage manifest to me that some people can be resilient through divorce and succeed in a remarriage.

Elizabeth: Elizabeth is a 60-year-old woman. Her mother was of English and German background, and her father of German and Italian descent. However, she identified herself as Italian. So, I asked her:

Joseph: What makes you feel Italian?

Elizabeth: I associate Italian people with family, stable home, together-type people. They have parties. They are family-oriented. That is why, I guess, I feel Italian. I want to be like that.

Elizabeth's highest level of formal education was 1 year and 6 months in college. She was raised Roman Catholic and identified herself as a practicing Catholic. Elizabeth first married Sandro at the age of 18, and the marriage lasted 5 years. The couple had one son, Robert. After 2 years of separation, she remarried with Peter. They have been together for thirty-one years in the second marriage, and they have one son (John). She lives in an urban neighborhood and has an annual family income of $35 to 45 thousand.
One of the experiences that Elizabeth emphatically mentioned during the interview was the way she came to terms with the resentment she felt towards her mother in regard to money. By the time of the interview, she had forgiven her for the poverty they lived in. This happened after her experience of being a single mother, because that is when she realized that single mothers have stretched financial situations.

During the interview, Elizabeth spoke also with notable enthusiasm about the wisdom of looking back at her experiences of love between her first marriage and her second marriage. She said that in the case of her second marriage, love was different from that in the first marriage.

Elizabeth: I remember myself thinking I was madly in love at 18 years old, and the word love meant sexual intimacy, nothing else. [In] the second marriage, there is a lot more than love. There is love [in the second marriage], but there is a lot of other stuff too. There is a commitment to one another, caring about someone. You think at 18 you love somebody, [but you don't know the meaning of love. When you get older, when you go through that second marriage, you are seeing the care and the patience that all comes under love. Love isn't just a word or only for sex.

I was impressed by Elizabeth's willingness to share her experiences about herself and other remarried parents. She mentioned that some divorced parents remarry for reasons related to security and love.

Elizabeth: They don't want to be alone anymore. They don't want to struggle by themselves. [This does not mean] ... that they would pick up anybody on the street. It is good if they find someone with whom they are compatible.

Felicia. Felicia is a 53-year-old Hispanic American woman, born in Puerto Rico and raised in the United States. She speaks Spanish and English fluently. She completed her second year of college and is currently remarried. She is Catholic and attends church services one or more times per week.

Felicia married for the first time at the age of 18 years, stayed for less than 1 year in her first marriage, and divorced her husband (Roberto) due to "humiliation above and beyond physical abuse that I suffered from my first husband." She and Roberto had one child, Jose. She
waited about 1 year, and then married Fausto, who she has now been married to for 33 years; together they have a daughter, Ana, as well as Felicia’s son. Together, they live in the inner-city on an annual income of $75 to 90 thousand.

After her divorce, Felicia, took custody of her son. She spent the time before remarriage in an apartment within a housing complex. In the same complex there was a man, Fausto, who had also gone through a divorce and was staying in one of the apartments. After taking the bus together for 3 months without talking, Fausto initiated a conversation with her. For 3 consecutive weeks, every morning Fausto used to wait for Felicia, so they could go together to the bus stop, and in the evening he made an effort to walk with her to her apartment. When the conversation became personal, Felicia started to withdraw from Fausto. However, Fausto remained persistent.

One of the reasons that Felicia stated for her withdrawal was related to her ongoing pain from the abuse from the previous marriage. Because of this, she had resolved not to date any man at all. Two months later, out of respect for her, Fausto decided to give Felicia her space. A month later, Felicia felt a strong urge to ask Fausto out for a date. She started making plans for how to meet him, and how to invite him to her apartment! To make a long story short, in 6 months they decided to get married and, by the time of the interview, they had been married for 33 years.

I was moved by compassion as Felicia was narrating her story of running away from home from her abusive mother and by the fact that she got pregnant on the first day of her sexual experience with a man who also abused her. Secondly, I felt compassion for Jose, who desperately tried to meet his father, only to find that even the man he was looking for did not show interest in him. I felt happy about Fausto’s expression of fatherly love towards Jose. Likewise, I felt happy by the way Felicia described herself as a person whose decision to get married to Fausto has brought meaning, happiness, spiritual growth, and economic prosperity into the lives of her children, Jose and Ana, and her husband, Fausto.
Grace. Grace is a 65-year-old African American woman raised in a Baptist Church. She attended college for half a year after her first marriage, which was at age 21, and lasted for 25 years. In this marriage, she had two pairs of twins (four girls) and one son who is the youngest. She did not have any child in her second marriage. She has been married to her second husband for 16 years, after waiting 20 years after her divorce to remarry. She was born in the inner city, in a poor neighborhood, and her parents died when she was 11 and 12 years old. Her first marriage was very painful. She experienced problems with the IRS because her husband used to spend a lot of money, which they did not have, and never filed income tax returns. Currently, she lives in the inner city and has an annual family income of $375 to 90 thousand.

Grace’s first marriage involved a lot of marital infidelities on the part of her husband. While she was still married to him, he had a child with another woman. That became the “last blow,” which influenced her to file for divorce immediately after she knew about that child. She left the house and started to care for her five children on a limited income. While still a single mother, she went back to school and also took on two jobs. Grace emphasized: “We were poor, but we were happy.”

After 2 years of being a single mother, Grace married one of her best friends whom she knew when she was still in her first marriage. The son is very proud of this man because he saved his mother from a lot of pain, humiliation, and shame. In reference to marriage and remarriage, Grace observed a major difference between most traditional Caucasians and many people of African American background in the United States. Grace said, “It seems in our community [African American], we do things backwards; the child first, then live together, and then somewhere along the line, for whatever reason, you get married.”

When I asked Grace what advice she would give to African American boys and girls in order to prepare themselves for a happy marriage, she emphatically said:

Grace: Finish school, stay motivated, go to college, get a good education, do some traveling, get your own apartment, do not live with anybody, and save yourself for that special person. It will be worth it. ... Save yourself. Abstain
from sex. I mean, sex is wonderful, the best thing in the world, but with the right person, and only the right person. It can be the most out of this world. It will be well worth it.

Elaborating on the notion of marital stability and satisfaction in a post-interview note, Grace wrote: "People should be intent on looking for what works. What use is stability without satisfaction or vice-versa?"

**Hilda.** Hilda is a 58-year-old woman of German-Welsh cultural background. She was a licensed professional with a post-masters degree in marriage and family therapy. She attended Presbyterian and Methodist Churches when she was growing up. Her first husband was Jewish, and she learned a lot about the Jewish culture. During her marriage to him for 12 years, she was only 19 when she married him and they had one child together.

Hilda’s first husband was physically abusive to her, and after the birth of their first child (Damian), he became even more abusive and even mistreated his mother-in-law. She waited 13 years before remarrying and has spent 25 years in her second marriage. She currently belongs to the Quaker religion with her spouse and children. They live in a suburban neighborhood and have an annual family income of $45 to 55 thousand. She had experienced a number of miscarriages in her second marriage before she gave birth to a boy (Robert) and a girl (Jace). I asked Hilda what divorced parents need to know and be prepared to encounter after remarriage, she said:

Hilda: Remarriage is messy, because whatever you do, you please one and you hurt the other. For instance, if you please the spouse, you may end up hurting the children or the ex-spouse or yourself. Hilda highlighted that remarriage involves a lot of shame and fear of the unknown future. That is why remarried people need to be supported, rather than judged, for their mistakes.

One of the mistakes Hilda admitted making, as a remarried woman, was to allow her son to continue making decisions in front of his spouse. This was a habit she had developed when she was a single mother. I was personally impressed about Hilda’s pride in her German background. Hilda stated, “We Germans, we don’t make decisions lightly. We won’t pack our bags at the first fight. You know we are going to stick with it…. We don’t make a mountain out of a mere hill.”
Therefore, it seems that for Hilda, divorce was the last option after bearing ten of physical and verbal abuse from her first husband.

**Description of the Male Participants**

**Abraham.** Abraham is 70-year-old, Jewish American, with a doctorate in clinical psychology. However he is not a practicing Jew; in fact he said that he did not have a religion that he called himself a part of. He married his first wife (Hannah) when he was 20 years old. The couple had one child (Thomas), who was born with mental problems. Thomas' mental status created a lot of stress for Abraham and Hannah because of the extra care that he needed.

Abraham clarified that this child contributed to the couples' divorce. He spent 40 years in his first marriage and, it was 2 years before he remarried. By the time of the interviews for this study, he had spent eight years in his second marriage with Joyce, also a divorcée. Joyce came to the second marriage with her 17-year-old son (John) from the first marriage. At the time of the interview Abraham and his wife, Joyce, live in a suburban neighborhood on an annual income of over $130 thousand.

I felt compassion for Abraham and his first wife Hannah because of the emotional stresses they had experienced as a couple while taking care of Thomas. During their courtship, Abraham and Hannah talked about their shared dream of having a normal child that they were going to cherish and educate. However, when their son, Thomas, was born handicapped, their dream was shattered.

According to Abraham, Thomas’s physical and mental conditions were a big blow to their dream, and they brought enormous stress on the couple relationship, which eventually led to their divorce. However, after feeling compassion for Abraham by virtue of his unrealized dream, I felt happy because of the joy his stepchild (John) has brought into his life.

**Bernardo.** Bernardo is a 62-year-old Italian American male. He has been a Roman Catholic for all his life. He completed 1 year of college, at the age of 20, he married Rose, who
spent 22 years married to, and the couple had two children, Alice and Tom. Bernardo's father, Robert, was also a divorcé. According to Bernardo, Robert's marriage failed because he put money first. Bernardo learned from his father to value money first, became a workaholic at the expense of his marriage, a controller of money in the house, and the decision-maker, which caused his first marriage to fail. Two years after Bernardo got divorced, he married a woman named Jessica, with one son, and they have been married for 19 years. Bernardo and Jessica live in a suburban neighborhood with an annual family income of $90 to 130 thousand.

Bernardo spent the two years after his divorce living in the same house with Alice, who was 19 years old at the time of her parents' divorce. In the meantime, Alice took on the responsibility of housewife, and she considered herself the female owner of the house. When Bernardo remarried Jessica, Alice was highly upset with her father and her stepmother. Jessica was a widower who had one child, (John), a situation, which made Bernardo a stepfather to John. Based on the experience Bernardo had with Alice and Jessica, he had learned the hard way that remarried couples should sell their old houses and buy a new one to reduce the risk of a sense of entitlement, especially if children are involved.

Bernardo was against joint custody, which includes weekends and any other short periods of less than 3 months. His rationale was that the parents have their permanent homes, but the children have no place to call home. He supported this idea based on the experience of his grandchildren who are caught in the middle of the weekend visits to their mother Alice and her ex-husband. Bernardo and Jessica are currently preparing themselves for their 20th anniversary, and they anticipated it to be a big family reunion. Although they had no children together, Bernardo and Jessica consider the children from each partner's first marriage as their biological children.

I was impressed about Bernardo's emphasis as he suggested to remarried parents to avoid "a selfish attitude [me, myself, and I] in a marriage, with a special emphasis on money." I was also impressed by Bernardo's comparison of the emotions related to divorce with the stages of
grief. Bermudo highlighted that it was hard for him as a man to initially accept his responsibility in the divorce. Even after the divorce had occurred, he spent a lot of time in denial, blaming his ex-spouse for the affair. He experienced a depression and kept going back and forth through these emotions. Bermudo concluded the interview by emphasizing that people should not rush into remarriages before removing the emotional baggage from the previous marriages.

Charles. Charles is a 70-year-old veteran and semi-retired. His parents came from Europe. He was of Hungarian-Polish descent. He belongs to the second generation. While he did not go to college, he did have 7 years of training in the Navy. He was an insurance salesperson, involved in financial planning who was taking care of his existing clients without looking for new cases. He was raised Catholic and continues to be an active member of the Catholic Church in his parish. He married his first wife at the age of 22, and their marriage lasted for 25 years, during which time they had four children. After 25 years, Jenny, his wife, divorced him, and 2 1/2 years later he married Julia, who he had been married to for 21 years. Charles and Julia live in a suburban neighborhood on an annual income of $75,000 to $90,000.

Charles revealed that he dated his first girlfriend (Rose) for 4 years, but they never got married because of his mother's disapproval that the woman was not Catholic. Consequently, his mother set up for him a new possibility (Jenny). Charles' mother and Jenny's mother were friends, and they worked together to get us going together and later I realized that it was a mistake, but at that time it looked good."

Charles married Jenny when he was 22 years old. By then, he was in the Navy, and he would come home only on weekends. Charles elaborated:

Charles: Nine months after meeting my wife (Jenny), we married, and I realized later that it was a mistake. [because] both of us were not ready for it. It was just a party every weekend and once we had the baby machine going, we had four kids in 49 months [4 years and 1 month]. After about 18 years she (Jenny) wanted to go to college, which she did not do before we got married.

Charles stated that his grandparents were alcoholics, and both his parents had only a grammar school education.
Charles: So when I got a high-school education there was no encouragement to go for further education. You know, get a job, get married, and have kids. [Charles did not obtain a college education because] I started having kids when I was 22, had three of them while I was in the Navy, and one when I got out. And I was living with my mother-in-law, who was a widow, just trying to support the family. When I started working as a mechanic, I had no time for the family. All the time was dedicated to work.

Additionally, Charles said that after 18 years of marriage with Jenny, the two of them agreed that Jenny would go back to finish her college education, and if possible go for a master's degree. Jenny dedicated herself to study until she completed her master's degree. Immediately after her graduation, she started working in New York, commuting from New Jersey. Three months after starting her job, she informed Charles that she had rented an apartment in New York from which she could commute to work. Charles was upset by all of these ready-made decisions, and, above all, after he became aware of this, that Jenny was having an affair with a married man from Japan.

After 25 years of marriage, Jenny divorced Charles for the Japanese man, who abandoned her because he did not want to divorce his wife and leave his teenage daughter. Charles added that, ever since Jenny divorced him, she has not been able to reestablish herself in another marriage. All the men who have come into her life stay with her for only a little while, and then they separate. That has probably contributed to her frustration and jealousy towards Charles' second wife (Julia).

I was impressed by Charles' determination and commitment to his second wife and the clear boundaries he has developed with his first wife and 4 children. He reported feeling happy for taking his stand, because he had won all their attempts to tear his remarriage apart. Surprisingly, irrespective of their negative attitude toward him and his second wife, he said that he still loved them and considered them part of his family.

Daniel: Daniel is a 47 year-old man, born in Puerto Rico, and raised in the United States. A college graduate, he grew up in the Catholic Church of the Roman Rite and, by the time of the
interview, his attendance at Church services was once a week, usually the Sunday Mass. He married his first wife (Paulina) when he was 21 years old. They had 3 children (Evelyn, Ana, and Tomas). Daniel reported that his marriage to Paulina lasted 15 years, but within that period he separated from her five times, each time for 3 to 6 weeks. He would go to stay with his friends, and on one occasion he went and stayed with his mother-in-law.

After trying different means of making the marriage work, including going for couple therapy, Daniel finally filed for divorce and left the house to Paulina. He stayed for 6 months with a friendly family, and then rented an apartment, where he stayed with his 17-year-old oldest daughter (Evelyn) for 1 year. During that year, he made arrangements to marry Maggie, who was also a divorcee with two sons from her first marriage. Daniel had known Maggie for 7 years at his work where he was her boss. By the time of the interview, Daniel and Maggie had been married for almost 9 years, were living in an urban neighborhood, and earning an annual family income of $45 to $55 thousand.

During the interview, Daniel was very outgoing and detailed in his responses. For instance, his responses to some of the questions I asked him may help the reader to get a better sense of some of his marital experiences and contributions to this study.

Joseph: What contributed to the end of the first marriage?

Daniel: Um, there were a number of things; there were a lot of things. She [Paulina], before my first daughter was born, she basically insulted my family and my parents... [and] my grandmother. She was very immature. I was blind, you know, I loved her, but she was from the street. She didn’t have a father, and she did things in the beginning that just hurt me. But I dealt with it because my daughter was coming, and I wasn’t the type of person to leave a person for that. I thought that in time things would get better, and it didn’t. I was unhappy... I was just fed up with it already. She did so many things that it hurt me, and I lost my love for her. Little by little, it was 15 years, and we had a third child, and I wasn’t even looking for a third child. I’m not saying I’m not happy about it, but I wasn’t ecstatic the fact I was going to have a third child, because I knew that our marriage was already like it wasn’t what I was looking for.

Joseph: What motivated you to remarry?

Daniel: First of all, I found it difficult to be by myself. I always lived with somebody my entire life. I was either with my parents, or I was with my first
marriage. I never lived alone, and it was very hard for me. It was very difficult for me the first time that I was by myself, and I just needed to be with somebody.

Joseph: How did you handle the moment of first being alone?

Daniel: It was very hard. The first night I finally because I didn’t go off to live by myself the first time when I got separated because I got separated a number of times. There were incidents that happened and I would leave the house and go live with a friend, or at one time I even stayed with her mom for a few days, a week. And I stayed with some friends of mine. One friend that helped me out, and I stayed in his house for a couple of months, in a certain place. But I never stayed by myself entirely until I felt I was imposing on my friend because he had his family. He has his wife and his children, and I needed to find a place on my own. Which I did, I found a small room in another place, and the first night was very difficult for me. I felt extremely lonely and sad, and I could hardly sleep that night. I was very depressed. I was very depressed. But um, as time went on, I adjusted.

As I listened to Daniel’s narratives about his remarriage experiences, I was profoundly moved by compassion for him in reference to what he called: “one of the most horrible days in my life.” He narrated the following story after I asked him the question:

Joseph: What has been the impact of your children on your remarriage stability?

Daniel: That has been very tough, very tough. Because my children always thought that I left their mother for her [Maggie]. And the little ones didn’t understand because they were younger at the time. But my older daughter [21 years old] knew what I had gone through. Even her mother, even my first wife’s mother even understood why I stopped, why I left. Because she knew what I had gone through, but, for the children, it was tough.

Joseph: It was tough.

Daniel: You know, and we had a lot of problems between my [second] wife and my children. My current wife and my children. My oldest daughter came to live with me at one point when I first got married, when I first got the house. She was living with me because my first daughter couldn’t live with her mom. She [Evelyn] was having trouble, she [Paula] wasritable. They did not get along, so I wasn’t going to leave her in the street. So … my daughter came to live with me. And, before I got married, she was still living with me. So, we got our house a month before we got married. First we got the house, then, when we got married, my daughter came to live with me. And after the first 2 weeks there was an incident in my house between my wife and my first daughter, and there was fights thrown, there was a fight. And that was very devastating for me. That was one of the most horrible days in my life. Because I just got in the house and my new wife and my daughter … didn’t like her from the beginning, but she did it. I spoke to her; she could come live with us, that everything was going to be fine, that she would have her own room, which she did. And it was ok the first 2 weeks; then an incident happened.
Joseph: Looking back, what do you think your daughter might have felt that contributed to the misunderstanding with your wife?

Daniel: They [three children] anger mostly towards her [Maggie], their hatred towards her because of the first marriage, because of the first marriage. They felt I guess, you know, that I shouldn’t have gotten remarried, that it was my fault. That’s the way they saw it. They were blaming me I think they were blaming her more than me for taking me away from their mother.

After that fight, the oldest daughter (Evelyn) left Daniel’s house and started living in an apartment alone at the age of 21. According to Daniel, "I think, I think I think for me it was best that my daughter left because that certainly wasn’t going to work out." However, even if the daughter left, Daniel expressed the following profound regret:

Daniel: And so this day, to this day, which I regret totally is that they have yet to come into my house. She comes to my house, but she is outside. And she has spoken to my wife. We have gone to a couple of weddings and a funeral. Unfortunately my mom, and then her mom, you know, and she speaks to her … not for long.

I was impressed to hear Daniel say that the reconciliation process had started between his second wife and his eldest daughter, and that had made him feel happier in his remarriage. He used phrases which seemed to indicate that, although it was very difficult for him to act as a judge between his second wife and children, he managed to put the events within a context that helped him to avoid taking sides.

Daniel: All three of my children were there when the incident happened. So that was horrible. So it took a few months before they started coming back slowly to come to the house and try and understand what happened. They accepted it and little by little. But it was tough. It was very tough for me. I’m not trying to discourage a person who wants to remarry and bring their children because my incident was a little unique … My new wife now, she worked for me. So right away they think that caused the problem, you know. (Consequently, he warned remarrying parents:) Don’t leave your children out, I think, because it is very important even in the tough situations and you have to try. It is very hard to be a referee or a judge when you have your children on one side, and you love them all, you have your wife on the other side, and you love them, and you’re stuck in the middle with a problem. If you lean toward them, then you are prejudiced towards her, and vice versa. It’s tough; it was tough. But I’m still with her, and I’m happy and work at it. You work at each situation, and you came up with and you try and resolve it without damaging either person, you know. And it’s hard on the children because they’re still growing up.
Daniel also used phrases of appreciation because of the role played by his second wife in reinforcing his remarriage stability, satisfaction, and relationships with his children from the previous marriage.

Joseph: What do you think has helped you handle this situation?

Daniel: My wife has been very patient, you know. She has been supportive, and she has spoken to my children from time to time, you know, even though there are moments when she seems like doesn’t want anything to do with them. But she still tolerates it, you know, and she is an understanding person. If you have that type of person to get married with you, I think that, when you have children at my age, because children remarry at different ages. Mine were seven, eleven, and eighteen. They could be older they could be younger. If it’s younger, it might be easier because they grow up with her. If they’re older already and they have been together with the mother for a while, it’s more difficult for them to understand what’s going on, to try to help them adapt to my new wife.

Based on Daniel’s descriptions and the whole interview process, it seems, that in order to understand the dynamics behind Daniel’s remarriage stability and satisfaction, it is important to understand the role played by his three children, especially the oldest daughter, and his second wife’s patience. No wonder, then, he finally suggested strongly that remarried parents should try their best to balance the time they dedicate to their children and second wives.

Elias. Elias a 50-year-old man, refrained from identifying his cultural background and he denied affiliation to any formalized religion. However, he admitted that his parents were of German and Swiss descent. Elias married his first wife, Bernadete, when he was 23 years old, and their marriage lasted 7 years. They had three children, whom Elias took custody of after their divorce. After the divorce, he waited 3½ years before he married Veronica, with whom he had two children. They have been married for 16 years. Veronica was a divorcée at the time of her remarriage to Elias. The two of them had become romantically involved while both of them were still in their first marriages. Veronica and Elias live in a suburban neighborhood on an annual income of $55 to 65 thousand.

Elaborating on the causes of his first divorce, Elias mentioned: “My first wife had a psychological profile to only express things in anger.” In part, Elias attributed this profile of his
wife to his involvement in an extramarital relationship with the woman he later married, "I [Elias] became unfairful because I felt need of being blamed all the time by my first wife for everything that went wrong at home." Elias' honesty and willingness to accept his mistakes in regard to the first divorce impressed me (the researcher). He expressed himself so calmly, without any defensive attitude, as he expressed his responsibility for the extramarital affair and the circumstances around it. In addition, I felt compassion for him since he sustained a relationship where his first spouse would only in anger told conversations with him.

I noticed that, throughout the interview, Elias' responses were very precise, direct and to the point whenever asked questions, and with little expressed emotion. Above all, I was impressed by Elias' concern for the children of remarried parents as he expressed himself clearly that parents should be attentive to the children's pain and needs. Elias suggested that remarriage stability and satisfaction primarily depend on the personalities of the partners, their compatibilities, shared values, the neighborhood, sex, parenting skills, and how they manage their finances.

Fred. Fred is a 54-year-old African American male. By the time of the interview, he was a doctoral student in a department of clinical psychology. He was raised Roman Catholic and is actively involved in the Catholic Church. He married for the first time at 24 years of age and stayed in that marriage for 15 years. His first wife, Rosie, was a Caucasian. According to Fred, his motivation for marrying a Caucasian woman had to be understood within the context of how life was in the 1960s in the United States. It was a time when many young people wanted to test everything to explore unknown territory, were highly curious, and rebellious. Fred stated: "I was a rebel, not to overthrow the government [but] no one could tell me who to sleep with, experiment with and what I should not experiment."

Fred and Rosie had one child, Bob. When the couple's marriage was going through a very rough time, Bob became a reason for the two parents to stay together. The contributing factors to their divorce included the lack of fulfilling their expectations and the lack of
negotiating their racial differences. Fred remarried Sarah 2 years after his first divorce, and they have been together for 10 years. Sarah is an African Caribbean who migrated to the United States in 1990. Sarah is also a divorcee, had one girl from her first marriage, and together they have a son (Jason). They live in the inner city. Fred's annual family income is $75 to 90 thousand. Fred and Sarah belong to different religions. According to Fred, Sarah's religious background was not an issue when they were dating. However, after marriage, for reasons not clearly known to Fred, Sarah started to withdraw from some of Fred's sexual advances and ways of expressing intimacy, particularly oral sex and watching sexual movies.

After the interview, I did not know what happened between Fred and Sarah, because during the interviews they were having strong disagreements related to religious differences. Those differences had affected their sexual satisfaction. The couple also had financial difficulties and discomfort due to differences in their levels of formal education. Sarah completed elementary school, and Fred was a Ph.D. student.

Fred complained that he had lost a lot of friends, because when they used to come to his home it was difficult to hold academically focused conversations without Sarah feeling excluded. At the same time, Fred mentioned that Sarah was complaining that Fred, with all his education, was not making enough money. In the meantime, Jason was the one whom Fred thought was making him stay longer in this marriage. Otherwise he was ready to move out. I was impressed by Fred's determination to seek professional help in order to make his remarriage work.

Godfrey: Godfrey is a 51-year-old male of Scotch and English background who attended college for 2 years. Godfrey was raised Episcopalian and during the interview period he was a very active member in his church. His first marriage was at the age of 21 to Nora. Their marriage lasted 7 years, and they had a daughter (Lucy). Four years after he divorced Nora, he married again, and has been remarried for 21 years; they have had two children together. He was living in an urban neighborhood, and his annual family income was $75 to 90 thousand at the time of the interview.
Godfrey and Nora were both peaceful in their marriage in the beginning. However, after the first 6 months, their personality differences started affecting their relationship. Godfrey described himself as very sociable, friendly, interested in family dinners, and church activities. This kind of sociability was the complete opposite of what Nora performed.

According to Godfrey, Nora was more of a homebody, one-on-one conversationalist, who had no interest in social gatherings and events. This incompatibility influenced Godfrey to socialize with friends outside the home and to return late in the evenings. At the same time, he bonded with his daughter and the two spent time together at home. This, however, made the situation more difficult for Nora because her daughter began to distance herself from her. In the final analysis, Nora decided to end the marriage. After the divorce, Godfrey spent 4 years before he remarried. Reflecting back on the 3 years after his divorce, he revealed:

Godfrey: I guess, I went through a depression time. You know, where I was not doing the right things, and I started to drink a little more than I used to because I was going out with some friends and my mother had helped out. She was watching the baby for a while; however, that got old real fast.

I, the researcher, was challenged by Godfrey's description of his sociability in relationship with the choice of mates. I had always been under the impression that the common adage only "opposites attract," was true. However, my mindset changed when I realized that Godfrey's first marriage failed primarily because his wife was extremely less social than him while he attributed the success of his second marriage to having a wife who was almost as sociable as he was. In fact, by the time of the interview, they had been married for 21 years, yet the first marriage had lasted only 7 years.

Secondly, I, the researcher, was impressed by the support Godfrey offered to his second wife when she was making the transition from the Catholic Church to the Episcopal Church to which he belonged. Godfrey described his second wife as a woman who is very spiritual and who wanted to get her remarriage blessed by a church minister. However, she could not receive that
blessing within the Catholic Church without getting an annulment. Consequently, she decided to
get remarried with Geoffrey in his church.

Henry. Henry was a 53-year-old male who identified himself as Irish-American. He has
a Ph.D. in civil law and did some preparation in family law. He is a devout Roman Catholic who
goes to church every Sunday. He first married Anne, when he was 32 years old, and their
marriage lasted 11 years. They had two children in that marriage, a boy and a girl. When they
divorced, he got joint custody of the children. Eleven years later he married a woman, Sally, and
they have been married for 6 years now, and have had one child together. He lives in a suburban
neighborhood and has an annual family income of over $130,000.

When asked by the researcher the contributing reasons for getting married a bit late,
Henry said: "My priorities were my studies, and I did not want to marry before establishing
myself financially." He mentioned that it was not only his studies that delayed him. He admitted
that he was shy and felt uncomfortable around women, primarily because he was overweight.
When I asked Henry the cause of his divorce, he stated:

Henry: Every family member was surprised about it because there was no
domestic violence, no alcohol abuse, no emotional cruelty, and no infidelity. I
admit, the real problem was that I was overworking, bringing work at home,
and, while physically being at home, I was absent-minded because I was
primarily thinking of the cases I was working on, and the next ones.
Consequently, this brought a lot of loneliness to my wife and children, a situation
that led my wife to divorce me.

I asked Henry about finances in the second marriage, and he said:

Henry: It is very important to discuss finances before remarriage. In my case, I
admire my second wife [Sally] because she accepted to have a joint account with
me, out of which I pay alimony for my first wife. Secondly, I admire the way my
wife spends money for the well being of my children from my first marriage, and
the way she treats them with due respect and love. I really advocate for joint
accounts in every marriage.

I was impressed by the way Henry described his journey of growth. He was very
elaborative in describing how he overcame his shyness, confronted himself, because aware of
how work had affected his first marriage, and the amicable divorce he handled with his wife. At
the time of the interview, Henry acknowledged that for him now home time is home time and work time is work time. Likewise, even if on certain occasions he was bringing work home, Sally had learned a way of reminding him prudently. In this regard, Henry considered her a buffer for him and he spoke about her with great admiration.

I was touched by the way that Henry expressed his pain of not being allowed to receive the Eucharist in the Catholic Church after his divorce. In pain and hope, Henry stated:

Henry: I long for the day the church officials will become more pastorally minded to administer to the divorced persons, encouraging them to experience God’s love. I think it is also important to extend the pre-remarriage preparations to divorced Catholics who have not received annulments.

Identification of the Primary and Secondary Factors of Remarriage Stability and Satisfaction

After a progressive and step-by-step analysis of the data, by making use of three sequentially unrelated stages of data analyses, namely, open, axial, and selective coding, nine primary factors and eight secondary axes were systematically selected from the data as factors influencing both remarriage stability and satisfaction for remarrying parents. The primary factors of remarriage stability and satisfaction were categorized as follows: committed love, integral maturity, finances, collaborative parenting, sexuality, knowledge of the complexity of remarriage, communication, spirituality, and professional help. The secondary factors were marital history, remarriage motivations, dating, clear boundaries, conflict-resolution, cohabitation, house rules and roles, and permanent sites for professional remarriage services.

It is important to clarify that these categories of words, selected by the researcher from the participants’ input and feedback, do not necessarily reflect their global constructs. Therefore, the goal in this chapter is to capture the participants’ experiences and conceptualizations of each theme or category (e.g., love) and how each influences both remarriage stability and satisfaction.

This chapter was designed to focus on describing the results of the study within the theoretical framework of the grounded-research methodology as proposed in chapter 3. Part of
this research methodology involves selecting the central theme on which the other themes are developed (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Criteria for the Selection of the Central Theme from the Data

After a step-by-step and systematic analysis of the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), the selected central theme from the same data is committed love. The criteria for choosing this theme to be the central theme is based on the unanimous consensus and experience of all the participants that love is the most influencing factor for both remarriage stability and satisfaction (Figure 4).

All the other selected themes seem to be coherently interrelated with this central theme. Secondly, this selected central theme seems to be consistent with the purpose of this study as stated in the first chapter. That is, to develop a theoretical model that is grounded in the participants' experience which family therapists, psychologists, and other professionals (FTPPs) might use to facilitate more effectively custodial parents' preparation for remarriage stability and satisfaction after a first divorce experience.

Based on the results of this study, committed love was the most mentioned and most emphasized factor amongst all the primary factors and seems clearly connected to all the other factors, primary and secondary. The dark outlined circular drawing within the diagram represents the central theme (committed love) and the dark outlined rectangular drawing represents the second primary factor to committed love. The other light rectangular drawings represent the additional primary factors to the central factor, and all the oval lined drawings indicate the secondary factors.
Primary Factors

Each one of the following nine factors was identified by more than eight participants as a factor significant to remarriage stability and satisfaction: committed love, integral maturity, finances, collaborative parenting, sexuality, knowledge of remarriage complexity, communication, spirituality, and professional help.

Description of Committed Love by the Participants and Its Subdivision

All the participants expressed their convictions in similar words or related phrases that committed love is the most important influencing factor for both remarriage stability and satisfaction. However, the participants did not speak about love in generic terms. Instead, they focused on describing it based on their perceptions and experiencing it to be a complex reality, consisting of different components.

Focusing on the participants' responses, the word "love" reflected a complexity of meanings or connotations. Two examples of such meanings emerged when the researcher asked the participants to describe what each of them meant by love. Four female participants said that love is a question of chemistry between the partners.

Elizabeth: I think people love one another because of their chemistry make up. That is why, I guess, some people are compatible, and others are not. In my case, on the very day I met my second husband for the first time, I felt something deep within myself that strongly attracted me to him.

Three other females and two males highlighted that love is a mysterious experience. For instance, one of them said:

Felicia: Love is a mysterious experience, and I don't find the exact words to explain to myself what turned me on to love my second husband. I really do not know because I resented him immediately I noticed his manifestations of getting interest in me.

Even if the participants described love in many different ways, all of them coincided in describing love within the following categories, "love of self, love of the partner, mutual love between the partners, love of children and attentiveness to their needs, and love toward the
multiple extended family members." For the purposes of facilitating the conceptualization of these multiple categories of committed love, each category will be described separately.

_Love of self._ All the participants mentioned that they had come to the realization that committed love starts with love of self. For instance, Grace expressed:

Grace: I have realized that the more I love myself, the more love I am to give and share with others. Otherwise, without loving myself, I feel my love for others is insincere, and I am pretending to give to others what I do not have. Secondly, whenever I do not love myself, I start to desperately demand attention from my husband, and, if he ignores me, I feel angry at him because he is mean.

According to Elias:

Elias: I learned to love myself by paying attention to my own woundedness as a divorced. It was hard for me to confront myself, and to admit that I was in pain. I knew that I needed healing before I could proceed with my plans for the next marriage. However, I told myself that "I had to learn to love myself by focusing on how to address and resolve my painful past."

Basing himself on a biblical passage, Fred stated that it is not bad to love oneself.

Otherwise, why would Jesus have commanded his followers to love God and others as they love themselves? Fred emphasized:

Fred: Jesus said: "Love others as you love yourself." Therefore, I have also learned to love myself. (When asked by the researcher to clarify what he meant, Fred said:) Love of self after divorce and before remarriage does not mean becoming narcissistic. It is about establishing a good foundation for feeling good about who you are as a person, developing your personal identity, exploring the unique person you are, your talents, limitations, dreams, needs, likes, dislikes, making priorities, fears, and accepting your uniqueness.

Henry highlighted:

Henry: Love of self goes hand-in-hand with the knowledge of self because, the more you know about yourself and love yourself, the more you are able to learn to love and know about other people. This makes it possible to establish harmonious relationships with others without distorting them. Likewise, you don't allow yourself to be dominated by others. It is a win-win situation for people who individually have a conscious, mature, honest, positive, realistic, and unconditional love of themselves.

Elaborating on love of self, Alisia stated:
Alicia: I felt a real need for a man in my life. I could not imagine myself remain unmarried for the rest of my entire life. I remained a single mother until the age of thirty-eight years. However, I was convinced that I would not get married with any man from the street. So, I started setting some of the things I would look for in a man before getting married with him. I had a chance this time to choose a man, and I used it.

Joseph: What kind of man did you want to choose?

Alicia: After my first divorce, I realized that there is no perfect man and no perfect woman in the world. So, I started to look for a man whom I would at least tell myself that his personality was matching the basics of what I wanted in a man, to get remarried with. Fortunately, I got him, and he is the one with whom I currently share a very happy marriage. I give myself credit for having done whatever it took me to love myself by setting the qualities I wanted to look for in a man, and abiding with them until I got the right one for me.

Love for the partner: Fifteen participants out of sixteen highlighted that it is important to develop a love for the person you want to marry. Deva stated:

Deva: After 2 months of dating my current husband, I realized that he had some of the qualities that I wanted in my spouse to be, but I also realized that he was not a perfect man. He was a good man, but I could not stand his smell of cigarettes. It was not easy for me to accommodate all his limitations. However, I realized that I was not perfect either. In the final analysis, after some negotiations about our differences of opinion and dislikes, I made a decision to love him, and we have been married for 18 years.

Ten participants also mentioned that love for the other involves, among other things, knowing the other's cultural background, religious affiliation, likes and dislikes, hobbies, favorite food, and fears. The person has to be loved with and without his or her stepchildren.

In regard to the other's religious affiliation and likes, Godfrey stated:

Godfrey: Even if my second wife agreed to have our marriage celebrated in my Episcopal Church, I have realized that she is still attached to the Catholic Church, and I encourage her to continue praying at home the Catholic prayers she likes a lot, especially the Rosary. I love her and respect the teachings of her religion, even if I do not agree with all of them. Secondly, because of the love I have toward her, I let her go to socialize with her friends. Sometimes I accompany her to visit her friends just to make her feel supported because she likes to socialize and networking with other people to help the people in need. She also likes to go shopping with her friends and my daughter from the previous marriage. They love one another and that makes me have a greater love for her. My second wife also likes to cook and invite her friends at home. I entertain her
friends and help her with the washing of the dishes. I do all this because of the love I have for her.

Mutual love. Based on the descriptions of mutual love by all the participants, it can be deduced that mutual love is a complex concept with different connotations. However, all of them agree on describing it as a bond of trust and caring for one another. Abraham clarified:

Abraham: Immediately after my first divorce, but before I married my second wife, I dated a number of women. The lesson I learned during those series of dates was that mutual love is a two-way traffic. Later on, I realized that some of those women I had sex with did not actually love me. They were only interested in having a nice time, yet I had felt that I had fallen in love with them.

Joseph: Tell me more about that.

Abraham: Well, after some time, I started to realize that some of them seemed to have fallen in love with me, but I cannot certainly say that I really loved any of them. I was primarily seeking them out for sex and to have away for some time from my loneliness.

Fourteen participants considered mutual love not to be an overnight product, but a process involving a journey of growth, self-giving to the other, and a give-and-take experience. It involves mutual fidelity, loyalty, unconditional commitment to one another, and the ability to be there for one another in joyful and painful moments of life.

In a special way, when I asked the participants to describe how mutual love between partners in second marriages differs from that of the partners in first marriages, all the participants pointed out that the uniqueness is based on each partner's conscious decision not only to love his or her spouse, but also the partner's children from the previous marriage. Eleven participants mentioned that love involves the ability to grow together beyond conflict, the ability to love the person, without focusing too much on the person's possessions, but who he or she is as a person.

Thirteen participants stated that mutual love involves peace, companionship, feeling secure, trust, tranquility, and above all the ability to enter into a non-judgmental and constructive dialogue with one's spouse. They also agreed that the ability to laugh and to eat together are also very important in reinforcing mutual love. Likewise, 12 participants expressed that mutual love is based on mutual respect for one another, honesty, and transparent communication. Above all,
15 participants considered sexual intimacy to be their greatest expression of mutual love. Grace expressed, "Sex is wonderful, the best thing in the world, but with the right person, and only the right person, it can be the most out-of-this-world experience."

Elaborating on the notion of mutual love, Beatrice emphasized that men and women lack the knowledge and practice of how to treat one another. No wonder then, Beatrice noted: "Every woman should learn about how to treat a man and vice versa. This requires preparation and self-challenge, because people always run the risk of getting remarried primarily by instinct and/or physical needs." Mutual love symbolized for all participants a decision, based on commitment, to be there for the person "no matter what" (added Catherine), and the ability to enter marriage by prioritizing love before anything else.

*Love of children and attentiveness to their needs.* All the participants highlighted that whatever happens to the children affects the parents. Grace emphasized, "Once a parent, you remain a parent for life; even grown up children turn to their parents for advice and support."

These participants, by virtue of being parents when entering remarriage as custodial parents, expressed the love for their children and their attentiveness to the needs of the children have highly contributed to the couple's remarriage stability and satisfaction.

All the 16 participants clarified that, for at least the first 3 years of remarriage, none of them paid sufficient attention to the needs of his or her children. This was because of two main reasons: the remarried parent's lack of knowing the unique needs and challenges faced by children of remarried parents after divorce, and the remarried parent's emotional investment in pleasing the partner because they were struggling to make the second marriage work and to reduce the risk of another divorce.

As all the participants later realized, the parents' lack of identifying and paying attention to their children needs, not only affected the children involved, but also affected negatively the stability and satisfaction of their marriages. This was particularly applicable to remarried parents with adolescent children from a first marriage. The following paragraphs highlight some of the
main children's needs and challenges which the participants identified, and suggested that both remarrying and remarried parents should pay a lot of attention to them. For instance, Fred suggested:

Fred: Parents should be attentive to children who blame themselves for their parents' divorce. Fred made this suggestion after realizing that his first son from the previous marriage had taken onto himself the responsibility of having failed to save the marriage of his parents.

Four other participants also mentioned a similar story about their children. However, they acknowledged that the failure of the first marriages was not their children's fault. Additionally, five female and four male participants reported that after remarriage their children struggled for more than a year while grieving the lost fantasy for their biological parents to remarry. These nine participants also reported that their adolescent children rejected disciplinary roles from their respective stepparents.

Twelve participants, however, reported that it took them more than a year to realize how their adolescent children experienced conflict of loyalties and guilty feelings for having attended the wedding ceremony of a biological parent with a non-biological parent. Some children were reported by nine participants as having struggled with feelings of resentment and anger with themselves for having failed to forgive the biological parent for remarrying.

Ten participants mentioned that their children had difficulty in handling the feelings of the lost privilege and of being the center of attention as a result of passing from being the only child to living with other step-siblings and/or half-siblings. This feeling was also reported by two male participants as still a problem for their adult children, already in their thirties, because it involves sharing the inheritance from their parents with their stepsiblings.

Nine participants, without referring to their children, mentioned that they have witnessed the children of their friends in second marriages having profound concerns and fear that their parent's new marriage might also end in another divorce. Unfortunately, the participants reported that those concerns and fears had started to have negative effects on those children because some
of them seemed very preoccupied about the risk of experiencing another divorce experience and another adaptation experience.

All the participants highlighted that parents contemplating remarriage should pay attention to the children’s developmental needs and introduce their prospective spouses at the right time. This involves prudent dating, whereby the parent ought not to introduce to his or her biological children everybody he or she starts to date before making a commitment to live together. Otherwise, breaking up with a particular person might also affect one’s children.

After acknowledging that it might not be easy to date a compatible partner the first time after divorce, 14 participants cautioned that parents contemplating remarriage should avoid the risk of playing out their romantic experiments with different partners in front of their children. According to Henry, “It is heartbreaking for the children to see their parents with a different stranger every now and then.”

*Loving attitude toward the multiple extended-family members.* Fifteen participants mentioned that they had found it very helpful within their remarriages to extend their love to different members of their extended families. Catherine and I discussed this further in the following interchange:

Catherine: Ever since I knew that I could not change my fate, I resolved to change my attitude.

Joseph: What do you mean?

Catherine: I had to accept the bitter truth that, even if signing the divorce papers officially indicated the legal ending of my first marriage with my first spouse, those signatures did not terminate our family. My ex-spouse and I continued to be significant others to one another because we had children who needed to be in contact with both of us after the divorce. By the same token, for the sake of the children, I sought family therapy for myself and the children in order to learn how to handle the conflict of loyalties between me and their father. They needed him, and they needed me, and they still need both of us.
Daniel told me that he did whatever was within his possibilities to keep contact with his ex-spouse for the sake of the children:

Daniel: Every attempt was in vain. That woman has a lot of psychological issues, and they are really affecting the children. I had with her and I. Nevertheless, I managed to reconnect with my ex-in-laws, and they are very understanding, friendly with me, have compassion for my children and I. This is because they know that my ex-spouse is a trouble-maker with me telling them. Fortunately, keeping a healthy relationship with my ex-in-laws (especially the mother-in-law, father-in-law and brother-in-law) has relieved me of the stress and guilt. I have been feeling for my children to grow up while disconnected with their maternal relatives.

Joseph: What else would do you want to say about your love for those family members?

Daniel: I have realized that, ever since I reconnected positively with my ex-in-laws, the relationship with my second wife has also improved. For instance, if we want to have a good time with my wife for a weekend or have another honeymoon experience, we can leave my children in the safe hands of their maternal grandparents.

Grace: My love toward significant others included making a conscious decision to embrace a positive attitude of forgiving my ex-spouse. I did this after realizing that, the more I held on to blaming my ex-spouse and keep on the grudges we had ten years ago, the more I suffered from the resultant anger of recalling the events that surrounded my divorce.

Joseph: What else did you learn from that experience?

Grace: I realized that my lack of forgiving him was negatively affecting my relationship with my current husband. Given these observations, I felt challenged to decide between holding on to blaming him and forgiving him. Four years later after the divorce, with the help of a religious minister, I made the decision to forgive my ex-spouse for whatever he did to me. Ever since, I started to feel better. However, I admit that was difficult for me to let that anger go because I still think that I was faithful to him, and he is the one to blame for cheating on me. Nevertheless, I had to let go holding on to my sense of self-righteousness, because the emotional price I was paying for it was draining all my emotional resources and integrity.

Integral Maturity

All the participants highlighted that maturity is one of the most important influencing factors to remarriage stability and satisfaction. However, based on how each participant described
how he or she conceptualized maturity, it was not a mere notion of one's chronological age that determined his or her level of maturity. Accordingly, Catherine said: "My second husband is 10 years younger than me, but mentally he is above me."

Based on the participants' descriptions of maturity and how they applied it to remarriage, I realized that maturity is a complex concept. For instance, six female and five male participants described maturity as an individual's ability to independently make coherent decisions, and that individual's ability to put into action the decisions made. On the other hand, Godfrey mentioned:

Godfrey: A mature divorced parent should be capable of assuming responsibility for his or her past, present, and future actions. One of the greatest lessons I learned, as I was struggling to come to terms with my divorce, was to stop blaming other people for my all actions and wrong choices in life. This included learning to confront myself by reflecting upon my personal contribution to the previous divorce.

Likewise, Bernardo stated:

Now, when I look back at my divorce, however difficult it may be for me to admit, the truth is that I was responsible in one way or another for my previous divorce. It takes two to make the marriage work, and it takes two to break it.

Elaborating on the importance of integral maturity and self-love, Hilda stated:

Hilda: Though at the time of remarriage I was more focused on finding a companion to overcome my loneliness. What I have learned along the way is that I lacked the appropriate degree of maturity to love myself better.

Joseph: What does that mean?

Hilda: Integral maturity is indispensable for every partner contemplating remarriage. This implies maturity at different levels (e.g., emotional, spiritual, social, interpersonal, and ability to handle conflict with prudence). Maturity is also based on ability to slowing down, think things through, not rush into another marriage before resolving one's baggage.

Furthermore, 10 participants stated that seeking professional help after divorce is also an expression of maturity. This includes every divorcee's willingness to make an effort to work through his or her frustration and guilt from the first marriage. This requires honesty and self-love. Charles said, "Maturity embraces the ability to hold to realistic expectations in a second
marriage. One should be able to decide when it is the right time for him or her to enter a second marriage."

Nine participants mentioned that they felt seriously hurt by the ex-spouses, because all the events that surrounded the divorce and ultimately the divorce itself marked an irreversible change in their lives. Based on the intensity of the pain, suffering, humiliation, and the shame related to their divorce experiences, four of them said that they experienced thought of retaliation toward their ex-spouses, but they did not carry out any imagined act of revenge. However, according to those nine participants, their pain and related losses from the divorce persisted until each discovered a real solution that they referred to as forgiveness based on maturity.

Grace said: "Real forgiveness is a manifestation of maturity, especially when people acknowledge their own contributions to actions that have brought pain, humiliation, or loss of any kind." Bernardo said:

"I did not experience comfort in my heart and the ability to move on with my life after divorce until I took a decision as a mature person to forgive my ex-spouse. I also had to make another tough decision of forgiving the family friend with who my ex-spouse went to bed while we were still married. As I look back now, I guess becoming more mature and understanding my contribution to her marital infidelity helped me to forgive my ex-spouse and that family friend. I guess, if I had not forgiven them, I would still feel very hurt.

Ten participants stated that recovering one’s integral health is an act of maturity, and it has a significant influence on remarriage stability and satisfaction.

Henry: Being healthy in terms of mind, body, spirit, and emotionally helped me to enter my second marriage with a sober mind and helped me to discuss tough issues with my current wife before remarriage. Good health also helps me to relate with my significant others without becoming extremely dependent on them, but rather relate with them natively and interpersonally.

Along the same trend of thought, Beatrice cautioned divorced parents who are still single:

Beatrice: Do not stuff somebody into your life before feeling whole about yourself. You need to be independent in order to establish an intimate relationship, without feeling the exaggerated urge to have someone into your life, nor looking for others to fill into the hurt parts of yourself."
Additionally, Grace spoke of compassion and forgiveness as integral parts of maturity.

Grace: Even if my first husband had cheated on me, got a child with another woman while we were still married, and I was very angry with him when we divorced, I managed to forgive him before he died.

Joseph: What influenced you to forgive him?

Grace: After divorce, I converted to the Catholic Church and, during Lent, a priest at my new parish encouraged us during the homily to visit the sick, especially those who were lonely. Surprisingly, the priest gave us that homily during the very moment when my ex-husband was sick and lonely. I don’t know how to say this. Anyway, I had vowed never to forgive my husband. However, that homily really changed my life upside down. After Mass, I felt a strong urge to talk with my ex-husband, but I did not know how my second husband would react about my going to care for my ex-husband. After some serious thought, I acted maturely by letting my husband know about my ex-husband’s illness, and I asked him to accompany me to go and visit him.

Joseph: What happened when you told him?

Grace: He [second husband] welcomed the idea, and, when he realized, and was happy because I had included him into the visit. He even suggested that I could stay more days alone with my ex-husband in his final days. It was a very powerful experience. We talked a lot, asked me for forgiveness, and I forgave him. After his death, I arranged for his funeral, and I really feel happy that I had the opportunity of reconnecting with him before he died.

Joseph: What did you learn from all this?

Grace: I have realized that life is too short to go around not talking to your family and in-laws. I really believe in forgiveness with everybody, including the people who had seriously hurt me.

Elias also considered himself to have become more mature in his second marriage in comparison to his first marriage. When I asked him about what he thought had contributed to his great sense of maturity, Elias said:

Elias: I perceive myself wiser in the second marriage because I no longer put all the blame for my divorce on my ex-spouse. I have learned to assume responsibility for my actions. I have learned to be realistic, and not to expect everything to be wonderful in remarriage because life is not that way, and people are not that way either.

Elaborating on this acquired wisdom and maturity, Elias suggested that divorced male parents preparing for remarriage should primarily look at what is their part in the marriage, what they each might not be doing, how one’s faults might have contributed to the first divorce.
Twelve participants mentioned that counseling and psychotherapy were part and parcel of maturity in so far as they contributed to those participants healing from the wounds of divorce. Those participants considered counseling and psychotherapy to be very helpful in setting the tone for establishing stability and satisfaction in second marriages. Accordingly, in a post-interview note, Hilda wrote, “I think the whole key to marriage and remarriage is counseling! I can’t stress this enough. I think I should have gone through this process the first time I got married.”

Eight participants highlighted that maturity involves the way remarried people strategize working with their family members in regard to work in order to avoid family tension. In this regard, Elizabeth clarified how her second husband’s business with his brothers has strained her marriage.

Elizabeth: In the last few years, the relationships have strained a lot. I resent not having the closeness of family. Even though we are older and thank God my sons both grew up with their uncles and that was fine, but now everything is kind of strained.

Joseph: What is the contributing factor to their strained relationships?
Elizabeth: In the business, the guys have different views. One has one view, and another has another view. They clash.

Eleven participants mentioned that maturity included their ability to discern how to apply the knowledge gathered from daily life events or information to strengthen their second marriages. A typical example was that of Elizabeth, who proficiently applied to her marriage a technique that she had overheard on a television channel. She overheard that technique at the moment when the stability and happiness in her marriage had started to be affected negatively by her husband’s demanding and stressful work. The television message was: “Giving a strong hug to a loved one reduces his or her stress.” Consequently, Elizabeth started to give a strong hug to her husband as soon as he entered the home door from work. Elaborating on the impact of that hug on her marriage, Elizabeth said.

Elizabeth: Whenever my husband comes home from work, I give him a big greeting because that changes his mood. Always I have learned, [to stop] whatever I’m doing, and come out and say: ‘Hi, how are you? How was your day?’ If I greet him like that, he becomes a better person. If I just say: ‘Hi, how
are you "hey, how you doing?" He comes in miserable. Now, I only believe in that [bug] I heard it on the TV one day, and I applied it to my husband, and it really works.

Elaborating on the notion of forgiving the ex-spouse as an expression of love by the one who forgives, Alicia stated:

Alicia: Currently, I do not care whether my ex-spouse acknowledged his mistake or not. The most important thing for me is that forgiving him has made me feel better about myself and improved the love I have for my second spouse. This is because I am no longer wasting my energy ruminating about the past abuses. Instead, I am more focused on the present and how to keep my second marriage successful. So, you see (while making eye-contact with researcher), forgiveness of the ex-spouse has had many benefits for me. Therefore, I recommend that those who find it hard to forgive should do it at least for personal reasons if they cannot for other motives. I have experienced that forgiveness heals the one who forgives, and it is based on love.

Finances

All participants highlighted that finances are not easy to handle in stepfamilies if they are not negotiated before remarriage. Divorced parents who bring children to second marriages create a situation for the stepparents to their children that may affect the dynamics of the couple and bring about many emotions. Fourteen participants mentioned that finances become a difficult topic to handle, especially because there are many people involved within the stepfamily. For instance, Felicia who entered the second marriage with her son reported:

Felicia: My second husband [Fausto] was uncomfortable in the first 3 years to spend money for the well-being of my son. However, I also noticed in him [Fausto] an attitude of ambivalence. This was because I had realized that he wanted to be with me alone [without my son], but how could he do that without paying attention to my dear son?

Fausto once in a while would resent spending his money on Felicia's son because Fausto clearly knew that he was not the biological father of her son. Felicia reported that Fausto used to complain to her about her first husband's failure to help her with money for her son.

Nevertheless, when he realized that he could not love the mother without caring for her son, he
changed his attitude towards the son and started spending money on him. During the interview, Felicia expressed her gratitude to Fausto for helping her to pay for the college education of her son because her ex-spouse never spent a cent on her son.

Twelve participants mentioned that remarried parents, together with their spouses, should have better spending habits. In order to do this, these participants suggested that they needed to know about themselves and how to prioritize their expenses because there are many needs and many people to take care of within a stepfamily setting. Twelve participants highlighted that each couple is unique in regard to finances. Therefore, they suggested that remarrying partners should have better communication skills about money, because, if left undiscussed, finances can severely contribute to the disruption of marriage. Likewise, Grace suggested, “Remarrying parents should not spend all the money they have, nor spend the money they don’t have, especially by the use of credit cards.”

Although none of the participants discussed finances with a professional accountant before remarriage, all the participants highlighted that parents contemplating remarriage, together with their prospective spouses, should consult a qualified financial accountant before remarriage. Bernardo highlighted that this kind of consultation is particularly important for remarrying parents who are very rich, have a lot of assets, and/or a lot of valuable inheritance.

In similar terms, nine participants mentioned that prenuptial written agreements are helpful in securing the financial benefits of the remarrying parent and his or her children, just in case the second marriage ends in another divorce or in the death of one of the spouses. Otherwise, the owners of the money might feel insecure financially and not want to risk their money being shared by the children and/or relatives of the other spouse. By the same token, 10 participants perceived this kind of insecurity as a hindrance to remarriage stability and satisfaction.

When I asked how the participants were currently handling their financial arrangements with their spouses, the responses showed three models of accounts: one-pot method, one-pot and
independent method, and independent method. Elaborating on these models of accounts, nine
participants mentioned that they use the one-pot method. This involves two spouses’ putting
together all their resources into an account and spending together from the same account. To this
effect, Elias mentioned, “The pot method has strengthened my marriage, and it has helped me to
learn that marriage is all about sharing.”

In specific terms, Bernardo highlighted, “Sharing money with the second spouse
symbolizes a trap of trust that spouses put in one another, especially for the partner who invests
more money and invests into the relationship.”

Grace emphasized:

Grace: I grew up in a poor family, and that helped to learn to value the little we had
and to share the little with others. However, irrespective of our poverty, we
survived, partly because my parents spent the little money they had prudently,
and I used to hear dialoging about what item to spend money on. Therefore, I
think that, when spouses have a joint account, they should not make surprise
purchases of more than a hundred dollars without consulting the other spouse,
even if the purchase is for the well-being of the other spouse.

Joseph: What else do you remember about the handling of finances in your
parents’ home?

Grace: I recall that my parents had to make tough choices of removing
completely some items from the shopping list because … they did not have the
money. They put those items on hold until they got the money to them. My
parents also discouraged me and my siblings from borrowing money in order to
offer very expensive gifts to one another during Christmas days.

Five participants reported that they were using the one-pot and independent method. This
consists of the two spouses putting together some of their financial resources, especially money,
and putting some of their money into a separate account. Hilda was one of the participants who
used this method of accounting.

Hilda: In my second marriage, we have three accounts. I share one account with
my husband, my husband has another one of his own, and I have another account
that is mine alone.

Joseph: What is your rationale for maintaining these two separate accounts in
addition to the joint account?

Hilda: After divorce, I became a single-mother, and I learned how to
handle my own money. I started to make all the financial decisions by myself. So, after remarriage, it was not easy for me to give up that autonomy. Secondly, as a woman, my husband and my first marriage kept me out of all the decisions regarding money. My [second] husband has a separate account also because it is specifically for his business, and both of us contribute to the joint account.

Four other participants also emphasized the usefulness of having some money that one can spend as he or she likes without the need to be on constant negotiations about money with one's spouse. Two participants out of these five had a separate account primarily because they were running businesses that needed different kinds of accounting.

Two participants out of 18 mentioned that they had independent accounts with their second spouses. When asked about the rationale for separate accounts, Fred mentioned that since his young adolescence, he decided not to make a joint account with any future wife because he got tired of bearing fights his parents had over money because they had a joint account. Another participant, Dora, resolved not to have a joint account based on her experience in her first marriage in which the other spouse spent a lot of money they had in a joint account a few months before their divorce. By the same token, as I listened to all these stories, it became evident to me that most of the participants made their financial decisions based on their histories and what they learned from their parents.

Thirteen participants clarified that most of the conflicts surrounding money in the early stages of their remarriages were focused on who pays for what, how much, and why me, as a stepparent, if the children are not mine. However, as the problems surfaced about money, these 13 participants reported that those conflicts helped them to start discussing openly the impact of money on their remarrying. They said it was difficult to speak about the topic of finances. The conversations were emotionally charged at the beginning, but they realized that silence about money would not resolve the problem.

These participants recommended that divorced parents contemplating remarriage should take the risk of discussing openly money and other financial assets that they bring to the marriage and define in concrete terms (e.g., who is going to pay for the expenses?) Along the same lines,
Dora mentioned, "Informing my second spouse about my elderly parents that I had to take care of had helped my second spouse to understand my financial needs and become supportive by providing more money from his separate account."

Charles: I grew up in a poor family, whereby being on the breadline affected my attitude towards money. I learned that there are things that my rich neighbors had (e.g., swimming pools, nice houses, and new cars), and to my surprise the lack of those things influenced me to develop a deeper friendship with the children of our rich neighbors. Detailed conversations and interactions with some of these friends helped me to realize that, although their parents were rich, there were things that their parents could not buy for them, even with all the money that they had. I kept that lesson all through my life, and I have not let money take away from me those things that money cannot buy.

Joseph: What are some of the concrete examples of things that money cannot buy, yet you consider them very important to your remarriage stability and satisfaction?

Charles: Love, friendship, respect, spirituality, common sense, and, [in conclusion about finances, Charles emphatically cautioned]:

Charles: Divorced parents should not focus all their attention on the money because there are many important things in second marriages that money cannot be bought by money, for instance, winning the trust of the stepchildren.
Figure 5. Three models used by remarried couples in handling their finances.
Collaborative Parenting

Fourteen participants mentioned that children need the collaboration of both biological parents because each parent has something unique to offer to the children that cannot be given by the other parent. Therefore, even before the divorce occurs and after it takes place, the two parents should make an effort to make sure that their interpersonal relationships, especially if they are consensual, do not hinder the children from interacting with either parent. Accordingly, by means of a metaphor, Henry emphasized: “Even if the two elephants [parents] are still fighting, they should protect the grass [children].”

Charles narrated a typical example of how the on-going conflicts between divorced parents affected his children and his second marriage. He clarified that before his first wife (Jenny) finished her education, she revealed in private to their youngest son (Paul) that, after her education, she would leave the marriage in order to get alimony. At first, Paul kept this information to himself because he thought that his mother was joking. However, when he saw his mother carrying out all of her hidden agendas, he was upset by his mother’s actions, and he decided to inform his father about all the things she had told him.

This revelation impacted the whole family system, whereby Paul sided with his father and against his mother while his three older siblings sided with their mother and became rebellious to their father’s authority over them. As a result, Jenny started using these three children to the detriment of Charles’ second marriage by soliciting them to hurt his wife and make his second marriage difficult for him.

Charles elaborated that, although he went through a very hard time after his divorce, he also felt relieved that his marriage with Jenny had ended because, he could not endure any longer the sufferings he was experiencing when they were together. Four years after the divorce, he started dating Julia and they remarried after 6 months. They have been married for 21 years, and he described his marriage with Julia as satisfying, fulfilling, spiritual, and stable.
Felicia's story illustrates how the fight between the parents prevented their son (Jose) knowing his father. Felicia narrated that, because of the way her first husband (Roberto) had mistreated her, she did whatever was within her powers to make sure that Jose should not have any contact with his biological father. She also decided not to inform Jose who his biological father was. However, at the age of 15, Jose wanted to meet his father, but his mother could not give him any clue. Felicia's rationale was that she did not want her son to be in touch with the man who had abused her emotionally and physically during her pregnancy with Jose. Nevertheless, Jose desperately continued to contact other family members to help him find his father.

On one occasion, one of his nephews found Roberto in a certain bar and immediately came to call Jose, so that Jose could meet his father. They found him in that bar, but the meeting was very painful for Jose. This was because, after Roberto recognized who Jose was (as Jose introduced himself to his father), Roberto just gave a handshake and left Jose and his nephew in the bar.

After that meeting, Jose's nephew told Felicia about how both of them had gone to meet Roberto, and the unhappiness that Jose felt because Roberto did not respond to him at all. Jose did not know that his nephew had informed Felicia about that meeting. After that meeting, up to the time of the interview with Felicia, both Jose and Felicia had had no conversation at all about Roberto. Even when Roberto died, and Felicia was informed about it, she refused to tell Jose about it. Therefore, Felicia stated: "If my son [Jose] happened to know about his father's death, somebody else might have told him, not me."

Felicia seemed to have taken a definitive decision not to initiate any conversation with Jose about her first husband.

Felicia: I assume the responsibility of saying nothing to my son about his father, but also I rest assured that I have done whatever is in my power to be there for him [Jose]. Fortunately, my second husband has done his best to treat Jose almost like his biological child.
Elaborating on the notion of collaborative parenting, 13 participants emphasized that custodial parents, who remarry after divorce, should understand the importance of the parenting role of the stepparent. This is because it is very difficult for an adult person who lives in the same house with the children to have no impact on them at all and vice-versa. On the other hand, even if the stepparent plays a parental role to the stepchildren, every child who reaches the age of reason should be encouraged by the biological parent to address directly or, in making reference to the stepparent, by the first name or any title that the child feels comfortable with.

Catherine made the following detailed clarifications. First of all, she said that it is important to let the children from the first marriage find the right title in regard to how to address a stepparent. This was a great lesson for me, because many children struggle with how to address their stepparents without feeling disloyal to their biological parents of the same gender as their stepparents. This became evident as Catherine was narrating how her daughter, Eileen, felt comfortable addressing Michael by his first name at all times, although Eileen perceives Michael as a father figure, but without losing sight of her biological father. On the other hand, although her sibling (Eric) addresses Michael by his first name when talking to him or introducing him to others, in his absence, Eric refers to Michael as his stepfather.

Stepparent's collaboration with the biological parent. Nine participants mentioned they experienced peace and happiness in their remarriages wherever their second spouses collaborated with them in the role of the children from their first marriages. One of the typical examples of this collaboration was that mentioned by Abraham, who had a son (Paul) from the first marriage. Paul was 27-year-old at the time of Abraham's remarriage to Joyce.

Abraham: Two months after remarriage, I experienced an inner struggle about how to learn to be a caring stepparent to John who was a physically and mentally normal child, and yet keep on expressing my loving care toward Paul who was born physically and mentally handicapped. Indeed, it is not the same feeling to raise a normal child and a handicapped child. [However, with a smile in his face, Abraham added:] I have progressively established a close relationship with my stepson [John], because he is very intelligent, respectful, responsible and outgoing, and his qualities have played a significant impact in my marriage.
Parents' collaboration in disciplining and rewarding children in second marriages.

Speaking about disciplining stepchildren, Bernardo emphasized that the biological parent should be the one to discipline one's own children. The stepparent may have the right answers and words, but they may be coming from the wrong person. However, the biological parent and stepparent should form a united front, together set rules for the children, which the biological parent should carry out. Henry stated, in his house, after he had consulted in private with his second wife about the adequate disciplinary measure to carry out on his two children from the first marriage, Henry (the biological parent) was their sole disciplinarian. However, together with his second wife, they were the disciplinarians of their biological child.

If the two children do something that he and his second wife think it is worthy rewarding them for, his second wife does the rewarding. By the same token, Henry reported that his two children from the previous marriage were on good terms with their stepmother and vice-versa. Henry was also feeling supported by his wife, and he recommended other parents in almost similar situations to exercise most of the disciplinarian role for their children instead of leaving all the responsibility to the stepparent. Otherwise, one risks creating an environment of resentment and anger between the stepparent and the stepchild.

The need for parents to avoid loading their parental roles onto children. Based on the data of this study, seven participants had biological children in both their first and second marriages. The reported minimum age difference between each participant's youngest child in first marriage and the participant's first child in the second marriage was 3 years and 6 months. The average age was 5 years, and the maximum age difference was 8 years.

During the interviews, six participants out of the seven parents who had children in both marriages regretted having loaded some of their parental roles onto their young children from the first marriages to take care of their younger half-siblings. Another participant, Elizabeth, who had biological children in both marriages and who had personally taken care of her half-sibling while growing in a stepfamily illustrated:
Elizabeth: My mother and her second husband (Jim) had a son together (Jose). Unfortunately, Jim died 4 years after marrying my mother. I ended up taking on the responsibility of caring for my younger half-brother (Jose) because our mother was not available to us.

Elizabeth mentioned that it was very painful for her to take care of Jose. Later on, when Elizabeth was in her second marriage, she resolved that her older son, Robert, should not take care of his younger half-brother, John. Instead, she decided to take care of both of them because she was convinced that it was her role as a mother to parent her children.

When asked by the researchers about her feelings towards Robert and John, Elizabeth said that she was trying her level best to express her love to both of them without showing any kind of preference. However, she clarified that, deep within her heart, she was feeling a stronger affection for her first son "because we (Elizabeth and Robert) went through so much, there is more communication between us."

Elizabeth: I find myself feeling a little guilty knowing that my second child, you know, has two parents. My first child only had the one parent (me alone), and it was a little bit tougher. My first son and I had to go through a tough life, and we sacrificed a heck of a lot more than the second child.

Joseph: It seems like your second son's needs are better taken care of than the first?

Elizabeth: Yes. And, you know, you are growing up, and the second child gets all of this stuff, and not that the first child does not, but he is older now. I think I just bent a little more to my first child knowing that the second one got so much more, and I felt a little guilty because the first one did not get so much.

Sexuality

All the participants highlighted that they entered their remarriages when they were chronologically older in comparison to when they entered their first marriages, and that this age difference had affected the frequency of their sexual expressiveness. Additionally, five participants above the age of 50 years indicated that they had started to struggle with the question of how to keep sexuality alive as a result of advancing in years.
All the participants emphasized that sexuality was one of the aspects that they wanted to continue to keep alive in their second marriages as part of both partners. Some of the processes that the participants were doing to maintain active sexual expressiveness with one another included the following:

Ten participants mentioned that they had developed a habit of dressing well. Accordingly, Elizabeth identified physical attraction as an integral part of marital stability and satisfaction. In fact, Elizabeth was the only participant out of the sixteen who mentioned physical attraction as a factor influential both to remarriage satisfaction and stability. Elizabeth said, "If you are not physically attracted to him or her, then you shouldn't be with that person. There has to be a reason why you connected to begin with."

Fourteen participants mentioned that taking periodic honeymoons by going to a hotel (e.g., at least twice a year) and/or going to a different place only by themselves as a couple were excellent boosters to their remarriage stability and satisfaction. Two participants highlighted that watching sexually seductive movies together with their spouses was an influencing experience for them to feel motivated to engage in romantic activities in the privacy of their bedrooms.

In regard to maintaining sexual expressiveness, seven participants spoke of the practice of being tender with one another, doing activities together with their partners, eating together, sharing opinions, having sex for pleasure, and learning new techniques of how to position themselves during sexual intercourse. According to Daniel, changing such positions was helpful in overcoming the routine of having sex in the same position. Likewise, changing positions was helping him and his partner to improve their communication about which positions were more suitable for their sexual satisfaction.

Hilda: Scheduling the time for having intimacy with my spouse has proven very practical. Due to the many activities that go on in our life as a couple, by the time we go to bed, we are very exhausted, and with less energy to engage in sex. In fact, it is my experience that without scheduling for sexual intercourse, especially for working and aging spouses, it is impossible to let it go without interfering it. Yet, sexual intercourse is a very important activity that you cannot leave to the fate of spontaneity.
Hilda emphasized that sexual intercourse is an expression of mutual love for one another and can serve as a balm in hard times. Consequently, she referred to "good sex as good-glue" in remarriage.

On the other hand, Charles made a statement that struck me.

Charles: Good sexual life starts in the kitchen.

Joseph: May we please elaborate on what you mean by that statement.

Charles: Good sexuality begins by helping out with the cooking, with the clean up of the dishes, and helping clean the house. (It involves) listening to each others' needs, and trying to be open to taking care of her needs, and what she wants out of the marriage, and by supporting her in her desires to grow as a human being. This kind of mutual collaboration keeps us together, and then we feel comfortable to relax in the same bed, with our arms wrapped around one another.

Felicia spoke of the willingness to engage in sexual intercourse as a means of caring for one's partner. She suggested that spouses should think not only about individual sexual satisfaction, but also the satisfaction of their partners.

Felicia: Sometimes, I'm not in the mood to have sex, but, when I think of my husband's needs, I motivate myself to have intimacy because, in the end, both of us benefit from the experience.

Felicia added that this kind of self-motivation had significantly contributed to her marriage stability and satisfaction. This was because, before developing this self-motivation, her history of low sexual desire was affecting the couple's sexual satisfaction in her second marriage. In her opinion, the low sexual desire was a result of the abuse she suffered from her first husband.

Knowledge of the Complexity of Remarriage

All the participants admitted that they did not know much about remarriage at the time of their second marriages. They did not know what they were entering into, especially the challenges that they have faced, yet such knowledge could have prevented some of them in time. A typical
challenge that 12 participants were not prepared for at all was how to handle the constant interference of their ex-spouses and/or those of their current spouses.

Alice: The ex-spouse of my husband has given us a lot of headache in our remarriage. She does call on a regular basis, almost daily, with the excuse of the child, you know, to ask questions about the child. But, and she is a ... sort of a lonely person, has no one to reach out to, and so she still continues to reach out to her ex-husband for support and some of her own things, like you know if she is sick or whatever, and he has continued to support her. Fortunately, I feel very secure in my relationship with my husband. If she wanted that relationship, he would have stayed with her. He chose to leave her, so I don't feel threatened by her in any way.

Daniel highlighted that divorced parents contemplating remarriage should know about its complexity before they enter it. "Know what you are getting into before you enter it [remarriage]." Likewise, 11 other participants indicated that making the right decision (e.g., in regard to who to marry) presupposes the need to have the right information. This information involves knowledge about oneself (self-knowledge), the prospective spouse, and about how to resolve the specific issues in remarriage. According to Henry, such awareness matches with the adage: "Prevention is better than cure." He added:

Henry: That is why I like very much the Book of Proverbs in the Bible. It speaks of knowledge as a source of life for those who possess it. In fact, the knowledge I have now about remarriage, helped me to understand my wife's concerns better and avoid many potential problems. Now, I have a better knowledge of how to handle the sensitive topics with my wife, and I have a better practice of self-control than I did at the beginning of my remarriage.

Seven male participants out of eight and six females out of eight revealed that they entered their second marriages with very little awareness about the complexity and challenges of remarriage. Based on a marital experience of at least 3 years or more in their second marriages, all the participants revealed their realizations that remarriage is complex, especially if it involves children from the previous marriage that ended in divorce and if the previous spouse is still alive.

Elaborating on the value of awareness, 13 participants highlighted that rushing into remarriage, particularly when children are involved from the first marriage and before resolving the "baggage" associated with divorce, may be very dangerous. Therefore, the emphasis of
putting into practice what they have learned is helpful in remarriage, because awareness alone about its complexity and challenges is not enough. Additionally, Hilda indicated that awareness of the resources and practices that reinforce both remarriage stability and satisfaction go beyond guesswork.

To make sure that knowledge about remarriage complexity gets better disseminated, 14 participants suggested that qualified personnel from different professional background are needed to form a joint team. Examples of such professionals will be mentioned later. However, according to those 14 participants, such professionals are the ones who might play a significant role in helping divorced parents learn about the complexity of remarriage and its challenges before and/or after remarriage.

Communication

Fifteen participants mentioned that communication in remarriages is important because it facilitates relationship building, especially because of the diverse numbers of people involved in a stepfamily. These people include one’s children, one’s spouse, the former spouse, ex-in-laws, current in-laws, the ex-spouse of one’s current spouse, and stepchildren. According to Hilda, should there be any kind of miscommunication, all these people may be emotionally hurt by it.

The flow of information among these members of the extended family can get out of one’s control, and, by the time it reaches the fourth or fifth person, a given message may not match the meaning of what the first speaker wanted to say. By the same token, 12 participants emphasized that, to avoid higher risks of miscommunication in stepfamily settings, remarried spouses should learn better communication skills and create time for them as a couple, so that they can dialogue about the diverse topics that need to be resolved.

According to Beatrice, some of those conversations may revolve around stepparenting and how to ask the current spouse to be supportive for the partner’s children if their other biological parent does not respond to their emotional needs. Elaborating on the importance of the
need for communication in regard to marriage stability and satisfaction, Felicia mentioned that learning when to keep her mouth shut and when to open it had helped her to improve the relationship with her second spouse.

Based on her experience, Felicia revealed that words can hurt people and affect the relationship of the people one cares about. She emphasized that even if one can make an apology, what has been said cannot be taken back. Felicia and I discussed at length about communication in the following interchange:

Felicia: Communication involves trust and mutual respect because, even if both spouses see things differently, they can still communicate and influence each other's views. I think that, in a marriage, you learn a lot from your spouse, but at the end your spouse also learns a lot from you. So you learn to, I would say, adjust.

Joseph: OK.

Felicia: And I would say that behind every good man there is a good woman, and vice versa.

Joseph: Behind every good woman there is a good man.

Felicia: Yes, that's what I mean by vice versa. And not being always the same, I think that is a good thing.

Joseph: Being flexible?

Felicia: Yes, being flexible and being different is ok because my husband and I are like day and night. I never always see things the way he sees them, but then, when we sit together and I tell him what I think and he tells me what he thinks, we negotiate our differences and come to conclusions.

Joseph: OK.

Felicia OK.

Joseph: Now, being different as you are and at the same time sharing a dream, what do you think has contributed to your marriage stability? What has contributed to your stability?

Felicia: Sometimes I will hold back things just to keep the peace in the family. OK. Sometimes I am not happy with decisions, but I hold back. At the end it works. At the end it is for the better because I am too quick at judgment. And I find that, if I hold back and think about things, I am better off.

Joseph: So you withhold your judgment, you think through things, and eventually things work out. For the sake of peace sometimes you just stay quiet.
Felicia: For the sake of peace, yes sometimes you should swallow your pride and hold things back. Not always.

Elaborating on the theme of communication, all the participants’ input could be put into two major categories, informal communication and in-depth communication. The informal communication is focused on the casual conversations that help people to start interacting with one another, and these conversations need to be maintained throughout the remarriage.

Examples of these conversations include topics that are less emotionally charged, and they do not tend to be personal. Catherine referred to these kinds of talks as icebreakers that might help in creating an environment of mutual trust, so that people may feel comfortable to speak about their personal lives.

On the other hand, Beatrice highlighted:

Beatrice: Even if casual conversations are important, remarrying spouses should go beyond the romantic talk, discussing their ex-spouses, discussing politics, or the weather, and focus on the topics that are more relevant to the establishment of successful remarriages for the partners and their significant others.

The other kind of communication, which encompassed the opinions of all the participants and their perceptions, was the need for in-depth communication between the partners. According to all the participants, in-depth communication consists of taking the risk to discuss emotionally charged conversations which most remarrying parents feel insecure to bring up into open discussions with their partners, and the issues remain unresolved.

Examples of such issues that all the participants mentioned include money in second marriages, religion, sexuality, relationships with in-laws, unresolved issues from the previous marriage, step-parenting, relationships with their ex-spouses, pending credit debts, and death.

Hilda added that it is also important for divorced parents contemplating remarriage to discuss any histories of mental illness, substance abuse, and domestic violence.
Spirituality

All 16 participants reported that painful experiences in their divorce had brought them closer to God, especially during those moments when they had to make their hardest decisions of whether to divorce or not, and while going through the aftermath of divorce. All the participants (including the two males who had denied belonging to any formalized religion) stated that spirituality played a great role in their remarriage stability and satisfaction.

Elias was a participant who did not identify himself with any religion. I was amazed about his insights on spirituality and religion and how he expressed the influence of spirituality on his remarriage stability and satisfaction.

Elias: Whenever I have to make a decision in my marriage or any other major decision in life, I have to pray first. I give witness that God listens to my prayers whenever I pray... In my life, I consider spirituality a great inspiration for living an ethical life, philosophical ideals, and I believe that that supernatural power blesses my marriage and family. I perceive this supernatural power to be compassionate, inclusive, transcendent, and infinite.

Even if Elias reported not belonging to any formalized religion, he made the following remark: "Having no church to go to is a bad thing."

Joseph: What does that mean?

Elias: Any religion, if well understood and practiced by its believers in the right way, can be a profound source of faith, solidarity, unity for its members, improvement of peoples’ lives in their marriages and family life. Religions are good sources of hope and meaning to people, especially if they do not become breeding grounds for duality politics, but rather become a means of transmitting God’s mercy, love and forgiveness, compassion, and hope for eternal life with God.

Nine Catholics out of eleven who participated in this study expressed that faith in God had played a significant role in their remarriages, and had empowered them in many ways, especially during the most painful moments of their lives, during the process of divorce, and its aftermath. On the other hand, to illustrate how spirituality was a significant factor in lives of the Catholic participants, 8 out of the 11, were not able to get annulments from the Catholic Church.
before they remarried. Consequently, they went to ask for God’s blessing for their marriages in front of a religious minister of another religious denomination.

A typical example of a couple’s remarriage celebrated by a minister of another religion was that of Charles and his wife Julia. Charles stated that God had a very profound place in his life, and he described Julia as a very spiritual woman. According to Charles, he and his wife did all that was within their possibilities to have their marriage blessed by a Catholic minister before they started living together. Both of them were Catholic divorcees, and it was very difficult for them to remarry in the Catholic Church before receiving an annulment from their previous marriages. They tried to get the annulments, but they could not get them by the time of their anticipated marriage.

In pain and frustration of not being able to get married in the Catholic Church, Charles agreed with his wife-to-be to seek God’s blessing from an Episcopal minister. Five years later, they received the annulments, and their marriage was con-validated in the Catholic Church. This made them very happy, and ever since they became Eucharist Ministers in their church and have conducted pre-remarriage talks for 10 years to divorced Catholics preparing for remarriage.

According to 12 participants, spirituality was described as a resource that was contributing in one way or another to their remarriage stability and satisfaction, because it was helping them to find meaning, purpose, and keeping them in close connection with a transcendent being whom they identified as God. All of the 16 participants expressed their belief in the spirit of God empowering them to love by their marriage commitments, learning to love other people, and forgiving those who had hurt them in one way or another, especially their ex-spouses.

Ten participants also described how spirituality had motivated them to improve their human behaviors in their everyday lives. Additionally, spirituality was a resource for them in their remarriages because it was helpful in motivating them to live morally better lives. By the same token, they were able to distinguish between good and bad ways of interpersonal relationships with their family members, community, and society at large.
All of the eight female participants and six males stated that God had a very special place in their remarriages. Some of the ways they had been able to experience strongly God's presence included holding onto prayer, hope, searching for forgiveness from God for the mistakes they felt they had committed as wives or husbands, and as parents against their children.

Catherine: I owe a lot of thanks to God for the success of my remarriage. I remember waking up at night and kneeling down to ask for God's guidance and strength when my remarriage was going through a very difficult financial situation. My husband started to have misunderstandings with his brothers and their business almost broke down, yet at that time I was not working. Surprisingly, a month later I got a job and my husband's relationship with his brothers improved, and their business improved from loss to gain.

Ten participants mentioned that turning to God and to their church ministers, and/or to the faith-community were also resourceful to them and were bringing them God's solace, particularly during the moments of discouragement and frustration in their second marriages. They also realized that spirituality was affecting them in their decision-making process. In fact, belonging to a religious denomination and being an active member within one's church were reported by 12 participants to be significant influences on remarriage stability and satisfaction.

Nine participants reported that belonging to a church community was beneficial for them. Each one of them acknowledged the social support, he or she received. In a special way, seven female participants appreciated the community support especially during the divorce process, mourning divorce, financial difficulties, strong feeling of ambiguity about re-dating and remarriage.

One of the participants who elaborated on the importance of spirituality and belonging to a supportive religious community was Henry. After his divorce, he continued to go to Church and did a lot of volunteer work in the Catholic Church with other parishioners. Three years later, his parish priest and other committee members in the parish started making arrangements for him to work in close contact with a single woman interested in meeting someone to marry. As anticipated, the two of them started dating, got married, and by the time of the interview they had been together for 8 years. All in all, Henry spoke with admiration about how a supportive
religious community had helped him on his spiritual journey and marriage life to meet his second wife, whom he described as “very spiritual, community oriented, and very compassionate.”

Dora elaborated upon the quality of spirituality in remarriage. She was an active member in her Church and her faith was forthcoming as she expressed herself during the interview.

Dora: Spirituality and action are inseparable. That is why I think that any married man who believes in God should also treat his wife with respect, and if he makes a mistake, he should learn to apologize. I feel men should learn to say “sorry,” or at least should admit their mistakes and talk about them with their wives. I am concerned about the spirituality of many men because men in general do not admit their mistakes, and that affects their marriages negatively.

Furthermore, Dora stated that spirituality goes beyond the mere fact of belonging to a formalized religion and going to a religious building for prayers.

Dora: Some people go to Church and just pray, and they are not as good as they are in the Church. Outside of the church building, they do the things they are not supposed to do as churchgoers. So I believe, if there is a God, I know He is happy with me because I try to help. I always try to do the best do the correct thing. ... I taught my kids too.

Professional Help

Twelve participants stated that, even if they did not seek professional help before they remarried, they had acknowledged that their remarriages would have been a little easier if at all they had received some guidance and counseling from competent personnel before remarriage.

They indicated that, because of the complexity of remarriage and its challenges, pre-remarriage counseling is important.

Henry: Looking back at my remarriage journey, and what I have heard other remarried people experience in my profession as a family attorney, I would recommend that you, remarrying people, should consult religious ministers to impress upon you the importance of the third Person namely God in the relationship; [consult also] social workers to impress upon you reasonable expectations that, un you know, women don’t wake up with make-up on every day, and that sometimes they don’t look attractive as others, and the guys sometimes don’t share for 2 days in a row.
Five females and four male participants acknowledged that, if they had not received professional help after they remarried, from excellent marriage and family therapists, their remarriages would most probably have ended in another divorce. Additionally, six female and five male participants attributed their stability and satisfaction in remarriage to having consulted their religious ministers after they remarried, but they emphasized that it would have been better if they had received this help before remarriage.

Seven males and four female participants suggested consulting financial accountants, especially to establish pre-nuptial agreements. Five females and three male participants suggested seeking help from social workers, especially those who are competent and interested in working with divorcees, remarried parents, and children in stepfamilies.

Abraham: I appreciate the work done by family therapists, psychologists, and social workers in their efforts to help parents and children in remarriage settings. However, based on what I have gone through in my life as a married man in both marriages, the training I received as a clinical psychologist, and later on as a researcher, I think there is need for specialized training of professionals working with divorcees and people living in remarriage contexts and stepfamilies. I say this to you [Joseph] because most of the traditional psychologists that I know, including myself, we were trained to work with individuals, not stepfamilies.

Joseph: May you elaborate on that point please.

Abraham: Yes. Based on my literature reviews, I have realized that there are very few specialized remarriage professionals working with people in stepfamilies. Furthermore, I have realized that there are some similar things between my first marriage and remarriage, but the two marriages are extremely different. Therefore, I suggest that pre-remarriage preparing programs for divorce parents have to be distinct from those of first marriages and vice-versa.

Elaborating on the factors influencing remarriage stability and satisfaction, eight female participants and seven males mentioned the need for effective stepparenting. According to Henry and Hilda, stepparents need to go slowly and have to be sensitive to the child’s gender, age, developmental needs, and temperament. Grace suggested, “It is extremely important to begin relating as a friend to the children of a prospective spouse, instead of presenting oneself as disciplinarian or as a representative of the other biological parent.”
Thirteen participants highlighted that remarrying parents need to be educated by competent personnel to evaluate their motivations and expectations before remarriage. According to Daniel, this is important because, “Setting realistic expectations and holding on to the right motivations for remarriage positively influence remarriage stability and satisfaction.”

One of Hilda’s greatest convictions was that the key to marriage and remarriage is counseling. She emphasized, “I wish I had gone through this the first time.” Hilda also acknowledged that remarriage is a real challenge. A success for remarriage requires first healing from the wounds of divorce before remarriage. Otherwise, one runs the risk of projecting onto the second spouse suspicion of marital infidelity, as was her case.

Fred was insightful in offering his suggestions for African American divorced males. He advocated for them to avoid remarriages of convenience. In preparing themselves for marriage, he stressed that the facilitators of the program should help highly educated Black males to stop denying their pain, loss, anger, resentment, and emotional baggage from the first marriages and families of origin. They should be encouraged to be custodial parents to their children because they need them.

Secondary Factors

The following results are categorized as secondary factors because, as mentioned before, they were referred to by at most eight participants out the total number of the 16 participants. There are nine secondary factors, which emerged namely, marital history, motivations for remarriage, dating, house rules and roles, conflict resolution, clear boundaries, cohabitation, re-divorce prevention, and permanent sites for professional remarriage services.

Marital History

Seven participants mentioned that they strongly attributed their remarriage stability and satisfaction to the lessons they had learned from their families of origin and their past experiences.
of marriage. By the time of the interview, those seven participants reported that their parents were divorced at least once. However, for the sake of illustrating the impact of marital history on remarriage, two detailed stories have been selected by the researchers (one of a male participant, Bernardo, and another of a female participant, Elizabeth).

Bernardo: I do not blame my parents for having divorced when I was 9 years old. They had their reasons for doing so. However, since I grew up without seeing my father and mother living together, expressing love for one another and love for us [the children, my sister and I], all that had a negative impact on my life. Secondly, even when they got married with other people, their remarriages also ended in divorce. As a result, when my first marriage ended in divorce, I felt guilty because I saw myself repeating what my parents had done. Surprisingly, my daughter also had children in her first marriage, then divorced, and is now remarried. Therefore, for the success of my second marriage, I am putting into practice what I have learned from my past mistakes and those of my parents and my daughter. Now I believe that history tends to repeat itself unless lessons are learned from it, and put into practice.

Elizabeth mentioned that her remarriage stability and satisfaction were in one way or another influenced by the experiences she had gone through while growing up. Thus, while elaborating on her family of origin, Elizabeth stated that the divorce of her parents when she was 4 years old affected her very much, because she ended up living with her mother, a woman whom she resented for many reasons. Some of these reasons included the way Elizabeth emphatically described her mother as an alcoholic who spent most of the time away from home dating other men.

Elizabeth: My mother was never satisfied with one person. My mother needed recognition from a lot of people. I think that was her sickness. I didn’t recognize that, of course, until I was older. But she did have a sickness. She drank a lot. She wasn’t a full-on drunk, but her first priority was herself, not her children. I resented my mother very much; I resented her lifestyle. I resented the way she lived. We had nothing; I resented that. And my anger was on her because we had nothing.

Joseph: How would you describe your experience of family life while growing-up?

Elizabeth: We had no family life; she didn’t keep in touch with her family. We didn’t have cousins. We didn’t have uncles; we didn’t have aunts. So to speak, once in a great while we would have family. You see other people, you go to school with bad clothes, people make fun of you, and you have no real friends, because nobody wants to be bothered with you because you are trash. That is
what we were. We were trash. I mean I look back now and say my mother tried. She was single, she went to work every day, but my mother thought about herself. I needed a pair of shoes. I can remember this. I needed a pair of shoes really bad. I had holes in my shoes, and she wouldn’t buy them because she had to go out to the bar that night. She had to have money for that bar, and that was more important to her. I did resent that.

Based on this resentment, when her mother remarried Jim, Elizabeth felt a strong attachment to Jim because she found in him a lot of compassion and understanding. Consequently, I asked Elizabeth to elaborate:

Joseph: How was your relationship with your stepfather?

Elizabeth: Very good from what I remember. I remember specifically one time he [Jim - my stepfather] came home for lunch. He had a cake in his lunch box or something, and my mother gave all the cake to my youngest half-brother [Jose]. Then my stepfather took the cake and cut it in half, and we got half and half. That I remember. I remember good things with him. He was a good man. Unfortunately he passed away [just after 4 years of living together].

The seven participants reported that the lessons they had learned from their first marriages and/or from the experiences of their second spouses helped them to avoid many mistakes in their second marriages. A typical example was that which Daniel narrated in detail, illustrating the precautions he was taking to reduce the risk of transference issues that had started to affect his second marriage. Daniel and I had the following detailed discussion. (Note: In the same discussion, Daniel used several times the colloquial phrase “you know,” simply as a connective between his ideas.)

Daniel: We [my second wife and I] have spoken about our past marital experiences. Actually, she has spoken a lot more than I have about my divorce because I have always spoken about things that happened in my [first] marriage to her, and she has told me everything basically that has happened to her in her [first] marriage. This helps me to understand what each one of us expects. OK. Um, her situation was a lot different because he [her ex-spouse] just traveled a lot, and, um, he was with other women. And she found out that, afterward, he had children you know, while they were still married, so that was a different situation than mine. I didn’t have that problem, you know, but it did affect me somewhat because she went through so much with that situation. And her divorce, I think that, it kind of like it carried over to me because she was very, um, not pressure, she was very, not jealous either, but she was very watchful of different things I did. You know, she was being careful that I wasn’t doing anything. You know, because she already was so hurt so much before that, and she didn’t want the same thing to happen to her. And I know that; I know that.
Sometimes we had situations where I would turn to her and say, “You know, what you’ve been really hurt too—had with her—that you are really starting to take it out on me.” I told her a couple of times, Maybe I shouldn’t have, but I wanted to tell her that because I realized she was bringing her past and bringing it on to me when really she shouldn’t have. But that’s part of learning, you know, that’s part of the learning. If you don’t say something to her, then how is she going to know? So I think one of the things to help us to deal is to let each other know what we didn’t like about the previous marriage. So, you know, and, by me telling her what I went through with my wife, with my first wife, she will be careful to do those things. And the same thing her, you know, I’m careful. You know, I don’t try to, you know, give her any idea that something is going on.

Joseph: So, you are saying that speaking about what each one of you went through, didn’t like, liked, or whatever also contributes now to the stability of your remarriage?

Daniel: Yes, yes, because [now] I know what hurts her. I know what doesn’t hurt her. You know, and I try to keep it there. I keep it in that frame of mind, you know. I think that is important; you know you might make the same mistake.

**Motivations for Remarriage**

In retrospect, six participants acknowledged that they entered their second marriage with many unrealistic expectations.

Daniel: After 2 years of remarriage, I thought of divorcing my second wife because I was not happy with and we had started to disagree on many things. On further analysis of what was going on, I found out that part of my frustration was related to my expectations. At the same time, I started to feel ambiguous about myself. You know, on one part, I was having thoughts focused on divorce, and yet I was feeling insecure, and fearful of experiencing a second divorce. I was very concerned about subjecting my children again to what they had just gone through. Four months later, I decided to let go some of my unrealistic motivations for remarriage, and, as a result, I felt happier and more loving of my second wife.

Based on Daniel’s experiences and those of six other participants who had expressed their frustrations about remarriage because of their unmet and unrealistic expectations about remarriage, the researcher decided to focus on asking the participants to mention what each participant had experienced as realistic motivation. In reply, five participants identified the search for companionship and friendship. Six others emphasized the need for mental, social, and
psychological support (three males and three females). Four participants mentioned the need for a co-parenting partner, and a real model for their children.

Seven participants spoke of being in love with the partner while six emphasized the need to share household expenses with the significant other. Eight participants highlighted the need to move on with their lives as they worked on resolving their pains from the first marriages. Eight highlighted the search for meaning and happiness in life with a partner. Five participants stated that they felt motivated, but at the same time, though unsure, they risked to start over again, praying and trusting in God, so that their second marriages would be successful. According to Godfrey, his motivation for remarriage that had proved successful was what he referred to as his “fidelity to God’s plan for humanity: man was not created to live alone.” Eight participants said that their remarriages were successful because their motivations for remarriage were based on their convictions that they had found right and compatible life partner.

**Dating**

Six participants highlighted that dating after divorce may be difficult, especially for divorced parents. Part of this difficulty may be related to the unresolved pain, anger, frustration, guilt related to the previous marriage, fear of experiencing another divorce and being hurt again, and/or because of the challenges that may surface from dating while having a parental role to play. By the same token, Bernardo emphasized:

**Bernardo:** Dating parents need to be very careful, learn to take risk of dating again in their partners, but they should start as friends and companions. This is because friends do things together, share hobbies, communicate with honesty, understand each other’s views, and even if they hurt one another, they let the other person know, explore the cause of conflict, analyze stuff within 48 hours, and are flexible with one another. And all this lays a foundation for mutual love and sexual satisfaction.

Beatrice also highlighted the need for family reunions for divorced parents who are dating their prospective spouses. She described such reunions as less intimidating, and it lets the two people get to know one another and to interact with each other’s children. By the same
Thirteen participants highlighted that remarriage parents need to be educated by competent personnel to evaluate their motivations and expectations before remarriage. According to Daniel, this is important because, "Setting realistic expectations and holding on to the right motivations for remarriage positively influence remarriage stability and satisfaction.

One of Hilda's greatest convictions was that the key to marriage and remarriage is counseling. She emphasized, "I wish I had gone through this the first time." Hilda also acknowledged that remarriage is a real challenge. A success for remarriage requires first healing from the wounds of divorce before remarriage. Otherwise, one runs the risk of projecting onto the second spouse suspicion of marital infidelity, as was her case.

Fred was insightful in offering his suggestions for African American divorced males. He advocated for them to avoid remarriages of convenience. In preparing themselves for marriage, he stressed that the facilitators of the program should help highly educated Black males: to stop denying their pain, loss, anger, resentment, and emotional baggage from the first marriages and families of origin. They should be encouraged to be custodial parents to their children because they need them.

Secondary Factors

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Elizabeth: My mother was never satisfied with one person. My mother needed recognitions from a lot of people. I think that was her sickness. I didn’t recognize that, of course, until I was older. But she did have a sickness. She drank a lot. She wasn’t a full-down drunk, but her first priority was herself, not her children... I resented my mother very much; I resented her lifestyle. I resented the way she lived. We had nothing; I resented that. And my anger was out on her because we had nothing.

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Beatrice also highlighted the need for family reunions for divorced parents who are dating their prospective spouses. She described such reunions as less intimidating, and it lets the two people get to know one another and to interact with each other’s children. By the same
token, the children are likely to start seeing the stranger as a family friend with no strings attached. Parents should take seriously their children’s needs to feel comfortable with people whom they date. Beatrice added, “If the children don’t feel comfortable with their stepparents, they can make their parent’s remarriage miserable.”

Grace suggested that, if a parent senses that his or her children are not receptive to his or her prospective spouse, then that parent should make a decision to seek family counseling before proceeding with the remarriage arrangements. Likewise, six participants suggested that remarrying parents should slow down before starting to date and give themselves sufficient time to heal from the wounds of divorce. Your participants added that prudent dating involves exploring and addressing the likely problems in remarriage, more than paying more attention to the color of the wedding gown.

Elaborating on the notion of dating, Abraham, a 70-year old participant, cautioned parents, especially those with teenagers and/or young adults to be very conscious and moderate about their dating styles and behaviors. Otherwise, if they exaggerate by becoming very persuasive in their seeking or take on mannerisms that put their dignity into jeopardy, they may embarrass their children and/or give or set a bad example for them.

Abraham: They should date with dignity and prudence, without forgetting that they are parents. For that matter, they should be very careful about how they dress, the dances they go to, the time they come back from their dates, and, if possible, never spend the whole night with their dating partners outside or inside their residential homes without informing their children.

Bernardo said that when his divorced daughter starting dating again, Bernardo told her, “Re-date as a mature adult, without manifesting behaviors that may seem as if you are in competition with your teenage children.”

Seven participants, with large extended-family backgrounds, suggested that, since remarriage tends to be harder and more complex, especially if it involves children from the previous marriage, remarrying parents should include the in-laws in the remarriage arrangements, because they are constantly present in one’s marriage. Three participants clarified that remarriage
involves a lot of work because you marry a family, not just a person, and that is outside of your control. Five participants highlighted that re-dating ought to start by developing friendship first, mutual respect between companions, and holding in-depth talks about children, expectations, money, sex, personal history, family of origin, parenting skills, and disciplining of children.

Given Geoffrey's deteriorating health as a result of overdrinking and unresolved grief that was associated with his divorce, his mother and friends advised him about the overthinking and encouraged him to seek therapy to better handle and resolve the depression instead of escaping away from it by drinking. He took their word, sought professional help, became more sober, and started to date some women, including Melissa, whom he eventually married.

Elaborating on the value of dating after divorce, one of the participants highlighted:

Godfrey: I started to mess with some women around, and actually I got introduced to my second wife through friends. And, you know, we had a nice time and we saw each other once in a while, and then we just stepped it up. It was a natural progression, you know? So I guess, the motivating factor was just the fact that we hit it off real well, and it was enjoyable being together, and she was very good with my daughter, and then so it all came together.

Catherine cautioned dating parents with the intention of establishing happy and lasting remarriages to avoid the risk of believing that remarriage changes people from their behaviors. She learned that lesson from her first marriage. Catherine described her first husband as a good man, a good father, and hardworking. Nevertheless, his problem of gambling, which she knew about before they got married, contributed to a lot of financial battles in the family and consequently to the end of the marriage.

In retrospect, Catherine suggested that whoever is dating someone whose behavioral problem he or she knows and is not happy about it (e.g., smoking, alcoholism, and flirting), that problem should be brought up, thoroughly discussed and resolved before marriage. Catherine concluded, "Marriage doesn't automatically change people from their habitual behaviors. If there is any behavior of one's partner that one does not want or cannot stand, it should be completely resolved before remarriage takes place."
House Rules and Roles

Seven participants mentioned that because of the complexity of remarriage, rules are very important in second marriages. Some of the reasons they gave were that rules help to maintain structure and to establish a sense of discipline and order in the house. All seven of these participants had joint custody of their children with their former spouses, and they had realized that their children were finding it difficult to figure out what to do and not do in the household of their divorced parents.

Three of these participants had attended a seminar about remarriage in which they were helped to understand the importance of establishing rules and making them clear to the children in their households. One of the phrases which five participants reported as effective in helping their children to deal with the differences of guidelines while living in two households was the usage of the phrase: “In this house, the rules are....”

Further individual discussions with those three parents helped the researcher to understand that the rules which had better helped their children in their second marriage were those that were clear, consistent, flexible, not rigid, and to which defined consequences were attached. One of the rules that Elias mentioned was, “In this house, everybody who is at home during mealtime is expected to collaborate in the washing of the dishes after eating. Otherwise, whoever does not collaborate will have to wash the dishes alone after the next meal.”

Six participants mentioned that the parents should make the rules in dialogue with their children, so that the children, especially teenagers and young adults, may know what is expected of them. However, four participants emphasized that parents should not exclusively set the rules for their children to abide by. The parents should make rules or guidelines for themselves and abide by them, too. One of rules that six participants suggested for divorced parents was that, as parents, they should not criticize the ex-spouse in front of the children.
In addition to the house rules, four participants attributed the success of their remarrying to the fact that they made a conscious decision with their respective spouses not to get stuck into a rigid structure of abiding by the traditional gender roles.

Abraham: I help my second wife a lot with cooking, washing of the dishes because I do not think that it is a job exclusively for women. This may sound be perceived as a small thing by some people in traditional marriages, but it is a great relief to my wife. She likes it, and makes me feel supportive of her as we share some of the so-called traditional gender roles. Equally, too, I am not the only bread-winner in the house.

Joseph: What type of financial arrangement do you have with your spouse?

Abraham: We have a joint account, and we share all the expenses. However, there are other roles that we had to define clearly. For example, even if my stepson did not need any disciplinarian action because he grew up well-behaved, just in case any disciplinarian measures had to be taken, his biological parents would be the ones to do that, not me.

Five participants mentioned the need for couples a set a ritual for themselves alone and to schedule it in the form of a rule, so that they can comply by it. Elizabeth referred to that ritual as couple time and described it as a special time for her and her husband alone. Elizabeth clarified,

I find myself during the week, really crazy [very busy, with no time. By the same token, she encouraged other remarried people with tight schedules:] to find time[together], let the dishes go, let the laundry go, don’t wash the floor. It will be there. It is absolutely true. It will be there. Find some time, even one hour a week, special time to go out to dinner. My husband does not like to go out to dinner, so we made a different special time. It is our date Saturday night. I find it very helpful for us, and it keeps us fresh.

**Conflict Resolution**

Five participants stated that some conflict was inevitable and necessary to stay happily remarried. Felicia clarified:

Felicia: My [second] husband is a very peaceful gentleman, and both of us communicate very well. Nevertheless, however much we love one another, it is hard for us to live together without some moments of conflict between us. Once in a while, we have our arguments, but even then, we respect one another.

Elaborating about conflict in his remarriage, Henry clarified:
Henry: Although it is sometimes very hard for my wife and I to maintain personal integrity during moments of conflict, whenever we resolve any given conflict, I feel good about myself, and we end-up hugging one another. In a special way, I give credit to my wife because I have learned from her better skills of handling and resolving conflicts than I used to do in the past. I used to scream and nag at my wife, children, and co-workers.

Joseph: What are some of those better skills that you have learned from your wife?

Henry: Well, first of all, I have learned to slow down, try to control my anger, keep my mouth shut as I think through the issues; not speak in self-defense, nor project blame on my wife because sometimes no one is to blame. In fact, sometimes conflicts arise out of misunderstandings, so to put the blame constantly on the other person or to make myself guilty for something I am not responsible for is not healthy. Additionally, as I force myself to slow down and delay passing judgment, I start to feel more comfortable to listen to my wife’s perspective and put into context the motivations that might have contributed to what she thinks, feels, says, does, does not say, or decides not to do. Currently, I have also learned the importance of practicing the conflict resolution skills I have learned. Otherwise, without practicing them, I would not be any better at all than before.

With a smile on her face, Dora said:

Dora: The conflicts I had in my first marriage have helped me to believe that nothing bad happens without some good coming out of it. I also noticed that some conflicts have strengthened my relationship with my spouse. My experience of conflict in marital relationships is that, if conflict does not escalate into the death of one or both spouses, it can influence those involved to make decisions and take actions that lead to positive change. Looking back on my life, even if the conflicts I suffered in my first marriage brought me a lot of pain and humiliation, they prepared me to become more tolerant and persevering in life, especially during the divorce process and as a single mother of five children.

Beatrice: I have realized that taking the time to understand the source or sources of our conflicts has helped me to learn better ways of how to handle and resolving conflicts with my husband. Secondly, I have learned not to minimize conflicts because in every conflict someone feels hurt. I also learned in my remarriage not to turn every minor conflict into a big issue. In a special way, I recall the night when I screamed at my husband for coming home delayed for 2 hours than usual. He did not call me to inform me what that he would be late nor informed by phone that something had happened to him. I got mad at him, started thinking and imagining things that I cannot tell you now.

Joseph: What next?

Beatrice: When he came home, I screamed at him, and I left him into the sitting room, and I told him to go to another bedroom. To cut the long story short, he told me that he was stuck in traffic for over an hour after deadly accident had occurred in front of him, and he did not have his cell phone that day because he
had forgotten it in his other coat. When I read about that fatal accident in the newspapers the next day, I felt very bad, not so much about the victims, whom I did not know, but because of the guilt I was feeling for having been unkind to my husband without knowing the cause of his delay and lack of communication.

Two participants (a male and a female) mentioned that they lacked competency in handling conflict, especially in their first marriages, and in the first 5 years of their second marriages. They were interested in learning some of conflict-resolution skills and how to control their anger during moments of conflict, especially with their ex-spouses and stepchildren.

Daniel, however, revealed: Although I had learned the hard way how to handle conflict more effectively than when I was my first marriage, and during the first 5 years of remarriage, I eventually learnt how to choose my battles, and to express my feelings without intentionally hurting my ex-spouse and/or second spouse.

Three participants suggested that, if the conflict escalates in frequency and/or anger becomes intensely uncontrollable by one or both spouses, adequate measures must be taken before people seriously hurt one another. In retrospect, thinking over what had helped them in some moments of conflict, those three participants suggested that they found it very helpful to seek professional help because they managed to control their anger by attending anger management programs, and through timely communication of their feelings.

Based on personal experience, Felicia suggested, “Each spouse should know that he or she may have the right answers or words, but may have to hold back to avoid the risk of speaking with anger.” Dora also suggested, “In the case of on-going conflicts with the ex-spouse, the biological parents should avoid the risk of getting children caught-up into those conflicts.”

Clear Boundaries

Six participants mentioned that it was difficult for them to separate themselves completely from their ex-spouses, especially because four participants had joint-custody for their biological children with their ex-spouses.

Alicia: Immediately after my divorce, I did not want to have any contact with my
ex-spouse. I was so angry, frustrated, and fed-up with him. Unfortunately, I had to live with the bitter truth that, because of the child we had together, I had to maintain constant contact with. Secondly, I realized that as I kept being angry and distanced from him, the more I suffered because I could not sit down with him to plan what would be in the best interest of our child.

Joseph: Then, what happened?

Alicia: I changed my attitude toward him, and my understanding of how his mother had badly treated him while growing up helped me to forgive him. So, when I changed the perspective and way of relating with him, he also changed. Then we started to communicate well. Ever since, we both respect each other, and planned together the wedding of our son, together with the help of my second husband, and his second wife. Therefore, I have learned that, though divorce ends a marriage, it does not end the family. My ex-spouse and I are now close, and we can relate as friends.

On the other hand, Godfrey mentioned:

Godfrey: My divorce with my ex-spouse was generally amicable. I have never had any fight or major argument since I married my first wife and even after our divorce. That even makes me now understand better why many relatives were shocked by our divorce. On the other hand, I have to clarify that, ever since I remarried, I have taken serious measures to make sure that my on-going amicable relationship with my ex-spouse does not become too intimate, and hence put my second marriage in jeopardy. We are very close as parents and friends, but distant enough to avoid the risk falling back into romance. My second wife is also very respectful of my on-going friendship with my ex-spouse, and the two do some shopping together once in a while. All these healthy interpersonal relationships have also contributed to my remarriage stability and happiness.

Four participants also mentioned that having friendly relationships with their ex-in-laws and current in-laws were significant contributors to their remarriage stability and satisfaction.

Henry narrated how his ex-in-laws keep on sending him cards on his birthday and how his children enjoy spending part of their holidays with both their maternal and paternal grandparents.

Five participants highlighted that one of the things that had helped them in strengthening their remarriages was their on-going review as individuals and couple to become more conscious of how to protect themselves from the negative influences of their neighborhoods and society at large.

Catherine: Yes, I am a remarried divorcée, but I have realized that it is not very easy for me sometimes to live in a suburban neighborhood where most of my relatives and close friends are divorcing for the first, second, or third time. Fortunately, I have a very good supportive community at my church where I
meet with other remarried parents. We empower one another and pray together for the success of our marriages. Therefore, I suggest that remarried couples need to learn how to take an objective stance in order to selectively appreciate what society offers, but also distance themselves from the negative influences from media, and the pressures from society which are detrimental to marital stability and happiness (e.g., drugs).

The type of relationship between the stepparent and a stepchild plays a big role also in regard to the stability and satisfaction of a divorced parent’s remarriage. This observation was reflected in Felicia’s remarriage.

Felicia: During the first years of my remarriage, I was very unhappy, and I was not sure whether my remarriage was going to last for long. This was because my second husband [Fausto] resented my son [Jose]. However, ever since I saw my husband interested in my son and doing his best to help my son, I experienced a lot of joy and tranquility in my remarriage.

Cohabitation

It is likely that more participants may have cohabited (lived together) before they formalized their remarriage in a civil court and/or a recognized religious denomination by the State of New Jersey. However, only seven participants communicated to me without being asked that they decided to start living together with their partners before getting remarried. All seven participants highlighted that it was not as easy decision for them because of the criticisms they received from their family members who were against cohabitation before the official wedding in front of a municipal judge or a religious minister. Nevertheless, those seven participants managed to resist the criticisms from their relatives and the teachings of their churches that did not condone cohabitation.

Abraham: After four prolonged conversations with my second wife [a divorced parent too], both of us decided to start living together without any formal ceremony at all. On my behalf, the primary motivation for prioritizing cohabitation was the fact that I was feeling insecure about committing myself to my partner because I was still wounded in my heart based on what I had gone through with my previous spouse. Fortunately, the 3-year period I spent with her helped me to know her in her true colors, and with no make-ups. She is truly an adorable woman.
Beatrice: I was fearful to be hurt the second time. This was because I want to make sure that I was not getting into trouble the second time by marrying another abusive person and with a hidden agenda. So, I arranged with my fiancé [a divorced parent too] to start living together before marriage, so that we could know one another better. Furthermore, he had just spent 2 months in the United States since he left his native country. That also impacted our decision to live together before marriage. Two years later, we got married because both of us had come to know one another more closely.

Fred narrated his detailed experience about cohabitation as follows:

Fred: I dated many women after my first divorce.

Joseph: Tell me more about that.

Fred: I dated a number of women, primarily for sex, until one of them [a divorced parent too] asked me to marry her. During the next two months, I focused my exclusive attention to her, and, as a result, she asked me to get married with her in church before we started living together. After a week or two, I eventually convinced her to postpone the church wedding, and asked her to start living together. She accepted, and we started living together.

Joseph: Then what happened?

Fred: I spent the first 3 months very well, and then we started to have problems related to finances and religion. Even if we were not married officially, we had established a real bond between us. However, due to the escalating problems, we decided to seek marital counseling to avoid the risk of separation. The counselor did his best, and we also put our united effort to save the marriage. In the end we survived, but I realized that we made a mistake before we started living together.

Joseph: So, what is your view about living together before remarriage?

Fred: The truth of the matter was that both of us still had unresolved problems that were related to our divorces. Those problems made it harder for the counselor and for us because the counselor had to put aside our present problems that we had presented to him about how our finances and religious differences were affecting our marriage. Instead, the counselor decided to focus on each individual's "baggage" that we had brought to the relationship. Therefore, I think that divorces should work toward resolving their problems before planning to live together and before they officially remarry.

Dora also spoke of her cohabiting before remarriage (with a divorced parent, too).

Dora: I do not advocate for everybody to live with his or her fiancé before they remarry, but, in my case, it was very helpful, because that living together helped us to know one another. Therefore, when we made the decision for our official remarriage, both of us were convinced that we were making a life-commitment to one another. We have come a long way because, when we started living together, we liked each other, but we didn't love each other. ... I know, I don't love him.
We didn’t even go out. We just started to live together… Now we love each other, and we have been married for 18 years.

Permanent Sites for Professional Remarriage Services

Seven participants mentioned that it was very hard for them to know whom to turn to and where to receive a comprehensive pre-remarriage preparation, in order to get a better sense of what they were going into before making a final commitment to one another. All of them admitted that they needed guidance about remarriage in a conducive environment that facilitates learning, reflection, prayer, and where they could come back to get additional professional help whenever needed in the near and/or distant future. Five participants recalled having attended, in a costly hotel, a weekend preparation course that was organized by three remarried couples and a priest.

All five participants described that weekend experience as very inspiring, very loaded, expensive, and without an opportunity for any follow-up session, even if needed because the director admitted that they were not professionals, and there was no place to meet afterwards.

Alicia: I have heard of many places where different types of training are offered (e.g., computer training centers, nursing schools, police training centers, sports centers, and schools for foreign languages). However, I have never heard of a training center exclusively dedicated to the training of people for marriage and/or remarriage. That bothers me a lot. I remember pronouncing my vows before the municipal judge the day I married for the first time and the second time, but I did not receive any training about marriage or remarriage. Above all, I really needed it before my remarriage because I did not want to run into the same problems without knowing how to address them.

Joseph: Did you try to seek help from church?

Alicia: No. The Pentecostal church I go to does not offer pre-remarriage training. In my local church and county there is no established site for remarrying parents where they can go and receive pre-remarriage counseling. To the best of my knowledge, I think only the Catholic Church is the one that has started to offer that kind of training, and I hear that it is only for Catholics who are widowed or divorced who have received their annulments from the previous marriage.

Daniel (a resident of another county from that of Alicia) mentioned:
Daniel: I haven’t seen nor heard of any permanent building or center offering remarriage counseling in my local county. However, it is heart-breaking to see my close friends divorcing, remarrying within 6 months or so, and then re-divorcing. I wish I knew where to send them to seek guidance before they continue hurting their children also by these changes.

Joseph: Do you think your friend would go there to seek remarriage services?

Daniel: I am not certainly sure. Probably, let me answer your question by referring to the people who go to the medical clinics. I do not go to my doctor unless I am sick or if he recommends me for a medical check up. Honestly, who goes to the medical doctor without being sick? However, the good news is that whenever you get sick, you can go to the hospital because it is there for you, and you know where it is, or someone else takes you there. Therefore, it is my educated guess and heartfelt desire that people in need of remarriage services will have greater chances of going there, especially if they are acceptable, with safe parking lots, financially affordable for people with low income, and if the confidentiality is ensured.

Godfrey: Based on personal experience, most of remarriage problems become more explicit after I started living with my second wife, not during our courtship, and yet I did not know where to seek help when I most needed it. I am not sure whether I had idealized so much my wife while we were dating, and I felt I did not need any professional help before remarriage. However, I think that, if I had known of any established buildings with qualified personnel (particularly remarried spouses), I would probably have sought post-remarriage counseling, and to address the problems which we faced in the first 5 years of remarriage.

Eight participants (four males and four females) expressed that they had observed increasing numbers of divorce, remarriages, and second divorces in their neighborhoods. All of them made the suggestion regarding an urgent need for establishing permanent buildings where people can receive remarriage services. Those participants also suggested that the buildings should be geographically accessible, within safe neighborhoods, with parking space, and where people can be referred for help at affordable cost for the professional services they receive.

Fred: There is a school almost for everything, for example driving schools, agriculture, and seminaries where religious ministers are trained. However, the government has almost nothing set in place to help the people prepare themselves for marriage or remarriage. The marriages in civil courts are primarily focused on paper work and writing signatures. Beyond that, there is no preparation at all for married life.

Joseph: Do you know some of the churches or agencies that offer pre-remarriage preparation training directly to remarrying parents in your neighborhood?
Fred: I do not know of any other church, apart from the Catholic Church, where a selected number of Catholics, those whose marriages have been annulled, are offered a one-day or one-weekend pre-remarriage preparation workshop. I hear the content is good, but the workshop is too rushed, with limited numbers of participants, and very costly.

Joseph: What would you like to say in closing?

Fred: Based on my marital experience of 25 years in both marriages, I have realized that I have made many mistakes because of my ignorance about first marriages and the complexity of remarriage. Hopefully, I would have avoided some of those raistakes if I had participated in a comprehensive pre-marital preparation program within a formalized institution.

Validating the Theoretical Schema

The method for checking the validity of a theoretical scheme in qualitative research I implemented in this study was the one suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998). It is a method that requires the researcher to develop a summary or storyline of the theoretical scheme and then compare the storyline against the raw data to check whether they match. If the story explains most of the data, then there is a good fit, and the theoretical scheme is valid. The storyline for this study may be delineated as follows:

The custodial parents who participated in this study had a shared story of resilience and triumph in remarriage over the tragedy of divorce. They achieved this triumph by learning from their past mistakes, and more importantly by learning the meaning of committed love and its demands. Applying that love to their relationships with themselves, their children, ex-spouses, ex-in-laws, current spouses, current in-laws, and stepchildren helped them to establish and maintain stable and satisfactory second marriages.

The result of a checking this storyline against the data for the present study showed a good fit pointing to a valid theoretical scheme.
Preliminary Theoretical Statement and Hypothesis

One of the primary goals of this study was theory development. To this end the preliminary theory may be stated as follows:

A custodial parent's perceptions of the application of a multidimensional view of love and integral maturity to the process of remarriage significantly influences his or her perceptions of the success of the remarriage as well as the survivability of the remarriage.

Given this theoretical statement, the following exploratory hypothesis was developed:

The more the custodial parent perceives that he or she has/is applying a multidimensional view of love and integral maturity to the remarriage process, the more likely the remarriage will survive, and the more likely it will be perceived as successful by the custodial parent.

Future research may further refine the theory developed in this study as well as generate more hypotheses.
Chapter V
Discussion

This chapter focuses on the discussion of several areas in regard to factors influencing the remarriage stability and satisfaction of custodial parents. The main areas of interest include the interpretation of the results, a discussion of the grounded theory developed in the previous chapter, a comparison between the research findings in this study and previous literature, a reflection upon my experiences throughout the research process, the limitations of this study, the clinical implications of this study, and recommendations for future research.

Figure 4 in the previous chapter was to facilitate the reader's visualization of the nine primary factors (including the central one) and eight secondary factors, all of which constitute the components of the theory developed. The same figure may serve as an outline of the responses to the research question I stated in the first chapter. The discussion about how to apply the grounded theory that was developed is limited to the data that were provided by the participants, as this new theory is still subject to further empirical research before it can be considered definitive.

Interpretation of the Developed Grounded Theory in Light of the Participants' Data

Based on the data I received from the participants, the theory developed may be conceptualized within the following subdivisions:

1. The contexts of the participants in light of their demographics and other variables
2. The central theme and its relationship to the primary and secondary factors
3. Brief discussion of each primary factor
4. Brief discussion of each secondary factor

Discussion of the Participants' Demographics and Other Variables
Before discussing the identified primary and secondary factors for both remarriage stability and satisfaction, it is important to articulate the participants' demographics and variables, because they seem to facilitate the conceptualization and contextualization of the grounded theory that was developed. These include the participants' age range and age differences at first and second marriages, factors contributing to their first divorces, gender differences, cultural backgrounds, religious backgrounds, the impact of their residential neighborhoods, levels of formal education, their overall levels of resilience and differentiation of self. Secondly, in the following discussion I will draw on some of the participants' quotations and/or my dialogues with them to emphasize some of the points that I believe need to be elaborated upon.

Age range and age differences at first and second marriages. The participants' chronological age range was 45 to 70 years. They were all very generous in sharing their stories, which seemed to be the fruits of long-term experiences, and their responses reflected a broad knowledge base. I think most of their resourceful contributions were based on each participant's life experiences and the wisdom that comes only with age. I realized that their input and feedback were far more advanced in comparison to the knowledge that I have acquired through formal education about remarriage.

A typical example of such experience-based wisdom was communicated to me in a post-interview discussion with Abraham, a 70-year-old participant. Both Abraham and I had the following detailed discussion, in which I asked him to elaborate on his insightful observation:

Abraham: I have a Ph.D. in clinical psychology, but I have realized that there are some things that I could not easily learn from books in comparison to real-life experiences.

Joseph: May you give me an example of the things that you have learned through your life experience.

Abraham: After turning 70 years a month ago, I made a review of my life, and one of the things that struck me was the realization that every one of my resources had played a double role, as well as my constraints.

Joseph: Tell me about your realization that your resources have played a double role in your life.
Abraham: Since we [Abraham and Joseph] are talking about remarriage, let me take one example I have learned from my remarriage. One of my resources in remarriage is the ability to make right decisions, because I take time to think the pros and cons before I carry it out. The trade-off that my wife helped me to acknowledge was the dominion that I had over my first wife, and over my second wife, especially in the first 3 years of remarriage. My sense of always making the right decisions made me to think of myself as the sole decision-maker was exaggerated to the point of dictating things to my family members, wives, and co-workers. I give sincere thanks to my [second] wife who one day confronted me about the lack of consulting her before making the decisions regarding where to spend vacations. After that I felt humbled and regretted having excluded her, and especially my first wife, from many family decisions that I had taken without consulting them.

Joseph: Now, may you elaborate on how a specific constraint turned out to be a resource in your life.

Abraham: If constraints are looked at from a positive perspective, they can also be turned into instances of growth and positive change. For instance, one of my main struggles I experienced in my first marriage was the fear of being perceived as a failure as a result of divorce. On one hand, that fear helped me to maintain a stable marriage for 20 years, but I was unhappy till it reached a point when I could not bear any longer the pain of staying in my first marriage. The pain I experienced helped me to start thinking about other alternatives in life. The alternative I chose was to file for divorce. Afterwards, I met my [second] wife whom I adore and love to death. However, I would not have married her if I had not overcome my fear and pain that I suffered in my first marriage. So, you can now see how I turned my lemons into lemonade.

Factors contributing to the participants’ first divorce experiences. A brief exploration of the factors that contributed to the participants’ divorces was included in this study partly because the failure to identify and resolve the factors contributing to divorce in first marriages creates serious consequences in remarriage (Minuchin & Nichols, 1993). Two participants who remarried before resolving some of these issues reported their reenactments of the dynamics of their first marriages in their second marriages (Gansong & Coleman, 1989; Gottman, 1994b) until their second spouses confronted them.

Incongruent with the literature, which focused on the lack of communication as one of the principal causes of divorce (Berger, 1998; Gottman, Notarius, Gonso, & Markman, 1976), the participants frequently reported marital infidelity, prioritizing of work at the expense of marriage, domestic violence, incompatibility between spouses, money used as a power source to control
one’s partner, and lack of pre-marital preparation. Other contributing factors that were reported by the participants included unrealistic expectations about marriage and unrealistic idealization of one’s partner (especially during courtship), constant social pressures that create stress, lack of open communication and negotiation about money, use of drugs and alcohol addiction. These observations are consistent with the literature (Carter & McGoldrick, 1998; Gottman, 1994a; Kaslow, 1996; Rutter, 1998; Treadway, 1989).

Gender differences and similarities. Marked gender differences were noticed in recruiting participants, in the differential changes men and women experienced in their finances after divorce, in who became stepparents, in the length of time between divorce and remarriage, in the levels of formal education, in the levels of social support during and/or after divorce, and in their numbers highlighting each factor of the theory developed (chapter 4).

First, it was easier for me to recruit female participants for this study than it was to obtain males. A likely explanation for this difficulty may be that more women than men tend to be the custodial parents after divorce (Davidson, 2003). This possibility was supported by the fact that one of the criteria for this study was that all participants had to be custodial parents. Nevertheless, further studies are needed to explore why more females than male remarried parents manifested greater enthusiasm at the beginning of this study to volunteer to participate. However, every male and female individual who volunteered to participate in the study was very generous in sharing his or her personal information and in making significant suggestions for the study.

Gender differences were also noticed in regard to finances. In a special way, seven out of eight female participants reported that their finances dropped drastically, especially in the first 2 years after divorce and before remarriage. Seven out of eight male participants reported a significant increase in their finances. This observation is consistent with the literature (Cox, 2002; Kelley & Burg, 2006). All seven female participants whose finances dropped remained with all the caregiving responsibilities of their children, and they were not well-supported financially by their ex-husbands (Ahrons, 2004; Davidson, 2003). The eighth female, who reported that her
finances improved, was the primary breadwinner in the family before the divorce and had a profession that she continued with after divorce.

The seven males whose finances improved were those who had been the sole breadwinners in their previous marriages. The eighth male participant attributed the drop in his finances to losing his job during the proceedings of a bitter divorce with his ex-wife. Female participants reported getting more social support than males. This may also have contributed to the longer period most of the women spent before remarrying than did the men, whose self-reported loneliness was more frequent than that of women. More divorced males spend shorter lengths of time between divorce and remarriage than divorced females (Figures 2 & 3). This observation was supported by the existing literature (Baum, 2003; Kelley & Burg, 2000; Lofas & Sova, 1985; Reis et al., 1985).

In elaborating on finances as a primary factor within the theory developed, both males and females reported that each couple is unique in regard to opening bank accounts. However, they suggested that clinicians and financial advisers should help to understand the three alternative models of how to handle finances in remarriage (joint account, independent account, or joint and independent), so that the partners can be able to consciously choose the best model for them. In general, the male and female participants who had joint accounts with their partners seemed to be more trusting of their partners and seemed to have almost similar spending habits as their partners, and more open communications about money, investments, retirement plans in comparison to those who had independent or joint and separate accounts.

Gender differences were also noticed in relation to being a stepparent. Seven female participants had children from a first marriage and were married to men without children. On the other hand, four male participants had children from a first marriage and were remarried to women with children. In this sample, there were more men who were stepfathers than women who were stepmothers, and this observation was also congruent with the literature about stepfamilies (Kelley, 1995; Kelley & Burg, 2000). A possible explanation for this is that more
women than men have been granted the custody of their children. Thus, if they decide to remarry, their husbands become stepparents to their children. Both male and female participants seemed to be collaborative with their partners in the parenting of each participant’s child(ren) from the first marriage.

An overall view of the differences and similarities in regard to how the male and female participants’ experiences of the model developed in this study seemed to be a shared vision with minor differences. As indicated in the preliminary theoretical statement and hypothesis at the end of chapter 4, all the participants (eight males and eight females) perceived the application of a multidimensional view of committed love and integral maturity as the foundation and constant point of reference for the satisfaction and stability of their remarriages.

Minor gender differences may be found in each factor of the model developed in chapter 4. For instance, in regard to the motivations for remarriage, more males than females reported that they remarried in order to have a companion who would be helpful in overcoming intense feelings of loneliness. The males had less social support after divorce than most of female participants, and this observation is consistent with the literature (Baum, 2003; Ganong & Coleman, 1989; James & Johnson, 2001).

Cultural backgrounds and differences. Although I tried my best to obtain participants from different cultural backgrounds throughout the State of New Jersey, the volunteers who finally participated were mostly of European descent (10), two were African Americans, and four were Latinos from different parts of South America. All of them were either first, second, or third generation immigrants to the United States, and had spent at least 8 years in the State of New Jersey. Given their diversity in terms of all their demographics, each one of them made a significant contribution to the study. However, I failed to engage participants of Asian and Australian descent. Therefore, further studies are needed to explore their cultural inputs to such a study.
Religious backgrounds. In regard to the participants' religious backgrounds, 11 out of 16 identified themselves as members of the Roman Catholic Church. The remaining participants belonged to the following denominations: Pentecostal (1), Quaker (1), and Episcopal (1). Two participants said that they do not belong to any formalized religious denomination, but expressed their profound belief in a Supernatural Being that they referred to as God. One participant had converted to membership in the Catholic Church from the Baptist Church after remarriage to a Catholic partner.

All 10 participants who had been raised as Catholics had celebrated their first marriages within the Catholic Church. During the interviews, they all expressed their pain as they struggled to obtain annulments of their first marriages. Four of them reported their frustration and failure to get their annulments before they remarried, and decided to get married in other religious denominations. Because the greatest number of participants was of Catholics, and all of them expressed painful experiences and rejection from their church leaders, it seems that their experiences had been affected by the church ministers who did not recognize their divorce.

I was surprised to hear one of the non-Catholic participants reacting with emotion as to why the Catholic Church lawmakers had made it so difficult for divorced Catholics to remarry in the church.

Godfrey: I have read the same Bible that Catholics read and I have found in it that the only sin that cannot be forgiven is the sin against the Holy Spirit. So, even if divorce may be a sin according to the Catholic-Church teachings, it can be forgiven. So, do the Catholic officials use a more Bible-centered theology, so that they can stop punishing and excluding the divorced and remarried Catholics? My second wife was Catholic, and she decided to get remarried with me in my church because she did not like to be perceived in her church as a sinner, and go church on Sunday without being allowed to receive the Eucharist. Joseph, I encourage you to do some study about theology, and you will realize that God does not blame people who divorce and/or remarry. I am not a Catholic, neither a religious minister, but think that the Catholic Church leaders should make some changes in their attitudes, Church laws, and traditions in order to offer better pastoral care to divorced and remarried Catholics.
Based on these concerns and suggestions expressed by Godfrey (also shared by Adams, 1980) and the difficulties that the Catholic participants experienced in the Catholic Church after divorce (as indicated in chapter 4 of this study), I want to clarify that, since the first marriage is often well-celebrated in the Catholic Church, so the second needs to be highlighted and supported, too. As a matter of fact, some Catholic officials have started to make statements that may one day lead to a significant change that will benefit many divorced and remarried individuals in the Catholic Church (Himes & Coriden, 1996).

Reported impact of the participants’ residential neighborhoods. Eight participants reported that their residential neighborhoods were having an impact in one way or another on their marital stability and satisfaction. When asked by the researcher about his experience of remarriage stability and satisfaction in a suburban neighborhood, Elias stated that, although the suburbs have most of the resources (e.g., excellent schools, swimming pools, shopping malls, and other facilities), they are also have the potential to influence financial competition among the residents.

Such competitiveness creates a lot of stress on many marriages, and many marriages break up in the suburbs because they cannot keep up with the demands of higher standards of living. I did not find any literature in support or not about this observation. It needs further studies. Elias, however, attributed the survival of his marriage in a suburban neighborhood partly to the joint decision he has made with his wife to stop competing and to teach his children about the need to be satisfied with what they have.

Levels of formal education. Before elaborating on the formal education of the participants, it is important to keep in mind the social context in which most of the participants were raised (late 1930s to 1980s) encouraged more males than females to go for higher education. In light of the same trend, this may explain why seven female participants entered their first marriage before completing college (Figure 2).
One of the female participants completed college education after divorce, and another earned her post-masters, also after divorce. Four female participants took on two jobs after divorce, started earning money, and opened personal bank accounts—opportunities that they did not have in their first marriages. Eventually, when the women started working and/or remarried, their finances improved. As they earned more funds, some went to school to complete college and/or pursued professional studies.

Two of the male participants held Ph. Ds, another was working on the completion of his Ph. D. in clinical psychology, and the other five males had completed college (Figure 3). I admit that I did not probe the participants about the impacts of their formal educations on their marital experiences. In this study, only one participant (Fred) mentioned (without being asked) that his academic friends stopped coming to his home for academic conversations because his wife was always excluded from those conversations, and that had started to affect the couple’s relationships. Therefore, further studies may be needed to explore the impact partners’ levels of formal education have on their remarriage stability and satisfaction.

*Brief Discussion of the Central Theme and its Relationship to the Other Themes*

Based on the results of the study (as indicated in the previous chapter), committed love was identified as the central theme; it comes from integral maturity, and all the other factors were attached and interrelated to it (Figure 4). As I will elaborate later, the committed love that springs from maturity is consistent with Bowenian theory (Kerr & Bowen 1988) in regard to the differentiation of self. It is important to note that in addition to the theme of committed love as being the central theme among the primary and secondary factors, the stories of all participants implicitly included the notion of resilience.

The practice of resilience was intertwined with the theme of committed love in all the factors identified in the grounded theory of remarriage stability and satisfaction. Beatrice, as well as other six participants, described the love that contributes to remarriage success as an act that
involves self-sacrifice, perseverance, endurance, making tough choices and decisions, as well as daily dying to one’s own selfish ambition.

Overall observations about the participants’ resilience. Although only one participant (Hilda) used the word “resilience,” all the other participants used different phrases to describe the same concept. All of them, including Hilda, spoke about what had helped them to recover from the wounds of divorce and its painful repercussions as they worked toward the establishment of their remarriage stability and satisfaction. Their expressions of resilience were congruent with Walsh’s (1998) description of resilience. The participants identified some of the interpersonal processes and learned coping skills that enabled them to make meaning of their adversities and how they handled effectively the divorce, post-divorce, and remarriage challenges.

During the course of remarriage, the participants also developed conflict resolution that helped them to express their points of view and communicate better with their second spouses than they used to do with their former spouses. Others managed to reconnect and reconcile with the ex-spouses. All of them managed to adapt themselves to the changes that come about with divorce, single-parenting and remarriage, stepparenting, and learned to establish clear boundaries with their multiple extended family members. One of the main belief systems or the “heart and soul of resilience” (Walsh, 1998) that 15 participants manifested throughout the interviews was their belief in the success of their second marriages. Only one participant expressed concerns about the future of his remarriage, but he seemed determined to make it work.

Some of the phrases that the participants used in expressing their resilience include the following.

Grace: Based on personal experience, I have realized that remarriage is not easy. It is not an event, and it is not about how colorful the wedding was or not. My remarriage has been a process of hard work; a job to be done daily and it is an unfinished business. I will do whatever it takes to make it succeed.
Felicia said, "Since my divorce process started, I do not know how I have reached where I am today. I do not even know where I got the energy and courage to overcome all the obstacles in my married life."

Charles: Now, I am to able function normally because I have learned to withstand the pressure from my ex-wife and my three daughters. Ever since we divorced, my ex-wife has used these three children to mess up my second marriage, but I have managed to resist them, and I am happy that my son has not joined his sisters and mother, because he is on my side.

Irrespective of the hardships that Charles had experienced in his second marriage because of his first wife's intrusion and tension with his three children, Charles stated, "I have made a commitment to my wife for life. If it ever happens, she will be the only one to walk away from me, but I will never walk away from her."

Charles stated that, although he grew up in a very poor family, he now enjoys a very luxurious life, in a suburban neighborhood, with a comfortable family annual income of over $130 thousand. In retrospect, Charles clarified that growing up in a poor family helped him to learn that there are some experiences that money cannot buy (e.g., friendship, love, and faith in God), and he still cherishes these experiences very highly.

Beatrice: Some inner strength within has helped me to survive my divorce and all the financial challenges I went through as a single mother while struggling to support my five children and myself. Now, I am happy because my second marriage is stable, and my second husband is very supportive of my children.

Those eight participants' experiences and the literature reviewed in chapter 2 of this study concurred in affirming that remarriage is difficult and that there are more re-divorces than first divorces in the United States (McGoldrick & Carter, 1998; Nichols, 1996; Rutter, 1998). Likewise, based on the programs I have watched on public television channels, I am inclined to affirm the participants' experiences that there is more publicity in the media about the remarriages that fail than about those that succeed. Yet, there are successful remarriages of couples who do work through the challenges of remarriage, as evidenced by the participants in this study.
The same eight participants suggested that there is a greater need for church ministers and other professionals to reinforce hope rather than pessimism about remarriage success. Fred mentioned implicitly the theme of resilience while referring to the challenges that were surrounding his remarriage during the time of the interview for this study. He and his wife were going through a very difficult life, and Fred was concerned about the future of his remarriage.

Joseph: “What is helping you to stay in your remarriage?”

Fred: “Stick-to-it-ness.”

Joseph: “May you clarify please by what you mean by this terminology.”

Fred: By stick-to-it-ness, I am referring to my inner resources that are keeping me hopeful, persistent, and persevering for the sake of my child whom I had with my second wife. [Additionally, Fred said:] Yes, some people marry, divorce, remarry, and may re-divorce or stay in their second marriages. The problem is we hear very little about successful remarried couples. That is why we should not limit ourselves to the statistics of remarriages that end in divorce. There are many others that flourish, but they are not mentioned in the media.

**Brief Discussions of Each Primary Factor**

**Integral maturity.** In an effort to establish a sense of priority amongst all the factors identified as influencing remarriage stability and satisfaction, I realized from the research results (chapter 4) that all the participants described committed love as possible because of each partner’s integral maturity. In metaphorical terms, as sunlight is important to chlorophyll during photosynthesis, so is integral love important to committed love for remarriage stability and satisfaction.

Two weeks after completing the first draft of chapter 4, I started wondering why the participants gave integral maturity more priority than other themes like communication and finances. A week later, while driving, I had an insight that I wrote about in my reflective journal. Corbin and Strauss (1998), whose methodology I used in this study, also wrote about those ideas which came to the researcher’s mind even in the middle of any activity, at any given time, and
place. The following paragraph is a quotation from my journal, and I believe it may be a useful hypothesis as to why all the participants prioritized integral maturity over other factors in relation to the grounded theory that was developed.

Joseph: Although I consider communication to be an important factor, it seems that in remarriage settings, maturity supersedes communication probably because the maturity with which one communicates matters a lot, and it influences the decisions he or she makes, and the commitment to carry them out, thereby, assuming responsibility for his or her actions.

It seems that the communication that reinforces remarriage stability and satisfaction is not a matter of communicating or dialogueing about any topic, at any time, in any place, with any other person, but communication that is geared at building relationships, solving problems, and communicating naturally instead of a mere venting of one's emotions without due consideration for the recipient(s) of the communication.

The same rationale could be applied to the other primary and secondary factors that were identified. A typical example is in reference to maturity and finances in remarriage. Based on the collected data, 10 participants stated that intelligent decisions have to be made before spending the money, and other decisions that go along with money (e.g., deciding whether to have a joint account or separate accounts).

As I reviewed the transcripts over and over, I realized from all the data that whenever the participants applied maturity to remarriage stability and satisfaction, most of them were describing it as a fruit of perseverance, earned through hard work and through overcoming hardships. Six participants spoke of maturity as the ability that had helped them to maintain self-control in emotionally charged moments in their remarriages.

At the time of the interview, all the participants seemed to have what Kerr and Bowen (1988) referred to as a high "differentiation of self." They expressed themselves with clarity of feelings and thoughts, yet, while listening to their stories about their first marriages, they seemed to have been in these earlier marriages more driven by their emotions (e.g., love perceived as being one's needs or limited to romance) than a balance of thought and feelings. Based on what I
have learned from all the participants, I have realized that remarriage stability and satisfaction appear to require individuals with an above-average level of differentiation of self.

Analyzing how the participants presented the details about their first marriages, I think that most of them had earlier differentiation of self that was below average. It seems that each participant's acquired higher differentiation of self may have played a significant role in positively influencing his or her remarriage stability and satisfaction.

In elaborating on the importance of hardships and maturity, Fred highlighted: "Whatever does not kill you makes you to grow." I realized from the participants' descriptions that however tough their divorce process and its consequences were for most of them, all the participants reported having grown in one way or another through their divorces. Examples of related areas of growth included forgiveness, compassion, patience, and ability to take risks, as well as self-improvement through education, spiritual growth, and the courage to seek help. I was impressed to learn from the participants that maturity is a core trait in remarriage stability and satisfaction because it helps the individual to be in control of his or her life, to make coherent decisions, and to assume responsibility for his or her actions.

Finances. I realized that every participant presented a story that was quite unique as to how couples handle money. Because each couple seems unique in regard to finances, I think professionals should help each couple to decide how to handle their money. I realized from the interviews that participants who had joint accounts with their spouses reported more trust their partners, but that joint accounts were not the ideal for all participants. Other participants were using both joint and separate accounts, while some had completely separate accounts from their spouses. Such account arrangements were congruent with Kelley and Burg's (2000) observations with remarried couples.

Based on personal experience in her first marriage, one participant emphatically warned partners preparing for marriage, whether in a first or second marriage, to be very careful about the
use of credit cards. Grace highlighted that "partners have to train themselves to use the money that they have, live within their means, and think economically."

**Collaborative parenting.** During the interview, Elias acknowledged that he accepts part of the responsibility for the end of his first marriage. He added that he has become aware of his own faults and that maturity is a process that one goes through by learning from his or her mistakes.

Elias also clarified that his father was a child of divorce, and his father used to relate to him the pain he suffered after the divorce of his parents. This trend of divorce and children suffering the consequences of their parents' divorces continued when Elias' parents also divorced. In that case, Elias experienced a lot of pain as he witnessed the bitter divorce of his parents. (Evers-Weathersley, 1996).

According to Elias, the lesson he learned from this series of divorces and the pain suffered by the children had helped him in making the decision to do whatever was within his powers to protect his children from suffering the consequences of his divorce. Consequently, Elias suggested that every remarried parent, after a first divorce, should make an effort not to subject his or her children to a second divorce, because "divorce pain the children."

The research results from Wallerstein and Blakeslee's (1989) longitudinal study were congruent with Elias' perception of the impact of divorce on children. Moreover, in Atron's (2004) later study, children of divorced parents were reported to have overcome the negative impact of their parents' divorce and to have become resilient and functional in life.

**Sexuality.** Seven participants reported having engaged in sexual liaisons during the divorce process while experiencing moments of high anxiety. As I listened to the participants' stories while elaborating on their loneliness after divorce, I realized that their stories included themes of anxiety and anger toward their ex-spouses, especially the stories of those who reported being involved with multiple partners after divorce, and those who started cohabiting with their partners before remarriage. This was congruent with the literature that reported individuals
experiencing intense emotions of anxiety, frustration, anger, and/or hatred were more likely to experience intense feelings of sexual attraction (Cox, 2002; Dibson & Aron, 1999).

Aging was another factor that 10 participants expressed as a one of the factors hindering their remarriage satisfaction. They reported that aging had negatively affected their frequencies of sexual expressiveness because of the reduced physical energy in their weakening bodies. These observations were congruent with the literature (Kelley & Barg, 2000). However, I was impressed by the concrete examples that the participants had designed to keep sexuality alive. A typical example of such interventions included establishing a ritual or routine for couple time, and/or going periodically to different places for honeymoon-like experiences to rejuvenate their remarriage experiences.

Knowledge of the complexity of remarriage. Eight participants (four men and four women) highlighted that, in order to reinforce remarriage stability and satisfaction, it is important to know the factors that influence remarriage instability and unhappiness. Elaborating on re-divorce prevention, Bernardo observed:

Bernardo: One of the main reasons why my first divorce occurred was because my first wife and I contracted a marriage that did not have a good foundation. We married young because my girlfriend was pregnant. She wanted to get out of the house, and our marriage was just focused on the business of raising children. She [Rose] became pregnant, we claimed to have loved one another, and we wanted to go forward, anyway.

Joseph: In addition to pregnancy, what else motivated both of you to marry?

Bernardo: Each of us wanted to get out of our homes and go to our own home that we thought would be better, “the grass is greener” [on the other side]. Something like that. Therefore, based on the lessons I learned from my first marriage and from the re-divorces of my loved ones, I think re-divorces could also be reduced if every remarriage begins on a good foundation.

Elaborating on the notion of a good remarriage foundation, various participants identified the following factors as effective because they had used them and/or they had proven effective for them significant others. Seven participants mentioned the absence of utilized and continuous aggressive behaviors from the ex-spouse. Five participants spoke about the partners’
responsibilities to become more aware of and to avoid repeating the factors that contributed to the first divorce. Four participants mentioned the need for the remarrying parents to work toward considering and resolving the parts they played in the first divorces.

In order to prevent the risk of re-divorce, 14 participants emphasized that remarried couples should try individually and as a couple to avoid all the conditions that could lead one or both spouses to extramarital sex. Marital infidelity was reported by 14 participants to be one of the most significant factors contributing to remarriage instability and unhappiness. An honest act of introspection inspired Bernardo to reveal:

Bernardo: I acknowledge that I share part of the blame in my first wife's extramarital affair because I have left her on her own. I had separated myself emotionally from her as I was so much immersed in my work. However, whatever the case, the truth is that I cannot tolerate a wife who cheats on me.

By making use of a metaphor of owning a new motor vehicle, Elias, a mechanic by profession, said it is not enough to for remarrying parents to focus exclusively on the factors that contributed to establishing a good foundation for remarriage. He clarified:

Elias: Focusing on the factors for a good remarriage foundation is like having a new Toyota car. For the first few years, you drive your Toyota without the need for immediate servicing. However, for the proper functioning of that car, it has to be serviced every now and then.

Joseph: What is your interpretation of the parts that wear out and need to be replaced?

Elias: Almost the same thing happens to remarriage. In order to keep it stable and a source of happiness for the spouses involved and their significant others, the spouses have to keep working on their remarriage, and that work never stops. The parts of the car that wear out and need to be replaced may represent the changes that the spouses have to make in their lives and the adaptations they have to make as they go through the different transitions of their remarriage cycle.

Joseph: May you give some examples of such changes and transitions.

Elias: In a special way, this refers to when their children leave home for college, get married, move to other states, a new grandchild is born, when one of them retires (or both of them), or changes a career, or when death occurs in the family. All these changes and adjustments can radically affect the stability and happiness of a remarriage even if it had a good foundation,
Communication. In congruence with the literature, the participants expressed the need for a validating and interactive process in contrast to avoidant and volatile communication (Burleson & Denton, 1997; Gottman, 1994b; Johnson & Greenberg, 1994). Communication is one of the most important ingredients of marital success (Gottman, 1994a; Kiara, 2004; LeBey, 2004; Nichols, 1996). The participants identified communication as one of the primary factors of remarriage stability and satisfaction.

According to Yalom (1985), communication is an on-going process in relationships because people keep communicating (Kiara, 2004). Likewise, five participants who reported that they were still angry at their ex-spouses said that even if they tried their best to avoid face-to-face interactions with their ex-spouses, the efforts they were making to maintain the silence had become for them like another means of keeping the communication in place with ex-spouses. In light of this, I think that divorced parents contemplating remarriage, and those who are already in remarriages should be aware of their constant communication with their significant others, with special regard to the risk of prolonged silences, especially if there are on-going conflicts and cutoffs within their family systems (Papernow, 1998).

In order to reinforce communication between remarried spouses, and/or significant others, they need to know some of the major skills of effective communication, and to be able to express themselves to their partners in at least one language. Additionally, it is important to highlight Charles’ emphasis and perception of good communication that includes “every spouse’s willingness to be a good listener and ability to learn how to communicate effectively, honestly, constructively, timely, in an appropriate space, in the right manner, with empathy and reduced risk of jumping to conclusions.” These observations are also emphasized in the literature about marital communication (Gottman et al., 1976; Kiara, 2004; LeBey, 2004).

Spirituality. In congruence with Adam’s (1989), Kiara’s (2004), and Walsh’s (1998) reflections on spirituality and marital life, all the participants mentioned that spirituality was a very significant factor influencing in their remarriage stability and satisfaction. I was surprised as
I heard two participants clarify that, even if they did not belong to any formalized religion, spirituality was one of the greatest sources of empowerment in their remarriages.

Based on the inputs of the other participants who identified their religiousness as resources contributing to spirituality, and the inputs of those two others, I realized that spirituality and religion are not mutually exclusive (Miller, 1999). Marital spirituality seemed to go beyond the boundaries and norms within the participants' religions.

The central message I learned from all the participants derived from the descriptions of their remarriages as a covenant or bond with a Supernatural Power (whom they identified as God). I admired how the participants were doing their best to integrate some of their experiences of the characteristics they attributed to God into their remarriages and relationships with their significant others. Two typical expressions of spirituality that were mentioned by a female and a male participant, included the following.

Grace: I believe in a God of love, forgiveness, and who wants us to love our neighbors, and to forgive those who have offended us. Inspired by this belief, I forgave my ex-husband.

Godfrey: One of the reasons I remarried was because God said in the Bible that it is not good for man to be alone. So, after my divorce, I did not want to stay alone.

Based on these observations and quotations, it is important for marital therapists to recognize these participants’ opinions as resources and integrate them into the therapy process.

Elaborating on marital spirituality, Kiuru (2004) noted:

Marriage is a relationship of love... The spirituality of marriage will therefore be as good as the personal spirituality of the individual spouses... The first neighbor is a marriage relationship is one’s spouse... It is impossible to love God without loving the neighbor... Basic spirituality for a married couple consists in loving God through each other in the hustle and bustle of daily life. This includes forgiving each other here and now for past failures and mistakes... [God] ending each day by praying together and reading the Scripture. This will provide the couple with resources to handle their human problems with greater insight and understanding. (pp. 82 – 83)
Professional help. Before identifying the needed professionals for remarriage services, I would like to remind the reader about the phrase “remarriage triad” that I described in the first chapter of this study.

Given the unique needs and challenges of remarrying and remarried parents, together with their significant others (Abrons, 2004; LeBey, 2004), I think that some of the professionals that may bring about a positive impact within the remarriage triangle include the clergy, marriage and family therapists, financial advisers, social workers, psychologists, divorce mediators, remarriage counselors, psychiatrists, and medical personnel (Vallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989).

Because partners tend to idealize one another during courtship (McGoldrick & Carter, 1998), I agree with Dora (one of the participants), who suggested that professionals should discern the right moment during the remarriage preparation phase to ask the partners some hypothetical questions to help them think more realistically than idealistically. According to Dora, professionals need to act like the devil’s advocate by asking questions based on real-life experiences and applying them to the partners’ lives. A typical example of such questions that Dora highlighted was the “What if...question?” For instance, what if one should become ill and be unable to work? What if one’s children should not accept his or her partner? What if one of you should get involved in an extramarital affair?

The professional may formulate other questions to help the partners become more reflective about the responsibilities ahead of them after the wedding. For example, engaged partners who are more invested in the remarriage wedding events than the remarriage itself may be asked by a remarriage facilitator at the wedding. What is the difference between a wedding and a remarriage? Just as with the partners say: A wedding is for one day but they are intending to start together until death do them part, then the remarriage facilitator may ask them: Apart from the wedding preparations, what are the benefits of preparing for remarriage? I think that by means of such questions, that is, hypothetical and reality-testing questions, the partners may start to think seriously about the complex responsibilities and remarriage commitments ahead of them.
Brief Discussion of Each Secondary Factor

Marital history. Based on the experiences of the participants, I realized that some remarried spouses ran the risk of transference (Nichols, 1996) thereby projecting their negative experiences with the former spouse onto the current spouse. For instance, if a former spouse was involved in an extramarital affair, a spouse may become suspicious of the current marital partner’s interactions with people of the opposite gender for fear of his or her being unfaithful. This situation may gravitate into the spouse’s developing an over-controlling attitude toward the current spouse.

I was impressed to hear Hilda’s narrative of how she overcame her transference issues with her second husband, a situation that almost contributed to the ruin of her second marriage. The following dialogue between Hilda and me helped me to get a clear sense of how previous marital experiences can negatively reinforce transference in a remarriage:

Hilda: My first husband was physically and verbally abusive to me. I developed a lot of fear toward him. It even reached a point where the mere sight of him made me become very anxious and lose track of whatever I was doing. Unfortunately, when my second husband and I got married, whenever he made a comment about something that I had done wrong or had forgotten to do, then I would withdraw from him, be silent for a day or two. This was because I imagined that, if I would respond to him, he would become more verbally and physically abusive to me, and about at my son as my first husband used to do. I recall a particular instance when I kept silence for almost 3 days without saying a word to him. That happened after he told me about his discomfort on the pretext that I had consulted my gyn. instead of him, about which restaurant we would go to for dinner. I was so terrified that was going to become a big issue and probably lead us to separation.

Joseph: So, how have the two of you resolved that?

Hilda: On that same day, I decided to ask pardon from my husband and explained to him how my ex-husband used to beat me and shout at my son whenever we had an argument. So, my second husband, with a smile on his face, and with a great sense of humor said “I am not your ex.” He then gave me a big kiss, and we started talking again.

Joseph: Did you have other arguments after that? If so, how did your react to him afterwards?

Hilda: Of course, yes. I am sure it is not uncommon to disagree once in a while for people who love and care about one another. Ever since, whenever my
husband sees me withdrawing from him, he says “I am not going to do you harm. I am [mentioned his name] not [mentioned her ex-spouses' name].” Then, the two of us start laughing and hug one another.

In addition to overcoming the risks of transference in remarriage, I realized that by the time of the interviews, all the participants had learned significant lessons from their past marital mistakes in both the first and second marriages. For instance, the participants who entered their first marriages thinking that they were in love acknowledged during the interviews, that they were not motivated by love per se when they entered their first marriages. They had other motives other than the love that binds the spouses together. Catherine said that she no longer believed in the adage that “love is blind” because marrying for the wrong reasons is what makes people to perceive love as blind.

Based on the lessons learned from past marital mistakes, Catherine and the other six participants suggested that divorced parents should avoid the risk of marrying for the wrong reasons. For instance, sole interest of sexual expressiveness, begetting children and/or alimony, because the female partner is pregnant, impatience - claiming that it is time, too late to get married, extreme impulsivity or other's uncomfortable living alone, want to get out of one's parent's house or escape a bad marriage, or as Fred (an African American participant) said, he married a Caucasian woman because he wanted to experiment with a person of another race.

I was impressed to hear seven participants suggesting to divorced parents contemplating remarriage to make the best use of the time between the end of the first marriage and before the second marriage. Based on their retrospective experiences, those participants said that although they had not adequately utilized that duration constructively before they remarried, they considered it a golden opportunity for healing from the wounds of divorce, going for further education, introspection, spiritual growth, purifying one's motivations for remarriage, start doing with a lot of prudence, and comprehensive preparation for remarriage with the help of competent professionals in providing remarriage services.
Motivations for remarriage. Interviewing the participants about what motivated them to remarry seemed to be one of the most difficult areas to respond spontaneously and immediately to the following question: “What motivated you to remarry?” Six participants acknowledged that they entered their second marriages with many unrealistic expectations.

Based on the participants’ input, one of the greatest lessons I learned from them is that the family environment in which children are raised and one’s previous marital experiences are likely to have an effect on their future marital decisions and motivations for remarriage life. A typical example was that of Dora. She was raised in a stepfamily, and she spoke about her stepmother with a lot of resentment. Dora suffered the pain of growing up lonely “because I had no family member to identify with.” As a teenager Dora had a friend who introduced her to a young man. Dora added: “Although I did not love that young man, I decided to get married with him in order to escape my stepmother and my never available father.”

Looking back, Dora regretted her marital relationship with that man (Jorge). Speaking about her marriage to Jorge, she described Jorge as “very dominating.” Above all, Dora expressed her feelings of resentment related to her first sexual experience and one of the main motivations for her remarriage as follows.

Dora: I had never slept with any man until I was 20 years old. He [Jorge] forced me to have sex with him without my consent. See, [started shedding tears, then a brief silence, then added:] I lost my innocence, that is, my virginity with a man I did not love. Unfortunately, I had to give in to his demands for sex because by then he was the only one who would help me to escape from my stepmother. So, one of the main reasons that motivated me to get married with my second husband was because he did not have children. I didn’t want, and I still don’t want to be a stepmother to anybody’s child.

Dating. I learned from the participants that each divorced parent contemplating remarriage or involved in any romantic relationship should be extra-prudent and think thoroughly before dating. He or she should plan diligently how to verbally introduce his or her prospective spouse to the children in a non-threatening setting. Ahrons (2004) elaborated on the dangers
involved if dating parents do not take into account how their dating behaviors impact their children.

Based on my experiences and interactions with remarried parents, I think it is also important for dating parents to make the best use of the courtship period by risking to have detailed dialogues about sensitive topics in comparison to focusing on the idealization of their relationship (McGoldrick, 1998). Such sensitive topics may include discussions about money, children, and motivations for remarriage expectations, and marital compatibility.

Given the current advances in technology, dating on-line is also increasingly common. I make the same recommendations for those dating on-line with the goal of entering a second marriage, and I would also caution them to be extra careful because of the real life dangers attributed to on-line dating (Cyberide, 2005).

House rules and roles. I learned from the participants that house rules and roles are of paramount importance in remarriage settings. Three participants identified different house rules (bed-time for children) with a soft and firm tone of voice that helped me perceive rules as means of establishing order within the family, and thereby helping each other to live in harmony. Based on their descriptions of the need of house rules, I realized that establishing clear house rules and the attached consequences for not abiding by them was a means to greater freedom within the family system, dealing with the children, and for keeping clear boundaries with the ex-spouses in order to provide collaborative parenthood to the children.

The participants also helped to make a distinction between traditional gender rules and flexible gender rules. Based on their inputs, it seemed that rigid, traditional gender roles (e.g., men as the sole bread-winners and women as the sole nurturers in a home) were not well suited for people in remarriage settings. Instead, they recommended mutual collaboration in many roles. Typical examples of such mutual sharing of roles included for some of the participants having the same bank account (joint method), through which the two partners responded to the payment of the house bills and other expenses.
Another example was the move away from emphasizing the biological parent as the only person responsible for the parenting responsibilities over his or her children from the previous marriage. The participants mentioned that consulting their second spouses empowered them to become better parents, and they felt supported by the new spouse and more adult in their parenting role, especially those participants who did not have amicable relationships with their ex-spouses.

I was amazed by the wisdom within Henry's parenting style. He had arranged with his second wife that he would be the disciplinarian of his children from the first marriage, and his wife would be the one to reward them. He reported that this style had helped him to learn how to seek consultation from his second wife before disciplining his children. He felt supported by his second wife, put his wife into an active co-parenting role, and removed his wife from the position of being resented by his child and his ex-wife. Instead, she was well-respected as a stepmother without seeming to take away the mother-figure role from the children's biological mother, with whom the children have regular contact. The children like his wife very much because she reinforces their positive behavior by rewarding them.

Conflict resolution. The participants mentioned the likelihood of conflict and/or ongoing expressions of abuse (e.g., physical, emotional, or verbal) in remarriage triad settings. However, one of the main problems that was highlighted by the participants was the lack of knowing the skills for resolving conflict and the ability to put them into practice during the moment of conflict. Kiern (2004) observed: "Couples can injure each other in the vain attempt to resolve conflicts. When this happens matters become worse while the problem, precipitating the conflicts remains unresolved" (p. 39).

I was impressed to realize that the participants identified the couple's abilities to resolve conflicts as one of the factors influencing remarriage stability and satisfaction. Some of the skills that the participants recommended after having found them helpful in their remarriage included knowing how to channel anger constructively, discerning when to speak and when to keep one's
mouth that, being respectful of one another — even in the midst of strong differences of opinion, and the courage to deal with the problem in a timely fashion without attacking the other person or projecting all the blame onto oneself (LeBey, 2084).

Clear boundaries. Congruent with the literature, a very strong attachment with the ex-spouse can be quite dangerous (Ahrons, 2004). I think that very close boundaries may create a possible risk of becoming sexually intimate again while currently in a second marriage with another person. However, very distant and/or conflictive boundaries with the ex-spouse may not be in the best interests of the children, especially in cases of joint custody.

I think that it is important to establish clear boundaries and guidelines with one’s children so that they do not break a remarriage in the dream of getting a parent together with a former spouse. No wonder then that one of the participants with his adolescent and young adult children at the time of remarriage took a strong stand and told them that his second marriage comes first before them. In that way, he managed to create clear boundaries with them, and they avoided the interruption of his remarriage and triangulation with their mother (McGoldrick & Carter, 1998).

The same participant also suggested that other remarried parents should do as he did. However, although I admire his suggestion and German background as reflected in his strong personality, I am wondering whether all parents can manage to establish such rigid boundaries with their children. My guess is that parents of Italian, Jewish, or African American backgrounds, who tend to be quite attached to their children, may not find it very easy to exert such clear boundaries with their children as that participant managed to do (McGoldrick et al., 1990).

Cohabitation. Cohabitation, as a transitional step, had also been practiced by some of the participants, and it is documented in the existing literature. Unlike the findings of a study by Ganong and Coleman (1989), which indicated that most of the cohabiting partners who sought counseling ended up separating before remarriage or after remarriage, all the participants who expressed having cohabited before remarriage said that seeking counseling had helped them very much.
The participants encouraged divorced parents contemplating transitional cohabitation before remarriage to seek counseling before starting to cohabitate. In a similar vein, they might benefit from counseling by being helped to make realistic goals for cohabitation, thus start working toward the process of successful family blending (Altrons, 2004; Lelley, 2004).

Permanent sites for professional remarriage services. The participants highlighted that some of the workshops that professionals could offer in such sites would include those focused on how to help couples communicate better, to learn and practice problem-solving or conflict-resolution skills, to have open and mutual negotiation dialogues about finances, sexuality, parenting skills, setting clear boundaries with in-laws, attaining a level of acceptance that some aspects cannot be changed, and to stop attempting to change one another.

Based on the literature consulted, remarrying parents may be helped in such workshops to learn about how to maintain a significant level of shared spirituality and prayer time, to learn to forgive oneself and the other, to constantly recall the purpose(s) of their marriage, to learn to negotiate differences of opinion, and, wherever necessary, to join a support group and to seek professional help before the problems escalate (Altrons, 2004; Ganong & Coleman, 1989; Kerr & Bowen, 1988; O’Leary et al., 1988).

Other Factors

In addition to the primary and secondary factors mentioned in this chapter, different participants reported that there were specific factors that had contributed to their remarriage stability but not to their remarriage satisfaction or to their satisfaction but not to their stability. However, it is important to clarify that the responses that some of the participants specifically attributed to remarriage stability, were reported by the other participants as exclusively applicable to their remarriage satisfaction.

Although some of the reported specific facets for remarriage stability are similar to those for remarriage satisfaction, the differences were based in every participant’s perceptions of what
he or she had significantly influenced his or her remarriage stability or satisfaction. A possible explanation for these unique perceptions may be related to every participant’s personal needs, needs of his or her significant others, and achieved expectations for remarriage. The following factors were identified as exclusively contributing factors to remarriage stability.

Factors influencing remarriage stability. Two males and three female participants attributed marital stability to having a respectful partner (especially one who is not verbally, emotionally and/or physically abusive), having the right motivations for remarriage (e.g., focus upon realistic expectations about remarriage and the prospective spouse). Two other female participants mentioned marital compatibility, selection of the right partner, and a life commitment to one’s partner as exclusive factors to remarriage stability.

Three other males highlighted every partner’s level of integral maturity, temperament, high level of emotional stability, perseverance, and good attitude (e.g., loving, calming influence, easy going, kind, and/or optimistic) as influencing factors to remarriage stability. Four females identified the need for structure, flexibility with self and others, and the wisdom that is focused on knowing one’s position and roles in the marriage.

Two females and two males emphasized the need for each partner’s ability to handle and resolve conflicts with a balanced control of emotional outbursts and the importance of negotiating differences of opinions in order to arrive at mutually acceptable decisions. They added the need for keeping up with the lessons learned from one’s past mistakes that contributed the end of the first marriage (e.g., marital infidelity and over-focus on work at the expense of marriage and family life) in order to avoid the risk of making the same mistakes again.

One female participant reported that her remarriage stability had been highly influenced by her need for a co-parent and a real model for her children from the first marriage. Based on these “two benefits” which were provided by her second husband, she was resolved to stay remarried, especially for the benefit of her children. Two males and two female participants acknowledged the pains and losses suffered by the children as a result of parental conflict and
divorce. Consequently, they were resolved to stay in the second marriage, so that their children do not face the same fate again.

Given the scarcity of research studies focused on remarriage stability, further studies are needed to evaluate how the reported factors are congruent and/or incongruent with a broader range of people from diverse backgrounds and groups. More research studies and clinical cases have been reported in regard to marital stability in first marriages (Gottman, 1993) in comparison to second marriages.

Factors influencing remarriage satisfaction. Four males and two female participants attributed remarriage satisfaction to in-depth communication with second spouses, deeper perception of feeling respected by second spouses in comparison to the first ones, and harmonious relationships between their second spouses and biological children from the first marriages. Two other female participants highlighted the satisfaction they received from being actively involved in decision-making processes.

Two males and two female participants said that having peaceful and well-behaved biological and stepchildren had significantly contributed to remarriage satisfaction. Those children were described as keeping themselves out of trouble, collaborative with house chores, responsible with school-work, accepting of the stepparent, open to receive constructive criticism from the biological and stepparent, drug-free, know how to choose their friends, not sexually active (especially before finishing college), self-motivated, mentally healthy, physically and emotionally.

Four females and four male participants said that they choose the right partners, for their remarriages, who helped them to find satisfaction in their second marriages. In elaborating about choosing the right partners to remarry, these participants described a right marital partner as someone with whom he or she could trust, communicate with spontaneously, handle conflicts with, negotiate and resolve them maturely, is respectful, generous, outgoing, loving, mature,
friendly to his or her stepchildren, and spiritual. These observations are congruent with Cox's (2002) research findings.

Five females and four male participants reported that social support from trusted friends, humor with spouses, doing some household activities together with spouses (e.g., shopping), eating together with spouses, and relaxed moments of sexual intimacy with spouses were significant buffers for their remarriage satisfaction. Three females emphasized that acknowledgment of how second husbands related to them as equal partners helped them to feel happy and raised their levels of self-esteem. Some of the ways in which these participants perceived equal treatment from their husbands included each spouse's expressions of kindness, and generosity, involving their wives in the daily-decision making processes, as well as consistent and mutual respect for one another.

Four males and four female participants reported that learning to share and to appreciate what each partner brought and/or stated to bring to the remarriage relationship (e.g., material resources, personal talents, such as spirituality, conflict-resolution skills, optimism, parenting skills, and humor) had significantly contributed to remarriage satisfaction.

It is important to clarify that the identification of the specific factors that had contributed to the participants' remarriage stability and remarriage satisfaction indicated that some remarriages are stable, and yet the spouses are dissatisfied. In contrast, other spouses are satisfied, but their remarriages break up in less than 7 years. This observation is consistent with the literature findings and reviews already cited in the first and second chapters of this study (Abrons, 2004; Berger, 1958; Carter & McGoldrick, 1998; Gettman, 1994; Nichols, 1996; Sager, 1985).

Therefore, the above findings seem to indicate that a stable remarriage does not automatically equate to being a satisfactory one and vice-versa for each remarried partner. However, as Charles indicated, the factors that influenced his remarriage stability also reinforced his remarriage satisfaction.
Charles: Having a caring spouse has empowered me to stay longer in my remarriage [stability]. The more I stay with her, the happier I feel, and the more she continues to care for me, particularly when I am sick. I perceive her to be living by her vows because she loves me in good times and bad, and that brings a chain reaction of remarriage stability and satisfaction because now I feel more committed to than ever before [stability ↔ satisfaction].

Factor to consider for re-divorce prevention. In addition to the specifically reported factors for either remarriage stability or satisfaction, different participants said that remarrying and remarried parents should take into account the following factors in order to prevent risking their remarriages to another divorce. These factors included: Emotional and financial stress in raising a handicapped child (2 participants), domestic violence (2 participants), unpaid credit debts (5 participants), marital incompatibility (7 participants), marital infidelity (7 participants), jealousy (6 participants), partner's verbal and or physical abuse (7 participants), and over-prioritizing work at the expense of marital and family life (6 participants).

Discussion of the Research Findings within the Context of the Previous Literature

The main goal of this section is to evaluate how the results of this study are congruent or incongruent with the existing literature in related research studies. One of the areas of congruence the participants described was the adjustment process to remarriage. They said that it was not very easy for most of them, especially because it also involved their children and, for some, the children of their second spouses.

Kelley and Burg (2000) cautioned remarrying parents to prepare their biological children before they finalized their plans to remarry. Likewise, nine participants in this study suggested that, instead of rushing into remarriage, dating should begin with brief, get-acquainted visits before planning any significant time together (Black, 1998; Brehm 1992; Nichols, 1996).

The notion of resilience, as mentioned before in regards to the participants' experiences, was also congruent with the literature about successful remarriages and stepfamilies (Barlestone & Denton, 1997; Gottman, 1994b; Johnson & Greenberg, 1994). All the negotiators that spouses
have to make in regard to the different aspects of their remarriages involve the notion of resilience.

Examples of negotiation areas that were mentioned by the participants include dialogues about finances, sexuality, parenting, coparenting, setting clear boundaries with ex-spouses and in-laws (previous and current), overcoming the risk of attempting to change one another, maintaining a significant level of shared spirituality and prayer time, eating together, finding novelty within the routine activities, finding couple time, and learning to negotiate differences of opinion (Ahron, 2004; Ganong & Coleman, 1989; Kees & Bewen, 1988; O'Leary et al., 1998).

Congruent with the literature was also the practice of in-depth communication and the ability to resolve conflict (Gottman et al., 1976; Richmond, 1995; Russell-Chapin et al., 2001). The participants also expressed that they needed non-judgmental professionals and religious ministers in order feel comfortable, understood, and supported in their efforts to make their remarriages work. This trend of thought is reflected in the literature indicating that there is a need for a paradigm shift for practitioners working with custodial parents in remarriage situations that involves a consistent practice of empathic listening to clients (Fallicov, 1988; Ferch, 2001).

The adage: "Prevention is better than cure," was highlighted by the participants as a basis for offering pre-remarriage preparation workshops to divorced parents preparing for remarriage (e.g., in specified and permanent sites) in order to help them to learn about the complexity of remarriage before they enter into it and as a means of evaluating their motivations for remarriage. McGoldrick and Carter (1998) also highlighted the need for taking preventative measures in comparison to seeking professional help after the problems have escalated.

There was a convergence between the participants' data and the existing literature indicating that a stable and satisfactory remarriage requires a comprehensive pre-marital preparation. This preparation is particularly important if remarriage involves children. This is because remarried partners are more likely to face more challenges than first marriages if children are involved (Ahron, 2004; Cherlin, 1992; Lutz, 1983; MacDonal & DeMaris, 1993), especially
adolescents, because they are more capable of formulating their concerns and expressing their concerns than young children (Berger, 2000).

The research data in this study indicated results similar to the literature in regard to the complexity of remarriage (Kelley & Burg, 2002). Ten participants suggested that remarrying partners need to participate in pre-remarriage preparations so that they may learn how to resolve the different problems and issues that stepfamilies are likely to face and also to learn how to prevent some of the problems (Richmond, 1995; Sager, 1985).

Based on the descriptions of the participants of their remarriages, I realized that the dynamics within all the remarriages tried were not exactly the same. Typical examples of uniqueness included the ways in which the individuals within each triad mounted divorce, expressed their belief systems, and/or resolved conflicts. The same was true for unique ways in which the participants’ children adjust to their parents’ divorces and to their respective stepsiblings (Baum, 2003; Sager et al., 1983).

A Reflection on My Experiences During the Research Process

Throughout the entire research process, I kept a reflective journal in which I recorded my feelings, thoughts, personal biases, concerns, and reflections as I interacted with the participants. The following paragraphs are a summary of the general themes that I have selected from my reflective journal.

Understanding in Context the Final Cause Contributing to the First Divorce

During the interview process, one of the greatest challenges I faced was to learn how to overcome the risk of minimizing what five participants referred to as the “last blow” (final incident) that ultimately influenced them to opt for divorce. This was a challenge for me, because instead of limiting myself to listening to every participant with the intent of understanding how
his or her last blow influenced the option for divorce. I had run into the risk of judging the participants’ last blows as insufficient justifications for divorce.

As I listened to the third participant and invited her to elaborate on why her last blow was so important in her decision to file for divorce, I realized that, before the last blow, the participant’s previous marriage had gone through a number of crises, issues of domestic violence, power struggles about money, and the ex-spouse’s extramarital affair with a family friend. Five participants used the word “last,” meaning there had been previous incidents that had negatively affected the couple’s relationships before the last incidences occurred.

A typical example of one of the last blows that I wrote about in my journal was that of Hilda. She stated: “The main reason why I divorced my husband was because I refused to move with him to another state.” After listening to his statement, I asked myself: “How can being asked to move from one state to another become such a big deal for her to opt for divorce?”

When I asked her to elaborate on her stated motivation for divorce, her responses helped me to understand the context and historical circumstances that influenced her decision.

Hilda’s clarifications helped me to understand the context and emotional pain she had suffered in her first marriage, and the conflict of loyalties she had to deal with after the divorce of her parents. It is probable that moving to another state might also have severed many of Hilda’s resources (e.g., friendship relations, work, and familiar school for her child’s).

**Correcting the Perception Between Financial Status and Residential Neighborhood**

As I interacted with participants and listened to their descriptions of the neighborhoods they were living in (inner-city, urban, or suburban), I realized that some of their revelations were incongruent with my imaginations. In a special way, I want to clarify that, before conducting this study, I used to imagine that all people who live in the suburbs had a higher annual family income in comparison to those in urban neighborhoods and extremely more wealth than those in the inner-cities.
Based on the financial self-reports of all the participants, I realized that some of the participants in the inner-city were earning significantly higher amounts of money than those in the suburbs. On the other hand, my assumption about safety in the participants' neighborhoods matched the feedback from the participants. In other words, the participants in suburbs (all Caucasians in this study) were living in safer and lower-crime neighborhoods in the state of New Jersey than were those within the inner-cities.

Remarriage Stability Does Not Necessarily Imply Remarriage Satisfaction

During the interviews, I learned from the experiences of nine participants that remarriage satisfaction could not be determined by focusing on the longevity or duration of time the partners had been remarried. By the same token, those participants mentioned specific moments of remarriages when they experienced no satisfaction with their spouses, especially in regard to money, sexuality, and disciplining of the children; yet they remained in the remarriage.

Catherine clarified, "I am happy in my remarriage, but everyday is a not honeymoon." The results of this study (preserved in chapter 4) were primarily focused on factors influencing both remarriage stability and satisfaction. Otherwise, as those nine participants indicated, it is possible to stay in a remarriage (e.g., for the sake of the children), but without being happy, and vice versa.

All these observations remind me of the experience I had with one of the prospective participants, who decided to withdraw from the study just before she signed the consent form. After 15 years of remarriage, that prospective participant withdrew from the study because she had just started writing the papers to file for divorce. This observation is incongruent with Gottman's (1994) literature in which he predicted that couples that survive the first 7 years of remarriage are not likely to divorce.

That prospective participant's experiences, as well as that ofFred, seemed to be incongruent with White's (1990) observations. According to White, it takes an average of 5 to
seven years for a stepfamily to gel. However, in my opinion, I think that for the stepfamily members to establish a stable and satisfactory remarriage, it is important for the family members to cooperate as a team. Otherwise, a marriage will not survive if the partners do not commit themselves to the success of their remarriage.

The Two Memorable Dates: Date of Formal Divorce and Date of Formal Remarriage

Even if all the participants spoke of their divorce and remarriage experiences as processes, as I listened to their stories, I realized that two dates seemed to be highly referred to as unforgettable, namely, the day of formal divorce and the day of formal remarriage. At first, I did not understand why these two days had a great impact in the lives of the participants.

As I pondered about some the events in my life history and the dates on which they occurred, I realized that those dates had become memorable because of their lasting impact, not only to me, but also the other people around me. Consequently, I started to get a sense as to why the details surrounding the participants’ awareness of those two dates might be considered milestones or ice-burgs that have marked their lives for good. The following reflection is a quotation I have cited from my journal:

Two memorable milestones: day of divorce and day of remarriage

After completing the interviews, I realized that all the participants had almost live memories of the day they signed the divorce papers because each participant said that that day had marked a real beginning in his or her life. As long as each had not signed the divorce papers, he or she knew that he or she was still legally married. I think the felt change was related to a change in the marital status. The signing of the divorce papers was reported by some of those who took the initiative for divorce (the leavers) as a day of great relief and/or guilt, while most of those who did not take the initiative for divorce recalled it with greater feelings of anger. After divorce, some of the participants’ children had held onto the idea that their parents may reunite. So, the day one of the parents remarried with another person, then, those children’s dreams were shattered. Since the moment of formal remarriage, the children from the previous marriage have a stepparent. Once remarried, one may wonder if that marriage will last or will also end in another divorce. I think that the date of divorce marks a closing of one door, and remarriage seems to mark the entering of another door within the mysterious building of marital life. Based on the participants’ input, I think
the metaphor a milestone seemed to represent each one of those two days in the lives of the participants.

**Empowerment from the Participants**

In my journal, I also noted that, during the interviews, I felt empowered very much in terms of knowledge by the participants in many significant ways. I was empowered by them in different ways. Typical examples included the participants’ affirmation of some of the concepts I had learned from books about remarriage. New insights they taught me at times very much touched the pain they had gone through, and I was inspired by their resilience.

Some of the challenges I found during the research process included the difficulty of recruiting participants, especially men, driving long distances in order to meet the participants, and the patience to carry out this rigorous study. Therefore, in a special way, I give credit to the participants who inquired about the progress of the study during the time when I was emotionally stressed and somehow frustrated about this study. They encouraged me to persevere until its completion. For instance, Henry’s words of encouragement were a constant source of empowerment whenever I fell into despair. During a post-interview conversation, Henry told me: “Joseph, keep courage and persevere to the end. Your study is a goldmine. It is my hope that many people will benefit from your study once it is finished.”

I want to clarify that during and/or after the interviews, I experienced a diverse range of feelings as I listened to or pondered about the each participant’s experiences. In general, I felt compassion for those who narrated their first-marriage and post-divorce experiences of pain, shame, loneliness, domestic violence, rejection from family members, and/or humiliation. On the other hand, I felt happy as I listened to their stories of resilience and experiences of satisfaction and stability in their second marriages. Almost all of them narrated having recovered self-esteem, dignity, having found meaning in life, and that they seemed to be more resolved to stay with their second spouses till death do they part.
Mental-health of Either Partner

As I listened to the participants’ personal stories and their narratives about their families of origin, I realized that every partner's state of mental health (cognitive and emotional functioning) seemed to have a significant impact on marital stability and satisfaction. A typical example of negative effects on marital success as a result of poor mental health were reported by Godfrey, especially after his excessive dependence on alcohol.

The other case that helped me to understand better the impact of cognitive and emotional functioning on marital stability and satisfaction was the one that Hilda narrated. She described how the lack of mental-health services might have contributed to the divorce of her parents and the resultant feelings of being triangulated between her parents after they divorced.

Hilda: My parents divorced during the time when the mental-health services were not as available as they are today. My mother filed for divorce after realizing that she could not bear any longer my father’s drastic mood changes. After signing the divorce papers, my father was diagnosed with a mental illness, and the cause of this divorce was emotional stress. Unfortunately, after knowing the diagnosis of my father’s mental illness, namely, post-traumatic stress disorder, my mother started to blame herself for having abandoned a mentally abnormal person. However much I tried to convince her that it was not her fault, she did not manage to forgive herself. She spent the rest of her life with a profound sense of guilt, and that also affected me.

Hilda’s description inspired me to start thinking of the need to make a comprehensive mental exam for people who plan to enter marriage life, and probably to encourage them to consider undertaking a 2-year periodic mental-health checkup. Such checkups might particularly be necessary for aging partners, who may be at a greater risk of dementia and/or Alzheimer’s disease (Groth-Marnat, 1999).

Clinical Implications of the Theory Developed

Before elaborating on the discussion about the clinical implications of this study, I would like to clarify one of the reasons that motivated me to conduct this study was the awareness of my limitations in providing effective services to remarried parents and to divorced parents preparing
for remarriage. Secondly, there is a low number of professionals trained to work with divorced parents, remarried spouses and children living in stepfamilies (Lelley, 2004; Nichols, 1996).

Based on the data, notes from my research journal, and the reviewed literature, I have deduced the following clinical implications:

** attentiveness to people’s losses **

All the participants spoke of their experiences of resolved and unresolved losses in terms of human relationships, self-esteem, dignity, identity, and painful memories as they entered their second marriages and formed stepfamilies. Likewise, Kelly and Burg (2000) indicated that stepfamilies are born out of multiple losses either through divorce or death. Therefore, it follows that professionals working with people living in remarriage triad households should help them to mourn their unresolved losses.

Kelley (1995) also reported examples of loss on the part of the children of divorced parents. She found out that even for children who had acknowledged their parents’ divorce, when their parents remarried with other partners, the children experienced the loss of the fantasy that their parents would reconcile and live together again. Although some of the people living in stepfamilies have started to speak about their losses and challenges in clinical settings (Rutter, 1998), professionals should continue to encourage them and avoid the risk of minimizing their clients’ losses and challenges.

Clinicians should pay extra attention to their clients and assume a non-judgmental stance. Professionals also need to coach remarried parents to understand their children’s losses, and integrate rituals into treatment (Aheons, 1998). Even if the number of children facing similar losses is increasing as a result of the divorce and remarriage of their parents, that does not make each child’s losses less challenging.
Need for Comprehensive and Contextually Based Assessment Before Intervention

I concur with Aponte (1994) that assessment serves intervention and intervention follows assessment. Having explored (assessed) some of the needs, it is then important to make interventions based on a comprehensive assessment of every person in each given case, and to seek a clear understanding of their contextual realities. I make this observation by basing myself on the unique aspects I noticed in all the individuals who participated in this study (Figures 2 & 3).

Kaslow (1996) clarified that "our theoretical and clinical interventions must be informed by an understanding of ethnicity, culture, religion, gender, sexual preference, family life cycle, socioeconomic status, education, physical and mental health, values, and belief systems [in this case, of the remarried parents and their significant others]" (p. vi). In other words, these variables are contextually based (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986), and I think they offer profound resources for developing a comprehensive assessment.

Method of Comprehensive Assessment and Intervention

Based on the interviews and the theory developed in this study, I think that one of the methods of assessment and treatment that may be used is the one that focuses on a comprehensive exploration the resources and constraints within all the identified primary and secondary factors (the domains that make up the theory). The hypothesis or rationale for suggesting this method to professionals who might use this model is based on the assumption that constraint(s) within one or more of the domains may influence the people involved in a given remarriage triad to be stuck, but the resources within one or more of the domains might reinforce the client(s) seeking help toward remarriage stability and satisfaction.

Structured Therapy Process or Procedures within the Theoretical Model Developed

This section has been included within the clinical implications to demonstrate how clinicians may make use of the grounded theoretical model developed in this study. Again, based
on the participants’ contributions to this study, suggestions for professionals (Appendix K), and consulted literature, I have developed the following structured outline that clinicians may use while working with clients in remarriage triad situations:

- A social stage
- Initial interview
- A complaint and assessment stage to explore the presenting problem
- Definition of the problem(s) from the therapist’s point of view
- Developing a general hypothesis
- Making a referral (if necessary and possible)
- The stage for bringing about change (interventions and treatment)
- Evaluation and termination
- Follow-up.

Clarification

A clinician may use the above outline in therapy with an individual client, couples in second marriages, and/or stepfamily members. However, for the sake of demonstrating how a clinician may use the above suggested therapy process, I have chosen to use Fred’s case. Fred was one of the participants in this study. The criteria for choosing Fred is based on the fact that he was the only participant who expressed uncertainty about the future of his second marriage.

Since my interactions with Fred were specifically research based, rather than clinically focused, it is beyond the scope of this study to illustrate a comprehensive assessment and intervention strategies of his case. However, I encouraged him to pursue his resolution to seek professional help because of the constraints he referred to as “radical changes” his wife had made after they remarried. Based on the theory developed and consulted literature, I would recommend Fred’s clinician to carry out an in-depth and comprehensive assessment of the following domains (Figure 4):
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain / Factor</th>
<th>Clients’ resources (strengths and themes of resilience)</th>
<th>Clients’ constraints (what causes the client to think, where, how, and when did start?)</th>
<th>Suggested interventions (for short-term and long-term goals)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Permanent site for remarriage services</td>
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<td>Marital history</td>
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<td>Motivations for remarriage</td>
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<td>Dating</td>
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<td>House rules and roles</td>
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<td>Conflict resolution</td>
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<td>Clear boundaries</td>
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<td>Cohabitation</td>
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<td>Knowledge of the complexity of remarriage</td>
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<td>Communication</td>
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<td>Spirituality</td>
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<td>Collaborative parenting</td>
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<td>Professional help</td>
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<td>Sexuality</td>
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<td>Finances</td>
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<td>Integral maturity</td>
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<td>Love</td>
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</table>

*Figure 6. Sample of Comprehensive Assessment and Treatment Form.*
Congruent with the grounded theory developed in this study, I would recommend following therapy process to clinicians interested in applying it to typical cases (e.g., Fred’s case).

**Brief Description of the Social Stage and Initial Interview**

I believe Fred is seeking therapy while feeling stuck after being on his own to solve the problems he has with his wife. Given that Fred has chosen willingly to seek therapy, he might be less resistant in comparison to someone who is mandated to go for therapy. Whatever the case, the clinician should join with him first to establish a therapeutic alliance (Minuchin, 1974), and to reduce his anxiety to the lowest level possible.

The social stage should help the clinician to perceive Fred as a person who is stuck, in contrast to being perceived as a pathological specimen or failure, because his first marriage ended in divorce and now the second is also not working well. So, the clinician should help Fred feel welcomed as a guest in the clinician’s office (Haley, 1987; Minuchin, 1974). Joining may be facilitated between the clinician and the client by dialoguing about each other’s hobbies, favorite foods.

The clinician may then introduce the domain of pattern sites for remarriage services—which I consider to be the most objective for debating about and sharing of opinions. For instance, a clinician may make the following observation. Fred, I have realized that today there are many schools for many things (e.g., sports, computers, and teaching).

However, it seems that there are very few places where one can learn about remarriage before entering remarriage. What do you think about the need for introducing such schools in our state? What do you think remarriage partners should be helped to learn about in regard to remarriage after divorce? A clinician may assess this domain by asking the client whether he or she knows about any existing sites, personal opinions about such sites, willingness to participate, rationale, and fears related to participating or not.
Just in case the clinician should realize by means of Fred's verbal or nonverbal communication that he is feeling uncomfortable to socialize with the clinician, then, the clinician may take a downward position, become more formal with him, and pay special attention to his cultural background. This step may seem like a waste of the clinician and/or client's time and other resources. However, based on my personal interactions with people in remarriage trials, I have realized that joining is important because it sets the tone for the next sessions.

**Intake**

After the clinician's realization that Fred has started to feel more comfortable with him or her, the clinician should introduce the conditions under which he or she works as a therapist. For instance, the clinician should introduce the notion of confidentiality and its limits. Both the Fred and the clinician should sign a confidentiality contract in order to work under specific ethical and therapeutic regulations. Afterwards, the clinician should ask the client to complete demographic information sheet (Appendix 7) to gather relevant data.

**Client's Definition of the Presenting Problem and Motivations for Seeking Therapy Now**

After completing the demographic data sheet, the clinician should ask the client to describe in his or her own words the presenting problem and the motivations for seeking therapy now. The clinician should explore more about the nature of the real problem from the client's perspective before making any intervention.

However, for cases that require immediate action, especially those involving threat to the life of the client or another person, the clinician should take adequate action. If considered necessary, the clinician should assume immediately the duty to warn the client, the legal authorities, and those at risk of imminent danger (Hackney & Cormier, 1994).
Complaint and Enactment Stage

The complaint stage is a stage in which the clinician should conduct a comprehensive assessment of all the 17 domains identified in theoretical model developed in this study (Figure 2). Based on the complexity of these domains, the clinician may carry out the assessment by making use of Bremilin et al.'s (1997) "less method of assessment" (p. 6). As the clinician listens to Fred's presenting problem in the first therapy session, he or she does not immediately affirm that the presenting problem is the real therapeutic problem. The clinician should take note of the details related to Fred's definition of the problem.

In addition to the presenting problem, the clinician should start to explore with Fred each one of the 17 identified domains of remarriage stability and satisfaction (Figure 2). The main motive for exploring all the domains is to identify which ones are most affected by constraints. The clinician should also look for the domains and resources that help Fred to cope. Later on, the clinician may make use of those resources to empower Fred and also use them as openings to reinforce change (Freedman & Combs, 1996).

A typical procedure of how to assess for resources (strengths) and constraints in all the primary and secondary domains requires the clinician to keep in mind all the 17 factors which constitute the grounded theory developed in this study (Figure 2). The clinician should conduct a comprehensive assessment of all the domains even if the clients specify what they consider to be the problem or presenting problem.

I suggest that the clinician should start by assessing for the clients' resources and constraints within one of the secondary domains that seem least threatening to the clients (e.g., marital history). Throughout the assessment process, the clinician should keep building rapport (e.g., by using humor to win the trust of his or her clients (e.g., individual clients, couples, and/or remarriage trust members). The attached assessment form (Figure 3) may help the clinician to maintaining a sense of structure during assessment and treatment stages.
The more sensitive areas, like finances, sexuality, and spirituality may be reserved for later assessment after the clinician has established rapport with the clients. Otherwise, the clients may feel intimidated or their privacy invaded by a stranger, thereby reinforcing their resistance instead of circumventing it. The clinician may use this method of assessment and intervention with individuals, couples, and extended stepfamily members within a remarriage triad and/or those preparing for remarriage. For instance, for clients who seek help after remarriage, the clinician may start by assessing for whether they have already set up some house rules and roles by asking the clients: What are some of rules you have set for yourselves as adults and for your children from the previous marriage? Tell me about those rules and how are they helping or affecting you?

The clinician may inquire about the clients’ attempted solutions, reinforce the ones that have worked, explore which interventions have not worked and why, before suggesting new interventions. The clinician ought to be a facilitator of change, by actively collaborating with the clients to set their goals for the required change.

Description of How to Use the Lens Method

During the assessment sessions, the clinician may put on the lens (assess) Fred’s motivations for the second marriage. As the clinician put on this lens (assesses this domain), he explores whether each of Fred’s motivations was realistic or not, and which ones he has achieved, not achieved, the feelings attached to the fulfilled motivation, and may ask Fred to elaborate on his feelings regarding the unachieved ones.

The clinician may then put on another lens, for instance, that of assessing the domain that encompasses Fred’s presenting problem. The clinician may then incorporate the collected demographi: information (Appendix F) into the assessment phase, drawing a genogram (Bowen, 1972; McGoldrick et al., 1999) as the Fred describes his family of origin, first marriage and second marriage. Fred may be also encouraged to integrate on the genogram all the children in his
remarriage triad, their ages, genders, and impact on the stability and satisfaction of his remarriage.

While drawing the genogram, the clinician may also assess for triangles, differentiation of self, dyad, sibling positions, half-sibling and step-sibling relationships, spirituality, and significant deaths within Fred’s remarriage triad. The incidences of divorce and remarriage, and the emotions surrounding each divorce (e.g., anger, fear, amicable feelings, or ambivalence), and the nature of the boundaries between ex-spouses also need to be assessed (e.g., clear, conflictual or enmeshed boundaries).

The use of the genogram during assessment may thus help the clinician to summarize the complex patterns and significant demographic variables (Appendix F) of Fred’s remarriage triad. The drawing of the genogram may also facilitate the clinician’s assessment process, because it may give Fred the opportunity to provide significant clinical data about his significant others (e.g., identify who talks to whom, about what, and identify whom he considers might be the facilitator of the desired change in his remarriage triad).

The construction of the genogram and its description by Fred or any other client may thus help the clinician to explore and to assess the client’s multigenerational patterns and current contextual realities (Bognar-Nagy & Kramer, 1986). Based on such assessments, the clinician may then be to come up with coherent suggestions for bringing about change in Fred’s family system (McGoldrick, 1995).

After getting some relevant data about Fred’s remarriage triad and marital history, the clinician can then explore the role played by his culture, ethnicity and gender, and how those variable relate to the presenting problem. The clinician should ask Fred to teach him or her about his culture, ethnicity, religion, spirituality, and other relevant data. In this way, the clinician may reduce the risk of guessing and/or holding onto unrealistic biases and stereotypes about Fred’s cultural background. The clinician should also dispose him/herself to learn more about Fred’s culture and other related domains from other sources of reliable information (e.g., family
members in therapy with Fred, and/or professional literature). The clinician should take into account that culture is not static but dynamic.

Depending on the level of trust established between the clinician and Fred, the clinician should then consider assessing the sensitive domains, identified in the theoretical developed in this study as primary factors (e.g., love, integral maturity, finances, collaborating parenting, sexuality, and spirituality). In case spirituality plays a positive role in Fred’s life, then the clinician should consider it as a resource and strength to be encouraged during the treatment sessions. If it makes a lot of sense to him (e.g., serving as a strength for coping), then the clinician should even anticipate the treatment sessions and encourage Fred to continue practicing his religious beliefs, “do more of the same” (Fisch et al., 1982).

The clinician may then decide to assess the resources and constraints with the domain about finances. For instance, the clinician may ask Fred to describe the type(s) of banking accounts he has with his second wife (e.g., joint, independent, or both) and explore the rationale behind that choice of accounting. It would also be important to explore whether that Fred and his wife had and/or continue to have in-depth communications about finances, who pays for what, how much does each earn, and how much does each spend on his or her child from the previous marriage? Does any of the two partners, especially the one who earns more than the other use money as a weapon for controlling the other? The clinician may formulate additional questions.

Sexuality may then be another domain to explore in depth, depending on the clinician’s level of trust with Fred. For instance, the clinician may explore who of the two partners takes more initiative for engaging in genital intercourse? How frequent does the couple have genital intercourse? Do the partners speak about what each likes and does not like during moments of intimacy? Are the partners still faithful to one another? Does one of the two partners use sex as a weapon for controlling the other? Does one use his or her religious beliefs as an excuse for not engaging in sexual expressiveness with one’s partner? Does the couple have periodic
honeymoons as one of the means for keeping their sexuality alive? Has work, stress, children, age, physical health, and/or low sexual desire started to affect the couple's sexual expressiveness?

In regard to the domain of professional help, the clinician should explore Fred's expectations for seeking help, and why is he seeking it now? Has he ever sought mental-health services? What were his reasons for seeking those services? What kind of cultural impositions did he have to overcome before seeking professional help? What are his belief systems about seeking professional help before and/or after remarriage? Is his partner also willing participate in therapy sessions? If his insurance does not cover the services he is seeking, is he capable of paying for them?

The clinician should also assess the other primary domains (e.g., communication, and integral maturity by formulating questions based on the theory developed in this study). Before completing the assessment phase, the clinician should then spend sufficient time to explore the impact of the central domain of love. This is a domain that has to be assessed when Fred or any other client feels very comfortable with the clinician because this domain presupposes the client's maximum trust in the clinician, client's honesty while narrating personal stories, fears, dreams, pain, emotions (e.g., guilt, anger, confusion, anxieties, lack of forgiveness, and/or joy, happiness) to the clinician who gives compassion, competence, confidentiality, and understanding.

It is also important while assessing this domain for the client to answer as honestly as possible the clinician's questions. Saying only the truth during the assessment of this domain is very important, even if that may mean the client's contradiction of some of the information he or she might have falsely communicated to a stranger (clinician).

I have realized through my interactions with some people that before feeling comfortable with me, they tell me things which they contradict later, and when I compassionately confront them about which version of their stories is true, they say the last one. Most of them have told me the established trust with me motivates them to tell me their true stories, some of which they could not dare to speak about before. In general, most of those stories which they narrate later on
involves a certain degree of shame, guilt, anger, unresolved loss, fear of being rejected, judged negatively, incompetence, and marital infidelity. Consequently, I have realized that trust between a client and therapist has a significant clinical implication.

Some of the questions that the clinician may ask Fred may include those focused on his love of self (e.g., describe two personal stories in his journal that illustrate your love of self after your first divorce). Another question may be focused on asking Fred to write in his journal a description of two actions he has done recently as actions of love for his partner. The clinician may also ask Fred to narrate to him or her, using sufficient details, three significant ways in which the two partners express their mutual love, love for their children, and attentiveness to their needs. The clinician should also explore two ways in which Fred has expressed and/or intends to express a loving attitude toward his multiple extended family members.

Basic Method for Bringing about Change in the Theoretical Model Developed

Since the constraints were already identified during the assessment, now the main task is to start setting appropriate goals, using adequate interventions that correspond to the theoretical model generated. Treatment is aimed at releasing the domains from the constraints which impede the balance and harmony of a specific remarried couple and/or stepfamily, and the individuals within it. The main goal of treatment is to release the constrained domains. This may help the clients to become more functional, utilize their resources, establish and maintain harmonious interpersonal relationships in the stepfamily system, and be able to fit in the micro-and-macro societies (Breunlin et al., 1997; Walsh, 2002).

The basic method of bringing about change in the theory developed in this study is almost similar to the method of assessment. That is moving from one domain to another at the discretion of the clinician. The major difference during treatment is that the clinician should concentrate upon the constrained domains while also reinforcing the assessed resources. I suggest that the clinician should focus on one domain at a time, and stay there for a reasonable amount of
time before passing on to another domain. However, while focusing on one domain at a time, he or she should continue to keep in mind all the other domains and their relationship with the domain of interest.

**Summary of the Strategies and Techniques in the Grounded Theoretical Model Developed**

A clinician should have a profound knowledge of strategies and techniques for bringing about change. At the same time, by making use of the following techniques and strategies, I have to discern when to use which one, with whom, and how:

1. Joining with "Fred" (a hypothetical client) to reduce resistance and to reinforce therapeutic mutual trust (Hays, 1987; Minuchin, 1974).

2. Suggest new roles, or interchange roles between spouses and amongst the family members (Minuchin, 1974).

3. Clinicians should take non-judgmental stances in order to conceptualize and help their clients to understand that the processes of divorce, however painful and challenging they may be for the people involved, can offer each of them, and/or as a family, opportunities for growth. Divorce may also help individuals to grow in preparation for future relationships (e.g., by learning through their past mistakes).

4. Clinicians should understand that instead of an exclusive focus on keeping the partners together, sometimes divorce counseling may be in the best interests of the clients. This is particularly important between partners in an abusive relationship and on-going domestic violence, which may even end in homicide. Divorce may save a life!

5. Attentive listening to Fred's stories, beliefs, cultural values, fears, and gender expectations.

6. Use narrative therapy techniques during assessment to explore in-depth the client's life stories. For instance, use of deconstructing questions, story developing questions, and meaning questions.
This may help the clinician to understand comprehensively the underlying dynamics (Freedman & Combs, 1996).

7. Use circular questioning, formulate first session task, miracle questions, exception questions, scaling questions, and use imagination.

8. Set short-and-long-term goals in collaboration with Fred, and reinforce small changes.

9. Recommend "do more of the same" for whatever works and changing what does not work (de Shazer, 1985).


11. Coach Fred to strike a balance between autonomy and intimacy (Bowen, 1972).

12. Take breaks in-between sessions for reflection or consultation. "We will come back to that later."


15. Get a clear understanding of how every family member defines and practises "fairness" (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1966), and resilience strategies (Walsh, 2002).

16. Paraphrase, reframe, use reversals, metaphors, active listening, allow moments of silence, reflection of feelings, respond to content (cognition), respond to feeling (affect), positive regard (Hackney & Cormier, 1994).

17. Goal setting in concrete and operational terms (Fisch, 1982).

18. Motivate Fred to practice his spirituality resources (Miller, 1999).

19. Use open-ended questions.

20. Clinician’s takes a downward position.

21. Refer - especially if Fred’s problem is beyond the clinician’s field of competence (Hackney & Cormier, 1994).
Evaluation and Termination

Before termination, the clinician should evaluate with Fred the whole therapeutic experience. This enables the clinician to get feedback from him. This evaluation is valuable in as far as it enables Fred to look back and realize the changes he has made and what he still has to do in the future. I also learn what corrections I have to make in order to improve on my quality of work with Fred during the follow-up sessions.

As mentioned before in respect to the goals of therapy, termination in my model is not necessarily determined by the complete resolution of the presenting problem. In case the problem is resolved, the better. However, given that there are some complex and chronic problems that cannot even be resolved by making referrals, termination can also occur in my model after realizing that Fred is able to better cope with the same problem. In addition, I want to clarify that I start to orient Fred about termination before the last four or three sessions. In this way, I help him to plan, accept and to face termination with an, informed consent and with a reduced risk of feeling as if he is being pushed out of therapy or rejected by the therapist. Finally, in collaboration with Fred, a place and a time for the first follow-up session should be scheduled.

Follow-up

The clinician should schedule the first follow-up session after 1 month has elapsed. I think that this is a reasonable amount of time to make a check-up as to whether Fred is progressing or whether he made rapid changes that have led him to relapse. A follow-up before it is too late and without being too early can help Fred’s therapeutic process to take a right channel. The clinician may have two or three more follow-ups. The clinician can help Fred to work through the other problems that are related to the major therapeutic problem (Fay & H., 1987), and focusing to solve one problem at a time can lead Fred to solve other related problems (de Shazer, 1985).
Clinician’s Ethical Responsibility and Non-conflicting Multiple Roles

The clinician’s using the theory developed is expected to relate and work ethically with all the clients. Nagy-Boszomneyi and Krasner’s (1986) ethical principle that “therapist’s work on the ethical level requires a high degree of commitment ... here the emphasis falls neither on empathy nor on affect” (p. 175) is also applicable within the theory generated. In regard to the ethical notion of competence, clinicians using the theory developed are encouraged to specialize and make adequate referrals whenever necessary.

Team work and networking among professionals is encouraged in the model developed. In order to maintain an internal consistence within the model developed, the clinicians have to be flexible, as opposed to being rigid. Based on the results of this study, remarriage was reported by the participants to be more complex interpersonal relationships than first marriages. Given such complexity, the clinician has to maintain structured with the clients and simultaneously be flexible with them. Such flexibility should involve making accommodations to non-conflicting multiple roles with the clients in order to conceptualize better the nature of their presenting problems, culture, gender expectations, levels of resistance, anxieties, spiritual overtones, and validate the clients’ resilience strategies in moments of adversity (Walsh, 1998).

The clinician may relate with Fred during his initial sessions in therapy by acting as a host or receptionist in order to join with him. Later on, the clinician may progressively shift to acting as a coach. During the entire assessment and treatment processes, the clinician may interchangeably act as:
1. an active listener or a teacher, a director or a follower, or an anthropologist;
2. a spiritual director, a collaborator or a challenger, a comforter;
3. a midwife or a leader, a biologist or a sociologist, a psychodynamic clinician, or an economist;
4. a humorous friend or a serious Socratic philosopher, a historian, or a futurist;
5. an optimist animator or a pessimistic and doubtful analyst of rapid changes;
6. an expert or a learner from Fred about his culture, gender expectations, and roles;
The clinician’s shifts in roles and the position are mainly related with the hypotheses to or she draws after conducting a comprehensive assessment. A tentative hypothesis helps the clinician to discern whether to use more strategies and techniques from either Bowen’s theory or from the structural approach, solution-focused or strategic, contextual or narrative therapy. Developing coherent skills for discerning how to select and apply the necessary techniques from the different models of family therapy is important within the theory developed.

Inclusion of the Remarrying and/or Remarried Parents' Children

As indicated in chapter 4 of this study, the children of divorced parents, especially adolescents (Berger, 1998), play significant parts in their parents’ remarriage stability and satisfaction (Kelley & Burg, 2000; McGoldrick & Gert, 1998). Therefore, whoever works with adolescents should validate their feeling of loss and also help them to be understanding of and empathetic with the parent who decides to remarry.

Consequently, adolescents should also be coached to develop a better differentiation of self (Kerr & Bowen, 1983), and to learn to establish clear boundaries (Minuchin, 1974) with their significant others, especially with their divorced biological parent, stepparents, siblings, stepsiblings, and grandparents. The clinician may also encourage them to be compassionate toward their remarrying parent instead of resisting his or her plans to remarry, especially if the parent is below 50 years of age.

Adolescents should be encouraged to seek professional help with the informed consent of their parents. For instance, they can benefit in regard to grief therapy, adjustment to stepfamily systems, and from learning to cope with and negotiate issues with their parents, siblings, stepsiblings, and stepparents without getting triangulated. Professionals should coach remarried parents living with adolescent biological children to avoid the risk of triangulating their adolescent children into conflicts with their ex-spouses. Professionals should also coach parents
contemplating remarriage and remarried parents to continue their parenting roles instead of putting their older children in charge of their younger siblings and/or half siblings.

In respect to stepparents, professionals should help them to realize the roles, risks, complexity, interpersonal dynamics and boundaries of being a stepparent to an adolescent male or female. For instance, in regard to intimacy, stepparents need to be helped to prevent, or stop as soon as possible, any behavioral activities that involve sexual overtures toward their stepchildren.

Professionals should design interventions for addressing adolescents’ personality pathologies, lack of differentiation of self, use of alcohol or drugs, excessive individualism, superiority complex, low self-esteem, pathological jealousy, or inability to establish and maintain constructive self-talk or to enter into dialogue with others (Berger, 1998; Carter & McGoldrick, 1998; Nichols, 1996).

Professionals should motivate members of the stepfamily to be patient with themselves and with one another because, in many instances, when a blended family is new, its members expect everyone to automatically love each other. This myth of instant love creates an incredible amount of guilt and frustration for adults and children alike. “Children (including adolescents) feel caught, afraid that if they don’t love a new stepparent, they will hurt and anger one parent, but if they do love the stepparent, they are disloyal and will hurt or lose the love of the other” (Carter & McGoldrick, 1998, p. 424).

Whenever possible and necessary, professionals should include both ex-spouses (with joint custody, or custodian and non-custodian parents) into treatment if the problem with the children requires the intervention of both parents. Other significant others may also be invited (e.g., the children’s grandparents and stepparents) may also be invited to participate with the children’s therapy sessions (Framo, 1985).

Professionals working with stepparents should help them to realize that they also should not expect to instantly develop lasting concern for the stepchildren. According to Kelley (1995),
love takes time to grow. The belief that a stepparent should love all their stepchildren equally is not a reasonable expectation for stepfamilies.

In regard to deciding how or where to celebrate family events (for instance, where to go for holidays, celebrating father’s day, mother’s day, birthday celebrations or celebrating death anniversaries of significant family members), professionals should encourage remarried spouses to avoid the risk of guessing for the adolescents (Hrons, 2004) which family events are most important to them. Thus, decisions should be taken after attentive listening to adolescents living in a stepfamily.

Team of Professionals Needed to Offer Remarriage Services

The participants mentioned that remarriage is quite complex (Sager, 1985). They recommended that practitioners working with individuals living in remarriage contexts should work as a team, and each practitioner should be specialized in at least one of the major remarriage domains that have a significant impact on the lives of the people involved. Typical examples of professionals who would be part of the remarriage services team that the participants suggested included remarriage and stepfamily counselors, pre-nuptial financial advisers, remarried spouses with children from the first marriage, clergy, medical doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers (Gray, 1996; Larson et al., 2002; Miller, 1985; Smoke, 1995).

The suggestion of forming a remarriage service team of diverse professionals reflected Gray’s (1996) model that she designed in order to help therapists work in mutual collaboration with attorneys and other legal-system personnel. She called that model the expert-consultant model. It is an alternative model to traditional therapy models because it is a model of intervention that takes both psychological and legal processes of divorce into consideration. It is intended to offer quality care for divorcees and their significant others.

This kind of teamwork and mutual collaboration amongst remarriage services professionals might help them to offer better help to their clients. This is extremely important
because, for example, sometimes before people can be adequately helped to work through the legalities of divorce, they may be in need of psychological help.

Gray (1996) recommended that attorneys assess their clients' psychological conditions through observation (e.g., clients who seem to be burned out with the divorce process) and refer them to professional psychologists. I agree with Gray's suggestion that, in the mean time, it is important to postpone the legal process until the client has gained more energy and achieved appropriate mental health. That may help the client to think more clearly about the decision he or she is making (Bauer, 2003; Coleman & Ganong, 1985; Ganong & Coleman, 1989).

Suggestions for Clinicians Working with Divorced and Remarried Catholics

The following paragraphs are intended to offer some elementary theological suggestions that clinicians may use while working with divorced and remarried Catholics, before making referrals whenever they are thought necessary. The suggestions are focused on clinicians working with Catholics, because the results of this study (chapter 4) indicated that 11 participants out of 16 belonged to the Roman Catholic Church, and all of them reported experiencing feelings of rejection from some of the Catholic religious ministers because they had divorced and/or remarried. They were denied reception of the Eucharist before the annulment of their first marriages. Although some of them sought therapy from clinicians, the clinicians they turned to lacked the basic theological guidelines to help their clients.

Therefore, based on my theological training and the writings of three highly qualified and respected bishops in the Roman Catholic Church (Himes & Corson, 1996), I suggest that clinicians working with divorced and/or remarried individuals need to communicate to their Catholic clients the difference between the Catholic Church's laws regarding divorce and remarriage (Bell, Coriden, Green, 2000) from the reality of God's unconditional love for all people (Adams, 1990). Professionals should help their Catholic clients know that, even if they are not yet allowed to receive the Eucharist in the Catholic Church, God's love for them is
unconditional, and they have another chance to establish stable and happy second marriages (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995).

The three Catholic bishops (Walter Kasper, Karl Lehmann, and Oskar Saier) who designed this new theological perspective and pastoral-care approach to divorced and remarried Catholics gained their respective professional training in theology, pastoral experience, and canon (Church) law. They encouraged Catholics to understand that the spouses’ wedding vows for the two spouses to become one till death parts them (Bohr, 1999) should not be limited to each spouse’s biological death. Understood in terms of this theological perspective, this vow includes each partner’s commitment to keep his or her marital relationship alive. Otherwise, a dead marital relationship cannot be considered any longer to be a life-giving marriage (Heinisch, 1955; Himes & Coriaden, 1996; Smoke, 1995; Silemnon, 1992).

Limitations of the Study

This study was focused exclusively on heterosexual custodial parents who remarried after a first divorce. The study involved a small sample of 16 participants. Therefore, its findings may not reflect key areas that are specific to committed coupled partners of other sexual orientations. Consequently, in order to be of greater help to homosexual estranged parents seeking to achieve stability and satisfaction as they form new couple relationships, it may be useful for family therapists, psychologists, and other professionals (FTP PPs) who are interested in expanding their knowledge of the impact of other sexual orientations to consult other sources or to engage in relevant research.

Based on the scope of this study, FTPPs may not be able to use its results to address the specific needs of other individuals (e.g., those who remarry after the death of a spouse, non-custodial parents, and partners who do not have any child from the previous marriage). The participants were selected only in the State of New Jersey. Their input and the resultant theory
may not reflect a broader reality as lived by remarried parents in other states and other parts of the world.

Recommendations for Future Research

A quantitative study could be conducted to explore the effectiveness of the developed grounded theory. This study may be replicated but include participants of different continents, states, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and persons of other religions (e.g., Moslems and Hindus) in order to compare and contrast the results of this study with those that emerge from other populations. Another study may also be conducted involving participants who remarried after widowhood instead of divorce.

The results of this study produced a preliminary model. Therefore, qualitative and quantitative researchers can look at the variables within this model, define, specify, and study them (e.g., the multidimensional experiences of love).

More qualitative research studies are needed to explore what mental-health professionals need to know in order to empower divorced custodial parents preparing for remarriage, to reinforce their marital stability and satisfaction, to help remarried spouses establish and maintain clear boundaries with their former spouses, and to empower the children in remarried families to comfortably live with stepparents and stepsiblings.

Based on the results of this study and the literature consulted, more research is needed to explore what remarriage services personnel may need to know to empower divorced parents contemplating remarriage to help reinforce their remarriage stability and satisfaction. School personnel can also be made aware of what is learned from such research, to help them be more supportive of the needs of children whose parents are going through a divorce, both those in single-parent families, and those living in stepfamilies.

It seems to me that the current social context in terms of higher levels of formal education for women has generally improved in comparison to that of the female participants in this study,
who were born and educated between the 1940s and 1960s (McGoldrick et al., 1996). My observation is based on personal experiences on university campuses and in other social settings; I have known a significant number of divorced and remarried female parents with Ph. D.s and other qualifications of formal education involved in well-paid jobs. Based on this, I think further studies are needed to explore the impact of formal education and/or income on remarriage stability and satisfaction.

In this study, I did not explore the participants’ ideas about how to help parents and children grieve their losses during and/or after divorce. So, this is one of the areas that future studies could be designed to focus upon. There is a need also to explore ways to encourage divorced parents contemplating remarriage to seek professional remarriage services before they remarry and thus, to better prepare for successful remarriage. More research studies are needed which will help professional remarriage service providers think more in terms of prevention of remarriage problems rather than remaining resigned to their later correction.

Conclusion

It has been a challenging and rewarding experience to explore the factors that influence remarriage stability and the satisfaction of custodial parents who remarry after a first divorce. Analyzing and recording the data for emergent categories of meaning have been challenging experiences and most exciting experiences for me. The process of developing a grounded theory has been tedious, but the theory developed is very encouraging due to its congruence with the existing literature and research studies.

In addition to the theory developed, I consider the participants’ suggestion for permanent sites where remarriage services may be offered to be one of the most significant new findings in this study. Likewise, I feel empowered and confident about the theory developed. I conceptualize it to be a first step or an “opening” (de Shazer, 1986) to the advancement of how to reinforce remarriage stability and satisfaction. The theory generated is a step that sets the tone for
doing preventative rather than curative work with divorced parents preparing themselves for remarriage. The same step may set the tone for further research, and the grounded theory developed can be published for professional use.
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Appendix A

Letter for Directors of Social Agencies
Agency Director's name

Name of Agency & Address

My name is Joseph Kabali. I am a doctoral student in the Marriage and Family Program in the Department of Professional Psychology and Family Therapy at Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ, and I am seeking for participants for the research I am conducting for my doctoral dissertation.

Purpose of the research
The purpose of conducting this study is to identify the factors that influence marital stability and satisfaction for custodial parents who remarry after a first divorce. In order to do this, I will interview custodial parents who are currently remarried to inform me about their ideas in regard to what each believes might be helpful to divorced parents contemplating remarriage.

Request
Based on these considerations, I ask for your permission allowing me to distribute flyers in your Agency as one of the ways to recruit participants. The attached flyer is a sample of the flyers I distribute in your Agency. Secondly, I would like to ask to put your reply for this permission to be in writing on the official letterhead of your Agency. Consequently, I will show your written permission to the Director of the Institutional Review Board for research involving human subjects at Seton Hall University as a means of expressing that I have been authorized to recruit participants within a specific site.

Further contacts
If you have any questions or need additional information regarding this letter or the researcher, you may contact:

Joseph Kabali, M.A., M.S. (Researcher)
41 Manning Ave.
North Plainfield, NJ, 07060
Therapy
Tel. (908). 757. 4514
e-mail: kabali jo@shu.edu

Robert Massey, Ph. D. (Dissertation Advisor)
Seton Hall University
Dept. of Professional Psychology and Family Therapy
400 South Orange Ave.
South Orange, NJ, 07079
(973). 761. 9581
e-mail: massey ro@shu.edu
Appendix B

Letter Sample to Religious Ministers
Name of Minister

Name Church and mailing address

My name is Joseph Kabali. I am a doctoral student in the Marriage and Family Program in the Department of Professional Psychology and Family Therapy at Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ, and I am recruiting participants for the research I am conducting for my doctoral dissertation.

The purpose of conducting this study is to identify the factors that influence stability and satisfaction in remarriage parents who remarried after a first divorce. In order to do this, I will interview parents who are currently remarried to inform me about their ideas in regard to what each believes might be helpful to divorced parents contemplating remarriage.

Therefore, I am writing to ask for your written permission to recruit and distribute flyers in your Church for possible participants in this study. The Institutional Review Board for research involving human subjects at Seton Hall University requires this letter of permission on an official letterhead before I can proceed.

If you grant me the permission, I would graciously ask that I be given two to three minutes to present this study to your congregation so as to maximize the opportunity for recruitment. Before addressing your congregation, I will submit in writing the exact presentation to be made for your approval.

If you have any questions or need additional information regarding this letter or the researcher, you may contact:

Joseph Kabali, M.A., M.S. (Researcher)
41 Mainsing Ave.
North Plainfield, NJ, 07066
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e-mail: masseyr@shu.edu
Appendix C

Oral Presentation in Churches
Good morning / afternoon / evening

I would like to thank your Minister / Pastor _______ (name) for graciously allowing me these few minutes to present to you my request.

My name is Joseph Kabali. My name is Joseph Kabali. I am a doctoral student in the Marriage and Family Program in the Department of Professional Psychology and Family Therapy at Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ, and I am recruiting participants for the research I am conducting for my doctoral dissertation.

I am trying to figure out some of the things, the dos and don’ts – that help people in their second marriages to stay together and feel happy. Hopefully, the information we will eventually put together will help divorced parents who may be thinking of remarrying.

The help I need now is from those of you who are currently remarried for at least eight years to help me to take and read flyers I am going to distribute to you in reference to this study. After this presentation, I will stay for a while to answer some of the questions you may have. The flyer contains my contact address and telephone number and e-mail. After being contacted, I will discuss in detail with the person about how to proceed.

I thank you so very much for your time, attention, and help.
Appendix D

Flyer that was Distributed to People in Social Agencies and Churches
REMMARRIED PARENTS NEEDED TO VOLUNTEER

IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Researcher: Joseph Kabali, M.A., M.S. I am a doctoral student in the Marriage and Family Program in the Department of Professional Psychology and Family Therapy at Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ, and I am searching for participants for the research I am conducting for my doctoral dissertation.

Purpose study: To identify the factors that influence stability and satisfaction in remarriage in order to help divorced parents entering a second marriage.

Duration of participation: approximately three hours (all in one day or two days).

Requirements: Participation will be limited to individuals who are heterosexual male and female adults. Each participant should be currently remarried in a civil court or religious denomination after a first divorce in a civil court. Each participant should have an experience of permanent or temporary residence in the second marriage with at least one biological child from the first marriage. Every participant should have at least eight years in the second marriage.

Participation entirely voluntary: Every participant will retain the freedom to withdraw from participating at any point of the interview without penalty, prejudice, or obligations attached.

Confidentiality: No participant's name will be used in analyzing or reporting the results during or after the study. The material gathered from each interview will be confidentially kept in a locked cabinet in a safe office.

Contact person: If you are interested to participate in this study, or you know somebody who might be interested, or need additional information regarding this study, you may contact:

Joseph Kabali, M.A., M.S. (Researcher)
41 Main Ave.
North Plainfield, NJ, 07060
Tel. (908) 757-4514
e-mail: kabalijo@shu.edu

What next: Contact Joseph Kabali as soon as possible or pass the flyer to a remarried parent whom you consider might volunteer because your help may contribute to people’s remarriage stability and satisfaction.
Appendix E

Informed Consent Form
Informed Consent Form

Researcher’s affiliation: Joseph Kabali, is a doctoral student in the Doctoral Program in Marriage and Family program in the Department of Professional Psychology and Family Therapy at Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ, and is searching for participants in the research he is conducting for his doctoral dissertation.

Purpose of the Research: The purpose of conducting this study is to identify the factors that influence marital stability and satisfaction for custodial parents who remarry after first divorce. In order to do this, the researcher will conduct individual interviews with custodial parents who are currently remarried to participate in this study and seek each participant’s advice in regard to what he or she believes might be helpful to divorced parents contemplating remarriage.

Duration of subject’s participation: The researcher will interview each participant for approximately three hours (all in one day or two days).

Voluntary participation: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Therefore, every participant will retain the freedom to withdraw from participating at any point of the interview without penalty, prejudice, or obligations attached.

Non-anonymous study: Before participating in the study, every prospective participant will write his or her names and mailing address on the Informed Consent Form for further and necessary contacts by the researcher. However, no participant’s name will be used in analyzing or reporting the results during or after the study.

Confidentiality: The researcher will safeguard every participant’s confidentiality. The information gathered from each interview will be confidential and the researcher will securely store all the data (e.g., Contact information sheet, background information, tapes, and transcripts) in a locked cabinet in his office. The results of this study may be published and presented to different audiences at the researcher’s discretion.

Requirements: Participation will be limited to individuals who are heterosexual male and female adults. Each participant should be currently remarried in a civil court or religious denomination after a first divorce in a civil court. Each participant should have an experience of permanent or temporary residence in the second marriage with at least one biological child from the first marriage. Every participant should have at least eight years for the second marriage.

Risks or discomforts: Because this study involves reflecting upon lived experiences, it is likely that a participant may experience some minimal discomfort before, during, and/or after the interview process.

Steps to take in case of risks or discomforts: The participant may speak to a relative, friend, religious minister, and/or seek professional help. If it is during the interview process, the participant should inform the researcher in order to be referred for help from an appropriate source. Alternatively, the participant may seek mental-health services from the NJ Psychological Association (1-800-281-6572), the National Association of Social Workers NJ Chapter (1-800-932-0004) and/or from the NJ American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (609-771-2119).
Benefits: No participant will receive any monetary or material benefits for participation in this study. However, he or she may find the interview helpful in clarifying his or her ideas.

Further questions in need of clarification or need of additional information regarding this letter or the research protocol may be directed to:

Joseph Kabali, M.A., M.S. (Researcher)
41 Main Ave.
North Plainfield, NJ 07060
Tel. (908) 757-4514
e-mail: kabali@shu.edu

Robert Masey, Ph. D. (Dissertation Adviser)
Seton Hall University
Dept. of Professional Psychology and Family Therapy
400 South Orange Ave.
South Orange, NJ 07079
Tel. (973) 761-6591
e-mail: maseyra@shu.edu

Mary F. Ruzicka, Ph. D. (Director, IRB)
Seton Hall University
Office of Institutional Review Board
400 South Orange Ave.
South Orange, NJ 07079
Tel: (973) 313-6313
Fax: (973) 775-2998

Audio-taped interviews: All the interviews will be audio-taped and a trained secretary in human research ethics will transcribe the tapes. Just in case a participant may have additional insights after the interview(s), the researcher will be glad to receive them in writing. All written materials by the participant should be typed notes or in readable hand-written notes before mailing them to the researcher in a self-addressed stamped envelope that he will provide to every participant at the end of the interview(s). If necessary, the researcher will schedule a follow-up session of approximately one hour in order to make the necessary clarifications he might need and to double check with a participant whether his summaries reflect clearly the participant's contributions as reported in the previous interview(s). The researcher will keep the audio-taped interviews for a minimum period of three years after the research is finished. The researcher may use segments of the audio-taped interviews during his future presentations without the need of asking the participant to sign another consent form. The participant will have the right to review all or any portion of his or her recorded audio-tape and to request that a specific segment or the whole audio-tape be destroyed.

Note: Taking in account all the above considerations, if a prospective participant voluntarily decides to participate in this study, let him or her write down the required information in the following spaces on this form as an expression of his or her informed consent. The researcher will give a copy of this signed and dated consent form to the prospective participant before the beginning of the first interview.

Name: ____________________________

Address: ____________________________

Street address ____________________________

City ____________________________ State ____________________________ Zip code ____________________________

Telephone: ____________________________ (____ ) ____________________________

Area code ____________________________

Participant's Signature ____________________________ Date ____________________________

Researcher's Signature ____________________________ Date ____________________________

Seton Hall University

Department of Education and Human Services
Department of Professional Psychology and Family Therapy
400 South Orange Avenue • South Orange, New Jersey 07079-2685

ENRICHING THE MIND, THE HEART AND THE SPIRIT
Demographic Sheet – created by researcher to collect participant’s in-depth, contextual, and background information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your gender: Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Religion:

Your current attendance of religious services: *One or more times per week:* *Once a month:* *Less than five times a year:* *Not attending.*

Gender of your first spouse: Male | Female | Age |
|---------------------------------|--------|-----|

His or her religion:

His or her attendance of religious services during your first marriage: *One or more times per week:* *Once a month:* *Less than five times a year:* *Never attended.*

Gender of your second spouse: Male | Female | Age |
|---------------------------------|--------|-----|

His or her religion:

His or her current attendance of religious services: *One or more times per week:* *Once a month:* *Less than five times a year:* *Not attending.*

Cultural / ethnic background of your biological mother:

Cultural / ethnic background of your biological father:

Cultural / ethnic background with which you identify yourself:

Highest level of your formal education:

Your sexual orientation:

Cultural / ethnic background of your first spouse’s mother:

Cultural / ethnic background of your first spouse’s father:

Cultural / ethnic background with which your first spouse identified himself/herself:

Highest level of formal education of your first spouse:

Sexual orientation of your first spouse:

Cultural / ethnic background of your second spouse’s mother:
Cultural/ethnic background of your second spouse's father

Cultural/ethnic background with which your second spouse identifies himself/herself

Highest level of formal education of your second spouse

Sexual orientation of your second spouse

Indicate four times with in (x) the approximate annual income in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual income</th>
<th>Annual family income in your family of origin (before your first marriage)</th>
<th>Annual family income in your first marriage</th>
<th>Your annual income after divorce and before second marriage</th>
<th>Annual family income in your second marriage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$15,000 - 25,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>$25,000 - 35,000</td>
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<td>$75,000 - 90,000</td>
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<td>$90,000 - 100,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Over $100,000</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of all persons currently dependent on the annual family income:

- before your first marriage _______; in your first marriage _______; in your second marriage _______

Your current home neighborhood based on the State of New Jersey:

Inne-city _______; Urban _______; Suburban _______

Family of origin (fill in all the spaces below with either Yes or No)

Your biological mother: Alive _______; deceased _______; married _______; divorced _______; remarried _______; remarried more than once _______; never lived together with your father _______

Biological father: Alive _______; deceased _______; married _______; divorced _______; remarried _______; remarried more than once _______; never lived together with your mother _______

Biological mother of your first spouse: Alive _______; deceased _______; married _______; divorced _______; remarried _______; remarried more than once _______; never lived together with your father _______
Biological father of your first spouse: Alive ______; deceased ______; married ______; divorced ______; remarried ______; remarried more than once ______; never lived together with your mother ______.

Biological mother of your second spouse: Alive ______; deceased ______; married ______; divorced ______; remarried ______; remarried more than once ______; never lived together with your father ______.

Biological father of your second spouse: Alive ______; deceased ______; married ______; divorced ______; remarried ______; remarried more than once ______; never lived together with your mother ______.

Number of your older brothers ______; Number of younger brothers ______; Number of older sisters ______; Number of younger sisters ______.

Number of your single brothers (above eighteen years of age and never married) ______; Number of your brothers in their first marriages ______; Number of your currently married brothers ______; Number of your currently remarried brothers ______.

Number of your single sisters (above eighteen years of age and never married) ______; Number of your sisters in their first marriages ______; Number of your currently divorced sisters ______; Number of your currently remarried sisters ______.

You grew up with: both biological parents ______; single parent ______; other relative ______; in a stepfamily ______; a stepfather ______; or stepmother ______; Adoptive parents ______.

Number of your first spouse’s older brothers ______; Number of younger brothers ______; Number of older sisters ______; Number of younger sisters ______.

Number of your first spouse’s single brothers (above eighteen years of age and never married) ______; Number of brothers in their first marriages ______; Number of currently married brothers ______; Number of currently remarried brothers ______.

Number of your first spouse’s single sisters (above eighteen years of age and never married) ______; Number of sisters in their first marriages ______; Number of currently divorced sisters ______; Number of currently remarried sisters ______.

Your first spouse grew up with: both biological parents ______; single parent ______; other relative ______; in a stepfamily ______; a stepfather ______; or stepmother ______; Adoptive parents ______.

Number of your second spouse’s older brothers ______; Number of younger brothers ______; Number of older sisters ______; Number of younger sisters ______.

Number of your second spouse’s single brothers (above eighteen years of age and never married) ______; Number of brothers in their first marriages ______; Number of currently married brothers ______; Number of currently remarried brothers ______.

Number of your second spouse’s single sisters (above eighteen years of age and never married) ______; Number of sisters in their first marriages ______; Number of currently divorced sisters ______; Number of currently remarried sisters ______.
Participants' first marriage, divorce, and remarriage

Your age at first marriage: __________________________ Duration of your first marriage: __________________________

Time between your first divorce and second marriage: __________________________

Number of your biological children in first marriage: __________________________ Age(s) of your biological children at time of first marriage: __________________________

Gender and current age of your biological children from first marriage living or had lived with you in your second marriage:

Females: __________________________ Males: __________________________

Number and ages of your biological children born in your second marriage: __________________________

Age of your first spouse at time of your first marriage: __________________________ Age of your current spouse at time of your remarriage: __________________________

Gender and current ages of your stepchildren (current spouse's children) living with you at present in your second marriage:

Females: __________________________ Males: __________________________

Participants' first spouse: Marriage, divorce, and remarriage

Age of your first spouse at his/her first marriage: __________________________ Duration of his/her or her prior marriage(s): __________________________

Time between his/her first divorce and second marriage: __________________________

His or her number of prior marriages: __________________________ Age(s) of his/her or her biological children at time of his/her or her marriage with you: __________________________

Gender and current age of his/her or her biological children from prior marriages who lived with you in your first marriage:

Females: __________________________ Males: __________________________

Age of your ex-spouse at time of his or her marriage with you: __________________________

Gender and current ages of his or her stepchildren who lived with you in your first marriage:

Females: __________________________ Males: __________________________

Participants' second spouse: Marriage, divorce, and remarriage

Age of your second spouse at his/her first marriage: __________________________ Duration of his/her or her prior marriage(s): __________________________

Time between his/her first divorce and second marriage: __________________________

His or her number of prior marriages: __________________________ Age(s) of his/her biological children at time of his/her marriage with you: __________________________

Gender and current age of his/her or her biological children from prior marriages living with you in your second marriage:

Females: __________________________ Males: __________________________

Age of your current spouse at time of his/her marriage with you: __________________________

Gender and current ages of his/her or her stepchildren who lived with you in your second marriage:

Females: __________________________ Males: __________________________

Current marriage
Is there something unique about the structure of your current marriage you think it would be helpful for the researchers to know in relation to this study? Circle Yes or No. If yes, describe it as clearly as possible.
Appendix G

Interview Guide
Interview guide

Note: Before conducting a face-to-face interview, I (primary researcher and interviewer) informed each interviewee that each remarriage or second marriage was mentioned heteronormative marriage was implied.

**Entering a remarriage after a first experience of divorce**
- What motivated you to remarry?
- What do you think motivated divorced custodial parents to remarry?
- How did you plan for your remarriage?
- How should divorced parents plan for a second marriage?
- Give as many suggestions as you can in regard to what divorced/custodial parents should do and not do before they remarry.

**Gender-related questions for women who remarried after first divorce**
- What challenges do you consider affect women who are custodial parents in their remarriages?
- What do you recommend that women who are divorced should do to resolve some of those problems in order to attain and maintain remarriage stability?
- What do you recommend that women who are divorcees should do to resolve some of those problems in order to attain and maintain remarriage satisfaction?
- What suggestions do you have as a woman for custodial male parents (i.e., men who are custodial parents) entering a second marriage?

**Gender-related questions for men who remarried after a first divorce**
- What challenges do you consider affect men who are custodial parents in their second marriages?
- What do you recommend that men who are divorcees should do to resolve some of those problems in order to attain and maintain remarriage stability?
- What do you recommend that men who are divorcees should do to resolve some of those problems in order to attain and maintain remarriage satisfaction?
- What suggestions do you have as a man for custodial female parents (i.e., women who are custodial parents) entering a second marriage?

**Reinforcing remarriage stability**
- Identify and describe briefly the personal experiences that have worked for you in stabilizing your remarriage.
- Identify and describe briefly what you have done that has not worked efficiently in reinforcing your remarriage stability.
- Identify and describe briefly the factors that you consider contribute to remarriage stability.

**Reinforcing remarriage satisfaction**
- Identify and describe briefly the personal experiences that have worked for you to find satisfaction in your remarriage.
- Identify and describe briefly what you have done that has not worked efficiently in reinforcing your remarriage satisfaction.
- Identify and describe briefly the factors that you consider contribute to remarriage satisfaction.

**Participants' suggestions for family therapists, psychologists and other professions**
- What do you think family therapists, psychologists and other professionals (e.g., religious ministers, and social workers) need to do in order to get partners contemplating remarriage to seek pre-remarriage counseling and psychoeducation?
Identify and describe as many suggestions as you can that family therapists, psychologists, and other professionals may need to understand so that they become efficient counselors for divorced custodial parents who are preparing for a second marriage.

Note: After the interview, if you would like to provide additional suggestions in writing for family therapists and psychologists about how to reinforce remarriage stability and satisfaction for custodial parents who remarry, you may do so by means of legible handwriting or by opening and sending them to me in a stamped, self-addressed envelope. You have at most seven days from today to write those suggestions and then send them to me immediately. If you wish, you may take some time now and jot them down so that you can take them with you, or if you prefer to write them later on, you may drop them in the mail to me.
Appendix H
Transcriber's Consent Form
Transcriber's Consent Form

I, _________________, agree to keep confidentiality about all the data I will be transcribing from the audio-taped interviews by Joseph Kahili (primary researcher). Apart from him, I will not share any information related to this study with anybody until the results of the study are finally finished and officially published, and, then, I shall communicate only the generalized results. I will at no time attempt to link individual responses to participants, nor will I discuss the work I am doing with participants in the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transcriber's Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Primary researcher's Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Appendix I

Peer Supervisor’s Consent Form
I, ________________________, have been a peer graduate student to Joseph Kabali (primary researcher) at Seton Hall University. At his request and in consultation with his mentor, I have volunteered to use my knowledge to help him with the following responsibilities:

I will read and keep confidentiality of all the transcribed data from the audio-taped interviews by Joseph Kabali. I will play a devil's advocate by constructively critiquing his deduced categories and themes from the transcribed data. I will offer constructive criticism to help him not to include his biases in the reporting of the results. I will double-check his organizational and conceptualization of the transcribed data. I will check for the clarity and themes of meaning within his written reports. I will ask for explanations of his interpretations of the data, and help him in exploring gender-related cues within the data which might escape his attention. Additionally, I will search for coherence among the collected data, established categories and the evolving theory of remarriage stability and satisfaction.

Peer Supervisor’s Signature  Date  Primary researcher’s Signature  Date
Appendix J

Open Coding
Open coding

Concepts and/or categories from data regarding remarriage stability and satisfaction (Figures 2 & 3 in chapter IV illustrate pseudonyms and the genders of the participants who made following open coded contributions to this study)

- Love (0001F – 0008F, 0001M – 0008M)
- Motivations for remarriage (0003F, 0007F, 0003F, 0001M, 0004M, 0007M, 0008M)
- Realistic expectations (0001M, 0003M, 0005F, 0007F, 0007M, 0008M)
- Compatibility (0001M, 0001F, 0002M, 0003M, 0007M)
- Commitment to marriage (0001M, 0003M, 0004M, 0006M, 0007F, 0007M, 0008F)
- Temperament of partners (0002M, 0006F, 0007M, 0008F)
- Perseverance (0001M – 0007M, 0006F, 0006F, 0007F)
- Flexibility (0005M, 0006M, 0007F, 0008F)
- Wisdom (0005M)
- Motivations for first marriages (0004F, 0006F, 0006M, 0008M)
- Maturity (0001M – 0008M, 0001F – 0008F)
- Conflict resolution skills (0001F, 0002F, 0004F, 0006F, 0004M, 0008M)
- Mental status of children (0001M, 0001F, 0008M)
- Finances (0006M – 0008M, 0001F – 0008F)
- Trust between partners (0002F, 0005F, 0006F, 0002M, 0005M, 0007M, 0008M)
- Collaborative parenting (0001F – 0002F, 0001M – 0008M)
- Family of origin (0002M, 0005M, 0008M)
- Amicable divorce (0001F – 0003F, 0003M – 0006M)
- Communication (0001F – 0008F, 0001M – 0008M)
- Dating (0003F, 0005F, 0007F, 0008F, 0001M, 0002M, 0003M, 0007M)
- Forgiveness (0001F, 0005F, 0007F, 0008M)
- Relationship with stepchild (0003M, 0004M, 0006M)
- Support from trusted friends (0002M)
- Boundaries (0001F, 0003F, 0006F, 0003M, 0008M)
- Munet (0002M, 0005F, 0007M, 0007F, 0008F)
- Fairness (0003M, 0004F, 0005F, 0007M)
- Family values (0002M, 003M, 0004F, 0006F, 0007M, 0008M, 0008F)
- Respect (0001F, 0002F, 0004F, 0005F, 0003M)
- Resilience (0001F – 0008F, 0001M – 0008M)
- Expectances in-between marriages (0001F – 0005F, 0003M, 0007M)
- Spirituality (0001F – 0008F, 0001M – 0008M)
- Sexuality (0001F – 0008F, 0001M – 0008M)
- Religion (0005F, 0006F, 0007F, 0003M, 0008M)
- Marital history (0004F – 0007F, 0002M – 0006M)
- Structure (0003M, 0006M, 0007F, 0008F)
- Education (0001M, 0006M, 0009F, 0003F, 0008M)
- Knowledge about remarriage (0001F – 0008F, 0001M – 0008M)
- Work (0001F, 0003F, 0006F, 0008F, 0001M, 0004M, 0006M, 0008M)
- Counseling (0002F – 0003F, 0001M, 0003M, 0006M)
- Marital history (0001F, 0002, 0005F, 0006F, 0002M, 0004M, 0006M)
- Tenderness (0001F, 0005F, 0003M, 0005M, 0007M, 0008F)
- Children's age (0002F, 0004F, 0005F, 0006F, 0008F, 0002M, 0003M, 0004M, 0007M, 0008F)
- In-laws (0003F, 0007F, 0004M, 0005M, 0007M)
- Social support (0001F – 0005F, 0003M)
- Cohabitation (0002F, 0004M, 0001M, 0006M)
- Professional help (0001F – 0005F, 0001M – 0003M)
- Pre-nuptial financial agreements (0001F, 0006F, 0002M, 0008M)
- Sites for remarriage services (0001F, 0005F, 0007F, 0008F, 0004M, 0006M, 0007M, 0008M)
- Attention to teenagers' needs (0001F, 0003F, 0007F, 0002M – 0004M, 0007M, 0008M)

- Cultural background (0001F – 0008F, 0002M – 0004M, 0006M – 0008M)
- Age at first marriage (0001F – 0008F, 0001M – 0003M)
- Duration of first marriage (0001F – 0008F, 0001M – 0003M)
- Annual family income (0001F – 0008F, 0001M – 0003M)
- Duration in-between marriages (0001F – 0008F, 0001M – 0003M)
- Marital infidelity (0001F – 0008F, 0002M – 0006M)
- Clergy (0002F – 0007F, 0002M, 0003M, 0006M – 0008M)
- Transference issues toward second spouse (0001F, 0004M)
- Clean credit history (0007F)
- Comply with on-going alimony arrangements (0008M)

- Mourning divorce (0005F, 0007M)
- Autolament process (0002F – 0005F, 0002M – 0004M, 0006M, 0008M)
- Preventative measures of remarriage dissolution (0001F, 0002F, 0007F, 0001M, 0003M)
- Overcome remarriage obstacles (0001F – 0004F, 0005M, 0007M)
- Formal education (0003F – 0008F, 0001M – 0003M)
- Paid job (0001F, 0003F – 0008F, 0001M – 0003M)
- Study is a go-emine (0007)
- Hope (0001F, 0005F, 0008F, 0001M, 0003M, 0007M, 00008F)
Appendix K

Axial Coding
Axial Coding

Relating the open-coded categories to their subcategories and providing explanations. Redundancies are included as a reflection of emphasis and saturation point.

**Primary motivations for first marriage**
- Thought was in love
- Companionship: needed somebody to be with
- Female spouse was pregnant
- Wanted to get children
- Wanted to get out of parent's house
- It was time to get married
- Wanted to have on-going sexual expressiveness with the same person
- Curiosity and rebellious: wanted to experiment with a person of another race

**In-between the first and second marriages**
- Single mothers' finances dropped significantly
- Perception of divorce as an iceberg
- Single fathers' finance increased and standard of living
- Suffering and rejection from family members and friends
- Felt very, very lonely
- Single mothers who had never done paying jobs entered the job market
- Took on two jobs to handle financial demands
- Went for further education
- Some single fathers started overthinking
- Change in interactions between custodial single parents and their children

**Primary motivations for second marriage**
- Love
- Companionship in order to overcome loneliness
- Emotional support
- Fidelity to God's plan for humanity: man was not created to live alone
- Tenderness toward self and significant others
- Found the right and compatible partner
- Got financial support from former spouse
- Need for a parenting partner and real model for children
- Being in love with the partner
- Get away from pain in the first marriage
- Search for meaning and happiness in life with a partner
- Start over again, praying and trusting in God so that this time it (marriage) would work

**Remarriage, love, and maturity**
- Having the right motivations for marriage
- Focus on realistic expectations about remarriage and prospective spouse
- Compatibility, involving the picking of the right partner or chemistry match
- Love evolves making a decision and a commitment to marriage
- Love of children and attentiveness to their needs
- Intelligent and emotional maturity
- Unconditional love
- Self-identity and personality qualities (e.g., reliable, responsible, sociable, easy going, kind, reasonable spending habits, perseverance, joyful, spiritual, independent and dependent)
- Mutual love between partners
- Love toward the multiple extended-family members
- Maturity based on one's experience
- Ability to handle and resolve conflicts to arrive at mutually acceptable decisions
- Children's mental status

- Wisdom that focuses on knowing your position and roles in the marriage
- Forgiveness is part and part of maturity
- Love of self and love of the partner
- Sense of order, structure, and flexibility with self and others
- Awareness that all marriages are difficult
- Need to work hard for the relationship to succeed
- Perception of remarriage as an iceberg
- Compatibility: described as enjoying some of the same things and values
- Keeping up with the lessons learned by from one's past mistakes that contributed the end of the first marriage (e.g., marital infidelity and over focus on work at the expense of marriage and family life), in order to avoid the risk of making the same mistakes again.
- Parent's realization of the pain and losses suffered by the children as a result of parental conflict and divorce, hence, resolve to make the second marriage work so their children do not face the same fate again.

Handling the complexity of remarriage
- Awareness and acceptance of one's contribution to the failure of the first marriage (e.g., without putting all the blame on the ex-spouse or upon oneself)
- In-depth communication that is reinforced by trust
- Gradual introduction of the prospective spouse to one's biological children
- Parental satisfaction: reinforced by peaceful and well-behaved biological children and stepchildren - e.g., those who do not get into trouble, not out of control, able to receive correction, without raising their voices, and are self-motivated.
- Taking courage to trust again
- Caring for mentally and emotionally healthy children
- Friendly relationship with stepchildren
- Ability to ask for help from trusted loved ones and/or professionals

- Accepting support from trusted relative and friends.
- Humor and optimism, especially in hard times
- Doing things together with spouse
- Equality and equity in remarriage
- Acknowledging whatever each partner brings and takes from the relationship
- Consistent and mutual respect for one another
- Personal attributes beyond material magnetism of sheer desire: kindness, generosity, shared view that the relationship is build on equal effort
- Ability to share with others and overcoming a deeply rooted selfish attitude, that makes constant focus on: "Me," "My," and "I"

- Better spending habits by both spouses
- Integral maturity that encompasses the whole life of the individuals
- Ability to forgive is a manifestation of maturity and personal growth
- Overcoming transference issues in second marriage based on unresolved issues from first marriage (e.g., an erroneous projection on the second spouse one's suspicion of marital
infidelity on the basis of unresolved feelings that are related to the infidelity of the first spouse)
- Making use of accumulated knowledge through experience
- Appropriate response to the unkind and continuous aggressive behavior from the ex-spouse
- Maturity based on ability to slow down to think through things, accept one's personal limitations, seek professional help, and if necessary to resolve them, and start to implement the adage: "prevention is better than cure" (007M)
- Overcoming frustration, anger, and/or guilty from first marriage
- Better spending habits by both spouses
- Kindness to self and consideration for others

**Dating after divorce: Participants' suggestions for parents preparing for remarriage**
- Slow down before you start dating and behaving romantically after divorce.
- Give yourself time to heal from the wounds of divorce.
- Dating ought to start by developing friendship first, mutual respect between companions, hold in-depth talks about children, expectations, money, sex, personal history, family of origin, parenting skills and disciplining of children.
- Anticipate that your teenager might react with a negative attitude toward your prospective spouse, especially if the teenager is still has hope that you and his or her other biological parent will reconcile and remarry.
- Be aware of your marital history, interpersonal dynamics in your family of origin, first marriage.
- Be clear about your motivations for remarriage, develop realistic expectations, know the consequences of your actions and be flexible in order to adjust well to changes in remarriage.
- Pre-nuptial agreements are extremely necessary especially between very rich partners.
- Let each partner sell his or her residential house or apartment so that the two partners (and custodial children) can move into a new house. If one of the two partners has to move into the other's house or apartment - that move must be on a temporary basis.
- Focus on exploring and addressing the likely problems in remarriage than putting more attention to the color of the wedding gown.
- Acknowledge that remarriage is hard, complex, especially if it involves children from the previous marriage. Remarriage involves a lot of work because you marry a family, not just a person, and that is outside of your control. Therefore, include the in-laws in the remarriage arrangement because they are constantly present in your marriage.
- Take advanced studies because that might also help you to get a better paying job.
- Pre-nuptial agreements are extremely necessary especially between very rich partners.
- Be extra prudent in regard to dating, know the challenges involved, and keep up with your parenting roles while dating.

- Establish and maintain consistent house rules and roles
- Be aware of the potential areas of conflict in remarriage, learn the skills of conflict resolution and practice them
- Understand that cohabitation has its advantages and disadvantages, and it is still not encouraged in all religions, societies, and/or individuals close to you may not approve it.
- Look primarily at what your part is in the marriage, what you might not be doing, and how your faults might be contributing to the marriage.
Structure and personal integrity: Participants’ suggestions for remarrying parents
- Set house rules that state clearly how you want the things to be (e.g., in this house, nobody has the right to bad-mouth one’s ex-spouse in front of the children; table manners must be respected
- Including the positioning of the forks, knives, and saucers.
- Keep clear boundaries with significant others, especially with your ex-spouse, children, and impact of society on your life and remarriage

- Avoid unnecessary resentment of your prospective spouse by your biological children
- Develop and put into practice the guidelines for parenting and step-parenting
- Set rules as you want the things to be. Examples of house rules (e.g., no bad muthing of one’s ex-spouse in front of your children)
- Understand that divorce ends a marriage, not a family

- Reduce your children’s risk of feeling responsible and/or guilty for your divorce by verbally informing them it was not their fault
- Overcome frustration and/or guilt from first marriage, and if necessary, use professional help
- Be aware that joint physical custody that involves very short term alternation of residences (e.g., as a weekly, weekend, or monthly basis) enables the children to be both parents, but it leaves the children lacking a place to call home.

- For the greater benefit of your children, avoid the risk of bringing anybody you are dating to your house until both of you really feel committed to one another.
- Prevent and/or reduce the risk of another divorce by maintaining marital fidelity. Avoiding an extramarital affair is crucial to marital trust. It is not easy to forgive an affair. Even if one does, there will always remain a doubt in one’s mind: “Can I trust my ex-spouse again?” (091F)
- Seek counseling if necessary to address your unresolved issues related to the previous marriage (e.g., unresolved pain, anger, and/or frustration)

Remarriage and finances
- Each couple is unique in regard to finances. Although none of the participants had his or her current spouse discussed finances with the help of a professional accountant, all participants highlighted the need for parents contemplating remarriage and their prospective spouses to consult with an accountant before remarriage in order to choose their appropriate financial model(s) in remarriage. The following three models are the ones currently used by the participants:

1. One pot method - whereby both spouses have mutual trust and commitment that empower them to put all their financial resources together, hold transparent dialogues about how to invest their money and how to spend it. “Marriage is all about sharing.” (0005M)
2. Independent accounts – No sharing of financial resources, each spouse handles his or her personal account.
3. One pot method and independent accounts – this method was reported by the participants who used for the well-being of their children from previous marriage, safety reasons and emergencies and/or holding different business.

Remarriage, finances, and mental health
- Lack of financial resources in a remarriage may contribute to strain in a marriage and or the individuals’ psychological well-being, thereby bringing about other kinds of mental problems, negative attitudes, and behaviors. For instance, being on the breadline could affect people’s mental health.
- Recover your personal integral health and self-esteem.
- Separation of money should primarily be done for the benefit of the children from the first marriage.
- Know the limits of money and attentiveness to resources that money cannot buy.
- Sharing money also symbolizes a leap of trust that spouses put in one another; especially the partner who invests more money and assets into the relationship.
- On-going child support and whether applicable, paying alimony for the ex-spouse.
- Neighborhood (e.g., living in a suburban neighborhood — due the expected high standard of living, thus creating financial pressure on the couple and family struggling to fit-in.

Remarriage, sexuality, and aging: Participants’ experiences and actions
- Differences in sexual desire and aging couples.
- Scheduling time and space for intimacy.
- More people are currently entering remarriage when they are chronologically older in comparison to those entering first marriages. Keeping sexuality alive by aging spouses in remarriage is vital, especially as partners advance in age. Participants suggested that they handled this by maintaining a youthful attitude that involves dressing well, mentally alert, taking periodic honeymoons, tenderness, doing things together, going places, eating together, sharing opinions, have sex for pleasure, learn techniques for igniting desire and interest into the partner and/or watching sexually seductive movies together with their partners.

Remarriage, communication, and conflict resolution
- Values and opportunities for informal and in-depth communication.
- In case of on-going conflicts with ex-spouse, avoid the risk of getting children caught-up in the midst of those conflicts.
- Each should know that he or she may have the right answers or words, but may have to hold back to avoid the risk of speaking with anger.
- Listen and learn from another person’s point of view.
- Be aware and accept that every marriage involves some level of conflict.
- Learn some conflict resolution skills and practice them (e.g., be patient, give yourself time to think through the issue).
- Establish clear boundaries and guidelines with them so that they do not break your remarriage in the dream of getting you together with your former spouse. Therefore, tell that how your marriage comes first before them.
- Talk into account the child’s age while communicating about your remarriage arrangements.
- Be aware of the challenges in remarriage related to children (e.g., children with special needs, they create a lot of stress on a marriage.
- Avoid behaviors that influence your children to live in conflict of loyalties situations between you and your ex-spouse (e.g., putting children in the middle of your on-going conflicts with your ex-spouse).
- Timely communication of feeling (e.g., if one is hurt by the other spouse, the hurt party should let the other person know that he or she has been hurt in less than forty eight hours. Likewise, each spouse should know that he or she may have the right answers or words, but may have to hold back to avoid the risk of speaking with anger.
- In case of on-going conflicts with ex-spouse, avoid the risk of getting children caught-up into those conflicts.
- Parenting: metaphor regarding the protection the gosses whenever two lions fight
- Listen and learn from another person’s point of view
- Be aware and accept that every marriage involves some level of conflict
- Learn, some conflict resolution skills and practice them (e.g., be patient, give your time to think through the issues).
- Complexity of remarriage is important to know about before remarriage
- During while simultaneously parenting may be difficult and emotionally charged
- Difficulty in finding a name to address the stepparent, his or her title, and roles
- Communicate clearly with your spouse about how to discipline and reward children in second marriages
- Keeping contact with the other biological parent and celebrating future events

Remarriage, Spirituality, and Religion
- Personal spiritual experience and journey of faith
- Family background
- Community-based Religion
- God who heals the heart-broken and offers forgiveness
- Impact of divorce and remarriage on devout Catholics,
- Fertile annulment process
- Divorced Catholics in search of God’s blessing in non-Catholic Churches and non-Catholic ministers

Remarriage and religious leaders: Participants’ suggestions for religious ministers
- Religious ministers, especially within the Roman Catholic Church should be more compassionate and less judgmental about divorced and remarried ones. They should have positive pastoral attitude toward divorced with and without annulments, civilly remarried couples, cohabiting divorced.
- It is high time for the hierarchy within the Roman Catholic Church to seriously reflect and take action with a non-judgmental pastoral care to the increasing numbers of divorced, cohabiting and remarried Catholics.
- They should allow parents contemplating remarriage to participate in remarriage workshops that are organized and funded by the Catholic Church. In other words, pre-remarriage preparation should be open to all people, including divorced Catholics who have not received the annulments of their first marriages.

Remarriage and professional services: Participants’ suggestions for professionals and clergy (Improving professionals’ work with divorced, remarried parents, and children in stepfamilies)
- Know that every remarriage case is unique. Each couple has a specific history and personality differences. There are many factors that vary from one marriage to marriage
- Orientate remarrying partners to assess their motivations for remarriage, expectations to avoid the risk of remarrying on the basis of the partner’s money
- Coach the partners to ask themselves the “What if...?” question (e.g., What if all your expectations are not fulfilled in remarriage, what will you do?”)
- Help the partners to understand differences between remarriage after divorce and after widowerhood
- Professionals should advocate for involving children in the pre-marriage arrangements in order to listen to their concerns, and pay attention to their needs, address their fears, losses, conflict of loyalties, and help them in their adjustment process to live within a stepfamily.

- Professionals acknowledge people's spirituality. Religion and spirituality empower people to live by and be motivated by the ethical component within the marriage, thereby empowered to practice family values, e.g., justice, fairness, and charity.

- Double-check with the remarrying partner if he/she has accepted personal responsibility for the end of the previous divorce.

- Help partners to set clear boundaries with one's ex-spouse, family, members and friends.

- Clarify to the partners that nobody changes the other, but a change in oneself can change the other.

- In regard to resolving conflict, help each part to realize that he or she is only seeing part of the whole picture.

- Clarify to each party that it is hard to get outside of one's view. So, encourage each to do so.

- Be knowledgeable about how to normalize the anger and let each party know that anger is not necessarily a good skill for handling conflict.

- Establish an accessible and permanent building. There is a need for an accessible and permanent building or center within the community where people can receive orientation, pre-marital counseling, therapy and other services that are related to remarried families.

- Differing professional disciplines and professionals are needed to reinforce remarriage stability and satisfaction.

- Establish centers in different parts of the state, country, and worldwide where people can have access to qualified personnel in remarriage.

- Pre-remarriage preparations should involve workshops and role plays by the remarrying partners.

- Be aware of the partners' developmental needs (e.g., a remarrying woman).

- Acknowledge that remarriage is not an event, but an ongoing process and like an iceberg that reawakens diverse memories into the people involved.

- Help partners to understand the importance of resolving their unfinished problems from the previous marriage and other related problems which may interfere with the marriage stability and satisfaction.

- Coach the remarrying partners about the different needs and challenges in remarriage (e.g., physical, emotional, sexual, financial, step-parenting, and other important topics related to remarriage with the partners before formulating their marriage).

- Offer psycho-education or referral to partners by paying attention to the demographic differences (e.g., age, gender, cultural backgrounds, social economic status, level of formal education, and religion) of the remarrying and/or remarried individuals.

- Pay attention to women going through menopause and men with declining sexual expressiveness.

- It is important to know the unique needs and challenges of the remarrying individuals, partners, and children involved (e.g., handicapped, recovering alcoholics, and immigration status).

- Help partners to involve children from the very start of dating another person other than the out-of-door biological parent.

- Help the parents to think through what kinds of risks are anticipated.

- Since money seems to be a major contributing factor to divorce for partners living in suburbs and very rich couples, pre-remarriage contracts are highly recommended for financially very rich partners; and if possible, those partners should attend separate sessions from those partners with lesser finances.
Biological parent's awareness that his or her children do not have a choice to choose their
stepparent as the parent may decide on his or her prospective spouse.

Children: sensitivity to the children's developmental stage, needs, fears, emotions, jealousy
feelings toward the stepparent, who might be perceived by the children as the person coming to
take the parent away.

Disciplining stepchildren: biological parent should do the disciplining most of the time,
especially at the beginning of the marriage.

Trust: prospective stepparent warning children's trust before marriage and during marriage

Children: sensitivity to the children's developmental stage, needs, fears, emotions, jealousy
feelings toward the stepparent who might be perceived by the children as the person coming to
take their parent away.

Assess for the emotions surrounding the stages of divorcee's grieving of divorce.

Professionals should be non-judgmental, able to maintain confidentiality, and ask for affordable
prices for their services by the people who need help. Very high costs hinder some people from
seeking the professional help they need.

Go through the physical needs, sex, financial, stepparenting, and other important topics related
to remarriage with the partners before formalizing their marriage.

Since money seems to a major contributing factor to re-divorce for partners living in suburbs
and very rich couples, pre-remarriage contracts are highly recommended for financially very
rich partners; and if possible those partners should attend separate seminars from those
partners with lesser finances.

Professionals providing services related to remarriage stability and satisfaction should
encourage the remarried parents and remarried one especially the biological parents to be very
supportive and empathetic to the adolescents during process of identity formation. The
significant others should be encouraged to contribute to every adolescent's process of identity
formation by being trustworthy and caring about the integral growth of the adolescent.

Professionals should help couples to address some of the micro and macro social contextual
challenges by establishing workshops (especially in school settings) about prevention of
substance abuse, substance dependence, self-control, sexual awareness, teenage pregnancy,
self-harm, and supportive groups for students grieving the loss of their loved ones. They are based
on the participants' suggestions for professionals working with divorces, remarried parents and
children in stepamilies.

Different professional disciplines and professionals are needed to reinforce remarriage stability
and satisfaction (e.g., clergy, financial accountants, family therapists and psychologists).

Assess for the emotions surrounding the stages of divorcee's grieving of divorce. Professionals
should be non-judgmental, able to maintain confidentiality, and ask for affordable prices for
their services by the people who need help. Very high costs hinder some people from seeking
the professional help they need.

Remarriage, impact of relatives, culture, and macro-society

Some of the participants received rejection from their family members, churches, and societies
after divorce.

Remarriage involves complex interpersonal interactions. Therefore, whenever applicable,
discern wisely be flexible in your interactions with the ex-spouse, biological children from the
first marriage, current spouse, children from the second marriage, in-laws from first marriage,
in-laws from second marriage, and your second spouse: who comes first in your life? Whose needs do you address first?

- We live in a society where divorce, remarriage, stepfamilies, and re-divorce are increasing every year. This increase may help people not to feel as social misfits, however, the pain and relief experienced by the people involved reflect a challenge and invitation for society and Churches to get involved in helping people establish stable and happy marriages.

Structuring and promotion of remarriage services
Seventy participants mentioned that pre-remarriage counseling is important but very few people seek it. This is probably because people do not have places to turn to for advice. Secondly, sometimes remarriage problems tend to become more explicit after the spouses have started to live together. Therefore, in order for people to seek pre-remarriage counseling, and to address the problems which come up during celebration and/or remarriage, some participants suggested that it is necessary to establish buildings with qualified personnel (thus include remarried spouses). The participants also suggested that the trained professionals should look for ways of advertising their services to the community (e.g., in the Churches, High School, Local Radio and T.V. channels, local news papers).

Remarriage and re-divorce prevention strategies
- Becoming more cognizant of the contributing factors to the first divorce
- Working toward resolving them and/or preventing them in the second marriage.

Those contributing factors include the following:
1. marital infidelity
2. emotional and financial stress in raising handicapped a child
3. marital dissatisfaction
4. marital incompatibility
5. partner's verbal and or physical abuse
6. over prioritizing work at the expense of marital and family life
7. immaturity of both parties, especially by those who emphasized that they entered the first marriage when they were very young or to escape from home or because of pregnancy
8. high accumulated debt and bad credit history
9. alcoholism and/or dependence on illegal drugs
10. lack of active belonging to a formalized religion and/or lack of spiritual practice by one or both spouses
11. biggest problems: children and money
12. unresolved issues and/or lapses from the first marriage
13. on-going aggressive behaviors from the ex-spouse

Hope for stable and satisfactory remarriages
Although the divorce rate after remarriage seems to be higher than the divorce rate in first marriage, some of the participants clarified that there is a need for professionals and church ministries to reinforce hope and help the people contemplating remarriage because remarriages really do work for many people.