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**Intrapsychic and interpersonal factors related to adolescent
psychological well-being in stepmother and stepfather families**

Collins, William Edward, Ph.D.

The Ohio State University, 1993

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INTRAPSYCHIC AND INTERPERSONAL FACTORS RELATED TO
ADOLESCENT PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING IN STEPMOTHER AND
STEPFATHER FAMILIES

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Doctor of Philosophy Degree in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

William Edward Collins, B.A., M.Div.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University

1993

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My gratitude and appreciation is deeply felt and expressed to the following persons who played a part in making this research possible:

To Dr. Barbara Newman and Dr. Patrick McKenry, my co-advisors, for their interest, encouragement, guidance, expertise, and friendship throughout my graduate program and particularly during all the phases involved in completing this dissertation.

To Dr. Bruce Walsh for his assistance and encouragement throughout my graduate program and for his interest in the completion of this research.

To Dr. Donna Quick for her speedy helpfulness during the data analysis phase of this research.

To Fred Ruland for his assistance throughout this project and especially during the data analysis phase.

To Dr. Norman Bradburn for his helpful consultation toward the end of this project.

To Dr. Alexander Grob at the University of Bern, Switzerland, for his interest in this research area and for the English translation of his research findings.

To Dr. Ed Diener for his help and assistance during the final phases of this research.

To my friends and colleagues at Harding Hospital for their continued support and encouragement throughout my

graduate program.

To my mother, whose search for emotional well-being developed in me a curiosity about the psychological and spiritual side of life.

To my father, whose life example instilled in me the value of perseverance and self-motivation.

To my wife, Janet, for her love, patience, and enduring support throughout my graduate program, and for her affirmation and encouragement during the completion of this research.

To the ultimate Source of well-being, and for His gracious presence and guidance in my life.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

By the year 2000, it is predicted that well over one-half of all young persons living in the United States will have become stepchildren (those born before a parent's remarriage without reference to age or living arrangements) (Glick, 1989). Stepfamilies are becoming one of the most common "alternative lifestyles" in the United States (Spanier & Furstenburg, 1987). Glick (1989) estimated that while there were over 40 million first-marriage families in 1987 (63%), there were 11 million remarried families (17%), over 7 million one-parent families (11%), and nearly 6 million unmarried adult families (9%). Out of the 11 million remarried families, nearly one-half (4.3 million) are estimated to be stepfamilies. Other remarried families either have young children from a previous marriage who live elsewhere, have children older than 18 or relatives living in the household, or have had no children at all (Glick, 1989).

A different perspective of the remarried family and stepfamily situation can be obtained if the national statistics are estimated for married-couple families only (excluding one-parent families and unmarried families). Using this approach, Glick (1989) estimated that over 17%

of all married-couple families are stepfamilies. This finding is close to other national estimates (Norton, 1987). The percentage of remarriages with stepchildren actually decreased slightly from 1980 to 1987, due to an increase in cohabitation following divorce (Bumpass & Sweet, 1989), and to the fact that women are less likely to remarry for economic reasons. An estimated 80% of all divorced persons remarry (Baker, Druckman & Flagle, 1980). Over 40% of all marriages are remarriages for one or both partners. The median interval between divorce and remarriage was 3 years in 1975 (Glick, 1980). Two-thirds of all recent remarriages were preceded by cohabitation, which means that the median interval between divorce and the establishment of a new relationship is even less than 3 years (Bumpass & Sweet, 1989). About 70% of all stepfamilies are stepfather families, whereas almost 20% are stepmother families. A small minority are blends, with both parents bringing children from a previous marriage. Many stepfamilies also produce children of their own (Santrock, 1990).

Remarriages tend to be somewhat less stable than first marriages, remarriages having a higher divorce rate (55%) than first marriages (50%) --a small but significant difference (Weed, 1980). Researchers have offered various explanations for the instability of remarriages. Cherlin (1978) theorized that remarriage is an "incomplete

institution" with few clearly defined cultural and social norms to guide the remarried couple. According to Cherlin, the lack of having clear societal guidelines in parenting stepchildren may negatively affect marital stability. However, Cherlin's "incomplete institution" hypothesis does not entirely avoid the biased assumption that stepfamilies are somehow "deficient" by nature (Furstenberg & Spanier, 1987). Alternative explanations to Cherlin's "incomplete institution" theory focus instead on the often complex changes and stressors that stepfamilies face. The psychological influence of the first marriage may have lingering effects on the second. Interference of the previous partner may continue, especially if there are children from the previous marriage. Many stepfamilies must cope with stretched resources, and must deal with many new and complex sources of stressors, such as: (a) multiple sets of grandparents, (b) inconsistent parental discipline between the two sets of parents, and (c) competition between the two sets of parents for the child's affection and loyalty (Spanier & Furstenberg, 1987; Eshleman, 1988). It is remarkable that the divorce rate is not higher for stepfamilies in light of the many difficulties they face, and testifies to the strengths they bring to the adjustment process.

Adolescent Stepchildren

Remarriages with adolescent stepchildren have been identified as particularly stressful and at greater risk

for destructive parent-child interactions (Garbarino, Sebes & Schellenbach, 1984). Marital transitions that involve the entrance of a stepparent may be especially difficult for adolescents to negotiate since they are also experiencing numerous developmental changes of their own. These changes include (a) puberty; (b) expanded logical reasoning; (c) development of a personal ideology; (d) increased idealistic and egocentric thought; (e) cognitive shifts in how parents are perceived; (f) changes in socially appropriate behavior upon entrance to high school; (g) increased peer pressure with peers of both sexes; (h) emerging sexuality and the advent of dating; and (i) movement toward emotional and financial independence from parents and other adults (Santrock, 1984, 1990). Despite all these developmental changes, some adolescents exhibit remarkable resiliency and seem to be enhanced by their adjustment to marital transitions. Other adolescents, however, may continue to have unresolved emotional pain regarding their parents' divorce and remarriage, or suffer developmental delays (Hetherington, 1990).

Subjective Well-Being in Adolescence

When one considers the rising adolescent suicide rate and the greater use of psychological services by children and youth since the 1960s, it would appear that the emotional well-being of children and adolescents has

declined over the past three decades (Zill & Rogers, 1988). Increased family disruption because of divorce is often blamed for this decline in the adjustment of young people. On the other hand, studies of divorcing families indicate that a substantial number of youth are able to cope with family stress and go on with their lives. Furthermore, survey reports from young people themselves show that the majority are not depressed, alienated, or dissatisfied. Since 1976, annual survey measures of high school seniors' subjective well-being have shown little change despite the continuing trends in marital disruption (Rodgers & Bachman, 1988; Zill & Rogers, 1988). In fact, Zill and Rogers (1988) point out that the positive feelings most young people have about their families is striking in light of the continuing turbulence in American family life.

However, Wallerstein and others present a more troubled picture of how adolescents are coping with their parents' marital transitions. Wallerstein, in her longitudinal study of children of divorce, found that the psychological well-being of a substantial number of older children and adolescents was dampened by painful feelings and sometimes vivid memories of their parents' marital breakup ten years later (Wallerstein, 1985, 1989). These vivid memories and intense feelings are somewhat similar to the intrusions of unbidden images, flashbacks, and strong waves of emotion characteristic of posttraumatic

stress disorder (Horowitz, 1974, 1982; Petersen & Spiga, 1982). Vivid recall of negative life events has been found to lower subjective well-being in experimental studies (Strack, Schwarz, & Gschneidinger, 1985). The stronger the memory of a past event, the greater is its impact on present well-being (Tversky & Griffin, 1991). One recent study of Swiss adolescents (Grob, 1991) found that well-being was significantly lower in those who recalled two or more negative life events (e.g., parents' divorce, suicide of a friend) compared to those who recalled fewer such events.

The social problems literature also indicates that family structure is a strong predictor of a variety of negative outcomes. These studies have found that (compared with children from first-marriage families) children from divorced, single-parent, and stepparent families are (a) more likely to exhibit antisocial behavior and juvenile delinquency (e.g., contact with the law, arrests, runaways, school discipline problems, and truancy) (Dornbusch et al., 1985; Kalter, 1977); (b) more likely to engage in deviant behavior as a result of peer pressure (Steinberg, 1987); (c) more likely to engage in health-risk behavior such as substance abuse (Saucier & Ambert, 1983); (d) more likely to present to clinics with more severe behavioral problems (Brady, Bray & Zeeb, 1986); and (e) are more at risk to attempt and/or complete

suicide (Dorpat, Jackson & Ripley, 1969; Hawton, 1982).

An important question arises regarding adolescent well-being in stepfamilies. What are the intrapsychic and interpersonal resources available to the adolescent that might contribute to well-being and adjustment in stepfamilies? Psychological or subjective well-being has been found to be highly related to specific life concerns, such as the quality of the family environment (Andrews & Robinson, 1991). In his sample of 914 high school students, Torgoff (1979) found that satisfaction with family life was the most powerful domain affecting overall subjective well-being, followed by satisfaction with friends and social life, and feelings about one's accomplishments in life. Thus, subjective well-being may be a useful psychological indicator of how well adolescents are coping with marital and family transitions. According to Filipp and Klauer (1991), the impairment of subjective well-being is often regarded as the "crucial element inherent in critical life events," and the "restoration of well-being . . . has been equated with 'successful coping' in most studies" (p. 213).

The proposed study takes a phenomenological approach by assuming that adolescent behavior cannot be understood without reference to the subjective world. Adolescent behavior is not governed exclusively by the world that exists but by the world that is perceived. Adolescents respond in terms of how things seem to them (Campbell,

1976; Rosenberg, 1989; Snygg & Combs, 1949). The key dependent variable will be the subjective well-being of the adolescent as a psychological indicator of adjustment to parental divorce, remarriage and stepfamily life. In order to quantitatively reflect subjective well-being, adolescent self-reports of subjective well-being as measured by the Bradburn (1969) Affect Balance Scale will be collected. Although subjective well-being will be the main dependent variable measured in terms of affect balance scores, positive and negative affect will be analyzed as separate dependent measures in the post hoc analyses. Data from parental observations of adolescent problem behaviors will be correlated with well-being scores during the post hoc analysis to assess the relationship between observed external behaviors and subjective well-being.

A Theoretical Perspective on Adolescent Subjective Well-Being in Stepfamilies

Because 75% of divorced mothers and 80% of divorced fathers remarry, and the divorce rate in remarriages is higher than first marriages, many children are exposed to a series [italics added] of marital transitions and household reorganizations following their parents' initial separation and divorce. (Hetherington, Stanley-Hagan, & Anderson, 1989, p. 303)

In light of the above demographics, Hetherington et al. (1989) maintain that "divorce and remarriage should not be viewed as a single static event but as part of a

series of transitions modifying the lives and development of children" (p. 303). They conclude: "Children encounter widely varying sequences of family reorganizations and family experiences following divorce, and the patterning and timing of these experiences may be critical in their long-term development" (Hetherington et al., 1989, p.303).

Transition Theory

Hetherington and colleagues' observations about the divorce and remarriage experience suggest that a new theoretical model is needed from which to understand the complex psychological and interpersonal dynamics occurring during such life transitions. In contrast to the more demographic, event-focused approach of sociology and the public health field, Cowan (1991) has proposed a new, psychosocial framework for understanding major life transitions such as divorce and remarriage. Cowan's transition theory is an integration of both the psychological and family systems literature, and his model of life transitions is based upon theory and research related to (a) human development, (b) identity formation and self-concept, (c) cognition and emotion, (d) stress and coping, (e) adaptive behavior, (f) self-efficacy and skill development, (g) role-taking, (h) conflict resolution, (i) family dynamics, and (j) other interpersonal processes. Thus, transition theory offers a more intrapsychic as well as a more interpersonal vantage

point from which to study the impact of divorce and remarriage upon adolescent adjustment.

Cowan's model of transition focuses upon the psychological and interpersonal shifts that occur within individuals and families during periods of change. He maintains that transition is not defined by an external event, but by psychological changes in one's inner world and in the organization of one's roles and central relationships. He defines transition as a long-term process that results in a "qualitative reorganization of both inner life and external behavior" (Cowan, 1991, p. 5). He concludes:

For a life change to be designated as transitional, it must involve a qualitative shift from the inside looking out [italics added] (how the individual understands and feels about the self and the world) and from the outside looking in [italics added] (reorganization of the individual's or family's level of personal competence, role arrangements, and relationships with significant others. (Cowan, 1991, p. 5)

Cowan's model also makes important distinctions between normative and nonnormative transitions. Cowan states that previous approaches to the study of major life change --preventive psychiatry (Lindemann, 1979), family sociology (Hill, 1949), and life stress events (Holmes & Rahe, 1967)-- have not only ignored "the alternative view that transitions are processes that unfold over time," but have blurred the distinction between normative and nonnormative transitions (Cowan, 1991, p. 11). Cowan (1991) maintains that normative transitions are expected

and experienced by most individuals and families (e.g., entering school, forming intimate relationships), while nonnormative transitions are unexpected and are associated with unusual or unpredictable events (e.g., natural disasters, accidents, serious illness, emotional breakdowns, winning the lottery).

The study of nonnormative life transitions had its beginnings in the work of Rueben Hill and his colleagues who developed the ABC-X model of crisis (Hill, 1949; Hansen & Johnson, 1982). Cowan maintains that divorce falls into the nonnormative category. He states that some would place divorce at the midpoint of this bimodal classification, but "because most couples enter marriage believing that divorce will not and should not happen to them, and because children rarely expect it (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980), divorce, from a societal perspective, is still a nonnormative family transition" (Cowan, 1991, p. 9).

Cowan's transition model is a psychosocial, process-oriented theory that goes beyond sociological and public health "life event" definitions of transition which focus on a single event in time. Transition theory acknowledges and incorporates the psychosocial complexity of human development throughout the life course. Cowan (1991) distinguishes between psychosocial structures and temporal process components of the transition experience

(See Figure 1). Psychosocial "structures" should not be confused with structural, demographic variables such as income and gender, but refer instead to the intrapsychic and interpersonal domains (what is happening within the individual and within his or her social milieu during the transition experience). Process components refer to the unfolding, temporal aspects of transitions --to the cognitive, affective, and behavioral paths, phases, and sequences that individuals and families may experience over time as they work through a major life change.

Transition Theory and Subjective Well-Being

The personal strivings model of subjective well-being (Emmons, 1989) may be helpful in understanding how adolescents experience life-changing events and how successfully they cope with their parents' marital transitions and adapt to stepfamily life. Like other telic (or goal-oriented) theories of well-being, personal strivings theory states that well-being is achieved by striving toward and obtaining personal needs, goals and desires (Palys & Little, 1983; Reich & Zautra, 1983). There is widespread agreement that the fulfillment of one's needs, goals, and desires is related to subjective happiness (Diener, 1984; Reich & Zautra, 1983). In their study of U. S. and Italian teenagers, Csikszentmihalyi and Wong (1991) found that the highest levels of subjective well-being were associated with activities having clear goals that required the development of relevant skills.

STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

<u>Intrapsychic</u>	<u>Interpersonal</u>
Restructuring of Sense of Self	Restructuring Personal Competence (new skills)
	Reorganization of Roles (appropriate behaviors)
Alterations in Assumptive World (beliefs, roles)	Reorganization of Relationships (parent-child dynamics)
Affect Regulation: Inner Coping (experiencing vs. controlling emotion)	Affect Regulation: Interpersonal Coping (expressing vs. controlling emotion)

PROCESS COMPONENTS

Transitional experience across time ----->

Early Phase	Middle Phase	Late Phase
Conflict Loss, Uncertainty De-organization	Testing New Alternatives	Return to Former Equilibrium OR Establishment of New Equilibrium

FIGURE 1

Structural and Process Components
of Transition Theory

Developmental examples of personal goals or strivings during adolescence are (a) gaining emotional independence from parents, (b) acquiring a set of values, (c) achieving a masculine or a feminine role, (d) obtaining more mature and intimate relationships with age mates of both sexes, and (e) preparing for an economic career (Santrock, 1984).

During a transitional life event, the feasibility of goal achievement could be described as "coping efficacy" (Aldwin & Revenson, 1987). Achievement of personal strivings during adolescence may be complicated by marital transitions, and thus affect adolescent subjective well-being. Factors that may interfere with the adolescent's personal strivings are (a) reduced financial resources; (b) the reduction or absence of guidance and emotional support from one or both biological parents; and (c) a conflict in personal goals that arises from trying to remain loyal to both divorced parents, or from competition with the stepparent for the custodial parent's attention.

During the divorce, single-parent, and remarriage phases of marital transitions, the adolescent may experience internal conflict or ambivalence over personal strivings. The adolescent may want independence from parents, yet still need parental guidance and assurance from the absent noncustodial parent. The adolescent may want to express feelings about the divorce or new stepparent, yet feel compelled to avoid or deny expression of these feelings. Thus, ambivalence over personal

strivings may be increased due to the stresses related to marital transitions.

Personal strivings theory maintains that many of the strivings that are rated high in ambivalence seem to be centered on the expression of emotion (Emmons, 1989). Research findings suggest that high ambivalence or internal conflict over the expression of feelings (a desire to confide coupled with a fear of confiding) is related to anxiety, depression, and lower subjective well-being (Emmons, 1989). Personal strivings theory states that ambivalence over expressing emotion (cf. Cowan's internal affect regulation), rather than lack of emotion per se, may be detrimental to subjective well-being (Emmons, 1989).

The personal strivings of the adolescent may also be changed or altered during major life transitions. Figure 2 depicts how events that occur during the transition from an intact family to a stepfamily may lead to a personal transformation or turning point in the adolescent's life. Emmons (1989) refers to such events as "nuclear" episodes --scenes that are accompanied by high levels of affect (cf. Cowan's interpersonal affect regulation) and that play a major role in the development of the adolescent. During parental divorce and remarriage, emotionally charged "nuclear transition episodes" either move the adolescent away from or toward the achievement of personal

FIGURE 2

The Relationship Between Transition Theory
and Well-Being

goals, needs and desires, thus modifying well-being (see Figure 2). A heated parental argument, for instance, could lead the adolescent to try harder to become independent from his or her parents, a personal striving that could be played out again and again in response to the inability of the stepfamily to maintain interpersonal affect regulation (Cowan, 1991; Emmons, 1989). Failure to achieve mature independence or ambivalence over the striving for independence during marital transitions could result in lower subjective well-being in the adolescent.

Theoretical Components Measured in This Study

This study will investigate several aspects of transition theory that appear to relate to subjective well-being as an outcome variable. The independent variables that will operationalize relevant aspects of transition theory are listed under the boxes in Figure 3. Adolescent self-esteem, and intrusion and avoidance of thoughts and feelings about parents' divorce operationalize intrapsychic components. Being in a same-sex custody family, and the adolescent's perception of parent-child and stepparent-child communication comprise the interpersonal components measured in this study. Same-sex custody will be determined by matching adolescents with the custodial parent of the same sex, resulting in the noncontinuous variable, "same-sex parent" (coded 1), and its corollary, "opposite-sex parent" (coded 0).

STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

PROCESS COMPONENTS

FIGURE 3

Aspects of Transition Theory Measured in This Study

The process components of transition theory will be operationalized by the adolescent's age at parents' divorce, the adolescent's age at the custodial parent's remarriage, and the number of years the adolescent has lived in the stepfamily. Age differences in how adolescents adjust to their custodial parent's remarriage have been noted in the literature (Hetherington et al., 1989). Although process components deserve more fine-grained measurement, in this study these age and time variables may provide a rough estimate of how developmental factors may impact upon adolescent well-being as an indicator of successful adaptation to life in a stepfamily. The age and time variables will also be controlled in additional analyses.

Two variables not directly related to transition theory will also be added to the research model. Divorce has been found to have a more negative impact on boys, whereas remarriage may impact girls more adversely (Hetherington et al., 1989). One study found that subjective well-being may be somewhat lower for adolescent girls regardless of family structure (Torgoff, 1979). Studies of adult well-being have found few gender differences, however (Diener, 1984). Since the literature indicates some gender differences in how adolescents respond to their parents' marital transitions, gender of the adolescent will be included in the analysis.

Stepfamily income will also be included as the main control variable. Income appears to be positively associated with subjective well-being (Diener, 1984). A lack of economic resources within the post-divorce family has also been found to increase the risk of several developmental problems in children (Amato & Keith, 1991). Reduced economic resources following divorce may negatively affect children's well-being because of (a) poorer nutrition and health, (b) moving to new housing, neighborhoods, and schools, and (c) loss of the child's familiar friends, neighbors and teachers (Amato & Keith, 1991; Hetherington et al., 1989).

In summary, transition theory and personal strivings theory provide a number of conceptualizations that may be useful in the study of adolescence. The independent variables selected for this research attempt to operationalize key aspects of transition theory that might help explain the potential impact marital transitions may have on adolescent subjective well-being.

Statement of the Problem

The increasing number of remarriages and stepfamilies suggest that such families are becoming normative and deserve further study. Yet, the nonnormative aspects of marital and family transitions require more "finely grained" studies (Clingempeel, Brand & Ievoli, 1984) in order to determine how the transition from nuclear family

to stepfamily impacts the psychological well-being of adolescents. Only a handful of studies about stepfamilies existed prior to 1980, and nearly all existing empirical studies on stepfamilies have been published in the last decade. Although this body of research contains over 200 published empirical works (Coleman & Ganong, 1990), existing studies are often methodologically and conceptually weak. Common methodological problems include (a) small sample sizes, (b) use of psychiatric or clinical populations, (c) omission of crucial variables, (d) unstandardized or inappropriate measures, (e) failure to control for factors that have impact on results (such as age of child at time of divorce and remarriage), and (f) basing causal inferences on correlational data (Leigh & Peterson, 1986). Since 1986, however, many studies have addressed the problems noted by Leigh and Peterson.

Conceptual problems have also existed in many previous studies. The absence of an adequate theoretical framework has been a major concern for those who study remarried families (Esses & Campbell, 1984). Until recently, divorced and remarried families were viewed by many researchers as structurally abnormal or deficient in comparison to nuclear, intact families. Ganong and Coleman (1984) refer to this as the deficit-comparison model. This model assumes that stepchildren will be psychologically and behaviorally deficient when compared to "healthier" children in intact, nuclear families.

Earlier correlational comparisons between intact families and other "deviant" family structures have highlighted differences but have often ignored similarities between family forms. Worst of all, such studies have often yielded mixed, inconclusive or confusing results, as well as offering limited insights into the nature and functioning of stepfamilies themselves. In fact, Wallerstein (1991b) considers much of the group-aggregated comparisons between divorced and intact families to be of "dubious validity and potentially seriously misleading." Remarried and intact families especially comprise "vastly different subgroups" about which we know little (Wallerstein, 1991b). "The prevalence and heterogeneity of stepfamilies justify more fine-grained studies which compare structural types and examine the 'effects' of structural variations" (Clingempeel et al., 1984). In recent years, researchers have begun to move away from viewing stepfamilies as pathological and are focusing more on factors that facilitate or disrupt the development and adjustment of adolescents in remarried families (Hetherington et al., 1989).

Subjective well-being of adolescents within different types of stepfamilies has been barely studied. Stepfamily structure, complexity, and interpersonal functioning may effect adolescent well-being in different ways. While

other stepfamily studies have focused on the behavioral adjustment of adolescents across different family forms, few, if any, have examined factors that may correlate with adolescent subjective well-being as an outcome indicator of psychological adjustment to parent's remarriage. In addition, there is no empirical research to date that has studied adolescent subjective well-being utilizing a comprehensive, psychologically-based model of transition that attempts to integrate both individual and family process variables.

Objectives

1. The primary objective of this study is to examine intrapsychic and interpersonal factors that relate to adolescent subjective well-being as a psychological indicator of adjustment within stepmother and stepfather families. Intrapsychic components examined in this study include: (a) adolescent's level of self-esteem; and (b) adolescent's internal affect regulation regarding parents' divorce as measured by intrusion of thoughts and feelings about the divorce, and avoidance of thoughts and feelings about the divorce. Interpersonal components examined in this study include: (a) regulation of interpersonal affect (adolescent's perception of communication with both custodial parent and stepparent); and (b) reorganization of relationships (living with the same-sex parent versus living with the opposite-sex parent).

2. The second objective of this study is to determine how several developmental factors are related to adolescent subjective well-being (e.g., adolescent's age at the time of parents' divorce, adolescent's age at the time of the custodial parent's remarriage, and the number of years the adolescent has lived in the current stepfamily).

3. The third objective of this study is to determine how several structural variables are related to adolescent subjective well-being (e.g., gender of the adolescent, and stepfamily income).

Research Hypotheses

This study was designed to investigate social and psychological factors that relate to adolescent psychological or subjective well-being as an indicator of adjustment to marital transitions. Specifically, the following hypotheses will be tested:

1. Adolescent self-esteem is positively related to adolescent subjective well-being.
2. The adolescent's intrusive thoughts and feelings about parents' divorce is negatively related to adolescent subjective well-being.
3. The adolescent's avoidance of thoughts and feelings about parents' divorce is negatively related to adolescent subjective well-being.

4. The adolescent's perception of the quality of communication with the custodial parent is positively related to adolescent subjective well-being.
5. The adolescent's perception of the quality of communication with the stepparent is positively related to adolescent subjective well-being.
6. Being an adolescent with the same-sex custodial parent is positively related to adolescent subjective well-being (During data analysis, the noncontinuous variable "Same-Sex Parent" will be created by matching gender of parent and child).
7. The adolescent's age at the time of parents' divorce is negatively related to adolescent subjective well-being.
8. The adolescent's age at the time of the custodial parent's remarriage is negatively related to adolescent subjective well-being.
9. The number of years the adolescent has lived in the current stepfamily is positively related to adolescent subjective well-being.
10. It is expected that the gender of the adolescent will affect his/her level of subjective well-being:
 - a. Being an adolescent male is positively related to subjective well-being.
 - b. Being an adolescent female is negatively related to subjective

well-being.

11. Stepfamily income level is positively related to adolescent subjective well-being.

In addition, post hoc analyses will be performed to determine how the independent variables in this study are related to the two dimensions of subjective well-being: positive and negative affect. Therefore, in the post hoc analysis, positive affect and negative affect will be treated as separate dependent variables, and separate analyses of the independent variables will be performed on each of these two dependent variables. Additional post hoc research questions will examine: (a) whether data from parental observations of adolescent problem behaviors will correlate with self-reported adolescent well-being scores; (b) whether adolescents in stepmother and stepfather families differ across the dependent and independent variables; (c) whether adolescents in same-sex custody and opposite-sex custody families differ across the independent variables; (d) whether adolescents with clinically high intrusion and/or avoidance scores differ across the independent variables; and (e) whether adolescents exhibit gender and age differences across the independent variables.

Assumptions

1. Divorce, single-parenting, and remarriage are not single, separate events, but part of a long-term

process of marital transition.

2. During the process of separation, divorce, and remarriage, the developmental level of the child at each point will influence how the child copes and adapts to the family situation.
3. The transition from a two parent home to a single parent home to a stepfamily home is stressful for the adolescent and will affect the adolescent's well-being.
4. Subjective well-being is an appropriate indicator of adjustment in the divorce to remarriage transition.

Definition of Terms

Adolescent: the period of life from puberty through the early twenties (Newman & Newman, 1984). Subjects in this study who are between the ages of 12 and 18 will be referred to as adolescents.

Adolescent's age at custodial parent's remarriage: self-reported chronological age at the time of parent's remarriage.

Adolescent's age at the time of parents' divorce: self-reported chronological age at the time of parent's divorce.

Adolescent's perception of parent-child communication: the adolescent's self-reported score as defined and measured by The Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale (Barnes & Olson, 1982), which measures aspects of

family communication as experienced by the adolescent, describing (a) the amount of openness or freedom to exchange ideas, information and concerns, (b) the degree of trust or honesty experienced, and (c) the emotional tone or tenor of the interactions, whether positive or negative.

Adolescent's perception of stepparent-child communication:

the adolescent's self-reported score as defined and measured by The Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale (Barnes & Olson, 1982), which measures aspects of family communication experienced by the adolescent, describing (a) the amount of openness or freedom to exchange ideas, information and concerns, (b) the degree of trust or honesty experienced, and (c) the emotional tone or tenor of the interactions, whether positive or negative.

Avoidance: the adolescent's self-reported score of avoidance or denial of thoughts and feelings about parental divorce, as measured by the Impact of Event Scale (Horowitz, Wilner & Alvarez, 1979). High avoidance indicates the presence of ideational constriction, denial of meanings and consequences of the divorce, blunted sensation, behavioral inhibition or counterphobic activity, and awareness of emotional numbness regarding parents' divorce. Low avoidance indicates that the adolescent is experiencing few of these symptoms.

Custodial parent: the biological parent with primary custody of the child, and with whom the child resides.

Gender of adolescent: an assigned characteristic.

Gender of custodial parent: an assigned characteristic of the biological or adoptive parent with primary custody.

Intrusion: the adolescent's self-reported score of intrusive thoughts and feelings about parental divorce, as measured by the Impact of Event Scale (Horowitz, Wilner & Alvarez, 1979). High intrusion indicates the presence of unbidden thoughts and images, troubled dreams, repetitive behavior, and strong pangs or waves of feelings about parents' divorce, Low intrusion indicates that the adolescent is experiencing few of these symptoms.

Same-sex custody: a custody arrangement where the adolescent and custodial parent are of the same sex.

Self-esteem: the adolescent's self-reported score as measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). High self-esteem indicates that adolescents respect and consider themselves worthy; low self-esteem reflects both a lack of self-respect and feelings of inadequacy.

Stepchild: a child brought into a remarriage who is biologically or adoptively linked to one of the

parents, but does not have such a link to that adult's spouse.

Stepfamily: (also termed blended, reconstituted, or remarried) a family in which one or both of the adults have children from a previous marriage residing in the home.

Stepfamily income: self-reported total family income by custodial parent or stepparent.

Stepfather: the spouse of the adolescent's biological or adoptive mother by a subsequent marriage.

Stepmother: the spouse of the adolescent's biological or adoptive father by a subsequent marriage.

Subjective well-being: (also termed psychological well-being) the adolescent's self-reported score of positive and negative affect as defined and measured by the Bradburn Affect Balance Scale (Bradburn, 1969). High subjective well-being signifies that the adolescent reports having a preponderance of positive affect. Low subjective well-being signifies that the adolescent reports having a preponderance of negative affect.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the current literature pertaining to subjective well-being and the study of adolescent well-being in stepfamilies. It is divided into four sections: (a) transition theory, (b) factors related to subjective well-being in adolescent stepchildren, (c) research related to transition theory, and (d) summary. Since the body of literature addressing adolescent subjective well-being in stepfamilies is meager at the present time, research findings in related fields of study are investigated and applied to the present research questions. Relevant research findings leading to testable hypotheses are also discussed.

Transition Theory

Intrapsychic Dynamics

Cowan explains the psychosocial structures of transition by first addressing the intrapsychic world. Within the intrapsychic domain, a major life transition would impact the adolescent on a cognitive/affective level by: (a) restructuring the adolescent's psychological sense of self (identity, self-esteem), (b) altering the adolescent's assumptive world or belief system (how roles

and relationships should be defined), and (c) triggering the adolescent's affect regulation and inner coping mechanisms (Boss, 1987; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Levenson & Gottman, 1983).

Sense of Self. Regarding the restructuring of the self, Cowan observes that the question of identity is consciously raised for the first time during adolescence (Erikson, 1950, 1959), but identity remains a continuing issue at every life transition. During the transitions of divorce and remarriage, the self-view of both the parent and adolescent is open to question, redefinition, and reorganization (Cowan, 1991). While identity has been conceptualized as the total personality (Santrock, 1984), self-concept and self-esteem refer more to how we evaluate our identity on both the cognitive and affective levels respectively (Coopersmith, 1967). Self-esteem has been defined by some as the evaluative component of the self, thought to result from perceived discrepancies between the real self and the ideal self (Cohen, 1959). Such self discrepancies may be heightened during times of transition. Taylor (1983) proposes that one of the tasks in adjusting to threatening events is the effort to restore self-esteem through self-enhancing evaluations.

Assumptive World. Regarding the shift in the adolescent's assumptive world (Parkes, 1971), the idea is derived from attribution theory (Weiner & Graham, 1988), and refers to changing expectations about how rules should

be defined and relationships should operate. During a transition, previously held beliefs about how the world works may no longer apply. Cowan (1991) observes:

In the normative transition to adolescence, formal operations opens the world of possibility to the teenager; in the process many adolescents begin to reconceptualize their relationships with their parents. . . . Experiencing one's parent's divorce . . . can also result in radically altered assumptions about one's place in the universe. (p. 14)

Taylor (1983) proposes that part of the task in adjusting to major life changes is the search for meaning in the transitional experience (Cameron, Titus, Kostin & Kostin, 1973). Finding new meaning during life transitions requires that the past be redefined. Blos (1967, 1968) proposed that a major developmental task of late adolescence is the redefinition of the past. Wallerstein and Corbin (1989) elaborate:

One part of this process involves the vivid and passionate reliving of early experiences and attachments, and reassessment of these experiences as a necessary prelude to emotional separation and relinquishment. It is reasonable to assume that the return in memory and feeling to the childhood past carries both special urgency and special pain for young people who have lived through the collapse of the intact family (p. 603).

Affect Regulation: Inner Coping. Regarding the adolescent's internal affect regulation, Cowan (1991) states that this concept is similar to "Erikson's initial emphasis on the inner emotional upheaval that accompanies the attempt to cope with new and ambiguous life tasks" (p. 15). Moos and Billings (1982) describe affect regulation

as emotion-focused coping. They state that affect regulation involves efforts to control stress-induced emotion by "consciously postponing paying attention to an impulse (suppression), experiencing and working through one's feelings, trying not to be bothered by conflicting feelings, maintaining a sense of pride and stiff upper lip, and tolerating ambiguity by withholding immediate action" (Moos & Billings, 1982, p. 219).

Cowan defines affect regulation as the need to both experience and control emotion during the coping process:

Adaptive coping with inner emotional arousal involves achieving a balance between two competing tendencies. First, in order to mobilize the appropriate psychological defenses and problem-solving skills, it seems necessary for us to experience some of the disruption instead of blocking it out or ignoring it. Second, it is necessary to develop some strategies for self-regulation so that our feelings do not totally overwhelm and incapacitate us. This shifting balance between experiencing and controlling emotion has recently been described as emotional regulation, and occurs . . . in interpersonal as well as intrapsychic domains. (Cowan, 1991, p. 15)

Related to the concept of internal emotional regulation is Horowitz's (1974) description of intrusion and avoidance in his phasic model of stress responses syndromes. Breuer and Freud (1895) found that traumatic events were repressed and yet involuntarily repeated in the form of hysterical symptoms. These symptoms, since validated in clinical and experimental studies, took the form of intrusive, compulsive repetitions or unbidden images of the traumatic event (Furst, 1967; Horowitz & Becker, 1972). Examples of intrusion are sudden waves of

emotion, nightmares, obsessive thought images, flashbacks, illusions, and altered body states. Another common response to trauma is avoidance, which is characterized by cognitive denial and emotional numbing.

Intrusion and avoidance may occur simultaneously or in patterns of phasic alteration. Following a stressful event, there may be: (a) an immediate emotional reaction; (b) a period of denial and numbing; (c) an oscillatory period alternating between episodes of intrusive images or emotional flooding and periods of continued denial and emotional numbing; and (d) a final phase of "working through" where there are diminished intrusive attacks, greater acceptance of the stressful event, and increased stability of mood (Horowitz, 1974). Patterns of intrusion and avoidance may especially occur in nonnormative life transitions that are experienced as sudden, unexpected, and traumatic. Intrusion and avoidance responses may occur during adolescence in reaction to traumatic events such as parental divorce and remarriage (Petersen & Spiga, 1982; Wallerstein, 1985, 1987).

Thus, from an intrapsychic perspective, transitions involve a "qualitative shift in perceptions of oneself and the world," and an "imbalance usually, but not always, followed by rebalance in our emotional equilibrium" (Cowan, 1991, p. 15). Some degree of change in the adolescent's sense of self, in the adolescent's assumptive

world, and in the adolescent's internal emotional regulation must occur before we can speak of a life change as being a transition (Cowan, 1991).

Interpersonal Dynamics

Cowan's (1991) second structural dimension, the interpersonal domain, is "the view from the outside" (p. 15). He draws on family systems theory and psychological theories related to adaptive behavior (Leland, 1978), role reorganization, and personal-social competence. Cowan (1991) states that "successful navigation of transitions requires new forms of adaptive behavior --concrete, observable external actions and readjustments to cope with new developmental tasks and social/interpersonal demands" (p. 15). A major life transition (e.g., remarriage and becoming a stepfamily) brings about several changes within the interpersonal domain. Everyone in the stepfamily, including the adolescent, must reorganize and restructure (a) personal competence, (b) family roles, (c) family relationships, as well as (d) control affect regulation on the interpersonal level (Cowan, 1991).

Restructuring Personal Competence. Cowan (1991) notes that during a transition "individuals couples and families must adopt new strategies, skills, and patterns of behavior to solve new problems" (p. 17). If a new level of skills is achieved, it is assumed that the transition has been resolved successfully. Cowan (1991) adds, "If personal disorganization continues, the negative

consequences may have long-term effects, especially when new normative or nonnormative life transitions come along" (p. 17). Personal competence or coping efficacy (Aldwin & Revenson, 1987) is vital for the adolescent to successfully negotiate the divorce, single-parent, and remarriage phases of marital transition. Personal competencies of the adolescent that are called forth by the divorce and remarriage transition include (a) communication skills, (b) interpersonal problem-solving skills, and (c) interpersonal resources affecting adjustment to new, often complex stepfamily relationships.

Reorganization of Roles. Regarding family roles, Cowan (1991) states that "change in one major role through addition, redefinition, or shift in salience, usually affects the organization of existing role arrangements" (p.16). New and old roles must be integrated and coordinated. The search for new roles to take the place of lost roles is quite stressful. Cowan elaborates on the stress associated with role changes: "Within the person, the pushes and pulls associated with conflicting role demands can result in severe role strain . . . Within the family, the addition and redefinition of roles can create new or increased interpersonal conflict" (pp. 16-17).

Reorganization of Relationships. Divorce and remarriage not only alter the nature of couple relationships, but the relationships between parents and

children as well (Hetherington, 1991). Cowan (1991) distinguishes relationships from role behaviors:

Role refers to the definition of appropriate behaviors for a person occupying a given position, while relationship refers to the dynamics or qualities of the interaction between two or more people as they carry out their various roles (p. 16).

Cowan (1991) observes that the parent-child relationship "implies a large set of caretaking, guiding, and socializing behaviors initiated from parent to child" (p. 16). During the divorce, single-parent, and remarriage phases of marital transition, the interactions between parent and adolescent may change dramatically. Caretaking, guiding, and socializing behaviors initiated from parent to child may be interrupted or diminished, particularly in stepfamilies where the custodial parent and the adolescent are of opposite gender.

Affect Regulation: Interpersonal Coping. In order to modulate interpersonal conflict, affect regulation is just as essential on the interpersonal level as it is on the intrapsychic level. Maritally dissatisfied couples tend to escalate negative affect until their exchanges are out of control. Maritally satisfied couples, on the other hand, are able to express but maintain some control of negative affect (Gottman & Levenson, 1989; Levenson & Gottman, 1983). Cowan (1991) states that individual and family transitions generate "heightened affective arousal," which should "increase the risk of affect dysregulation, and increase the probability that intimate

relationships will change in a negative direction, at least temporarily" (p. 18).

During marital transitions, parent/adolescent communication may play a major role in interpersonal affect regulation. Petersen and Spiga (1982) state:

Better relations and frequent communication with parents may effectively prepare the adolescent for stress. Parents may provide information about what to ignore, what to attend to, and how to cope with challenges or threats. Parents may reduce the adolescent's anger and rage by allowing expression of the difficulties and providing empathy (p. 522).

Transition as a Process

As mentioned earlier, process components of transition refer to temporal, phasic aspects of transitional experience. Cowan (1991) assumes that the reorganization of the adolescent's psychological sense of self, world-view, and internal affect regulation --along with changes in roles, relationships, and interpersonal affect regulation-- do not always occur at the same time. Cowan (1991) states: "It is more likely that individuals and families go through a period of deorganization in which almost everything is out of sync" (p. 19). Roles may change first (divorce or remarriage), followed by lowered self-esteem, depression, and marital and/or family conflict. "Or family conflict may lead to role reorganization, which, in turn, stimulates a reconsideration of one's identity" (p. 19). Cowan (1991) maintains that an "essential, defining characteristic" of

transitions is their lack of synchrony during periods of change.

Cowan (1991) cites Parkes (1971) in suggesting that there may be a lawful sequence within transitions: "beginning with an early phase of conflict, loss, uncertainty, proceeding through a middle phase of testing new alternatives, and entering a late phase involving a return toward previous equilibrium or to the establishment of a new equilibrium" (p. 19). Cowan believes this sequence seems to fit childhood normative transitions, some adult normative transitions such as parenthood, and nonnormative transitions such as divorce. Whether these process components apply to other life transitions is open to question and further empirical investigation.

Developmental Issues

Cowan (1991) questions whether the metaphorical language used in describing transitions in adulthood needs to be reformulated to more accurately describe childhood transitions. Developmental theorists (Freud, 1953; Erikson, 1950; Piaget, 1985) might conceptualize childhood transition in terms of "a shift from one relatively stable [stage] of biological or psychological organization to another" (Cowan, 1991, p. 6). During the period when one developmental stage is being replaced by another, the child may oscillate between two or more stages. Cowan (1991) summarizes:

Transition is a time of disequibration and internal conflict. Old cognitive/affective structures and behavior patterns are being reorganized; new patterns are not yet set. Successful resolution of the disequibration and conflict leads to a higher, more differentiated and integrated level of adaptation. Unsuccessful resolution leads to developmental delay and regression. (p. 6)

Cowan maintains that a new model of transition theory should focus on what happens between developmental stages of the life cycle. His theory attempts to "explain why individuals and families differ in their rate of progress from one stage to another, or why they fail to follow the expected sequence of life changes" (Cowan, 1991, p.4).

Essential Factors of a Transition Experience

In order for a life experience to qualify as a transition, says Cowan, qualitative changes must take place on both the intrapsychic and interpersonal levels: "A shift in role . . . that did not involve a shift in one's inner view of self and the world and in some major relationships, should not qualify as a life transition" (p. 18). Cowan maintains that simply passing a life marker (e.g., entering school) or changing one's identity (e.g., becoming a spouse or a parent) does not necessarily indicate that a transition has been completed.

Multiple Family Transitions

Cowan's theory applies not only to individual transitions but to family transitions as well. In encompassing transitions made by families who are in the process of formation and reorganization, the family

transition model emphasizes "multiple developmental trajectories" (Parke, 1988), or the "web of interdependencies both with the dyadic unit and across the lineage system" (Elder, Caspi, & Burton, 1989). In Cowan's model of transitions, the individual and family trajectories have reciprocal effects:

As children enter adolescence, their parents may be in a midlife individual or marital transition of their own, which makes the transition to adolescence very complex indeed. Change in the life course of any one family member, dyad, or triad, then, may trigger disequilibrium and reorganization of the whole family system. (Cowan, 1991, p. 7)

In summary, transition theory provides a number of conceptualizations that may be useful in the study of adolescence and the impact marital transitions may have on the adolescent's intrapsychic and interpersonal functioning. Transition theory predicts that the process of parental divorce and remarriage creates stressors that either diminish or enhance the adolescent's (a) self-esteem, (b) internal emotional control, (c) interpersonal emotional control, (d) personal competencies related to communication skills, and (e) ability to cope with the reorganization of family relationships. It is expected that the adolescent's ability to cope with these intrapsychic and interpersonal stressors should in turn affect psychological adjustment or emotional well-being during the various phases of the transition process.

Factors Related to Subjective Well-Being in Adolescent Stepchildren

Subjective Well-Being: An Overview

The study of subjective well-being in everyday life had its beginnings more than half a century ago with the random time sampling of subjects' feelings done by Flugel (1925). Wilson's (1967) review of theory and research indicated that subjective well-being was still an emergent field of study during the 1960's. The seminal work of Bradburn (1969) set off a renewed interest in the topic during the 1970's. Since the early 1980's, several thousand new studies relevant to subjective well-being have been published (Andrews & Robinson, 1991), indicating that happiness research is quite robust. Subjective well-being has generally been defined and measured as self-reported global happiness or life satisfaction.

Subjective well-being has also been described as an attitude, and it is widely accepted that attitudes have at least two basic components: cognition and affect (Ostrom, 1969). Affective components of subjective well-being have been further divided into two subcomponents: positive affect and negative affect (Bradburn, 1969; Warr, 1978; Watson & Tellegen, 1984). Happiness is thought to be related to the frequency (not the intensity) of positive affect (Diener & Iran-Nejad, 1986). Measures of happiness or subjective well-being (e.g., the Bradburn Affect

Balance Scale) have been shown to reflect large amounts of affect but relatively little cognition. Measures of life satisfaction, however, tend to reflect more of the cognitive components of attitude (Andrews & Robinson, 1991, Huebner, 1991). For purposes of this study, subjective well-being will be conceptualized psychologically as the relationship between positive and negative affect (as measured by the Bradburn Affect Balance Scale).

Distinguishing between cognitive and affective components of subjective well-being clarifies some potential confusion in the literature. While early studies found that young people were happier than older adults (Kuhlen, 1948), recent studies have found virtually no age effects (Andrews & Withey, 1976). However, studies singling out cognitive and affective components of well-being have found that cognitive evaluations of global well-being seem to rise with age, while positive affect may decline with age. Perhaps people become somewhat jaded emotionally as they age but increase their level of achievement and/or adjust their aspirations (Andrews & Robinson, 1991; Diener, Sandvik & Larsen, 1985).

Positive and negative affect have been found to be statistically independent of each other (Bradburn, 1969). Bradburn was surprised by this finding in his data, and it has been replicated several times since with independent

samples (Andrews & Withey, 1976; Cherlin & Reeder, 1975; Emmons & Diener, 1986; Harding, 1982; Watson & Tellegen, 1985; Zevon & Tellegen, 1982). There is even some evidence that positive and negative affect may be activated by different areas of the brain (Olds & Milner, 1954). Others have challenged the independence of positive and negative affect (Kammann, Christie, Irwin, & Dixon, 1979), pointing out that while positive and negative affect correlate with different variables, differential correlations are moderated by other variables and that cross-over effects do occur (Reich & Zautra, 1983; Zautra, 1983; Zautra & Reich, 1983). Some critics have claimed that altering Bradburn's scoring method to a proportion of time format eliminates statistical independence (Warr, Barter, & Brownbridge, 1983).

However, the independence of positive and negative affect has now been confirmed in longitudinal studies by Diener and Emmons (1984) and Diener, Larsen, Levine and Emmons (1985). These studies found that, at particular moments in time, positive and negative affect are negatively correlated in terms of the frequency of their occurrence (each type of affect tends to suppress the other). However, in terms of their intensity, positive and negative affect are positively correlated with each other. Diener, Larsen, Levine and Emmons (1985) found that, over longer periods of time, the positive correlation related to the intensity of affect cancels out the inverse

correlation related to the frequency of affect. Thus, over a period of weeks (or longer) in a person's life, the average levels of positive and negative affect show a low correlation with each other because average levels of positive and negative affect are a result of both their frequency and intensity. The implication of this finding is that if one uses a well-being scale that has both frequency and intensity items, one is more nearly measuring mean levels of affect, and the results are more likely to show statistical independence of positive and negative affect (Diener, 1984). It is interesting that Bradburn discovered this statistical independence even though his scale contains no specific items for frequency and intensity of affect.

There is evidence that well-being may be related to personality differences. Some studies have found that positive affect is correlated with the personality trait of extraversion, whereas negative affect seems to correlate with neuroticism (Costa & McCrae, 1980; Emmons & Diener, 1985; Hartman, 1934; Tolor, 1978; Warr et al., 1983). Attributional style (how events are interpreted) is another source of individual differences in subjective well-being. Martin, Argyle and Crossland (1988) found that happy people (on the Oxford Happiness Inventory) did not make negative attributions for bad events as do depressive personality types (see also Golin, Sweeney, &

Shaeffer, 1981; Sweeney, Anderson, & Bailey, 1986; Sweeney, Shaeffer, & Golin, 1982). In contrast, Martin et al. (1988) found that happy people make positive attributions for good events that are internal, global and stable. Interestingly, Taylor and Brown (1988) found that positive attributions made by happy people may be unrealistically high and a distortion of reality. Examples of positive attribution distortions include (a) an extremely positive view of the self, and (b) exaggerated beliefs of control over good events (see also Benassi, Sweeney, & Drevno, 1979; Wright, Zautra & Braver, 1985). Unhappy, depressed people have been found to exhibit fewer positive attribution distortions than those with higher well-being, yet depression and other measures of psychopathology have been associated with lower subjective well-being (Lewinsohn & Amenson, 1978; Reich & Zautra, 1981; Tanaka & Huba, 1984). Early investigators also found that intelligence as measured by IQ tests was positively related to well-being (Jasper, 1930; Washburne, 1941), but Diener (1984) cites subsequent research in which no such relationship was found.

Although subjective well-being may also be susceptible to transient factors such as current mood (Bower, 1981; Blaney, 1986; Kammann, 1983; Natale & Hantas, 1982; Rowlison & Felner, 1988), and is subject to experimental mood induction techniques (Schwarz, Strack, Kommer & Wagner, 1987; Sutherland, Newman & Rachman, 1982),

previous research has found that subjective well-being is stable over time and across situations (Diener 1984). In fact, Kammann et al. (1979) found that current mood does not substantially distort well-being scores on multi-item measures like the Bradburn Affect Balance Scale. Diener and Larsen (1984) found substantial amounts of cross-situational consistency and temporal stability in mean levels of person affect. In contrast to average affect levels over time, there was less stability and consistency when emotions at particular moments in time were examined. In their sample of 65 undergraduate students, Yardley and Rice (1991) demonstrated the stability of subjective well-being, finding that current well-being is still significantly related to previous well-being, even after controlling for the effects of mood. All the above findings lend little support to Unger's (1970) theory that happiness is cyclical (that happy periods are naturally followed by unhappy periods).

Although Lichter, Haye, and Kammann (1980) found that happiness could be improved by the daily rehearsal of positive feeling statements, other studies have found that it is the absence of negative thoughts, rather than the presence of positive thinking, that is beneficial to well-being. Goodhart (1985) found that while induced positive thinking increased well-being only immediately after thoughts were salient, induced negative thinking lowered

well-being over an 8-week period. Fordyce (1977, 1983) also found that subjects' subjective well-being could be improved if a conscious attempt was made to reduce negative thoughts.

Theoretical approaches to the study of subjective well-being have been numerous. Diener (1984) reviews the literature and discusses seven psychological theories pertaining to subjective well-being. Telic or goal-oriented models of subjective well-being, such as personal strivings theory (Emmons, 1986, 1989), appear to be most relevant to the study of adolescent developmental tasks. The adolescent's achievement of such tasks may be affected by marital transitions, thus modifying well-being. Completion or mastery of valued goals as well as personal strivings characterized by perceived voluntariness appear to be significantly associated with positive affect (Argyle & Crossland, 1987; Csikszentmihalyi & Figurski, 1982). For the most part, intrinsic goals or desires appear to be more positively related to well-being than extrinsic demands from the environment (Reich & Zautra, 1983). Taylor (1983) proposes that during a major life change, one of the goals of the adjustment process is an attempt to regain mastery over the change event and over life more generally.

Measurement. Most measures of subjective well-being correlate moderately with each other, show high convergent validity, have adequate temporal reliability and internal

consistency, and correlate moderately with happiness ratings made about respondents by others (Diener, 1984). People's accuracy in rating the psychological well-being of others has been questioned, however (Irwin, Kammann, & Dixon, 1979; Kammann, Smith, Martin, & McQueen, 1984). None of the measures of subjective well-being show high social desirability effects. Most subjective well-being measures show a low correlation ($r = .20$) with lie scales and social desirability scales (Diener, 1984).

One of the first and most widely accepted measures of subjective well-being is the Affect Balance Scale (ABS) developed by Bradburn (1969). Unlike several other measures of well-being, the (ABS) was not specifically designed for use with older adults, and is thus not age specific. The "affect balance" score is derived by subtracting the negative affect scale score from the positive affect scale score. Higher scores on the (ABS) are positively correlated with higher subjective well-being. George (1982) evaluated eight different measures of subjective well-being and found that the (ABS) was the only measure that met psychometric criteria in all of the following categories: (a) normative data (population norms and subgroup norms), (b) applicability to heterogeneous samples, (c) quantification and discriminability, (d) established reliability and validity, (e) scalability, (f) sensitivity to change, and (g) ease of administration.

While the (ABS) continues to be widely used by researchers, other scales measuring more specific aspects of subjective well-being have been developed. Underwood and Froming's (1980) Variability Subscale reflects the changeableness of a person's moods, and Kammann and Flett's (1983) Affectometer is designed to measure both the frequency and intensity of positive and negative affect. Andrews and Robinson (1991), in their review, describe these and many other newly developed well-being scales in more detail.

There is a need for a reliable baseline measure of adolescent subjective well-being. Bradburn's (ABS) has been used with young adults and college undergraduates, and has the ability to yield an index of positive affect --a factor that sets it apart from most measures of well-being, which tend to accentuate the negative (Warr et al., 1983). Recently, three instruments measuring both life satisfaction and subjective well-being have been developed specifically for children and adolescents. Huebner (1991) devised the Student's Life Satisfaction Scale, which was administered to 3rd to 8th grade children. Consistent with multidimensional theories of subjective well-being, he found that satisfaction ratings were differentiated from affective ratings. Torgoff (1979) devised the Life Satisfaction Chart which was administered to 916 high school students. The mean level of subjective well-being was found to be significantly lower for white female

adolescents than for white male, black male and black female adolescents.

The Bern Subjective Well-Being Questionnaire for Adolescents (Grob, Luthi, Kaiser & Flammer, 1991) assesses both the cognitive and emotional aspects of well-being and life satisfaction and includes the following factors: (a) positive attitude toward life, (b) problem awareness, (c) somatic complaints, (d) self-worth, (e) depressive mood, and (f) joy in living. Some of the items for the positive attitude subscale were taken directly from the Bradburn's well-being scale (A. Grob, personal communication, May 14, 1993). Administered to 294 male and female Swiss adolescents and young adults (aged 14-20 years), the Bern Subjective Well-Being Questionnaire for Adolescents was found to have adequate reliability and validity (Grob et al., 1991).

In summary, the Bradburn Affect Balance Scale (ABS) is one of the most widely accepted measures of psychological well-being. Other scales have recently been developed that measure both frequency and intensity of affect, as well as cognitive and emotional aspects of well-being. Some recently developed well-being scales have also increased the number of scale points (i.e., answer categories), and tend to capture more of the variation in well-being than the 2-point (yes/no) response format used with the original Bradburn scale (Andrews & Robinson,

1991). Still, with all its shortcomings, the Bradburn (ABS) continues to be a valid and reliable measure of well-being, and in some ways is superior to many other well-being measures (E. Diener, personal communication, June 2, 1993).

Subjective Well-Being and Life Events

The impact of life events appear to have a significant effect upon subjective well-being (Zautra & Beier, 1978). Using data from the Australian panel study, Headey and Wearing (1989) found that life events tend to influence subjective well-being over and above the effects of personality. Good and bad events have been found to be independent in the people's lives (Warr et al., 1983). Good events have been correlated with positive affect while bad events are related to negative affect (Reich & Zautra, 1981; Zautra & Maio, 1981; Zautra & Reich, 1980). The effects of life events upon well-being present some interesting findings, according to Smith, Wedell and Diener (1989). In laboratory experiments, they found that "extremely bad" events tend to create a context in which later "good" events can produce more happiness. Likewise, "extremely good" events can make future negative events even more negative. How would these findings apply to adolescent well-being in stepfamilies? Suppose, for example, that the adolescent has the perception that family life was "extremely bad" before his or her parents' remarriage. If this perception is used as the standard of

comparison (Dermer, Cohen, Jacobsen, & Anderson, 1979), this might make living in a well-functioning stepfamily more positive for some adolescents. Similarly, perceiving that family life was "extremely good" before their parents' remarriage might make living in a dysfunctional stepfamily even more negative for other adolescents.

Research investigating the impact of life events upon the subjective well-being of adolescents is limited. Grob (1991) investigated the effect of life events upon domain-specific control attributions and subjective well-being in 728 Swiss adolescents and young adults (aged 14-20 years). Self-reported life events were pooled and assigned to either a critical events category (e.g., parents' divorce; death or suicide of a friend or parent) or daily hassles category. Subjective well-being was measured by the Bern Subjective Well-Being Questionnaire for Adolescents, a six-factor scale that assesses both the cognitive and emotional aspects of well-being and life satisfaction. Results indicated strong effects for control attributions only for those adolescents who had experienced no more than two critical life events. Those reporting more than two critical life events had worse control attributions and significantly lower levels of well-being (more problem awareness, higher levels of depressive mood, less positive attitude toward life, more pathological symptoms) than those reporting fewer such events (A. Grob, personal

communication, May 14, 1993).

Subjective Well-Being and Stress

The stress and coping literature suggests that "hardiness" (Kobasa, 1979) may be the factor that enables some people to maintain or regain high levels of well-being even in the face of the most difficult life events (Bulman & Wortman, 1977; Meyer & Taylor, 1987).

Nevertheless, it is well known that distress symptoms can persist for many years in some victims of life crises (Wirtz & Harrell, 1987). Research on the effects of unpredictable life events during adolescence have shown that such events (e.g., divorce) may have an impact on adolescent psychological status (Andreasen & Wasek, 1980; Gersten, Langer, Eisenberg, & Orzek, 1974; Petersen & Spiga, 1982).

According to Bryant and Veroff's (1982) factor analyses of data from large national samples, stress appears to be a major factorial dimension of subjective well-being (in addition to unhappiness and personal inadequacy). One study that investigated the effects of stress upon adolescent well-being found that measures of negative life change were significantly related to life satisfaction (Greenberg, Siegel, & Leitch, 1983). In their stress and coping research, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) have investigated how cognitive "appraisal and coping processes" interact with "positive and negative emotion, or subjective well-being" in specific stressful

encounters (p. 195). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) explain: "The positive and negative emotions that are experienced during a stressful encounter are reflections of the person's momentary evaluation of his or her well-being" (p. 195). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) state that subjective well-being is related to but distinct from the concept of morale, which "is likely to be more of a background affective state that is relatively enduring" (p. 195).

While subjective well-being is descriptive of affect balance or regulation of affect, cognitive processes are also involved in this affect regulation. While different self-report measures may distinguish between cognitive and affective components of subjective well-being, cognition and affect may be much more closely related in actual stressful situations. Zajonc (1980) contends that emotional reactions occur independently of and more rapidly than cognitive evaluation of stimuli. However, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) cite recent research findings that demonstrate the bidirectional causality of emotion and cognition --that emotion can disrupt cognitive activity but can also be shaped by thought processes. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) state that when information is appraised as having significance for our well-being, it becomes "hot information," or information that is laden with emotion (p. 277). In the context of most stressful events, "emotion and information (and therefore cognition)

are conjoined for large portions of the evaluative appraisal process" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 277). This close connection between emotion and cognition makes affect (i.e., subjective well-being) an important outcome variable in the study of stressful life transitions (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Regarding the adolescent's response to stress, "emotion-focused" modes of coping may be especially effective in confronting uncontrollable events such as parental divorce (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Rothbaum, Weisz & Snyder, 1982). Not simply relying on a personal "bag of virtues" (Parkes, 1986), adolescents may need to cope with marital transitions by using available social resources within the family or peer group. In some cases, social support may be an effective way to buffer the effects of stress and maintain well-being (Palys & Little, 1983). Other factors thought to be related to the impact of stress upon well-being are the adolescent's (a) internal sense of control, (c) external sense of control, and (e) role performance (Andrews & Robinson, 1991).

The Family Domain and Subjective Well-Being

In his review of the literature, Diener (1984) reports that satisfaction with marriage and family life is one of the most important predictors of subjective well-being in adults, and was the strongest predictor of subjective well-being in many studies. In their meta-analysis of U. S. studies on subjective well-being before

1980, Okun and Stock (1987) found that measures of subjective well-being showed moderate correlations with adjustment and family satisfaction. Subjective well-being may also be a useful psychological indicator of how well adolescents are adjusting to stepfamily transitions. Torgoff (1991) found that satisfaction with family life was the most powerful domain affecting overall life satisfaction and subjective well-being in a large sample of high school students ($n = 916$). Emotional or subjective well-being variously defined and measured has been used as a outcome variable in several studies examining the effects of marital transitions upon children and adolescents (Baydar, 1988; Furstenberg, Morgan & Allison, 1987; Kellam, Ensminger, & Turner, 1977; Mechanic & Hansell, 1989).

Studies of Well-Being in Children of Divorce

A major problem in the divorce literature is the fact that well-being is operationalized in a number of different ways that make comparisons across studies very difficult. Amato and Keith (1991) conducted a meta-analysis of 92 studies that examined the effects of divorce upon the well-being of young people. They coded eight outcome categories: (a) academic achievement, (b) conduct, (c) psychological adjustment (depression, anxiety, happiness), (d) self-concept (self-esteem), (e) social adjustment, (f) mother-child relations, (g)

father-child relations, and (h) other. Combining all categories, their findings confirmed that children of divorce experience a lower level of well-being than do children living in continuously intact families. It should be noted that the effect sizes were weak and of doubtful substantive significance. However, critics have questioned the ability of meta-analysis to detect significant differences (Kazdin, 1986). Conduct and father-relations had the largest mean effect size, while mean effect sizes for psychological well-being, self-concept and social adjustment were lower. Affect sizes were strongest for primary-school children and high-school adolescents (Amato & Keith, 1991).

There are a few divorce studies that actually utilized measures of subjective well-being. Furstenberg et al. (1987) found no effects of post-divorce paternal involvement on the self-reported subjective well-being of youth aged 11-16. They devised a 14-item well-being scale that was more a measure of ill-being than well-being. Furthermore, the psychometrics of their measure is unknown. Dunlop and Burns' (1988) Australian study of 37 divorcing families found that adolescents' perception of "family happiness" was not significantly related to poor adolescent adjustment. Kulka and Weingarten (1979) also examined subjective well-being in their retrospective study of adult children of divorce. They found that, especially for males, childhood or adolescence was

reported to be the most unhappy time of their lives, but that such unhappiness had a modest effect on later adult adjustment.

Mechanic and Hansell (1989) investigated the longitudinal effects of family conflict and divorce on the emotional well-being of 1,067 adolescents. They found that higher levels of family conflict were associated with depressed mood, anxiety and physical symptoms over time. However, neither recent divorce or earlier divorce was associated with longitudinal changes in emotional well-being. Baydar (1988) examined the effects of parental separation and reentry into union on the emotional well-being of children. Mothers' reported changes in children's emotional well-being was significantly related to reentry into union but not to divorce.

In summary, the effects of divorce upon adolescent subjective well-being offer inconsistent results. Although "well-being" has been often used as an outcome variable, it has been too broadly defined and operationalized, and in very few cases have researchers focused specifically on subjective well-being and used reliable, standardized measures appropriate to this construct. It remains unclear if the effects of parental divorce might continue to have impact on adolescent subjective well-being during single-parent and stepparent transitions. Wallerstein's longitudinal findings indicate that while the well-being

of many children appears to be undampened by their parents' divorce, a significant subset --particularly those who were older children and adolescents during their parents' divorce-- suffer from vivid memories and painful, intense feelings about the divorce many years later, even long after their parents' remarriage (Wallerstein, 1985, 1987). Perhaps the remarkable maturity many adolescents exhibit during the first years of marital transition gives way to a "sleepers effect" many years later. Adolescent subjective well-being in stepfamilies may thus be modulated by how well adolescents cope with the earlier marital transitions of parental separation and divorce.

Subjective Well-Being, Stress and Remarriage

Most of the existing research suggests that stepchildren are about as happy as children from nondivorced families (Bohannon & Yahres, 1979). However, a few studies indicate otherwise. Kellam et al. (1977) devised a 2-item measure of subjective well-being for their sample of black, urban third-grade children whose adjustment had been followed since first grade. They found that children in single-parent families and (to a lesser extent) stepparent families reported more feelings of sadness and nervousness than those in intact families. The low number of stepfamilies in their sample is a major limitation of their study, however.

In a recent study involving longitudinal observations of stepfamily interactions, Bray, Berger, Boethel, Maymi &

Touch (1992) found that stepfamilies had more negative family relationships and more problematic family processes than nuclear families. They also found that stepchildren tend to have more behavioral problems, less prosocial behavior, and more life stress than children in intact families. Social psychological influences theory (Abbey & Andrews, 1985) suggests that high levels of family stress may directly influence adolescent psychological well-being.

There is little doubt that the process of marital separation, divorce and remarriage is stressful for many children (Hetherington, 1979; Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1978; Rutter, 1980; Wallerstein, 1984; 1987; 1991a; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Few children desire their parents' divorce, and many of them maintain resentment toward their parents' remarriages (Clingempeel et al., 1984; Garbarino et al., 1984; Hetherington, 1990; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). By the time many youth have adjusted to being in a single-parent family, they must confront still another marital transition in their custodial parent's remarriage. In their review of the literature, Hetherington et al. (1989) speak of the multiple transitions children must make:

After a period of initial distress following divorce, most children and parents adapt to their situation in a single-parent household within two to three years if their new situation is not compounded by continued or additional adversity. The new family structure and equilibrium is usually disrupted, however, by the custodial parent's remarriage within three to five

years. (p. 303)

Multiple marital transitions can be especially stressful for children and youth (Rutter, 1980). "Because divorces do tend to occur more rapidly in remarriages, in some families the child is already confronting a second divorce before adaptation to the remarriage may have occurred" (Hetherington et al., 1989, p. 303). The complex changes in family structure and the stress of redefining roles and relationship patterns make adjustment to remarriage a longer process than that required for divorce, especially for older children (Hetherington, 1990; Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1988; Hetherington et al., 1989). While divorce often involves high levels of family conflict and a decrease or loss of contact with the non-custodial parent, remarriage may confront the child with new, more complex stressors, such as the addition of a stepparent or step-sibling (Hetherington et al., 1989). Citing Furstenberg (1988) and Zill (1988), Hetherington et al. (1989) summarize:

A child whose parent remarries has already experienced life in his or her family of origin, divorce, and a period of time in a single parent household before the remarriage occurs. Children's experiences in earlier family situations will modify responses to new situations. It has been argued that behavior problems exhibited by children in remarried families are attributable not to difficulties in adapting to remarriage, but to stresses associated with divorce and life in a single-parent household. (p. 303)

In summary, findings on the cumulative effect of multiple stressors associated with divorce and life in a

single-parent household --along with the added stressors unique to remarriage-- suggest that adjustment to the custodial parent's remarriage is complicated for the adolescent. The stress and strain of this adjustment thus appears to influence directly the adolescent's behavioral and emotional adjustment (Duberman, 1975; Wallerstein, 1987, 1991a), and in turn should affect subjective well-being.

Adolescents in Stepfamilies: Resilient or Vulnerable?

Regardless of the child's age, following the remarriage of the custodial parent, there is often a re-emergence of emotional and behavioral problems in girls and an intensification of problems in boys (Bray, 1988; Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1986; Santrock, 1990; Santrock & Warshak, 1979). In a recent longitudinal observational study, Bray et al. (1992) found that although 80% of the stepchildren in their sample were functioning within a normal range on standardized measures of adjustment, 20% had clinically significant levels of behavioral problems. In contrast, only 10% of intact-family children in their sample had significant behavioral problems on these same adjustment measures (e.g., Child Behavior Checklist, Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983).

The developmental tasks facing adolescents make them especially vulnerable to the remarital transition and the entrance of a stepparent (Santrock, 1990). Yet, there

appears to be great diversity in children's responses to the stress of parental remarriage. Hetherington (1990) found that while some suffered from long-term developmental delays following parental divorce and remarriage, other children exhibited remarkable resiliency and seemed to be enhanced by coping with these marital transitions. On the other hand, children who coped well in the early stages of family reorganization showed delayed effects later on, especially during adolescence. Long-term effects seem to derive not so much from the fact that marital transitions have occurred, but to a combination of factors: (a) new stressors in the stepfamily, (b) individual attributes, (c) the atmosphere of the stepfamily environment, and (d) the available resources to the child (Hetherington et al., 1989). The long-term behavioral and emotional effects of marital transitions, whether they elicit resiliency or vulnerability in adolescents, should have some degree of impact on adolescent subjective well-being in stepfamilies. These long-term effects may also be influenced by the "buffering effects" of supportive family members and peers (Cohen & Wills, 1985).

Adolescent Subjective Well-Being in Stepfamilies

Research examining the subjective well-being of adolescents living in divorced and remarried families is limited. Holman and Woodroffe-Patrick (1988) estimated the effects of family structure on how children perceived

whether they were happy or anxious in a sample of preadolescent and early adolescent youth ($n = 255$) from Trinidad and Tobago. They found that single-parent children reported feeling less happy than children from intact two-parent homes, even when the amount of family conflict was controlled. It may be recalled that the Kellam et al. (1977) study found that school-aged children in single-parent families and (to a lesser extent) stepparent families reported lower subjective well-being (more feelings of sadness and nervousness) than those in intact families.

It has already been pointed out that there is often a re-emergence of emotional and behavioral problems in girls and an intensification of problems in boys following the remarriage of the custodial parent (Bray, 1988; Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1986; Santrock, 1990; Santrock & Warshak, 1979). Exactly how subjective well-being may vary in relation to these emotional and behavioral problems is unclear. It could be anticipated that emotional problems in the form of depression and anxiety would be significantly related to lower subjective well-being.

Crosbie-Burnett (1987) examined the effects of joint custody and structural complexity (presence or absence of stepfather's children from a previous marriage) upon the subjective well-being of oldest or only adolescents in 84

white, middle-class stepfather families. She found that adolescents in joint custody and simple stepfamilies (those with no stepfather children) reported more subjective happiness and more inclusion than did adolescents in joint custody and complex stepfamilies (those with stepfather children). Boys were reported to have greater well-being than girls regardless of custody arrangements.

In summary, we know relatively little about adolescent subjective well-being in remarried families. The very limited research suggests that adolescent subjective well-being may be negatively impacted during the period between divorce and remarriage, may be related to the emotional and behavioral upheaval that tends to re-emerge following remarriage, and may also be impacted by the complexity of subsequent stepfamily structure.

Research Related to Transition Theory

Intrapsychic Resources

Self-Esteem. Marital transitions have been thought to have marked effects on self-esteem, at least initially (Ganong & Coleman, 1984; Hetherington et al., 1978; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). In their review of the literature, Hetherington, Arnett and Hollier (1988) conclude that the majority of studies on divorce adjustment outcome have reported no differences in self-esteem between stepchildren and children in intact and single-parent families. Their conclusion is in

agreement with other reviews (Coleman & Ganong, 1990; Ganong & Coleman, 1984). However, Hetherington et al. (1988) note that length of time since remarriage is often uncontrolled in many studies. Furthermore, comparisons between family types that find no differences in self-esteem tend to involve younger grade-school children, while studies reporting lower self-esteem have had adolescent, or adult samples (Rosenberg, 1965; Kaplan & Pokorny, 1971).

Self-esteem and subjective well-being appear to be closely related although distinct constructs. Self-esteem has been described as an evaluative self-attitude (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991). Rosenberg (1965) defines self-esteem as the affective direction (positive or negative) of the self-attitude. Low self-esteem has often been associated with various forms of psychological distress including low life satisfaction (Rosenberg, 1985).

Laxer (1964) found that self-esteem drops during periods of unhappiness. In his review of the literature, Diener (1984) states that self-esteem is one of the strongest predictors of subjective well-being. He cites 11 studies that all found a relationship between self-esteem and subjective well-being. Drumgoole (1981) found that self-esteem was related to life satisfaction in young adults, and Pomerantz (1978) found a relationship between

self-esteem and satisfaction with one's social milieu in a sample of adolescents.

Substantial research evidence suggests that positive self-esteem is an important component of the general assessment of life (Andrews & Withey, 1976). Self-esteem is thus considered to be a dimension of life satisfaction, morale and happiness (Bowling, 1991). Self-esteem (as measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale) has been found to be moderately to highly correlated with subjective well-being as measured by the Satisfaction With Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985).

Both self-esteem and subjective well-being have been conceptualized in terms of cognitive discrepancies. Cohen (1959) has suggested that self-esteem results from perceived discrepancies between the actual and ideal self. Others have suggested that self-esteem is one's attitude toward the discrepancy between the actual and ideal self (Wells & Marwell, 1976). Subjective well-being has also been thought to result from multiple discrepancies or "gaps" between what one perceives oneself to have and what one wants, deserves, expects or hopes for (Michalos, 1985). In light of the available theory and research, it could be anticipated that self-esteem in adolescents will be positively related to subjective well-being.

Emotional Regulation: Intrusion Versus Avoidance. The stress response syndrome theory of Horowitz (1974) has received some support from observations of affective

responses to stress during adolescence (Petersen & Spiga, 1982). Horowitz (1974) proposed that the human response to traumatic life events is characterized by two stress response syndromes: intrusion and avoidance. Memories of a stressful event, unbidden thoughts and images of the event, troubled dreams, strong pangs or waves of feelings, and repetitive behavior are characteristic of psychological intrusion. Ideational constriction, denial of the meanings and consequences of the stressful event, blunted sensation, behavioral inhibition or counterphobic activity, and emotional numbness are characteristic of psychological avoidance (Horowitz, Wilner, & Alvarez, 1979).

Wallerstein's longitudinal findings indicate that a substantial number of those who were older children and adolescents during their parents' divorce exhibit intrusive-like responses: vivid memories and painful, sad feelings about the divorce many years later, even long after their parents' remarriage (Wallerstein, 1985, 1987). Wallerstein's description of vivid memories and painful, sad feelings in older children and adolescents supports Horowitz's (1982) previous findings that (a) persons under stress reporting high levels of intrusion also rate themselves high on negative emotions, and (b) posttraumatic intrusions correlate most highly with feelings of pain, surprise and sadness. Horowitz (1982)

also found that female subjects tend to report higher levels of both intrusion and avoidance than males.

In the case of severe trauma (e.g., rape), intrusion effects may persist over time. Kilpatrick and Veronen (1984) found that intrusion levels remained fairly high in rape victims even two years following the traumatic event. Since divorce is considered to be a traumatic experience for some children and adolescents, one might expect to see intrusion and avoidance effects one to two years following divorce. Wallerstein's 10-year follow-up findings suggest that intrusion effects may reoccur or persist for much longer periods of time in some children of divorce.

Horowitz (1982) theorizes that high levels of avoidance prevent the individual from "working through" the traumatic experience. Perhaps the maturation of cognitive functioning and the separation/individuation process occurring during adolescence enables young people to emotionally distance themselves during parental divorce as a way of coping (Roth & Cohen, 1986). This might result in much delayed intrusion effects later on similar to Wallerstein's findings.

Headey and Wearing (1990) investigated coping strategies and their effectiveness in minimizing the impact of adverse life events upon subjective well-being. They found that affective regulation strategies were ineffective, while avoidance and denial strategies were harmful to subjective well-being. Research on cognitive

styles suggests that subjects who employ the Freudian mechanism of repression in coping with adverse life events experience both positive and negative affect less intensely. In other words, repression seems to take the edge off those positive emotions associated with well-being (Davis & Schwartz, 1987; Gorman & Wessman, 1974). Because of their cognitive development, adolescents may use avoidance and denial strategies as a way of coping with parental divorce. It would therefore be anticipated that such coping styles might have a delayed "sleeping" effect on adolescent well-being some time later, perhaps even many years later following parental divorce. There is no known research available that investigates long-term intrusion and avoidance effects in adolescents following their parents' remarriage. There is also no known research that examines the relationship between Horowitz's stress response syndromes and subjective well-being. However, in light of the above limited research findings, it could be anticipated that intrusion and avoidance regarding parental divorce would be negatively related to subjective well-being.

Interpersonal Resources

Parent/Adolescent Communication. Petersen (1981) found that adolescents who reported having more frequent communication with parents had higher self-esteem and more positive emotional tone. The concept of social attachment

(Bowlby, 1969) may be useful in describing parent/adolescent communication in terms of the exchange content of youths' interactions with parents. To investigate this idea, Cotterell (1992) examined the relation of attachment to adolescent well-being, and found that for both sexes, the strength of attachments to parents was associated with positive feelings about themselves. Young peoples' perception of parent/adolescent communication may also be related to their sense of interpersonal competency. Emmons & Diener (1985) found that interpersonal competencies were strongly associated with positive affect as measured by a satisfaction-with-life scale in their two samples of undergraduate students.

Research on parent/adolescent communication and its impact on the subjective well-being of teenagers living in stepfamilies is very limited. In remarried families, the adolescent's sense of attachment to the custodial parent may be threatened by the presence of the stepparent, who may be viewed by the adolescent as a competitor for the custodial parent's time and attention. Thus, the teenage stepchild may experience communication difficulties with both the custodial parent and stepparent. In fact, more positive marital relations in families with either stepfathers or stepmothers have been associated with more negative parent-child relations and poorer adjustment for girls (Brand et al., 1988; Hetherington, 1988). For boys, however, after the first

two years of remarriage, high marital satisfaction between the custodial parent and stepparent is related to more positive adjustment just as it is in nondivorced families (Hetherington, 1987). Both stepmothers and stepfathers take a considerably less active role in parenting than do custodial parents. Even after two years, disengagement by the stepparent is the most common parenting style (Hetherington, 1987, 1988, 1990; Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1988). The stepparent's more disengaged involvement with the adolescent may also create its own communication problems.

In summary, the adolescent's interpersonal competency as an effective communicator and negotiator with parents may be jeopardized by marital breakup and stepfamily reorganization. This hypothesis has gained some recent support from observational research. In their observations of family interactions, Bray, Berger, Mann, Silverblatt & Gershenhorn (1987) found that nondivorced families were rated as having more positive moods and better communication skills than stepfather families. In addition, interpersonal interactions were rated as more coercive in stepfather families than in intact families.

In their comparison of 18 bereaved, divorced and intact families, Partridge and Kotler (1987) found that family type accounted for less than 1% of the variance in measures of adolescent self-esteem, while family

environment (quality of family interaction and communication) accounted for between 12% to 29% of the variance. Since self-esteem and subjective well-being have been shown to be moderately correlated (Diener et al., 1985), it is anticipated that the adolescent's perception of the quality of communication with the custodial parent and stepparent will be positively related to subjective well-being.

Gender of the Custodial Parent: Same-Sex Custody. The gender of the custodial parent may be a significant factor in the assessment of interpersonal resources available to the adolescent. There is some evidence that sex of parent and sex of adolescent matter in parent-adolescent relations. At adolescence, there is greater responsibility for socialization along same-sex lines (Gecas & Seff, 1990). Gender differences in stepchildren's adjustment have been reported in relation to the gender of the custodial parent. By two years after divorce, custodial fathers report better family adjustment and fewer problems with their children than do custodial mothers (Furstenberg, 1988). This may be because, unlike custodial mothers, custodial fathers have fewer financial worries, more available supports, and are more likely to be awarded custody of school-aged children and adolescents.

School-aged children have been found to adapt better in the custody of a parent of the same sex (Camara & Resnick, 1988; Zill, 1988). Furstenberg (1988) found that

boys in the custody of their fathers are more mature, social, independent, less demanding, and have higher self-esteem than do girls in their father's custody. Girls in the custody of their fathers show higher levels of aggression and behavioral problems, and fewer instances of prosocial behavior than do girls in the custody of their mothers. In light of the available evidence, it is anticipated that being in a stepfamily with the custodial parent of the same sex will be positively related to adolescent subjective well-being.

Process Variables

Adolescent's Age at Parents' Divorce. During stressful encounters, age appears to modify effective coping behaviors with regard to emotional well-being (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988). Following marital transitions, the type of emotional and behavioral problems in children and adolescents vary by age (Hetherington et al., 1989). Because of their cognitive immaturity, children who were young at the time of divorce may have fewer memories of parental conflict. Ten years later, Wallerstein (1984) found that those children who were aged 2 1/2 to almost 6 at the time of parental separation had few conscious memories of the marital rupture, and were considerably less burdened than those who were older at the time of divorce. These young children, who were the most distressed at the time of marital rupture, were not

troubled by frightful feelings or intensely cathected memories of parental conflict ten years later as were their older counterparts. Wallerstein (1989) notes that those female adolescents who were toddlers and preschool-age at the time of parental separation were by far the most intact group in her sample at the 10-year mark. In their review of the literature, Hetherington et al. (1989) conclude that although about one-third may still be troubled, most young children seem to adapt reasonably well to parental divorce if they are not encountering new personal or family stressors.

Those who were latency-age children and adolescents at the time of parental divorce seem to be more consciously troubled. In Wallerstein's (1987) ten-year follow-up, emotional and behavioral problems persisted in almost half of Wallerstein's early latency-age children of divorce (those who were between 6 and 8 years old at parental separation). Most of these children had lived for many years in a stepfamily, but still continued to struggle with negative feelings about their parents' divorce and were preoccupied with issues of loss and separation from their biological fathers (Wallerstein, 1987). Her findings were even more striking with older children and adolescents. Ten years after marital disruption, a significant number of these older children and adolescents (who were age 9 or older at time of marital separation) were still burdened by resentment,

feelings of sadness and deprivation, and vivid memories of their parent's marital rupture (Wallerstein, 1985). In summary, although long-term effects of marital transitions upon children and adolescents are less well established, it is apparent from the research at hand that the effects of these transitions vary according to age of the child at the time of divorce. How well adolescents cope with parental remarriage and life in a stepfamily may be influenced by how well they have adjusted to their parents' divorce. Thus, adolescent subjective well-being in stepfamilies may be related to these age effects. In light of the above research, it could be anticipated that the adolescent's age at the time of parental divorce is negatively related to subjective well-being (as age goes up, well-being goes down).

Adolescent's Age at Custodial Parent's Remarriage.

Very few empirical studies document age differences in how children adjust to the custodial parent's remarriage and life in a stepfamily. Early adolescents appear to be especially vulnerable to the effects of remarriage and have the most difficulty in adjusting to life in a stepfamily (Brand et al., 1988; Hetherington, 1987, 1990; Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1988; Hetherington et al., 1986). Young adolescents are faced with numerous tasks. They must (a) formulate new perceptions of their parents, (b) attempt to become more independent of parental control

and learn how to be self-monitoring, (c) learn how to balance parental, individual, and peer expectations, and (d) learn how to be autonomous and make their own decisions (Steinberg, 1985). Remarriage of the custodial parent only makes these tasks more complicated and difficult for the younger adolescent. Displays of affection by newly remarried parents may also be a source of misunderstanding, resentment and embarrassment to the adolescent's emerging sexuality (Hetherington, 1988, 1990). The impact of parental remarriage upon the adolescent's subjective well-being is surely intensified by all the dynamic changes occurring in the adolescent's assumptive world, sense of self, emotional balance, and interpersonal life. From these theoretical observations and the available empirical evidence, it is anticipated that the adolescent's age at the time of the custodial parent's remarriage will be negatively related to subjective well-being (as age goes up, well-being goes down).

Length of Time in the Current Stepfamily. Several studies have found that the length of time in a remarried family appears to have positive impact on adolescent adjustment. Clingempeel and Segal (1986) found that stepmother/stepdaughter relationships and child outcomes were positively associated with the length of time the biological father and stepmother had lived together. Lutz (1983) found that adolescents who lived in stepfamilies

less than two years reported more stress than those who had lived in a stepfamily more than two years. However, Pink and Wampler (1985) found that length of time in the current stepfamily was not related to the quality of the stepparent-stepchild relationship or to the adolescent's adjustment to stepfamily life. Studies that examine the relationship between adolescent subjective well-being and length of time in a stepfamily are virtually nonexistent. However, since stress has been identified as a major domain relating to subjective well-being, and since stress levels are reported by adolescents to go down with years in a remarried family, it is anticipated that the adolescent's number of years in the current stepfamily will be positively related subjective well-being.

Other Structural Factors

Other factors not directly associated with transition theory may be related to adolescent subjective well-being in stepfamilies. Salient structural variables include (a) gender of the adolescent, and (b) stepfamily income.

Gender of the Adolescent

Gender differences in response to remarriage are less consistently reported in adolescents than in younger children (Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1988; Wallerstein et al., 1988). Gender differences may be somewhat more evident among older children. Hetherington, Cox, and Cox (1986), in their sample of older children (mean age = 10

years), found that divorce impacted boys more negatively, while remarriage impacted girls more adversely. Likewise, Vuchinich et al. (1991), in their sample of older children and adolescents (aged 10 to 14), found that girls have more problems adjusting to remarriage than boys, girls having more difficulty in their interactions with stepfathers.

Regardless of family structure, one study found that subjective well-being may be lower for white female adolescents than for white male, black male and black female adolescents (Torgoff, 1979). In addition, Crosbie-Burnett's (1987) study of oldest or only adolescents in 84 white, middle-class stepfather families found that boys reported greater well-being than girls regardless of custody arrangements.

In adult studies, although women report more negative affect, they also seem to experience greater joys than men, so that little significant difference in overall well-being (or affect balance) is usually found between adult men and women (Diener, 1984). Adolescent gender differences in well-being are less clearly established. More research needs to be done regarding adolescent gender differences in well-being during parental marital transitions. It could be hypothesized that the well-being of teenage girls may be more affected by parental remarriage since girls may tend to be more concerned about interpersonal relationships than are boys, may draw

more emotional support from within the family than do boys, and may experience more involvement with family problems than do boys. On the basis of these theoretical notions, and the Crosbie-Burnett (1987) finding that adolescent boys reported greater well-being than girls regardless of custody arrangements, it is anticipated that, in remarried families, being an adolescent female will be negatively related to subjective well-being.

Stepfamily Income as a Control Variable

Lower income individuals and those with unstable incomes are more likely to divorce and remarry (Hetherington et al., 1989). A lack of economic resources within the post-divorce family has been found to increase the risk of several developmental problems in children (Amato & Keith, 1991). Reduced economic resources following divorce may negatively affect children's well-being due to (a) poorer nutrition and health, (b) moving to poorer quality housing, neighborhoods, and schools, and (c) loss of the child's familiar friends, neighbors and teachers (Amato & Keith, 1991; Hetherington et al., 1989).

While reduced economic resources may accompany divorce for custodial mothers, custodial fathers generally maintain or improve their standard of living following divorce. At remarriage, the financial situation improves significantly for custodial mothers as well. In fact, financial status in stepfamilies tends to parallel that

found in intact families (Hetherington et al., 1989). Nevertheless, financial problems are not necessarily absent following remarriage. Remarried individuals may have the added stress of supporting more than one household, at least to some extent (Hetherington et al., 1989).

Diener (1984) reports that there is an "overwhelming amount of evidence that shows a positive relationship between level of income and subjective well-being within countries" (p. 553). Even if stepfamilies and first-marriage families in the United States differ little in income, in the general population there still appears to be a positive relationship between income and well-being regardless of family structure. It is thus anticipated that stepfamily income as reported by the custodial parent will be positively related to adolescent subjective well-being (although the effect may be small if the variance in income within this sample is negligible). The effects of income on adolescent well-being will be controlled in the final regression analysis.

Summary

The research on adolescent subjective well-being in stepfamilies is limited, yet the subjective well-being literature plus findings from related research areas suggest that divorce and remarriage can be stressful for adolescents, who must learn how to adapt to profound changes in family structure and interpersonal

relationships as they work through their own developmental changes. These changes in family structure and relationships can have great impact upon the attitudes and mood states of adolescents, who are in the midst of learning how to master several developmental goals and tasks. These developmental tasks include: (a) understanding, expressing, and most importantly regulating the expression of their own emotions; (b) achieving emotional independence from parents; (c) developing personal competencies, especially in the area of communication skills, and (d) forming and maintaining more mature relationships. The extent to which family reorganization may enhance or jeopardize the achievement of these goals and subsequently impact the adolescent's subjective well-being is the focus of this study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study is part of a larger research project entitled "Divorce and the Transition to Remarriage: A Study of Stepfamilies with Adolescent Children." Under the direction of Dr. Barbara Newman, and Dr. Patrick McKenry of The Ohio State University, the project analyzed factors related to the adolescent's adjustment in a stepfamily. Funding for previous phases of the project was provided by the Ohio Department of Mental Health, and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (H-839). This phase of the study analyzed factors relating to adolescent subjective well-being in stepmother and stepfather families.

Sample Selection

Sample selection has already been described in detail in previous studies (Inkrott, 1988; Quick, 1989; Skopin, 1988). The original sample consisted of 101 stepmother and stepfather families with their adolescent stepchildren, custodial and non-custodial, between and including the ages of 12 and 18, living in families residing in large metropolitan areas of Ohio and Kentucky. For inclusion in the study, the stepparents had to have been remarried for

at least one year to a man or woman who was divorced. In addition, adolescents had to either live with the custodial parent and stepparent, or visit regularly (at least once a month). Where there was more than one adolescent in the home, only the eldest eligible stepchild participated in the study.

The purposive sample was acquired by a reputational sampling technique. Referrals were made by the "snowball" procedure. Families were referred by colleagues, stepfamily support groups, other small groups with sizable numbers of stepfamilies, and by families participating in the study. Although the sample size may appear small statistically, it took the original investigators well over a year to identify and solicit an equal number of stepmother and stepfather families that were willing, in the end, to participate (Quick, 1989). It should also be noted that stepfamily studies that have an equal number of stepmother and stepfather families, that have three family members cooperating in the study, and that have a total sample size as large as that of the present study are virtually nonexistent. Two major reasons for this rarity were confronted firsthand by the original investigators at the time of data collection. First, many stepfamilies were unable to participate in the study due to continuing emotional pain, changes in living arrangements, schedule difficulties, or lack of cooperation among all stepfamily

members. Second, finding enough stepmother families for research purposes is difficult: only about 5-10% of fathers in the general population have custody of their children following divorce, and most children's regular visitation with their fathers decreases substantially after 1-2 years (Quick, 1989).

Data Collection Procedures

The original research proposal was approved by the Human Subjects Committee of The Ohio State University and is documented in previous studies (Inkrott, 1988; Quick, 1989; Skopin, 1988). Following approval, the survey materials were pretested for inappropriate or ambiguous items by stepfamily members not included in the sample.

Each stepfamily received a mailed letter of introduction, inviting them to participate in the study. Letters were followed by telephone calls to answer questions and to set up appointments for administration of the questionnaires. Consent forms were completed before each family was interviewed. Family members were requested to keep their answers confidential.

Data were collected by the original investigators (Inkrott, 1988; Quick, 1989; Skopin, 1988). Family members were interviewed in their homes. The questionnaires took families about one hour to complete on average. Family members were seated around a table with the original investigator present. Such an arrangement maintained confidentiality, prevented inappropriate responses between

family members, and encouraged adolescents to take the task seriously. Questionnaires were individually collected upon completion.

Stepfamilies living in states other than Ohio and Kentucky completed questionnaires by mail. This small subgroup was given special written instructions and received follow-up telephone calls to insure that the instructions were properly understood. These families were also asked to keep their responses confidential until all questionnaires had been returned.

Subjects

The initial sample from which this study's final sample was drawn consisted of two types of families: (a) fifty stepmother families with a natural father, having at least one adolescent living with the family, and (b) fifty-one stepfather families with a natural mother, having at least one adolescent living with the family. There were no mutual children between any of the married adults. Only the oldest child living in the home was included in the study. After listwise deletion of missing cases, the final sample in this study consisted of 82 stepfamilies: (a) forty-two stepmother families, and (b) forty stepfather families. Demographic characteristics of the sample are presented and discussed in Chapter 4.

Instruments and Measures

Data were collected from the stepfamilies by means of three paper and pencil questionnaires designed by the principle investigators, Dr. Barbara M. Newman, Dr. Patrick McKenry, and Ms. Donna Quick, research associate. Adolescent, parent, and stepparent versions of the questionnaires used in this study were composed of demographic and family background questions as well as standardized scales designed to measure the perceptions and psychological functioning of the adolescent. Listed below are the variables investigated in this present study and the corresponding questions and scales by which they are measured. All responses pertaining to these variables were taken from the adolescent questionnaire, except for stepfamily income which was taken from the custodial parent questionnaire.

1. Adolescent's subjective well-being

Bradburn's (1969) Affect Balance Scale. To determine whether data from parental observations of adolescent problem behaviors correlate with adolescent well-being scores (to assess the relationship between observed behaviors and self-reported subjective well-being), the following items from the custodial parent questionnaire will be included for post hoc analysis: "Have you noticed any of the following problems in your child since your divorce? (a) ___emotionally upset or depressed; (b) ___decline in school

performance; (c) ___insecurity; (d)___detachment from either parent; (e)___difficulty with social relationships/social adjustment; (f)___psychosomatic illness; (g)___acting out behavior (delinquency); (h)___relationship problems with stepparent; and (i)___other"

2. Adolescent's self-esteem

The Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale

3. Adolescent's intrusion of thoughts and feelings about parents' divorce

Impact of Event Scale (intrusion subscale) (Horowitz et al., 1979)

4. Adolescent's avoidance of thoughts and feelings about parents' divorce

Impact of Event Scale (avoidance subscale) (Horowitz et al., 1979)

5. Adolescent's perception of parent-adolescent communication.

Barnes and Olson's (1982) Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale (adolescent questionnaire --custodial parent form)

6. Adolescent's perception of stepparent-adolescent communication.

Barnes and Olson's (1982) Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale (adolescent questionnaire --stepparent form)

7. Gender of custodial parent: same-sex custody

"Relation to the child: Mother Father"

Gender of adolescent: "Sex: Male Female"

During data analysis, the noncontinuous variable, "same-sex custodial parent," will be created by matching gender of parent and child.

8. Adolescent's age at parents' divorce

"What was your age when your parents divorced?"

9. Adolescent's age at custodial parent's remarriage

"What was your age when your custodial parent remarried your current stepparent?"

10. Adolescent's years lived in current stepfamily

"How many years have you lived in your current stepfamily?"

11. Gender of adolescent

"Sex: Male Female"

12. Stepfamily income

"What is your approximate total annual family income (all sources before taxes)?" (custodial parent questionnaire)

Affect Balance Scale

Based on the "pleasure-pain" model of well-being, the Bradburn (1965) Affect Balance Scale (ABS) was developed as a measure of self-reported psychological or subjective well-being for the general population. The (ABS) was developed by Bradburn and Caplovitz (1965) using a sample

of 2,006 adults in Illinois. Bradburn (1969) revised the (ABS) using a sample of 2,787 adults of mixed socioeconomic and ethnic groups based on five probability random samples in Detroit, Chicago, Washington, D.C., and ten other large U. S. cities. Respondents in his study were interviewed 12 weeks apart.

The (ABS) is not concerned with detecting psychiatric or psychological disorders, and its ability to yield an index of positive affect sets it apart from most measures of well-being, which tend to focus on negative affect (Warr et al., 1983). The (ABS) measures two independent or orthogonal dimensions of subjective well-being: positive and negative affect (Diener, 1984; Diener & Emmons, 1984; Watson & Tellegen, 1985; Emmons, 1989). Subjective well-being is expressed as the balance between these two dimensions.

The scale consists of 10 items, five of which comprise the positive affect subscale and five of which comprise the negative affect subscale. The response format in the original version of the scale is a dichotomous (yes/no). This study employed the (yes/no) response format. To obtain an overall affect balance score, this study also employed Bradburn's original scoring method, which involves a complex calculation. A "yes" response on the five positive affect items is coded 1 and a "no" response is coded 0, resulting in a range of 0 to 5 for

the positive affect subscale. Bradburn first employed differential weighting for the last four negative affect items, coding all "yes" responses to these negative items with a 2 instead of a 1, resulting in range of 0 to 9 on the negative affect subscale. A "yes" response to the first item on the negative subscale was still coded 1 because Bradburn felt the direction of this item was more equivocal (N. Bradburn, personal communication, May 12, 1993). Subscale raw scores thus range from 0 to 5 for the five positive affect items and from 0 to 9 for the five negative affect items.

Bradburn then combined subscale raw scores at the frequency extremes, resulting in a subscale raw score range of 0 to 4 for each subscale. For example, if a subject got a positive affect subscale raw score of 0 or 1, this was recoded 0; Positive affect subscale raw scores of 2, 3, 4, and 5 were recoded 1, 2, 3, and 4 respectively. The same procedure was carried out for the negative affect subscale raw scores, but more raw scores were combined because of the weighting. For example, if a subject got a subscale raw score of 7, 8, or 9, these were recoded 4. Subscale raw scores of 5 and 6 were recoded 3; subscale raw scores of 3 and 4 were recoded 2; subscale raw scores of 1 and 2 were recoded 1; and subscale raw scores of 0 were coded 0. Scores on the positive and negative affect subscale raw scores now range from 0 to 4 respectively. To compute the total affect balance, the

negative affect subscale raw score is subtracted from the positive affect subscale raw score, and a constant (+5) is then added to the sum, resulting in affect balance scores ranging from 1 to 9 by the addition of this constant.

A less complex method is to simply dispense with Bradburn's weighting on the negative items. This was not initially done in the present study, since the original weighted scoring method had been recommended by P. Bova at the National Opinion Research Center (P. Bova, personal communication, June 22, 1992), and had already been¹ employed by this investigator in the data analysis. Bradburn confirmed that this investigator had indeed scored the (ABS) correctly using the weighted method, and also indicated that converting over to the unweighted scoring method would not change the affect balance scores (N. Bradburn, personal communication, May 12, 1993). As a check on this investigator's coding of the scales, the printed raw data for several subjects in the study were recoded without using the weighted method, and the exact same affect balance scores were obtained.

¹ Scoring instructions for the ABS are available from the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago, and may be obtained by writing to Norman Bradburn, Director, NORC, 1155 East 60th St., Chicago, Illinois 60637, or by writing to Mr. Pat Bova at the Paul B. Sheatsley Library, 1155 East 60th St., Chicago, Illinois 60637.

Recent use of the (ABS) has dispensed with the differential weighting and the 4-point subscale ranges. Veenhoven (1993) has computed (ABS) mean scores from numerous national studies employing the Bradburn (ABS) as the measure of subjective well-being. For international comparisons, Veenhoven (1993) converted the (ABS) to a 10-point scale range rather than using Bradburn's 9-point scale range. In order to compare this study's well-being mean score to the U.S. mean score computed by Veenhoven (1993), the Bradburn (ABS) was recoded for this study's sample using the 10-point affect balance scale range. After recoding the (ABS), the regression analyses were re-run, and it was found that the Veenhoven recode did not significantly alter the multiple regression results except to increase the R squares slightly on the main predictor variables (see Tables 9, 10, and 11). The regression results reported in Chapter 4 are based on Bradburn's 9-point affect balance scale range.

Regarding the internal consistency reliability of the (ABS), Andrews and Robinson (1991) report inter-item correlations between .19 and .75 for the positive affect subscale and between .38 and .72 for the negative affect subscale. Cherlin and Reeder (1975) report similar inter-item coefficients, ranging from .47 to .73 for the positive subscale and .48 to .73 for the negative subscale. Bowling (1991) states that correlations between

the (ABS) and other well-being measures are around .66, indicating acceptable criterion validity. Bradburn (1969) reports acceptable convergent validity for the (ABS), citing correlations between .45 and .51 (gamma values) with a general question about reported happiness. No data on discriminant validity were reported by Bradburn (1969). Cherlin and Reeder (1975) have criticized the scale, suggesting that there is a third factor (activation level) as suggested by the (ABS) item: "particularly excited or interested in something."

Test-retest reliability has been acceptable. Across a 3-day period, Bradburn (1969) reported a gamma value of .76 for the total scale, with .83 for the positive items and .81 for the negative items. Bradburn (1969) also found the (ABS) to have acceptable test-retest reliability ($r = .48$) over a nine month period. Campbell, Converse and Rodgers (1976) found a slightly weaker test-retest reliability ($r = .38$) in their reinterview over eight months. Smith (1979) states that since changing life experience would naturally influence well-being over time, these moderate to strong associations indicate that respondents understand the (ABS) items and are referring to their general, current level of subjective well-being rather than to daily changes in mood.

Results from other studies suggest that about 10 percent of the general population experience a strong sense of positive well-being (Bowling, 1991). Bradburn

reported no overall mean for his samples. However, Andrews and Robinson (1991) report a mean score of 6.7 for Bradburn's national sample, extrapolated from the individual item percentages. Veenhoven (1993) computes a mean score of 7.0 for a 1981 U.S. adult sample (using a 0-10 scale range), and reports (ABS) mean scores for many other countries.

The (ABS) has been widely used as a measure of well-being among older adults. Bradburn (1969) noted some time ago a lack of relationship between (ABS) scores and age. Recent interest in subjective well-being has seen an increased use of the (ABS) and other well-being scales among young adults and college undergraduates. A few studies have examined subjective well-being among adolescent populations. Since the (ABS) was not developed specifically for older adults, there is no apparent reason why it would not be a suitable measure of subjective well-being for these younger groups.

Recently, however, Bolin and Dodder (1990, 1992) have questioned the suitability of the (ABS) with adolescent samples. They administered the (ABS) to 380 undergraduates between the ages of 18 and 20 and got unanticipated results in their factor analysis. Contrary to previous research with the (ABS), these investigators found that the negative affect items loaded positively, while the positive affect items loaded negatively. A table of the

first unrotated factor loadings was presented by Bolin and Dodder (1992) (see Table 1), who also noted that the (ABS) still showed acceptable construct validity and reliability. After conducting several validity checks, they concluded that the responses of the students were valid, indicating that the students actually experienced a duality of feelings. Bolin and Dodder (1992) also presented several reasons why their findings may be unique to the peculiarities of their research.

Nevertheless, the reverse loading on Bolin and Dodder's first unrotated factor analysis indicated that while many of the young students reported feeling on top of the world, they also felt depressed at the same time, felt interested yet restless, etc. Bolin and Dodder (1990) suggested that psychological or subjective well-being may be "qualitatively different among college students or even among youth in general. . . . Feelings that are polar opposites, such as being intensely interested in something yet bored, may be commonly held simultaneously at this period in life" (p. 840). Thus, these investigators concluded that the (ABS) might not be an appropriate measure for adolescent well-being.

Factor Analysis: This Sample. Since adolescent subjective well-being is the outcome measure of this research, this investigator conducted a factor analysis of the (ABS) which had been administered to adolescent subjects during the initial phase of the research project.

Results opposite to that of Bolin and Dodder (1990) were obtained. This investigator's factor analysis of the (ABS) generated first unrotated factor loadings in the expected direction --the negative items loaded negatively and the positive items loaded positively, indicating that the adolescent subjects in this study did not experience the same duality of feelings as did the undergraduates in Bolin and Dodder's study (see Table 1). R. A. Dodder (personal communication, November, 11, 1992) confirmed that this investigator had followed generally comparable coding and statistical procedures (although Dodder stated he had used a 5-point Likert response format instead of the yes/no format used by this investigator). Consultation with R. A. Dodder confirmed that this investigator's factor analysis results were indeed in the opposite direction from that obtained in the Bolin and Dodder (1990) study. Thus, the (ABS) appears to be a valid measure of subjective well-being for the adolescents in this study.

Results from the final rotated factor matrix indicate that all five of the (ABS) positive affect items are strongly correlated (Eigenvalue = 3.1) under factor one (see Table 2). Four of the negative affect items showed good correlation (Eigenvalue = 1.5) under factor two. One negative affect item, "So restless that you couldn't sit long in a chair" was weakly correlated ($r = .21$) with the

other negative affect items, and loaded by itself under a third factor.

Overall, these factor loadings lend little support to Cherlin and Reeder's (1975) suggestion that there is a third component (activation level) included in the scale (e.g., particularly excited or interested in something"). Borgatta and Montgomery (1987) have also argued that some items seem to be measuring instrumental aspects (e.g., accomplishments). However, in this present study, these "activation" items were strongly correlated with the positive affect items. These findings from the factor analysis suggest that instrumentality or activation is an aspect of positive affect that is consistent with goal theories of subjective well-being, one of which is personal strivings theory employed in this study.

Inter-Item Reliability: This Sample. Despite the fact that the Bradburn (ABS) is not age-specific, it has not been frequently administered to adolescent populations. Therefore, the responses of the adolescents in this sample were used to compute the internal consistency (inter-item) reliability for each affect subscale (using the Kuder-Richardson-20 formula for dichotomously scored items). For this sample, the computed coefficient alphas for the Bradburn (1969) positive affect and negative affect subscales were .73 and .59 respectively. These reliability coefficients for the Bradburn (ABS) subscales are very similar to those found by Bradburn (1969), and by Cherlin

and Reeder (1975), who reported internal consistency (inter-item) correlations ranging from .47 to .73 for the positive subscale, and from .48 to .73 for the negative subscale in their adult samples. Furthermore, since the reliability coefficients computed for this sample are both well below .85, these findings also indicate that response set bias² on the Bradburn (ABS) is not a problem for the adolescent sample in this study. Again, it is concluded that the (ABS) is a valid and reliable measure of subjective well-being for the adolescent subjects in this study.

Self-Esteem Scale.

Developed by Rosenberg (1965), the Self-Esteem Scale (SES) is the most popular measure of global self-esteem. Blascovich and Tomaka (1991) state that the (SES) is "the standard with which developers of other measures usually seek convergence" (p. 120). The (SES) is a ten-item self-report scale originally designed to measure adolescent's global feelings of self-worth or self-acceptance. Rosenberg (1965) defines self-esteem as a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward oneself. The original sample was a group of 5024 high school juniors and seniors from 10 randomly selected New York State high

2

Response set bias is the conscious or unconscious tendency to respond in a similar way to subscale items that are grouped together as a set.

schools. Although first designed as a Guttman-type scale, the (SES) is frequently scored using a four-point Likert-type response format (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree). The scale range for the (SES) is 10 to 40 with higher scores representing higher self-esteem. Scores in the middle range (scores around 23, 25, 27 or so) represent low levels of self-esteem, since most people tend to rate themselves as above average on self-esteem scales (Baumeister, Tice & Hutton, 1989).

The scale shows good reliability, Dobson, Goudy, Keith and Powers (1979) reporting a Cronbach alpha of .77 for their sample, and Flemming and Courtney (1984) reporting a Cronbach alpha of .88, demonstrating good internal consistency. For the adolescent sample in this present study, the internal consistency reliability was .89. Silber and Tippet (1965) reported a test-retest correlation of .85 for 28 subjects after a 2-week interval. Flemming and Courtney (1984) reported a test-retest correlation of .82 for 259 male and female subjects over a 1-week period. Rosenberg (1965) presents considerable data demonstrating construct validity for the (SES). The scale has also exhibited very good convergent and discriminant validity (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991).

Impact of Event Scale

The Impact of Event Scale (IES) is a 15-item instrument that measures current subjective stress.

Seidner, Amick & Kilpatrick (1988) state that the (IES) shows promise both in measuring stress responses following traumatic events and in assessing treatment outcome. The (IES) was initially designed by Horowitz et al. (1979) to measure two stress response syndromes characteristic of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): event-related intrusion (intrusively experienced thoughts, images, feelings, dreams), and event-related avoidance (consciously recognized avoidance of certain ideas, feelings, or situations).

Originally used with trauma victims, the (IES) can be used to measure the impact of any stressful event. In their comparative analysis of victims of various traumatic life events, Wilson et al. (1985) found that the (IES) was significantly differentiating among the trauma groups (combat, divorce, violent crimes, natural disasters, and family trauma such as alcoholism, mental illness and death). The scale has also been recently employed as a measure of distress in infertile and expectant couples (Jarboe, 1986).

Development of the (IES) utilized pilot studies in which item lists were given to psychotherapy patients exhibiting stress response syndromes and to nonpatient volunteers exposed to serious life events. All items were endorsed frequently in the pilot studies. Utilizing only those items that empirically clustered around the intrusion and avoidance dimensions, the final revised

total scale exhibited high split half reliability ($r = .86$). Using Cronbach's alpha, Horowitz et al. (1979) found that the internal consistency of the (IES) subscales was high (intrusion = .78, avoidance = .82). The (IES) subscales also exhibited a high internal consistency with the adolescent sample in the present study. The internal consistency reliability of the intrusion subscale was found to be .82 for these adolescent subjects, while the internal consistency of the avoidance subscale was .78. In Horowitz' original pilot study, a moderate correlation ($r = .42$) between the intrusion and avoidance subscales was found, suggesting that related but distinguishable dimensions were being measured (Horowitz et al., 1979). For the subjects in the present study, this moderate correlation between scales was duplicated ($r = .41$). Also in Horowitz' pilot study, test-retest reliability (1-week testing interval) for the revised (IES) scale was found to be .87 for the total scale, .89 for the intrusion subscale, and .79 for the avoidance subscale. The (IES) was also found to accurately distinguish between reactions to various types of trauma, and to sensitively reflect changes over time (Horowitz et al., 1979).

The (IES) has been used mostly with adults, but is an appropriate measure of distress for adolescents as well. One recent study (Popiel & Susskind, 1985) administered the (IES) to a group of 25 adolescent female rape victims

aged 16 and older. The (IES) was a valid and sensitive measure of their distress three months after their assault. In the present study, adolescents were asked to indicate how often the (IES) items were true for them while their parents were divorcing, using a four-point Likert-type response format (not at all, rarely, sometimes, often). The two subscales, intrusion and avoidance, are comprised of 7 and 8 items respectively. Horowitz et al. (1979) recommend the use of separate subscale scores to preserve the sensitivity of the scale to both intrusion and avoidance processes. In this study, separate subscale scores will be used.

Horowitz (1982) reports that levels of intrusion and avoidance are significantly different across groups of persons with diverse life events. In a series of studies following the development of the (IES), Horowitz found that the intrusion means ranged from a high of 23 for predominantly PTSD clinic patients to a low of 2.4 for physical therapy students who had recently participated in a cadaver dissection. The avoidance means ranged from a high of 19.4 for the clinic patients to a low of 2.1 for the physical therapy students. Horowitz (1982) has also established clinical criteria for (IES) symptom levels on each subscale. Subscale scores below 8.5 reflect low levels of distress, subscale scale scores ranging from 9-19 reflect medium levels of distress, and subscale scores over 19 reflect high levels of distress.

Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale

Developed by Barnes and Olson (1982), the Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale (PACS) is a 20-item measure that was designed to assess the perspectives of both the parent and adolescent regarding their communication process. The (PACS) has already been used in one stepfamily study to explore the stepfather-adolescent relationship (Pink & Wampler, 1985). The (PACS) measures several dimensions of the communication process: (a) open exchange of ideas, information and concerns between generations; (b) trust or honesty experienced; and (c) the perceived emotional tone of the interactions, whether positive or negative (Barnes & Olson, 1982).

Three main factors emerged from Barnes and Olson's pilot study, these being incorporated into the two subscales of the final instrument. The first subscale, Open Family Communication, measures more positive aspects of parent-adolescent communication: free exchange of factual and emotional information, lack of constraint, and degree of understanding within the relationship. The second subscale, Problems in Family Communication, measures negative aspects such as hesitancy and caution in self-disclosure, negative styles of interaction, and selectivity and caution in what is shared. The two subscales, each consisting of 10 items, will be combined in this research to yield a total scale score.

The (PACS) uses a five-point Likert-type response format (strongly agree, moderately agree, neither agree or disagree, moderately disagree, strongly disagree). The (PACS) items are summed with a possible range of 20-100. The scale shows good reliability. Utilizing Cronbach's alpha, Barnes and Olson (1982) computed the internal consistency reliability for each subscale with two different samples. Olson reported a Cronbach alpha of .87 for Open Family Communication, .78 for Problems in Family Communication, and .88 for both subscales combined. For the adolescent sample in the present study, Cronbach alphas for the Open Family Communication subscale were computed for the four adolescent versions of the scale and were found to be higher than Barnes and Olson's coefficient alpha: .91 for the mother version, .89 for the father version, .92 for the stepmother version, and .94 for the stepfather version. For this sample, the Cronbach alphas computed for the Problems in Family Communication subscale were close to Barnes and Olson's coefficient alpha for the four versions of the scale: .75 for the mother version, .66 for the father version, .74 for the stepmother version, and .66 for the stepfather version. Barnes and Olson (1982) found that construct validity ranged between .48 and .71 on Open Family Communication, and between .26 and .60 on Problems in Family Communication. Norms for total scale scores have also been developed by Barnes and Olson (1982) for adolescents.

Data Analysis

The main dependent variable in this study is the adolescent's self-reported score of psychological or subjective well-being as measured by the Bradburn (1969) Affect Balance Scale. Affect balance scores will be used as the dependent variable in the stepwise multiple regression analysis, which will be the main statistical procedure employed in this study. Prior to multiple regression analysis, a correlational analysis will be performed to check for multicollinearity among the independent variables. A SAS diagnostic test for multicollinearity will also be employed.

The intrapsychic and interpersonal independent variables employed in this study are the adolescent's (a) self-esteem, (b) intrusion of thoughts and feelings regarding parents' divorce, (c) avoidance of thoughts and feelings regarding parents' divorce, (d) perception of parent-adolescent communication (scores are combined for custodial mothers and custodial fathers), (e) perception of stepparent-adolescent communication (scores are combined for stepfathers and stepmothers), and (f) same-sex custody (living with the custodial parent of the same sex, created by matching the gender of the adolescent with the gender of the custodial parent). Process independent variables are the adolescent's (a) age at parents' divorce, (b) age at the custodial parent's remarriage, and

(c) number of years lived in the current stepfamily.

The independent variable that will be controlled is stepfamily income, by partialing out its effect on the correlation between the independent variables and the dependent variable. Although initially uncontrolled for in the main analysis for theoretical reasons, the two age variables and the number of years in the current stepfamily will also be controlled in further analyses for possible age and time effects. Gender of the adolescent will be added as a noncontinuous variable in the multiple regression analyses, although a t-test will be employed during the hypothesis testing to determine the relationship between gender and the dependent variable.

During the post hoc analyses, stepwise multiple regression will be performed with the independent variables on positive and negative affect as separate dependent variables. Separate t-tests will be performed on the three dependent variables (positive affect, negative affect, and affect balance) with each item of a 9-item custodial parental checklist measuring adolescent problem behaviors since divorce. The purpose of this procedure is to identify what specific items from the parental ratings of adolescent problem behaviors might correspond with adolescent self-perceptions of well-being. Other post hoc analyses will be performed as well. Additional t-tests will be performed to determine possible differences across the independent measures in the same-sex custody and

opposite sex custody stepfamily subgroups, as well as in the stepmother and stepfather subgroups. Additional t-tests will also be performed across the independent variables to evaluate clinically high intrusion and avoidance effects, age at divorce effects, and gender differences.

Limitations

Several threats to the validity of this study exist:

(1) A larger sample size might have produced more significant results. Generalizations of findings from this study are limited due to the nonrandom sample selection. Although participants in the study met all the established criteria, they were a volunteer sample obtained through the "snowball" procedure, in which stepfamilies referred other stepfamilies, resulting in a homogeneous sample of middle to upper-middle-class families. Obtaining an acceptable number of families who were willing to participate in the study was difficult. Over a 15-month period, elaborate and prolonged efforts were made by the original research team to gather subjects. It was difficult to find families where all three members, custodial parent, stepparent and adolescent, were willing to participate. It was also difficult to find families who could all be home at the same time to fill out the survey packet. Many stepfamilies experiencing difficulties declined to participate for fear that participation in the

study might rekindle family problems. Therefore, the families who volunteered may be different from those who declined to participate or dropped out, and thus constitute a homogeneous sample.

(2) This study is limited by its exclusive reliance on a self-report, paper and pencil questionnaire. Respondents were asked to recall their feelings and perceptions regarding the divorce process and stepfamily formation. Recollections may not be as accurate as immediate responses to these events. Self-report data is also limited by the subjectivity factor and the willingness of subjects to express themselves honestly and openly.

(3) Since the sample is largely comprised of college-educated, white, middle to upper-middle-class stepfamilies, the results may not be generalized to non-Caucasian, minority, rural, or non-middle-class stepfamilies.

(4) This study is based entirely on the adolescent's perceptions of personal well-being and family interaction. Different conclusions or perspectives regarding adolescent well-being could be drawn from custodial, noncustodial and stepparent's reports of adolescent emotional and behavioral functioning.

(5) The variables selected for this study were based largely on a review of the current research literature. Other variables having a potential impact on adolescent

subjective well-being were not included in this research. These variables include: the degree of marital conflict in the stepfamily, the degree of continuing conflict between the custodial and noncustodial parent (Block et al., 1989), the impact of simple versus complex stepfamily structure, adolescent satisfaction with current custody arrangements and how these decisions were made (Hetherington et al., 1989), adolescent physical attractiveness (Mathes & Kahn, 1975), the degree of adolescent self-disclosure with peers, and adolescent peer acceptance and support (Palys & Little, 1983).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine intrapsychic and interpersonal factors related to adolescent subjective well-being in stepmother and stepfather families.

Subjective well-being was measured by the Bradburn (1969) Affect Balance Scale (ABS), and subjects' affect balance scores were used as the main dependent variable in this study. Affect balance was derived by subtracting the negative affect subscale score from the positive affect subscale score and then adding a constant of (+5). During the post hoc analyses, positive affect subscale scores and negative affect subscale scores were also utilized as dependent variables. The eleven independent measures were (a) the adolescent's self-esteem, (b) the adolescent's intrusion of thoughts and feelings about parents' divorce, (c) the adolescent's avoidance of thoughts and feelings about parents' divorce, (d) the adolescent's perception of communication with the custodial parent, (e) the adolescent's perception of communication with the stepparent, (f) the adolescent's presence in a same-sex custody family, (g) the adolescent's age at parents' divorce, (h) the adolescent's age at the custodial parent's remarriage, (i) the number of years the

adolescent had lived in the current stepfamily, (j) the gender of the adolescent, and (k) stepfamily income. The variable controlled for in the primary analysis was stepfamily income, although additional regression analyses were performed using two control variables: stepfamily income, and the number of years the adolescent had lived in the current stepfamily. The adolescent's age at parents' divorce, and the adolescent's age at the custodial parent's remarriage were also controlled for in subsequent analyses.

Subjects

After listwise deletion of missing cases, the all-white sample consisted of 42 stepfather and 40 stepmother families --stepparent, natural parent, and his or her¹ oldest adolescent child. There were 37 male adolescents and 45 female adolescents in the sample. Forty-nine of these adolescent children were living with a custodial parent of the same sex, whereas 33 were living with a custodial parent of the opposite sex. The adolescent mean

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For the independent measures employing scales, mean substitution was used in a few cases where no more than one or two items had missing values. Mean substitution was not employed with the demographic independent variables, except in one case with the variable, stepfamily income, where one custodial parent had checked the "do not know" response option. Mean substitution was deemed appropriate in this case since the category, "do not know," indicated having a variable yearly income rather than being a response omission.

current age was 15.7 years at the time of the original investigation. The majority of the sample included mostly Protestant, highly educated, middle- to upper-middle class families (Inkrott, 1988). The average family income for this sample fell within the interval of \$50,000 to 74,999. For complete demographic statistics regarding the custodial parents, stepparents, and other stepfamily data in the original sample of 101 stepfamilies, see previous dissertations (Inkrott, 1988; Quick, 1989; Skopin, 1988). Demographic statistics for stepfamily income, the primary variable controlled for in this study, are presented in Table 3.

Psychometric Statistics

A factor analysis of the dependent measure, affect balance scores on the Bradburn Affect Balance Scale, was performed prior to the regression analyses. Results of the factor analysis for this sample are reported in chapter 3 and summarized in Tables 1 and 2. The internal consistency reliabilities of all the scales and subscales used in this study (inter-item correlations or coefficient alphas) were also computed for this sample and are reported in chapter 3 in the sections describing each scale.

Findings Related to the Hypotheses

The results of this study are discussed in order of each research hypothesis as originally presented. Table 4 lists the means, standard deviations, and ranges for each variable. Among the intercorrelations between independent

variables, the strongest relationships existed between adolescent's age at custodial parent's remarriage and the number of years the adolescent had lived in the current stepfamily ($r = -.77$). The two age variables, adolescent's age at parents' divorce and adolescent's age at the custodial parent's remarriage, were also strongly related ($r = .53$). These age variables, however, have an obvious natural relationship.

Nevertheless, a SAS (PROC REG) diagnostic test for collinearity or linear relationships among the independent variables was performed requesting the tolerance option for the parameter estimates. Tolerance in the SAS test is the reciprocal of the correlation between one variable and other variables (D. Bolten, personal communication, July 6, 1993). Tolerances less than .10 indicate serious collinearity problems. The reported tolerances for the age variables in this study were .31 for adolescent's age at custodial parent's remarriage, .37 for years lived in stepfamily, and .66 for adolescent's age at parents' divorce, indicating that collinearity is not a serious problem. Collinearity between all other independent variables was ruled out by tolerances ranging from .64 to .94.

As a check on the tolerance test, standard errors were examined for large increases (50% to 100%) in the stepwise regression analysis when the time variable (years

in stepfamily) and the two age variables were each forced into the equation separately. Stepwise regression was then performed on the remaining variables. Results indicated no large increases in standard errors for any of the independent variables. Even though there were decreases in the minimum tolerances² for the time variable (years in stepfamily) and the age at remarriage variable when either one was forced into the stepwise equation, collinearity was not a serious problem since there were only small changes in the standard errors of all the variables.

Correlations among the independent and dependent variables are listed in Table 5. Correlations among the four versions of the Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale on positive affect, negative affect, and affect balance are listed in Table 6. Correlations among the independent variables and the post hoc dependent variables (positive and negative affect) are listed in Table 7. A probability level of .05 was used to report significance.

Following the preliminary bivariate analysis, stepwise and forced-entry multiple regression analyses were

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The tolerance of a variable entering a regression equation is $(1 - R^2)$, where R is the multiple correlation of the new variable with those previously entered. When tolerances are high, this means that a large proportion of the variance in a given independent variable is not explained by the other independent variables. When tolerances are low, there is a high correlation between a given independent variable and another independent variable.

performed as the main statistical procedures on affect balance (total scale) scores. Multiple regression was chosen for its versatility in providing an overall picture of the complexity of relationships between the dependent and the independent variables of interest in this study (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). It was also chosen for its tendency to protect against Type I error --the error of finding spurious significance, or, less formally, "finding things that are not there" (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). The stepwise multiple regression analyses presents the percentage of the variance in subjective well-being accounted for by each variable in cumulative fashion as it enters the regression equation.

Hypothesis 1. Adolescent self-esteem is positively related to adolescent subjective well-being. Pearson product-moment correlations analysis was used as an initial indicator of the strength and direction of the relationship between the adolescent's self-esteem and the dependent measure, overall subjective well-being (affect balance). The correlation coefficient obtained from this analysis was significant ($r = .43$, $p < .05$), and was in the direction predicted. To test the hypothesis, all the

independent variables were included in the stepwise multiple regression analysis. Entering on the first step, self-esteem was significant ($t = 4.3, p < .05$), and accounted for 19% of the variance in overall well-being (affect balance) in a highly significant model ($F(1, 80) = 18.1, p < .05$). Controlling for stepfamily income, self-esteem remained significant ($t = 4.3, p < .05$), explaining 18% of the variance in overall well-being in a highly significant model ($F(2, 79) = 11.4, p < .05$). Simultaneously controlling for both stepfamily income and the number of years the adolescent had lived in the current stepfamily, self-esteem continued to be significantly related to overall well-being ($t = 4.2, p < .05$), still accounting for 18% of the variance in overall well-being in a significant model ($F(3, 78) = 7.5, p < .05$). Self-esteem remained significantly related to overall well-being even after simultaneously controlling for adolescent's age at parents' divorce, adolescent's age at custodial parent's remarriage, and number of years lived in current stepfamily

($t = 4.1$, $p < .05$). In this case, self-esteem continued to account for 17% of the variance in overall well-being in a significant model ($F(4, 77) = 5.4$, $p < .05$). On the basis of these findings, the research hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 2. The adolescent's intrusive thoughts and feelings about parents' divorce is negatively related to adolescent subjective well-being. Pearson product-moment correlations analysis was used as an initial indicator of the strength and direction of the relationship between the adolescent's intrusive thoughts and feelings regarding parents' divorce and the dependent measure, overall well-being (affect balance). The correlation coefficient obtained from this analysis was not significant ($r = .01$, $p > .05$), and was not in the direction predicted. To test the hypothesis, all the independent variables were included in the stepwise multiple regression analyses. Results indicated that, with or without control variables in the analyses, intrusion was not significantly related to

overall subjective well-being (affect balance). On the basis of these findings, the research hypothesis is not accepted.

Hypothesis 3. The adolescent's avoidance of thoughts and feelings about parents' divorce is negatively related to adolescent subjective well-being. Pearson product-moment correlations analysis was used as an initial indicator of the strength and direction of the relationship between the adolescent's avoidance of thoughts and feelings regarding parents' divorce and the dependent measure, overall well-being (affect balance). The correlation coefficient obtained from this analysis was not significant ($r = .08$, $p > .05$), and was not in the direction predicted. To test the hypothesis, all the independent variables were included in the stepwise regression analysis, and avoidance was not found to be significantly related to overall subjective well-being (affect balance), with or without control variables employed in the analyses. On the basis of these findings, the research hypothesis is not accepted.

Hypothesis 4. The adolescent's perception of the quality of communication with the custodial parent is positively related to adolescent subjective well-being. Pearson product-moment correlations analysis was used as an initial indicator of the strength and direction of the relationship between the adolescent's perception of the quality of communication with the custodial parent and the dependent measure, overall well-being (affect balance). The correlation coefficient obtained from this analysis was significant ($r = .34$, $p < .05$), and was in the direction predicted. To test the hypothesis, all the independent variables were included in the stepwise multiple regression analysis. The stepwise regression results indicate that despite the strength of the bivariate coefficient, the quality of communication with the custodial parent was not significantly related to overall subjective well-being (affect balance), since it did not enter on any of the step levels in the stepwise multiple regression procedure.

Communication with the custodial parent

also remained insignificant after controlling for stepfamily income, and after simultaneously controlling for both income and number of years the adolescent had lived in the current stepfamily. In fact, communication with the custodial parent continued to remain insignificantly related to well-being in the multiple regression analysis even after controlling for the strong effects of self-esteem. To check for masking effects, communication with stepparent was first removed from the stepwise equation. The removal of communication with stepparent did not cause communication with custodial parent to achieve significance in its relationship with overall subjective well-being, probably because self-esteem was still in the equation. Only when self-esteem was completely left out of the stepwise equation did communication with custodial parent become significantly related to overall well-being in the stepwise regression analysis ($t = 2.4$, $p < .05$), accounting for an additional 6% of the variance in well-being beyond that explained by communication with the

stepparent in a significant model ($F(2, 79) = 9.7, p < .05$). However, on the basis of the initial stepwise regression findings, the research hypothesis is not accepted.

Hypothesis 5. The adolescent's perception of the quality of communication with the stepparent is positively related to adolescent subjective well-being. Pearson product-moment correlations analysis was used as an initial indicator of the strength and direction of the relationship between the adolescent's perception of the quality of communication with the stepparent and the dependent measure, overall well-being (affect balance). The correlation coefficient obtained from this analysis was significant ($r = .37, p < .05$), and was in the direction predicted. To test the hypothesis, all the independent variables were included in the stepwise multiple regression analysis. Results indicate that the quality of communication with stepparent was significantly related to overall subjective well-being in the initial stepwise multiple regression

($t = 2.5$, $p < .05$), entering at the second step after self-esteem. Along with self-esteem, communication with stepparent accounted for 24% of variance in overall well-being, and explained an additional 5% of the variance in overall well-being beyond the effects of self-esteem in a highly significant model ($F(2, 79) = 12.7$, $p < .05$). Controlling for stepfamily income, communication with stepparent remained significant ($t = 2.0$, $p < .05$), and explained an additional 4% of the variance in overall well-being beyond that accounted for by self-esteem in a highly significant model ($F(3, 78) = 9.2$, $p < .05$). Simultaneously controlling for both income and the number of years the adolescent had lived in the current stepfamily, communication with stepparent continued to remain significant ($t = 2.0$, $p < .05$), and still accounted for an additional 4% of the variance in overall subjective well-being beyond that accounted for by self-esteem in a significant model ($F(4, 77) = 6.9$, $p < .05$). Thus, communication with stepparent appears to explain an additional 4 to 5%

of the variance in overall well-being beyond that accounted for by self-esteem. In additional analyses, communication with stepparent remained significantly related to overall well-being after controlling for adolescent's age at parents' divorce, adolescent's age at custodial parent's remarriage, and the number of years the adolescent had lived in the current stepfamily (each variable being controlled for individually and in various combinations). Simultaneously controlling for all three of these age and time variables, communication with stepparent was still significant ($t = 2.8$, $p < .05$), and explained an additional 8% of the variance in overall subjective well-being (affect balance) beyond that which was explained by self-esteem. In summary, beyond the variance in overall well-being accounted for by self-esteem, the adolescent's perception of the quality of communication with the stepparent consistently explained an additional 4 to 8% of the variance in subjective well-being scores depending on the variables

controlled for. On the basis of these findings, the research hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 6. Being an adolescent with the same-sex custodial parent is positively related to adolescent subjective well-being. To test this hypothesis, a t-test for independent samples of same-sex and opposite-sex custody families was performed. Results indicated no significant differences between groups on overall subjective well-being (affect balance). On the basis of this finding, the research hypothesis is not accepted.

Hypothesis 7. The adolescent's age at the time of parents' divorce is negatively related to adolescent subjective well-being. Pearson product-moment correlations analysis was used as an initial indicator of the strength and direction of the relationship between the adolescent's age at the time of parents' divorce and the dependent measure, overall well-being (affect balance). The correlation coefficient obtained from this analysis was not significant ($r = -.06$, $p > .05$), but was in the direction predicted. To test the

hypothesis, all the independent variables were included in the stepwise multiple regression analysis. Results indicated that the adolescent's age at the time of parents' divorce was not significantly related to overall subjective well-being (affect balance). Even when forced into the regression equation as a control variable, age at divorce accounted for less than 1% of the variance in overall well-being (affect balance). On the basis of the stepwise regression findings, the research hypothesis is not accepted.

Hypothesis 8. The adolescent's age at the time of the custodial parent's remarriage is negatively related to adolescent subjective well-being. Pearson product-moment correlations analysis was used as an initial indicator of the strength and direction of the relationship between the adolescent's age at the time of the custodial parent's remarriage and the dependent measure, overall well-being (affect balance). The correlation coefficient obtained from this analysis was not significant ($r = .06$, $p > .05$),

and was not in the direction predicted. To test the hypothesis, all the independent variables were included in the stepwise multiple regression procedure. Results indicated that the adolescent's age at the time of the custodial parent's remarriage was not significantly related to overall subjective well-being in the stepwise regression analysis, with or without other variables being controlled for. Yet, in the initial forced entry regression analysis, where all the variables are forced into the equation as a group, the adolescent's age at the time of the custodial parent's remarriage was significantly related to overall well-being ($t = 2.1, p < .05$). The adolescent's age at custodial parent's remarriage, together with all other independent variables entered as a group, accounted for 34% of the variance in overall subjective well-being in a significant model ($F(11, 70) = 3.2, p < .05$). To test for interactive effects that other variables might have upon adolescent's age at the time of the custodial parent's remarriage, additional forced entry and

stepwise analyses were performed with each independent variable left out of the equation one at a time. Results of these additional forced entry regression analyses indicate that adolescent's age at custodial parent's remarriage lost significance in each of these subsequent forced entry equations when adolescent's age at parent's divorce, avoidance of thoughts and feelings about parent's divorce, years in current stepfamily, and adolescent's communication with stepparent were each left out of the equation one at a time. It was the interactive effects with these variables that made age at remarriage significant in the initial forced entry model. When the adolescent's age at custodial parent's remarriage was itself left out of the forced entry equation, the adolescent's age at parent's divorce and number of years the adolescent had lived in the current stepfamily continued to remain insignificant as in the initial forced entry model. Also, in the additional stepwise regression analyses, the adolescent's age at

custodial parent's remarriage failed to enter on any step in the stepwise analyses where all of the independent variables were left out of the stepwise regression equation one at a time. Furthermore, removing the adolescent's age at custodial parent's remarriage from the stepwise regression equation did not diminish the significance of adolescent self-esteem or adolescent's perception of communication with the stepparent. Therefore, on the basis of the initial stepwise regression findings and the additional diagnostic regression results, the research hypothesis is not accepted.

Hypothesis 9. The number of years the adolescent has lived in the current stepfamily is positively related to adolescent subjective well-being. Pearson product-moment correlations analysis was used as an initial indicator of the strength and direction of the relationship between the number of years the adolescent had lived in the current stepfamily and the dependent measure, overall well-being (affect balance). The correlation coefficient obtained from this analysis

was not significant ($r = .08$, $p > .05$), but was in the direction predicted. To test the hypothesis, all the independent variables were included in the stepwise multiple regression analysis. Results from the stepwise regression indicated that the number of years the adolescent had lived in the current stepfamily was not significantly related to overall subjective well-being. When forced into the regression equation as a control variable, the number of years lived in the current stepfamily explained less than 1% of the variance in overall subjective well-being. On the basis of the stepwise regression findings, the research hypothesis is not accepted.

Hypothesis 10. It is expected that the gender of the adolescent will affect his/her level of subjective well-being:

- a. Being an adolescent male is positively related to subjective well-being. To test this hypothesis, a t-test for independent samples of male and female adolescents was performed on the dependent measure,

overall subjective well-being (affect balance). Results indicate no significant positive relationship between being an adolescent male and overall subjective well-being (affect balance). On the basis of this finding, the research hypothesis is not accepted.

- b. Being an adolescent female is negatively related to subjective well-being. To test this hypothesis, a t-test for independent samples of male and female adolescents was performed on the dependent measure, overall subjective well-being (affect balance). Results indicate no significant negative relationship between being an adolescent female and overall subjective well-being (affect balance). On the basis of this finding, the research hypothesis is not accepted.

Hypothesis 11. Stepfamily income level is positively related to adolescent subjective well-being. Pearson product-moment correlations analysis was used as an initial indicator of the strength and direction of the

relationship between stepfamily income and the dependent measure, overall subjective well-being (affect balance). The correlation coefficient obtained for stepfamily income on well-being (affect balance) approached significance ($r = .21$, $p > .05$). To test the hypothesis, all the independent variables were included in the stepwise multiple regression analysis. Results indicated that stepfamily income was not significantly related to subjective well-being in the stepwise regression analysis. Stepfamily income also approached significance in the regression analysis when used as a control variable ($t = 1.9$, $p > .05$). On the basis of the stepwise regression findings, the research hypothesis is not accepted.

Summary of Multiple Regression Findings

Results from the stepwise multiple regression analyses supported two of the research hypotheses in this study. The self-reported self-esteem scores of the adolescents in this study and their perceptions regarding the quality of communication with their stepparents were significantly related to their overall subjective

well-being (affect balance). Controlling for stepfamily income, subjects' self-esteem explained an additional 18% of the variance in overall well-being while subjects' perception of the quality of communication with the stepparent accounted for an additional 4% of the variance in adolescent subjective well-being beyond that accounted for by self-esteem. All other independent variables were not significant in the stepwise regression analyses. However, the initial forced entry regression model summarized in Table 8 clearly indicates that the combined effects of the independent variables not significant in the stepwise analysis added a sizable additional amount to the variance in well-being. These variables, together with self-esteem and communication with the stepparent, accounted for 34% of the variance in adolescent subjective well-being in the forced entry model ($F(11, 70) = 3.2, p < .05$). For the amount of the variance in subjective well-being (affect balance) accounted for by each significant independent variable while simultaneously controlling for stepfamily income and the number of years lived in the current stepfamily, see Table 9.

Additional Analyses

This section will examine (a) factors significantly related to positive affect in the multiple regression analysis; (b) factors significantly related to negative affect in the multiple regression analysis; (c) the extent to which data from parental observations of adolescent

problem behaviors correlate with adolescents' self-reported well-being scores; and (d) subgroup comparisons. Subgroup comparisons will examine differences between adolescents in the same-sex custody and opposite-sex custody subgroups as well as in the stepmother and stepfather subgroups. Subgroup comparisons will also examine differences among the independent variables in the low and high intrusion subgroups, and in the low and high avoidance subgroups. In addition, age at divorce differences as well as gender differences among the independent variables will be explored.

Factors Related to Positive Affect

The positive affect subscale score from the Bradburn (ABS) was employed as a dependent measure during post hoc analyses to determine the separate effects of the independent variables upon positive affect. For Pearson product-moment correlations among the independent variables on positive affect, see Table 7. For a summary of the percent of the variance accounted for in positive affect by each of the independent variables that were significant in the controlled stepwise regression analysis, see Table 10.

Self-esteem. In the initial stepwise regression procedure, the adolescent's self-esteem entered at the second step, being significantly correlated with positive affect ($t = 2.3$, $p < .05$), and along with communication

with custodial parent explained 20% of the variance in positive affect in a significant model ($F(2, 79) = 9.7$, $p < .05$). Self-esteem explained an additional 5% of the variance in positive affect beyond that accounted for by communication with the custodial parent. When controlling for stepfamily income, custodial parent communication dropped out of the stepwise equation completely, and self-esteem entered at the first step, being significantly related to positive affect ($t = 3.6$, $p < .05$). In this equation, self-esteem explained an additional 14% of the variance in positive affect beyond that accounted for by stepfamily income in a significant model ($F(2, 79) = 9.2$, $p < .05$). Controlling for both stepfamily income and the number of years lived in the current stepfamily, self-esteem remained significantly related to positive affect ($t = 3.6$, $p < .05$), and continued to explain 13% of the variance in positive affect beyond that accounted for by the control variables in a significant model ($F(3, 78) = 6.1$, $p < .05$).

Intrusion. In the initial stepwise multiple regression analysis, intrusion of thoughts and feelings about parents' divorce did not enter on any of the steps, and was not significantly related to positive affect. When controlling for stepfamily income, however, intrusion of thoughts and feelings regarding parents' divorce became significantly related to positive affect ($t = 2.3$, $p < .05$), and accounted for an additional 5% of the variance

in positive affect beyond that accounted for by self-esteem in a significant model ($F(3, 78) = 8.1, p < .05$). Intrusion was also significantly related to positive affect when simultaneously controlling for both stepfamily income and the number of years the adolescent had lived in the current stepfamily ($t = 2.3, p < .05$), and continued to explain an additional 5% of the variance in positive affect in a significant model ($F(4, 77) = 6.1, p < .05$). When controlling only for adolescent's age at parents' divorce, intrusion remained significantly related to positive affect ($t = 2.4, p < .05$), accounting for an additional 6% of the variance in positive affect beyond that explained by self-esteem in a significant model ($F(3, 78) = 7.3, p < .05$). These results indicate that intrusion is explaining about 5 to 6% of additional variance in positive affect, depending on the variables controlled for. Surprisingly, intrusion was found to covary in a positive direction with regard to positive affect in all these models. This was not in the direction predicted.

Communication with Custodial Parent. In the initial stepwise multiple regression analysis, the adolescent's perception of the quality of communication with the custodial parent was significantly related to positive affect ($t = 3.7, p < .05$), entering on the first step in the stepwise analysis, and accounted for 15% of the

variance in positive affect in a highly significant model ($F(1, 80) = 13.7, p < .05$). Controlling for stepfamily income, however, communication with custodial parent was no longer significantly related to positive affect in the stepwise regression analysis. When controlling for stepfamily income and the number of years lived in the current stepfamily, communication with the custodial parent continued to be unrelated to positive affect. Thus, in the stepwise regression analysis, the adolescent's perception of the quality of communication with the custodial parent appears to be rather weakly related to positive affect.

Communication with Stepparent. The adolescent's perception of the quality of communication with the stepparent was significantly related to positive affect only when the adolescent's years in the current stepfamily, adolescent's age at parents' divorce, and age at custodial parent's remarriage were controlled for simultaneously ($t = 2.6, p < .05$).

Stepfamily Income. Unlike the Pearson product-moment correlation for stepfamily income on affect balance, which only approached significance, the correlation coefficient obtained for stepfamily income was significant for positive affect ($r = .23, p < .05$), and was in the direction predicted. When used as a control variable on positive affect, stepfamily income was significant ($t = 2.1, p < .05$), accounting for 5% of the variance in

positive affect in a significant model ($F(1, 80) = 4.5$, $p < .05$). However, the statistics generated when entering one variable at a time are essentially equivalent to the bivariate analysis. In the initial stepwise multiple regression analysis, when no controls were entered beforehand, stepfamily income was not significantly related to positive affect. Only when the adolescent's age at parents' divorce was controlled for did stepfamily income become significantly related to positive affect in the stepwise analysis. Thus, stepfamily income has some impact upon positive affect when controlling for age at parents' divorce, but its effects are somewhat weak.

Factors Related to Negative Affect

The negative affect subscale score from the Bradburn (ABS) was employed as a dependent measure during post hoc analysis to determine the separate effects of the independent variables upon negative affect. For Pearson product-moment correlations among the independent variables on negative affect, see Table 7. For the percent of the variance accounted for in negative affect by the independent variables that were significant in the controlled stepwise regression analysis, see Table 11.

Self-esteem. The adolescent's self-esteem was the only noncategorical variable that was significantly (inversely) related to negative affect ($t = -3.2$, $p < .05$) in the initial stepwise regression model, explaining 11%

of the variance in negative affect in a highly significant model ($F(1, 80) = 10.2, p < .05$). Self-esteem continued to explain 11% of the variance in negative affect when controlling for both stepfamily income and years lived in current stepfamily.

Communication with Stepparent. The adolescent's perception of the quality of communication with the stepparent was significantly correlated with negative affect in the bivariate analysis ($r = -.30, p < .05$), and was in the inverse direction predicted. However, in the initial stepwise regression analyses, communication with stepparent was not significantly related to negative affect. Communication with stepparent remained insignificantly related to negative affect even when controlling for stepfamily income, and when controlling for both stepfamily income and the number of years lived in the current stepfamily. Yet, when adolescent's age at parents' divorce, adolescent's age at custodial parent's remarriage, and years lived in current stepfamily were all controlled for simultaneously, communication with stepparent was significantly inversely related to negative affect ($t = -2.1, p < .05$), and explained an additional 5% of the variance in negative affect beyond that accounted for by self-esteem (10%). Thus, the adolescent's self-esteem and perceived communication with the stepparent both accounted for 15% of the variance in negative affect, the best model for negative affect as a dependent measure

($F(5, 76) = 3.1, p < .05$).

Gender of Adolescent. To determine the relationship between the categorical variable, adolescent gender, and negative affect, a t -test for independent samples of male and female adolescents was performed on the dependent measure, negative affect. Results indicate a significant inverse relationship between gender and negative affect ($t = -2.1, p < .05$), and it was in the predicted direction. Being an adolescent female was significantly correlated with negative affect. Being an adolescent female was the only categorical variable significantly related to negative affect.

Summary of Findings on Positive and Negative Affect

Positive Affect. The adolescent's self-esteem was significantly related to positive affect in this sample. In addition, intrusion of thoughts and feelings about parents' divorce was significantly related to positive affect, when controlling for stepfamily income, or when controlling simultaneously for income and the number of years lived in the current stepfamily. Although the adolescent's perception of the quality of communication with the custodial parent explains a small part of the variance in positive affect, its effect is weak and becomes insignificant when stepfamily income is controlled for. The adolescent's perception of the quality of communication with the stepparent was also significantly

related to positive affect, but only after both age variables and number of years in the current stepfamily were controlled for simultaneously. In addition, stepfamily income was significantly related to positive affect, but only when forced into the equation as a control variable. As a group, the independent variables in this study explained 34% of the variance in positive affect when entered together in the initial forced entry equation in a significant model ($F(11, 70) = 3.25, p < .05$).

Negative Affect. The adolescent's self-esteem and gender were both significantly related to negative affect. Specifically, being an adolescent female was significantly related to negative affect. The adolescent's perception of the quality of communication with the stepparent was also significantly related to negative affect only when both age variables and number of years in current stepfamily were controlled for simultaneously. As a group, the independent variables in this study explain 22% of the variance in negative affect when entered together in the initial forced entry equation, yet the model only approaches significance ($F(11, 70) = 1.8, p > .05$). For a summary of the percent of the variance accounted for in positive affect and in negative affect by the each of noncategorical independent variables that were significant in the controlled stepwise regression analyses, see Tables 10 and 11.

Do Parents' Observations Predict Adolescent Well-Being?

Subjective well-being scales have been found to correlate moderately with ratings of subjects' happiness made by others (Diener, 1984). However, the correlation between self-reported well-being and observational ratings of subjects' happiness has recently been questioned (Irwin, Kammann, & Dixon, 1979; Kammann, Smith, Martin, & McQueen, 1984). To evaluate the correlation between adolescent self-reports of well-being and parental observation of adolescent behaviors associated with well-being, nine t-tests were performed on positive affect, negative affect, and affect balance utilizing each item of a 9-item nonstandardized adolescent problem behavior checklist that had been administered to the subjects' custodial parents at the time of the initial data collection. The 9 items are listed under "Instruments and Measures" in Chapter 3.

In their responses to item 10 on the Bradburn (ABS), nearly 44% of the adolescent subjects in this study indicated they had been feeling depressed. On the adolescent problem behavior checklist, 41% of the parents indicated that their child was "emotionally upset or depressed." Since this checklist item appeared to have face validity in its association with well-being and particularly with negative affect, it was expected that this item, if checked, would show some correlation with

adolescent well-being (affect balance scores) or with negative affect subscale scores. Other checklist items were not expected to be as strongly correlated with well-being. To test these post hoc hypotheses, the custodial parents were divided into two groups: those who had checked problems for their child and those who had not. Nine t -tests were performed with each of the nine checklist items on affect balance scores, positive affect scores, and negative affect scores.

Results indicated that one item on the checklist, "relationship problems with stepparent," checked by 37% of the parents, showed a significant relationship with adolescent subjective well-being ($t = 2.1$, $p < .05$). None of the checklist items showed any significant correlation with either positive or negative affect subscale scores. Yet "relationship problems with stepparent" approached significance for positive affect ($t = 1.9$, $p > .05$). In summary, the adolescents whose parents had checked "relationship problems with stepparent" had significantly lower overall well-being scores (affect balance subgroup mean = 5.2) than those adolescents whose parents had not checked this problem behavior (affect balance subgroup mean = 6.3). Since the problem behavior checklist employed by the original data collectors was an unstandardized measure with unknown validity and reliability, caution should be used in interpreting these results. However, these findings lend further support to the strong

association between adolescent subjective well-being and the perceived quality of communication with the stepparent that was found in the multiple regression analyses.

Subgroup Comparisons

Same-Sex and Opposite-Sex Custody Subgroups. To determine whether possible differences among the independent variables existed between adolescents in the same-sex custody and opposite sex-custody subgroups, a t -test was performed on all the noncategorical independent variables employed in this study. Results indicated no differences between adolescents in same-sex custody stepfamilies and opposite-sex custody stepfamilies among the noncategorical independent measures.

Stepmother and Stepfather Subgroups. To determine whether differences among the independent and dependent variables existed between adolescents in the stepmother and stepfather subgroups, a t -test was performed on affect balance, positive affect, negative affect, and all the noncategorical independent variables employed in this study. Results indicated no differences between adolescents in stepmother and stepfather families among the dependent and independent measures, except for adolescent's age at parents' divorce ($t = 4.1$, $p < .05$). The adolescents in the stepfather families in this sample were younger at the time of their parents' divorce (mean age at divorce = 6.5 years) than were the adolescents in

stepmother families (mean age at divorce = 9 years).

High Intrusion and Avoidance Subgroups. At the time of their parents' divorce, over one-third ($n = 28$) of the adolescents in this study recalled having intrusion and/or avoidance levels in the clinically high range --scores 20 or higher on either subscale (Horowitz, 1982). The majority of these adolescents recalled having high avoidance distress levels ($n = 24$), but 7 subjects recalled having high intrusion distress levels. Four of the high intrusion subjects also recalled experiencing high avoidance distress levels (scores 19 or higher). The average number of years since their parents' divorce was computed by subtracting subjects' average age at parents' divorce from subjects' average current age at time of data collection. The number of years since parents' divorce ranged from 2 to 14 years for the entire sample of adolescents, the average being 8 years.

Intrusion Subgroup Comparison. To determine whether differences among the independent variables existed between the subjects in this study who recalled having clinically low and clinically high intrusion distress levels, the subjects were divided into two groups: those with intrusion scores of 15 or higher ($n = 18$), and those with intrusion scores of 3 or lower ($n = 19$). Since there were only 7 subjects with high intrusion scores (20 or higher), cut-off scores of 3 and 15 were chosen to provide an adequate number of subjects for group comparison. A

cut-off score of 15 is near the top end of Horowitz' moderate distress range (8.5 to 19), while a score of 3 is at the bottom end of the low distress range (0 to 8.5). This creates a group comparison for intrusion that compares subjects with very low scores to subjects with moderate-to-high scores.

A t -test was performed between low and high intrusion groups on all independent measures employed in this study. Results indicated significant differences between subgroups for subjects' current self-esteem ($t = 2.4$, $p < .05$), and for subjects' age at custodial parent's remarriage ($t = -1.96$, $p < .05$). Subjects recalling moderate to high levels of intrusion were older (mean age = 12.5) at the time of their custodial parent's remarriage than those recalling very low levels of intrusion (mean age = 10.5). The main finding is that adolescents who recalled having moderate to highly distressing levels of intrusive thoughts and feelings about their parents' divorce at the time of their parent's breakup had significantly lower self-esteem (mean score = 30.6) eight years later (on average) than those adolescents who recalled experiencing very low distress levels of intrusion at the time of their parents' divorce (mean self-esteem score = 35.0).

To check these results, the t -test for intrusion was repeated with groups split at the intrusion mean score for

this sample (mean score = 8.6). The reported intrusion mean score for this sample was found to be equivalent to Horowitz' (1982) clinical cut-off score (8.5) for low distress levels. Intrusion scores above 8.5 indicate moderate to high distress levels (Horowitz, 1982). Accordingly, subjects were divided into two groups: those with intrusion scores of 9 or higher ($n = 37$), and those with intrusion scores of 8 or lower ($n = 45$). Results duplicated the previous t -test findings for subjects' self-esteem, which remained significant ($t = 2.3$, $p < .05$), the group means for self-esteem being 30.8 for the high intrusion group and 33.9 for the low intrusion group. However, age at custodial parent's remarriage was no longer significant.

Avoidance Subgroup Comparison. To determine whether differences among the independent variables existed between subjects in this study who recalled clinically low and clinically high avoidance distress levels, the subjects were divided into two groups: those with avoidance scores of 20 or higher ($n = 24$), and those with avoidance scores of 8 or lower ($n = 27$). Scores below 8.5 indicate clinically low distress levels (Horowitz, 1982). A t -test was performed between the low and high avoidance subgroups on all independent measures employed in this study. Results indicated that significant differences between groups existed only for subjects' age at custodial parent's remarriage ($t = -3.7$, $p < .05$), indicating that

high avoidance subjects were older at the time of their custodial parent's remarriage (mean age = 13.2) than were low avoidance subjects (mean age 10.3). Subjects' number of years lived in current stepfamily approached significance ($t = 1.86, p > .05$), indicating that high avoidance subjects had spent less time living in their current stepfamily (mean years = 3.3) than low avoidance subjects (mean years = 4.8).

No significant differences were found between the avoidance subgroups regarding subjects' age at parents' divorce, self-esteem, perceived communication with either the custodial parent or stepparent, and family structure (same-sex custody, stepfamily income). The main finding is that subjects who recalled having clinically high levels of avoidance at the time of their parents' divorce were older at the time of their custodial parent's remarriage than were those recalling low levels of avoidance. Since no differences were found between subgroups regarding subjects' age at parent's divorce, this finding suggests that subjects recalling high levels of avoidance about their parents' divorce had been living in a single-parent family longer than subjects recalling low levels of avoidance.

Age at Parents' Divorce Subgroups. Since Wallerstein (1987) reported long-term adjustment problems in older children who were between 6 and 8 years of age at the time

of parental separation, post hoc t -tests between age groups were performed among the independent variables. Results revealed no differences among the independent variables between children aged 7 or younger at the time of their parents' divorce and those aged 8 or older. The average age of the child at parents' divorce was 7.7 years for this adolescent sample. A second t -test was performed between children aged 5 or younger and children aged 12 or older at the time of their parents' divorce, and again, no differences between groups were found.

Gender Differences. To determine whether gender differences existed among the independent variables in the study, a t -test was performed on all noncategorical independent measures employed in this study. Results indicated significant differences between groups on self-esteem ($t = 2.0, p < .05$), adolescent females having a significantly lower group mean score on the self-esteem scale (mean score = 31.3) than adolescent males (mean score = 34).

Summary of Post Hoc Comparisons

In addition to the findings on positive and negative affect, post hoc comparisons found that adolescents whose parents had checked "relationship problems with stepparent" had significantly lower overall well-being scores (affect balance) than those adolescents whose parents had not checked this item. No significant differences among the independent variables were found

between adolescents in same-sex and opposite-sex custody families. No age at divorce differences were found. Adolescents in stepfather and stepmother families were also not significantly different, except that those in stepfather families were younger at the time of their parents' divorce than were adolescents in stepmother families. Adolescents recalling moderate to high intrusion levels about their parents' divorce had significantly lower self-esteem than those adolescents recalling very low intrusion levels at the time of divorce. Adolescents with high avoidance levels were older at the time of their custodial parent's remarriage and had been living in a single-parent family longer than subjects recalling low avoidance levels. Adolescent females were found to have significantly lower self-esteem than the adolescent males in this sample.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore intrapsychic and interpersonal factors that may influence adolescent subjective well-being as a psychological indicator of how well adolescents are coping with their custodial parent's divorce and remarriage. An additional purpose of this study was to operationalize several elements of Cowan's (1991) transition theory, and to evaluate the theory's relevance to adolescent development and to the adolescent psychological experience during times of major family change.

Discussion

Sample Characteristics

This White middle- to upper-middle-class sample was obtained through reputational sampling or the "snowball" technique. The average family income fell within the interval of \$50,000 to 74,999. For complete demographic statistics regarding the custodial parents, stepparents, and other stepfamily data in the original sample of 101 stepfamilies, see previous dissertations (Inkrott, 1988; Quick, 1989; Skopin, 1988).

The 37 male and 45 female adolescent subjects ranged in age from 12 to 18 years. Their average age at the time of data collection was 15.7 years. Average age at the time of parents' divorce was 7.7 years. Time since parents' divorce ranged from 2 to 14 years, averaging 7.9 years. On average, the adolescents in this sample were 11.4 years of age at the time of their custodial parent's remarriage. The average number of years in the current stepfamily was 4.33 years, ranging from 0 to 13 years.

Discussion of Psychometric Measures

Affect balance scores as measured by the Bradburn (1969) Affect Balance Scale were used as the dependent measure in this study. Scores from several other psychometric measures were used as independent variables in this study: the intrusion and avoidance subscales from the Impact of Event Scale (Horowitz et al., 1979), the Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale (Barnes & Olson, 1982), and the Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale. Internal consistency reliability (inter-item correlations) for each scale are reported in Chapter 3. Mean scores for the psychometric scales employed for the dependent and independent measures are listed in Table 12. For comparison of this study's psychometric mean scores with national means, norm scores, control group mean scores reported by other research, or clinical rating scales, see Table 12.

Affect Balance Scale. Total scale scores (affect balance) were used as the dependent variable in this study. Nearly 68% of the sample had subjective well-being scores between 4 and 8. The average subjective well-being score for this adolescent sample was 5.87, using Bradburn's original scoring method with an affect balance scale range of 1 to 9. Norms are not available for adolescents. However, a mean score of 6.7 has been derived from Bradburn's (1969) national sample of 2726 married adults aged 18 and older (Andrews & Robinson, 1991).

Over 23% ($n = 19$) of the adolescent subjects in the present study reported well-being scores of 8 or 9 (top of the scale). By comparison, only 13.5% of Bradburn's (1969) national sample reported well-being scores of 8 or 9. About 10% ($n = 8$) of the adolescent sample in this present study reported well-being scores of 1 or 2 (bottom of the scale). Only about 7% ($n = 180$) of the adult subjects in Bradburn's (1969) national sample reported scores of 1 or 2. These comparisons suggest that the adolescent subjects in this present study report a somewhat lower level of well-being on average than the Bradburn (1969) national sample. Yet, the adolescents in this study present a slightly greater range of well-being scores, with more adolescent subjects reporting very high and very low scores than the adults in the national sample.

Previous research has found little age differences in well-being (Diener, 1984). Inglehart (1990) found

insignificant differences in well-being across persons aged 15 to 65 in 169,776 interviews conducted in sixteen nations. Comparison of average well-being levels between this adolescent sample and the (1969) adult national sample may therefore be somewhat permissible. Comparison of the study mean (5.9) with the Bradburn national mean (6.7) indicates that the adolescent stepchildren in this study reported, on average, somewhat lower levels of well-being than the 1969 general population. The difference in mean scores may be considered by many to be insignificant, however.

It may be argued that Bradburn's (1969) national sample is not a suitable comparison for the adolescent cohort in this study because different eras are being compared. A national sample closer to the time of this study's data collection (1986 to 1987) has recently been cited by Veenhoven (1993), who computed national well-being mean scores for the U.S., Canada, Europe, Asia, and Australia. Veenhoven (1993) utilized datafiles from numerous national studies of adults aged 18 or older that employed the Bradburn (ABS) as the measure of subjective well-being. For international comparisons, Veenhoven (1993) converted the (ABS) to a 10-point scale range rather than using Bradburn's 9-point scale range. In order to compare this study's well-being mean score to the U.S. mean score provided by Veenhoven (1993), the Bradburn

(ABS) was recoded for this study's sample using the 10-point affect balance scale range. The re-computed mean for the adolescents in this sample was 6.7, slightly below the 1981 U.S. mean of 7.0 ($n = 2310$) reported by Veenhoven (1993) (see Table 12). Incidentally, after recoding the (ABS), the regression analyses were re-run, and it was found that the recoding did not significantly alter the multiple regression results except to increase the R squares slightly on the strongest predictor variables (see Tables 9, 10, and 11).

Comparison of the re-computed study mean (6.73) to 1981 U.S. mean (7.0) suggests that the subjective well-being scores of the adolescent stepchildren in this study do not differ significantly from the average level of well-being reported by adults in the general population. In fact, since Bradburn's (1969) national study was conducted, overall well-being has remained fairly constant among the adult population in the U.S. Veenhoven (1993) reports U.S. mean well-being scores ranging from 6.4 in the 1973 national sample to 7.0 in the 1981 sample.

Since 1976, annual survey measures of high school seniors' subjective well-being have also shown little change despite the continuing trends in marital disruption (Rodgers & Bachman, 1988; Zill & Rogers, 1988). Unfortunately, these high school surveys (e.g., Johnson, Bachman, & O'Malley, 1989) use the one-item Gurin Scale of global happiness, which is not as valid and reliable as

the Bradburn, and its results cannot be directly compared to the (ABS) mean score in this study.

Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale. The combined mean score for communication with either the custodial mother or father on the adolescent version of the Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale was 65.5. The norms given for adolescents on this scale are 66.6 for custodial mothers and 63.7 for custodial fathers. Averaging the two adolescent norm scores for both mothers and fathers yields a combined norm score of 65.2 for custodial parent communication. Thus, the adolescents in this sample did not differ significantly from the adolescent norm group regarding their perception of the quality of communication with the custodial parent. However, the mean score for communication with stepparents in this study was 58.0. No norms have been developed for stepparents, yet this adolescent/stepparent communication mean score is significantly lower than the norm scores Barnes and Olson (1982) report for adolescents' perception of communication with their parents (averaged norm = 65.2).

Self-Esteem Scale. The mean score for adolescent self-esteem was 32.5. No norms are known by this investigator to be currently available. Baumeister et al. (1989) found that most people rate themselves as above average on self-esteem scales, and that those with low self-esteem tend to have scores in the middle range of

possible scores (scores around 23, 25, 27 or so). A comparison with sample means and selected item frequencies from other studies provides some indication of how the subjects in this study rated themselves relative to other adolescents. Employing the 10-item Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Tollefson et al. (1982) report a mean score of 29.1 for the 99 junior high school students in their control group. Unfortunately, none of the national surveys of adolescents and youth use all 10 items from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. For a six-item (frequency) comparison between the subjects in this study and a national sophomore sample provided by the National Center for Education and Statistics (NCES), see Table 13. By comparing the frequencies on each item across samples, Table 13 suggests that the predominantly 10th-grade adolescents in this study appear to rate themselves slightly higher in self-esteem on these six self-esteem items than those 10th-grade high school students in the national sample. In other words, adolescents in this study tended to check the "strongly agree" and "strongly disagree" response categories more frequently than did the adolescents in the national sample.

Intrusion and Avoidance Subscales. To make the Impact of Event scale more clinically useful, Horowitz (1982) developed clinical criteria for high, medium, and low distress levels for the intrusion and avoidance subscales. Scores of 20 or higher indicate high levels of

distress, scores between 9 and 19 indicate medium levels of distress, and scores 8.5 or lower indicate low levels of distress. In the present study, adolescent subjects' mean score for intrusion was 8.6, while their avoidance mean score was 13.9. Using the clinical rating scale, the mean scores for this sample indicate that, on average, the adolescents in this study report having experienced low-to-moderate levels of distress during their parents' divorce. On average, they report experiencing low levels of intrusion-related distress and medium levels of avoidance-related distress.

However, a review of individual subjects' scores indicates that over one-third ($n = 28$) of the adolescents in this study recalled having intrusion and/or avoidance scores in the clinically high range (scores 20 or higher on either subscale) during their parents' divorce. These adolescents apparently experienced a high level of distress symptoms during their parents' divorce similar to that found in patients with post-traumatic stress disorder. Had this subgroup of adolescents been clinically assessed during the time of their parents' divorce, "diagnostic, evaluative or treatment procedures" would have been "clearly warranted" (Horowitz, 1982; p. 722). While the majority of this subgroup had high avoidance scores ($n = 24$), seven adolescents (some of them with high avoidance scores) also had high intrusion scores. Four

adolescents out of these seven had clinically high scores (19 or higher) on both the intrusion and avoidance subscales.

It is important to remember that adolescent subjects were asked to respond retrospectively to the intrusion and avoidance items. Their scores should primarily reflect their distress experienced during the time of their parents' divorce, not necessarily their distress level at the time of data collection. Time since parents' divorce ranged from 2 to 14 years, the average being 8 years. Caution should be used in interpreting the results related to intrusion and avoidance effects since the range in time since divorce was so wide (2 to 14 years). In future studies involving retrospective data, the best approach would be to control time since divorce in the sample selection, and measure intrusion and avoidance effects longitudinally, perhaps at several points in time.

Research Hypotheses: Summary of Findings

The research hypotheses were tested to determine the degree of relationship between eleven independent variables and the dependent variable, adolescent subjective well-being (affect balance), as a psychological indicator of coping and adjustment to life in a stepfamily. Correlational analyses were used as initial indicators of the strength and direction of the relationship between independent and dependent variables.

The Overall Model. Using the 9-point scale range for affect balance, the initial forced entry multiple regression indicated that all the independent variables in the model explained 34% of the variance in subjective well-being ($F(11, 70) = 3.20, p < .05$). Using the 10-point scale range for affect balance (Veenhoven, 1993), the model explained 37% of the variance in subjective well-being ($F(11, 70) = 3.73, p < .05$). Just as the model suggested, there is clearly a mixture of intrapsychic, interpersonal, and process factors that together explain 34 to 37% of the variance in well-being. This finding suggests that Cowan (1991) is on the right track, that psychological adjustment to a major life transition such as parental divorce and remarriage does include intrapsychic and interpersonal resources that the adolescent brings to these life changes, and that adjustment is influenced by the developmental and dynamic processes occurring during these changes. Furthermore, psychological well-being appears to be a product of the interaction of the intrapsychic, interpersonal and process components of Cowan's theory. It is concluded that transition theory is a worthy framework for the study of life transitions from the adolescent's perspective.

Findings Related to the Independent Variables. Step-wise multiple regression analyses were used to test the research hypotheses, and to determine the total amount of

variance in overall subjective well-being that could be accounted for by the independent variables. In the initial stepwise regression analyses, two independent variables, the adolescent's self-esteem and the adolescent's perception of the quality of stepparent-adolescent communication, were significantly related to overall subjective well-being, and together accounted for 24% of the variance in subjective well-being (21% of the variance when controlling for stepfamily income and number of years lived in current stepfamily). In the post hoc stepwise regression analyses using positive and negative affect as separate dependent variables, the adolescent's self-esteem and intrusion of thoughts and feelings about parents' divorce were significantly related to positive affect. When controlling for stepfamily income, self-esteem and intrusion explained 19% of the variance in positive affect beyond that accounted for by income. When controlling for income and years lived in current stepfamily, adolescent self-esteem and intrusion continued to explain 18% of the variance in positive affect beyond that accounted for by the control variables. With the above controls, intrusion explained an additional 5% of the variance in positive affect beyond that accounted for by self-esteem. The only noncategorical independent variable that was strongly related to negative affect was adolescent's self-esteem. Self-esteem accounted for 11% of the variance in negative affect when controlling for

income and number of years lived in current stepfamily. The adolescent's gender was also significantly related to negative affect, adolescent females having significantly higher levels of negative affect than adolescent males. Discussion of the findings related to the independent variables follows.

Implications of Hypothesis Testing

Adolescent's Self-Esteem. The hypothesis that subjective well-being would be related to the adolescent's self-esteem was supported by the initial stepwise multiple regression analysis. Post hoc research analyses also revealed that self-esteem was significantly related to both positive and negative affect. In fact, adolescent self-esteem was the only independent variable in this study that was strongly related to all three of these dependent variables without controlling for other factors such as income and number of years in stepfamily. Adolescent subjects' self-esteem was positively related to overall well-being (affect balance), positively related to positive affect, and negatively related to negative affect. The robust relationship this research found between adolescent self-esteem and subjective well-being supports previous research findings that well-being is strongly associated with intrapsychic personality components such as self-esteem (Diener, 1984), and is an important component in the assessment of the overall

quality of life (Andrews & Withey, 1976). Regarding adolescent adjustment in stepfamilies, findings from this research suggest that the way adolescent stepchildren evaluate themselves on an affective level and the self-view they construct during marital transitions is highly related to positive affect, negative affect, and overall subjective well-being.

Intrusion of Thoughts and Feelings About Parents' Divorce. The hypothesis that subjective well-being would be related to the intrusion of thoughts and feelings about parents' divorce was not supported by the initial stepwise regression analysis. Several explanations of intrusion's insignificant effect upon well-being can be offered. Perhaps the adolescents' previous intrusive distress level had been reduced by the fact that they were no longer in the same conflictual family environment. Since the mean number of years since parents' divorce was 8 years, it is possible that the adolescents in this study had sufficient time to recover or work through their intrusive thoughts and feelings about their parents' divorce. Even in cases of severe trauma, such as rape, high levels of intrusion seldom persist longer than two years (Kilpatrick & Veronen, 1984). These explanations do not support Wallerstein's (1985, 1987) longitudinal findings that intrusive thoughts and feelings may persist for much longer periods in children of divorce --at least for the adolescents in this sample.

Perhaps psychological indicators other than subjective well-being are more affected by intrusion distress effects. For example, during the post hoc analysis, it was found that those subjects experiencing moderate-to-high levels of intrusion (scores 9 or higher) at the time of their parents' divorce had significantly lower self-esteem at the time of data collection than subjects reporting low levels of intrusion (scores 8 or lower). However, the self-esteem mean score for the high intrusion subgroup was still fairly high (mean = 30.6), and was very close to that reported for the control group (mean = 29.1) in the Tollefson et al. (1982) study. A final possible explanation of the lack of intrusion effects upon overall well-being is that the adolescents in this study are not a representative sample of adolescent stepchildren. Quick (1989) observes that this investigator's sample of middle-to upper-middle class stepfamilies may have had more than average access to both social and psychological resources, and thus may be better adjusted than stepfamilies in the general population.

Intrusion and Positive Affect. Although intrusion was unrelated to overall well-being in this study, post hoc multiple regression analysis revealed some surprising findings about intrusion and positive affect. Intrusion of thoughts and feelings about parents' divorce was found to be significantly related to positive affect, when

controlling for stepfamily income only ($t = 2.3$, $p < .05$), or when simultaneously controlling for stepfamily income and the number of years the adolescent had lived in the current stepfamily ($t = 2.3$, $p < .05$). This finding was surprising in light of the fact that the bivariate correlation between intrusion and positive affect was insignificant ($r = .14$, $p < .05$).

Another unexpected finding related to intrusion and positive affect was that the relationship in both the bivariate analysis and in the stepwise multiple regression analysis was in a positive direction. Intrusion of thoughts and feelings about parents' divorce was expected to be positively related to negative affect, but this post hoc research question was not supported. Apparently, recalling intrusive thoughts and feelings about their parents' divorce had a slight but significant positive effect on adolescents' positive feelings in this study.

One interesting explanation of this finding is offered by judgment theories of well-being (Parducci, 1982; Smith et al., 1989; Strack et al., 1985). The "contrast effect" occurs when a recalled past negative event is judged in relation to the present situation, which, when compared or contrasted to the present, reminds us that the present, "although imperfect, could be a great deal worse" (Tversky & Griffin, 1991, p. 110).

This contrast effect has been demonstrated repeatedly in experimental laboratory studies. Tversky and Griffin

(1991) elaborate on the Strack et al. (1985) experiment:

Strack, Schwarz and Gschneidinger (1985) instructed subjects in one group to recall and write down a very negative event in their lives. Subjects in another group were instructed to recall and write down a very positive event in their lives. Within each group, half the subjects were asked to recall a present event, and half were asked to recall a past event. Subjects were then asked to rate their well-being on a 10-point scale. This procedure yields a 2 x 2 (between-subjects) design in which the recalled event was either positive or negative, in the present or in the past. . . . Recalling a positive present event made people feel good, whereas thinking about a negative present event made people feel less happy. The results for past events were more surprising: ratings of well-being were higher for those who recalled a past negative event than for those who recalled a past positive event (p. 109).

How does the contrast effect apply to the findings in the present study? The types of questions and the order in which they were asked at the time of the data collection are similar to the protocol used in the experimental study, and thus may have produced a slight contrast effect in the adolescents' responses on the Bradburn well-being scale, at least with positive affect. In the present study, subjects who said they had had problems since their parents' divorce were asked to write down the types of problems experienced since the divorce. This open-ended question, if answered, would be the equivalent to the past negative event that some of the subjects in the experimental study were asked to recall and write down. This open-ended question also occurs just before the Impact of Event Scale in the questionnaire

booklet. The Impact of Event Scale measures intrusion and avoidance of thoughts and feelings about a traumatic event --in this study, the parents' divorce. The Bradburn Affect Balance Scale, the measure of well-being employed in this study, is placed toward the end of the questionnaire booklet, following the open-ended question and the Impact of Event Scale. Thus, the order in which the open-ended question and the two psychometric scales occurred duplicates the protocol used in the experimental study described above.

Although not intentional on the part of the original investigators, the order in which these items occurred in the questionnaire booklet may have generated the contrast effect to some degree, at least in relation to positive affect. This contrast effect was not strong enough to influence overall subjective well-being (affect balance) as in the experimental study, yet may have been significant enough to influence positive affect in this study's adolescent respondents.

Another (and perhaps best) explanation of the positive relationship between intrusion and positive affect is that the contrast effect was operating independently of the subjects' responses to the order of the questionnaire items. Regardless of the nature and order of the items, the contrast effect could have resulted from comparisons made prior to data collection, judgments of happiness already made by the adolescent

subjects. Perhaps some of the adolescents in this sample had the perception that family life was "extremely negative" during their parents' divorce. If this perception is used as the standard of comparison (Dermer, Cohen, Jacobsen, & Anderson, 1979), this negative perception might make living in a functioning stepfamily more positive for some adolescents, and thus increase their positive feelings. The accumulation of negative experiences during childhood and adolescence may establish a baseline against which all subsequent events may be seen as an improvement (Schwarz & Strack, 1991).

Avoidance of Thoughts and Feelings About Parents' Divorce. The hypothesis that subjective well-being would be related to the avoidance of thoughts and feelings about parents' divorce was not supported by the stepwise regression analysis. Subjects' avoidance distress during their parent's divorce was not related to current positive affect, negative affect or overall subjective well-being (affect balance). Several explanations of this finding can be offered. Perhaps the avoidance of thoughts and feelings about parents' divorce dampens both positive and negative affect, so that the effects of avoidance are essentially cancelled out in the measurement of subjective well-being (affect balance). Perhaps the adolescents' avoidance level at the time of parents' divorce was reduced to an insignificant level at the time of data collection,

probably because the adolescents were no longer in the same conflictual family environment, or because of the effects of time. Since the mean number of years since parents' divorce was 8 years, it is possible that the adolescents in this study had sufficient time to recover from any avoidance distress effects that might negatively affect well-being.

Adolescent's Perception of the Quality of Communication with the Custodial Parent. Despite the strength of the bivariate correlation ($r = .34$, $p < .05$), the hypothesis that subjective well-being would be related to the adolescent's perception of the quality of communication with the custodial parent was not supported by the initial stepwise multiple regression analysis. Communication with the custodial parent also remained insignificantly related to well-being after controlling for stepfamily income, and after simultaneously controlling for both income and number of years the adolescent had lived in the current stepfamily. In fact, communication with the custodial parent continued to remain insignificantly related to overall well-being in the multiple regression analysis even after controlling for the strong effects of self-esteem.

To check for further masking effects, the communication with the stepparent variable was first removed from the stepwise equation. The removal of the communication with stepparent variable did not cause

communication with custodial parent to achieve a significant relationship with overall subjective well-being, probably because self-esteem was still in the equation. Only when self-esteem was completely left out of the stepwise equation did communication with custodial parent become significantly related to overall well-being ($t = 2.4, p < .05$), accounting for an additional 6% of the variance in well-being beyond that explained by communication with the stepparent in a significant model ($F(2, 79) = 9.74, p < .05$).

How should the findings be explained related to the adolescent's perceived communication with the custodial parent? Apparently, its effect upon well-being is masked by the adolescent's self-esteem, at least for the adolescents in this sample. One explanation for the masking effect of self-esteem is that frequent, positive communication with the custodial parent has been found to be associated with higher adolescent self-esteem (Petersen, 1981).

Adolescent's Perception of the Quality of Communication with the Stepparent. The hypothesis that subjective well-being would be related to the adolescent's perception of the quality of communication with the stepparent was strongly supported by the initial stepwise multiple regression analysis. This hypothesis was supported not only when controlling for stepfamily income,

but also when controlling for both income and number of years lived in the stepfamily. Even when controlling for the strong effects of adolescent self-esteem, the adolescent's perception of stepparent-adolescent communication was still a robust predictor of overall well-being in the stepwise regression analysis ($t = 2.5$, $p < .05$) in a highly significant model ($F(2, 79) = 12.7$, $p < .05$).

These findings are in line with previous research evidence. Previous research has found that stepmothers and stepfathers take a considerably less active role in parenting than do custodial parents. Even after two years, disengagement by the stepparent is the most common parenting style (Hetherington, 1987, 1988, 1990; Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1988). The stepparent's more disengaged relationship with the adolescent may also create its own communication problems. In their observations of family interaction, Bray et al. (1987) found that stepfather families had less positive moods and more problematic communication than non-divorced families. The Bray et al. (1987) observations are supported by the findings from this study: for both stepfather and stepmother families, adolescents who reported having less open, more problematic communication with their stepparents had significantly lower well-being scores (less positive moods) than those adolescents reporting more open, less problematic communication with their

stepparents.

Regarding their mean scores on the Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale (PACS), the adolescents in this sample did not differ from the norm group regarding their perception of the quality of communication with the custodial parent. No significant differences in (PACS) mean scores were found between custodial mothers and fathers, or between stepfathers and stepmothers. However, the adolescent mean score for communication with their stepparents was lower (mean score = 58.0) than the mean score for custodial parents (mean score = 65.5). No norms have been developed for adolescents regarding their communication with stepparents, yet the stepparent mean score (58.0) for this sample is significantly lower than the adolescent norm scores (combined adolescent norm score for mothers and fathers = 65.2). These mean score comparisons, along with the above findings from the stepwise regression analysis, support the Bray et al. (1987) observational findings of more negative moods and poorer communication skills in stepfamilies compared to non-divorced families.

Being an Adolescent with the Same-Sex Custodial Parent. The hypothesis that the adolescent's subjective well-being would be related to living with a custodial parent of the same sex was not supported by the bivariate analysis or the t-test group comparison of same-sex and

opposite-sex custody families. This study also showed no differences between groups across the independent variables. The findings from this study related to custody arrangements do not support the previous research evidence that adolescents may experience better adjustment when living with the custodial parent of the same sex (Camara & Resnick, 1988; Furstenberg, 1988; Gecas & Seff, 1990; Zill, 1988). Perhaps the adolescents in this study had sufficient time to adjust to their custody arrangements, so that no differences between groups were found at the time of interview. Perhaps significant differences might have been found between same-sex custody and opposite-sex custody groups if outcome measures other than subjective well-being had been used (e.g., aggressive behaviors, delinquent behaviors, or other behavioral problems). On the other hand, research on the effects of same-sex custody is very limited. Perhaps under some conditions, being with a custodial parent of the same sex is an important factor in the adjustment of the adolescent. Yet, the findings of this study clearly indicate that a more important factor in the adjustment to stepfamily life is the adolescent's relationship with the stepparent, not the gender of the custodial parent.

Adolescent's Age at Parents' Divorce. The hypothesis that the adolescent's overall subjective well-being would be related to the adolescent's age at the time of parents' divorce was not supported by the bivariate analysis, or by

the initial stepwise multiple regression analysis. Wallerstein's findings that adolescents and older children (between ages 6 and 8) are more adversely affected by their parents' divorce was not supported by this research, at least in terms of subjective well-being as an outcome indicator of adjustment. A post hoc t -test between groups revealed no differences among the independent variables between children aged 7 or younger at the time of their parents' divorce and those aged 8 or older. The mean age at parents' divorce was 7.7 years for this adolescent sample. A second t -test was performed between children aged 5 or younger and children aged 12 or older at the time of their parents' divorce, and again, no differences between groups were found. The findings of this study support recent research evidence that age differences in well-being may be very minor (Diener, 1984).

Another possible explanation of the lack of age at divorce effects upon overall well-being is that the adolescents in this study are not a representative sample of adolescent stepchildren. As noted earlier, Quick (1989) states that this sample of middle-to upper-middle class stepfamilies may have had more than average access to both social and psychological resources, and thus may be better adjusted than stepfamilies in the general population.

Adolescent's Age at the Custodial Parent's Remarriage. The hypothesis that the adolescent's overall subjective well-being would be related to the adolescent's age at the time of the custodial parent's remarriage was not supported by the bivariate analysis, or by the initial stepwise multiple regression analysis. When employed as a control variable, the adolescent's age at the custodial parent's remarriage accounted for an extremely small amount of the variance in overall well-being. Again, the findings of this study support recent research evidence that age differences in well-being may be relatively minor (Diener, 1984).

The research evidence that young adolescents have the most difficulty adjusting to life in a stepfamily (Brand et al., 1988; Hetherington, 1987, 1990; Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1988) was also not supported by the findings of this study, when using subjective well-being as an outcome indicator of adjustment. The possibility that the adolescents in this study are not a representative sample of adolescent stepchildren can again be cited as an explanation of the lack of age effects (Quick, 1989). It also may be that subjective well-being is not as sensitive to age differences as some other outcome indicators.

Number of Years Lived in the Current Stepfamily. The hypothesis that the adolescent's overall subjective well-being would be related to the number of years lived in the current stepfamily was not supported by the bivariate

analysis, or by the initial stepwise multiple regression analysis. The findings of this study lend little support to the research evidence that length of time in a remarried family has a positive impact upon adolescent adjustment (Clingempeel & Segal, 1986; Lutz, 1983), at least when using subjective well-being as an outcome indicator. In fact, the results of this study tend to support Pink and Wampler's (1985) findings that length of time in the current stepfamily may not be related to the quality of the stepparent-stepchild relationship, or to adolescents' adjustment to stepfamily life. One possible explanation of the lack of time effects is that individuals may be on their best behavior or have high expectations during the first few years of remarriage (Quick, 1989).

Gender Differences. The hypothesis that the adolescent's overall subjective well-being would be related to gender was not supported by the bivariate analysis, or by the t-test group comparison for adolescent males and females. This finding of no difference between sexes does not support previous research evidence that stepfamily life has a more negative impact on adolescent females than upon adolescent males (Hetherington et al., 1986) in terms of overall subjective well-being (affect balance). However, in the post hoc analysis, being an adolescent female was found to be significantly related to

negative affect ($t = -2.1, p < .05$) and to self-esteem ($t = 2.0, p < .05$), female adolescents reporting more negative feelings and lower self-esteem than adolescent males.

It is important to note that the self-esteem mean score for adolescent females is still fairly high (mean score = 31.3), higher than the mean score (29.1) for the junior high school control group in the Tollefson et al. (1982) study. Also, it is important to note that no gender differences were found in the adolescents' perceptions of the quality of communication with either the custodial parent or the stepparent. These post hoc findings suggest that while some gender differences exist in negative affect and self-esteem, the impact of these differences upon overall well-being is insignificant for the adolescents in this sample: the female affect balance mean score was 5.6, while the male affect balance mean score was 6.2, an insignificant difference ($t = 1.24, p > .05$).

Stepfamily Income. The hypothesis that the adolescent's overall subjective well-being would be related to stepfamily income was not supported by the bivariate analysis, or by the initial stepwise multiple regression analysis. However, results from the post hoc multiple regression analysis indicate that stepfamily income was significantly related to positive affect in this adolescent sample. Reduced economic resources following divorce may negatively affect children's

well-being (Amato & Keith, 1991; Hetherington et al., 1989). While financial status in stepfamilies tends to parallel that found in intact families (Hetherington et al., 1989), financial problems are not necessarily absent following remarriage. Remarried individuals may have the added stress of supporting more than one household, at least to some extent (Hetherington et al., 1989).

One possible explanation for the lack of income effects upon subjects' overall well-being is that the reported incomes of this middle-to upper-middle class sample were strongly skewed toward higher income levels. Nearly 82% of the stepfamilies in this sample had incomes over \$40,000. The possibility that the adolescents in this study are not a representative sample of adolescent stepchildren can once more be cited as an explanation of the insignificance of income effects (Quick, 1989). Other possible explanations of the lack of income effects upon adolescent well-being are (a) income may only have an effect on well-being at the extreme levels of poverty, and (b) the influence of income upon well-being may be largely relative (Diener, 1984). Perhaps a better variable would have been income change during the divorce to remarriage transition. Such a variable would show more variance in income. Previous economic hardship might also cause a contrast effect later on, increasing well-being.

Additional Findings Related
to an Examination of Open-Ended Responses

Adolescent subjects with high and low levels of well-being were divided into two subgroups, and their responses to four "open-ended" questions related to their parents' divorce and remarriage were examined. From these qualitative data emerge several important themes that provide further support for the findings of this study. The well-being subgroup ($n = 19$) consisted of adolescents with very high levels of subjective well-being (affect balance scores at or above one standard deviation above the mean: scores of 8 or 9). The ill-being subgroup ($n = 21$) consisted of those adolescents with very low levels of subjective well-being (affect balance scores near or below one standard deviation below the mean: scores of 1 to 4). Several common themes emerged that were distinctive of each group.

Ill-Being and Problem Behaviors. Adolescents who indicated they had had problems since their parent's divorce were asked, "Please describe the types of problems you have had." Also, at the end of the data collection, adolescents were asked, "Is there any additional information which you think might be helpful to us in trying to understand your experiences with separation, divorce and remarriage?" In the ill-being subgroup, adolescent females who responded to these two open-ended questions reported a variety of responses: (a) bad dreams

and flashbacks about parents' divorce, (b) emotional strain, (c) social withdrawal, (d) hurt and anger at both biological parents, (e) not talking to the biological mother, (f) feeling uncomfortable talking to the biological father, (g) fear of being left out of the biological father's life, (h) problems explaining the divorce to friends, and (i) academic problems. The female responses about their biological parents may lend support to personal strivings theory (Emmons, 1989), in that the responses of some of these ill-being adolescent females indicate they might have had some ambivalence about their communication strivings with parents (whether to communicate or not to communicate).

The adolescent females in the ill-being subgroup also reported a variety of problems related to intense interpersonal conflict: (a) constant fighting, (b) unpredictable moods among stepfamily members, (c) being "treated badly" by extended family members, (d) getting in the middle of parents' arguments over child support, (e) difficulty accepting parents' remarriage, (f) problems in getting along with or adjusting to the stepparent (jealousy, fighting, competition, withdrawal, difficulty accepting the stepparent's attempts to be a parent), (g) conflict with the custodial mother over the adolescent's non-acceptance of the stepfather, and (h) exposure to intense fighting between the custodial parent and the

stepparent.

Adolescent males in the ill-being subgroup also reported a variety of problems, but they reported fewer problems related to family conflict than those reported by the female adolescents, suggesting that the male adolescents in the ill-being subgroup may have been more removed from family conflicts or less likely to get involved with family conflicts than were their female counterparts. The male adolescent responses included: (a) having a cynical attitude, (b) having transportation problems, (c) disliking the increased "noise" of the stepfamily, (d) disliking being bounced around between parents, (e) problems adjusting to parents' divorce, (f) anger at mother for bringing the stepfather into the family, (g) difficulty accepting the stepparent's attempts to be a parent, (h) bedwetting, (i) longing for the non-custodial father, and (j) difficulty in expressing feelings about the divorce.

Well-Being and Problem Behaviors. We now turn to the responses of those adolescents in the well-being subgroup. Since their parents' divorce, the adolescents in the well-being subgroup reported having problems similar to those reported by the ill-being subgroup, except their problems seemed somewhat less serious and less conflictual than those reported by the ill-being group. Adolescent females in the well-being subgroup reported a variety of responses: (a) being bothered by petty jealousies, (b)

getting in the middle of communication triangles in the stepfamily, (c) mild or temporary withdrawal from mother, (d) missing the non-custodial father, (e) sadness over losing one's childhood, (f) difficulty liking, getting to know and adjusting to the stepparent, and (g) a dislike of being "lectured endlessly."

The variety of problems reported by adolescent males in the well-being subgroup also seemed somewhat less serious and somewhat less conflictual than those reported by the males in the ill-being subgroup. These responses included: (a) being ignored and put down, (b) exposure to disagreements between the custodial mother and stepfather over family rules, (c) acting out and showing disrespect to parents due to lax family rules, (d) difficulty getting along with the stepmother, and (e) finding enough time to visit the non-custodial mother. Two adolescent females and two adolescent males in the well-being subgroup reported having either temporary difficulties or no difficulties at all with their parents' marital transitions, and all four said they were adjusting well to stepfamily life.

Ill-Being and Attitudes Toward Stepfamily Life. At the end of data collection, the adolescents in this study were asked, "What do you like most about living in a stepfamily?" In the ill-being subgroup, adolescents had more difficulty naming positive aspects about their stepfamilies than adolescents in the well-being subgroup.

In fact, even the positive comments made by the adolescents in the ill-being subgroup regarding their stepfamilies sometimes appeared to have a slightly negative ring, which seemed to convey an underlying negative message about their previous family environment. Three adolescent females and one adolescent male in the ill-being subgroup were highly critical of stepfamily life, stating that they liked nothing at all about their stepfamilies. Several female adolescents in the ill-being subgroup said they liked having a "real dad" to rely on. These positive comments about the stepfather seemed to convey an underlying message of hurt, perhaps suggesting that their biological father should have been more available, more supportive, or more reliable. Another female said she appreciated when her stepfather would "occasionally" convince her "overprotective mother" to allow her to do certain things, while still another female said she liked not having to put up with her real parents' fighting (two more examples of a positive comment with perhaps an underlying negative message). Other positive comments from the ill-being subgroup were more straightforward. One adolescent female said she liked her stepfamily's more open and honest expression of feelings (another female reported "liking" her stepfamily and stepparent in one of the open-ended questions pertaining to the parents' divorce). Two females said they liked having a "mom" or another woman around for support. One

adolescent male said that he liked his stepfamily's financial stability: "the rent and bills get paid better." Two other male adolescents in the ill-being subgroup liked having more friends (step-siblings) around, but a third male, in an attempt to come up with something positive about his stepfamily, could only come up with a sarcastic remark about his step-siblings.

Well-Being and Attitudes Toward Stepfamily Life. The comments about stepfamilies made by the adolescents in the well-being subgroup conveyed a decidedly more positive tone, well summarized by one adolescent girl's comment: "I guess it's just a matter of adjustment. Once you get used to another person being thrust upon you, it isn't bad." The responses of the female adolescents included: (a) enjoying the added support and resources of the stepfamily, (b) appreciating the love that surrounds the family, (c) having more people around to share one's joy with, (d) having more people around to talk to and to do things with, (e) happiness over being a part of the stepfamily, (f) having a permissive stepparent, (g) not having to clean house, (h) getting more presents and "feeling very happy," and (i) having two adults around the house to help out with everyday occurrences.

The male responses were equally as positive: (a) "liking everything," (b) "living in a home full of loving and caring people," (c) "finally getting the sister I

wanted so much," (d) the quality time spent, (e) feeling closer to the stepfather than the biological father, and (f) going to the stepfather first when needing something. Only one male adolescent in the well-being subgroup had difficulty coming up with something positive about his stepfamily, finally stating that he "occasionally" liked being around his step brother and sister.

This investigator was struck by the highly positive comments made by the well-being subgroup regarding their stepfamilies. Was Pollyanna right? (Goodhart, 1985). Is taking a positive attitude toward one's circumstances a more accurate assessment of reality? Could it be that the adolescents in the well-being subgroup were making positive attributions about their stepfamilies that were unrealistically high and a distortion of reality? The qualitative data suggest otherwise, since many of these same adolescents appeared to be painfully aware of the problems that existed in their stepfamilies, and could also long for their noncustodial father or be reflective about the loss of their childhood.

An alternative explanation for the well-being subgroup's positivity is that a "contrast effect" was occurring. Freud (1930) theorized that the human psyche is only able to enjoy contrasts. The contrast effect occurs when a recalled past negative event (parents' divorce) is judged in relation to the present situation (stepfamily life). Perhaps when these adolescents compare their

memories of their parents' divorce to their present stepfamily life, it reminds them that living in a stepfamily, "although imperfect, could be a great deal worse," and thus increases their positive feelings about the stepfamily (Tversky & Griffin, 1991).

Ill-Being and Improving Stepparent Relationships. The final open-ended question for the adolescents in this study asked, "How do you feel you could improve the relationship with your stepparents?" In the ill-being subgroup, improving the relationship through better communication skills along with serious doubts about making any improvements at all were the two predominant responses given by these adolescents. Five females said they should "talk more" with their stepparents, while two other females said they should "agree more" and "not argue as much." One female adolescent felt it was the responsibility of the stepparent to improve the relationship. Three female adolescents expressed great doubt about the possibility of improving their relationship with their stepparents: the first female adolescent said that "moving out" was the only way to improve the relationship, the second female said that she "had tried" to improve her stepparent relationship but "it did not work," while the third female adolescent said that improving the relationship with her stepparent was "impossible." Only two of the adolescent males thought

that better communication (talking and listening more) would improve their relationship with stepparents. Three other adolescent males expressed great doubt about the possibility of improving their relationship with their stepparents: the first adolescent male wanted to avoid dealing with his stepparent altogether until he was older, the second male said he had "tried twice" to improve the relationship, but that his stepfather was "irrational, egotistical, and critical," while the third adolescent male could only come up with a sarcastic remark about his stepmother.

Well-Being and Improving Stepparent Relationships. A more optimistic tone came through in the responses from the adolescents in the well-being subgroup. Four of the female adolescents felt that their relationship with their stepparents was very good already. These female adolescents described their relationship with their stepparent as either "very close," "pretty good," or "good enough." Two of these said they would not want to change anything about their relationship with their stepparent and could not think of ways to improve it. Four other female adolescents felt they needed to improve their communication skills by "talking more," "listening more," and "understanding each other better." Adolescent males in the well-being subgroup were not as optimistic about their stepparent relationships as were the females, but they were not as negative about making improvements in these

relationships as were the adolescent males in the ill-being subgroup. In the well-being subgroup, male adolescent responses included: (a) showing more respect to each other, (b) being nicer, (c) getting along better, and (d) accepting the stepfather for who he is instead of comparing him to the real father. Only one male adolescent in the well-being subgroup responded negatively about the possibility of improving the relationship with his stepfather.

Ill-Being and Well-Being Subgroups: Summary of Themes

These selected pieces of qualitative data indicate that the adolescent stepchildren in the ill-being subgroup (a) experienced emotionally intense, unresolved conflict in their stepfamilies, (b) sometimes got in the middle of conflict or avoided dealing with conflict, (c) had problems in getting along with or adjusting to the stepparent, (d) experienced communication problems with their stepparent, (e) said they needed to improve their communication skills with their stepparent, (f) had ambivalence about their communication strivings with biological parents (whether to communicate or not to communicate), (g) expressed difficulty accepting and adapting to stepfamily life, and (h) tended to be negative in their attitudes toward improving stepfamily relationships.

In contrast, the adolescent stepchildren in the well-being subgroup (a) reported moderate levels of family conflict, (b) predominantly reported having acceptable or very good relationships with stepparents, (c) sometimes got in the middle of family triangles but otherwise did not frequently mention having major communication problems in their stepfamily, (d) generally spoke positively of the love, caring and acceptance between stepfamily members, (e) seemed to adjust well to stepfamily life and seemed to thrive on the presence of step-siblings, and (f) were generally very satisfied with stepfamily relationships and found little to improve upon. In both subgroups, there appeared to be some gender differences in the way interpersonal conflicts were handled. The female adolescents in both subgroups appeared to be more actively involved in family conflicts and communication triangles than were their male counterparts. This seemed to be especially true for those females in the ill-being subgroup.

It is important to remember that these comparisons are only suggestive, and are based on clinical impressions rather than on objective statistical analysis. While cause and effect relationships are not suggested here, the observations from the qualitative data do support previous research findings, and provide additional support for the findings of this study. Although roughly sketched, the clinical picture that emerges from the qualitative data

suggests that many of the adolescents with high well-being were able to maintain a positive attitude or reframe their stepfamily situation in a more positive light, and seemed to adapt and adjust more easily to stepfamily life than were the adolescents with low well-being. The themes from the qualitative data support the findings of the multiple regression analysis, which found that well-being in these adolescent stepchildren was significantly associated with high self-esteem --their ability to take a positive attitude toward themselves and to believe in their personal competencies in making the adjustment to stepfamily life. The qualitative findings also underscore the significant relationship found in the multiple regression analysis between well-being and these adolescents' perceptions of more open, honest, emotionally positive communication with their stepparents.

Recommendations

The recommendations of this research will be divided into three sections: (a) implications for theory development, (b) implications for future research, and (c) implications for practice and public policy. Before proceeding with these recommendations, it is important to consider several factors when discussing the implications of this study. The results of this study are based on a small, purposive sample of adolescent stepchildren, and generalization beyond this sample must be made with

caution. It is also important to remember that this study was correlational in design, and thus cause-effect relationships cannot be implied or suggested by its results. With these considerations in mind, the findings of this research indicate that specific intrapsychic and interpersonal resources available to the adolescent stepchild were significantly associated with adolescent subjective well-being as a psychological indicator of adjustment to their parents' marital transitions and life in a stepfamily.

Implications for Theory Development

On the basis of several concepts from transition theory (Cowan, 1991), it was hypothesized that how adolescents feel about themselves (self-esteem), the way they regulate their internal feelings about their parents' divorce (intrapsychic affect regulation), and the way they regulate their feelings in their communication with parents and stepparents (interpersonal affect regulation) would be related to their overall subjective well-being (affect balance) as an indicator of their emotional adjustment to stepfamily life. This research provided support for these theoretical concepts. The findings of this study support transition theory as a useful approach to the study of marital transitions from the adolescent's perspective.

Intrapsychic Components. According to transition theory, the transition from a first-marriage family to a

stepfamily generates intrapsychic stressors that threaten the adolescent's identity, personal competency, and sense of self (Cowan, 1991). The question of identity is first raised during adolescence (Erikson, 1950, 1959), and may be further complicated by potentially disruptive life changes such as parental divorce and remarriage. Self-esteem has been described as the evaluative component of the self, and refers more to how adolescents evaluate their identity on an affective level (Coopersmith, 1967). How adolescents feel about themselves may both shape and be shaped by significant life transitions such as parental divorce and remarriage.

The importance of the intrapsychic dimension in transitional experiences was supported by the statistical and qualitative findings of this study. Results from the multivariate regression analysis indicated that having high self-esteem, which includes the ability to take a positive attitude toward oneself and one's personal competencies during critical life transitions, was the strongest predictor of high well-being in adolescent stepchildren. Findings from the qualitative data suggest that having high self-esteem may also influence how adolescents perceive their environmental situation, and thus enable them to take a more positive stance toward potentially disruptive life changes. Taking a positive attitude toward one's stepfamily situation might be an

interpersonal dimension of self-esteem that enables some adolescents to adapt more easily to stepfamily life.

According to transition theory, traumatic life events generate intrapsychic stressors that not only affect the adolescent's self-esteem, but also affect the adolescent's ability to regulate internal emotions about the trauma. The emotional coping process following a traumatic event requires that the adolescent experience enough emotion to work through the loss, and yet control internal emotions sufficiently to avoid being totally overwhelmed. Cowan (1991) refers to this balancing of intrapsychic affect as emotional regulation. The loss of emotional regulation or "affect balance" may be characterized by intrusive negative thoughts and feelings about traumatic events (Horowitz et al., 1979), and may occur during adolescence in the form of vivid memories and intense waves of emotion in reaction to traumatic events such as parental divorce (Wallerstein, 1985, 1987).

Contrary to prediction, however, intrusive negative thoughts and feelings about their parent's divorce had no significant relationship to the balance between positive and negative affect (or overall well-being) in these adolescent stepchildren. This finding does not support previous research that found intrusion effects in a significant subsample of maladjusted older children and adolescents years after their parents' divorce (Wallerstein, 1985, 1987). For this investigator's sample

of adolescent stepchildren, average intrusion levels were in the upper end of the clinically low range (mean = 8.6). Findings from this study indicate that while these adolescents might occasionally experience flashbacks or sad feelings about their parents' marital breakup, these intrusion effects were not seriously affecting their adjustment to the stepfamily, or significantly related to their overall well-being, which, on average, did not differ from the general population.

However, the post hoc multivariate regression analyses on positive and negative affect revealed some surprising results. Rather than being positively related to negative affect as predicted, intrusion of thoughts and feelings about their parents' divorce was positively related to positive affect, when controlling for stepfamily income. Apparently, having clinically low levels of intrusive thoughts and feelings about their parents' divorce significantly increased positive feelings in these adolescent stepchildren!

How does this finding relate to transition theory? The relationship between intrusion and positive affect lends support to the process components of transition theory (Parkes, 1971), by suggesting that intrapsychic factors may play different roles at different times during the transition process. If denial or avoidance is the dominant strategy in the early phases of a transition,

then perhaps as time goes by, those who are adjusting better can allow negative thoughts to intrude and begin to work them through. This "working through" of past negative events would ultimately increase positive affect. Furthermore, high intrusion effects may be more related to negative affect during the early phase of loss and uncertainty, while during the last phase of marital transitions --when emotional equilibrium is eventually achieved by the adolescent-- low-to-moderate levels of intrusion may be more related to positive affect. The adolescents in this study apparently had sufficient time and opportunity to reach this emotional equilibrium (the mean number of years since parents' divorce was 8 years). If their group mean score on the Bradburn Affect Balance Scale is any indication, they had, on average, successfully negotiated their parents' marital transitions, at least in terms of their affect balance. The "contrast effect" coined by judgment theories of subjective well-being (Parducci, 1982; Smith et al., 1989; Strack et al., 1985) may offer the best explanation of the relationship between intrusion and positive affect during this final equilibrium phase, where a "vivid and passionate reliving of early experiences and attachments," along with a "reassessment of these experiences" may be a "necessary prelude to emotional separation and relinquishment" during the final phase of stepfamily transition (Wallerstein & Corbin, 1989). The contrast

effect suggests that when these adolescents' negative memories and feelings about their parents' divorce were compared to their present situation in their stepfamily, positive feelings about themselves and their stepfamilies increased, and enabled them to achieve a more stable emotional equilibrium and a letting go of the past. The accumulation of negative experiences during childhood and adolescence may establish a baseline against which all subsequent events may be seen as an improvement (Schwarz & Strack, 1991).

Interpersonal Components. In addition to intrapsychic stressors, transition theory also states that the process of becoming a stepfamily may generate interpersonal stressors. These interpersonal stressors may impact upon the adolescent's ability to regulate emotional control during stepfamily interactions, and specifically may affect the way adolescents regulate and express their feelings during moments of intense communication with parents and stepparents (interpersonal affect regulation). In order to resolve interpersonal conflict, affect regulation is just as essential on the interpersonal level as it is on the intrapsychic level (Cowan, 1991). Previous research has found that maritally dissatisfied couples tend to increase their negative affect until their exchanges are out of control. Maritally satisfied couples, on the other hand, are able to express but maintain some

control of negative affect (Gottman & Levenson, 1989; Levenson & Gottman, 1983). Cowan (1991) states that individual and family transitions generate "heightened affective arousal," which should "increase the risk of affect dysregulation, and increase the probability that intimate relationships will change in a negative direction, at least temporarily" (p. 18). During stepfamily transitions, parent/adolescent communication may play a major role in interpersonal affect regulation, and thus influence subjective well-being. Petersen and Spiga (1982) state that frequent, open communication with parents may help the adolescent deal with stepfamily stress, and may "reduce the adolescent's anger and rage by allowing expression of the difficulties and providing empathy" (p. 522).

The present study provided evidence to support these theoretical concepts regarding the adolescent's relationship with the stepparent. Findings from the multivariate regression analysis indicated that the adolescent's perception of more open communication with the stepparent was the second strongest predictor of high well-being. Those adolescents who experienced an openness or freedom to exchange ideas, feelings or concerns with their stepparents, who experienced trust and honesty in their relationship with their stepparents, and who experienced a more positive emotional tone in their interactions with stepparents, were more likely to have

high levels of subjective well-being. The qualitative data also support the findings of the multivariate regression analysis. Those adolescents with high well-being reported experiencing more open, trusting, emotionally warm and positive communication with their stepparents. On the other hand, those adolescents with low well-being reported experiencing more problematic, conflictual stepparent interactions with a decidedly more negative emotional tone.

This study did find a positive relationship at the bivariate level between subjective well-being and the adolescent's perception of communication with the custodial parent. However, the relation between well-being and the adolescent's perception of the quality of communication with the custodial parent was not supported by the initial stepwise multiple regression analysis. Only when self-esteem was completely left out of the stepwise equation did communication with the custodial parent become significantly related to overall well-being. It appears that the effect of the custodial parent relationship upon adolescent well-being is masked by the adolescent's self-esteem, at least for the adolescents in this sample. One explanation for this masking effect is that frequent, positive communication with the custodial parent has been found to be associated with higher adolescent self-esteem (Petersen, 1981). Cotterell (1992)

also found that adolescents' strength of attachments to parents was associated with positive feelings about themselves. From a theoretical perspective, perhaps the adolescent's perception of the quality of communication with the custodial parent functions more as a constant in the transition experience, providing a baseline from which to reorganize one's view of self and the world, from which to judge the quality of communication with the stepparent, and from which to adjust to new relationships and move toward emotional equilibrium.

Process Components. Process concepts in transition theory seem to be defined more broadly than they are in family systems theory. Process components in transition theory encompass not only the sequences of interaction between family members, but longitudinal, phasic aspects of intrapsychic and interpersonal adjustment to major life changes. While none of the process variables selected for this study were significantly related to adolescent subjective well-being in the stepwise regression analysis, they still contributed a sizable amount of variance in the forced entry model, together with all other variables explaining 34 to 37% of the variance in well-being. This finding suggests that process components are important in the study of adolescent transitions.

Perhaps process components that are age related need a more distinct time frame from which to measure their effects. For example, longitudinal studies that control

for age at divorce at the time of sample selection could measure the effects of age over time. However, age variables alone may not be sufficient for the study of process effects. Longitudinal studies could be designed that measure changes in intrapsychic and interpersonal components as adolescents proceed through the phases of marital transitions. The findings of this study tell us nothing, for example, about how the adolescent's self-esteem and interpersonal skills are affected during the various periods of adjustment to divorce and remarriage.

One final point is that perhaps none of the process variables selected for this research proved to be relevant to adolescent subjective well-being because the majority of these adolescents had, for the most part, successfully adjusted to life in a stepfamily. The qualitative data indicate, however, that a small subgroup of adolescents were still struggling in their adjustment to stepfamily life, and were experiencing continual difficulties in their relationship with stepparents. From a theoretical perspective, perhaps adolescents are not able to move through the various phases of stepfamily transition when the structural components required to make the transition become dysfunctional or problematic (e.g., low self-esteem, high stepfamily conflict, high negative affect in interpersonal relationships, problematic communication, problematic reorganization of roles or relationships).

Personal Strivings Theory. The findings of this study not only lend support to transition theory as the overall framework guiding this research, but also suggest that the personal strivings theory (Emmons, 1989) is a promising construct. Personal strivings theory states that well-being is achieved and maintained by striving toward personal needs, goals and desires (Palys & Little, 1983; Reich & Zautra, 1983). The strong relationship between self-esteem and well-being found in this research supports the goal-oriented aspects of personal strivings theory. Baumeister, Tice and Hutton (1989) found that, in contrast to defensive self-esteem which hungers for approval and expresses pretensions of high achievement, healthy self-esteem grows out of the actual achievement of realistic goals.

Goal attainment in this present study was only indirectly measured, however. Future studies could investigate which of the adolescent's personal goals, needs and desires are being foiled or facilitated by the divorce to remarriage transition. For example, it is not known how personal goals related to family belonging, parental guidance, independence, academic achievement, sport activities, and peer relations are affected by marital transitions. The expression and achievement of these personal strivings could be measured directly in longitudinal studies involving adolescent stepchildren. Longitudinal studies could also more directly measure

internal conflict or ambivalence over personal strivings.

Implications for Future Research

A larger sample of adolescent stepchildren might have generated more significant predictors of well-being in the multiple regression analysis. Due to the self-selected nature of this sample of stepfamilies, the results of this study might be biased toward higher functioning stepfamilies. A substantial minority of stepfamilies declined to participate out of fear that old problems might be rekindled, or that existing problems would be made worse. Also, this sample is comprised mainly of white middle- to upper-middle class families. Results might have been different for samples of upper-class stepfamilies, working-class stepfamilies, and stepfamilies from different racial and ethnic groups. More effort should be made to obtain random, representative samples of stepfamilies. Random samples of stepfamilies have been extremely difficult to obtain due to their demographic anonymity. The present study also relied on the retrospective recall of often emotionally difficult time periods. Thus, subjects' recall and perceptions of those events could be biased. In addition to the paper and pencil questionnaire used in this study, the use of structured interviews might have yielded a more finely grained assessment of the adolescent's thoughts and feelings. Future studies should employ multi-method,

multi-source, and multi-context approaches to the study of adolescents in stepfamilies (Quick, 1989).

Other variables not included in this study might have explained more of the variance in subjective well-being. Other variables related to transition theory and personal strivings theory could be explored in future studies of adolescent subjective well-being in stepfamilies. These include: (a) changes in the quality of sibling and stepsibling relationships, (b) the type and frequency of enjoyable activities with siblings and stepsiblings, (c) the type and frequency of enjoyable activities that include the entire stepfamily, (d) the role of peer friendships in providing social support as a buffer to the adjustment process during the stepfamily transition, (e) the impact of the noncustodial parent relationship upon adolescent well-being, (f) the achievement of the adolescent's personal needs and desires within the stepfamily environment (family belonging, parental guidance, independence, peer relationships, etc.), and (g) the efficacy of the adolescent's adaptive behaviors or goal-oriented coping behaviors during the stepfamily transition.

Since transition theory was found to be a worthy framework for the study of the adolescent experience during major life transitions, future studies might better operationalize various components of the theory. Measures of self-concept and ego identity could be

employed in future studies investigating the impact of marital transitions upon the adolescent's sense of self. Longitudinal studies could explore how the adolescent's self-concept and identity might change and develop during the various phases of marital transitions. In addition to communication scales, instruments that measure other interpersonal skills (e.g., self-disclosure reciprocity) could be employed in longitudinal studies to get a better picture of how the adolescent's personal competencies may be diminished or enhanced by marital transitions. Other components of transition theory not directly measured in this study could also be explored. Regarding the adolescent's assumptive world, future studies could investigate the relationship between psychological adjustment and the adolescent's assumptions about stepfamily life (via a stepfamily myths scale). Longitudinal studies could check for changes in these assumptions during the various phases of stepfamily adjustment. Other studies might explore attitudes about role formation and role change during marital transitions and how these changes may affect adolescent adjustment.

Process variables related to well-being in stepfamily formation and maintenance have scarcely been studied. Perhaps the factors treated as "process" variables in this study were limited in their ability to track changes in well-being over time due to the cross-sectional nature of

the research design. To address the limitations of cross-sectional and correlational designs, future studies investigating adolescent well-being in stepfamilies should utilize longitudinal designs to more accurately track the time-related changes in well-being that occur at various points in the process of stepfamily formation and maintenance. Longitudinal designs could also follow a more rigorous set of intervals for interview.

At present, there is a lack of research based on adolescents' perceptions of themselves and their stepfamily environments. More studies from the adolescent's perspective are needed. Through the use of electronic pagers, research designs that allow for random repeated measurement of activities, thoughts, and feelings in the adolescent's stepfamily setting would be more amenable to the measurement of process components of adolescent well-being (Csikszentmihalyi & Wong, 1991). More studies employing observational ratings or repeated random measures could examine the reciprocal effects between stepparent mood and adolescent mood. Controlled studies of well-being could be designed that randomly measure (via an electronic pager) positive and negative affect levels for one week following stepfamily training in mood elevating techniques such as cognitive restructuring and positive reframing. Positive and negative affect levels of a stepfamily control group could be randomly monitored to determine the impact of

treatments on the treatment group.

Future studies should also include comparisons of different structural subtypes of stepfamilies. One finding of this study is the apparent lack of differences between stepmother and stepfather families, at least in terms of the adolescent's experience. Most of the literature has focused on stepfather families due to their commonality and accessibility to researchers. Perhaps other variables not included in this study, especially variables related to satisfaction with custody arrangements, might have revealed more differences between stepmother and stepfather subgroups, or between same-sex custody and opposite-sex custody subgroups. While more research could be done with stepmother and stepfather families to explore possible differences in intrapsychic functioning and interpersonal dynamics, findings from this study suggest that the quality of stepfamily communication is more critically related to adolescent well-being than stepmother versus stepfather differences.

Several questions related to the trait versus state controversy were raised by the findings of this research. The generally positive tone of those adolescents with high well-being in the qualitative, anecdotal material and the surprising multivariate finding related to intrusion effects upon positive affect raises the old trait versus state issue: Is subjective well-being in adolescence

better defined as a trait (a relatively permanent personality disposition), a state (a transitory subjective experience responsive to momentary events or conditions in the environment), or a combination of the two? It is also not clear how both trait and state aspects of well-being interact in a stepfamily environment. Csikszentmihalyi and Wong (1991) have recently attempted to measure both the trait-like and state-like dimensions of well-being in adolescent samples through repeated, randomly paged self-reports of happiness over a week's period. No research of this type and complexity has ever been done with adolescents in stepfamilies. The stresses of stepfamily life would present an interesting backdrop from which to explore trait-state aspects of subjective well-being in adolescence.

Implications for Practice and Public Policy

The results of this research indicate that for the adolescent stepchildren in this study, having high self-esteem and experiencing more open, trusting, emotionally positive communication with their stepparent was related to increased overall subjective well-being. In addition, the post hoc findings indicate that for the adolescent stepchildren in this study, recalling mildly intrusive thoughts and feelings about their parents' divorce was associated with increased positive affect, when controlling for stepfamily income. This study also found that intrapsychic, interpersonal, and process factors

together explained 34 to 37% of the variance in adolescent well-being, suggesting that psychological well-being is the product of the interaction of these components. It was concluded that transition theory is a worthy framework from which to study adolescent adjustment in stepfamilies. A number of recommendations for clinical, educational, and policy intervention are suggested by these findings.

The findings related to self-esteem suggest that having positive feelings about one's worth and personal competency may help adolescents cope with the many changes that living in a stepfamily brings. High self-esteem may be a factor in how easily adolescents adapt and adjust to marital transitions and to stepfamily life. Healthy self-esteem seems to grow out of a sense of personal control and the actual achievement of realistic goals (Baumeister et al., 1989). Having more achievable, realistic interpersonal goals during remarital transitions and stepfamily formation may increase adolescent self-esteem and enhance well-being. It is therefore recommended that family life educators offer programs for stepfamilies that include discussion of stepfamily myths. Such discussion could dispel unrealistic expectations that parents and adolescents may have about stepfamilies, and encourage open discussion about realistic interpersonal goals. Family therapists and family life educators could also

stress the importance of esteem-building techniques for remarried parents with adolescent stepchildren.

This study lends support to the importance of positive mood in helping the stepfamily cope with stress and to deal with conflict constructively. Maintaining a positive attitude helps stepfamilies to redefine or normalize stressful events and thus make them more manageable. Reframing techniques could be taught to stepfamily members to help them view difficulties as challenges and opportunities rather than as hassles or impossible-to-solve problems. Family life educators and family therapists should be well-trained in cognitive restructuring and positive reframing techniques in order to reduce negative moods and to encourage optimism, creative problem-solving, and conflict resolution in stepfamilies.

The findings related to open, positive communication between the adolescent and the stepparent underscore the importance of helping adolescents and stepparents learn more effective ways to communicate with each other. Family life educators and family therapists could conduct communication workshops for stepfamilies in which adolescents, parents and other stepfamily members could learn communication skills such as I-messages, repeating back, checking out assumptions, negotiating, and staying on one subject at a time. Such skills would increase open, honest, nonjudgmental discussion and encourage the free

sharing of ideas and feelings. Family life educators and family therapists could also teach stepfamilies how to conduct weekly family meetings where specific problems could be discussed openly, ideas and feelings could be freely exchanged, and democratic problem-solving skills could be utilized.

Regarding public policy, Price and McKenry (1988) note that the recent increase in the number of persons and families affected by divorce has not been accompanied by an increase in widespread societal support that would help make the transition to remarriage and stepfamily life an easier process. Perhaps a national stepfamily week could be promoted by government agencies, civic organizations, churches and synagogues, and the media to raise public awareness of stepfamilies. Such a program could increase awareness of stepfamily issues, could dispel myths about stepfamilies, could emphasize positive aspects of stepfamily life, could promote wellness in stepfamilies, and provide a forum of discussion on both the national and local levels.

APPENDIX

TABLE 1

UNROTATED FACTOR LOADINGS OF AFFECT BALANCE ITEMS:
COMPARISON OF SAMPLE WITH PREVIOUS RESEARCH

First Unrotated Factor Loadings

Bradburn Affect a Balance Scale Items		(this research)		(Bolin & Dodder, 1992)
1.	Pleased about having accomplished something	(+)	.62	-.47
2.	That things were going your way	(+)	.72	-.49
3.	On top of the world	(+)	.63	-.50
4.	Proud because someone complimented you on something you had done	(+)	.49	-.59
5.	Particularly excited or interested in something	(+)	.59	-.47
6.	Very remote or lonely from other people.	(-)	-.55	.53
7.	Upset because someone criticized you.	(-)	-.51	.58
8.	So restless that you couldn't sit long in a chair.	(-)	-.20	.58
9.	Bored.	(-)	-.49	.53
10.	Depressed.	(-)	-.64	.54

Eigenvalues
(this research)

Factor I = 3.133
Factor II = 1.480

a
Items followed by (+) are measures of positive affect;
items followed by (-) are measures of negative affect.

TABLE 2
ROTATED FACTOR MATRIX OF AFFECT BALANCE ITEMS

Bradburn Affect Balance Scale Items	a	Factor 1	Factor 2
1. Pleased about having accomplished something	(+)	.65	
2. That things were going your way	(+)	.61	
3. On top of the world	(+)	.68	
4. Proud because someone complimented you on something you had done	(+)	.74	
5. Particularly excited or interested in something	(+)	.73	
6. Very remote or lonely from other people.	(-)		.69
7. Upset because someone criticized you.	(-)		.65
8. So restless that you couldn't sit long in a chair.	(-)		.21
9. Bored.	(-)		.69
10. Depressed.	(-)		.75

Eigenvalues
 (this research)

Factor I = 3.133

Factor II = 1.480

a

Items followed by (+) are measures of positive affect;
 items followed by (-) are measures of negative affect.

TABLE 3
DEMOGRAPHIC STATISTICS FOR STEPFAMILY INCOME

Total Family Income	Percent
less than 10,000	1%
20,000 -- 29,999	7%
30,000 -- 39,999	9%
40,000 -- 49,999	21%
50,000 -- 74,999	33%
75,000 -- 99,999	11%
100,000 or more	18%

TABLE 4
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS ON STUDY VARIABLES

	<u>n</u>	Mean	<u>SD</u>	Observed Range	Possible Range
Adolescent's affect balance score	82	5.9	2.2	1-9	1-9
Adolescent's positive affect score	82	3.1	1.2	0-4	0-4
Adolescent's negative affect score	82	2.2	1.4	0-4	0-4
Adolescent's intrusion of parents' divorce score	82	8.6	6.9	0-26	0-35
Adolescent's avoidance of parents' divorce score	82	13.9	8.9	0-35	0-40
Adolescent's self-esteem score	82	32.5	6.0	12-40	10-40
Adolescent's perceived communication with custodial parent score	82	65.5	13.8	31-93	20-100
Adolescent's perceived communication with stepparent score	82	58.0	14.8	27-92	20-100

Continued

TABLE 4 (continued)

	<u>n</u>	Mean	<u>SD</u>	Observed Range	Possible Range
Adolescent's perceived communication with custodial mother score	42	66.1	14.0	32-93	20-100
Adolescent's perceived communication with custodial father score	40	64.9	13.7	31-93	20-100
Adolescent's perceived communication with step- mother score	40	59.5	14.4	32-82	20-100
Adolescent's perceived communication with step- father score	42	56.6	15.3	27-92	20-100
Adolescent's age at parents' divorce	82	7.7	3.1	2-15	-----
Adolescent's age at custodial parent's remarriage	82	11.4	3.1	4-19	-----
Adolescent's years lived in current stepfamily	82	4.3	3.2	0-13	-----

TABLE 5
CORRELATIONS AMONG THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLES
WITH WELL-BEING (AFFECT BALANCE)

	Adolescent's subjective well-being score (Bradburn's <u>Affect Balance</u> Score)
Adolescent's intrusion of parents' divorce score	.01 <u>n</u> =82
Adolescent's avoidance of parents' divorce score	-.08 <u>n</u> =82
Adolescent's self-esteem score	.43** <u>n</u> =82
Adolescent's perceived communication with custodial parent score	.34** <u>n</u> =82
Adolescent's perceived communication with stepparent score	.37** <u>n</u> =82
Adolescent's age at parents' divorce	-.06 <u>n</u> =82
Adolescent's age at custodial parent's remarriage	.06 <u>n</u> =82
Adolescent's years lived in current stepfamily	.08 <u>n</u> =82
Stepfamily income	.21 <u>n</u> =82

*p < .01

TABLE 6

CORRELATIONS AMONG THE FOUR PARENT AND STEPPARENT
COMMUNICATION SCALES WITH POSITIVE AFFECT, NEGATIVE
AFFECT, AND AFFECT BALANCE

	Positive Affect	Negative Affect	Affect Balance
Adolescent's perceived communication with custodial mother score	.34* <u>n</u> =42	-.12 <u>n</u> =42	.26 <u>n</u> =42
Adolescent's perceived communication with custodial father score	.43** <u>n</u> =40	-.26 <u>n</u> =40	.42** <u>n</u> =40
Adolescent's perceived communication with stepfather score	.36* <u>n</u> =42	-.36* <u>n</u> =42	.43** <u>n</u> =42
Adolescent's perceived communication with stepmother score	.30 <u>n</u> =40	-.26 <u>n</u> =40	.34* <u>n</u> =40

*p < .01

TABLE 7
CORRELATIONS AMONG THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLES
WITH POSITIVE AFFECT AND NEGATIVE AFFECT

	Positive Affect	Negative Affect
Adolescent's intrusion of parents' divorce score	.14 <u>n=82</u>	.11 <u>n=82</u>
Adolescent's avoidance of parents' divorce score	.03 <u>n=82</u>	.15 <u>n=82</u>
Adolescent's self-esteem score	.36** <u>n=82</u>	-.34** <u>n=82</u>
Adolescent's perceived communication with custodial parent score	.38** <u>n=82</u>	-.19 <u>n=82</u>
Adolescent's perceived communication with stepparent score	.32** <u>n=82</u>	-.30** <u>n=82</u>
Adolescent's age at parents' divorce	-.13 <u>n=82</u>	-.01 <u>n=82</u>
Adolescent's age at custodial parent's remarriage	.06 <u>n=82</u>	.03 <u>n=82</u>
Adolescent's years lived in current stepfamily	.06 <u>n=82</u>	-.08 <u>n=82</u>
Stepfamily income	.23* <u>n=82</u>	-.13 <u>n=82</u>

*p < .01

TABLE 8

INITIAL FORCED ENTRY MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF THE
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES ON WELL-BEING (AFFECT BALANCE)

Independent Variables ADOLESCENT:	Unstandardized Regression Coefficient	Standard Error	Standardized Coefficient (Beta)	T value
Self-Esteem	.095	.044	.27	2.18*
Communication with Stepparent	.034	.016	.23	2.09*
Age at Remarriage	.254	.122	.36	2.08*
Same-Sex Custody	-.014	.438	-.00	-.03
Gender	-.397	.449	-.09	-.88
Intrusion	.023	.035	.07	.65
Parent's Income	.198	.147	.14	1.35
Avoidance	-.022	.027	-.09	-.80
Communication with Custodial Parent	.015	.018	.09	.80
Age at Divorce	-.130	.083	-.19	-1.55
Years in Stepfamily	.161	.108	.24	1.49
(constant)	-3.161	2.343		

$R = .58$

R^2

$R = .34$

Adjusted $R^2 = .23$

$F(11, 70) = 3.19$

*p < .05

TABLE 9

THE AMOUNT OF THE VARIANCE IN WELL-BEING ACCOUNTED FOR
BY EACH SIGNIFICANT INDEPENDENT VARIABLE BEYOND THAT
EXPLAINED BY INCOME AND YEARS IN CURRENT STEPFAMILY

Independent Variable	Percentage of variance in well- being (affect balance) explained	
	1 - 9 scale range	^a 0 - 10 scale range
Stepfamily income and number of years lived in current stepfamily (control variables)	5%	5%
Adolescent's self-esteem	18% *	20% *
Adolescent's perceived quality of communication with stepparent	4% *	5% *

* significant F , $p < .05$

^a
Scale range used by Veenhoven (1993)

TABLE 10

THE AMOUNT OF THE VARIANCE IN POSITIVE AFFECT
ACCOUNTED FOR BY EACH SIGNIFICANT INDEPENDENT VARIABLE
BEYOND THAT EXPLAINED BY INCOME AND YEARS IN CURRENT
STEPFAMILY

Independent Variable	Percentage of variance in positive affect explained	
	1 - 9 scale range	^a 0 - 10 scale range
Stepfamily income and number of years lived in current stepfamily (control variables)	6%	5%
Adolescent's self-esteem	13% *	15% *
Adolescent's intrusion of thoughts and feelings about parents' divorce	5% *	5% *

* significant F , $p < .05$

^a
Scale range used by Veenhoven (1993)

TABLE 11

THE AMOUNT OF THE VARIANCE IN NEGATIVE AFFECT
ACCOUNTED FOR BY EACH SIGNIFICANT INDEPENDENT VARIABLE
BEYOND THAT EXPLAINED BY INCOME AND YEARS IN CURRENT
STEPFAMILY

Independent Variable	Percentage of variance in negative affect explained	
	1 - 9 scale range	^a 0 - 10 scale range
Stepfamily income and number of years lived in current stepfamily (control variables)	2%	3%
Adolescent's self-esteem	11% *	13% *

* significant F, $p < .05$

^a
Scale range used by Veenhoven (1993)

TABLE 12

COMPARISON OF THIS STUDY'S PSYCHOMETRIC MEAN SCORES
WITH NATIONAL MEANS, NORM SCORES, CONTROL GROUP
MEAN SCORES, OR CLINICAL RATING SCALES

Measures	Study Mean	National Mean	Norm Score	Control Mean	Clinical Rating
Affect Balance (range 1-9)	5.9	6.7	a		
(range 0-10)	6.7	7.0	b		
Intrusion Subscale	8.6				0 - 8.5 ^c
Avoidance Subscale	13.9				9 - 19 ^d
Self-Esteem Scale	32.5			29.0 ^e	
Parent- Adolescent Communication					
Mothers:	66.1		66.6		f
Stepmothers:	59.5		----		
Parent- Adolescent Communication					
Fathers:	64.9		63.7		g
Stepfathers:	56.6		----		

a

1969 adults; $n = 2726$ (Andrews & Robinson, 1991)

b

1981 adults; $n = 2310$; ABS range 0-10 (Veenhoven, 1993)

c

low distress levels (Horowitz, 1982)

d

medium distress levels (Horowitz, 1982)

e

H. S. juniors; $n = 99$ (Tollefson et al., 1982)

f

 $\underline{SD} = 12.10$; $55.0 = 1 \underline{SD}$ below $\bar{X}$ (Barnes & Olson, 1982)

g

 $\underline{SD} = 12.02$; $52.0 = 1 \underline{SD}$ below $\bar{X}$ (Barnes & Olson, 1982)

TABLE 13
SELF-ESTEEM SCALE FREQUENCIES ON SIX ITEMS:
RESPONSES OF THIS SAMPLE COMPARED TO NCES SAMPLE^a

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale Items	Frequency: Valid Percent (this sample) n = 82		Frequency: Valid Percent (NCES sophomores) n = 13,749	
1. I'm a person of worth.	SA	73.2	SA	26.9
	A	24.4	A	57.8
	D	2.4	D	5.3
	SD	---	SD	1.0
4. I do things as well as most other people.	SA	58.5	SA	26.5
	A	31.7	A	60.3
	D	8.5	D	6.8
	SD	1.2	SD	.1
5. I do not have much to be proud of.	SA	3.7	SA	3.7
	A	11.0	A	11.3
	D	30.5	D	45.8
	SD	54.9	SD	32.3
6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.	SA	47.6	SA	26.7
	A	41.5	A	54.9
	D	7.3	D	7.3
	SD	3.7	SD	1.1
7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	SA	51.2	SA	18.9
	A	35.4	A	56.2
	D	8.5	D	15.2
	SD	4.9	SD	2.8
10. At times I think I am no good at all.	SA	15.9	SA	7.8
	A	25.6	A	43.4
	D	17.1	D	29.5
	SD	41.5	SD	10.7

^a Sebring, Campbell, Glusberg, Spencer, & Singleton (1987). High school and beyond: 1980 sophomore cohort, third follow-up (1980). National Center for Education and Statistics.

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