Remarriage & Stepfamilies

Test Section 4
Remarriage

- Someone has said that remarriage is ‘the triumph of hope over experience’.
- Approx. 83% of divorced men and 76% of divorced women remarry.
- About half of all marriages involve an adult who has been married before.
- Median length of time between divorce and remarriage is 5 years.
  - 1/3 remarry within a year.
Remarriage divorce probability

• Higher than 1st marriages. Why?
  – Complexity
    • Kids & divided loyalty
  – More likely to view divorce as an option
Stability of Remarriages

• According to the National Stepfamily Resource Center, 60% of remarriages end in divorce

• Between 20% and 30% of stepchildren will, before they turn 18, see their custodial parent and stepparent divorce.
Remarriages are different

• Emotional upheaval and significant life changes
  – Hope & fear; the past still in the present

• Occur later than 1st marriages; people in different stages of the life cycle

(Visher, Visher, & Pasley, 2003)
Remarriage
Remarriages are different (cont)
Satisfaction in Remarriage

• Little difference in overall well-being or in marital happiness BUT often more conflict

• Why?
  – More equity in remarriages than 1st marriages
  – Less-than-satisfactory experience in 1st marriage, so partner selection contributes to satisfaction
Stepfamilies

• Complex

• Numerous subsystems
  – Former spouse subsystem
  – Remarried couple subsystem
  – Parent/child subsystem
  – Sibling subsystems: step- & half- siblings
  – Mother/stepmother & father/stepfather subsystems
• Children are often the initiators of conflict in stepfamilies
  – Why do you think that is?

• Poor quality stepparent/stepchild relationship can negatively impact couple relationship
Children in Stepfamilies

- The quality of the communication and relationships and the extent to which children are monitored— is more important to positive child outcomes than family structure.
Stepfamilies (cont)

• May be better for stepfamilies to have less cohesion and more adaptability

• While conflict is present in all families certain issues differentiate them from 1st marriage families
  – Favoritism (along biological lines)
  – Divided loyalty (1/2 each)
  – Discipline
    • Hard for stepparents
    • Have to earn role, not assume it
  – Money, goods & services (includes time, space, and attention)
FACT OF THE DAY

In 2011, more than four-in-ten American adults have at least one step relative in their family – either a stepparent, a step or half sibling or a stepchild, according to a nationwide Pew Research Center survey. This was up from 21% in 1990.

Recognize that a child is part of 2 households

The vast majority of stepfamilies are formed post-divorce
Nurture the couple relationship to build family strength and to buffer against challenges

The couple has the most vulnerable relationship; dyadic spillover
Stepfamilies Strengths

• They function as families (focus on function, not structure)

• Remarriages can ease old marital wounds and stepparents can provide support to children

• Children have multiple roles to choose from

• Children gain greater flexibility

• Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants

(Espinoza & Newman)
Stepfamilies Strengths (cont)

- Stepparents can play a role parents can’t
- Children gain extra siblings
- Children gain an extra kin network
- Children may gain parents that are happily married