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CONSISTENCY OF COGNITIONS IN REMARRIAGE: A TEST OF THE CONSISTENCY TENET OF THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL COGNITIVE-DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL

by

JaNae Elise Campbell

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Family, Consumer, and Human Development

Approved:

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Logan, Utah

2009

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ABSTRACT

Consistency of Cognitions in Remarriage: A Test of the Consistency Tenet of the Multidimensional Cognitive-Developmental Model

by

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Utah State University, 2009

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Remarriages have been increasing over the last several decades, yet little has been done in establishing theories and interventions specific to remarried couples and stepfamilies. Fine and Kurdek proposed a model specific to individuals in a remarriage situation. In an effort to validate their model, this study tested a key tenet, the tenet of consistency in cognitions, across spouses. Data were analyzed from the "Relationship Quality and Stability in Utah Newlywed Remarriages" study. With a sample of 449 couples, a series of correlations and backward regressions were completed. The results indicate that individual perceptions are more predictive of remarital quality than is consistency of cognitions. A critique of the Multidimensional Cognitive-Developmental Model is discussed. Limitations are addressed and recommendations for future research are given.

(74 pages)

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JaNae Elise Campbell

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Remarriages have become as common as first marriages, yet have been neglected by researchers until recent years (Coleman, Ganong, & Fine, 2000). Census reports indicate that nearly half of the marriages that take place annually are remarriages, meaning that one or both partners have previously been married (U.S. Census Bureau, 1999). Studies have indicated that remarriages are at a slightly higher risk of dissolution than first marriages (Bumpass, Sweet, & Castro Martin, 1990; Ganong & Coleman, 2004) and it has become increasingly more common for individuals to marry three or more times (Bramlett & Mosher, 2001). Though quality of remarriages has been studied in comparison to the quality of first marriages, there is comparatively little empirical research on predictors of remarital quality (Coleman et al.). Consequently, calls have been made for more research that investigates (1) factors that contribute to quality in remarriages, and (2) differences between satisfied remarried couples and unsatisfied remarried couples (Ganong & Coleman).

One promising unexplored predictor of remarital quality is socioemotional behavior. Huston and Vangelisti (1991) have identified thirteen specific socioemotional behaviors (i.e., saying "I love you," sharing feelings, dominating the conversation, showing impatience) that they have shown, with a sample of couples in first marriages, to influence and predict marital quality. Individuals who enacted negative socioemotional behaviors received negative responses from their spouses – while individuals who enacted positive socioemotional behaviors received positive responses from their spouses

(Huston & Vangelisti). In subsequent studies, reported socioemotional behavior has also been linked to relationship stability (Fitzpatrick & Sollie, 1999) as well as relationship satisfaction (Caughlin & Huston, 2002). Huston and Vangelisti's Socioemotional Behavior Index captures the frequency of specific socioemotional behaviors by gathering reports from both spouses. Since self- and spouse-reports may be biased and inaccurate, they should be considered *perceptions* of socioemotional behavior (Gable, Reis, & Downey, 2003).

Above and beyond people's socioemotional behavior – self-reported or perceived by partner – the consistency of these perceptions has been theorized to be the real key to understanding remarital quality. For example, the Multidimensional Cognitive-Developmental Model (MDCD) for Stepfamilies proposed by Fine and Kurdek (1994) holds as one of its basic tenets that consistency and congruence of cognitions (including perceptions) are fundamental to remarital and stepfamily adjustment. According to the MDCD model:

> In multiperson units, the key issue is the extent to which the cognitions held by each member of the subsystem are consistent and in balance with those held by other members of the subsystem. A balanced subsystem is one in which the cognitions of the relevant members are consistent with each other, while an unbalanced subsystem is one in which members' cognitions are dissimilar and incompatible with each other. (p. 22)

The consistency tenet of the MDCD model is supported by the work of remarriage scholars and clinicians who have observed that inconsistency of cognitions among remarried couples may be problematic, causing conflict (Leslie & Epstein, 1988) and marital dissatisfaction (Kaplan & Hennon, 1992) – putting a remarriage at risk for divorce. If the MDCD model is correct then consistency of cognitions, such as

perceptions of behaviors, across partners may be more predictive of remarital quality than individual perceptions. Regarding this possibility, therapists have observed that regardless of what each family member believes to be true about remarried family life "conflict may occur when there is incompatibility among members' beliefs" (Leslie & Epstein p. 159). Similarly, Pasley, Ihinger-Tallman, and Coleman (1984) have noted that "perceived similarity and value consensus are contributors to marital adjustment and overall level of happiness gained from the marital union" (p. 451).

Although there is theoretical and clinical support for the notion that cognitive consistency is an important predictor of remarital quality, there has yet to be an empirical test as to whether the similarity of perceptions is in fact, more predictive than ones' individual beliefs. Previous efforts to study remarital cognitions have been unsuccessful at confirming the MDCD consistency tenet due to the lack of couple data (e.g., Higginbotham, 2005). Reports from both partners in remarriages are required to test whether consistency is as important to remarital satisfaction as Fine and Kurdek (1994) have theorized.

Using couple data, the objective of this study was to test the consistency tenet of the MDCD model. The guiding research question was: which is the better predictor of remarital quality – the husband's perception of socioemotional behaviors, the wife's perception, or the discrepancy of perceptions? To address this research question, Huston and Vangelisti's Socioemotional Behavior Index (SBI) was employed to capture perceptions from both spouses and thereby enabling comparisons between husbands' and wives' perceptions of the husbands' behaviors, as well as husbands' and wives' perceptions of the wives' behaviors. Analyses were conducted to determine whether

consistency of perceptions was more predictive of remarital quality than was husband's perceptions or wife's perceptions of socioemotional behavior.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The study of remarriages is a relatively young initiative. Until the 1970's when divorce replaced bereavement as the leading precursor to remarriage there was little interest in the subject (Coleman et al., 2000). However, due to the increased awareness of the prevalence and dissolution of remarriages, researchers are now exploring the causes of these social trends (for a review, see Ganong & Coleman, 2004). To date, these studies have not fully examined the role of cognitions in remarriage and stepfamilies – and leaders in the field have suggested the need for more research on cognitive factors associated with remarital quality (e.g., Coleman et al.).

The Multidimensional Cognitive-Developmental (MDCD) model is one attempt to describe how cognitions influence remarital quality. The multidimensional model was developed by Fine and Kurdek (1994) and brings together assumptions from popular family theories to articulate relationships among various variables in the context of stepfamily functioning. The model not only addresses many of the unique challenges facing stepfamilies but also offers testable hypotheses to guide future research. One of these hypotheses relates to the pivotal role of cognitive consistency in predicting remarriage outcomes.

A central tenet of the MDCD model is the importance of *cognitive consistency* between partners. Studies of marital satisfaction and marital outcomes have examined the influence of cognitions on marital quality (Gottman & Levenson, 1999; Huston & Vangelisti 1991; Matthews, Wickrama, & Conger, 1996), but very few have confirmed

that *consistency* of cognition between spouses is a determining factor in marital quality, let alone remarital quality. Therefore, the purpose of this proposed study is to explore how cognitive consistency, specifically perceptions of socioemotional behaviors, can aid our understanding of remarital quality. To assist in this purpose, this review of literature will first overview population and demographic trends that highlight the prevalence of remarriage and existing data on remarital quality. Second, a review of the Multi-Dimensional Cognitive Development Model will be provided. Third, research related to cognitive consistency will be discussed, and fourth, the research on socioemotional behaviors will be presented.

Remarriage Trends

Divorce and Remarriage

First marriages, in the United States, have a 0.43-0.46 probability of ending in divorce (Schoen & Canudas-Romo, 2006) and 75% of those who experience marital disruption are estimated to remarry (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002; Bumpass et al., 1990). Reporting on data from the 1995 National Survey of Family Growth, Bramlett and Mosher note that after 10 years 32% of White women's first marriages, 34% of Hispanic women's first marriages, and 47% of Black women's first marriages have dissolved. In this same report, Bramlett and Mosher note that after 5 years of divorce the probability of remarriage is 58% for White women, 44% for Hispanic women, and 32% for Black women. These remarriages have a greater chance than first marriages of ending in divorce (Bumpass et al.; Ganong & Coleman, 2004) and it has become increasingly more common for individuals to marry two, three, or more times (Bramlett & Mosher, 2001) .

Remarriage Quality

In a meta-analysis of studies that examined remarital quality, five common themes emerged. These themes emerged when comparing the differences of satisfaction between (1) couples in their first marriage versus remarried couples, (2) remarried men versus remarried women, (3) stepfathers versus stepmothers, (4) remarried couples with residential children versus remarried couples with children outside of the home, and (5) simple stepfamilies versus complex stepfamilies (Vemer, Coleman, Ganong, & Cooper, 1989).

Vemer and colleagues (1989) reported that overall, there was a difference in marital satisfaction between individuals in their first marriage compared to remarried individuals. Those in first marriages exhibited slightly higher satisfaction although it was noted that this difference was not substantial. Results indicated that remarried men are slightly more satisfied than remarried woman. Stepfathers and stepmothers did not differ in marital satisfaction, the same was true for couples who had and did not have residential children. No difference was found between simple and complex remarriages. According to the analyses conducted by Vemer et al., within group comparisons have been limited to gender, family structure, and living situations – and have identified only minor, if any, differences in satisfaction. The literature would benefit from a new approach in assessing the differences between satisfied and unsatisfied remarried couples and scholars have recommended the field explore the role of cognitions (Coleman et al., 2000).

The Multidimensional Cognitive-Developmental Model

Remarried couples and stepfamilies have been recognized as complex systems and are unique not only in structure but also in terms of adjustment and beliefs, as well as expectations (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). Over the decades, clinicians and researchers have failed to approach these complex systems differently. "Therapists continue to apply the nuclear family model to stepfamilies and make assumptions about how the stepfamily should function based on nuclear family norms and expectations. This is inappropriate and potentially damaging" (Huntley, 1995, p. ix). Fine and Kurdek (1994) took recognition of this situation and developed a model that would address the unique circumstances of individuals in remarriage and stepfamily systems. The Multidimensional Cognitive-Developmental (MDCD) model (Fine & Kurdek) is comprised of four dimensions: (1) units in the system, (2) types of cognitions, (3) continua of adjustment, and (4) developmental stages of the stepfamily system.

Units

Fine and Kurdek (1994) describe units as either one-person or multiperson. Members of the stepfamily system (i.e., parent, stepparent, child, and nonresidential parent) individually are defined as a one-person unit. The multiperson unit was adopted from the systems perspective and suggests the need to examine the stepfamily system in subsystems. These subsystems are viewed as "structural units consisting of stepfamily members who have a shared background and a stable pattern of relating to each other" (p. 17). These units are made up of two or more members of the stepfamily. The major

concept of this dimension is that a unit (either one-person or multiperson) influences other units or possibly the entire stepfamily system through direct or indirect relations.

Cognitions

Fine and Kurdek (1994) have integrated into the second dimension of their model five types of cognitions known to affect interpersonal relationships. These interrelated cognitions were first identified by cognitive behaviorists and include: (1) perceptions, (2) attributions, (3) expectancies, (4) assumptions, and (5) standards (Baucom & Epstein, 1990).

Perceptions are the aspects of a situation that an individual observes and fits into meaningful categories. Beliefs about the *causes* of an event are defined as *attributions. Expectancies* represent beliefs about the possibility that an event will occur under certain circumstances. *Assumptions* refer to cognitions regarding the roles people play and how relationships work, while *standards* refer to how things *should* be (Fine & Kurdek, 1994).

Adjustment

Adjustment is the third dimension to the MDCD model and is the "outcome" for each unit. Each outcome is depicted as a continuum of adjustment ranging from maladaptation to adaptation. The adjustment for a one-person unit refers to the individual's psychological adjustment. For the two- and three-person units, adjustment refers to the subsystem's (e.g., marital dyad) adjustment. Lastly, the adjustment of the four-person stepfamily unit is an evaluation of how well the entire stepfamily system functions (Fine & Kurdek, 1994).

Developmental Stages

Fine and Kurdek (1994) have suggested that cognitions and adjustment change over the course of a stepfamily's life span and have implemented the life course perspective into the fourth dimension of their proposed model. The MDCD model consists of the following stages: dating and courtship with eventual stepparent, cohabitation, early marriage (0-2 years), middle remarriage (2-5 years), and late remarriage (more than 5 years).

Consistency of Cognitions

In their model, Fine and Kurdek (1994) heavily emphasized the importance of cognitions and their relation to stepfamily adjustment – positing that cognitions "provide meaning, order and a sense of control" (p. 19). The "Cognitions" dimension of the MDCD model accommodates well the systems perspective, which is the basis of the "Units" dimension of the model. Fine and Kurdek have suggested that for the one-person units, cognitions are "individual psychological phenomenon" – but for the multiperson units, *consistency* of cognitions is of "primary importance" (p. 19) Consistency of cognitions between members is what defines a balanced subsystem, according to Fine and Kurdek.

Others have indicated that inconsistency of cognitions among remarried couples may be problematic, causing conflict (Leslie & Epstein, 1988) and marital dissatisfaction (Kaplan & Hennon, 1992) – putting a remarriage at risk for divorce. Though it has been suggested that compatible and consistent cognitions are important for a successful remarriage (e.g., Hetherington & Kelly, 2002), little empirical research has been

identified supporting this assumption for remarried couples. Therefore, the assumption remains theoretical for this population. Due to the lack of research targeting consistency of cognitions in remarriage, the focus of this review will be studies that have examined cognitive consistency or discrepancy amongst broader populations.

Empirical Research on Consistency

Tiggle, Peters, Kelley, and Vincent (1982) investigated the relationship between the understanding of desires for change and marital satisfaction. This study used two samples – 77 married couples from Houston, and 75 cohabiting and married couples from Los Angeles. Tiggle et al. assessed marital satisfaction using the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test. The Areas of Change Questionnaire was utilized to determine understanding of desires for change. A comparison of correlational and discrepancy indices were made. In both samples the discrepancy index was negatively correlated with marital satisfaction, suggesting that greater understanding (i.e. less discrepancy) characterizes the more satisfied couples.

Kurdek (1993) used a sample of 286 newlywed couples to examine how well marital dissolution was predicted using four different approaches: demographic, individual differences, interdependence, and spousal discrepancy. Discrepancy scores were derived by taking the absolute value of the difference between husbands' and wives' scores of the items that measured individual differences (personality traits that often lead a partner to distort events or to overreact to negative relationship events) and interdependence (individual's dependence or commitment to relationship). The results of this study indicate that unstable couples had larger discrepancies on interdependence

variables (i.e., satisfaction with marriage, faith in the marriage, and the value of attachment).

In contrast to Kurdek's attempts to determine a cause for marital dissolution, Robinson and Blanton (1993) set out to identify marital strengths in enduring marriages. Robinson and Blanton interviewed 15 couples who had been married for 35 years or more. Through these unstructured interviews five characteristics were identified as common among couples. These characteristics included intimacy, commitment, congruence, communication, and religious orientation. Congruence was described by the authors as consistency of perceptions of the strengths of the couple's relationship. Robinson and Blanton discovered a high degree of consistency regarding areas of communication, intimacy, family orientation, and religious orientation. The authors of this study also made note that the couples who exhibited inconsistent perceptions experienced stress in that particular area of their relationship.

Consistency was specifically examined by Hohmann-Marriott (2006). Hohmann-Marriott strived to determine whether or not common beliefs of the division of household labors between partners had any correlation with the stability of relationships. The sample of 1,039 couples was drawn from the National Survey of Families and Households and included both cohabiting and married couples. Dissolution of the relationship was defined as the outcome (or dependent) variable, while beliefs about the appropriate gendered division of household labor and the extent to which partners shared these beliefs were considered the independent variables. Difference scores were calculated by subtracting the woman's response from the man's response on the items measuring beliefs about the division of labor. The absolute scores were then categorized

into three levels of differences. These differences were then used in logistic regressions to predict union dissolution. The results of this study indicated that the couples who did not share expectations about the division of household labor were 71% more likely to end their relationship.

Watson and Humrichouse (2006) examined consistency in perceptions by focusing on perception of personality development. Watson and Humrichouse compared self-ratings and spouse ratings over a two year period. This comparison was used to determine consistency in perceptions of a partner's personality development. Watson and Humrichouse also examined the change in reports over time and the association the change had with marital satisfaction. For this study a sample of 291 newlywed couples was used. The Big Five Inventory was used to assess perceptions of specific traits: neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule was utilized in this study to assess perceptions of affect. The results of this study indicated that self-ratings increased over time in perceptions of conscientiousness and agreeableness – and declined in neuroticism and negative affect. Conversely, spouse ratings showed a decrease in perceptions of conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, and openness. This indicates a lack of consistency. Other analyses suggested that changes in spouse ratings were associated with changes in marital satisfaction; however, changes in self-ratings were unrelated to marital satisfaction.

Anderson, Keltner, and John (2003) also examined consistency; however, they concentrated on emotions rather than personality development. They proposed that people in relationships become emotionally consistent over time. They also suggested that consistency is essential to the formation and maintenance of long-term bonds.

Anderson et al. conducted this study in efforts to support their hypothesis. They used a sample of 60 dating couples. The Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale (tailored to romantic couples) was utilized to assess relationship satisfaction. Emotions were induced in a laboratory setting, asking couples to discuss a current success and a current concern in their relationship. Emotional responses were coded. At the first assessment there was some consistency between partners' emotional responses. At the second assessment, six months later, results indicated a significant increase in consistency. These results supported the authors' hypothesis that individuals who are in a relationship become emotionally consistent over time. Anderson and colleagues also discovered that couples who exhibited emotional consistency were more likely to remain together than couples who exhibited little or no emotional consistency. This finding may lend support to the idea that consistency is critical to the development of stable relationships.

The findings reported by Anderson and colleagues were similar to the findings of Gable et al. (2003) in that when partners exhibited consistency their relationship well-being was positively influenced. Gable et al. expanded on the idea of consistency by examining partners' perceptions of behavior. They conducted a study using a sample of 58 dating couples. Participants reported perceived behaviors enacted by the individual and behaviors enacted by their partners. This was done by answering a number of items that were categorized into three types: positive, negative, and supportive. Participants were also instructed to report daily perceptions of mood and relationship well-being. A comparison of perceived behaviors was made leading to four possible outcomes: (a) hit (both partners report that an individual engaged in a specific behavior); (b) false alarm (the individual reports not engaging in a behavior, but the partner believes the individual

did); (c) miss (the individual reports engaging in a behavior, but the partner reports that the individual did not); and (d) correct rejection (both partners agree that the individual did not engage in the behavior). Results indicated that participants agreed with their partners on 77% of positive behaviors, 89% of negative behaviors, and 73% of supportive behaviors. For positive behaviors, hits and false alarms significantly predicted relationship well-being, positive mood, and negative mood. For negative behaviors, misses significantly predicted relationship well-being and negative mood, and marginally predicted positive mood. Supportive behaviors produced mixed results – hits predicted greater relationship well-being and were also associated with more negative mood.

Burleson and Denton (1992) argued that similarity (or consistency), in social-cognitive and communication skills, is a predictor of marital satisfaction. They conducted a study using a sample of 60 married couples. The Role Category Questionnaire was used to assess levels of interpersonal cognitive complexity, while the Dyadic Adjustment Scale and Positive Feelings Questionnaire assessed marital satisfaction. The communication box, which is a laboratory measure, was used to assess perceptual accuracy. This was done by calculating the absolute values of the difference between an individual's "perceived intent" and the spouse's "actual intent" score. The results of this study supported Burleson and Denton's argument suggesting that spouses had similar skills in accurately perceiving the intent of their partner's message. Individuals who were categorized as low-skilled proved to be as satisfied as individuals who were categorized as high-skilled, when their spouses' skill level was consistent with their own.

Fowers, Montel, and Olson (1996) examined the concept of consistency by looking at expectations between partners who were to be married. They studied the

association between four premarital types (i.e., vitalized, harmonious, traditional, and conflicted) and relationship outcome over the course of three years. Their sample included 393 newlywed couples who had completed the PREPARE inventory prior to marriage. The PREPARE inventory measured couple strengths by examining consistencies in expectations and communication style. The ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale was also implemented in this study. A number of analyses were conducted. The results of a post hoc indicated that couples who were categorized as "conflicted" (those who reported dissatisfaction and had difficulty communicating problems in their relationship) had the greatest numbers of divorce and separation. A one-way ANOVA indicated that couples who were categorized as "vitalized" (those who had high consensus scores on a number of topics) had the highest level of marital satisfaction. However, another post hoc analysis suggested that "traditional" couples (having moderate relationship dissatisfaction, high agreement on future plans, and a realistic view of their marriage) were the least likely to separate or divorce.

Similar to consistency of expectations between partners is the consistency of marital ideals between partners. Acitelli, Kenny, and Weiner (2001) emphasized the importance of consistency in understanding of partners' marital ideals, and set out to discover its link to relationship satisfaction. A sample of 238 dating and married couples participated in the study. Ideals for marriage were assessed using the marital integration measure that asked both partners to rate and rank the importance of thirteen items concerning both their own and their partner's marriage values. Relationship satisfaction was measured by six items addressing happiness, stability, and satisfaction. Five of the six correlations significantly indicated that greater consistency was related to greater

satisfaction. Acitelli et al. also discovered that couples who had greater consistency had greater relationship duration.

Another study examined the association between consistency of partners' conflict styles and marital well-being (Acitelli, Douvan, & Veroff, 1997). A sample of 219 newlywed couples was utilized to compare black and white populations over a three year period. Spouses were interviewed and asked to report perceptions of self and spouse during disagreement. Three types of indices were calculated: actual similarity, perceived similarity, and understanding. Marital well-being was measured by adding together standard scores of six items covering how happy, how satisfied, how equitable, and how stable the spouse perceived the marriage to be. All perceptual variables (e.g., comparison of what the husband said he did to what he said his wife did) remained stable over time for both populations. Wives' understanding of husbands (e.g., comparison of what the wife said the husband did to what the husband said he did) predicted first year marital happiness significantly for wives – wives' understanding was predictive of happiness for both spouses during the third year analysis. For black wives this was a positive effect, but for white wives this was a negative effect.

In contrast to examining consistency in conflict styles Pasley et al. (1984) examined the differences in consensus styles among happy and unhappy couples on a number of marital topics. A sample of 359 remarried couples was used for this study. Spouses responded to a number of individual topics on a Likert scale indicating the frequency of perceived agreement or disagreement. Couples were then categorized into three types: agree-they-agree, agree-they-disagree, and mixed. A chi-square analysis was used to determine significant differences between happy and unhappy couples – they

differed significantly on 16 of the 19 items. Happy couples shared similar perceptions about the frequency of their agreement the majority of the time. Unhappy couples agreed they disagreed on topics of affection, time spent with spouse, sex, and (step)children needs and discipline. The majority of responses for unhappy couples were categorized as "mixed."

Only one identified study specifically utilized the MDCD model to guide their research. Fine, Coleman, and Ganong (1998) conducted a study to determine the degree of consistency in stepfamily members' perceptions of the stepparent role. They also assessed the relationship between the degree of consistency in role perceptions and adjustment in stepfamilies. The sample for this study included 40 stepfamilies from the Midwest. A number of self-report questionnaires were used (i.e., The Stepparent Behavior Inventory, The Stepparent Role Questionnaire, Stepparent Role Clarity Inventory, and the Family Strengths Scale). Eight composite role discrepancy scores were computed at the dyadic level to assess for consistency – absolute scores were used. Pearson correlations were computed to assess for the relationship between consistency in perceptions and stepfamily adjustment. Findings of this study indicated that stepparents and parents were likely to agree on the stepparent's role, while stepchildren had differing perceptions of the stepparent role. Results also indicated a modest correlation between consistency and adjustment. The authors noted, however, that greater consistency scores were related to closer stepparent-stepchild relationships.

Summary

The studies reviewed in this section have examined consistency covering several types of cognitions from beliefs about household labors (Hohmann-Marriott, 2006) to perceptions of stepparent roles (Fine et al., 1998). Because there is a variety of cognitions and topics studied, there is also a variety of measures that have been used. There is no common instrument across studies.

Consistency was also calculated in a variety of ways. Discrepancy scores (Fine et al., 1998; Hohmann-Marriot, 2006; Kurdek, 1993), correlational indices (Tiggle et al., 1982), the quasi-signal detection paradigm (Gable et al., 2003), and other approaches (e.g., Pasley et al., 1984) have been used to measure consistency within relationships. There was no common approach across studies. Still, the available literature taken as a whole suggests that greater discrepancies of cognitions leads to unstable and less satisfied relationships (e.g., Hohmann-Marriott; Kurdek). The question remains, does this hold true for *remarried* couples?

Two of the studies reviewed in this section used a remarried sample (Fine et al., 1998; and Pasley et al., 1984). Though Fine et al. incorporated the MDCD model into their study; they focused on perceptions of the stepparent role – highlighting the stepparent-stepchild dyad rather than the marital dyad. Pasley et al. did focus their study on the marital dyad. Their findings appear comparable to the studies involving broader populations such as cohabiting couples, newlywed couples, and married couples in general – however, this study is more than two decades old, focused on consensus styles, and stands alone in representing remarried couples. Consistency of cognitions among remarried couples remains a neglected area of research. In order to validate the

assumption of consistency proposed by the MDCD model there is a need for current empirical studies within the context of remarriages.

Socioemotional Behaviors

In the cognitive behavioral literature, it is understood that one's cognitions influence and are influenced by one's behaviors (Baucom & Epstein, 1990). Baucom and Epstein defined cognitions as "natural aspects of the information processing that is necessary in order for individuals to understand their environments and make decisions about how they will *interact* with other people" (p. 47). The five cognitions in the MDCD model are cognitions that have been identified as having an influence on interpersonal relationships (Fine & Kurdek, 1995). Gable et al. (2003) explained, "Patterns of interaction depend on the actions and reactions of both partners, and their actions and reactions depend on each individual's perceptions and interpretations of the other's behavior" (p. 100). Because cognitions and behaviors are interrelated – and influence interpersonal relationships – it is necessary to review the literature addressing socioemotional behaviors.

Empirical Research on Socioemotional Behaviors

The Socioemotional Behavior Index (SBI) was developed for a study conducted by Huston and Vangelisti (1991). Huston and Vangelisti set out to (a) explore concurrent relationships between satisfaction and the expression and receipt of positively and negatively valenced behavior, and (b) examine the extent to which stability and change in satisfaction can be predicted from socioemotional behavior and vice versa. The sample

used for the study included 106 couples who were in their first marriage. Data were collected in three phases over a period of 2 years. Marital satisfaction was measured by the Marital Opinion Questionnaire. Socioemotional behavior data were collected over the telephone. Husbands and wives were read statements describing 15 specific socioemotional behaviors and asked to indicate the number of times their spouses exhibited the behaviors during the 24-hour period – to collect spouse's perceptions of the individual's behavior. Results for this study indicated that when husbands were happy as newlyweds, their wives were more likely to maintain a high level of affectional expression over the first 2 years of marriage. Wives of husbands who exhibited relatively high levels of affection early in marriage tended to maintain their level of affection over time. Wives (as perceived by husbands) were less likely to increase their level of negativity when they were married to husbands who were initially less negative. Husbands' initial negativity (as perceived by wives) predicted changes in their spouses' marital satisfaction. For husbands, giving affection was more consistently associated with marital satisfaction than receiving affection.

Other studies have utilized the SBI and their findings appear comparable to the Huston and Vangelisti (1991) study. Fitzpatrick and Sollie (1999) studied the influence of distal factors (i.e., relationship standards, attachment motivation, and autonomy motivation) and proximal factors (i.e., self-disclosure, socioemotional behaviors, and conflict tactics) on relationship satisfaction and stability. The sample included 254 individuals who were involved in serious dating relationships. As previously noted, Fitzpatrick and Sollie used the SBI to measure socioemotional behavior. The relationship satisfaction variable was measured using the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale. A follow-

up assessment (occurring six months after the original assessment) determined whether the participants were still dating the same partner – which accounted for relationship stability. Correlations and regressions yielded results that suggest that for females positive behaviors explained 6% and negative behaviors explained 5% of the variance in satisfaction. For males positive behaviors accounted for 8% of the variance in satisfaction. Results also indicated that participants whose relationships remained stable reported greater positive behaviors than did their counterparts.

In a more recent study, Caughlin and Huston (2002) employed the SBI and found that both affectional expression and negativity explained significant unique variance in spouses' marital satisfaction. The sample consisted of 90 couples who were in their first marriage. The Marital Opinion Questionnaire measured marital satisfaction for this study. The model that included both affectional expression and negativity explained 27% of the variance in wives' satisfaction and 23% of the variance for husbands' satisfaction.

Summary

These studies examined the relationship between socioemotional behaviors and relationship satisfaction. Measures of relationship satisfaction were limited to the Marital Opinion Questionnaire and the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale. Although the SBI appears to be a valid indicator of relationship satisfaction (Caughlin & Huston, 2002; Huston & Vangelisti, 1991) and relationship stability (Fitzpatrick & Sollie, 1999), it has not been used to predict these outcome variables with a remarried sample.

Research Objectives

The first objective of this study is to identify a relationship between cognitions (i.e., perceptions of socioemotional behavior) and remarital quality. Previous research suggests that an individual's perception of the spouse's behavior can influence the individual's relationship satisfaction (e.g., Gable et al., 2003). Research also suggests that perceptions of negative behaviors may have a negative influence on marital satisfaction, while perceptions of positive behavior positively influence marital satisfaction (Huston & Vangilist, 1991). Due to this literature, it is hypothesized that individual perceptions of personal and spouse's negative behaviors will be related to low remarital quality. The second hypothesis is similar – it is expected that individual perceptions of personal and spouse's positive behavior will be related to high remarital quality

The second, and more fundamental, objective of this study is to test the tenet of consistency as proposed by the MDCD model. Research, in other populations, suggests that consistency between partners is important to relationship quality (e.g., Gable et al., 2003; Watson & Humrichouse, 2006). It is expected that the results of this study will yield similar findings. Therefore, the final hypothesis of this study is that the discrepancy between husbands' and wives' reports will be more predictive than individual perceptions of spouses' and personal socioemotional behavior.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

This chapter provides a description of sample, procedure, and measures obtained and utilized for this study. A description of the analyses and detailed hypotheses are also included.

Sample and Procedure

Data for this study was provided by the "Relationship Quality and Stability in Utah Newlywed Remarriages" study conducted by Dr. Brian Higginbotham. Approval, for the current study, was given by the University's research board (see Appendix A). Participants were recruited through marriage licenses acquired from the Utah Office of Vital Statistics. This office does not maintain the complete marriage licenses for marriages in Davis, Utah, and Weber counties, but does maintain all marriage licenses from Salt Lake and all 25 rural counties in the state of Utah. Participants were selected from marriage licenses that were issued during the year of 2006 in which one or both partners reported being a remarriage. Marriage licenses maintained at Utah Office of Vital Statistics provide information about which spouse has previously been married. These documents also provided contact information.

Approximately 4,800 survey packets were sent to qualified participants between February and April of 2007. These packets included a survey for the husband and a survey for the wife. A letter of information instructed that husband and wife surveys should be completed and returned separately. A pre-notice letter was sent informing the

couple of their selection in the study. Then the survey was sent with a self-addressed stamped return envelope. A postcard was then sent as a thank you/reminder. A $2.00 bill was attached to the questionnaire as an incentive to complete and return the survey. This protocol follows best practices for mailing surveys (Dillman, 2000).

By June 2007 data had been collected and entered for a sample of 449 couples. The female participants had an average age of 40.4 years with the median age at 38 years. The male participants had an average age of 43.8 years with the median age at 41 years. The majority of participants identified themselves as Latter-day Saints (64.5% of the females and 63.1% of the males), with the second most frequent religious preference participants being Catholic (6.1% of the females and 6.6% of the males). The majority of participants had a household income over $45,000 – with 21% receiving $100,000 or more. Ninety-seven of the female participants reported being in their first marriage (24.3%), 199 reported being in their second marriage (49.9%), and 75 in their third (18.8%). Eighty-seven male participants reported being in their first marriage (19.6%), 257 in their second (57.9%), and 80 in their third (18%). The average length of participants' current marriage was 10 months.

Measures

The measures of marital quality utilized for the current study include a two-item index used to identify marital satisfaction (Conger et al., 1990; see Appendix B), the Marital Stability Index (Booth, Johnson, & Edwards, 1983; see Appendix C), the cohesion subscale from the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Busby, Christensen, Crane, & Larson, 1995; see Appendix D). The Socioemotional Behavior Index (Huston

& Vangelisti, 1991; see Appendix E) and several demographic questions were also included. A description of each measure is provided below.

Demographics

Demographic items addressing age, gender, educational attainment, household income, and ethnicity were included in the questionnaire. Relationship information regarding martial status (e.g., widowhood or divorcement) and length of remarriage were also solicited through demographic questions.

Marital Satisfaction

A two item index developed by Conger et al. (1990) was used to assess marital satisfaction. Participants were asked to respond to the items using a seven-point scale that ranged from extremely unhappy/dissatisfied to extremely happy/satisfied. The first item invited participants to indicate at what level they are happy with their marriage. The second item requested the participants to indicate their satisfaction with their relationship with their spouse. The reliability for this measure was a Cronbach's alpha of .89 for husbands and .90 for wives.

Marital Instability

Instability was assessed by the Marital Stability Index (MSI; Booth et al., 1983). This instrument includes five items (e.g., "Have you ever discussed divorce or separation with a close friend?") and asks the participants to respond using a 3-point scale of "Never," "Yes, but not recently," and "Yes, recently." The internal reliability for this instrument was an alpha of .84 for husbands and .85 for wives.

Marital Adjustment

The Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS; Busby et al., 1995) consists of three subscales: cohesion, satisfaction, and consensus. The cohesion subscale was utilized for this study. Participants were asked if they agree or disagree on religious matters, demonstrations of affection, sex relations, and major decisions. Participants responded by using a 5-point Likert scales. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha was .86 for husbands and .84 for wives.

Socioemotional Behavior

The Socioemotional Behavior Index (SBI; Huston & Vangelisti, 1991) was used to assess an individual's frequency of socioemotional behaviors (e.g.., compliment partner, make partner laugh, dominating the conversation, showing impatience, and so forth) which they engage in daily, as well as the frequency of socioemotional behaviors their spouse engages in daily. Participants responded to thirteen items concerning their own behavior (7 positive items and 6 negative items) and the same thirteen items concerning their spouse's behavior. Frequency of each behavior was measured on a five-point scale ranging from "never" to "many times."

The SBI was utilized in this study to provide both husbands' and wives' perceptions of their own socioemotional behaviors as well as their perceptions of their spouses' socioemotional behavior. Reliability coefficients are presented in Table 1. Also, a discrepancy of perceptions was calculated by using the data received from the SBI. Following the example of Kurdek (1993), discrepancy scores were derived by taking the

Table 1

Reliability Coefficients for the SBI

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
H perception of H negative socioemotional behavior	.71
H perception of H positive socioemotional behavior	.80
W perception of H negative socioemotional behavior	.80
W perception of H positive socioemotional behavior	.85
H perception of W negative socioemotional behavior	.78
H perception of W positive socioemotional behavior	.84
W perception of W negative socioemotional behavior	.65
W perception of W positive socioemotional behavior	.82

Note. H = husband's; W = wife's

absolute value of the difference between husbands' and wives' scores of perceptions of socioemotional behaviors.

The two-item index, the MSI, and the RDAS contributed to this study by measuring remarital satisfaction, remarital instability, and remarital adjustment, respectively – providing information to determine the overall quality of remarriage. These measures assist in answering the research question: which is the better predictor of remarital quality – the husband's perception, the wife's perception, or the discrepancy of perceptions?

Hypotheses and Corresponding Analyses

Below the hypotheses of this study are reviewed. Included in the review of hypotheses is a description of the analyses that were utilized to test the given hypotheses. All the analyses described below were run separately using different dependent variables as indicators of remarital quality. These analyses were also used for the identification of associations and predictability with marital satisfaction, instability, and adjustment.

Table 2

Hypothesis 1: Summary of Correlations Between Perceptions of Negative Socioemotional Behavior and Marital Quality

Variable 1	Variable 2
H perception of H negative socioemotional behavior	H marital quality
H perception of H negative socioemotional behavior	W marital quality
W perception of H negative socioemotional behavior	H marital quality
W perception of H negative socioemotional behavior	W marital quality
H perception of W negative socioemotional behavior	H marital quality
H perception of W negative socioemotional behavior	W marital quality
W perception of W negative socioemotional behavior	H marital quality
W perception of W negative socioemotional behavior	W marital quality

Note. H = husband's; W = wife's

The first hypothesis is that an individual's perceptions of negative behavior will be associated with reports of low marital quality. This was explored through correlational analyses (see Table 2). Specifically, husband's perception of own negative behavior will be negatively correlated with husband's marital quality. Husband's perception of his own negative behavior will be negatively correlated with wife's marital quality. In addition to the husband's perception of negative behavior, the wife's perception was also analyzed. Correlations were used to test for an association with the wife's perception of her own negative behavior and her husband's marital quality as well as the wife's perception of her own negative behavior and her own reports of marital quality.

The second hypothesis of this study is that an individual's perceptions of positive behavior will be positively associated with both individual and spouse reports of marital quality. Again, correlations were utilized to test this hypothesis (see Table 3). Correlations were conducted to explore the husband's perception of his own positive behavior and his reports of marital quality. The husband's perception of his positive

Table 3

Hypothesis 2: Summary of Correlations Between Perceptions of Positive Socioemotional Behavior and Marital Quality

Variable 1	Variable 2
H perception of H positive socioemotional behavior	H marital quality
H perception of H positive socioemotional behavior	W marital quality
W perception of H positive socioemotional behavior	H marital quality
W perception of H positive socioemotional behavior	W marital quality
H perception of W positive socioemotional behavior	H marital quality
H perception of W positive socioemotional behavior	W marital quality
W perception of W positive socioemotional behavior	H marital quality
W perception of W positive socioemotional behavior	W marital quality

Note. H = husband's; W = wife's

behavior was then correlated with wife's reports of marital quality. Similarly, an association between the wife's perceptions of her own positive behavior and the wife's report of marital quality were assessed. The wife's perception of her own positive behavior and the husband's report of marital quality were also analyzed.

The final hypothesis for this study is that the discrepancy between husbands' and wives' reports will be more predictive of martial quality than individual perceptions of personal or spouses' behaviors. This hypothesis was tested by utilizing a backward regression. Several variables were analyzed as predictors of husband's marital quality. These variables include: (a) husband's perception of own negative behavior, (b) wife's perception of own negative behavior, (c) husband's perception of wife's negative behavior, (d) wife's perception of husband's negative behavior, (e) the discrepancy score of husband and wife's perception of husband's negative behavior, and (f) the discrepancy score of husband and wife's perception of wife's negative behavior. Similar variables addressing perceptions of positive behavior were assessed. All variables were also analyzed as predictors of wife's marital quality (see Table 4).

Table 4

Hypothesis 3: Summary of Backward Regression Analyses

Analysis	Independent variables	Dependent variables
Analysis A	a-f (negative)	H marital satisfaction
Analysis B	a-f (negative)	H marital instability
Analysis C	a-f (negative)	H marital adjustment
Analysis D	a-f (negative)	W marital satisfaction
Analysis E	a-f (negative)	W marital instability
Analysis F	a-f (negative)	W marital adjustment
Analysis G	a-f (positive)	H marital satisfaction
Analysis H	a-f (positive)	H marital instability
Analysis I	a-f (positive)	H marital adjustment
Analysis J	a-f (positive)	W marital satisfaction
Analysis K	a-f (positive)	W marital instability
Analysis L	a-f (positive)	W marital adjustment

Note. Variables a-f correspond with the variables listed in the above paragraph; negative refers to perceptions of negative socioemotional behaviors; positive refers to perceptions of positive socioemotional behaviors; H = husband's; W = wife's

Backward regression is an appropriate test for this study as it is used to test predictors of outcome variable(s). This statistical method allows a predicting variable to be eliminated at each stage of the analysis and provides a comparison as it calculates the amount of variability accounted for by each predicting variable (Cohen, 2001). This is beneficial in testing the hypothesis that discrepancy scores are more predictive of remarital quality than individual reports. By using backward regression, the retention of unnecessary terms can be avoided as backward regression only allows the terms that contribute significantly to remain in the final solution.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The consistency of cognitions tenet of the MDCD model was tested in three phases. The first phase was to confirm a relationship between marital quality in remarriages and perceptions of negative socioemotional behaviors. The second phase was to confirm a relationship between marital quality in remarriages and perceptions of positive socioemotional behaviors. Lastly, significant predictors were identified for each aspect of marital quality in remarriages including: satisfaction, instability, and adjustment.

Table 5

Summary of Correlations Between Perceptions of Negative Socioemotional Behavior and Marital Quality

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 H marital satisfaction	----	-.47**	.38**	.33**	-.32**	.29**	-.29**	-.34**	-.40**	-.22**
2 H marital instability		----	-.33**	-.39**	.57**	-.32**	.34**	.38**	.38**	.21**
3 H marital adjustment			----	.28**	-.32**	.47**	-.38**	-.39**	-.45**	-.27**
4 W marital satisfaction				----	-.59**	.53**	-.56**	-.27**	-.32**	-.36**
5 W marital instability					----	-.50**	.30**	.58**	.30**	.31**
6 W marital adjustment						----	-.31**	-.61**	-.33**	-.44**
7 H perception of H neg.							----	.50**	.59**	.42**
8 W perception of H neg.								----	.50**	.61**
9 H perception of W neg.									----	.45**
10 W perception of W neg.										----

Note. neg. = negative socioemotional behaviors; H = husband's; W = wife's
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

To test the first hypothesis that an individual's perceptions of negative behavior are associated with reports of low marital quality, correlational analyses were used (results shown in Table 5). Each of the ten variables significantly correlated to the others at the .01 level, indicating that the probability that these results would occur by chance is less than 1%. The perceptions of negative socioemotional behavior have a negative correlation to variables of satisfaction and adjustment, while these same variables have a positive correlation with variables of instability – lending support to the first hypothesis.

Table 6

Summary of Correlations Between Perceptions of Positive Socioemotional Behavior and Marital Quality

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 H marital satisfaction	----	-.47**	.38**	.33**	-.32**	.29**	.35**	.32**	.41**	.26**
2 H marital instability		----	-.33**	-.39**	.57**	-.32**	-.20**	-.25**	-.28**	-.22**
3 H marital adjustment			----	.28**	-.32**	.47**	.32**	.35**	.38**	.26**
4 W marital satisfaction				----	-.59**	.53**	.22**	.45**	.30**	.39**
5 W marital instability					----	-.50**	-.22**	-.42**	-.30**	-.35**
6 W marital adjustment						----	.27**	.53**	.32**	.48**
7 H perception of H pos.							----	..52**	.63**	.37**
8 W perception of H pos.								----	.44**	.75**
9 H perception of W pos.									----	.50**
10 W perception of W pos.										----

Note. pos. = positive socioemotional behaviors; H = husband's; W = wife's
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$.

Similar correlational analyses were conducted to test the second hypothesis that an individual's perception of positive behavior is associated with both individual and spouse reports of high marital quality (results shown in Table 6). Again, all correlations proved significant at the .01 level. The variables of satisfaction and adjustment resulted in positive correlations with variables of positive socioemotional behaviors – the coefficients ranging from .22 to .53. Variables of instability resulted in negative correlations with variables of positive socioemotional behaviors – these coefficients range from -.20 to -.42. These findings provide support to the second hypothesis.

A series of backward regression analyses were used to identify the strongest predictors of marital quality (results shown in tables 7, 8, 9, and 10). The predictor variables tested included: (a) husband's perception of own negative behavior, (b) wife's perception of own negative behavior, (c) husband's perception of wife's negative behavior, (d) wife's perception of husband's negative behavior, (e) the discrepancy score of husband and wife's perception of husband's negative behavior, and (f) the discrepancy score of husband and wife's perception of wife's negative behavior. Similar variables addressing perceptions of positive behavior were assessed. All variables were also analyzed as predictors of wife's marital quality.

Table 7 displays the negative socioemotional behavior variables that were retained as predictors of husband's marital quality. The regression coefficients in this analysis are consistent with the correlation coefficients above, indicating that the predictors are negatively related to husband's marital satisfaction and adjustment, while positively related to instability. For husband's marital satisfaction two variables were retained, both significant at the .01 level. These two predictors explain 18.5% of the

Table 7

Summary of Backward Regression Models for Husband's Marital Quality Based on Perceptions of Negative Behavior

Dependent variable	Predictors	B	SE B	ß	R^2
Satisfaction	H perception of W neg.	-.186	.030	-.311**	
	H perception of H neg.	-.116	.032	-.181**	
					.185
Instability	H perception of H neg.	.100	.039	.143*	
	H perception of W neg.	.091	.035	.164**	
	W perception of W neg.	-.100	.046	-.117*	
	W perception of H neg.	.167	.034	.280**	
	Discrepancy of W neg.	.087	.042	.101*	
					.217
Adjustment	H perception of H neg.	-.240	.090	-.146**	
	H perception of W neg.	-.302	.080	-.231**	
	W perception of H neg.	-.254	.069	-.182**	
	Discrepancy of W neg.	-.177	.097	-.068+	
					.251

Note. neg. = negative socioemotional behaviors; pos. = positive socioemotional behaviors; H = husband's; W = wife's
+ $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

variance in husband's marital satisfaction, as indicated by the R^2 value. The instability model retained five predictor variables. These predictors account for 21.7% of the variance in husband's instability.

In the adjustment model four predictors related to perceptions of negative socioemotional behavior were retained, including a discrepancy variable. Though the discrepancy variable was only moderately significant at the .10 level ($p = .069$), it was retained because this is an exploratory study. The four predictors account for more than 25% of the variance in husband's marital adjustment.

The wife's marital satisfaction model retained three variables, including both discrepancy scores associated with perceptions of negative socioemotional behavior (see Table 8). Again the discrepancy scores were only moderately significant ($p = .095$; $p =$

Table 8

Summary of Backward Regression Models for Wife's Marital Quality Based on Perceptions of Negative Behavior

Dependent variable	Predictors	B	SE B	ß	R^2
Satisfaction	W perception of H neg.	-.345	.030	-.504**	
	Discrepancy of W neg.	-.068	.041	-.069+	
	Discrepancy of H neg.	-.087	.047	-.084+	
					.321
Instability	W perception of H neg.	.296	.023	.546**	
	Discrepancy of H neg.	.062	.035	.076+	
					.341
Adjustment	W perception of W neg.	-.197	.085	-.109*	
	W perception of H neg.	-.658	.059	-.524**	
	Discrepancy of W neg.	-.142	.069	-.078*	
					.381

Note. neg. = negative socioemotional behaviors; pos. = positive socioemotional behaviors; H = husband's; W = wife's
+ $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

.063), but combined with the third variable they account for 32.1% of the variance in wife's marital satisfaction. Discrepancy variables were also retained in the models of wife's instability and adjustment. For the adjustment model the discrepancy variable was significant at the .05 level, and combined with both variables of wife's perceptions, accounts for 38.1% of the variance.

Table 9 displays the results for husband's marital quality based on perceptions of positive behavior. Husband's perceptions of wife's positive socioemotional behaviors and wife's perceptions of husband's positive socioemotional behaviors are variables that were retained in all three models. For each model the significance was at the .01 level.

The adjustment model included a third variable – wife's perceptions of wife's positive socioemotional behavior – however this variable is negatively related to adjustment. None of these models retained discrepancy variables. The retained variables

Table 9

Summary of Backward Regression Models for Husband's Marital Quality Based on Perceptions of Positive Behavior

Dependent variable	Predictors	B	SE B	ß	R^2
Satisfaction	H perception of W pos.	.139	.020	.333**	
	W perception of H pos.	.070	.020	.168**	
					.189
Instability	H perception of W pos.	-.084	.019	-.217**	
	W perception of H pos.	-.058	.019	-.151**	
					.099
Adjustment	H perception of W pos.	.276	.045	.304**	
	W perception of W pos.	-.148	.072	-.139*	
	W perception of H pos.	.293	.059	.323**	
					.192

Note. neg. = negative socioemotional behaviors; pos. = positive socioemotional behaviors; H = husband's; W = wife's
+ $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

explain 18.9% of the variance for satisfaction, 19.2% of the variance for adjustment, and only 9.9% of the variance for instability.

For wife's marital quality based on perceptions of positive socioemotional behavior, discrepancy of husband's positive socioemotional behaviors was retained in two models. It was retained in the instability model and the adjustment model. Husband's perceptions of husband's positive behaviors appeared at the .10 level for instability, as did discrepancy of husband's positive behaviors.

The same discrepancy variable was retained in the adjustment model, and indicates a negative relationship to adjustment. Retained variables explain 22.8% variance for wife's satisfaction, 20% variance for wife's instability, and 30.5% variance for adjustment (see Table 10).

Table 10

Summary of Backward Regression Models for Wife's Marital Quality Based on Perceptions of Positive Behavior

Dependent variable	Predictors	B	SE B	ß	R^2
Satisfaction	H perception of H pos.	-.064	.029	-.126*	
	H perception of W pos.	.084	.024	.188**	
	W perception of H pos.	.194	.022	.438**	
					.228
Instability	H perception of H pos.	.042	.024	.106+	
	H perception of W pos.	-.064	.020	-.183**	
	W perception of H pos.	-.135	.018	-.385**	
	Discrepancy of H pos.	.045	.026	.076+	
					.200
Adjustment	W perception of W pos.	.181	.057	.190**	
	W perception of H pos.	.307	.049	.378**	
	Discrepancy of H pos.	-.131	.055	-.095*	
					.305

Note. neg. = negative socioemotional behaviors; pos. = positive socioemotional behaviors; H = husband's; W = wife's
+ $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The discussion in this chapter focuses on trends found in the four domains of marital quality including: (a) husband's marital quality based on perceptions of negative socioemotional behavior, (b) wife's marital quality based on perceptions of negative socioemotional behavior, (c) husband's marital quality based on perceptions of positive socioemotional behavior, and (d) wife's marital quality based on perceptions of positive socioemotional behavior (see Table 11). The discussion continues with a review of trends by gender. A critique of the MDCD model is given as it relates to the results of this study. Implications of the findings are also addressed. Finally, the discussion concludes with the limitations of this study and recommendations for future research.

Resulting Trends

Table 11 provides a summary of the perception and discrepancy variables retained in models of marital quality. Below specific trends are discussed for each of the four domains of marital quality.

Trends in Husband's Marital Quality Based on Perceptions of Negative Socioemotional Behavior

Husband's perceptions of negative behavior for himself and his wife appear to influence all aspects of marital quality as these variables were retained in models of husband's satisfaction, husband's instability, and husband's adjustment. It should be recognized that individuals who have negative perceptions about themselves often have

Table 11

Summary of Variables Retained in Models of Marital Quality

Model	H of H	H of W	W of H	W of W	Discrepancy of H	Discrepancy of W
HMQ – N	satisfaction instability adjustment	satisfaction instability adjustment	instability adjustment	instability	---	instability adjustment
WMQ - N	---	---	satisfaction instability adjustment	adjustment	satisfaction instability	satisfaction adjustment
HMQ - P	---	satisfaction instability adjustment	satisfaction instability adjustment	adjustment	---	---
WMQ - P	satisfaction instability	satisfaction instability	satisfaction instability adjustment	adjustment	instability adjustment	---

Note. H of H = husband's perceptions of husband's socioemotional behavior; H of W = husband's perceptions of wife's socioemotional behavior; W of H = wife's perceptions of husband's socioemotional behavior; W of W = wife's perceptions of wife's socioemotional behavior; HMQ – N = husband's marital quality based on perceptions of negative socioemotional behavior; WMQ – N = wife's marital quality based on perceptions of negative socioemotional behavior; HMQ – P = husband's marital quality based on perceptions of positive socioemotional behavior; WMQ – P = wife's marital quality based on perceptions of positive socioemotional behavior

negative cognitions towards others. This may explain the retention of perceptions of wife's negative socioemotional behaviors. Fine and Kurdek (1994) agreed: "[Individuals] who tend to have negative cognitions about themselves and are distressed may be expected to consistently attend to the negative aspects of stepfamily situations and may interpret their experiences as undesirable" (p. 24).

Discrepancy of perceptions regarding wife's negativity was retained in models of husband's instability and adjustment, but not satisfaction. The discrepancy variables, however, were not retained in any models of husband's marital quality based on

perceptions of *positive* behavior. This may indicate that discrepancy is only a factor to marital quality when it is based on perceptions of *negative* socioemotional behaviors.

Trends in Wife's Marital Quality Based on Perceptions of Negative Socioemotional Behavior

Discrepancies, related to perceptions of negative behavior appear to be more influential to wife's marital quality than husband's – as these variables were retained in models of wife's satisfaction, wife's instability, and wife's adjustment. Discrepancy around husbands' negative socioemotional behavior was retained in models of wife's satisfaction and instability. Discrepancy around wife's negative socioemotional behavior was retained in models of satisfaction and adjustment. Acitelli et al. (1997) had similar findings, suggesting that consistency scores were predictive of wife's marital happiness during the first year of marriage. Perhaps wives are more aware of the discrepancies than husbands are. Fine and Kurdek (1994) explained that wives are more likely to attend to the emotional aspects of their marital interactions than are husbands. This may explain why neither husband's perception of his own negative behavior nor husband's perception of wives negative behavior had any impact on wife's reports of marital quality.

Wife's perception of husband's negativity was retained in each model of wife's marital quality. Wives have often been known to dwell on the negative and are less likely to forget negative socioemotional behavior displayed by their husbands (Huston & Vangelisti, 1991). Wife's perception of her own negative socioemotional behavior appears only in the model of wife's adjustment. Again, this supports the notion that those who view themselves negatively are likely to view their relationships negatively.

Trends in Husband's Marital Quality Based on Perceptions of Positive Socioemotional Behavior

Neither discrepancy variable was retained in any of the models related to husband's marital quality based on perceptions of positive socioemotional behavior. This may suggest that husbands are not affected by discrepancies in perceptions, or that they may not be aware of the discrepancy.

Consistently, husband's perceptions of wife's positive socioemotional behavior and wife's perceptions of husband's positive socioemotional behavior were retained in each model of husband's marital quality. Huston and Vangelisti (1991) noted that receiving affection was positively related to marital satisfaction for both spouses, but emphasized that for husbands giving affection was more consistently associated with husbands' satisfaction. These findings may indicate that husband's marital quality is dependent on his perceptions of his ability to make his wife happy.

In addition to these variables, wife's perception of wife's positive socioemotional behavior was retained in the adjustment model. This variable is the only variable with a negative affect on husband's marital adjustment ($ß = -.139$, $p = .040$). This negative affect may be explained by situations where the wife perceives herself as frequently enacting positive socioemotional behaviors and the husband feels that his needs are not being met. For example, the wife may tell her husband that she loves him several times a day, but maybe the husband would be more satisfied with a higher frequency of hugging and kissing.

Trends in Wife's Marital Quality Based on Perceptions of Positive Socioemotional Behavior

Discrepancy of husband's positive socioemotional behavior was retained in models of wife's instability and adjustment. According to the results this discrepancy variable has a negative effect on adjustment. For all three models of wife's marital quality, wife's perception of husband's positive socioemotional behavior was retained. Husband's perceptions of his own positive socioemotional behavior and wife's positive socioemotional behavior were retained in models of wife's satisfaction and wife's instability, but not in the model of wife's adjustment. Husband's perceptions of his own positive socioemotional behavior have a negative effect (ß = -.126, p = .028) on wife's marital satisfaction, unlike the other retained variables. This same variable has an unexpected positive effect on wife's marital instability as well (ß = .106, p = .072). This may also be explained by the idea that the wife may prefer more of one socioemotional behavior from her husband, though her husband may frequently perform other positive socioemotional behaviors.

Overall Trends by Gender

Wives. Discrepancy variables were retained in five of the six models related to wife's marital quality the exception being wife's marital satisfaction based on positive perceptions. These findings support the hypothesis that discrepancy (lack of consistency) in perceptions is predictive to marital quality, specifically for wife's marital quality. However, this may not be the best predictor of marital quality. In contrast, wife's perceptions of husband's socioemotional behaviors (positive and negative) were retained

in all six models of wife's marital quality at the $p <.01$ level. Other studies have yielded similar findings, suggesting that it is the wife's perception that is the best predictor for marital quality (Acitelli et al., 1997; Matthews et al., 1996).

Husbands. Discrepancy variables were retained in only two of the six models related to husband's marital quality. Both times the discrepancy was related to perceptions of wife's negative socioemotional behavior. This provides little support to the idea that discrepancy is important to predicting marital quality in remarriages – at least for husbands. The discrepancy of perceptions related to the husband's behaviors (positive or negative) appear to have no influence on husband's marital quality as these variables were not retained in any of the six models for husband's marital quality.

Husband's perceptions of wife's socioemotional behavior were retained in all six of the models related to husband's marital quality. Wife's perceptions of husband's socioemotional behavior were retained in all models related to husband's marital quality except husband's marital satisfaction as based on perceptions of negative socioemotional behaviors. These findings corroborate with the work of Watson & Humrichouse (2006) as they discovered that it was perceptions of spouse and not self that predicted marital satisfaction. While this was true in the present study when positive socioemotional behaviors were considered, husband's perceptions of their own negative behaviors was predictive of marital quality.

Critique of MDCD Model

The MDCD model emphasizes that consistency of cognitions between individuals is key to marital adjustment (Fine & Kurdek, 1994). Therefore, discrepancy in cognitions

such as perceptions may lead to maladjusted remarriages. Consistent with the MDCD hypothesis, this study indicates that discrepancy in perceptions is moderately predictive of wife's marital adjustment, and less predictive of husband's marital adjustment. The MDCD model is a model of *adjustment*, yet results indicate that discrepancies of perceptions are also predictive (to some degree) of husband's and wife's instability as well as wife's satisfaction. Variables of satisfaction and stability were not included in the MDCD model. Fine and Kurdek defined adjustment as the functionality of the system, but the model may benefit from the inclusion of satisfaction and instability as these variables measure the quality and durability of a system.

Overall, the findings of this study do not provide strong support for the consistency tenet of the MDCD model. However, in light of the developmental component of the model, consistency may be less important for remarried *newlyweds* inasmuch that spouses may expect to disagree in their early years of marriage. Couples' cognitions may become more consistent over time, and if they do not, maladjustment may be more noticeable. Fine and Kurdek (1994) proposed that cognitions will change over the life span of a relationship – influencing the degree of consistency. Other studies also acknowledge that couples' cognitions may become more consistent overtime. Anderson et al. (2003) discovered that after 6 months, couples show a higher degree of consistency.

It is also important to recognize that "perception" was the only cognition examined in this study. Perhaps consistency of other cognitions is more important to adjustment in remarriages. Fine and Kurdek (1994) identified four cognitions in addition to perceptions (i.e., attributions, expectancies, assumptions, and standards). It has been

suggested that *beliefs* or *assumptions* may influence the quality of remarriages (e.g., Higginbotham, 2005; Kaplan & Hennon, 1992). Others indicate that *expectations* may be key to marital satisfaction and stability (Fowers et al., 1996; Hohmann-Mariott, 2006).

The central tenet of the MDCD model is the consistency of cognitions, suggesting that remarriages have a higher level of adjustment when spouses' cognitions are similar. Perhaps adjustment in remarriage may be better predicted by acceptance of discrepancies rather than the lack of discrepancies. Researchers have suggested that even when discrepancies cannot be compromised between spouses, spouses can accept these differences and have a successful, well-adjusted relationship (Driver, Tabares, Shapiro, Nahm, & Gottman, 2003).

Implications

In addition to theoretical interests, the findings of this study may be informative to a variety of social science professionals. Marriage therapists may benefit from the findings that spouse's perceptions are associated with their partner's reports of marital quality. Therapists may benefit by working with both spouses as it is important for individual's to identify how they perceive their relationships and for spouses to have an understanding of those perceptions in order to meet the individual's needs. Though the results of this study indicate that consistency is not necessarily essential for high marital quality within remarriage, communicating perceptions and needs may help couples understand what socioemotional behaviors they could apply in order to meet each other's needs and to improve marital quality.

As spouse's perceptions are commonly predictive of individual's marital quality within remarriage, therapists may be instrumental in helping spouses identify the positive socioemotional behaviors of the individual. Increasing positive perceptions may influence the way couples interact, and possibly both spouses' marital quality.

In order to determine the marital quality for both spouses, therapists may want to assess the wife's perception of her husband as this variable was predictive of marital quality for both husband and wife regardless of whether perceptions of positivity or negativity were being assessed. Gottman (1994) has likewise identified the wife as a "barometer" of the emotional well-being of a marriage.

The MDCD and various practitioners have stressed the importance of consistency in cognitions. It is important that therapists understand that this is not necessarily true for remarried newlyweds. It is possible that consistency of cognitions is important later in remarriage, and working to help the couple become more consistent may prove helpful for their future, but therapists should continue to acknowledge that "the early stages of remarriage is devoted to adapting to the stress of a new life situation" (Fine & Kurdek, 1994). Pushing for consensus too early may do more harm than good. Therefore, therapists may help individuals cope with these stresses and assist the couple in learning how to validate each other's socioemotional behaviors as well as help to improve perceptions of both self and spouse.

Educators in this field may inform couples that perceptions of self are important to marital quality, particularly for husbands. Educators could inform husbands in remarriages that a negative perception of their socioemotional behaviors is highly related to their own marital satisfaction, stability, and adjustment. Educators may also inform

husbands in remarriages that positive perceptions of self may influence his wife's marital quality. Educators may benefit remarried couples by encouraging positive perceptions of self.

Extension agents, and other professionals responsible for programs related to remarried couples, may consider applying programs that help newlywed remarried couples cope with the stress of their new situation. By helping couples to cope and addressing individuals' concerns, these professionals may help couples develop positive perceptions – as distress is associated with negative perceptions and ultimately marital quality.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study that should be recognized. The first to be acknowledged is the issue of causality. This study is a cross-sectional analysis and therefore, it is not possible to determine whether perceptions actually drive marital quality. It is possible that marital quality may influence an individual's perceptions of self and partner's behaviors.

Second is the possibility of sample bias. Though efforts were made to include a fair representation of the population, the surveys that were returned were from individuals who were willing to write about their marriages, thus excluding those who were not willing to do so. It is also possible that the individuals who returned the surveys wanted to represent themselves in a positive light and did not answer honestly, though they were encouraged to answer honestly, independently, and accurately.

Third, the majority of the sample reported high marital satisfaction, low instability, and high levels of adjustment. This is understandable as newlywed couples are presumably happy. However, these circumstances may have resulted to a limited range of variability and outcome predictability. Perhaps a more evenly distributed sample may have identified discrepancy as the better predictor for marital quality within remarriages.

Fourth, the sample characteristics lacked diversity. This study used a Utah sample. Participants were predominately Caucasian and of the LDS faith. The majority of respondents received a high income. Due to the lack of diversity the results of this study may not be applicable to broader or more diverse populations.

Lastly, the choice to use a probability level of .1 was made to ensure that moderately significant findings could be identified. However, because $p < .1$ is above the accepted standard for significance, the findings may overstate the amount of variance explained attributed to the predictors and what variables should be retained in future studies.

Recommendations for Future Research

The results of this study provide weak support for the consistency tenet of the MDCD model. However, this study focused specifically on perceptions. These results may differ with the examination of other cognitions. Therefore, it is suggested that future research include an examination of the other cognitions included in the MDCD model.

Past research suggests that couples become more consistent over time. The participants of this study were newlyweds. To further understand the concept of consistency, the field of family studies would benefit from longitudinal studies.

Future research examining the MDCD model would be benefited by obtaining a broader sample, as this study was limited to residents of Utah. A broader sample would allow results to be generalized to the greater population. As remarried couples are becoming more prominent in our culture, it is important that theories and interventions be developed to meet the unique situations of remarried couples. Therefore, it is important that research in this field be expanded.

Conclusion

Though remarriages have been increasing over the last several decades, little work has been done in establishing theories and interventions specific to remarried couples and stepfamilies. Fine and Kurdek (1994) proposed a model that could be important to the individuals in a remarriage situation as well as the professionals that work with the remarried individuals; however, there is little empirical support for the proposed MDCD model. In efforts to provide some validation, this study tested one of the most crucial tenets of the model, the tenet of consistency in cognitions across spouses. The results indicate that individual perceptions are more predictive of remarital quality than is consistency of cognitions. These findings suggest that individual perceptions should be addressed in order to improve remarital quality. However, there is a need for further research testing the MDCD model as it is the only known articulated framework that addresses the unique situations of remarriages.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

USU Assurance: FWA#00003308
Protocol # 2044

UtahState
UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD OFFICE
9530 Old Main Hill, Suite 214a
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Telephone: (435) 797-1821
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SPO #:
AES #: UTA00

3/3/2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: Brian Higginbotham
JaNae Campbell

FROM: True M. Rubal-Fox, IRB Administrator

SUBJECT: Consistency of Cognitions in Remarriage: A Test of the Consistency Tenet of the Multidimensional Cognitive-Developmental Model

Your proposal has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board and is approved under exemption #4.

X There is no more than minimal risk to the subjects.
There is greater than minimal risk to the subjects.

This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file. **Any change in the methods/objectives of the research affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation.** Injuries or any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the IRB Office (797-1821).

The research activities listed below are exempt based on the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) regulations for the protection of human research subjects, 45 CFR Part 46, as amended to include provisions of the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, June 18, 1991.

4. Research, involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Appendix B

Two-item Satisfaction Index

6. Regarding your current marriage…	**Extremely Unhappy/ Dissatisfied**	**Very Unhappy/ Dissatisfied**	**Somewhat Unhappy/ Dissatisfied**	**Mixed**	**Somewhat Happy/ Satisfied**	**Very Happy/ Satisfied**	**Extremely Happy/ Satisfied**
a How happy are you with your *marriage*?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b How satisfied are you with your *relationship* with your spouse?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendix C

Marital Stability Index

7. Regarding your current marriage…		**Never**	**Yes, in the past but not recently**	**Yes, recently**
a	Have you ever thought your marriage might be in trouble?	☐	☐	☐
b	Has the thought of getting a divorce or separation crossed your mind?	☐	☐	☐
c	Have you discussed divorce or separation from your spouse with a close friend or relative?	☐	☐	☐
d	Have you or your spouse ever seriously suggested the idea of divorce?	☐	☐	☐
e	Have you and your spouse talked about consulting an attourney regarding a possible divorce or separation?	☐	☐	☐

Appendix D

Cohesion Subscale from the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale

10. Do you and your spouse disagree or agree on:	**Almost Always disagree**	**Frequently Disagree**	**Equally Agree/Disagree**	**Frequently Agree**	**Almost Always Agree**
a Religious matters	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b Demonstrations of affection	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c Making major decisions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d Sex relations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e Conventionality (correct or proper behavior)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f Career decisions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g Parenting duties	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendix E

Socioemotional Behavior Index

8a. Please think about your daily interactions with your spouse. In a typical day, how frequently do YOU:	**Never**	**Sometimes, but not every day**	**Once or twice a day**	**Often**	**Always**
1. Compliment your spouse	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Make your spouse laugh	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Say "I love you" to your spouse	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Do something nice for your spouse	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Talk about the day's events with your spouse	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Initiate physical affection with your spouse *(e.g., kiss, hug)*	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Share emotions, feelings, or problems with your spouse	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Initiate sex with your spouse	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Seem bored or uninterested with your spouse	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Dominate the conversation with your spouse	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. Show anger or impatience towards your spouse	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Criticize or complain to your spouse	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. Turn down or avoid sexual advances from your spouse	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. Fail to do something that your spouse asked	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. Do things that annoy your spouse	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

8b. Please think about your daily interactions with your spouse. In YOUR opinion, in a typical day how frequently does your SPOUSE:	**Never**	**Sometimes, but not every day**	**Once or twice a day**	**Often**	**Always**
1. Compliment you	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Make you laugh	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Say "I love you"	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Do something nice for you	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Talk about the day's events with you	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Initiate physical affection with you *(e.g., kiss, hug)*	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

7.	Share emotions, feelings, or problems with you	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8.	Initiate sex with you	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9.	Seem bored or uninterested with you	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10.	Dominate the conversation with you	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11.	Show anger or impatience towards you	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12.	Criticize or complain to you	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13.	Turn down or avoid sexual advances from you	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14.	Fail to do something you asked	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15.	Do things that annoy you	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐